

**Beyond the Fashion of 'Local': Critiquing the Primacy of Local Materials in Uganda's Competence-Based Curriculum for Secondary Schools**

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**Abstract**

**Background:** Uganda's competence-based curriculum mandates prioritization of locally available materials in secondary education, premised on assumptions of enhanced contextual relevance, reduced costs, and improved accessibility. However, the pedagogical effectiveness and equity implications of this policy remain critically unexamined.

**Objective:** This study critically examined the implications of prioritizing local materials in Uganda's CBC implementation, specifically analyzing teachers' experiences and challenges, assessing relationships between local materials usage and competency development, and examining effects on educational equity and global preparedness.

**Methods:** A concurrent mixed-methods design was employed across 36 purposively selected secondary schools stratified by location, type, and region. Quantitative data were collected from 450 teachers through structured questionnaires and 1,800 students through competency assessments, analyzed using descriptive statistics, ANOVA, multiple regression, and chi-square tests. Qualitative data from 48 teacher interviews, 12 head teacher interviews, 8 curriculum specialist interviews, 24 student focus groups, and 72 classroom observations were thematically analyzed using NVivo 12, with findings integrated through convergent analysis.

**Results:** Statistically significant differences emerged in student competency scores by school location ( $F=42.73$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $\eta^2=0.046$ ), with urban students ( $M=72.4$ ) substantially outperforming rural students ( $M=61.5$ ) despite rural schools' highest local materials usage intensity (71.3% vs. 45.2% urban). A significant negative relationship existed between local materials usage intensity and competency scores ( $F=18.92$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $\eta^2=0.021$ ). Multiple regression analysis revealed local materials usage as a significant negative predictor of competency ( $\beta=-.18$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) even after controlling for teacher qualifications, school resources, student SES, and digital access, which collectively explained 39.3% of competency variance. Thematic analysis identified six major themes: ambiguity of "local" (89.6% prevalence), resource constraints (95.8%), pedagogical limitations (85.4%), equity concerns (79.2%), pressure to comply (72.9%), and positive adaptations (64.6%). Chi-square analyses revealed significant associations between school characteristics and resource availability, with dramatic disparities in non-local materials access between urban (80.7%) and rural schools (22.7%), and between private (80.0%) and government schools (33.0%).

**Conclusion:** The study challenges foundational assumptions underlying the local materials mandate, revealing that prioritization of local materials is associated with lower competency outcomes and exacerbates rather than ameliorates educational inequities. The policy operates within complex ecological systems where school resources, teacher qualifications, and student socioeconomic status exert stronger influences on competency development than materials' geographical origin. Effective competency development requires balanced integration of local and global resources supported by adequate infrastructure, qualified teachers, and clear implementation guidelines rather than ideologically driven mandates that may perpetuate educational stratification.

**Keywords:** Competence-based curriculum, local materials, educational equity, curriculum implementation

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### **Introduction of the Study**

The adoption of competence-based curriculum (CBC) in Uganda's secondary education system represents a significant paradigm shift from traditional content-based approaches to learner-centered pedagogies that emphasize practical skills, critical thinking, and the application of knowledge in real-world contexts (Katurebe & Nalukwago, 2024; Prosper Mubangizi, 2020). Central to this curriculum reform is the explicit mandate for teachers to prioritize locally available materials and resources in their instructional practices. This emphasis on "local" materials has been championed as a strategy to enhance contextual relevance, reduce dependence on imported educational resources, promote indigenous knowledge systems, and make education more accessible and affordable within resource-constrained environments (Aheisibwe & Barigye, 2023; Mubaraka, 2023). However, while the rhetoric of localization in curriculum implementation appears progressive and culturally responsive on the surface, it warrants critical examination. The uncritical celebration of local materials as inherently superior or more appropriate for Uganda's educational context may obscure deeper pedagogical, epistemological, and practical challenges that could ultimately limit learners' competence development and their preparedness for an increasingly globalized world (Chemutai et al., 2023; Muwanguzi et al., 2023). This study critically interrogates the primacy accorded to local materials in Uganda's CBC for secondary schools, moving beyond the fashionable discourse of localization to examine its actual implications for curriculum implementation, pedagogical quality, learner outcomes, and educational equity. By problematizing rather than romanticizing the local, this research seeks to contribute nuanced perspectives to ongoing debates about curriculum contextualization in postcolonial African education systems.

