

Competency-Based Approach in Cameroon



Title	Competency-Based Approach in Cameroon
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IBE Director	Dr. Mmantsetsa Marope
Coordination and Production Team at the UNESCO IBE	Renato Operti, Ioanna Siakalli, Mariana Citrinovitz
Author	Julius Nuh Mih
Keywords	Cameroon – competency-based approach (CBA) – reform – secondary school – teachers

Open Note of the IBE

The IBE has launched the Diploma Alumni Series to create a shared space to involve local education professionals into a global dialogue and inspire original research and meaningful discussion. It intends to position the diploma alumni as active and distinct researchers, producers and disseminators of local knowledge and mastery. These through the elaboration of small-scale innovative research projects that will eventually enrich and advance the development of quality curricula for all.

The Diploma Alumni Series is the result of a Diploma Alumni Grant established by the IBE in 2015 with the hopes of providing professional development opportunities for the diploma alumni. The idea of promoting a grant for small-scale innovative research derives from the valuable contributions of the case studies written by the participants of the *Postgraduate Diploma in Curriculum Design and Development* as part of their coursework. During the past years, participants have been producing comprehensive and unique case studies, sharing a variety of approaches, strategies and practices in curriculum initiatives across regions. These products have become essential tools and reference materials of the Diploma and Masters programmes, as they allow the participants to reflect on diverse contexts and perspectives and further apply these new ideas into ongoing curriculum reform and worldwide discussions on current and critical issues in curriculum, learning and assessment. Echoing the success of the case studies, the Diploma Alumni Grant enables and encourages the animated participation of diploma alumni in continuing with their professional development through evolving their case studies and research topics into small-scale in-depth research.

Endorsed and produced in the three official languages of the Diploma and Masters Programmes, English, French and Spanish, the series of research primarily presents effective and relevant practices around (i) curriculum policy and reform and (ii) teaching, learning and assessment. Through their research projects, fourteen Diploma Alumni, 9 from Africa and 5 from Latin America and the Caribbean, shed light on teaching and learning approaches used at local level as well as on the state of education and curriculum reforms in these two regions. The Diploma Alumni Series becomes, therefore, an invaluable asset as it highlights concrete education practices across regions, fostering inclusive and holistic approaches that are simultaneously community-based and an extension of the global discussion on the concerns of Member States. Along with the series *In-Progress Reflections on Current and Critical Issues in Curriculum, Learning and Assessment*, the Diploma Alumni Series aims to facilitate online interactions through continuous reflection and exchange of ideas between local and international experts.

Dr. Mmantsetsa Marope: Director, International Bureau of Education



Competency-Based Approach in Cameroon

Abstract: One of the major reforms of the Cameroonian education system has been the introduction of competency-based approach (CBA) in secondary education in the last decade. The reform aims to bring about innovative practices that would enhance learning outcomes of secondary school students, preparing them to face the challenges of the 21st century. However, the implementation of CBA has not met the success rate envisaged. The constraints linked to the successful implementation of CBA include teachers' knowledge, attitudes and its poor implementation. This study seeks to investigate teachers' degree of adherence to the use of CBA in secondary schools in Cameroon. The study's research questions investigated teachers' knowledge of the approach, their attitudes towards it and the strategies put in place to carry out the reform. The study showed that teachers who had a positive attitude towards CBA, applied it in their classrooms. However, participants judged that the mechanism in place for the implementation of CBA failed due to inadequate teacher training, poorly skilled trainers, short duration of training programmes and non-mastery of the reform content. The study recommends reorganization of the pedagogic structure, and the need to equip schools with appropriate curriculum materials and to develop a plan for teachers' continuous professional development, as well as the importance of involving teachers in the conception phase of the reform in order to have their adherence.

Keywords: Cameroon – competency-based approach (CBA) – reform – secondary school – teachers

Background

The global economic situation of the late 1980s and 1990s, characterised by a recession, seriously affected Cameroon and the rest of the world. This period witnessed a demographic growth, especially of youth. Cameroon's population in general grows by 2% annually, which means an increase in the demand for education delivery. The same period experienced changes in the international scene that ushered in advances in science and technology. The changes affected most economies of the world, including Cameroon. The sectors that were most affected were health, education, food, and social security (MINEDUB, 2006). Accordingly, the crisis affected the capacity of the state to mobilise resources to finance education (Djallo, 2010).

In spite of the significant achievements in terms of access, as reported in the Project Appraisal Document (PAD) of 2013, the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2015 Report indicates that the education system of Cameroon faces a number of challenges. The weaknesses identified in the system so far include the following:

- Regional, gender and poverty disparities that worsen as children progress through their education;
- About 8% of children of school age are still at home;
- The timid expression of bilingualism;
- Low retention of children, characterised by high rates of school dropout within the cycle;
- Low school achievement of primary school pupils;
- Unadapted school programmes;
- Weak or complete absence of guidance and counselling;
- Mismatch between training offered and employment needs;
- Weak information systems;
- Poor financing of the education sector (World Bank, 2013).

Cameroon's vision of education is inspired by the Growth and Employment Strategy Document (GESD) endorsed by the government in 2009. This vision puts Cameroon on the path of becoming an industrialised nation by 2020 and an emerging country by 2035. This vision equally factors human capital as one of the driving forces that will enable the country to achieve this goal. The required human capital can only be possible if the country disposes of a good education system equipped with an efficient and relevant curriculum. The 1995 National Forum on Education in Cameroon proposed a series of strong recommendations that led to the Education Law of 1998. This law formed the basis of the school programmes that were put in place in primary schools in Cameroon in 2000. The 2000 curriculum coincided with the Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper (PRSP). The perennial problem of poverty that rocked the country at this time due to the dreaded economic adjustment programmes imposed by donors as a way of moving the country out of the scourging economic crisis of the 1980s and 1990s, required an education response. Besides, the 2000 education reforms concerned the primary school sector. It was not until 2010 that the government decided to carry out reforms in the secondary school sector with the introduction of Competency-Based Approach (CBA) as one of the major innovations.

Statement of the problem

For almost a decade now, the Cameroonian education system has been undergoing major reforms with the aim of aligning it to national development goals and international exigencies. This has been the case with the introduction of the competency-based curriculum in secondary school. Since 2010, the Ministry of Education has embarked on changing the secondary school curriculum from the notion/content based approach to CBA as a way to achieve quality education. The reforms aim to bring about innovations, among other things, which would enhance the learning outcomes of secondary school students, thereby preparing them to fully participate in the 21st century with knowledge and skills that enable them to be problem-solvers. In addition, the reform requires that teachers move away from assessment strategies that constitute a trap for students and that lead to high failure rates, and towards friendlier and more accountable strategies that guarantee high chances of school success.

However, the implementation of the new competency-based curriculum has not met the success rate that was envisaged by those who initiated the change. The implementation of the competency-based curriculum in Cameroon secondary schools seems to have been done in an incoherent manner and teachers are complaining that the constraints linked to the application of this reform in their daily pedagogic practices give them too much work. The majority of teachers have not mastered the reforms, and even those who claim to have mastered it, apply it in their own way (MINESEC, 2015).

The poor implementation of competency-based curriculum in Cameroon is blamed on the lack of knowledge of the reforms and the attitude of teachers to the change process. As Samoff et al. (2001) point out in their assessment of education reforms in Africa, knowledge of the subject is often at the origin. The question that should be asked here is: What causes teachers' mitigated adherence to the implementation of the competency-based curriculum in Cameroon secondary schools?

Literature Review

Theoretical considerations of the study

This study intends to use the theory of change as it influences the way human beings behave in the face of the change process. This theory attempts to show the reasons behind alterations in individual behaviour patterns in a change process. The theory of change cites environmental, personal, as well as behavioural characteristics, as main factors in behavioural determinism. Kritsonis (2005) distinguishes three main dominant theories of change: Lewin's three-step change theory, Lippitt's phase of change theory, and Pochaska and Diclemente's change theory. Each of these change theories attempt to analyse how change takes place in individuals.

