

In-service training for improving the implementation of competency-based curriculum in English foreign language teaching: is planning effective?

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Abstract

Purpose – In Tanzania, in-service training was implemented to facilitate teachers understanding and implementation of the competency-based curriculum in the English language. This study aims to evaluate whether or not the in-service training was effectively planned to achieve its goals.

Design/methodology/approach – The study used a narrative research design that focuses on analysing the story of a particular event, object or programme as it occurred in a specific social context. Thirty-two purposefully selected respondents were interviewed, and data were analysed using the thematic approach.

Findings – The study found strengths and weaknesses in the in-service training planning process. The strength included coherence between the need for in-service training and country priority. Moreover, collective participation was promoted since all trainees were English language teachers. Perceived weaknesses included a lack of coherence between training objectives and teachers' actual needs. Equally, collective participation was limited because trainees taught mixed grades with varied work environments and experiences. Besides, heads of schools were not involved in training planning. Even those tasked with a lead role in cascading training to untrained teachers lacked the confidence and competence to do so.

Originality/value – The study contributes to the body of knowledge by uncovering weaknesses associated with in-service planning in Tanzania. The study calls upon the future planners of in-service training to consider the elements of effective in-service training during the planning and ensure that the views of all stakeholders at the macro and micro levels are assessed for quality programme implementation and better results.

Keywords In-service training, Effectiveness, English foreign language, Planning, Competency-based curriculum

Paper type Research paper



Introduction

Despite English language teachers' positive attitude towards the competency-based curriculum (CBC) adopted in 2005, inadequate adherence to its principles in English

language teaching in ordinary secondary schools in Tanzania continues (Ndulila and Msuya, 2017). According to Kiswaga (2017), competency-based language teaching in Tanzania is still taught more theoretically than practically. Students respond better to hypothetical questions than practical ones. Likewise, Lyimo and Mapunda (2016) observed that the curriculum is slightly practised. Assessment and teaching activities do not check with competency-based language teaching principles. Moreover, Biseko *et al.* (2020) and Omari (2019) noted that the teachers' role is still knowledge transmission, and they dominate the lesson more than students. In a nutshell, CBC remains a good paradigm with limited implementation at the classroom level (Tarmo and Kimaro, 2021).

The limited enactment of CBC in English language subjects persists despite the government's and stakeholders' efforts to ensure that teachers are retrained so that relevant skills, attitudes, knowledge and beliefs needed for competence-based language teaching (CBLT) are acquired. The effort includes institutionalisation and provision of in-service education and training (INSET) in the second phase of the Secondary Education Development Programme (SEDP II) (2010–2016) [United Republic of Tanzania (URT, 2010)]. Since English is a language of instruction and learning, dialogue and commercial transaction, particular attention to INSET was paid to English language teachers (among others). They were provided with three years of NSET, which emphasised improving their subject knowledge (World Bank, 2017).

The persistence of ineffective implementation of a CBC in English language teaching made other scholars affirm that the competence-based approach is unsuitable for teaching the English language subject in Tanzanian secondary schools (Sane and Sebonde, 2014). While Sane and Sebonde (*ibid*) comment on the unsuitability of the new curriculum (hence its abandonment), other scholars recommend more provision of in-service teacher training (Kiswaga, 2017; Ndulila and Msuya, 2017; Omari, 2019). Yet, even if more INSET is desired, planning effectiveness for the INSET that has been provided so far to assist EFL teachers with competency-based teaching is not documented. Besides, more provision of in-service training will not mean better results if evaluation of its effectiveness is not paid attention to. Doing so will lead to implementing the in-service training in the same way that it achieved less than promised or nothing (Murphy, 2020).

Effective in-service training is a product of good planning, making in-service training planning as important as the outcome it hopes to achieve (Patton *et al.*, 2015). However, coordinators of in-service training pay too much attention to training outcomes, ignoring planning and processes that facilitate the successful attainment of the goals. As a result, training fails because they lack direction and purpose (Guskey, 2014). To quote Simão *et al.* (2009, pp. 57–58):

[...] success in teacher education, especially with regard to continuous training, depends on the ability of schools to involve themselves in the conception and collective development of training projects that meet the needs and enable answers to be found to day-to-day problems that arise [...] projects hatched in the heart of each institution, or group of institutions that organise themselves for this purpose, will be more profitable and relevant, as they will better match the needs and interests of the schools and allow the teachers themselves to draw up their own training processes.

Based on Simão's quote, the relevance of the in-service training depends on teachers' and schools' involvement in its planning. Hence, if there is a difference in INSET input and output, direct questions should be asked about whether the training was effectively planned and implemented (Hava and Erturgut, 2010).

