TEACHERS' READINESS FOR IMPLEMENTING NIGERIA'S NEW COMPETENCY-BASED BASIC EDUCATION CURRICULUM IN GOMBE STATE

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Abstract
This study investigated teachers' readiness for implementing the competency-based Basic Education Curriculum in Gombe State. A descriptive survey research design was employed, and data were collected from a sample of 362 basic education teachers selected through multistage sampling. A validated questionnaire with a reliability coefficient of 0.84 was used to gather information on teachers' awareness, attitudes, instructional practices and challenges related to curriculum implementation. Data were analysed using descriptive statistics. The findings showed that teachers possessed moderate awareness but limited understanding of the competency-based curriculum. Their attitudes toward the reform were generally positive, although concerns about workload and insufficient support were evident. Instructional practices partially reflected competency-based principles, with limited use of performance-based assessment and differentiated instruction. Teachers also faced significant challenges, including inadequate training, insufficient instructional resources, overcrowded classrooms and weak administrative support. The study concluded that while teachers are willing to implement the competency-based curriculum, their readiness is hindered by gaps in understanding and systemic constraints. It was recommended that teachers receive continuous training, schools be provided with adequate instructional materials, class sizes be reduced and administrative support strengthened to enhance effective implementation.

Keywords: competency-based curriculum, teacher readiness, instructional practices, curriculum implementation, Gombe State

Introduction
Curriculum reform remains central to global efforts aimed at improving learning outcomes and preparing young people for participation in a rapidly changing world. Over the last decade, many countries have shifted from traditional, content-heavy curricula to competency-based education (CBE) systems that emphasise the development of transferable skills such as problem-solving, creativity, collaboration, and digital literacy (Mulenga & Kabombwe, 2019; Schiro, 2022). Competency-based education is widely regarded as a vehicle for enhancing learner engagement and aligning school learning with real-life demands of the 21st century (Ezechukwu, 2023; Voogt & Roblin, 2019).

In Nigeria, curriculum reforms have been driven by concerns about declining learning outcomes, limited relevance of school content, and poor alignment between education and national development goals. The Nigerian Educational Research and Development Council (NERDC) initiated major revisions to the Basic Education Curriculum to address issues of subject overload, outdated content, and the persistent dominance of rote learning (NERDC, 2020). Recent policy discussions, including the planned nationwide rollout of a more competency-driven basic education curriculum between 2024 and 2025, emphasise learner-centred pedagogy, integration of digital skills, and the development of functional competencies needed for work and citizenship (Adebayo & Olatunji, 2022; Okebukola, 2023). However, empirical studies consistently show that curriculum reforms in Nigeria often fail at the implementation stage due to inadequate teacher preparation, insufficient instructional resources, and systemic constraints at the school level (Olibie, 2021; Onwuagboke & Osuji, 2020).

Teachers play a pivotal role in the successful implementation of competency-based curricula. For teachers to deliver such reforms effectively, they must possess not only strong content knowledge but also pedagogical skills required for learner-centred instruction, continuous assessment, and facilitation of real-world learning experiences (Darling-Hammond et al., 2019). Scholars argue that teacher readiness which includes awareness of curriculum changes, positive attitudes, professional competence, and access to supportive teaching environments is one of the strongest predictors of successful curriculum implementation (Kabombwe & Mulenga, 2021; Adedoyin & Torunarigha, 2023). Where teachers lack adequate knowledge or training, they tend to revert to traditional lecture-based methods, thereby

undermining the transformative intent of competency-based reforms (Ulum, 2020; Oviawe & Uwameiye, 2022).

In Gombe State, concerns about the quality of basic education have prompted government initiatives to review teacher utilisation, instructional delivery, and school quality indicators. Reports from recent assessments indicate persistent challenges related to teacher deployment, professional development, and instructional resource availability factors that directly influence teachers' capacity to translate curriculum prescriptions into classroom practice (Aliyu & Ibrahim, 2021; Suleiman & Gimba, 2020). Studies conducted within the state have highlighted issues such as weak curriculum planning, limited improvisation skills among teachers, and inconsistent adoption of modern teaching strategies (Abubakar & Ahmed, 2022). These issues raise critical questions about how ready teachers in Gombe State are to implement Nigeria's new competency-based Basic Education Curriculum.

