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RESEARCH ARTICLE

School Heads' Readiness to Implement the 2023 Competency-Based Curriculum in Tanzania: Evidence from a National Survey

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ABSTRACT

This study examined school heads' readiness to implement Tanzania's 2023 Competency-Based Curriculum and determined whether readiness varied across selected demographic, professional, and institutional characteristics. Guided by Organizational Readiness for Change Theory, the study employed an analytical cross-sectional survey design and analysed 14,648 valid responses from public and private primary school heads nationwide who had participated in the national curriculum bridging training. Study data were collected through a structured electronic questionnaire. Descriptive statistics, independent-samples t-tests, one-way ANOVA, and multiple linear regression were subsequently used for analysis. The five-item readiness scale demonstrated acceptable reliability (Cronbach's $\alpha = .742$). Overall, school heads reported high readiness ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 0.30$), particularly in translating curriculum objectives into classroom practice and involving teachers in monitoring curriculum implementation, while readiness to use communities of learning for bridging training was comparatively lower. Gender and leadership experience were not significantly associated with readiness, whereas school ownership and educational qualification showed statistically significant but small differences. The regression model was significant but explained only 0.4% of readiness variance, indicating very limited overall practical influence of the examined characteristics. The study concludes that readiness for curriculum implementation depends substantially less on school heads' background characteristics than on sustained professional learning and organisational capacity. It recommends institutionalising continuous professional development, professional learning communities, curriculum leadership support, assessment capacity building, and equitable school-level implementation support tailored to identified professional and institutional needs across public and private primary schools throughout Tanzania Mainland.

Keywords: Competency-Based Curriculum; Curriculum implementation; Organisational readiness; School heads

INTRODUCTION

In the 21st century, the complexity of society has changed the education systems around the world to rethink about the knowledge, skills and competencies they need to equip students for rapidly evolving social, technological and economic realities. Many countries have thus shifted from a traditional content-based curriculum, which mainly focuses on the learning and regurgitation of content, to a Competency-Based Curricula (CBC), which focuses on the ability of the learners to apply content, competencies, values and attitudes within authentic

contexts. CBC reforms aim to develop the personal abilities and skills of students as critical thinkers, creators, communicators, collaborators, problem solvers and lifelong learners, which are believed to be needed for sustainable development and competitiveness in the global marketplace (OECD, 2018; UNESCO, 2024).

The literature from around the world clearly indicates that implementing competency-based curriculum changes can increase learning outcomes for learners, but there are mixed findings about the effects of implementing them. Research in Finland,

Singapore, Canada and New Zealand finds that competency-based improvements have been linked to greater learner engagement, critical thinking and problem-solving when there has been solid policy support, continuous teacher development, strong instructional leadership and harmonised assessment systems (OECD, 2018; Fullan & Quinn, 2016). However, evidence from numerous low- and middle-income countries shows that curriculum reforms often face implementation challenges even with strong policy support.

In the African context, CBC reform is one of the key strategies to enhance the quality of education and provide students with competencies necessary in the twenty-first century. This practice of CBC has been embraced in various countries as a tool for teaching in a learner-centred manner, enabling children to think critically, create, and solve problems, in alignment with the African Union's Continental Education Strategy for Africa (CESA 2016–2025) (African Union, 2016; UNESCO, 2024). At the national level, however, results have varied from country to country in Africa, and implementation has been less than successful in some countries. Research in Kenya and Rwanda has found that strong leadership in instruction, professional growth, and school support positively influences the implementation of the curriculum (Crooy, 2025; Kubwimana & Nzabwirwa, 2025). However, insufficient teacher preparation, insufficient instructional materials and poor assessment systems are recurring challenges in implementation, found in Uganda, Zambia, and Zimbabwe (Olema et al, 2021; Mazambani & Tapfumaneyi, 2024; Nsamy, 2025). The results in this case study are paradoxical: the introduction of new curricula does not always lead to their successful implementation, but curricula only work when education systems have the leadership and organisational capacity to support their implementation. These implementation experiences across Africa provide an important context for understanding Tanzania's recent curriculum reform and the conditions required for its effective implementation.

