

# Implementing the Revised Primary School Curriculum in Tanzania: Evidence from National Monitoring and Evaluation of Standard One and Three Teachers

Godson S. Lema

*Tanzania Institute of Education (TIE), Dar Es Salaam*

[nsindo.usiri@gmail.com](mailto:nsindo.usiri@gmail.com)

## Abstract

*This study examines the early implementation of the revised curriculum in Standard One and Three based on the Revised Primary Education Curriculum that was introduced by the Government of Tanzania introduced in 2023 as part of comprehensive education reforms aimed at promoting competency-based and learner-centred education aligned with societal and labour-market needs. Using the national monitoring and evaluation data collected by the Tanzania Institute of Education, a mixed-method research design was employed, drawing on quantitative survey data from 622 primary school teachers across all regions of Tanzania Mainland. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics, while qualitative data were thematically analysed. Findings indicate high levels of teacher commitment, widespread adoption of participatory and learner-centred pedagogical approaches, and generally positive perceptions of curriculum relevance and the effectiveness of teacher training. Most teachers reported adequate access to core curriculum documents, syllabi, and textbooks. However, several implementation challenges persist, including overcrowded classrooms, uneven distribution of supplementary learning materials, limited ICT infrastructure particularly in rural schools and difficulties in managing learner-centred approaches in large classes. The study concludes that although the revised primary education curriculum is pedagogically sound and positively received by teachers, its long-term effectiveness depends on sustained investment in educational infrastructure, teacher continuous professional development, ICT enhancement, and equitable distribution of learning resources. Policy-relevant recommendations are offered to strengthen curriculum implementation and improve learning outcomes nationwide.*

**Keywords:** *Curriculum implementation, Primary education, Competency-based curriculum, Teacher preparedness and Learner-centred pedagogy and Teacher continuous professional development*

## Introduction

In the context of accelerating globalisation, rapid technological advancement, changing labour market demands, and evolving societal expectations, curriculum reform has become a central and recurring feature of educational policy across the world (Waks, 2003; Yin, 2013). Education systems are increasingly expected to prepare learners with competencies that extend beyond mastery of subject content to include critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, digital literacy, problem-solving, and lifelong learning skills. Consequently, governments and education stakeholders continue to redesign curricula to ensure that schooling remains responsive to contemporary social, economic, political, and technological transformations. Curriculum reform is therefore widely recognised as an essential mechanism for enhancing educational quality, promoting equity, and strengthening national competitiveness in the global knowledge economy.

Across diverse regions, including North America, South America, Europe, East Asia, the Middle East, and sub-Saharan Africa, curriculum reforms have been implemented with varying objectives and approaches. While the specific priorities differ across countries, many reforms share common aspirations of improving learning outcomes, modernising pedagogical practices, integrating information and communication technologies (ICT), promoting inclusive education, and aligning education with national development agendas (Yeung & Lam, 2007; Altinyelken, 2010). These reforms increasingly advocate learner-centred pedagogies, competency-based curricula, formative assessment, and contextualised learning experiences that enable learners to apply knowledge in solving real-life problems. As a result, curriculum reform has evolved from simply revising subject content to transforming the entire teaching and learning process.

Despite these ambitious goals, evidence from many countries indicates that successful curriculum reform depends not only on the quality of curriculum design but also on the effectiveness of its implementation. Research has consistently shown that implementation challenges such as inadequate teacher preparation, limited instructional resources, insufficient funding, overcrowded classrooms, weak institutional support, and limited stakeholder engagement often undermine the intended outcomes of curriculum reforms (Fullan, 2007; Altinyelken, 2010). Teachers, as the principal agents of curriculum implementation, play a critical role in translating curriculum intentions into classroom practice. Their knowledge, attitudes, pedagogical competencies, and

access to continuous professional development significantly influence whether curriculum innovations achieve their intended educational outcomes.

In sub-Saharan Africa, curriculum reform has become a strategic response to concerns about the quality and relevance of education in addressing the continent's socio-economic development priorities. Many countries have shifted from knowledge-based curricula towards competency-based education that equips learners with practical skills, entrepreneurial competencies, digital literacy, environmental awareness, and civic responsibility. These reforms are intended to improve employability, promote innovation, reduce learning inequalities, and contribute to sustainable national development. However, implementation has often been constrained by shortages of qualified teachers, inadequate teaching and learning materials, limited infrastructure, and weak monitoring and evaluation systems, creating disparities between policy intentions and classroom realities.