Given the centrality of teachers to curriculum implementation and the systemic challenges documented in both national and Gombe-specific studies, an empirical investigation into teachers' readiness for implementing the new competency-based Basic Education Curriculum is both timely and necessary. This study seeks to provide insight into teachers' knowledge of the revised curriculum, their attitudes towards it, the extent to which their instructional practices align with competency-based principles, and the barriers they encounter. Findings from the study are expected to contribute to policy decisions, teacher-training strategies, and ongoing curriculum improvement efforts within Gombe State and Nigeria at large.

Statement of the Problem

Nigeria's shift towards a competency-based Basic Education Curriculum is intended to improve learning outcomes by promoting practical skills, problem-solving abilities, and learner-centred instructional practices. However, the success of this curriculum depends largely on the readiness of teachers who are responsible for interpreting and implementing its provisions in the classroom. In many basic schools, teachers have traditionally relied on content-driven, examination-oriented approaches, raising concerns about their preparedness to adopt the more flexible, activity-based and assessment-diverse methods required in a competency-based system.

In Gombe State, this concern is particularly significant due to longstanding challenges related to teacher training, instructional resource availability, and variation in school environments across urban and rural areas. Although curriculum reforms have been formally introduced, it remains unclear whether teachers possess adequate knowledge of the new curriculum, the right attitudes toward its implementation, and the necessary pedagogical skills to translate its objectives into effective classroom practice. There is also limited understanding of the specific constraints teachers encounter as they attempt to implement competency-based learning, including infrastructural limitations, workload pressures, and gaps in professional development.

Without a clear picture of teachers' readiness, the goals of the new curriculum may not be realised, and the reform risks becoming another policy innovation that fails to create meaningful change in instructional practice. It is therefore necessary to investigate the extent to which teachers in Gombe State are prepared to implement the competency-based Basic Education Curriculum and to identify the factors that may facilitate or hinder effective implementation.

Objectives of the Study

The following objectives are formulated to guide the investigation into teachers' readiness for implementing the competency-based Basic Education Curriculum in Gombe State.

1. To determine teachers' level of awareness and understanding of the competency-based Basic Education Curriculum in Gombe State.
2. To examine teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of the competency-based curriculum in Gombe State.
3. To assess the extent to which teachers' instructional practices reflects competency-based principles in Gombe State.
4. To identify the major challenges teachers are facing in implementing the competency-based curriculum.

Research Questions

The following research questions are designed to direct the inquiry in line with the study objectives.

a) What is the level of teachers' awareness and understanding of the competency-based Basic Education Curriculum in Gombe State?
b) What are teachers' attitudes towards the implementation of the competency-based curriculum?
c) To what extent do teachers' instructional practices reflect competency-based principles?
d) What major challenges are teachers facing in implementing the competency-based curriculum in Gombe State?

Methodology

The study employed a descriptive survey research design. This design was chosen because it enabled the researcher to systematically obtain information from a representative sample of teachers regarding

their readiness to implement the competency-based Basic Education Curriculum in Gombe State. The design was appropriate for describing existing conditions, attitudes, and instructional practices without manipulating any variables. It also facilitated the collection of quantitative data that reflected the actual state of curriculum implementation readiness among basic education teachers.

The population of the study comprised all basic education teachers teaching in Gombe State during the 2023/2024 academic session. This includes teachers in both primary and junior secondary schools across the eleven Local Government Areas. Records obtained from the Gombe State Universal Basic Education Board indicated that approximately 11,450 teachers formed the target population. This sizeable population provided a broad base for drawing a representative sample capable of yielding findings generalizable to basic education teachers within the state.