I found Lewin's three-step change theory the most appropriate because it relates to the purpose of this study. Kritsonis (2005) citing Lewin, views change as a dynamic balance of forces working in opposing directions. Driving forces push individuals toward the desired direction, whereas restraining forces hinder change because they push individuals toward the opposite direction.

Contribution of research findings on CBA

CBA is a new concept in the education discourse in Africa. This explains why there may be limited literature on the subject. Research findings in Africa and in Cameroon (Altet et. al, 2006; Djallo, 2010; Lynd, 2006; Mih, 2012) have continued to provide some literature on CBA and other reforms, as they are being implemented in countries undergoing education reforms. Most studies have highlighted the role of main actors, such as teachers, and the difficulties faced by various countries that are implementing the reforms, among other issues. Lynd (2006) carried out an evaluation of the reform and how competency-based curricula were put in place in basic schools in Djibouti. Although the study focuses on the assessment of the reform, he notes the following difficulties: 1) intense lesson preparation; 2) lack of teaching aids; 3) time required for CBA; and 4) overcrowded classrooms. Lynd (2006) recommended the following:

- 1) The definition of the strategy should be attained, including implications of each stakeholder, which outlines the objectives of the reform;
- 2) Variation in the way CBA is applied in terms of pedagogic tools;
- 3) Support of teachers in the effort to prepare their own pedagogic /learning activities;
- 4) Establishment of a remediation programme;
- 5) Analysis of the problems linked with the harmonisation of curricular;
- 6) Strengths of the formative assessment system; and
- 7) Communication on the reform.

Furthermore, Altet and Develay (1999) carried out an evaluation on how CBA was put into place in the first and second grades of primary schools in Tunisia. They came up with the following findings concerning the strong points of the reforms: 1) existence of a general adherence to the change; 2) the reform was a starter to the new pedagogic practices; 3) the reform had enhanced creativity in teachers. Among the weaknesses noted on the reform were: 1) the difference between what is announced in the reform and classroom practices; 2) heavy assessment tests that the criteria used; 3) lack of new material to support the reform; 4) parents not being informed about the reform. However, the study recommended the following, among others: 1) Establishing synergy among the reform and existing structures and programmes; 2) Maximising adherence of all actors involved (teachers, inspectors, pupils and parents) to the reform; and 3) Harmonising official syllabuses with CBA.

In 2008 and 2009, Cameroon participated in a comparative study with three other African countries (Gabon, Senegal and Tunisia) on the modalities of implementing curriculum reforms. The report produced at the end of the study revealed the difficulties of implementing reforms at the level of appropriation by the actors in the field. The study made a number of relevant recommendations for the improvement of the quality and the relevance of the ongoing reform process. The follow-up study, carried out in 2010, on curricula reform in Cameroon focused on CBA and had the following findings:

- 1) Creating a training programme which does not allow for the main actors of the reform such as teachers, pedagogic advisers and inspectors to be trained;
- 2) Enhancing the level of appropriation of the reforms by the actors in the field (Djallo, 2010).

Furthermore, Mih (2012) carried out a study on education policy reforms and pedagogic practices in Cameroonian primary schools. This study focused on the use of pedagogical practices based on the New Pedagogic Approach, the New Assessment Vision and CBA in primary schools. The study found that teachers have very limited knowledge about the background of the reforms even though they were reported to have a positive attitude towards reforms. The study also reported on teachers' satisfaction on the implementation of the reforms, even though they judged that the reforms had failed.

Teachers' knowledge of CBA

The knowledge teachers have about the reform content is very crucial for the success of the reform; this is true when one considers the fact that teachers are the actors who put in practice CBA in their classrooms on a daily basis. The success or failure of the reform depends on the knowledge they have and how the reform will be carried out. In addition, teachers' adherence to CBA depends on how well reform goal will be communicated and how well the elements and technical components of CBA will be articulated. This way, teachers will find easier to apply what they know.

As pointed out by the literature on the implementation of reforms in general, and CBA in particular, the success or failure of any reform process in Africa depends to a large extent on the knowledge teachers have about them. Fullan and Miles, as cited in Elmore (1992), warn against the absence of knowledge in the reform process. They argue that when the knowledge is not deep in the subject, teachers are more likely to learn from direct observation of practice or trial and error in the classrooms than they are from abstract descriptions of new teachings. A view shared by Obanya (1989) in his assessment of education reforms in Africa, condemns the poor practice of those who conceived reforms. He argues that teachers sometimes do not see a single document and material officially distributed to schools (if it ever gets there) and these may be inappropriate or misunderstood by the teachers. In the face of this dilemma, teachers go on with their old practices.

Attitudes of teachers towards CBA

The success or failure of the implementation of CBA depends largely on the attitudes of secondary school teachers about the reform. Whether policy makers usually consider teachers or other actors involved in the reform process as factors that determine the implementation of the reforms is a matter for debate. Evidence from literature about change in attitude shows that it is an uphill task. Deal and Peterson, as cited in Mehan, Hubbard and Estein (2005), talking about cultures and traditions, posit that teachers who adhered to the reforms did so because these changes flow in the face of their perceptions of good teaching and learning and because they were asked to make significant changes in their standard operating procedures and well-worn practices. A position shared by Briges (1991, as

cited in Peck, 1996) suggests that if change is to take place real people must stop doing things in the old way and start doing things in the new way. Accordingly, dealing with the transition of the internal psychological reorientation of an individual coming to terms with change is key. Furthermore, the author continues to argue that it was not the change in the new curriculum instructional strategy or procedure itself that the individual resists; but it is the loss and endings that each individual experiences and the transmissions that individuals are resisting.

It should be noted here that reforms fail not only because teachers' negative attitude, but because of other intervening factors. Mih (2012), in a study on pedagogic reforms in Cameroon, discovered that teachers had a positive attitude towards a reform because they believed that the reforms were necessary. However, they judged that the reforms had failed because of other causes. The positive attitudes of teacher towards reforms seem to justify the way individuals behave towards change or innovations. Attitudes towards innovations, even though in an organisational structure or context, are more or less influenced by individual psychology and group culture. Furthermore, human beings are ambivalent about change. Often they exalt innovation in principle and not in practice. Generally, it cost time and effort to put innovation in principle into practice.

Implementation strategy of competency based approach

The success or failure of competency-based curriculum depends on how the reform is carried out. Most often, the failure of any reform process in Africa has been blamed on a number of factors, among which are the implementation strategies followed. Scholars, including Obanya (1989), Datnow (2001) and Ndoye (2009), paint a gloomy picture of reforms in Africa, especially concerning the way they are implemented. As Obanya (1989) describes, education reform has been on everyone's lips in Africa since independence, and what is meant by this expression is not always clear, except that every government has fought to modify the inherited colonial system of education. He goes on to illustrate that Africa today is littered by broken bones of pilot education projects, which have had no meaningful follow-up. Datnow (2001) is worried about the vexing issue and the presence of competing reforms with instability of leadership and other hindrances to the reform. This simply means that there are so many reform projects that are being introduced at the time and some of them end up being abandoned for lack of efficient follow-up and evaluation plans. Most reforms in Africa (Cameroon included) end whenever the funds of the partners end.

Ndoye (2009) shares his concerns on the choice of African countries to go for the experimental devices, evaluation modes and expansion phases. Also, Samoff et al. (2001) think that the proliferation of reforms in Africa are likely to complicate the process of follow-up of programmes and their implementation strategies. There are usually too many reforms being introduced at the same time with different partners without coordination and follow-up mechanisms. The efforts of technical and financial partners need to be conjugated so as to avoid duplication that sometimes leads to waste of resources.

