

How the competence-based curriculum is shaping secondary education in Bugiri

I see a quiet but meaningful shift taking place in secondary schools in Bugiri District. What stands out to me is not just the introduction of the new Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC), but how it is slowly redefining what learning looks like in practice. When I picture students gathered under a tree discussing a poultry project while a teacher listens more than instructs, I do not see a symbolic reform, I see a genuine attempt to rethink education. In my opinion, this shift from memorisation to application is long overdue, but its success depends on deeper structural changes, especially the integration of information literacy.

From where I stand, the move away from "chalk and talk" teaching toward competence and practice is one of the most promising aspects of CBC. The traditional system prioritised exam performance and recall, often at the expense of understanding. CBC, however, encourages critical thinking, collaboration, and problem-solving. In Bugiri schools, I observe students engaging more actively with real-life challenges, and teachers beginning to act as facilitators rather than authority figures. That said, I am not convinced that competence alone is enough. Without the ability to find, evaluate, and apply information effectively, these competencies risk becoming superficial.

This is why I strongly believe information literacy is the missing link in CBC implementation. While it is implicitly embedded in the curriculum, it is rarely taught explicitly. Students are expected to investigate, analyse, and present findings, yet many lack the skills to navigate information critically. In my view, this creates a gap between expectation and reality. Schools often lack functional libraries, reli-

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ble Internet access, and structured training in research skills. Teachers themselves may not feel adequately prepared to guide students in this area. Without deliberate attention to information literacy, I worry that students may complete projects without truly understanding how to engage with knowledge.

At the same time, I cannot ignore the practical challenges on the ground. In districts like Bugiri, the promise of CBC often collides with resource constraints. I have seen how project-based learning can place financial pressure on families and how large class sizes limit meaningful interaction. Teachers are expected to implement a demanding curriculum with limited support and materials. In such conditions, even well-intentioned reforms can become performative rather than transformative. Still, I acknowledge the creativity of many educators who use local knowledge and community resources to bridge these gaps. One area I believe holds significant potential is the school library. In my opinion, libraries must evolve from passive storage spaces into active learning hubs. They should support the teaching of research skills, provide access

to both digital and offline resources, and position librarians as partners in instruction. If CBC is to succeed, information literacy cannot remain abstract, it must be embedded in everyday learning.

What I find most compelling about CBC is its attempt to redefine students as knowledge producers rather than passive recipients. When students design projects, investigate community issues, and present their findings, they are engaging in meaningful learning. However, I remain cautious. Participation alone does not guarantee understanding. Without strong information literacy skills, students may simply go through the motions without developing critical insight. Looking ahead, I believe the way forward lies in better integration. Teacher training must go beyond theory and focus on practical, learner-centred approaches. Infrastructure, especially ICT, needs serious investment. The curriculum should intentionally connect subjects through real-world problems, and community support must be strengthened. Most importantly, decisions should be guided by ongoing research and evidence.

In conclusion, I view CBC as a promising but incomplete reform. It has introduced a more relevant and engaging approach to education in Bugiri, but its full potential will only be realised if it is supported by systems that promote inquiry and access to information. To me, information literacy is not optional, it is central. Without it, CBC risks falling short of its transformative promise.

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