

The influence of the Teacher's Mode of Assessing Learners on the Implementation of Competency Based Curriculum in Private Primary Schools in Kirinyaga Central Sub-County, Kenya

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Abstract

The purpose of this research paper is to present the findings of a study that investigated the influence of the teacher's mode of assessing learners on the implementation of Competency Based Curriculum in private primary schools in Kirinyaga Central Sub-County in Kenya. The study employed a descriptive study design to collect data from the head teachers and lower primary school teachers in the private schools offering the Competency Based Curriculum in Kirinyaga Central Sub-County. The study collected data from a sample size of 149 respondents selected using random sampling and census techniques. Data were collected using questionnaires and interview schedules and analyzed by descriptive and correlational statistics using Statistical Package for Social Sciences tool version 27 and through thematic narrations for qualitative data. The results of the study showed that the teacher's mode of assessing learners influenced the implementation of Competency Based Curriculum to a great extent with 81.2% of the respondents affirming it. The Pearson's Moment Correlation Analysis Coefficient was 0.783 implying that there is a strong positive relationship between the teacher's mode of assessing learners and the implementation of the Competency Based Curriculum in private primary schools in Kenya. The study recommends that the teachers should employ a variety of methods in assessing learners and that such assessments be used for improvement of the learner assessment approaches and practices.

Key Words: *Competency Based Curriculum (CBC), teachers, mode of learner assessment, curriculum implementation, educational reforms, assessment rubric*

Date of Submission: 10-08-2026

Date of Acceptance: 22-08-2026

1.1 Background to the Study

Many countries around the world are adopting the Competency Based Curriculum in order to develop skilled workforce that can adequately address the current job market demands (Acquah, Frimpong & Borkloe, 2017). The term competency has been conceptualized by UNESCO (2021) as the ability to apply learning resources and outcomes (knowledge, skills, values and attitudes) adequately in a defined context (education, work, personal, or professional development). The curriculum review from the Knowledge Based Curriculum to Competency Based Curriculum began in the United States of America in the 1970s and later expanded to European countries such as the United Kingdom and Germany in 1980s. It then spread further to other countries such as Australia, Canada, India, Denmark, New Zealand, Brazil, Malaysia and Finland. The developing countries of Asia and Africa such as South Africa, Nigeria, Rwanda, Ethiopia and Zambia started adopting the CBC in their respective countries in the late 2000s (Muraraneza, Mtshali and Mukamana, 2017).

Currently, Kenya has two education systems running concurrently: The Knowledge Based Curriculum (popularly known as the 8-4-4 curriculum, being implemented from form one upwards to the university) and the newly introduced Competency Based Curriculum (CBC), being implemented from the Pre-School, Grade One to Grade Six and Junior Secondary School, now at Grade Ten. The 8-4-4 structure has been criticized as being

theoretical in terms of its curriculum content and does focus less on the skills and competencies of the learners. According to Inyega et al., (2021), the 8-4-4 system is not very accommodative to the diverse needs and abilities of the learners. Moreover, it does not cater well for students outside the formal education system. The system is heavily inclined towards learners mastering the content and being too examination oriented rather than emphasizing on the acquisition of competencies and skills that are needed in the job market (MOE, 2019).

Due to the shortcomings of the 8-4-4 system of education, the Ministry of Education formulated Sessional Paper No. 2 of 2015 on 'Reforming Education and Training in Kenya' which recommended the adoption of the competency based approach. A taskforce report led by Professor Douglas Odhiambo on the status of the Kenya's Education Curriculum recommended conducting of reforms in the education system offered by Government of Kenya. It recommended the introduction of Competency Based Curriculum in the schools, (MOE, 2019). An earlier report by Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development in 2009 on the needs assessment of the curriculum reforms had observed that the country needed an education system that would equip the learners with skills and competencies that are relevant and applicable to the challenges and opportunities of the modern life (KICD, 2017).

The Ministry of Education in Kenya rolled out the Competency Based Curriculum (CBC) in January 2019 which will eventually replace the current Knowledge Based 8-4-4 Curriculum. The CBC emphasizes more on the Continuous Assessment Tests (CATs) over a one-off examination. The education system also focusses on the acquisition of industry requirement skills rather than mastery of subject content. The basic education is generally organized into three levels: Early Years Education, Middle School and Senior School (KICD, 2017). The Competency Based Curriculum is geared towards developing the following seven core competencies in learners: Communication and Collaboration, Self-efficacy, Critical Thinking and Problem Solving, Creativity and Imagination, Citizenship, Digital Literacy, and Learning to learn.