Tanzania has similarly undertaken several curriculum reforms since independence to respond to changing national priorities and international educational developments. The most recent reform resulted in the introduction of the Improved Primary Education Curriculum (2023), which represents a significant transition from a predominantly content-based curriculum to a competency-based and learner-centred approach. The revised curriculum seeks to develop learners who are creative, innovative, independent thinkers capable of solving problems, communicating effectively, collaborating with others, and applying acquired knowledge and skills in everyday life. It also integrates cross-cutting issues such as environmental conservation, health education, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, gender equality, and inclusive education to ensure that learning remains relevant to both national aspirations and global challenges.

The implementation of the revised primary school curriculum commenced nationally in 2024 with Standard One and Standard Three, following the curriculum review completed in 2023. The rollout was accompanied by several government interventions, including nationwide teacher orientation and professional development programmes, revision and distribution of textbooks and teachers' guides, procurement of teaching and learning materials, infrastructure improvement initiatives, and public awareness campaigns. These implementation efforts were intended to facilitate a

smooth transition to the new curriculum while ensuring that teachers and schools possessed the necessary capacity to adopt learner-centred instructional approaches.

Although these implementation initiatives represent substantial government investment in educational improvement, there remains limited empirical evidence regarding how effectively the revised curriculum is being implemented at the classroom level. Questions persist concerning teachers' preparedness, the adequacy of instructional resources, the suitability of assessment practices, classroom experiences, learner engagement, and the extent to which the intended competencies are being developed among pupils. Understanding these implementation experiences is essential for informing policy decisions, strengthening support mechanisms, and ensuring that the curriculum achieves its intended educational objectives.

This paper therefore examines the implementation of Tanzania's Improved Primary Education Curriculum (2023) in Standard One and Standard Three classrooms. Specifically, it evaluates the effectiveness of curriculum implementation, identifies the challenges experienced by teachers and schools, and assesses the early outcomes associated with the revised curriculum. The findings provide evidence-based insights that can guide policymakers, curriculum developers, teacher education institutions, school leaders, and other education stakeholders in strengthening curriculum implementation and improving the quality of primary education in Tanzania.

## **Objectives of the Study**

The general objective of this study was to examine the implementation of the improved primary education curriculum (2023) in standard one and three classrooms in Tanzania. Specifically, the study assessed;

- 1) To assess the effectiveness of implementing the Improved Primary Education Curriculum (2023) in Standard One and Three classrooms in Tanzania.
- 2) To identify the challenges encountered by teachers and schools in implementing the Improved Primary Education Curriculum (2023).

- 3) To examine the early educational outcomes of implementing the Improved Primary Education Curriculum (2023) in terms of learner competency development, classroom teaching and learning practices, and learner engagement.

## **Review of Literature**

### ***Effectiveness of Implementing Curriculum in Standard One and Standard Three Classrooms***

Curriculum implementation is widely regarded as the process through which planned educational objectives are translated into actual classroom practice. According to Fullan (2007), the success of any curriculum reform depends less on the quality of the curriculum document itself than on how effectively it is implemented by teachers within schools. Effective implementation involves teachers understanding curriculum objectives, applying appropriate learner-centred pedagogies, utilizing suitable instructional resources, and conducting assessments that align with the intended learning outcomes. Consequently, evaluating curriculum effectiveness requires examining whether the intended instructional changes are being realized in classroom practice.

Globally, curriculum reforms have increasingly shifted from content-based approaches toward competency-based education (CBE), reflecting the growing demand for learners equipped with practical skills, critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and problem-solving abilities (UNESCO, 2021). Countries such as Finland, Singapore, Rwanda, and Kenya have adopted competency-based curricula aimed at improving learner outcomes and preparing graduates for the knowledge economy. Studies from these countries indicate that curriculum effectiveness is strongly associated with teacher competence, instructional leadership, adequate teaching resources, and continuous professional development (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2021).

In sub-Saharan Africa, competency-based curriculum implementation has produced mixed results. Rwanda's curriculum reform demonstrated improvements in learner participation and classroom interaction where teachers received sufficient pedagogical support and instructional materials (Nzabalirwa, 2020). Similarly, Kenya's Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) has encouraged learner-centred teaching and continuous assessment but has also revealed substantial

implementation challenges, including inadequate teacher preparedness, shortages of learning materials, and limited parental understanding of the reforms (Ngware et al., 2022). These findings suggest that curriculum effectiveness depends on the interaction between curriculum design, teacher capacity, school resources, and institutional support.

In Tanzania, curriculum reforms have historically sought to align education with national development priorities and global educational trends. The Improved Primary Education Curriculum (2023) represents a significant departure from traditional content-oriented teaching by emphasizing competency acquisition, learner-centred instruction, inclusive education, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, environmental sustainability, and continuous assessment. The revised curriculum was introduced nationally in 2024, initially targeting Standard One and Standard Three, following nationwide teacher orientation programmes, curriculum dissemination, and distribution of revised textbooks and teachers' guides (Ministry of Education, Science and Technology [MoEST], 2023).