### **Background of the Study**

Uganda's education system has undergone several curriculum reforms since independence, with the most recent being the introduction of the competence-based curriculum framework that began rolling out in 2020. This reform was informed by global education trends emphasizing 21st-century skills, the need to align education with labor market demands, and critiques of the previous knowledge-based curriculum as producing learners who could memorize content but lacked practical application skills (Ma et al., 2022; Ndomondo et al., 2022). The National Curriculum Development Centre (NCDC), working with various stakeholders, developed the CBC with the explicit goal of producing holistic, competent learners who can apply knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes to solve real-life problems. A distinctive feature of Uganda's CBC is its strong advocacy for the use of locally available materials in teaching and learning across all subject areas. This policy direction draws from broader debates in African education about decolonizing curricula, valuing indigenous knowledge, and making education more culturally relevant and economically sustainable (Charles et al., 2023; VERGUN et al., 2021). The emphasis on local materials is presented as a solution to multiple challenges: the high cost of imported textbooks and equipment, the need to ground learning in learners' immediate environments, the imperative to preserve and transmit local cultural knowledge, and the desire to make learning more concrete and experiential.

However, the concept of "local" in educational discourse is neither neutral nor self-evident. What constitutes local materials, who defines their boundaries, and how they relate to global knowledge systems are contested questions. In Uganda's diverse cultural and geographical landscape, local materials vary significantly across regions, creating potential disparities in resource availability and quality (Jamil et al., 2020; Julius & Isaac Kazaara, 2025). Furthermore, the global knowledge economy, digital revolution, and interconnected nature of contemporary challenges demand that

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learners develop competencies that transcend purely localized contexts. The tension between the local and global in curriculum implementation thus presents complex pedagogical and philosophical questions that have received insufficient critical attention in Uganda's educational research and policy discourse (Franco et al., 2023).

Previous studies on CBC implementation in Uganda and other African contexts have largely focused on teacher preparedness, infrastructure challenges, and general implementation barriers. However, there has been limited critical engagement with the underlying assumptions about local materials—their availability, quality, pedagogical effectiveness, and their relationship to the broader goals of competence development (Putro, 2023; Ssentanda & Wenske, 2023). This gap in the literature necessitates a study that interrogates rather than assumes the value and appropriateness of prioritizing local materials in Uganda's secondary education system.

### **Problem Statement**

While Uganda's competence-based curriculum champions the use of local materials as a cornerstone of effective teaching and learning, this policy directive operates on several unexamined assumptions that may not hold in practice. There is an underlying assumption that local materials are readily available, easily identifiable, pedagogically effective, and inherently more relevant to learners' competence development than non-local alternatives. However, emerging evidence suggests significant challenges in the implementation of this policy (Monica, 2022).

Teachers report difficulties in identifying, accessing, and effectively utilizing appropriate local materials for certain competencies, particularly in subjects requiring specialized equipment or abstract conceptualization. The definition and boundaries of what constitutes "local" remain ambiguous, leading to inconsistent interpretation and application across schools and regions (Su & Zhong, 2022; Vergel et al., 2018). Rural and urban disparities in the availability and variety of local materials may be creating new forms of educational inequality. Furthermore, the emphasis on local materials may inadvertently limit learners' exposure to global knowledge, technologies, and perspectives that are essential for competence in an interconnected world (Fatimah et al., 2023; Pepin et al., 2017).

Critics argue that the primacy accorded to local materials reflects a romanticized and essentialist view of the "local" that may perpetuate educational disadvantage by denying learners in resource-poor contexts access to quality educational materials available elsewhere. There are concerns that this approach may create a two-tiered education system where learners in well-resourced schools access both local and global materials while those in under-resourced schools are confined to whatever limited local materials are available (Julius & Sula, 2025; Monday & Geophrey, 2023; Peterson & Sarah, 2023). Additionally, the pedagogical effectiveness of local materials in developing specific competencies remains largely unevaluated, with the policy appearing to be driven more by ideological and economic considerations than by empirical evidence of learning outcomes (Abulela & Bart, 2021; Richard et al., 2023; Sterpu et al., 2024). Despite these concerns, there has been insufficient critical research examining the assumptions, implementation realities, and actual outcomes of prioritizing local materials in Uganda's CBC. Without such critical examination, educational policy risks being guided by fashionable discourse rather than evidence-based understanding of what actually enhances learner competence. This study therefore addresses the critical gap in understanding the implications—both intended and unintended—of the primacy accorded to local materials in Uganda's secondary school curriculum.

### **Main Objective of the Study**

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To critically examine the implications of prioritizing local materials in the implementation of Uganda's competence-based curriculum for secondary schools, with a view to informing more nuanced and evidence-based approaches to curriculum contextualization.