The sample for the study consisted of 380 teachers selected from the target population. The sample size was determined using the Krejcie and Morgan table for determining sample size for known populations, ensuring an adequate and scientifically grounded representation. A multistage sampling procedure was adopted. In the first stage, six Local Government Areas were selected through simple random sampling to reflect both urban and rural contexts. In the second stage, primary and junior secondary schools within each selected Local Government Area were chosen proportionally. In the final stage, teachers were selected through stratified random sampling to ensure representation across gender, qualification levels, teaching experience, and school types. This approach ensured fair representation of the diverse teacher population in Gombe State.

Data for the study were collected using a researcher-developed questionnaire titled *Teachers' Readiness for Competency-Based Curriculum Implementation Questionnaire (TRCBCIQ)*. The instrument was designed to generate data relevant to the four objectives of the study. It consisted of four sections: the first section assessed teachers' awareness and understanding of the competency-based curriculum; the second examined teachers' attitudes toward the curriculum; the third investigated teachers' instructional practices; and the fourth identified challenges affecting implementation. Each item in the instrument was structured on a four-point Likert-type scale that ranged from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree. The instrument was constructed to be clear, concise, and aligned with the constructs under investigation.

To ensure content accuracy and appropriateness, the instrument underwent face and content validation. Three experts were consulted: two specialists in Curriculum Studies and one in Measurement and Evaluation. They reviewed the questionnaire items for relevance, clarity, language suitability, and alignment with the study objectives. Their recommendations led to refinement of several items, including rewording for clarity and removal of redundant statements. The validated instrument adequately captured the constructs intended for measurement.

Following validation, the instrument was subjected to a reliability test to determine its internal consistency. A pilot study was conducted using 40 teachers in Bauchi State who were not included in the main study but shared similar characteristics with the target population. Responses from the pilot test were analysed using Cronbach's alpha. The reliability coefficients for the four sections ranged from 0.79 to 0.87, with an overall reliability coefficient of 0.84. These

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values indicated that the instrument possessed a high level of internal consistency and was suitable for use in the main study.

Data collection was carried out after obtaining official approval from the Gombe State Universal Basic Education Board and permission from the heads of selected schools. The researcher personally administered the questionnaires with the assistance of trained research aides. Teachers were briefed on the purpose of the study, assured of confidentiality, and instructed on how to complete the instrument. Adequate time was provided for completion, and questionnaires were retrieved immediately after. Of the 380 questionnaires distributed, 362 were properly completed and returned, representing a response rate of 95.3 percent. This high retrieval rate enhanced the reliability of the data used in the study.

Data generated from the completed questionnaires were organised, coded, and analysed using the Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS). Descriptive statistics, specifically mean scores and standard deviations, were used to answer the four research questions. A decision benchmark of 2.50 was applied, whereby mean scores of 2.50 and above indicated agreement or high readiness, while scores below 2.50 indicated low readiness. Where hypotheses were tested, inferential statistics such as t-test and one-way ANOVA were employed at the 0.05 level of significance to determine differences in readiness based on teacher characteristics. The analysis procedures allowed for meaningful interpretation of the data in line with the study objectives.

Results

Research Question 1: What is the level of teachers' awareness and understanding of the competency-based Basic Education Curriculum in Gombe State?

Table 1: Teachers' Awareness and Understanding of the Competency-Based Curriculum (N = 362)

SN	Item Statement	M	SD	Decision	Rank
1	I am aware that Nigeria has introduced a competency-based curriculum.	3.21	0.81	Agree	1
2	I understand the major goals of the competency-based curriculum.	2.89	0.92	Agree	2
3	I am familiar with the key competencies learners are expected to develop.	2.63	0.94	Agree	3
4	I have received official communication explaining the new curriculum content.	2.57	1.01	Agree	4
5	I understand how learning outcomes are written under the new curriculum.	2.41	0.97	Disagree	7
6	I know how competencies differ from traditional content objectives.	2.52	0.89	Agree	5
7	I feel confident in interpreting the curriculum documents.	2.36	0.95	Disagree	8
8	The training I received helped me understand how the curriculum is structured.	2.28	1.03	Disagree	9
9	I understand the new assessment expectations required in the competency model.	2.44	0.98	Disagree	6

Grand Mean = 2.59

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Table 1 shows that teachers in Gombe State demonstrated a moderate level of awareness and partial understanding of the competency-based Basic Education Curriculum. The highest mean score was recorded for awareness of the curriculum reform (M = 3.21), indicating that most teachers were informed that a new curriculum had been introduced. Similarly, understanding of the curriculum's goals (M = 2.89) and familiarity with key competencies (M = 2.63) were above the decision benchmark of 2.50, suggesting that teachers possessed a basic conceptual awareness.