Although implementation is still in its early stages, emerging reports suggest encouraging progress in teachers' adoption of learner-centred approaches and increased classroom interaction. However, implementation effectiveness appears to vary considerably across schools due to differences in teacher preparedness, instructional supervision, availability of teaching materials, classroom conditions, and access to professional support (Tanzania Institute of Education [TIE], 2024). Since empirical studies evaluating classroom implementation remain limited, there is a need for systematic assessment of how effectively the revised curriculum is being translated into classroom practice in Standard One and Standard Three.

### ***Challenges Encountered by Teachers and Schools in Implementing Primary Education Curriculum***

Curriculum implementation literature consistently identifies implementation challenges as major determinants of curriculum success. Fullan (2007) argues that educational reforms frequently fail because insufficient attention is given to implementation processes rather than curriculum design. Teachers often experience difficulties adapting to new pedagogical approaches, assessment

systems, instructional technologies, and classroom management strategies required by curriculum reforms.

One of the most frequently reported implementation challenges globally is inadequate teacher preparation. Research indicates that many teachers receive short-term orientation programmes that introduce curriculum changes without providing sufficient opportunities to master new pedagogical competencies (Darling-Hammond et al., 2020). Effective competency-based instruction requires teachers to facilitate inquiry-based learning, collaborative learning, project-based activities, differentiated instruction, and authentic assessment. Without sustained professional development, many teachers continue using traditional teacher-centred instructional methods despite curriculum reforms.

Resource constraints also constitute significant barriers to curriculum implementation. UNESCO (2021) reports that shortages of textbooks, teaching aids, laboratory equipment, digital technologies, and classroom infrastructure continue to undermine educational reforms in many developing countries. Large class sizes further limit teachers' ability to implement learner-centred instructional approaches that require individualized attention and continuous assessment.

Evidence from African countries implementing competency-based curricula illustrates similar challenges. Studies conducted in Kenya found that teachers struggled with continuous assessment procedures, excessive workload, inadequate instructional materials, overcrowded classrooms, and limited stakeholder awareness of curriculum reforms (Ngware et al., 2022). Rwanda similarly experienced challenges related to insufficient instructional resources, language transition issues, and inadequate teacher support during the early phases of curriculum implementation (Nzabairwa, 2020).

In Tanzania, early implementation reports indicate several challenges affecting the Improved Primary Education Curriculum (2023). These include limited availability of revised textbooks and teachers' guides in some schools, inadequate classroom furniture, shortages of instructional materials, insufficient digital infrastructure, overcrowded classrooms, and variations in teachers' understanding of competency-based instructional methods (TIE, 2024). Teachers have also reported increased workload associated with lesson preparation, learner-centred activities, and

competency-based continuous assessment. Rural schools appear to experience greater implementation difficulties due to resource limitations and inadequate access to professional support compared to urban schools.

School leadership has also been identified as a critical factor influencing curriculum implementation. Effective instructional leadership promotes teacher collaboration, monitoring of classroom practices, resource mobilization, and continuous professional learning (Hallinger, 2020). Conversely, weak school leadership may reduce teachers' motivation and limit institutional capacity to support curriculum reforms. Therefore, successful implementation requires coordinated efforts among teachers, school leaders, education officers, curriculum developers, parents, and policymakers.

### ***Educational Outcomes of the Education Curriculum***

Curriculum reforms ultimately seek to improve learner outcomes by enhancing the quality of teaching and learning. Competency-based curricula particularly aim to develop learners' abilities to apply knowledge, solve real-world problems, think critically, collaborate effectively, communicate confidently, and demonstrate creativity (UNESCO, 2021). Unlike traditional curricula that emphasize content memorization, competency-based education prioritizes meaningful learning experiences and authentic performance.

Research conducted in countries implementing competency-based education indicates positive outcomes where implementation is adequately supported. OECD (2023) reports that learner-centred instructional approaches improve learner motivation, classroom participation, collaborative learning, and higher-order thinking skills. Similarly, studies in Singapore and Finland demonstrate that competency-based curricula enhance learner autonomy, creativity, and problem-solving when teachers effectively facilitate active learning environments.

In Africa, early evaluations of competency-based curricula have shown increased learner participation and improved classroom interaction. Kenyan studies indicate that learners are becoming more engaged in classroom discussions, collaborative projects, and practical learning activities under the Competency-Based Curriculum, although learning gains remain uneven due to implementation disparities (Ngware et al., 2022). Rwanda has similarly reported improvements in

learner confidence, communication skills, and collaborative learning among schools that effectively implemented learner-centred pedagogies (Nzabairwa, 2020).