In Tanzania, scholars have explored the implementation of a CBC in the English language, from how it is being executed to the challenges (Abdala, 2020; Biseko *et al.*, 2020;

Lyimo and Mapunda, 2016; Ndulila and Msuya, 2017). In both cases, inadequate INSET provision is frequently mentioned among the factors behind the curriculum's ineffective implementation. Nevertheless, a detailed analysis of individual participants' perceptions of the INSET planning process, i.e. training relevancy, needs and goals establishment, training modality and the overall participants' inclusion in in-service development and organisation, is often missing. Therefore, whether or not the INSET provided involves teachers during planning correlates with teachers' needs, and its job-embeddedness, to begin with, is hardly reported. Therefore, to this end, using one in-service training, the study evaluates stakeholders' perceptions of whether the INSET was planned following the features of effective INSET planning that the literature suggests. The study addressed the following research question:

RQ1. What is the overall stakeholder's evaluation of the in-service training planning?

Empirical insight

Conceptual framework

The study's conceptual framework was drawn from the features of effective INSET, which are said to occur when teachers have a chance to select, plan, carry out and evaluate the training that they attended (Sadeghi and Richards, 2021). According to Darling-Hammond *et al.* (2017), a teacher cannot be invited to participate in a top-down, arranged in-service training; instead, quality and fidelity to their needs to be taken care of. Among the features widely documented in the literature are considering the needs of individual teachers, students, schools and districts (Hunzicker, 2010). Teachers must learn something useful for their students and themselves (Matherson and Bulletin, 2017). Therefore, planning an INSET needs to be shared by the provider and recipient of the training so that it becomes differentiated per their needs and entangled with the challenges that students, teachers and schools face in implementing the reform (Luneta, 2012).

In addition to needs consideration, Loucks-Horsley (1996) and Petrie and McGee (2012) point out the need for INSET to prepare teachers to lead as mentors to others. The leading role helps them model and mentor those not attending training. Besides, there must be coherence between INSET activities, curriculum requirements and national priorities (Bautista *et al.*, 2017). Coherence also calls for INSET to be part of teachers' daily school activities and build on teachers' prior knowledge (Garet *et al.*, 2009). Moreover, school leadership is vitally involved in planning and implementation. Without their involvement, teachers will be left alone to implement changes while deprived of their immediate supervisors' support, motivation and encouragement (Whitworth and Chiu, 2015). The leaders can serve as facilitators and champions of the change so that they understand what is being taught and how it will be implemented in class (Schachter *et al.*, 2019).

Besides school leaders' involvement, collective participation between colleagues is also essential. According to Hubers *et al.* (2022), collective participation occurs when teachers teaching the same school, grade and subject attend the course together. Sharing similar characteristics enhances collaborations, participation, interaction and discussion, hence challenging one another and clarifying misunderstandings (Disch, 2020; Sims and Fletcher-Wood, 2021). Haney and Lumpe (1995a) point to another feature: the number of participants in in-service training. The number should be large enough to support peer support and collaborations. Thus, a school sending few participants to INSET limits peer support and sharing, leaving most teachers unaware of the proposed reforms (Petrie and McGee, 2012). In a nutshell, Guskey (2003) comments that the best INSET is the one in which administrators and all school members take part in planning and meeting their needs. Their

Effective participation in planning increases their buy-in to reform and motivates them to take action (Turnbull, 2002). However, an INSET adopted with minimal teacher, student and school participation may not grow and bloom as expected (Murphy, 2020).

Empirical literature review

Evaluating an Elite English programme in Taiwan, Shih (2019) noted that the programme matched the needs of students. Parallel findings were documented by Jauhari *et al.* (2021) and (Depranoto *et al.*, 2020). In both studies, evaluated programmes were relevant to the participants, aligned with the institutional mission and vision and conducted under the law and regulations. In the Umam and Saripah (2018) study, it was found that even though programme objectives were based on the needs of participants, they were still not communicated before training; hence, participants were unaware of the programme's purpose. Yastibaş and Erdal (2020) also found that even though on the context evaluation, the programme did not have many negative views, the programme's background did not relate to the physical condition of the classroom and students' background.

More diverse results were documented by Aldapit and Suharjana (2019) when evaluating the coaching programme of athletes. It was found that the context lacked budget and government support. Aliakbari and Ghoreyshi (2013) also observed a similar result when evaluating a programme for teaching English as a foreign language. The graduates reported that the programme somehow ignored their actual needs, had unclear objectives, and that some aspects of the course content were irrelevant. Moreover, Hayes *et al.* (2016) evaluated the low take-up of the in-service course by South Korean English language teachers. The study found the low acceptance was caused by a lack of teachers' involvement in deciding what and how to learn. In addition, Hung (2016) evaluated an in-service training program for primary school teachers of English in Vietnam. The findings indicated that although training met participants' expectations, the project management was still top-down. Moreover, there was no need for analysis, and communication between participants, project managers and primary managers was also poor. So were the findings in Altan (2016) that the INSET provided by the general directorate of teachers' education in Turkey does not meet the needs of the teachers.