Methodology

Introduction

For the past years, the Cameroonian education system has been undergoing major reforms in order to respond to international and national exigencies. Such a reform is the introduction of CBA in secondary schools. The implementation of this reform is not meeting the success rate that was envisaged. Those who are supposed to apply this reform in their daily pedagogic practices do so with a lot of difficulties, since they do not master it.

The objective of the study

The study aims to gather data that will help to attain the following objectives:

- Examine the causes of teachers' adherence or non-adherence to CBA in their pedagogic practices.
- Examine the knowledge teachers have about CBA.
- Examine the attitudes and practices of teachers about CBA.
- Examine the strategies put in place for the implementation of CBA.

Research questions

The study seeks to answer the following main question: *What are the hindering factors that prevent teachers from implementing CBA in their daily pedagogic practices?*

Research question 1

What is the knowledge teachers have about CBA?

Research question 2

What are the attitudes and practices teachers have towards CBA?

Research question 3

What are the strategies put in place for the implementation of CBA in secondary schools?

Scope of the study

This study is limited to teachers who apply CBA in their classes. No other reforms are included in this study. The researcher could only work with secondary school teachers in the Yaoundé school area because of the constraints in time and size of the study. Notwithstanding, the views expressed by the teachers in this study, although not representative of the entire population, can provide a basis for further investigation, but cannot yet be generalised.

Study design

This study uses both qualitative and quantitative data collection methods and analysis procedures.

Sample and sampling procedure

The population of this study is made up of secondary school teachers in both the French and English-medium schools from the Yaoundé school area, who apply CBA in their classes. To determine the required sample, the researcher used a cluster sampling technique. This technique finds its justification in the works of Amin (2005). According to this author, cluster sampling is a technique where the entire population is divided into groups, or clusters, and a random selection of these groups is made. To determine the sample size per cluster, the researcher divided 100 teachers by seven and one teacher was randomly chosen from each of the 15 clusters making a total of 15 teachers. The Yaoundé school area is made up of seven school districts and each district has some administrative autonomy. Each district here was considered as a cluster.

Data collection instrument

A questionnaire was used to collect data that recorded the respondents' views about CBA. The questionnaire was used because of its inherent advantage of being less constraining and easy to use; respondents could fill in their responses on the spot or take home to fill in at their convenience. It equally guarantees the respondents' anonymity.¹

The questionnaire is made up of four sections: Section one focuses on the respondents' demographic and professional backgrounds with reference to their grade, sex, highest academic qualification and teaching experience. Section two dwells on the knowledge and awareness of respondents on CBA. The third section deals with the attitudes of teachers and pedagogic practices on CBA, while the fourth section is about the implementation strategies put in place for CBA.

Data collection

The data collection instrument was pretested on teachers to ensure its reliability and consistency. These teachers did not take part in the study. Data for the study was collected between June and July 2016. To collect the data, the researcher sought the help of two data collection agents, chosen from school pedagogic supervisors who master data collection procedures and who equally understand the Yaoundé school area. They made several field trips to the selected schools of the clusters where the teachers were found. They collected data on different dates depending on the availability of the teachers. Some teachers filled in the questionnaires on the spot, while others preferred to take their questionnaires at home and return them at a later time.

Data analysis

A questionnaire was used to collect the required data for the study and entered electronically into SPSS (Statistical Packages for Social Sciences).

¹ www.kirklees.gov.uk/sources/questionnaires.

Presentation of results

Part I: Knowledge and awareness of CBA

1a. Have you heard before about CBA?

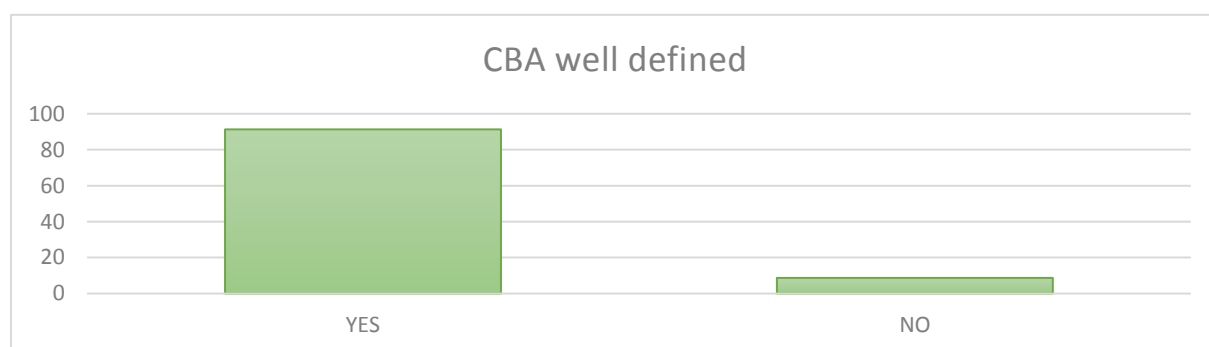
All respondents (100%) said that they had heard about CBA.

1b. Where did you learn about CBA?

58% of the respondents said they learned about CBA in a seminar, 28% in school, 6% learned about it from seminars at the ministerial level, 2% from inspectors during school visits, 3% from personal research, 2% from pedagogic inspectors, 1% from the American Embassy, 1% from TV and 1% learned about it from the radio.

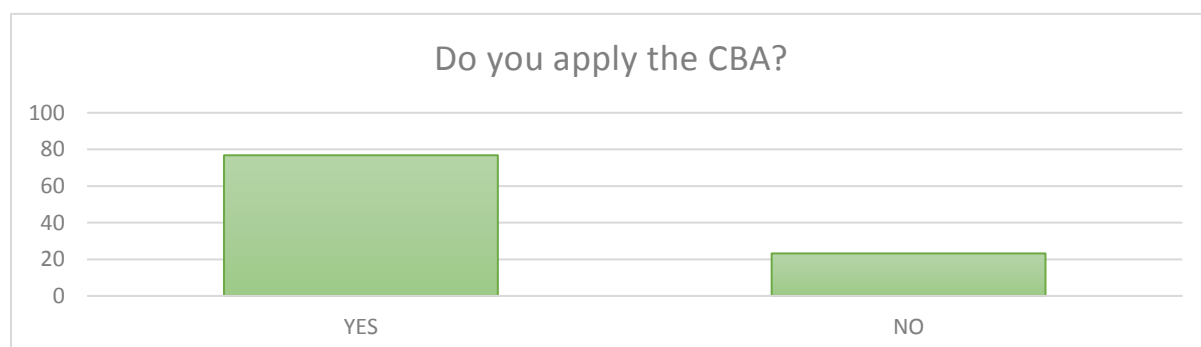
2. Can you briefly describe CBA?

When respondents were asked to briefly describe CBA, 84 teachers (about 91%) attempted to describe it in their own words. The most common feature of their definition focused on the fact that CBA was learner-centred. Problem solving was an integral part, thereby making students face real life situations. Only eight teachers (about 9%) could not really describe the approach.