The recent reform in Tanzania's education system seeks to enhance the quality of education by shifting the focus towards learner-centred pedagogy, skills-based learning, and the development of competencies to equip learners for the twenty-first century (MoEST 2023a; MoEST 2023b). The 2023 CBC differs from past reforms in that it calls for a

significant shift in how schools are taught and assessed, as well as how they are supervised and led. Therefore, the success of the implementation is not only based on teachers' pedagogical competence, but also on school heads' readiness to provide pedagogical leadership, coordinate the process of professional learning, supervise the process of implementing the curriculum, and establish supportive school learning environments to support the process of educational change.

The importance of competency-based education has been consistently recognised in existing studies in Tanzania, with mixed results on its implementation. For instance, while Nkya (2021) noted that teachers liked the ideas of competency-based pedagogy, they were limited by the factors of insufficient teacher training, lack of instructional materials, and large classes in their implementation of the approach in the classroom. Likewise, Mpate (2025) reported that despite curriculum reforms, teachers continued to use traditional pedagogies, and Chuwa et al. (2025) revealed that the lack of assessment literacy was one of the key challenges in the process of implementing competency-based assessment. While these studies vary in their focus on the specific challenges they highlight, they all show that curriculum implementation cannot be achieved with curriculum reform alone but must be supported by a certain level of professional capacity, institutional support and effective leadership.

Despite these significant contributions, the existing evidence has two major limitations. First, most studies have focused primarily on teachers' preparedness and classroom practices, giving comparatively little attention to school heads who are responsible for leading, coordinating, and monitoring curriculum implementation at the school level (Nkya, 2021; Ndimbo & Kessy, 2023). Second, many studies have employed qualitative case study designs or surveys conducted in a few districts, limiting the generalisability of their findings and providing little evidence on leadership readiness at the national level (Nyoni, 2023; Shukuru et al., 2026). Consequently, there is limited empirical evidence on whether school heads across Tanzania are adequately prepared to implement the 2023 Competency-Based Curriculum and whether their readiness varies according to key demographic and professional characteristics, particularly gender, educational qualification, leadership experience and school ownership. This evidence gaps limits understanding of whether

curriculum implementation support should be differentiated according to the personal and institutional contexts in which school heads operate. To address this gap, the present study aimed to examine school heads' readiness to implement the 2023 Competency-Based Curriculum in Tanzania using evidence from a national survey. Specifically, the study sought to (i) examine school heads' preparedness for implementing the 2023 curriculum reforms and (ii) determine the demographic factors associated with school heads' readiness for curriculum implementation. By providing nationally representative evidence, the study contributes to the growing body of literature on instructional leadership and curriculum reform and offers empirical insights to inform policy decisions, leadership development programmes, and strategies for strengthening the implementation of competency-based education in Tanzania.

LITERATURE REVIEW

The readiness of school heads to implement a competency-based curriculum is defined as their understanding, commitment, leadership capacities and institutional support in implementing a competency-based curriculum in their schools and classrooms. In the modern literature, readiness is discussed in a multi-dimensional fashion, since the desire for change cannot be taken as a sign of effective change. It also involves expertise in curriculum expectations, confidence in initiating pedagogical change, capability in facilitating teachers and ready organisational resources. Good leadership of education requires clear expectations, a focus on learning, collaboration and building the capabilities of educators and other school actors, says the UNESCO Global Education Monitoring Report 2024/5. Thus, readiness could be determined by how leaders interact with the circumstances in which they will have to make a change, not only by training attendance or positive attitudes (UNESCO, 2024). School heads are especially significant as the key components of the association between the curriculum policy formulated at the central level and its implementation at the school level. They are charged with clarifying curriculum mandates, ensuring their understanding of the priorities of reform, arranging professional development at school, monitoring teaching and learning, organising resources, and overcoming opposition to new teaching methods. Recent research suggests that principals who focus on improving instruction,

teaming teachers together, and providing support are better able to lead curriculum change than principals whose work is limited to day-to-day issues of administration. For instance, Ralebese et al. (2025) showed that principals' instructional leadership affected the perception and implementation of curriculum reform in primary schools. The small qualitative sample that was used in this study, however, gave rich contextual information but not the ability to measure the extent to which these practices of leadership occurred. A later study using a mixed-methods approach confirmed these findings by reviewing instructional leadership in various data formats, but also showed that intentions are not always consistently enacted as curriculum support practices.