However, several critical aspects of curriculum understanding fell below the benchmark. Teachers reported limited confidence in interpreting curriculum documents (M = 2.36), inadequate understanding of learning outcome structures (M = 2.41), and insufficient preparation through training (M = 2.28). Understanding of assessment expectations also fell below the benchmark (M = 2.44). Generally, the results (Grand M = 2.59) indicate that while teachers are generally aware of the new curriculum, their deeper understanding of key components required for effective implementation remains weak, posing potential challenges to classroom practice.

Research Question Two: What are teachers' attitudes toward the implementation of the competency-based curriculum?

Table 2: Teachers' Attitudes Toward the Competency-Based Curriculum (N = 362)

SN	Item Statement	M	SD	Decision	Rank
1	I believe the competency-based curriculum will improve students' skills.	3.14	0.77	Agree	2
2	I am motivated to implement the new curriculum.	2.83	0.85	Agree	6
3	I feel the curriculum is relevant to learners' real-life needs.	3.06	0.82	Agree	3
4	I am willing to adopt new teaching strategies required by the curriculum.	2.91	0.88	Agree	5
5	I see the competency-based curriculum as an improvement over previous curriculum.	2.98	0.80	Agree	4
6	I am concerned about the increased workload required to implement the curriculum.	2.45	1.07	Disagree	8
7	I believe learners will benefit from more practical, activity-based learning.	3.18	0.73	Agree	1
8	I feel adequately supported to implement the new curriculum.	2.22	0.99	Disagree	9
9	I am optimistic that the reform will succeed in Gombe State.	2.49	0.96	Disagree	7

Grand Mean = 2.81

Table 2 reveals that teachers' attitudes towards the competency-based curriculum were generally positive. The highest ranked item showed strong agreement that learners benefit from practical, activity-based learning (M = 3.18), and teachers also believed that the curriculum would enhance students' skill development (M = 3.14).

Teachers reported perceiving the curriculum as relevant to real-life needs (M = 3.06) and an improvement over previous curriculum (M = 2.98). These findings suggest a broad acceptance of the curriculum's underlying philosophy.

Nevertheless, some reservations were evident. Teachers expressed concerns about the increased workload associated with implementing the curriculum (M = 2.45) and felt inadequately supported (M = 2.22). Optimism regarding the curriculum's success in the state was marginally below the benchmark (M = 2.49). Taken together, the Grand mean of 2.81 suggests that teachers generally support and value the competency-based curriculum. Still, their enthusiasm may be hindered by a perceived lack of support and structural demands associated with implementation.

Research Question Three: To what extent do teachers' instructional practices reflect competency-based principles?

Table 3: Teachers' Instructional Practices Reflecting Competency-Based Principles (N = 362)

SN	Item Statement	M	SD	Decision	Rank
1	I use learner-centred teaching methods in my lessons.	2.74	0.89	Agree	2
2	I regularly engage students in problem-solving activities.	2.61	0.90	Agree	5
3	I design tasks that allow students to demonstrate competencies.	2.53	0.93	Agree	6
4	I integrate group work and collaboration in my teaching.	2.69	0.84	Agree	3
5	I assess students using performance-based activities.	2.47	0.95	Disagree	7
6	My lesson plans reflect learning outcomes aligned with competencies.	2.44	0.92	Disagree	8
7	I make use of real-life examples and practical activities.	2.71	0.83	Agree	1
8	I differentiate instruction to meet diverse learners' needs.	2.39	0.99	Disagree	9
9	I provide continuous assessment feedback to guide learning.	2.68	0.88	Agree	4

Grand Mean = 2.58

Table 3 indicates that teachers' instructional practices only partially reflect competency-based principles. Teachers reported relatively frequent use of practical examples (M = 2.71), learner-centred methods (M = 2.74), group work (M = 2.69), and continuous feedback (M = 2.68), all of which align with competency-based instructional strategies. These results suggest that teachers are making efforts to incorporate active learning approaches.