The Tanzanian Improved Primary Education Curriculum (2023) seeks to produce learners who possess foundational literacy and numeracy skills alongside competencies in communication, creativity, digital literacy, problem-solving, entrepreneurship, environmental awareness, and responsible citizenship (MoEST, 2023). The curriculum also promotes continuous assessment to monitor learner progress throughout the learning process rather than relying solely on end-of-cycle examinations.

Preliminary implementation reports suggest that classrooms adopting learner-centred instructional approaches have demonstrated increased learner participation, improved interaction between teachers and pupils, and greater use of collaborative learning activities (TIE, 2024). Teachers have reported that learners show greater curiosity, confidence, and willingness to participate in classroom discussions when interactive instructional methods are employed. However, the extent to which these intended competencies are being consistently developed across schools remains uncertain due to variations in teacher capacity, instructional resources, and school environments.

Current evidence therefore suggests that while the Improved Primary Education Curriculum (2023) has considerable potential to transform primary education in Tanzania, its long-term educational outcomes will largely depend on the quality of implementation. There remains limited empirical evidence regarding classroom-level implementation during the initial years of the reform, particularly in Standard One and Standard Three where implementation began. This study addresses this gap by examining the effectiveness of curriculum implementation, identifying implementation challenges, and assessing the early educational outcomes of the revised curriculum in Tanzanian primary schools.

## Conceptual Framework of the Study

The study was informed by a conceptual framework, the IPO model adapted from McGrath (1964), which visualises three domains: input, process and output, as indicated in Figure 1.

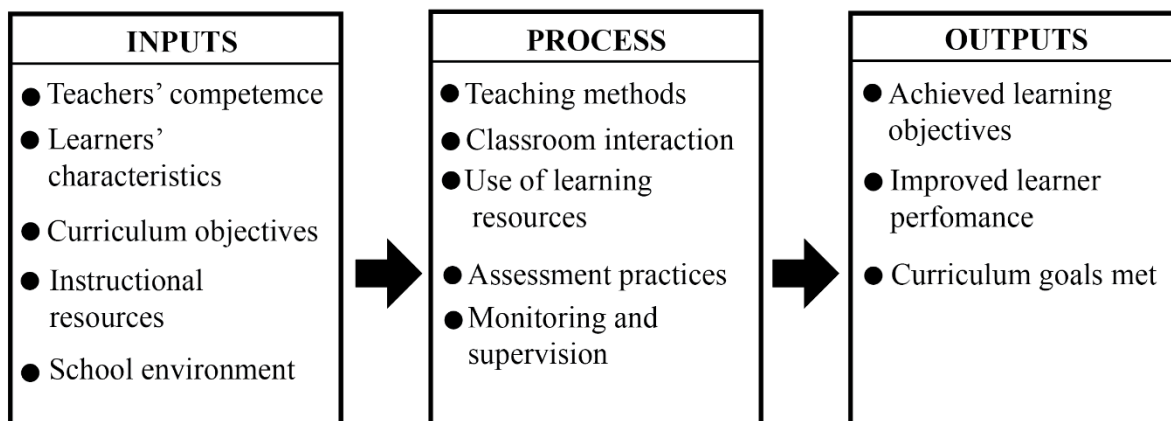


Figure 1: Conceptual Framework on Curriculum Implementation

The input component of this study represents the essential conditions that shape curriculum implementation. It includes teachers' competence, learners' characteristics, curriculum objectives, instructional resources, and the overall school environment. Teachers' professional knowledge, pedagogical skills, and attitudes strongly influence how curriculum intentions are interpreted and delivered in the classroom (Shulman, 1987; Darling-Hammond, 2000). At the same time, learners enter school with diverse backgrounds, abilities, motivations, and learning needs, which affect their engagement and achievement (UNESCO, 2017). Clearly articulated curriculum objectives provide direction for instructional planning and assessment, serving as the foundation of effective curriculum practice (Tyler, 1949). Furthermore, adequate instructional resources and a supportive school environment characterised by strong leadership, positive school culture, and sufficient facilities create conditions that enable both teachers and learners to perform optimally (Fullan, 2007; Orodho, 2013).

The process component describes how these inputs are transformed into meaningful learning experiences through teaching and school practices. It involves teaching methods, classroom interaction, use of learning resources, assessment practices, and monitoring and supervision.

Teachers implement the curriculum through instructional strategies that promote active learning, with learner-centred and interactive approaches enhancing engagement and understanding (Biggs & Tang, 2011). Classroom interaction enables learners to construct knowledge collaboratively, consistent with social constructivist principles (Vygotsky, 1978). Effective use of learning resources supports conceptual understanding and accommodates diverse learning needs (UNESCO, 2015). Assessment practices, particularly formative assessment, guide instructional improvement and enhance learner achievement by providing continuous feedback (Black & Wiliam, 1998). Regular monitoring and supervision by school leaders and education authorities further strengthen curriculum delivery by supporting teachers, ensuring accountability, and maintaining alignment with policy standards (Glatthorn, 2000).