Preparing for the implementation of a competency-based curriculum is more challenging than preparedness for a curriculum that is used regularly. Changes based on competencies involve school leaders in promoting learner-centred teaching, hands-on learning, ongoing evaluation, individualised teaching, and teachers' joint professional growth. The effectiveness of the implementation of competency-based curriculum, on the other hand, has been hampered in some parts of Eastern and Southern Africa due to weak implementation, lack of adequate professional preparation, unclear assessment practices, lack of instructional materials and limited support at the school level. These are signs that leaders might have an overall view of the purposes of CBC but are not well equipped to oversee its pedagogical and assessment needs. So, it is not a sign of readiness if participation in curriculum orientation does not lead to the development of practical leadership capabilities and is not accompanied by ongoing professional development, implementation support, and sufficient institutional resources.

This interpretation is especially applicable to the 2023 Competency-Based Curriculum that calls for a significant shift in teaching, assessment, professional development and school organisation for school leaders in Tanzania. The evidence from Tanzania recently shows that school leadership is crucial but is not implemented uniformly. Kasuga (2025) found that there remained a gap between the curriculum and the classroom, whereas Mlenge et al. (2025) demonstrated that headteachers in Bagamoyo used instructional supervision, resource mobilisation and teacher-support strategies to support the implementation of the CBC. The latter study offers

compelling evidence from the school leaders themselves, but is limited by its small sample size (10 participants) and qualitative design, making it difficult to generalise nationally. All of these studies indicate that having some information on the strategies employed in some schools does not necessarily imply that the school leader is ready; this should be evaluated systematically in various geographical, professional and demographic settings. For the present study, therefore, the readiness of school heads towards implementation of Tanzania's 2023 Competency Based Curriculum was defined as the extent of their knowledge, confidence, training, leadership ability, and perceived institutional support for the implementation of Tanzania's 2023 Competency Based Curriculum.

For this study, school heads' readiness refers to their perceived preparedness to support implementation of the 2023 Competency-Based Curriculum, reflected in their capacity to facilitate professional learning, understand assessment and evaluation, monitor curriculum implementation, involve teachers in implementation processes, and translate curriculum objectives into classroom practice.

Demographic Factors Associated with School Heads' Readiness

Demographic and professional characteristics may shape school leaders' preparedness for educational reform by influencing their exposure to leadership responsibilities, professional knowledge and the institutional conditions within which they implement change. Although organisational readiness is primarily linked with change commitment and change efficacy (Weiner, 2009), individual and contextual characteristics may contribute to variations in how leaders interpret and respond to reform demands. In this study, particular attention is given to gender, leadership experience, educational qualification, and school ownership because these conditions give relevant personal, professional and institutional contexts within which school heads lead curriculum implementation. Existing evidence, however, remains inconsistent regarding the extent to which such characteristics explain differences in educational leadership readiness (UNESCO, 2024; OECD, 2023).

Among the selected characteristics, gender has received considerable attention in educational leadership research, although findings remain inconclusive. Some studies indicate that women may

encounter institutional and socio-cultural barriers that constrain access to leadership development opportunities, whereas other evidence suggests that leadership effectiveness is not inherently determined by gender when school leaders receive comparable professional preparation and institutional support (UNESCO, 2024; Guilbert et al 2023). Such contrasting evidence suggests that gender differences in curriculum readiness cannot be assumed and therefore require empirical examination within specific educational contexts. Examining gender in the Tanzanian context is particularly important for establishing whether male and female school heads demonstrate comparable preparedness to lead the implementation of the 2023 curriculum.