However, other core practices required for competency-based instruction fell below the benchmark. Performance-based assessment (M = 2.47), outcome-aligned lesson planning (M = 2.44), and differentiated instruction (M = 2.39) were not widely practiced. These areas represent essential components of the competency framework, indicating that teachers may not yet be implementing the curriculum with the depth and consistency required.

The grand mean score of 2.58 suggests moderate alignment, but also highlights considerable room for improvement. Teachers appear willing to adopt some competency-based practices but still rely heavily on traditional instructional patterns.

Research Question Four: What major challenges do teachers face in implementing the competency-based curriculum in Gombe State?

Table 4: Challenges Faced by Teachers in Implementing the Competency-Based Curriculum (N = 362)

SN	Item Statement	M	SD	Decision	Rank
1	I face inadequate training on how to implement the competency-based curriculum.	3.32	0.74	Agree	1
2	My school lacks sufficient instructional materials for competency-based teaching.	3.27	0.79	Agree	2
3	Overcrowded classrooms make implementation difficult.	3.19	0.83	Agree	3
4	There is limited administrative support for the new curriculum.	2.97	0.91	Agree	7
5	I lack access to digital tools needed for activity-based learning.	3.08	0.86	Agree	5
6	Heavy workload affects my ability to plan competency-based lessons.	3.14	0.88	Agree	4
7	Time constraints limit my use of performance-based assessments.	3.01	0.92	Agree	6
8	The curriculum documents are difficult to interpret.	2.84	0.90	Agree	9
9	There is inadequate monitoring and supervision to support implementation.	2.96	0.89	Agree	8

Grand Mean = 3.09

Table 4 demonstrates that teachers encounter substantial challenges in implementing the competency-based curriculum. Inadequate training (M = 3.32) and lack of instructional materials (M = 3.27) ranked highest among the challenges identified. Overcrowded classrooms (M = 3.19), heavy workload (M = 3.14), and insufficient digital tools (M = 3.08) were also rated as major barriers. These findings show that essential support structures are lacking.

Time constraints (M = 3.01), limited administrative support (M = 2.97), and weak monitoring systems (M = 2.96) further contribute to implementation difficulty. Even interpretation of curriculum documents was rated as a challenge (M = 2.84), reinforcing earlier results that showed gaps in teacher understanding. The Grand mean of 3.09 indicates that teachers face high levels of systemic, logistical, and professional challenges, which could significantly impede the successful implementation of

the competency-based curriculum in Gombe State.

Discussion of the Findings

Findings from Table 1 indicated that teachers in Gombe State had moderate awareness of the competency-based curriculum but limited understanding of its deeper components, such as learning outcomes, assessment expectations and curriculum interpretation. This finding is consistent with several empirical studies, which similarly reported that teachers often possess surface-level awareness of curriculum reforms without a corresponding understanding of the technical aspects required for implementation. For instance, Olibie (2021) found that although teachers recognized ongoing reforms, their knowledge of competency descriptors and performance indicators was weak. Likewise, Adedoyin and Torunarigha (2023) observed that teachers' comprehension of CBE principles remained inadequate despite awareness campaigns.

Studies in other African contexts also align with the findings. In Zambia, Kabombwe and Mulenga (2021) reported that teachers struggled to interpret curriculum documents and frequently reverted to traditional content-based approaches. Similarly, Waweru and Kiio (2020) found that Kenyan teachers demonstrated only superficial understanding of the new competency-based curriculum. Therefore, the present findings support the broader empirical evidence that teacher awareness does not automatically translate into deep knowledge and that significant gaps persist in teachers' curriculum literacy in competency-based systems.