### **Specific Objectives**

1. To analyze teachers' interpretations, experiences, and challenges in implementing the local materials mandate within Uganda's competence-based curriculum for secondary schools.
2. To assess the relationship between the use of local materials and the development of specific competencies among secondary school learners in selected subjects across different geographical contexts in Uganda.
3. To examine how the emphasis on local materials in Uganda's CBC affects educational equity and learners' preparedness for participation in global knowledge economies.

### **Research Questions**

1. How do secondary school teachers interpret and experience the mandate to prioritize local materials in implementing Uganda's competence-based curriculum, and what challenges do they encounter in this process?
2. What is the relationship between the use of local materials and the development of specific competencies among secondary school learners in selected subjects across different geographical contexts in Uganda?
3. In what ways does the emphasis on local materials in Uganda's competence-based curriculum affect educational equity and learners' preparedness for participation in global knowledge economies?

### **Methods.**

This study employed a concurrent mixed-methods research design to critically examine the implications of prioritizing local materials in Uganda's competence-based curriculum for secondary schools. The study was conducted across 36 purposively selected secondary schools stratified by location (urban, peri-urban, and rural), school type (government-aided and private), and geographical region (Central, Eastern, Northern, and Western Uganda) to ensure diverse contextual representation. Using a power analysis with an alpha level of 0.05 and desired power of 80% to detect a medium effect size (Cohen's  $d = 0.5$ ), the quantitative strand required a minimum sample of 394 participants, which was exceeded with 450 secondary school teachers teaching Sciences, Mathematics, Humanities, and Languages who completed structured questionnaires on their experiences, challenges, and practices regarding local materials usage. Additionally, 1,800 senior three and senior four students (40 per school) participated in competency assessment tests designed to measure critical thinking, problem-solving, and practical application skills in selected subjects. The qualitative strand involved in-depth semi-structured interviews with 48 purposively selected teachers (12 from each region), 12 head teachers, 8 curriculum specialists from the National Curriculum Development Centre, and 24 focus group discussions with students (6-8 students per group) to explore deeper insights into interpretations of "local," implementation challenges, and perceived impacts on learning outcomes. Classroom observations were conducted in 72 lessons (2 per school) using a structured observation protocol to document actual usage patterns of local versus non-local materials and their pedagogical effectiveness.

Quantitative data were analyzed using SPSS version 26, employing descriptive statistics (frequencies, means, and standard deviations), inferential statistics including independent samples t-tests and one-way ANOVA to compare

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competency scores across school types and geographical locations, multiple regression analysis to examine the relationship between local materials usage intensity and student competency outcomes while controlling for confounding variables (teacher qualifications, school resources, student socioeconomic status), and chi-square tests to assess associations between categorical variables such as resource availability and school location (Nelson et al., 2022, 2023). Ethical approval was obtained from Makerere University School of Education Research Ethics Committee, and all participants provided informed consent with assurances of confidentiality, voluntary participation, and the right to withdraw at any stage of the research.

## Results

**Table 1: Comparison of Student Competency Scores by School Location and Local Materials Usage Intensity**

School Location	n	Mean Competency Score (SD)	Local Materials Usage Intensity (%)	t/F-value	p-value	Effect Size ( $\eta^2$ )
<b>By Location</b>				F=42.73	<0.001	0.046
Urban	600	72.4 (12.3)	45.2			
Peri-urban	600	68.1 (13.7)	58.6			
Rural	600	61.5 (15.2)	71.3			
<b>By Usage Intensity</b>				F=18.92	<0.001	0.021
Low usage (0-40%)	540	71.8 (13.1)	28.4			
Medium usage (41-70%)	720	67.3 (14.2)	55.7			
High usage (71-100%)	540	64.2 (14.8)	84.6			
<b>Post-hoc comparisons</b>						
Urban vs Rural				t=11.24	<0.001	d=0.78
Low vs High usage				t=7.89	<0.001	d=0.54

**Note:** Competency scores ranged from 0-100. Post-hoc analyses used Tukey's HSD test. All effects remained significant after Bonferroni correction ( $\alpha=0.017$ ).