Learner assessment gives evidence of how curriculum instruction was undertaken. A well-structured assessment should provide credible, reliable, continuous and high-quality information about the performance of students that the school teachers, administrators and the government can use to make informative decisions on the relevance of the curriculum content and the quality of instruction with an aim of making amendments or improvements (RIDE 2013). The assessment system should be well understood with clear grade levels, grades standards and expectations, and grade span expectations; which should apply across all the learners of the same grade level in the school or the country. The teachers should therefore have the requisite knowledge, competencies and skills to assess the learners objectively and fairly (RIDE 2013). The teachers instructs the learners and then assesses the same learners on curriculum content taught.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The Competency Based Curriculum is relatively new in Kenya and is being implemented in both public and private schools in Kenya. Private schools in Kenya have been given freedom to run the teaching and learning of the new Competency Based Curriculum with minimum supervision from both Ministry of Education yet they majorly operate as business enterprises. The implementation of the Competency Based Curriculum has been beset with challenges including ill-preparedness of teachers in instructional methods and learner assessments yet are the key stakeholders in the implementation of any curriculum reforms in schools.

The Kenya Institute of Curriculum Development affirms the centrality and role of Learner assessment by noting that it is a very important component of the teaching and learning process. Through assessment, we are able to evaluate the effectiveness of the implementation of the CBC process. The competency based curriculum introduces a paradigm shift in the assessment of learners. The teacher should demonstrate a mastery of the subject skills and content while the learner should equally demonstrate the application of the knowledge and skills. This therefore requires new methods of assessing learners that are aligned with the requirements of the Competency Based Curriculum. This study therefore sought to establish how the teacher's mode of learner assessment influences the implementation of the Competency Based Curriculum in private primary schools in Kirinyaga Central Sub-County, in Kenya.

1.3 Objective of the Study

The objective of the study was to establish the influence of the teacher's mode of assessing learners on the implementation of Competency Based Curriculum in private primary schools in Kirinyaga Central Sub-County, Kenya.

1.4 Research Question

How does the teacher's mode of assessing learners influence the implementation of Competency Based Curriculum in private primary schools in Kirinyaga Central Sub-County?

1.5 Scope of the Study

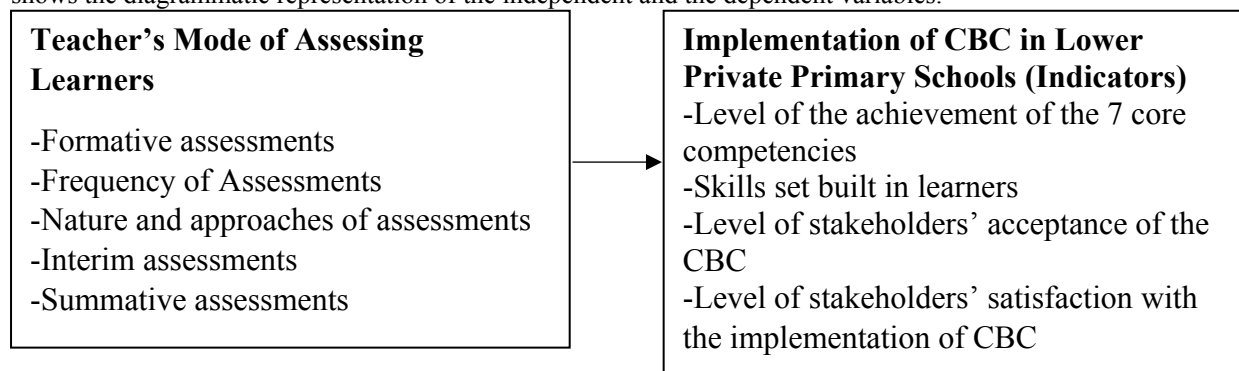
The study was conducted in private primary schools in Kirinyaga Central Sub-County, Kenya. The respondents were limited to the teachers handling learners in lower primary school (Grade One to Grade Three) and the head teachers of those respective schools.