The results in Table 2 showed generally positive attitudes among teachers, including belief in the value of practical learning and willingness to adopt new strategies. However, concerns about workload, inadequate support and uncertainty about the curriculum's success were also noted. This dual attitude pattern is in line with earlier empirical studies. Ezechukwu (2023) found that while Nigerian teachers viewed CBE positively, many were concerned about increased administrative and planning demands. Onwuagboke and Osuji (2020) similarly reported mixed attitudes: teachers supported the philosophy of CBE but doubted the availability of adequate training and school-level support systems. Studies from Ghana also echo these results. Adu-Gyamfi and Ampofo (2022) observed that teachers valued competency-based reforms but expressed skepticism regarding the sustainability of implementation due to systemic constraints. Thus, the current findings align with previous research showing that teachers generally welcome curriculum innovation but may hesitate to fully commit when institutional support is weak. The duality conceptual support but practical concern reflects a well-established pattern in curriculum reform literature. Musa et al. (2021) found that the competency possessed by teachers is high in the utilization of instructional methodologies.

Table 3 revealed that teachers' instructional practices partially reflect competency-based principles. While some teachers used learner-centred approaches, group work and practical activities, performance-based assessments, differentiated instruction and outcome-aligned lesson planning scored below the benchmark. This finding is highly consistent with empirical literature. Oviawe and Uwameiye (2022) found that many Nigerian teachers continued to rely on teacher-centred methods despite policy expectations for active learning. Likewise, Ulum (2020) reported that teachers in Tanzania reverted to didactic approaches even after receiving initial training on CBE. Waweru and Kiio (2020) also documented hybrid instructional practices in Kenya,

where teachers adopted isolated CBE strategies but failed to align lesson planning and assessment with competencies. Furthermore, Biwai et al. (2020) suggested that teachers' qualifications and experience enhance the usage of technology. The consistency across studies indicates that partial adoption of competency-based instructional practices is a widespread challenge. The alignment of the present findings with previous research reinforces the notion that teachers require deeper pedagogical training and sustained supervision to fully operationalize competency-based approaches.

Table 4 demonstrated that teachers are facing significant challenges, including inadequate training, insufficient instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, limited digital tools and heavy workload. These challenges substantially hinder teachers' readiness in implementing the curriculum. Previous empirical studies strongly support this pattern. Adebayo and Olatunji (2022) reported that sporadic, one-off workshops do not adequately prepare teachers for CBE implementation. Aliyu and Ibrahim (2021) found that Gombe State teachers are facing resource shortages, poor classroom conditions and insufficient administrative support challenges that directly echo the present findings. Abubakar and Ahmed (2022) further confirmed that teachers in Gombe lacked the capacity and materials needed to improvise for practical teaching. Beyond Nigeria, cross-country studies present similar conclusions. In Rwanda, Munyengabe et al. (2017) observed that poor supervision and inadequate teacher support hindered the successful adoption of CBE. These parallels demonstrate that the challenges identified in the present study are not isolated but reflect systemic issues common in low-resource education systems. Thus, the findings are highly consistent with existing literature, demonstrating that institutional and infrastructural limitations significantly constrain teacher readiness.

Conclusion
The study concluded that teachers in Gombe State demonstrated moderate awareness but insufficient understanding of the competency-based Basic Education Curriculum, showed generally positive attitudes toward the reform, exhibited only partial use of competency-based instructional practices, and faced significant challenges, including inadequate training, limited teaching resources, overcrowded classrooms, and weak administrative support, all of which collectively hindered effective curriculum implementation.

Recommendations
Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:
1. Teachers should be provided with comprehensive and continuous training to improve their understanding and implementation of competency-based curriculum requirements.
2. Schools should be adequately supplied with instructional materials and resources necessary for competency-based teaching and learning.
3. The government should address overcrowded classrooms and teacher workload to enhance teachers' capacity to implement competency-based instructional strategies effectively.
4. School administrators should strengthen supervisory support to ensure consistent guidance, monitoring and feedback for teachers during curriculum implementation.

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