The one-way ANOVA revealed statistically significant differences in student competency scores across school locations ( $F(2,1797)=42.73$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $\eta^2=0.046$ ), indicating a medium effect size according to Cohen's conventions. Urban students achieved significantly higher mean competency scores ( $M=72.4$ ,  $SD=12.3$ ) compared to their rural counterparts ( $M=61.5$ ,  $SD=15.2$ ), with post-hoc Tukey HSD tests confirming that all pairwise comparisons between locations were statistically significant at  $p<0.001$ . The effect size for the urban-rural comparison was substantial (Cohen's  $d=0.78$ ), representing approximately a 0.89 standard deviation difference in favor of urban students. Paradoxically, rural schools reported the highest intensity of local materials usage at 71.3%, while urban schools,

despite scoring highest, utilized local materials at only 45.2% intensity. Further ANOVA analysis examining the relationship between local materials usage intensity and competency scores revealed a statistically significant negative association ( $F(2,1797)=18.92$ ,  $p<0.001$ ,  $\eta^2=0.021$ ), whereby students in schools with low local materials usage (0-40%) scored significantly higher ( $M=71.8$ ,  $SD=13.1$ ) than those in high usage schools ( $M=64.2$ ,  $SD=14.8$ ), with a medium effect size ( $d=0.54$ ). The larger standard deviations observed in rural and high-usage contexts ( $SD=15.2$  and  $14.8$  respectively) suggested greater variability in student performance, indicating inconsistent learning outcomes possibly attributable to variations in the quality and pedagogical effectiveness of available local materials.

### Discussion of Findings

These findings presented a critical challenge to the foundational assumption underlying Uganda's CBC policy that prioritizing local materials would enhance competence development among learners. The inverse relationship between local materials usage intensity and student competency scores suggested that the mere availability and use of local materials did not automatically translate into improved learning outcomes; rather, contextual factors such as resource quality, teacher pedagogical skills, and access to complementary learning resources appeared to mediate this relationship. The superior performance of urban students, who paradoxically used fewer local materials, raised important questions about educational equity and whether the emphasis on local materials might inadvertently be perpetuating a two-tiered education system. Urban schools' lower reliance on local materials likely reflected their access to diverse educational resources including textbooks, laboratory equipment, digital tools, and internet connectivity, which collectively contributed to more comprehensive competence development. Conversely, rural schools' heavy dependence on local materials (71.3% usage intensity) appeared to be driven by necessity rather than pedagogical choice, as these schools lacked access to alternative quality learning resources. The statistical significance of these differences, coupled with medium to large effect sizes, indicated that these were not trivial disparities but represented substantive educational inequalities with potential long-term implications for learners' academic trajectories and life opportunities. The greater variability in rural student performance ( $SD=15.2$ ) further suggested that local materials usage in resource-constrained contexts was highly inconsistent in quality and pedagogical application, with some teachers able to leverage available resources effectively while others struggled, leading to uneven learning outcomes even within the same geographical category. These results problematized the romantic notion that local materials were inherently more relevant or effective, revealing instead that their pedagogical value was contingent upon broader educational infrastructure, teacher capacity, and the availability of complementary resources that enabled meaningful integration of local and global knowledge systems.

**Table 2: Multiple Regression Analysis Predicting Student Competency Scores**

Predictor Variables	B	SE	$\beta$	t	p	VIF
(Constant)	45.23	3.17	-	14.27	<0.001	-
Local materials usage intensity	-0.12	0.03	-.18	-4.26	<0.001	1.84
Teacher qualification (postgraduate)	8.42	1.24	.21	6.79	<0.001	1.52
School resources index	0.34	0.05	.28	6.80	<0.001	2.13
Student SES	6.18	0.89	.24	6.94	<0.001	1.97

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Access to digital resources	7.53	1.15	.19	6.55	<0.001	1.68
School location (urban=1)	4.87	1.32	.12	3.69	<0.001	2.24
Teacher experience (years)	0.31	0.09	.09	3.44	0.001	1.43

**Model Summary:**  $R=0.627$ ,  $R^2=0.393$ , Adjusted  $R^2=0.390$ ,  $F(7,1792)=164.52$ ,  $p<0.001$

**Note:** B=unstandardized coefficient; SE=standard error;  $\beta$ =standardized coefficient; VIF=variance inflation factor. Dependent variable: Student competency scores (0-100 scale). SES=socioeconomic status (standardized composite score).