The output component reflects the outcomes of curriculum implementation and is expressed through achieved learning objectives, improved learner performance, and the attainment of curriculum goals. When curriculum inputs and processes are well aligned, learners demonstrate stronger academic achievement, improved competencies, and more positive attitudes toward learning (Darling-Hammond, 2010). The achievement of learning objectives indicates coherence between curriculum planning, teaching practices, and assessment systems (Tyler, 1949). Ultimately, effective curriculum implementation contributes to the realisation of national and institutional educational goals and promotes holistic learner development necessary for lifelong learning and social participation (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2018).

## **Methodology**

This study employed a mixed-methods research design to comprehensively assess the implementation of the Improved Primary Education Curriculum (2023) in Standard One and Standard Three classrooms in Tanzania. The mixed-methods approach combines quantitative and qualitative techniques to generate both measurable evidence and in-depth insights regarding curriculum implementation. The study was conducted in selected public primary schools representing both urban and rural settings to capture variations in implementation experiences. The

target population comprised of Standard One and Standard Three teachers and pupils for classroom observations.

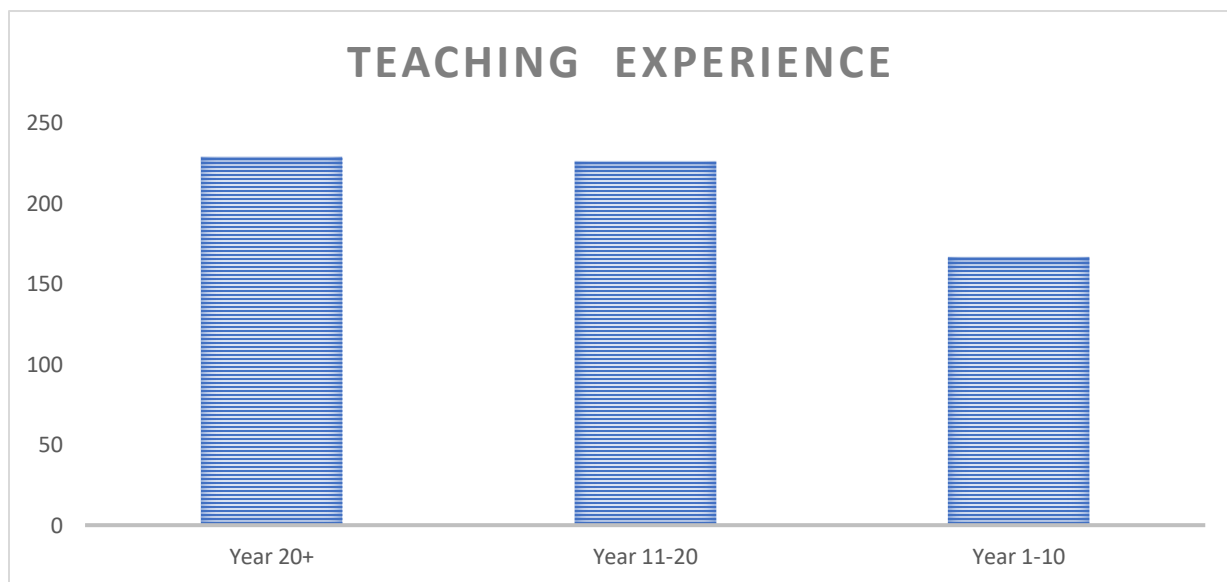
Data were collected through an online questionnaire using KoboToolbox. The study involved 622 primary school teachers, predominantly from public schools (97.91%), teaching Standard One and Three across all regions in Tanzania Mainland. Participants varied in gender, teaching experience, and academic qualifications, providing a representative national sample.

The study measured curriculum implementation effectiveness through indicators such as teacher preparedness, lesson planning, learner-centred teaching, use of competency-based instructional methods, availability and utilization of teaching and learning resources, continuous assessment practices, and curriculum coverage. Implementation challenges were examined across teacher-related, institutional, resource, and learner-related dimensions, including professional competence, workload, instructional materials, school leadership, supervision, classroom infrastructure, funding, and class size. Early educational outcomes were assessed in terms of learner competency development, classroom teaching and learning practices, and learner engagement, focusing on competencies such as communication, collaboration, creativity, critical thinking, problem-solving, active participation, and motivation. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics (frequencies and percentages), while qualitative responses were analysed thematically to identify recurring patterns related to implementation experiences and challenges. The validity of research instruments was established through expert review, while reliability was assessed using Cronbach's alpha coefficient. Ethical principles, including informed consent, voluntary participation, confidentiality, anonymity, and approval from relevant institutional and government authorities, were strictly observed throughout the study.