1.6 Theoretical Framework

The study was underpinned by the Curriculum Implementation Theory which was originally formulated by Gross (1971) but revised by Rogers (1981). The theory postulates three conditional factors that are important for the success of the implementation of any new curriculum or educational programme: the competence and ability of the teacher, the clarity of the implementer, and the support from the management (Gross, 1971; Tom 1981). The teacher, who in this case is the core implementer should be very competent by being knowledgeable of the changes of the innovation or the new curriculum. The teachers should have a positive attitude towards the new curriculum and be equally innovative in terms of its implementation by adopting the new learner assessment methods. The teacher is expected to be well versed with new ways and approaches for learner assessment in order to ascertain the effectiveness and efficacy of the implementation of any new curriculum. According to Omollo, Odongo and Raburu (2016), a teacher who is not aware of the changes in the instructional and assessment approaches of the new curriculum will not be competent enough to implement it. However, the competence of the teacher can be enhanced through capacity building in new content areas and teaching and assessment approaches.

1.7 Conceptual Framework

A conceptual framework is the graphical presentation of the relationship between the study variables. Figure 1 shows the diagrammatic representation of the independent and the dependent variables.



II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Learner assessment is the variety of different methods that allow students to demonstrate evidence of learning and can range from observations, student writing samples, performance tasks, to large-scale standardized tests (Rhode Island Department of Education (RIDE) 2013). Learner assessments are important because they help gather information on the evidence of learning for different stakeholders in the education sector, key among them being the learners themselves, parents, schools and the government.

Rhode Island Department of Education (2013) identifies three types of assessments which can be used in a school set up: formative, interim and summative assessments. Formative assessments are used by the teacher to gather information during the learning process so as to make adjustments accordingly. These can be seen as the daily class exercises, assignments and additional homework. Interim assessments occur on a scheduled basis during a break in the instructional flow and are used to test whether specific short term goals have been achieved. These are the topical or weekly tests administered to learners. Summative assessments are the formal assessments given at the end of the term, academic year or course. They can either be internally or externally tested. Summative assessments are less frequent but cover a wide scope of content (RIDE 2013).

According to Irmeli (2018), the Finnish education system, which is ranked as the best education system in the world emphasizes on four pillars of assessment: formative assessment, assessment as learning takes place, learner self-assessment and peer assessment. Through this mode of learning, learners set their goals for learning, then assess the results of their work basing on a set of assessment criteria. Sturgis and Casey (2018) opines that CBC expects teachers to assess the learners frequently using such methods as projects, portfolios, peer-assessment, self-assessment, classroom and field observations, learner interviews and oral presentations. The CBC focuses more on competencies and less on content and it should create a balance between formative and summative evaluation unlike the current 8-4-4 system of education which recognizes summative evaluation only.

Empirical studies carried out in Tanzania by Paulo (2014) and Lukindo (2016), established that despite Tanzania adopting CBC, some primary school teachers were not using the recommended assessment tools and methods yet they had been taught in teacher training colleges. The teachers were still using the traditional learner assessment criteria which resulted in learners not attaining the expected skills and competencies hence defeating the goal and essence of the introduction of CBC in schools. Another study conducted by Komba and Mwindaji (2015) in Tanzania to explore whether teachers fully understood how to conduct formative assessment of learners found out that 50% of the teachers could not effectively assess learners especially on the classroom activities. The study recommended that there should be a continuous in-service training of the teachers in order to equip them with the relevant knowledge and skills on how to assess learners.

A study carried out by Andiemba, (2020) in Kapsaret Sub County, in Kenya among the primary school learners with special needs on the teacher competencies in evaluation of CBC found out that majority of the teachers were not adequately prepared on how to assess learners with special needs in line with the CBC. This was caused by a lack of full understanding of the formative assessment to be used for learners with special needs. As a consequence, learners have not fully acquired the competencies and skill-set needed as per the expectations of CBC. However, this study was only conducted in public schools leaving out the private schools which are equally implementing the CBC to learners. Therefore, there is a gap as far as assessing the efficacy of the implementation of CBC in private schools in Kenya yet they conduct the teaching and learning of the curriculum.

III. Research Methodology

3.1: Research Design

This study adopted a descriptive study design. Cooper and Shindler, (2003) opine that descriptive design can be used when determining how variables of a study influence each other. This research design was appropriate because it enabled the researcher to gather both quantitative and qualitative data on how teachers' mode of learner assessment influences the implementation of the Competency Based Curriculum in Kirinyaga Central Sub-County, Kenya.