The multiple regression model was statistically significant ( $F(7,1792)=164.52$ ,  $p<0.001$ ) and explained approximately 39.3% of the variance in student competency scores ( $R^2=0.393$ , Adjusted  $R^2=0.390$ ), indicating a substantial proportion of competency variation could be accounted for by the predictor variables included in the model. All seven predictor variables made statistically significant unique contributions to the prediction of competency scores after controlling for the effects of other variables. Most critically, local materials usage intensity emerged as a significant negative predictor ( $\beta=-.18$ ,  $t=-4.26$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), indicating that for every one-unit increase in local materials usage intensity (measured as percentage), student competency scores decreased by 0.12 points when holding all other variables constant. This negative relationship persisted even after controlling for potentially confounding variables such as teacher qualifications, school resources, student socioeconomic status, and access to digital resources. The strongest positive predictors of competency scores were school resources index ( $\beta=.28$ ,  $t=6.80$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), student socioeconomic status ( $\beta=.24$ ,  $t=6.94$ ,  $p<0.001$ ), and teacher qualification at postgraduate level ( $\beta=.21$ ,  $t=6.79$ ,  $p<0.001$ ). All VIF values remained below 2.24, well under the conventional threshold of 10, indicating that multicollinearity was not a concern and that each predictor contributed unique explanatory power to the model. The standardized beta coefficients revealed that when all predictors were considered simultaneously, the school resources index had the strongest impact on competency scores, followed by student SES and teacher qualifications, while local materials usage had a negative though modest effect.

### Discussion of Findings

These regression findings provided robust evidence that challenged the policy assumption underlying Uganda's CBC regarding the primacy of local materials, as increased reliance on local materials was associated with lower student competency outcomes even when accounting for multiple confounding factors. The persistence of the negative relationship between local materials usage and competency scores after controlling for teacher qualifications, school resources, student SES, and digital access suggested that this was not merely a proxy for school poverty or resource scarcity, but rather indicated potential limitations in the pedagogical effectiveness of local materials themselves or in how they were being implemented in practice. The model revealed a complex ecology of factors influencing competence development, with school resources infrastructure, student socioeconomic background, and teacher qualifications emerging as substantially more influential than the type of materials used. This suggested that the policy emphasis on local materials might be misplaced, as competence development appeared to depend more fundamentally on the overall quality of educational inputs—qualified teachers, adequate facilities, supportive learning environments, and access to diverse resources—rather than on the geographical origin or local availability of learning materials. The significant positive effects of teacher postgraduate qualifications ( $\beta=.21$ ) and access to digital resources ( $\beta=.19$ ) underscored the importance of pedagogical expertise and exposure to contemporary knowledge tools in developing

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21st-century competencies, competencies that might be inadequately addressed through exclusive reliance on local materials. The moderate  $R^2$  value of 0.393 indicated that while the model captured important predictors of competency, substantial variance remained unexplained, suggesting other factors such as pedagogical approaches, curriculum implementation fidelity, classroom dynamics, and learner motivation also played important roles. These findings had profound implications for educational equity, as they suggested that policies mandating local materials usage might inadvertently disadvantage students in under-resourced schools who lacked access to the complementary resources (qualified teachers, infrastructure, digital tools) necessary to transform local materials into effective learning experiences, while advantaging students in well-resourced schools who could integrate local materials within a broader repertoire of high-quality educational resources.

**Table 3: Thematic Analysis of Teachers' Experiences Implementing the Local Materials Mandate**

Major Theme	Sub-themes	Representative Quotes	Frequency (n=48)	Prevalence (%)
<b>1. Ambiguity of "Local"</b>	-Unclear definitional boundaries -Regional variations - Tension between traditional and contemporary	"What exactly is local? Is a plastic bottle local because I found it here, or must it be traditionally Ugandan?" (T23) "In Kampala, what is local is very different from my village." (T41)	43	89.6
<b>2. Resource Constraints</b>	- Scarcity in rural areas -Seasonal availability -Quality inconsistency -Time-intensive preparation	"Some competencies require materials we simply don't have here. I cannot teach about circuits with banana fibers." (T15) "By the time I gather and prepare local materials, I've lost teaching time." (T32)	46	95.8
<b>3. Pedagogical Limitations</b>	- Inadequate for abstract concepts -Limited for advanced topics -Safety concerns -Difficulty demonstrating global standards	"How do I teach molecular structure with local materials? Some concepts need proper models." (T08) "My students need to understand international standards, not just what we can make from local items." (T37)	41	85.4
<b>4. Equity Concerns</b>	- Urban-rural disparities - Creating two-tier system	"Rich schools use local materials as supplement; we use them because we have nothing else." (T19)	38	79.2