## Findings and Discussion

### *Teaching experience*

Findings in Figure 2 illustrates teachers' years of work experience. The findings show that 229(36.82%) have more than 20 years of teaching experience, 226(36.33%) have between 11 and 20 years of experience, and 167(26.85%) have between 1 and 10 years of experience. These results indicate that the majority of teachers (approximately 73%) possess more than 10 years of professional experience, suggesting that the curriculum is being implemented by teachers with substantial pedagogical knowledge and practical expertise.

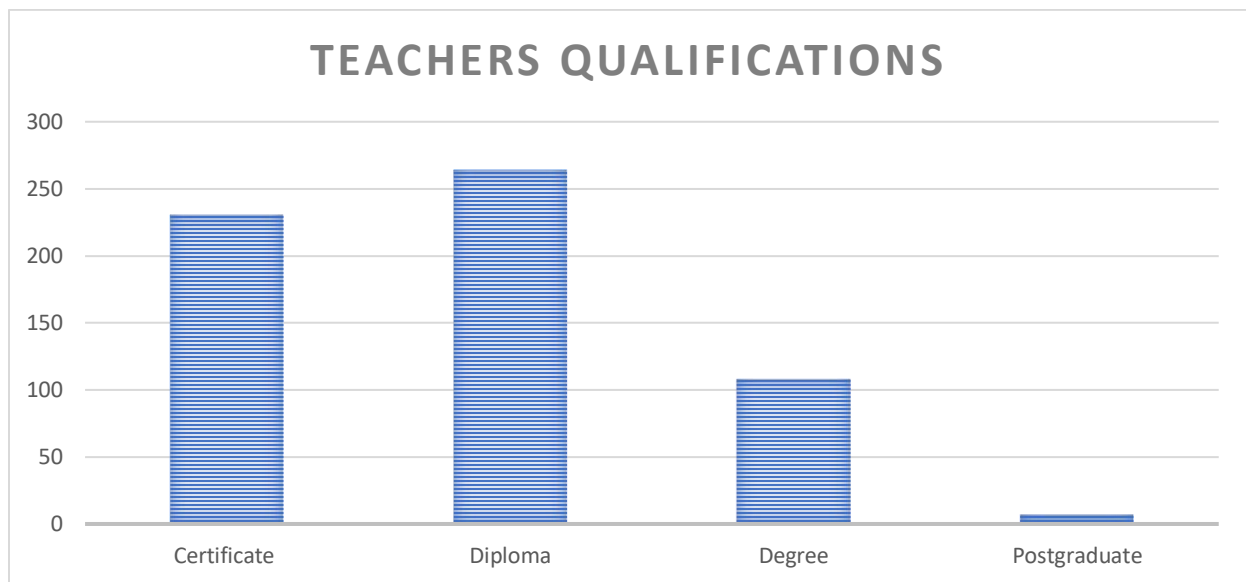


**Figure 2:** *Years of Teaching Experience*

From Figure 2, teachers prolonged engagement with different curricula is crucial for enhancing the effective implementation of the current curriculum. Consequently, the perspectives and feedback generated from this monitoring exercise are valuable for the government in its efforts to strengthen and improve the national education system.

### ***Professional Qualifications***

Figure 3 illustrates the distribution of participants' academic qualifications. The majority of teachers hold a diploma (43.41%) or a certificate (37.78%), followed by those with a bachelor's degree (17.68%). Only a very small proportion of primary school teachers possess a master's degree or higher qualifications, accounting for 1.12% of the respondents.