3.2: Target Population and Sample Size

The study target population were the teachers in the private primary schools handling lower primary section and the head teachers of those schools. Lower primary implies learners from Grade One to Grade Three. The total target population of the study were the head teachers of private primary schools, teachers and the Sub-County Director of Education. The study sampled 169 respondents using simple random and census sampling techniques.

3.3 Research Instruments

This study employed the questionnaire as the primary instrument for data collection from the teachers and the head teachers. The questionnaire contained both open-ended and closed-ended question items with a variety of alternative answers for the respondents to choose from. The closed-ended question items were graded on Likert scale. The study also interviewed the Sub-County Director of Education because this was a key informant who supervises the implementation of the Competency Based Curriculum in the entire sub-county in both public and private schools.

3.4 Validity and Reliability of the Research Instrument

Validity of a research instrument is the extent to which such an instrument accurately measures what it is expected to measure (Cresswell 2009). In order to ensure the validity of the research instruments, the question items were evaluated and appraised by the experts in the field of curriculum design and implementation and adjustments made to ensure that the question items truly covered and represented the domain of indicators under study.

Reliability of the research instruments is the extent to which the research items produce consistent results after repeated trials (Cresswell, 2009). In order to test the reliability of the research instrument, the researcher employed test-retest method by administering the questionnaire twice to a sample of twenty respondents from the neighbouring Mwea East Sub-County within an interval of two weeks. The results of the two set of tests were then computed and correlated using the Pearsons Product Moment Correlation Coefficient model (r) to test the strength of the test-retest reliability coefficient which produced a value of 0.732, which is an acceptable and good measure of reliability coefficient.

3.5 Data Analysis Procedures

This study collected both qualitative data and quantitative data. Qualitative data which was collected through interviews and from the open-ended questions was described into themes and presented in content narrative summaries through holistic description of the objective of the study. Quantitative data, which will be collected from the closed-ended items in the questionnaire, was coded and entered into the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) version 27 tool and then analyzed into descriptive and correlations using Pearson's Product Moment Correlation Coefficient analysis.

IV. Findings

4.1 Demographic Information of Respondents

The main respondents of this study were the teachers in private primary handling the learners in the lower primary school, from Grade One to Grade Three. The section analyzes their responses extracted from the research instruments. The findings of the demographics revealed that majority of the respondents were female teachers (68%) while the male teachers were 32% as shown in figure 2.

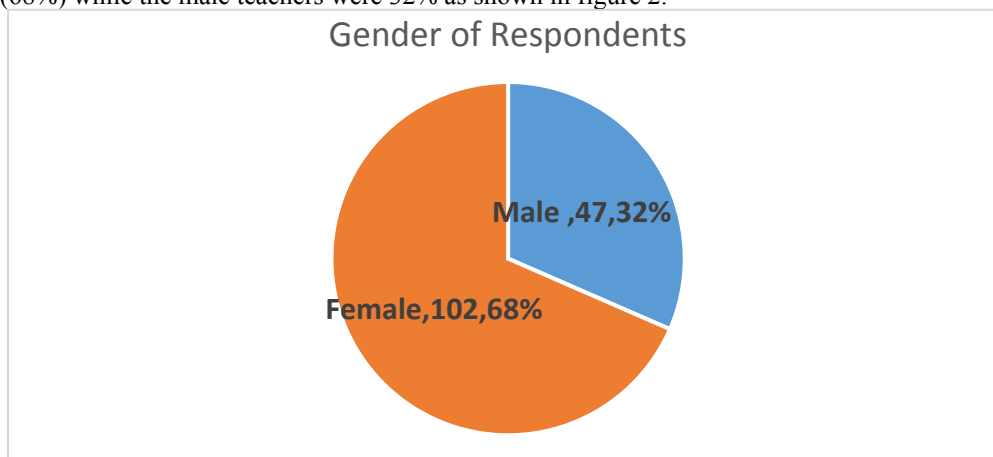


Figure 2: Gender of Respondents.