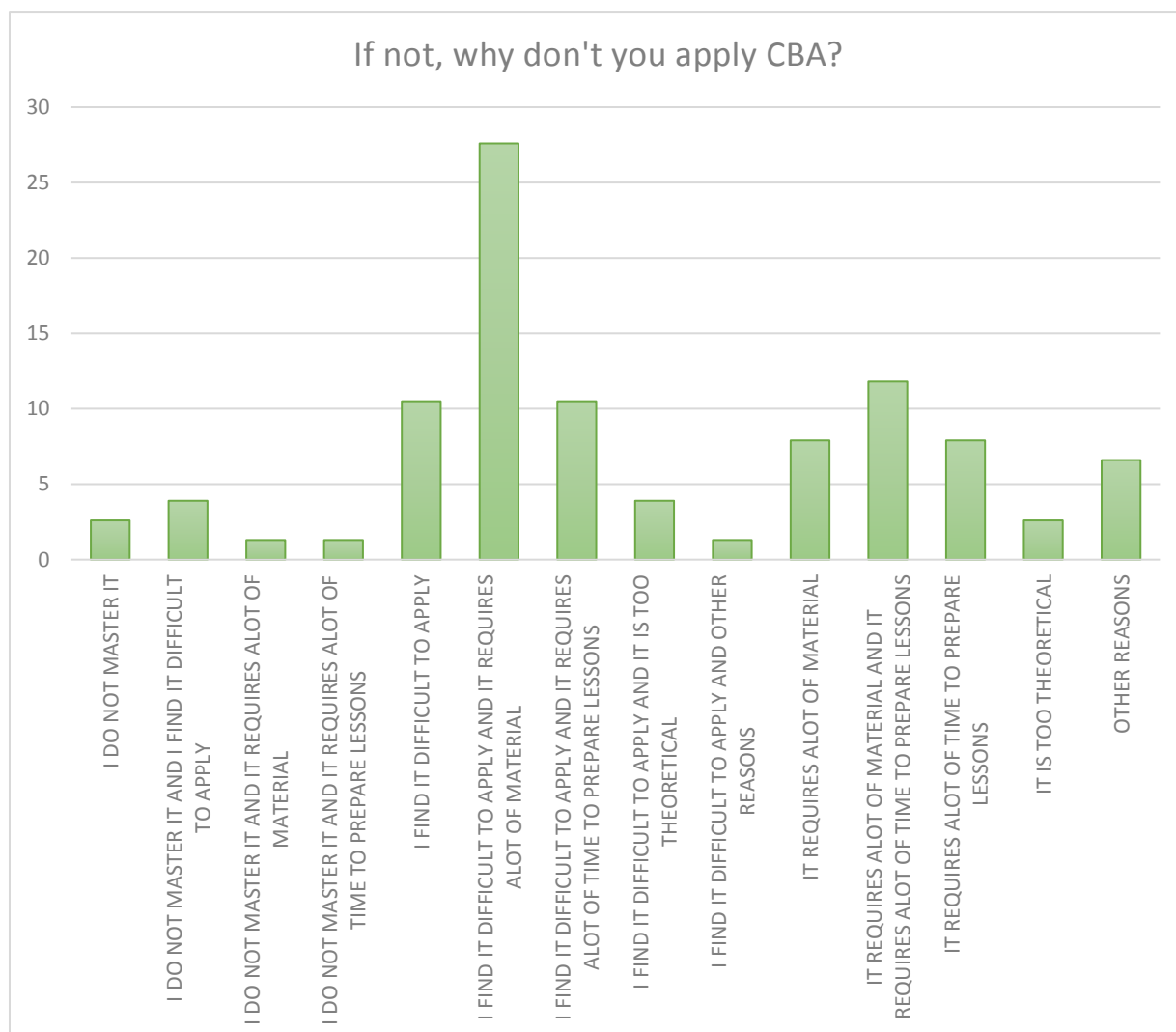
3. Do you apply CBA in your class?

When respondents were asked to state whether they use CBA in their own classes, 76 (77%) of them responded positively, while 23 teachers (about 23%) said that they do not apply the approach in their classes.



4. Why don't you apply CBA in your class?

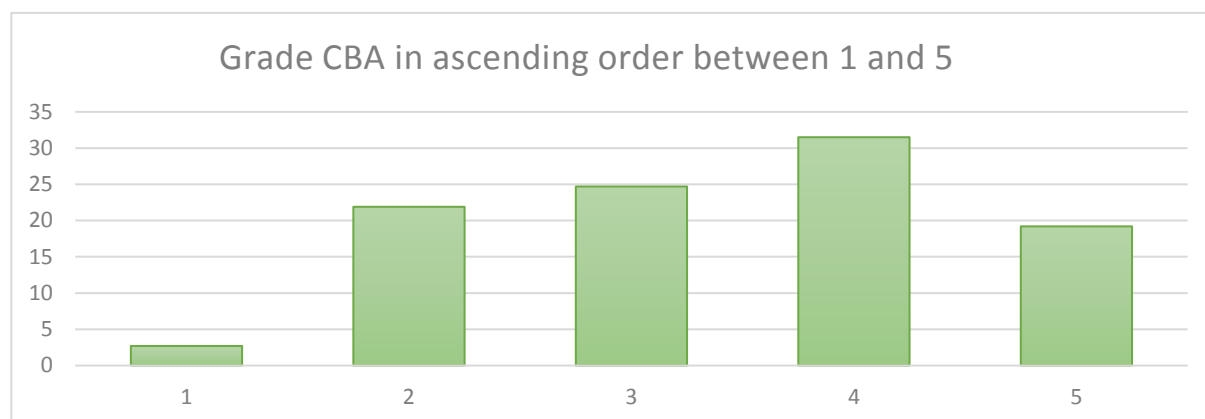
Those respondents who said that they did not apply CBA in their classes, were asked to give the reasons for not doing so. The respondents gave various reasons for not using the approach, including non-mastery (about 3%); difficulty in applying it, even if they felt that they mastered it (about 11%); and need for a lot of materials (about 28%). 1% of them said they needed a lot of time for preparing lessons.



Part II: Attitudes towards CBA and pedagogic practices

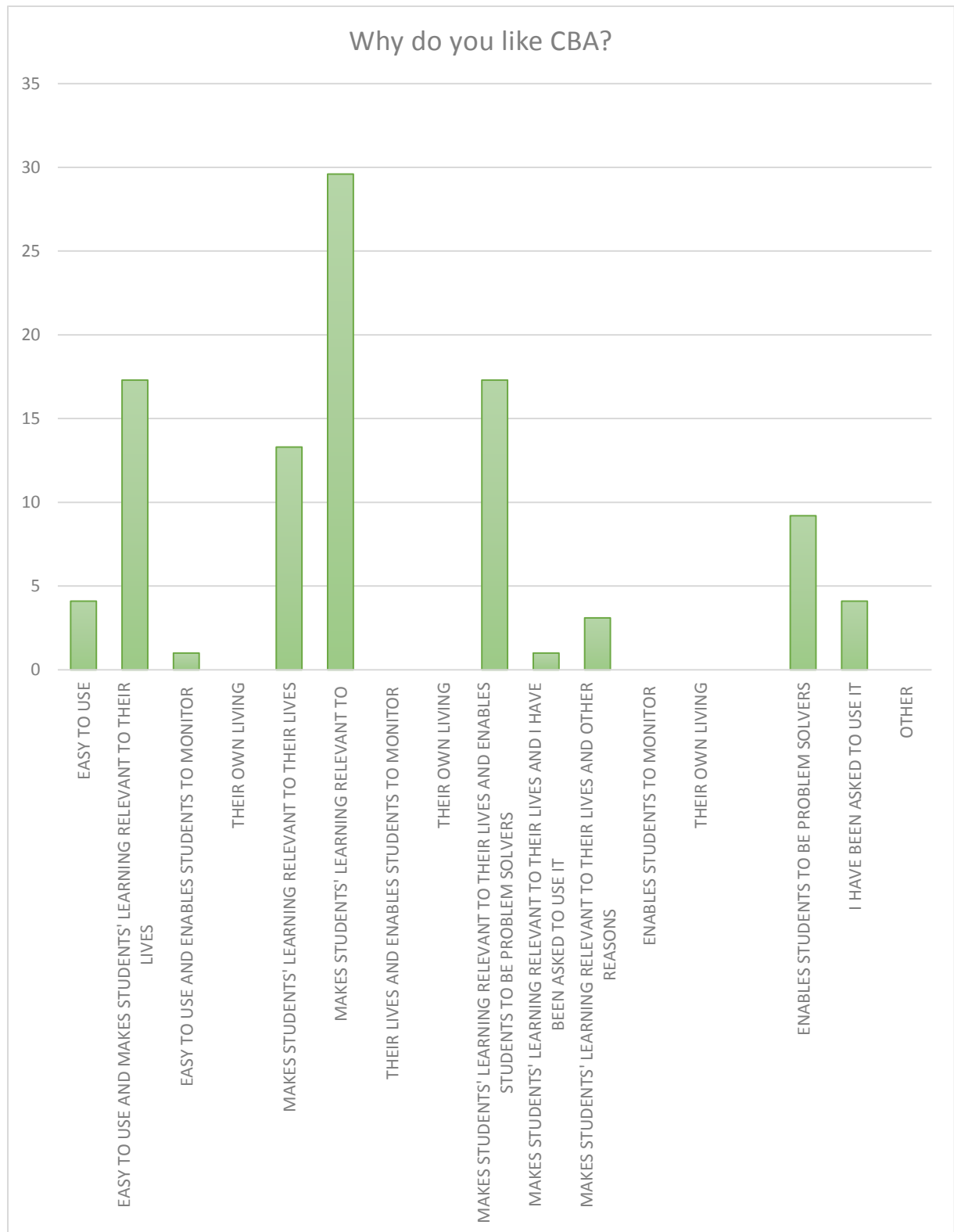
1. Grade CBA in ascending order of importance