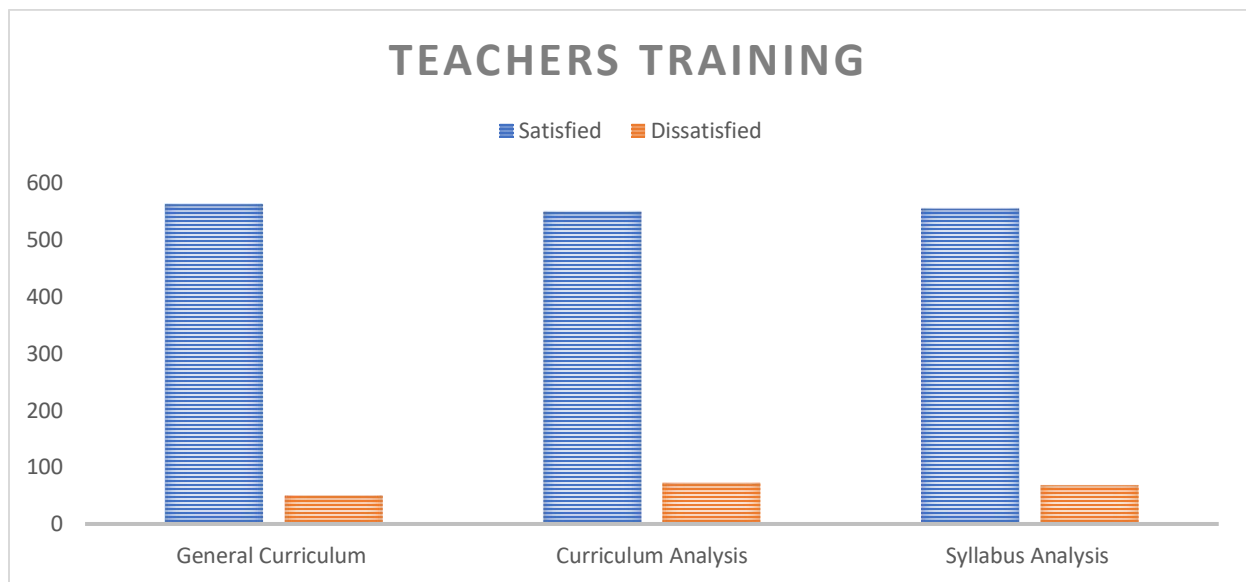


**Figure 3:** *Teachers' Qualifications*

These findings indicate that most teachers have mid-level academic qualifications, while the representation of teachers with advanced degrees remains limited. This situation underscores the need to strengthen opportunities for higher education and advanced professional training for teachers in order to increase the number of highly qualified professionals. Expanding access to advanced qualifications is likely to enhance pedagogical practices, improve the overall quality of education, and support effective implementation of an improved curriculum, thereby benefiting students and the education system as a whole.

### ***Orientation of Curriculum***

Figure 4 indicates that general curriculum training was positively received by most teachers, with 562 (90.35%) expressing satisfaction, suggesting high perceived effectiveness. However, 50 (9.66%) were dissatisfied, indicating the need to examine underlying factors. Similarly, curriculum analysis training was well received, as 549 (88.26%) of teachers were satisfied, reflecting its usefulness in understanding the revised curriculum.

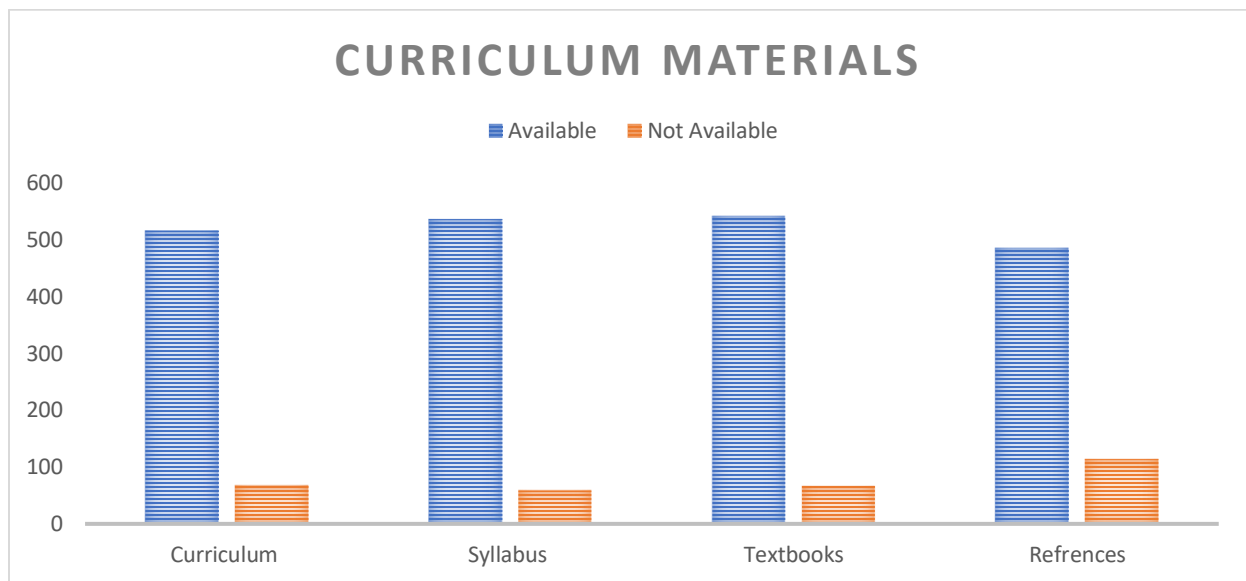


Nonetheless, 73 (11.74%) were dissatisfied. On the same vein, training on syllabus analysis showed high levels of satisfaction, with 554 (89.07%) of teachers expressing approval. Despite this, 68 (10.93%) were dissatisfied, highlighting areas for further improvement.