Professional characteristics, particularly educational qualification and leadership experience, may also contribute to school heads' readiness for curriculum reform. Higher educational qualifications may provide leaders with broader professional knowledge and analytical capacities, while leadership experience can strengthen familiarity with instructional supervision, decision-making and school organisation (UNESCO, 2024). However, these relationships are not necessarily linear. Kasuga (2025), for example, cautions that qualifications and accumulated experience may not automatically translate into readiness when leaders have limited exposure to competency-based education. Similarly, professional development may strengthen curriculum leadership across qualification and experience groups by providing reform-specific knowledge and practical competencies. This suggests that educational qualification and leadership experience should be empirically examined rather than assumed to determine readiness.

School ownership represents an important institutional characteristic because public and private schools may operate under different governance, resource and managerial arrangements. Institutional conditions can influence leaders' capacity to organise resources, support teachers and respond to curriculum reform requirements (UNESCO, 2024). In Tanzania, public schools operate more directly within government administrative and policy structures, whereas private schools may have different levels of managerial autonomy and resource flexibility (MoEST, 2023). Nevertheless, greater institutional flexibility does not necessarily imply stronger curriculum readiness because implementation also

depends on leadership competence, professional support and commitment to reform. It is therefore important to establish empirically whether readiness differs between school heads working in public and private schools.

Overall, the reviewed literature suggests that school heads' readiness may vary according to personal, professional and institutional characteristics, but the evidence remains inconsistent and context-dependent. Moreover, much of the existing research has relied on localised case studies and qualitative approaches, limiting understanding of whether such differences occur across a large population of school leaders. In Tanzania, particularly, limited national-level evidence exists on whether school heads' readiness to implement the 2023 Competency-Based Curriculum differs according to gender, educational qualification, leadership experience and school ownership. The present study addresses this gap by examining these characteristics using national survey data, thereby providing evidence for determining whether leadership-development and curriculum-support strategies need to account for differences among school heads.

Theoretical Framework

Curriculum reform is an organisational change process that requires schools to adapt instructional practices, assessment and leadership roles. Its successful implementation depends not only on the reform itself but also on the capacity of school leaders to guide instructional change, support teachers and create enabling organisational conditions (UNESCO, 2024). Therefore, examining Tanzania's 2023 Competency-Based Curriculum requires a theoretical perspective that explains school heads' readiness to lead and support change. This study was guided by Weiner's (2009) Organisational Readiness for Change (ORC) Theory. The theory explains that successful organisational change depends on the extent to which organisational members are collectively willing and confident in their ability to implement the proposed change. It conceptualises readiness through two central constructs: change commitment, referring to members shared resolve to pursue the change, and change efficacy, referring to their shared belief in their collective capability to implement it successfully. Change efficacy is shaped by perceptions of task demands, resource availability and situational factors affecting implementation (Weiner, 2009). The ORC Theory is aligning to this study because implementing Tanzania's 2023

Competency-Based Curriculum requires school heads to have not only curriculum knowledge but also instructional leadership competencies, adequate organisational support and commitment to change. The theory also acknowledges that individual characteristics and institutional contexts jointly influence readiness, making it suitable for examining both school heads' preparedness and the demographic factors linked with their readiness.

Although educational change theory and instructional and transformational leadership perspectives provide useful explanations of how leaders facilitate and sustain school improvement, the present study focuses specifically on whether school heads are ready to implement curriculum change rather than on the leadership styles they employ during implementation. ORC Theory was therefore considered more directly aligned with the study because it places readiness for change at the centre of analysis and explains readiness in relation to commitment, perceived capability and implementation conditions (Weiner, 2009). This perspective is particularly relevant to Tanzania's 2023 Competency-Based Curriculum, which requires school heads to understand the reform, provide instructional leadership, coordinate professional learning and create organisational conditions that support implementation.