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Limiting learner exposure</li> <li>- Disadvantaging poor students</li> </ul>	"Are we preparing our rural children for the same world as urban children?" (T44)		
<b>5. Pressure to Comply</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Inspection expectations</li> <li>- Fear of being seen as inadequate</li> <li>-Conflict between policy and practice</li> <li>- Performance anxiety</li> </ul>	<p>"Inspectors want to see local materials, so we display them even when they don't help learning." (T26)</p> <p>"I feel judged for using a textbook instead of improvising." (T12)</p>	35	72.9
<b>6. Positive Adaptations</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Contextual relevance for some topics</li> <li>-Student engagement in collection</li> <li>-Cost-effectiveness when done well</li> <li>-Environmental awareness</li> </ul>	<p>"For agriculture and biology, local materials make learning real and connected to their lives." (T04)</p> <p>"Students become active participants when gathering materials from their environment." (T29)</p>	31	64.6

**Note:** n=48 teachers interviewed; themes not mutually exclusive. Prevalence indicates percentage of teachers whose responses contained references to the theme.

**Qualitative Interpretation**

The thematic analysis revealed six major themes that illuminated the complex, often contradictory realities of implementing the local materials mandate in Uganda's CBC, with several themes appearing in the vast majority of teacher interviews. The most pervasive challenge was "Resource Constraints" (95.8% of teachers), which encompassed not merely the absence of materials but also their seasonal unavailability, inconsistent quality, and the substantial time burden associated with gathering and preparing them for pedagogical use. This theme was closely followed by "Ambiguity of 'Local'" (89.6%), wherein teachers struggled with the undefined boundaries of what constituted local materials, particularly in urban contexts where globalized consumer goods coexisted with traditional items, creating interpretive confusion that led to inconsistent implementation across classrooms and schools. The theme of "Pedagogical Limitations" emerged in 85.4% of interviews, with teachers articulating specific subject areas—particularly Sciences, Mathematics, and Technology—where local materials proved inadequate for teaching abstract concepts, demonstrating advanced principles, or meeting international curriculum standards. Teachers expressed frustration that the policy mandate did not adequately acknowledge the epistemological constraints of certain knowledge domains that required specialized equipment, standardized models, or precision instruments unavailable in local contexts. "Equity Concerns" appeared in 79.2% of teacher narratives, revealing a sophisticated awareness among educators that the local materials mandate, rather than democratizing education, was potentially creating a two-tiered system where affluent schools supplemented local materials with comprehensive resources while under-resourced schools were confined to whatever limited materials their environments provided.

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**Discussion of Qualitative Findings**

The qualitative findings provided essential contextual depth that explained the quantitative results, revealing that the negative relationship between local materials usage and competency scores was not simply a statistical artifact but reflected genuine pedagogical challenges and systemic inequities experienced by teachers on the ground. The high prevalence of the "Ambiguity of 'Local'" theme (89.6%) exposed a fundamental flaw in curriculum policy implementation: the introduction of a mandate without clear operational definitions, guidelines, or contextualized examples left teachers to navigate interpretation individually, resulting in highly variable implementation that undermined curriculum consistency and potentially compromised learning quality across schools. This definitional ambiguity was particularly problematic in Uganda's diverse geographical and cultural landscape, where what counted as "local" in Kampala bore little resemblance to local materials in rural Karamoja or Kigezi, yet the curriculum provided no framework for managing this diversity. The "Pressure to Comply" theme (72.9%) revealed troubling dynamics whereby teachers engaged in performative compliance—displaying local materials during inspections regardless of their pedagogical utility—suggesting that the mandate had become more about policy conformity than genuine competence development, potentially distorting teaching practices away from learning effectiveness toward bureaucratic acceptability. Most significantly, the "Equity Concerns" theme demonstrated that teachers themselves recognized what the quantitative data confirmed: that the local materials mandate was operating within and potentially exacerbating existing educational inequalities rather than ameliorating them. The poignant question posed by Teacher 44—"Are we preparing our rural children for the same world as urban children?"—encapsulated the core equity dilemma, suggesting that confining resource-poor students to local materials while their advantaged counterparts accessed global knowledge tools might be reproducing rather than challenging educational stratification. However, the "Positive Adaptations" theme (64.6%), though less prevalent, indicated that local materials did hold pedagogical value in specific contexts—particularly in subjects like Agriculture, Biology, and Environmental Science where connecting abstract concepts to learners' immediate environments enhanced engagement and understanding—suggesting that a more nuanced, subject-specific, and context-sensitive approach to materials selection might be more appropriate than a blanket mandate for localization across all subjects and contexts.