### ***Availability of Curriculum Support Materials***

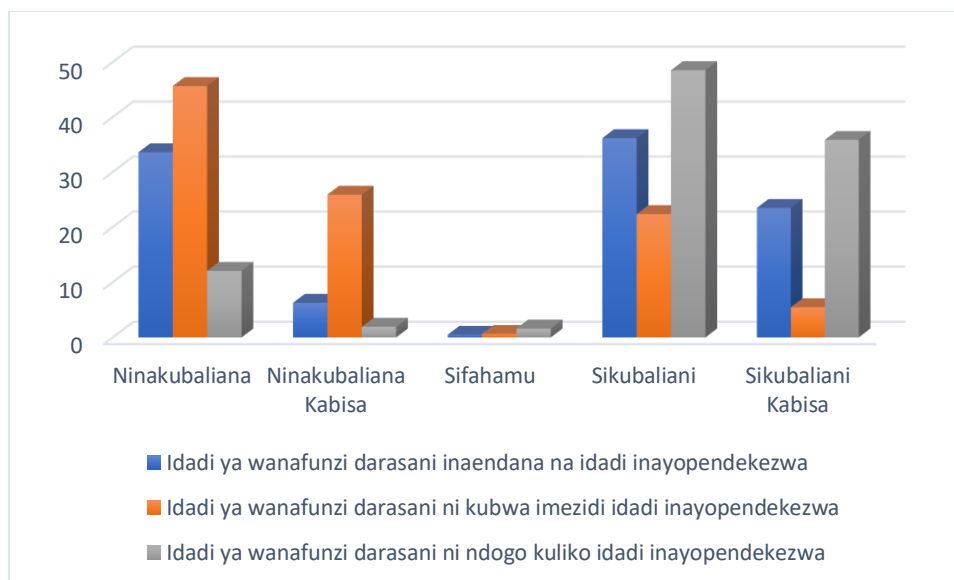
Figure 5 presents the availability of instructional materials, most teachers reported satisfactory access to the curriculum (84.73%), syllabi (87.94%), and textbooks (88.91%) in schools, indicating generally adequate provision. However, a notable minority reported uncertainty or lack of access, particularly to the curriculum (11.09%) and syllabi (9.65%), suggesting gaps in distribution. Access to supplementary books was comparatively lower, with 79.58% reporting availability and

18.65% indicating insufficiency, highlighting the need to strengthen the equitable distribution of learning resources.



### ***Classroom size***

Figure 6 shows that 371 (59.64%) of teachers perceived class sizes to be larger than the recommended standard, while 248 (39.87%) considered them acceptable and 3 (0.43%) were uncertain. These findings indicate that overcrowded classrooms remain a concern, with potential negative implications for teaching effectiveness and the learning environment.



The findings indicate strong teacher commitment and generally positive attitudes toward learner-centred pedagogy; however, several implementation challenges persist. These include difficulties in managing participatory teaching methods in overcrowded classrooms, limited ICT infrastructure—particularly in rural schools—and inconsistent parental and community engagement across regions (UNESCO, 2020; World Bank, 2021). Additionally, concerns were raised that certain aspects of the curriculum require further contextualization to align more closely with local realities, which is essential for enhancing relevance and effective learning outcomes (MoEST, 2021; Vavrus & Bartlett, 2019).

## Discussion and Recommendations

Based on the findings of this study, it is concluded that Tanzania’s revised curriculum is conceptually robust and well-received by teachers. High adoption of participatory methods reflects successful initial training efforts. However, implementation challenges particularly class size, ICT access, and uneven resource distribution mirror challenges identified in similar reforms across Africa. The gap between curriculum intentions and classroom realities underscores the importance of systemic support beyond policy formulation.

It is further concluded that the Improved Primary Education Curriculum has made promising early progress in transforming classroom practices and aligning education with societal needs. Nevertheless, sustainability and effectiveness depend on addressing structural constraints such as

overcrowding, teacher shortages, and ICT limitations. Without these supports, the curriculum risks underachieving its transformative potential.

Based on the conclusions, the following recommendations are suggested in order to address the identified challenges, there is a need for increased investment in educational infrastructure through expanded classroom construction and teacher recruitment to reduce overcrowding, alongside the institutionalization of continuous professional development via regular in-service training and mentorship programmes. Efforts should also focus on enhancing ICT by improving school connectivity and providing adequate digital devices, particularly in rural areas, while ensuring equitable distribution of textbooks and supplementary learning materials. Furthermore, strengthening collaboration among schools, parents, communities, and NGOs is essential for effective stakeholder engagement, and periodic curriculum review should be undertaken to ensure that content remains relevant to labour-market demands and local community needs.

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