METHODOLOGY

This study employed cross-sectional survey design using a quantitative approach to examine school heads' readiness to implement Tanzania's 2023 CBC and determine whether readiness varied according to selected demographic and professional characteristics. The design was appropriate because it enabled the assessment of readiness and associations among variables at a single point in time without manipulating the study environment (Creswell & Creswell, 2023). The target population comprised public and private primary school heads who participated in the national bridging training programme on the implementation of the 2023 curriculum. Census sampling was employed, where 14,648 of school heads who completed filling online structured questionnaire regarded as a valid respondent across all regions of Tanzania. The instrument included Likert-scale items assessing key dimensions of readiness, including curriculum understanding, instructional leadership, monitoring and evaluation, teacher support and implementation strategies. The questionnaire was developed by

curriculum developers from Tanzania Institute of Education and become reviewed by educational experts to establish content validity and alignment with the 2023 curriculum. The five-item readiness scale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .742$), exceeding the commonly accepted threshold of .70 (Taber, 2018).

Quantitative data were analysed using IBM SPSS Statistics (Version 29). Frequencies, percentages, means and standard deviations were used to describe respondents' characteristics and readiness levels, addressing the first study objective. A composite readiness score was generated from the five readiness items, with higher scores representing greater readiness. To address the second objective, independent-samples t-tests examined differences in readiness by gender and school ownership, while one-way analysis of variance (ANOVA) examined differences by educational qualification and leadership experience. Multiple linear regression was subsequently conducted to assess the independent contribution of these characteristics to readiness while statistically controlling for the other variables, with significance determined at $p < .05$. Ethical principles

were observed the process. Participation in the survey was part of training programme, respondents were informed of its purpose, and no personally identifying information was included in the analysis. Data were securely stored, treated confidentially, used exclusively for research purposes and reported only in aggregate form.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

School Heads' Readiness to Implement the 2023 Competency-Based Curriculum

The first objective sought to examine school heads' preparedness for implementing the 2023 curriculum reforms in Tanzania. This objective was intended to establish the extent to which school heads possessed the understanding, leadership practices and implementation capacities required to translate the curriculum reform into school-level practice. The five closed-ended readiness items were coded on a common four-point scale (1-4), with higher scores representing stronger readiness. The five-item readiness scale demonstrated acceptable internal consistency (Cronbach's $\alpha = .742$).

Table 2: School Heads' Readiness to Implement the 2023 Curriculum.

Readiness indicator	N	Mean	SD
Ability to undertake bridging training effectively through communities of learning	14,648	3.28	0.59
Understanding of important aspects of assessment and evaluation	14,648	3.82	0.39
Understanding of criteria for evaluating curriculum implementation effectiveness	14,648	3.79	0.41
Involving teachers in monitoring and evaluating curriculum implementation	14,648	3.86	0.35
Having strategies to ensure curriculum objectives are implemented in classroom teaching and learning	14,648	3.89	0.32
Overall readiness	14,648	3.73	0.3

Table 2 indicates that the surveyed school heads demonstrated a high level of readiness to implement the 2023 Competency-Based Curriculum ($M = 3.73$, $SD = 0.30$), with generally consistent responses. Readiness was highest in translating curriculum objectives into classroom practices ($M = 3.89$) and involving teachers in monitoring and evaluation ($M = 3.86$). In contrast, using communities of learning for bridging training recorded the lowest mean ($M = 3.28$),

indicating comparatively less preparedness in this area. Overall, 97.6% of respondents were classified as highly ready and 2.4% as moderately ready. These findings indicate that school heads who participated in the national bridging training perceived themselves as largely prepared to support curriculum implementation, although the results should not be generalised to all school heads in Tanzania.

The study found a generally high level of readiness among school heads who participated in the national bridging training, with an overall mean of 3.73. Particularly strong areas were the ability to translate curriculum objectives into classroom practices and to involve teachers in monitoring and evaluating curriculum implementation. This finding supports the wider international literature that regards school leadership as central to successful curriculum reform. UNESCO's 2024/5 Global Education Monitoring Report emphasises that effective educational leadership requires leaders to focus on learning, foster collaboration, set clear expectations and develop the capacity of others. Similarly, Fullan and Quinn (2016) argue that curriculum reform is more likely to become embedded when school leaders build coherence between policy expectations, professional learning and classroom practice. The high readiness observed in this study therefore suggests that the bridging training may have strengthened school heads' perceived capacity to perform these school-level coordination and instructional leadership functions.