Out of the 100 respondents who filled in the questionnaires, 23 (about 32%) of them rated it on a scale of 4 out of 5; 18 (about 25%) rated it at 3; 16 (about 22%) rated it at 2; 14 (about 19%) rated it 5. Only two teachers (about 3%) gave the approach the lowest rate of 1.



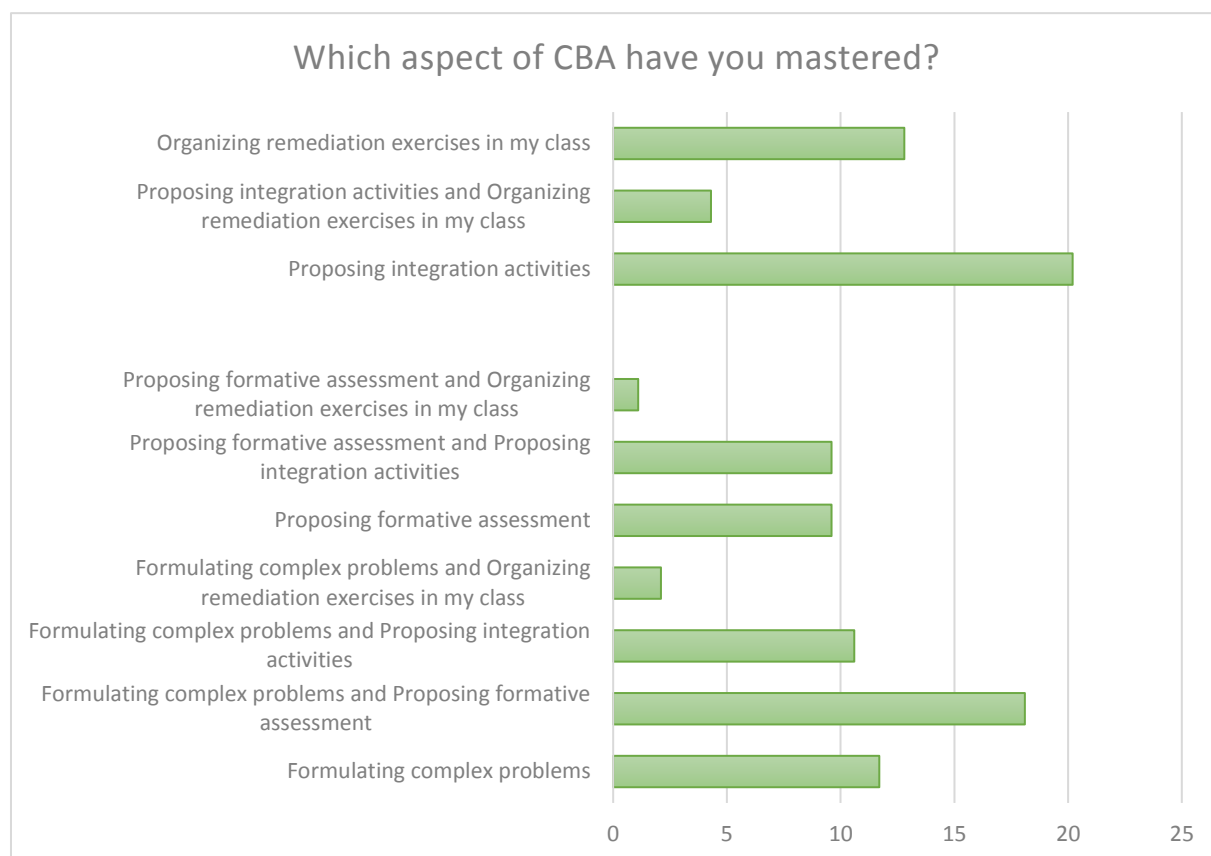
2. Reasons for liking CBA

Out of those who were satisfied with the approach, 17 teachers (about 17%) explained that they were satisfied with the approach because it was easy to use and relevant to students' learning. 29 (about 30%) said that they were satisfied because the approach made students' learning relevant and also that it made it possible for students to monitor their own learning. 17 teachers (about 17%) said that they were satisfied because the approach made students' learning relevant and also that it enabled them to become problem solvers. Only one respondent said s/he was using the approach because s/he has been asked to do so. This means that the teacher was not convinced with the use of the approach.



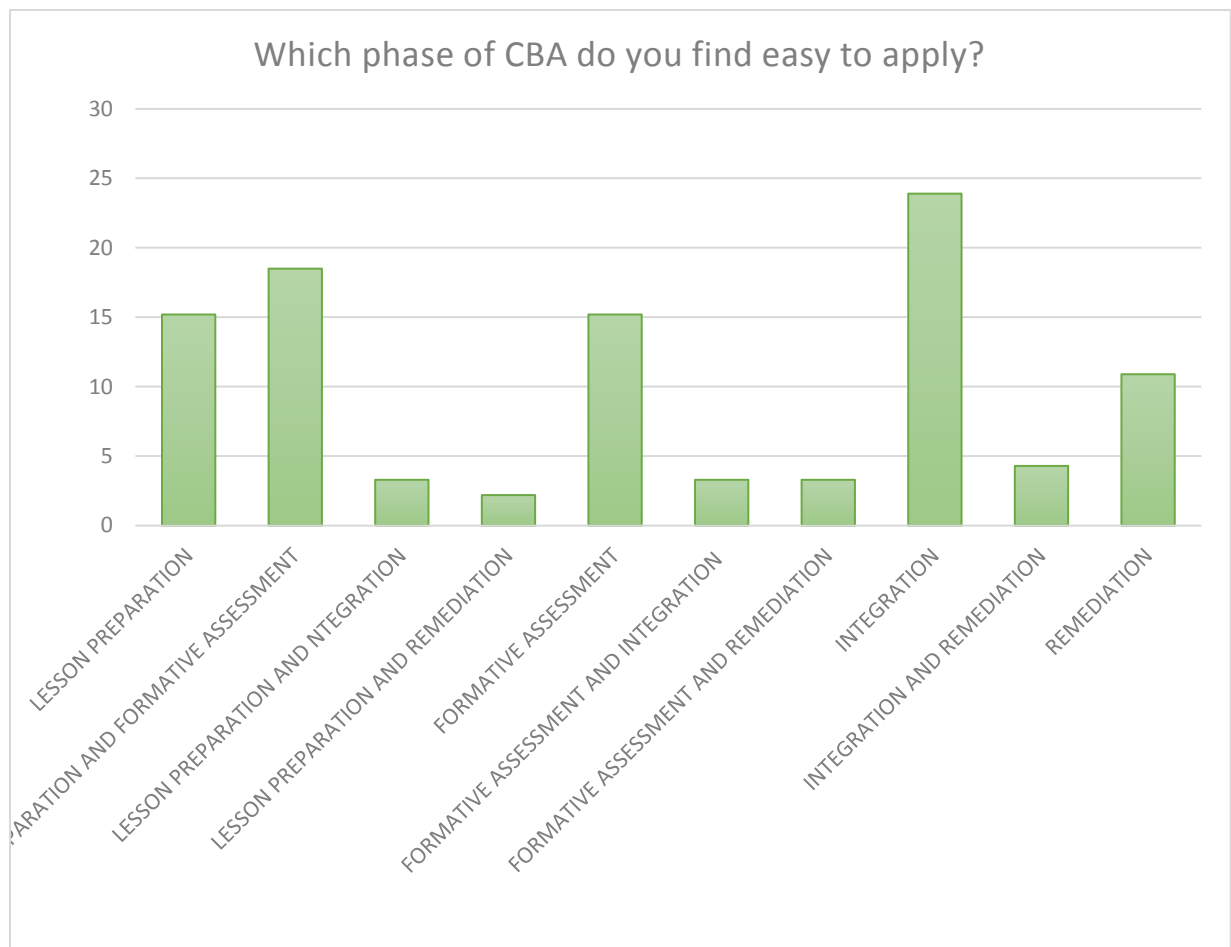
3. Which aspects of CBA have you mastered?