Figure 2 shows that the number of female teachers is more than double that of the male teachers. This implied that there is a gender imbalance in terms of teachers employed by private primary schools especially at the lower primary level, between Grades One and Three. Most schools prefer female teachers over their male counterparts. In terms of age, majority of the respondents were in the age bracket of between 20-39 years. It was further noted that majority of the respondents had three-four years of experience in teaching the competency based curriculum. In terms of education level of teachers, majority of the respondents either had a certificate or diploma in education. A few of the respondents had graduate and postgraduate qualifications.

4.2 Education Level of Respondents

The study sought to establish the education attained by the respondents who were the head teachers and the teachers. The findings are captured in Table 1.

Table 1: The education level of respondents

Education Level	Frequency	Percent
Certificate	65	43.7
Diploma	54	36.2
Degree	21	14.1
Postgraduate	9	6.0
Total	149	100.0

The findings from Table 1 indicate that the majority of the respondents have a certificate level of training in teaching (43.7%) followed by those with a diploma level qualification (36.2%). The respondents with a degree were 14.1% while those with postgraduate training were 6.0%. A certificate level training is the nationally accepted first level for all teachers handling learners in primary schools in Kenya. This information shows that the teachers have the requisite formal training for the implementation of any curriculum with over a half of them having attained higher training of diploma in education and above.

4.3 The Influence of the Teacher's Mode of Assessing Learners on the Implementation of Competency Based Curriculum in Private Primary Schools.

Learner assessments are important because they help gather information on the evidence of learning through various methods such as observations, student writing samples, performance tasks and large-scale standardized

tests (Rhode Island Department of Education). The common modes of learner assessments by teachers were: daily class exercises, individualized learner ability assessment, group assessments and project portfolio assessments. The teachers stated that they mostly use class exercises and group assessments. However, a few teachers also use individualized learner ability assessment and project portfolio assessments. It was further noted that most schools administer scheduled tests either termly or monthly, with few schools administering tests fortnightly.

4.3.1 Document Analysis of Pupils' Exercise Books

The researcher collected a number of pupils' exercise books to examine and analyze the nature, mode and contents of the assessments items administered to learners by teachers. The import of document analysis was to give a qualitative evaluation of the proficiency levels of the learners in the various subject areas in Competency Based Curriculum framework for Early Years Education (EYE) (Grades 1-3). These subject areas are: Mathematical Activities, English Language Activities, Hygiene and Nutrition Activities, Environmental Activities, Religious Education Activities, Movement and Creative Activities and ICT as an enabler integrated across all subjects (KICD, 2017). The researcher took photos of the following learning activities: language activities, mathematical activities, environmental activities and religious activities. Some of the expected learning outcomes for EYE are that the learner should be able to: communicate appropriately using verbal and/or non-verbal modes in a variety of contexts; demonstrate basic literacy and numeracy skills for learning; explore the immediate environment for learning and enjoyment; practice hygiene, nutrition, sanitation, safety and nutrition to promote health and well-being; and apply digital literacy skills for learning and enjoyment (KICD, 2017).

This evaluation by the researcher was based on the achievement level of the learner in the class daily tasks and assessments as marked by the subject teacher. The sample used for exemplification in this study was taken from a Grade Two learner. In the Language Activities, the learner sampled exhibited high level of proficiency, for example, he was able to change words from small letters to capital letters and vice versa and also form the past tense of four-letter verbs. The learner scored all the seven questions correctly. This assessment was done on 16th July, 2025. In Mathematics Activities under the sub-strand of multiplication of single digit numbers, assessed on 23rd May, 2025, the learner exceeded expectations by scoring all the six question items given. In the next day's assessment of Mathematics Activities given by the teacher, the learner scored three out of four question items, which is also an indicator of the learner meeting assessment expectations

Another assessment was done on 23rd of July 2025 in the Religious Education Activities. The results show that the learner met expectations by scoring correctly five out of six questions. Similar results were scored in the Environmental Activities subject in which the learner scored correctly, five out of six question items. In another assessment on Environmental Activities administered on 12th June 2025, the learner exceeded expectations by scoring all the six questions items given. From the document analysis extracted from a few Grade Two learners' exercise books, it was quite evident that the learners sampled had a good proficiency in the subject areas.