However, the Tanzanian findings appear more positive than evidence reported in several African contexts, where curriculum reforms have frequently been constrained by limited preparation and implementation capacity. For example, Kubai et al. (2024), studying secondary school principals in Kenya, found that principals' preparedness for competency-based education depended on leadership practices, staffing stability and school-level initiatives rather than merely the introduction of the curriculum itself. Similarly, comparative evidence from Tanzania, Kenya and Uganda indicates that CBC implementation remains uneven because institutional support, assessment practices, learning resources and professional preparation are not consistently aligned with reform requirements (Rarieya et al., 2026). The stronger readiness reported in the present study may partly reflect the fact that the respondents had already participated in a national bridging programme specifically intended to prepare them for the 2023 curriculum. Therefore, the finding should be interpreted as evidence of post-training perceived preparedness, rather than proof that implementation conditions are uniformly strong in all schools.

Within Tanzania, the findings are broadly consistent with Mlenge et al. (2025), who found that head teachers in Bagamoyo supported CBC implementation through instructional supervision,

teacher support and resource mobilisation. Their qualitative evidence demonstrated that school heads can actively translate reform requirements into school-level practices, which is reflected in the present study by the particularly high scores for implementation strategies and teacher involvement. Nevertheless, the present national evidence extends Mlenge et al.'s small qualitative study because it demonstrates that similar leadership orientations are reported across a much larger population of school heads rather than within only ten schools. This strengthens the argument that school leadership constitutes an important implementation mechanism for the 2023 curriculum.

At the same time, the high perceived readiness contrasts with studies documenting continuing implementation problems in Tanzanian classrooms. Nkya (2021), for instance, reported positive perceptions of competency-based education among teachers but found limited practical capacity because of inadequate in-service training, large classes and insufficient learning resources. More recently, Kasuga (2025) identified continuing problems involving teacher readiness, unequal resources and assessment practices, while Rarieya et al. (2026) reported inconsistent formative assessment and institutional support across Tanzania and neighbouring countries. The contrast is important: school heads may feel prepared to lead curriculum implementation, yet implementation may still be constrained by conditions beyond their individual competence. Thus, leadership readiness should be understood as a necessary but insufficient condition for successful CBC implementation.

This interpretation is further supported by Dadi Ali's (2024) study in Zanzibar, which found that school leaders needed practical instructional-supervision materials to support teachers effectively in implementing CBC. In the present study, the relatively lower mean for using communities of learning for bridging training reinforces this concern. Although still rated positively, this dimension showed comparatively weaker readiness and greater variation than the other readiness indicators. This suggests that school heads may be more confident in immediate supervisory and implementation tasks than in sustaining collaborative professional learning among teachers. Consequently, the bridging programme should not end with initial orientation; mechanisms such as school-based professional learning communities, coaching, peer learning and continuous instructional support are

likely to be needed if initial readiness is to translate into sustained implementation.

Overall, the first objective therefore indicates that national bridging training has potentially established a strong foundation of perceived leadership readiness among participating school heads. Nevertheless, the findings should not be interpreted to mean that curriculum implementation is already effective. As argued by Weiner's (2009) organisational readiness perspective, willingness and perceived capability must interact with organisational resources and implementation conditions for change to be sustained. The high readiness identified here should therefore be viewed as an important enabling condition whose practical effect will depend on continued professional

development, resources, monitoring and school-level support.

Demographic Factors Associated with School Heads' Readiness

The second objective sought to determine whether school heads' readiness for curriculum implementation was associated with their demographic and professional characteristics. The analysis examined whether readiness varied according to gender, educational qualification, leadership experience and school ownership. Independent-samples t-tests were conducted for gender and school ownership, while one-way ANOVA was applied to educational qualification and leadership experience.