Respondents were asked to state the aspects of CBA they had mastered. The responses were grouped into the number of aspects they said they had mastered. It is possible for one respondent to indicate that s/he mastered more than one aspect. Accordingly, 19 respondents (about 20%) reported that they mastered integration activities, 17 (about 18%) said they mastered the formulation of complex problem situations and proposing formative assessment; 11 (about 12%) said they mastered the formulation of complex problem situations only; 9 (about 10%) said they mastered proposal of formative assessment and proposal of integration activities respectively, and only one respondent said s/he organizes remedial exercises in his/her class.



4. Which phase of CBA do you find easy to apply?

The responses of those who filled in the questionnaire were grouped according to the number of phases of CBA they said they found easy to apply, including lesson planning, formative assessment and integration activities. It was therefore possible for one respondent to have more than one responses. The Lesson Preparation phase and Formative Assessment phases were rated the highest (18.5%). Those who only chose lesson preparation were rated at 15.2% as against those who said formative assessment only who were rated at 15.2% as well. 23 (23.9%) teachers chose integration activities only. No doubt, when they were asked in the preceding question to indicate the aspect they mastered the most, the majority of them chose integration activities.



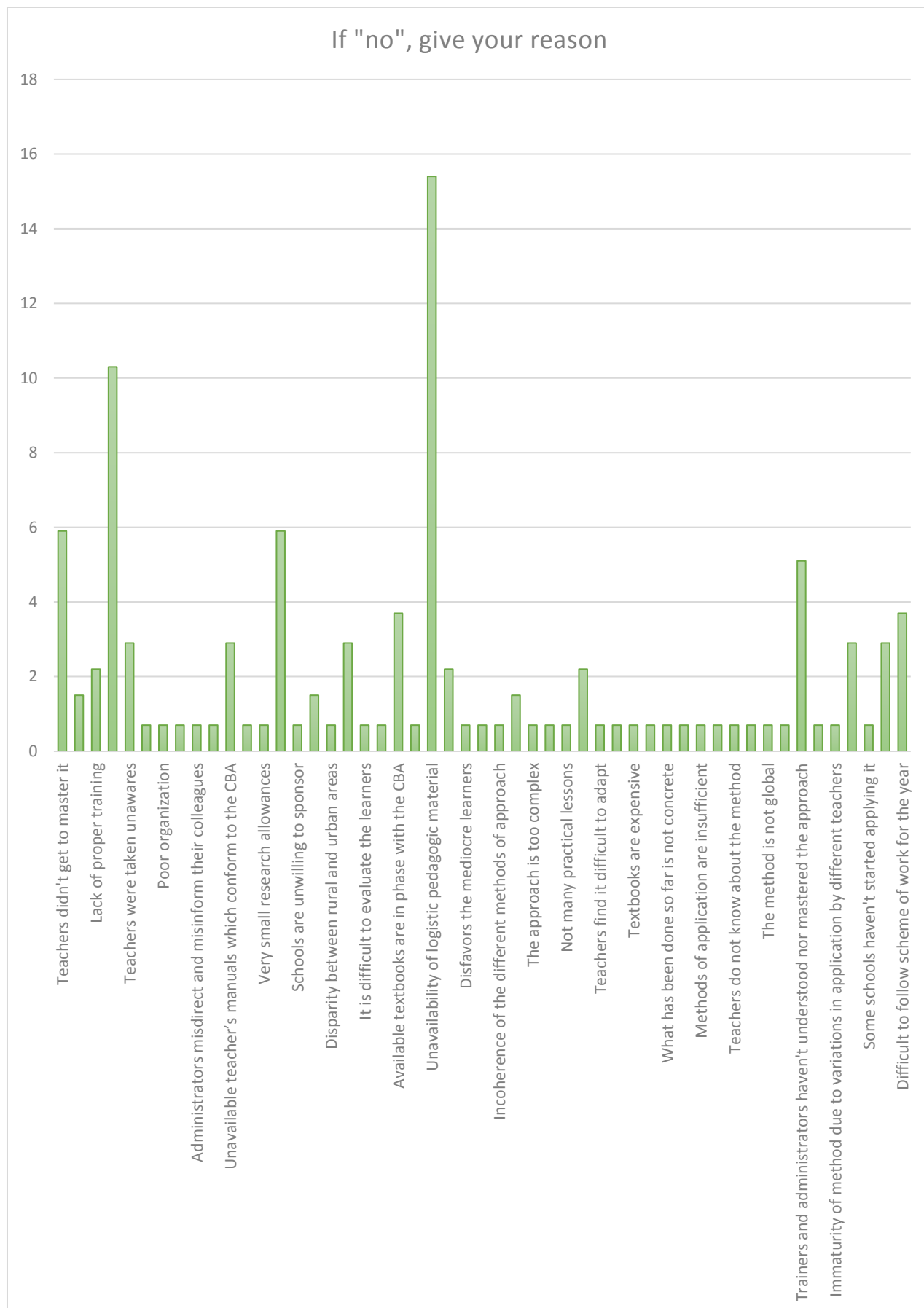
Part three: Implementation strategy

1. Are you satisfied with the way CBA is being implemented?

Participants were asked to say if they were satisfied with the way CBA is being implemented. The majority of them (about 83%) responded positively, while about 13% responded negatively.

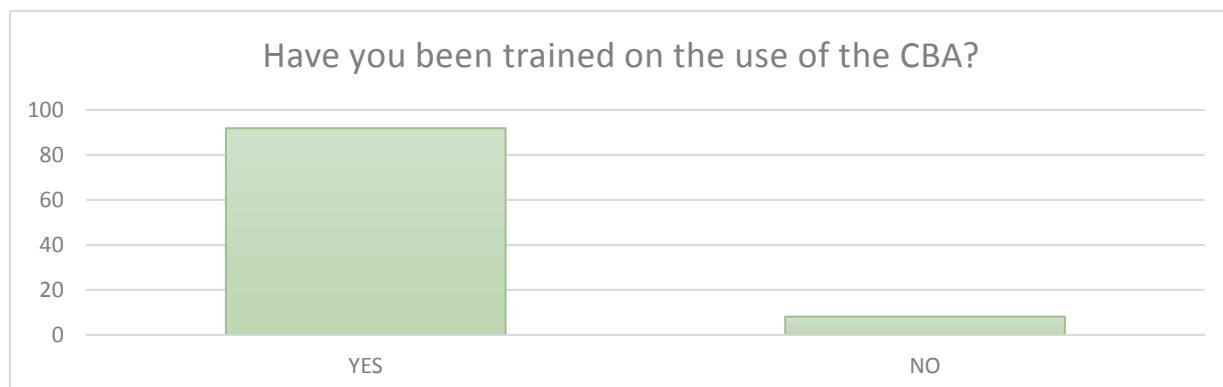
Those who answered positively, justified their answer with the following reasons, among others: students work independently, the approach makes students creative, students participate more actively in class, teachers and learners tend to do research.