**Table 4: Chi-Square Analysis of Resource Availability and Adequacy by School Characteristics**

Variable	Adequate Local Materials Available		Adequate Non-Local Materials Available		$\chi^2$	p	Cramér's V
	Yes n(%)	No n(%)	Yes n(%)	No n(%)			
<b>School Location</b>							
Urban (n=150)	82 (54.7)	68 (45.3)	121 (80.7)	29 (19.3)	87.43	<0.001	0.441

Peri-urban (n=150)	94 (62.7)	56 (37.3)	78 (52.0)	72 (48.0)			
Rural (n=150)	73 (48.7)	77 (51.3)	34 (22.7)	116 (77.3)			
<b>School Type</b>							
Government (n=270)	151 (55.9)	119 (44.1)	89 (33.0)	181 (67.0)	142.68	<0.001	0.563
Private (n=180)	98 (54.4)	82 (45.6)	144 (80.0)	36 (20.0)			
<b>Subject Area</b>							
Sciences (n=135)	58 (43.0)	77 (57.0)	62 (45.9)	73 (54.1)	63.24	<0.001	0.375
Mathematics (n=98)	41 (41.8)	57 (58.2)	48 (49.0)	50 (51.0)			
Humanities (n=129)	89 (69.0)	40 (31.0)	71 (55.0)	58 (45.0)			
Languages (n=88)	61 (69.3)	27 (30.7)	52 (59.1)	36 (40.9)			
<b>Regional Distribution</b>							
Central (n=112)	67 (59.8)	45 (40.2)	89 (79.5)	23 (20.5)	78.92	<0.001	0.419
Eastern (n=113)	59 (52.2)	54 (47.8)	51 (45.1)	62 (54.9)			
Northern (n=112)	56 (50.0)	56 (50.0)	41 (36.6)	71 (63.4)			
Western (n=113)	67 (59.3)	46 (40.7)	52 (46.0)	61 (54.0)			

**Note:** n=450 teachers. Adequacy assessed through teacher self-report using 5-point Likert scale; responses of "adequate" and "very adequate" collapsed into "Yes"; "inadequate," "very inadequate," and "neutral" collapsed into "No." All chi-square tests had df=3 for location/region and df=1 for school type.

The chi-square analyses revealed statistically significant associations between school characteristics and the availability of both local and non-local materials, with all relationships reaching significance at  $p < 0.001$ . For school location, there was a significant association with non-local materials availability ( $\chi^2(2) = 87.43$ ,  $p < 0.001$ , Cramér's  $V = 0.441$ ), indicating a large effect size, whereby urban schools reported adequate non-local materials at 80.7% compared to only 22.7% in rural schools, representing a 58 percentage point disparity. Paradoxically, the availability

of adequate local materials showed less dramatic variation across locations (urban 54.7%, peri-urban 62.7%, rural 48.7%), though peri-urban schools reported the highest adequacy. School type demonstrated the strongest association with materials availability ( $\chi^2(1)=142.68$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Cramér's  $V=0.563$ ), with private schools reporting adequate non-local materials at 80.0% versus only 33.0% in government schools—a striking 47 percentage point gap—while local materials adequacy was roughly equivalent between school types (government 55.9%, private 54.4%). Subject area analysis revealed significant disparities ( $\chi^2(3)=63.24$ ,  $p<0.001$ , Cramér's  $V=0.375$ ), with Sciences and Mathematics teachers reporting inadequate local materials at 57.0% and 58.2% respectively, compared to Humanities (31.0%) and Languages (30.7%), indicating that local materials were perceived as less adequate for STEM subjects. Regional analysis showed Central region with the highest non-local materials adequacy (79.5%) compared to Northern region (36.6%), a 42.9 percentage point difference, while local materials adequacy varied more modestly across regions (ranging from 50.0% to 59.8%). The Cramér's  $V$  effect sizes ranged from medium (0.375) to large (0.563), indicating these associations were substantively meaningful and not merely statistically significant due to sample size.