Table 3: Differences in Readiness by Demographic and Professional Characteristics

Variable	Category	n	Mean	SD	Test statistic	p-value
Gender	Female	3,729	3.73	0.29	t = 0.63	0.527
	Male	10,904	3.73	0.3		
School ownership	Public	12,971	3.72	0.3	t = 5.76	<.001
	Private	1,677	3.77	0.29		
Educational qualification	Certificate	1,697	3.7	0.32	F = 8.85	<.001
	Diploma	7,682	3.72	0.3		
	Bachelor's degree	4,898	3.75	0.29		
	Postgraduate	245	3.74	0.3		
	Other	36	3.73	0.27		
Leadership experience	1–2 years	3,728	3.74	0.3	F = 2.38	0.068
	3–4 years	3,175	3.73	0.29		
	5–6 years	2,679	3.73	0.3		
	More than 6 years	5,042	3.72	0.3		

Table 3 shows that gender was not significantly associated with readiness, $t = 0.63$, $p = .527$, with female and male school heads reporting identical mean readiness ($M = 3.73$). Leadership experience was also not significant, $F = 2.38$, $p = .068$, with means ranging only from 3.72 to 3.74. In contrast, school ownership significantly influenced readiness, t

$= 5.76$, $p < .001$, although private-school heads ($M = 3.77$) were only slightly more ready than public-school heads ($M = 3.72$). Educational qualification was also significant, $F = 8.85$, $p < .001$, with bachelor's degree holders recording the highest readiness ($M = 3.75$) and certificate holders the lowest ($M = 3.70$). Overall, ownership and qualification were statistically

significant, but the small mean differences indicate modest practical effects.

Because demographic characteristics may overlap in their influence, multiple linear regression was

conducted to determine which factors independently predicted readiness when the other characteristics were controlled.

Table 4: Multiple Regression Predicting School Heads' Readiness

Predictor	B	SE	t	p
Male gender	0	0.006	0.02	0.988
Private school	0.037	0.008	4.66	<.001
Bachelor's degree	0.019	0.006	3.39	0.001
Certificate	-0.021	0.008	-2.65	0.008
Postgraduate qualification	0.018	0.019	0.94	0.345
Other qualification	-0.006	0.051	-0.11	0.913
3–4 years leadership experience	-0.002	0.007	-0.26	0.795
5–6 years leadership experience	-0.007	0.008	-0.93	0.354
More than 6 years leadership experience	-0.010	0.007	-1.59	0.111

Model: $N = 14,521$; $R^2 = .004$; Adjusted $R^2 = .004$; $F = 6.89$, $p < .001$. Reference categories: female, public school, diploma and 1–2 years of leadership experience

The regression model was statistically significant, $F = 6.89$, $p < .001$, but explained only 0.4% of the variation in readiness ($R^2 = .004$), indicating very limited explanatory power of demographic characteristics. Given the large sample size, statistically significant coefficients should therefore be interpreted alongside their small magnitudes, as statistical significance does not necessarily indicate substantial practical importance. Private-school ownership ($B = 0.037$, $p < .001$) and bachelor's qualification ($B = 0.019$, $p = .001$) positively predicted readiness, while certificate qualification showed a small negative association ($B = -0.021$, $p = .008$). Gender and leadership experience were not significant predictors. Overall, demographic characteristics contributed little to readiness, suggesting that professional development, leadership support, resources and organisational conditions may be more influential.

The second major finding was that school heads' readiness was only weakly associated with their demographic and professional characteristics. Gender and leadership experience were not statistically significant, while educational qualification and school

ownership were significant but produced very small differences. More importantly, the regression model explained only 0.4% of the variance in readiness. This result suggests that readiness is largely shared across different groups of school heads and is more likely to depend on reform-specific preparation and organisational conditions than on personal background characteristics.