4.3.2 The Extent to which the Teacher's Mode of Learner Assessment Influences the Implementation of CBC in Private Primary schools

The study sought to establish the extent to which the teacher's mode of learner assessment influences the implementation of CBC in private primary schools in Kirinyaga Central Sub-County. The respondents who comprised of the head teachers and the teachers were asked to rate their responses on a Likert Scale of four grades as described as follows: a very great extent, a great extent, a moderate extent and low extent. The findings are captured in Figure 4.2.

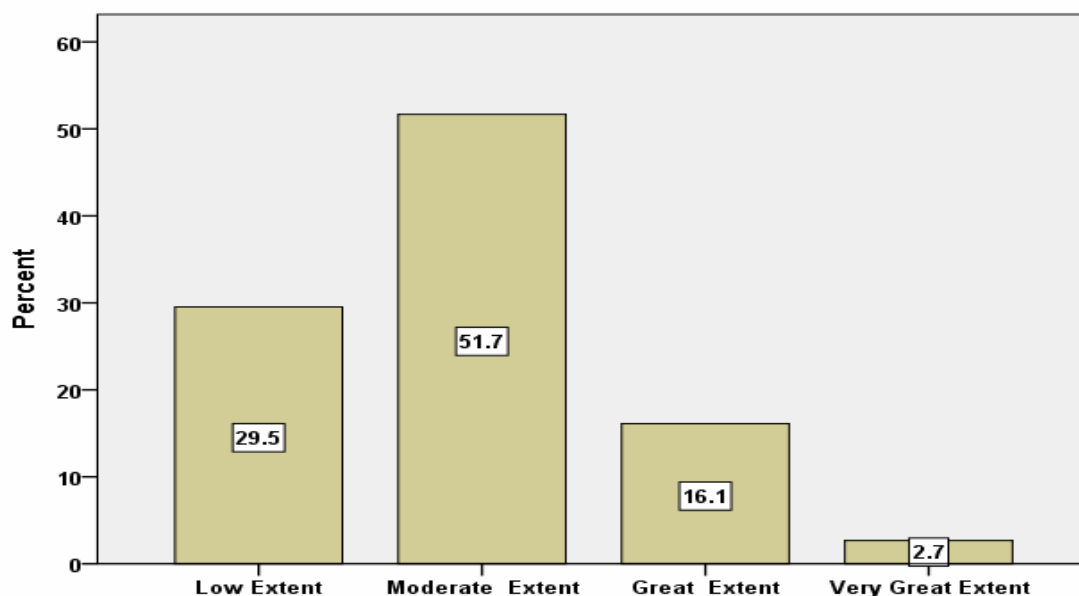


Figure 2: The extent to which the teacher's mode of learner assessment influences the implementation of CBC

The findings show that 44 (29.5%) of the respondents stated that the teacher's mode of assessment influences the implementation of CBC to very great extent while those who thought it influenced to a great extent were 77 (51.7%). The respondents who felt it influenced to a moderate extent were 16.1% while those who felt it influenced to a low extent were 10 (2.7%). Generally, the teacher's mode of learner assessment has a big significance on the implementation of CBC in schools. Teachers should use learner assessments methods that are efficacious so that learner assessment is objective, insightful and effective.

The study further established that most teachers were using the prescribed rubrics in assessing learners. A rubric is a scoring or grading guide that articulates how to assess a learner. The Competency Based Curriculum assessment criteria is structured as follows: Exceed Expectations (80-100%); Meet Expectations (65-79%); Approaching Expectations (50-64%) and Below Expectations (0-49%). It was noted that most teachers do not use class projects and simulations as one of the modes of assessing learners. This is attributable to the fact that projects and simulations can be a bit expensive and most schools do not have the requisite infrastructure and equipment such as laboratories and workshops for such projects and simulations.

4.3.3 Correlations Analysis between the Variables

The study computed a Pearson's Correlation analysis between the independent variable (teacher's mode of learner assessment) and the dependent variable (Implementation of CBC in private primary schools).

The value for the Pearson's correlation moment analysis for the two variables at 95% confidence level (2-tailed test) was 0.783 implying that there is a strong positive relationship between teacher's mode of learner assessment and the implementation of CBC in private primary schools in Kirinyaga Central Sub-County. This implies that teachers should employ the acceptable rubrics in assessing of learners' level of achievements in the CBC competency areas. The study concludes that there is significant positive relationship between the teacher's mode of learner assessment and the implementation of the Competency Based Curriculum in schools in Kenya.

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