Those who said that they were not satisfied, justified their answer with the following reasons, among others: overcrowded classrooms, teachers' non-mastery of the approach, lack of proper training, teachers were not aware of the approach, little motivation of teachers, unavailability of pedagogic material, lack of infrastructure, time consuming, difficult for learners to apply, difficult for teachers to apply in some subjects, too theoretical, some teachers do not like the methods of assessment and complexity of the approach.



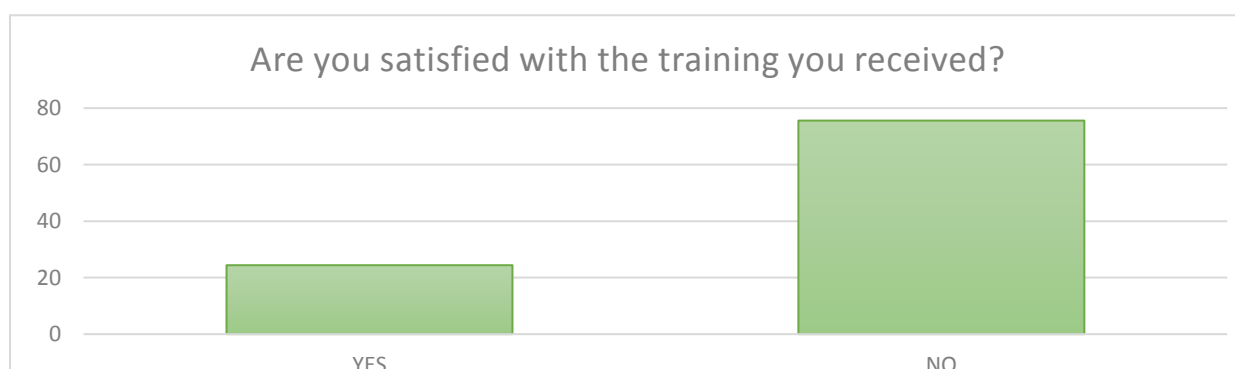
2a. Have you been trained on the use of CBA?

When respondents were asked to state if they had been trained on CBA, they had the following responses: 91 of them admitted that they had been trained on the use of the approach, while 8 said that they had not.



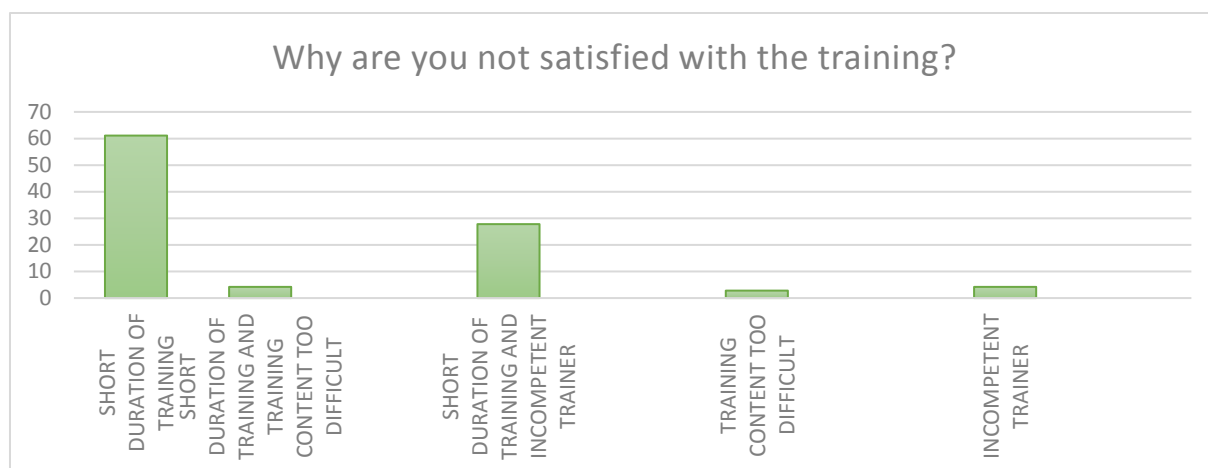
2b. Are you satisfied with the training received on CBA?

Teachers were asked to evaluate the training they received on CBA. 68 (about 76%) said that they were not satisfied with the training received, while only 22 (about 24%) were satisfied with the training.



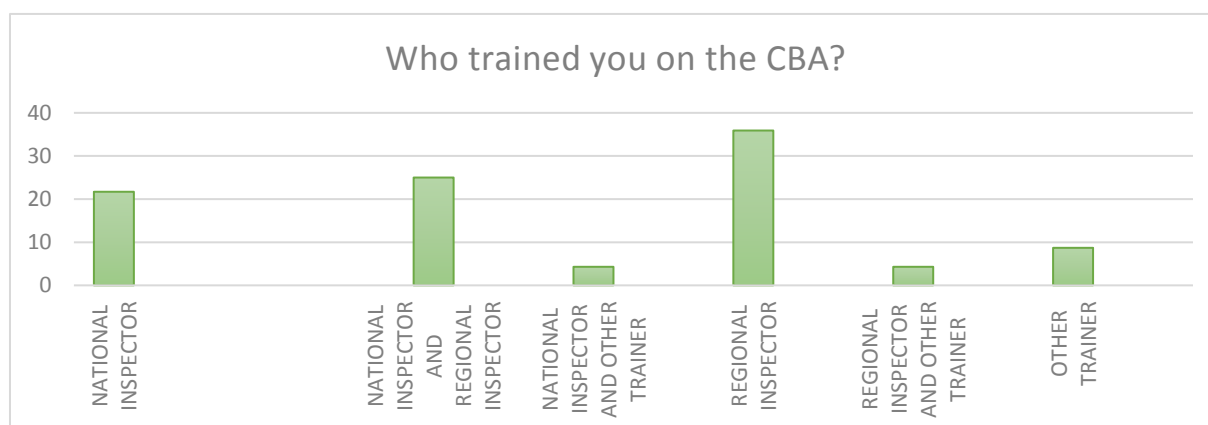
2c. Why are you not satisfied with the training received?

Teachers were asked to explain why they were not satisfied with the training they received on CBA. Short duration of training (61%) and poorly skilled trainers (28%) are seemingly the main reasons for teachers' dissatisfaction with the training received on the approach. Difficulty in mastering training content, according to about 4% of the respondents, seems to be the lowest rated reason.



3. Who trained you on CBA ?

From the table below, there seem to be multiple sources of training on CBA. The majority of teachers (34%) were trained by regional inspectors, 25% of them by both national and regional inspectors, 22% by national inspectors, 4% by both regional and other trainers, while 9% were trained by other trainers.



4a. What are some advantages of CBA?

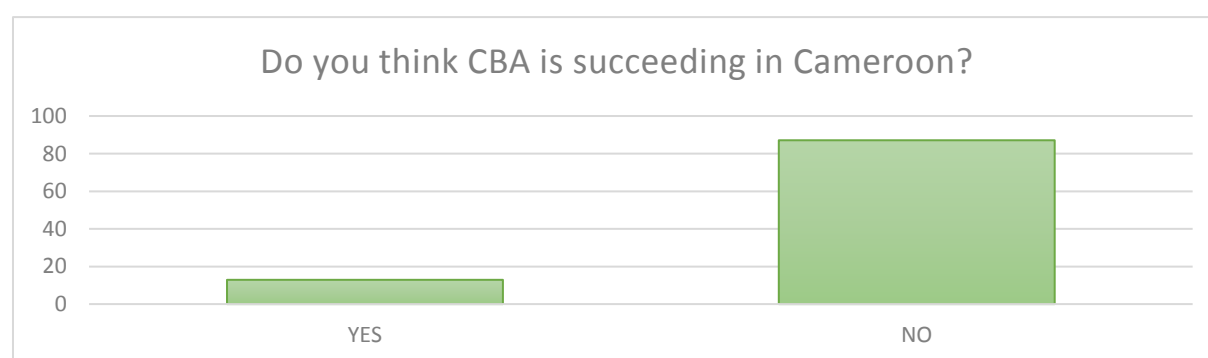
Respondents were asked to give some of the advantages of CBA. According to their answers, they believe that the use of this approach leads to a variety of outcomes: teachers do more research before teaching, it addresses real life situations, learners pay more attention in class, learners are more creative, students participate more actively during learning, learners are more integrated in their immediate environment. Furthermore, learners are independent and proactive, learners are more lively and interactive, learners understand lessons better, learners do more research, learners are more critical, learners are problem solvers, and teaching is more comfortable because the teacher simply acts as guide.