### **Discussion of Findings**

These chi-square results provided compelling evidence of systematic inequities in educational resource distribution that directly challenged the egalitarian rhetoric underlying the local materials mandate in Uganda's CBC. The finding that rural schools, despite having presumably greater access to "natural" local materials from their immediate environments, reported lower adequacy of local materials (48.7%) than their urban counterparts contradicted the assumption that local materials would be more readily available in rural settings. This paradox likely reflected several factors: rural teachers' limited training in identifying and adapting local materials for pedagogical use, the mismatch between available local materials and curriculum requirements, seasonal availability challenges, and the reality that even local materials required preparation time and pedagogical skills that were in short supply in under-resourced rural schools. Most troubling was the dramatic urban-rural gap in non-local materials availability (80.7% versus 22.7%), which, when combined with rural schools' inability to adequately leverage local materials, suggested these students faced a double deprivation—lacking both the global knowledge resources available to their urban peers and the capacity to effectively utilize local alternatives. The school type disparity was equally concerning, with private schools' 80.0% adequacy of non-local materials versus government schools' 33.0% indicating that the education system was producing fundamentally different learning experiences based on school funding models, likely perpetuating socioeconomic stratification across generations. The subject-area findings were particularly revelatory, demonstrating that the local materials mandate was not uniformly applicable across the curriculum; Sciences and Mathematics teachers' reports of 57-58% inadequacy revealed that these knowledge domains, with their requirements for precision instruments, standardized models, and abstract representations, were poorly served by available local materials. This suggested that the blanket policy directive for local materials failed to account for epistemological differences across disciplines, potentially disadvantaging students in STEM subjects where Uganda seeks to build capacity for technological and economic development. The regional variations, while less dramatic than urban-rural differences, nonetheless indicated persistent geographical inequities in educational resource distribution, with Central region's proximity to the capital, markets, and educational infrastructure translating into substantial advantages in accessing diverse learning materials. Collectively, these findings suggested that the local materials mandate, rather than serving as an equalizing force in Ugandan education, was operating within and potentially reinforcing existing

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patterns of educational inequality, as schools with fewer resources were expected to rely more heavily on local materials while lacking the complementary resources—teacher training, preparation time, pedagogical support, infrastructure—necessary to transform those materials into effective learning experiences comparable to what advantaged schools achieved with their diverse resource portfolios.

### Conclusion

This study critically examined the implications of prioritizing local materials in Uganda's competence-based curriculum for secondary schools, revealing findings that fundamentally challenge the policy's underlying assumptions. Regarding teachers' interpretations and experiences (Objective 1), the research uncovered profound ambiguities in defining "local" materials, with 89.6% of teachers expressing definitional confusion, alongside pervasive resource constraints (95.8%) and pedagogical limitations (85.4%) that undermined effective implementation. Concerning the relationship between local materials usage and competency development (Objective 2), the study established a statistically significant negative association, whereby students in schools with high local materials usage intensity (71-100%) scored significantly lower ( $M=64.2$ ) than those with low usage ( $M=71.8$ ), with this inverse relationship persisting even after controlling for teacher qualifications, school resources, and student socioeconomic status in regression analysis. Regarding educational equity and global preparedness (Objective 3), the findings revealed that the local materials mandate was creating a two-tiered system rather than democratizing education, as urban students with lower local materials usage (45.2%) substantially outperformed rural students with higher usage (71.3%), while chi-square analyses confirmed systematic disparities in resource availability across school locations, types, and subject areas. The study demonstrates that the primacy accorded to local materials in Uganda's CBC represents a policy driven more by ideological commitments to localization than by empirical evidence of learning effectiveness, and that without adequate complementary resources—qualified teachers, robust infrastructure, access to diverse materials, and clear implementation guidelines—the mandate risks perpetuating rather than ameliorating educational inequalities while inadequately preparing learners for participation in an increasingly interconnected global knowledge economy.

### Recommendations

**Adopt a Balanced Resource Approach:** The Ministry of Education and Sports, through the National Curriculum Development Centre, should revise the CBC implementation guidelines to replace the blanket mandate for local materials with a balanced, context-sensitive framework that encourages integration of both local and global resources based on pedagogical appropriateness, subject-specific requirements, and learning objectives, while providing teachers with clear operational definitions, subject-differentiated exemplars, and decision-making criteria for when local materials enhance versus constrain competency development.

**Address Systemic Resource Inequities:** Government should prioritize substantial investment in educational infrastructure for rural and government-aided schools, ensuring equitable distribution of essential learning resources—textbooks, laboratory equipment, digital tools, and internet connectivity—recognizing that effective use of local materials requires complementary resources and that educational equity cannot be achieved by expecting under-resourced schools to compensate for material deficits through localization alone.

**Strengthen Teacher Capacity and Policy Clarity:** Implement comprehensive, subject-specific professional development programs that equip teachers with practical skills in identifying, adapting, and effectively integrating

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local materials for appropriate learning contexts, while simultaneously providing clear policy guidelines that define "local materials," acknowledge disciplinary differences, remove performative compliance pressures, and empower teachers to make evidence-based pedagogical decisions prioritizing learning outcomes over ideological adherence to localization.

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