

Problems Encountered by Teachers in the Implementation of the Basic Features of Competency Based Education (CBE) in the Classroom

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Background of the study

Under the competency based, activity oriented, student centered curriculum introduced to state schools in Sri Lanka since 2007, a new role for teachers has been proposed to guide students to construct knowledge and derive meaning through their day-to-day experiences. In order to adopt this role, teachers first need to know the philosophy of the intended CBE and its basic features. Misinterpretations in this regard lead to a wide gap between the expected curriculum and the implemented curriculum.

Researchers have pinpointed that previous curriculum reforms have failed to achieve most of the objectives for which they were introduced, mainly due to inefficiencies in teacher preparation for the expected curricular changes. (Karunasena, 1994, Leelaratne, 1994). Seneviratne(2009) carried out a research on the organization of science lessons under CBE and concluded that teachers have faced problems in its implementation because the basic features of CBE have not been disseminated to teachers considering their actual practices and the realities of many schools. Thus, the responsibility of the teacher preparation institutes is to find out the feasibility of a curriculum reform by teachers at regular intervals and take necessary measures to fill the existing gaps. Therefore, this study attempts to explore the issues associated with the implementation of basic features of CBE among the in-service teachers of different subjects in order to support them to adopt this new role in the classroom.

Methodology

Questionnaires were administered to teachers of different subjects who are following the Postgraduate Diploma in Education (PGDE-2011/2012) and interviews were held with the PGDE teachers as the main data collecting instruments. The data was analyzed quantitatively in terms of tabulating, graphs and calculating the percentages.

Outcomes of the study

As revealed, majority of the teachers (71.7%) in the sample have been made aware of the CBE by the provincial Teacher Centers for Continuing Teacher Education. However, 40% of them had no idea of the basic features of CBE at all and no one in the sample was fully aware of all the basic features in its real sense. 30% of the PGDE teachers have problems in interpreting the competency based education due to less awareness. However, 20.7% of the teachers who were aware of the basic features of CBE had stated that they faced problems in applying these basic features with the classroom specifications. Further, 29% of them had issues in matching the expected outcomes of the CBE with student factors.

The findings of the specific nature of problems encountered by the PGDE teachers clearly showed that 71.7% of the sample has problems in identifying the specific learning outcomes under CBE, while organizing the student centered learning activities/experiences under the CBE was a problem for 64.1% of them. Moreover, 61.7% of the teachers in the sample have problems in providing learning opportunities in their disciplinary contexts which focused on discovery/exploration mode though it is the multifaceted instructional system introduced under

the CBE. The proposed CBE recommends process oriented assessments in place of traditional assessment tools in order to assess the achievement of competencies/competency levels. However, it was evident that 73% of the teachers have problems in planning such assessment tools. Extending the learning teaching process has been considered as an important component of CBE. However, the findings of the study revealed that 64.1% of the teachers encountered problems associated with extending lessons towards the respective competencies.

This study concludes that more than 50% of the in-service PGDE teachers do not possess the ability to analytically review these problems encountered in their classroom practices related to CBE. It was further evident that this ability is comparatively high among the teachers of Sciences than those of Arts and Commerce.

Conclusions and Recommendations

This study highlights that more than 60 % of the in-service teachers following PGDE have problems associated with four key features of CBE namely, specific learning outcomes under CBE(71.7%), adopting student centered learning activities with discovery mode(61.7%), adopting newer approaches to assessments(73%)and extending learning teaching process towards competency development(64.1%). Further, this study concludes that the ability of analytical thinking is comparatively high among the teachers of Sciences than the teachers of Arts and Commerce in the attempt at solving these problems at the classroom level.

Hence, this paper suggests that the present teacher education institutes should revisit their existing modes of curriculum dissemination which must focus on teachers' actual practices and the realities of many schools and students. Furthermore, it is essential to revise their curriculum and instructional system in accordance with the emerging needs specially to empower the present teachers with 21st Century workforce skills such as professionalism/work ethics, teamwork/collaboration, critical thinking and problem solving.

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