4b. What are some disadvantages of CBA?

Respondents had the following things to say about the disadvantages of CBA: The approach requires too many resources, is too expensive, there is lack of adequate infrastructure and lack of compatible text books and training guides. In addition, lessons are more difficult to prepare, the approach is difficult to understand, there is difficulty in completing schemes of work and in mastering all the problems faced by learners, the approach is too difficult to master and many teachers have not yet mastered the approach. Finally, more disadvantages identified were the fact that the approach is too elitist and may not be applicable to the Cameroonian context, as well as the fact that the didactic material is often unavailable, among other things.

5. Do you think that CBA is succeeding in Cameroon?

When teachers were asked to evaluate the success of CBA in the education system in Cameroon, most of them (87%) judged that the approach was not recording the success it was intended to. Yet, some respondents could not say whether the approach was succeeding or not.



6. Give suggestions for the better implementation of CBA.

Concerning the way CBA can be best implemented, respondents made the following suggestions: reduce class sizes, equip schools with the necessary pedagogic material, train school supervisors (inspectors) to better train teachers, increase the number of pedagogic seminars to disseminate the approach, supply instructional material, supply curriculum material to teachers and students, show teachers how CBA works in real life, introduce the approach in the teacher training colleges, and increase the teachers' salaries in order to motivate them to apply the approach, among other things.

Discussion and Conclusion

Knowledge and awareness of CBA

Teachers' knowledge and awareness is of upmost importance for the adherence to CBA. If one were to go by the teachers' knowledge of the reform, it can be said with certainty that CBA has succeeded. This is justified by the fact that all of teachers that participated in the study have heard about the approach, even though they learned about it from different sources. The different sources of knowledge justify the various curriculum delivery channels that exist in the Cameroonian education system. The fact that a respondent said s/he learned about CBA in the American Embassy shows the support some diplomatic representations give to the education system. The competency-based education reform in Cameroon has been introduced by more than one consortium with different funds from donors.

Respondents' knowledge of CBA was equally demonstrated by their ability to describe it. Again, on this note, the respondents attempted to describe what they thought CBA is. Regardless of the various descriptions they gave, the underlying feature of their description highlighted the fact that the approach is a learner-centred one that makes students solve problems and face real life situations.

Attitudes towards CBA and pedagogic practices

The attitudes teachers have towards reforms are very determinant for their success. This is so because if teachers do not have a positive attitude towards the reform, they will hardly apply it. Even if they do apply it, they will do so because they are compelled by professional obligation to do so. Notwithstanding, the evidence from our findings points to the fact that teachers have a positive attitude towards CBA. When respondents were asked to rate their liking for CBA on a scale of 1-5, most of them rated it in a range of 3 to 5, far above average.

The rating the respondents gave CBA can be compared with their willingness to apply it. Admittedly, 76% of the respondents indicated that they apply CBA in their classes. Their reason for rating the approach so high is equally justified by the reasons for liking the approach, which, according to them, is not only easy to use and relevant to students' lives, but also and most importantly enables students to be problem solvers.

Concerning the various aspects of the reform, most respondents said they mastered the integration activities and formulation of complex problem situations. Less attention was given to formative assessment and remedial teaching. Undoubtedly, teachers have not yet incorporated in their daily pedagogic practices the culture of formative assessment, otherwise considered as the type of assessment that increases students' learning. The same situation prevails with remedial teaching, which is possible when the formative assessment has been done and students' learning difficulties are identified.

By finding out from teachers the aspects of the approach they master best, the intension here was to gather their views on the routine practices as far as the reform is concerned. The lesson preparatory phase, complex problem formulation and integration phases seemingly constitute the phases these teachers master most, and that accounts for the reason why they find it easy to apply.

Strategies put in place for the implementation of CBA

Concerning the assessment of the reform with regards to the implementation strategies put in place, most teachers (84%) said that they were not satisfied. The fact that they said they were not satisfied means that they believe that there were alternative ways of introducing the approach in schools in order for it to be successful.

Among the reasons given for their dissatisfaction, teachers said that the short duration of training and incompetent trainers account for poor rating and lack of success of the reform. The strategy put in place by the Ministry of Secondary Education is one which seemingly does not enhance the mastery of the reform. Little time, usually one or two days, is allocated for training, relatively a very short time for teachers to master the training content. Furthermore, teachers believe that the trainers who trained them have not mastered the reform themselves. These things combined may account for the overall non-mastery of the reform.

Regarding the training of teachers, the multiplicity of the training sources might have created a disparate situation because the training content is not standardized. There is the likelihood that teachers might not have received the same information, thereby leading to non-mastery of the reform.

Teachers, however, were positive when they identified some of the advantages of the approach. Teachers' adherence to the reform is based on the fact that they believe in the advantages the approach has. No doubt, the respondents rated the approach higher than average on a scale of 1 to 5. However, teachers equally identified some shortcomings of the approach.

The suggestions the respondents made about the way the approach can be implemented shows the importance of involving teachers at the very initial phase of the reform process. In this way, the shortcomings associated with the implementation plan would have been avoided. Quite often reforms are introduced in a top-down approach where teachers' views are not taken into account. This is justified by the fact that teachers are hardly involved at the conception phase of the reform. The curriculum is highly centralised and most decisions are taken at the ministerial level. In this connection there is little or no initiative taken by teachers at school level.

Conclusion

This study set out to investigate the factors that influence teachers' adherence or non-adherence to CBA in secondary schools in Cameroon. The findings from the field have led to the conclusions based on the knowledge and awareness that teachers have about CBA, their attitudes and pedagogic practices, as well as the strategies put in place for the implementation of the approach.

Regarding the level of knowledge and awareness about CBA, teachers seem to be quite knowledgeable as well as highly aware of the approach, as demonstrated by the findings. The knowledge teachers have is very crucial for their adherence to the reform.

Concerning the attitudes that teachers have about CBA, the findings show that teachers have a positive attitude towards the reform. Their positive attitudes for the reform are closely linked to the reasons they have for liking the approach. It can be understood that teachers have adhered to the reform even though they have encountered some difficulties in its application.

Finally, concerning the strategy put in place for implementing the reform, teachers said that they were not satisfied with the way the reform is being introduced. A short duration of training and incompetent trainers are the most likely causes of their dissatisfaction.

Recommendations

The findings of the study have shown that teachers demonstrate a good knowledge of CBA, as well as positive attitudes towards the reform. However, this is not the case with the strategy put in place for the implementation of the reform.

Taking into consideration the findings of this study, the following recommendations are made:

- Reorganise the pedagogic structure by reducing class sizes, and providing appropriate curriculum materials and equipment to schools;
- Motivate teachers by improving their working conditions;
- Put in place a plan for continuous professional development for teachers and inspectors concerning CBA;
- Involve teachers in the implementation plan for the dissemination of CBA;
- Put in place a monitoring and evaluation mechanism in order to ensure the effectiveness of the reform. In this way, some of the errors and insufficient points of past reforms will be corrected.

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