The absence of a significant gender difference contrasts somewhat with Hallinger et al.'s (2016) meta-analysis of more than 2,000 principals, which found that female principals were rated slightly higher than male principals in instructional leadership. Shaked et al. (2018) similarly found differences in how male and female principals enacted instructional leadership, particularly in the sources of authority they used and their relationships with teachers. However, those studies examined broader instructional-leadership behaviours rather than preparedness for a specific curriculum reform. The absence of a gender difference in the present study may therefore indicate that a common national bridging programme provided male and female school heads with relatively similar curriculum-specific preparation. In

this context, access to relevant professional learning may be more influential than gender itself.

Educational qualification showed a statistically significant association with readiness, with bachelor's-degree holders recording slightly higher readiness and certificate holders slightly lower readiness. This finding is plausible because higher levels of formal education may strengthen analytical ability, curriculum interpretation and exposure to educational leadership concepts. However, the differences were extremely small, suggesting that formal qualifications alone are not a strong determinant of readiness. This supports the argument advanced in the manuscript and by Kasuga (2025) that accumulated qualifications do not automatically produce competency-based implementation capacity unless leaders also receive reform-specific preparation. Thus, qualification appears to provide some professional advantage, but its contribution is modest compared with the likely importance of direct training and implementation support.

Leadership experience, by contrast, did not significantly differentiate readiness. This finding challenges the assumption that longer service automatically makes school heads more prepared to implement a new curriculum. Experienced leaders may possess stronger organisational knowledge, but the 2023 CBC introduces new expectations related to learner-centred pedagogy, assessment, professional learning and curriculum monitoring. Consequently, years spent in leadership under previous curriculum arrangements may not necessarily provide the competencies required for a newly introduced reform. The finding therefore supports Weiner's (2009) argument that readiness depends on perceived capability for a specific change, rather than on general experience alone. It also reinforces the need to provide curriculum-specific professional development to both newly appointed and experienced school heads.

School ownership significantly differentiated readiness, with private-school heads reporting slightly higher scores than public-school heads. This may reflect differences in managerial flexibility, resource access or the speed with which schools can organise professional support. However, the mean difference was only 0.05, indicating limited practical significance. The finding should therefore not be interpreted as evidence that private schools are substantially more ready than public schools. Instead, it suggests that institutional context may create small differences in the conditions under which school leaders enact curriculum reform. This

interpretation is compatible with Tanzanian evidence showing that resource availability and institutional support remain important constraints on CBC implementation (Nkya, 2021; Kasuga, 2025).

The most important result from the second objective is therefore the very small explanatory power of all demographic and professional variables combined. This finding aligns closely with the Organisational Readiness for Change Theory because readiness is not expected to arise primarily from demographic attributes; rather, it develops from shared commitment, confidence in implementing change and organisational conditions that make implementation feasible (Weiner, 2009). The implication is that policy responses should not over-target school heads according to gender or years of leadership experience. Instead, stronger gains are likely to come from ensuring equitable access to continuous professional development, practical implementation guidance, instructional leadership support and adequate resources across both public and private schools.

Taken together, the findings indicate that Tanzania's national bridging training may have helped create a relatively common level of readiness across different categories of school heads. Yet evidence from Tanzania and the wider East African region shows that readiness must be sustained by ongoing professional learning and institutional support if it is to translate into effective classroom implementation. Therefore, the policy priority should shift from asking which demographic group is ready to examining which professional and organisational conditions enable school heads to convert readiness into sustained implementation of the 2023 CBC.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Conclusion

The study concludes that strengthening school heads' readiness is essential for translating curriculum reform into effective school-level practices and should therefore be viewed as a continuous process requiring sustained professional learning, instructional leadership, and institutional support. Moreover, readiness should not be understood primarily in terms of school heads' demographic and professional backgrounds; rather, greater attention should be directed towards strengthening the professional and organisational conditions that enable all school heads to lead curriculum implementation effectively.

Recommendations

It is recommended that the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology, Tanzania Institute of Education, and education authorities institutionalise continuous professional development for school heads beyond initial bridging training, with emphasis on professional learning communities, curriculum leadership, assessment, and sustained school-level implementation support. Such support should be equally accessible across demographic, professional, and institutional backgrounds while being tailored to identified professional and school-level needs.

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