Generally, reviewed literature indicates the criteria to be considered when planning in-service training. Fundamental requirements include identifying participants and their needs, developing the vision and goals of the programme and ensuring that the programme has legal establishment and that its vision and mission align with particular country priorities. Other critical issues such as programme sustainability, setting time for professional development, developing leadership and professional learning culture, ensuring equity, obtaining public support and scaling up should also be analysed early (Loucks-Horsley *et al.*, 2010).

Methodology

Study design

The study used a narrative research design that focuses on analysing the story of a particular event, object or programme as it occurred in a specific social context (Patton, 2015). Using narration as a study design aimed to keep participants' views and experiences of the INSET planning at the centres of evaluating INSET relevancy. According to Shakman *et al.* (2017), since programmes are designed and implemented by the people, which affects the lives of the participants and the community at large, understanding the trajectory of the training using the stories of those affected by the programme is quite significant.

Study location and participants

The study was conducted in two regions: Kilimanjaro and Manyara. Prior research inquiry indicated that the two areas did an INSET to improve EFL teachers' understanding and implementation of CBLT. Thirty-two (32) respondents were involved in the study. They included 21 trainees (EFL secondary school teachers), four regional management and technical team members and seven heads of schools. The participants were recruited using a purposive sampling strategy where only those involved in INSET in designing and implementing were involved. The participant list was obtained from the regional INSET coordination. After that, each participant on the list was phone-called and asked if they could be interviewed.

Data collection

Interview and documentary analysis were the primary methods for collecting data. The study used one-to-one semi-structured whereby one respondent was interviewed at a time. Despite the time and cost, it was still a better data collection approach since many respondents resided in rural areas and were dispersed. The flexible nature and the ability to provide exhaustive participants' experiences of an event were the reasons for choosing the semi-structured interview. Moreover, since it was one-to-one, a more profound and individualised experience in training planning was collected.

Along with interviews, documents were used as a data source in this study, not to supplement or seek convergence and corroboration, as [Bowen \(2009\)](#) suggests, but rather as an independent method on its merit. The documents collected were only those related to the INSET that the current study evaluated that were in the respondent's possession and affirmed that they were given during the training. Obtained documents included participants' invitation letters, INSET diaries, reports, timetables, handouts, training manuals and a facilitation guide.

Data analysis

After the interview, data were transcribed. The researchers did the transcription to enhance familiarity with the data. After transcription, interviews were managed using qualitative data analysis software named ATLAS.ti. Both interviews and documentary data were analysed thematically using a thematic approach. The approach involves analysing data in six nonlinear stages, i.e. familiarising with data, coding, searching for themes, reviewing code, defining and naming themes and producing reports ([Braun and Clarke, 2012](#); [Braun and Clarke, 2013](#)). The analysis started with getting acquainted with the data by reading and reading the transcript to become aware of the information contained therein.

The second stage was generating the initial code. In this study, codes were generated inductively using exact words and phrases said by the participants. After coding, the next phase was developing themes, whereby a group of codes capturing the same ideas are kept together. Stage four revisited the themes obtained in stage three to see if they represented the story of that particular theme. At this stage, mismatched codes to the theme were removed, empty codes were deleted, and re-coding was done where necessary. The last two phases of thematic data analysis, defining and renaming the themes and producing a report, were done co-concurrently.

Findings*Training coherence with teachers' needs and national priorities*

The coherence aspect evaluated whether need identification was conducted, training coherence with teachers' and school needs, and national priorities. The findings are presented in [Table 1](#).

Aspect	Criteria	Interview quotes
INSET coherence	The in-service training was coherence with the national priority	The syllabus was competence-based, whereas teachers were teaching using teacher-centred methods. On the other hand, students did examinations that measured their competence. So, in 2012, there was a mass failure because students were asked questions that required real-life experience, but they were not taught (Education Officer 1, Manyara)
	The in-service training objectives were determined using the bottom-up approach	Most of the time, training is done at the national level. So even needs identification is made at the national level. At the council level, we are just involved in the participants' selection and implementation of the training. But we don't need identification. If that were the case, every municipal could prepare its own since there could be no uniformity (Education Officer 2, Kilimanjaro) No, because we already had a guide. So, materials were prepared according to the facilitation guide (Education Officer 1, Manyara)
	The in-service training objectives were relevant to EFL teachers teaching challenges	The new syllabus has sections that are very different from the old one. Assessment of the lesson plan and scheme of work was challenging. Understanding what competence is, was a problem. (Teacher 3, Kilimanjaro)

Table 1.
Training coherence
with teachers' needs
and national
priorities

Source: Authors' own work

From the data in [Table 1](#), the following was observed: first, there was in-service training coherence with the national priority. The training was motivated by the need to improve the quality of English language teaching by providing them with knowledge and skills on how to interpret, translate and implement competency-based language teaching introduced in 2005. Among the consequences of curriculum change was students' mass failure in the English language in national form four examinations in 2010, 2011 and 2012 due to a mismatch between the nature of the assessment (competency-based) and how students were taught (content-based). Therefore, EFL teachers had to be trained to help them transition from one paradigm to another in lesson preparation, presentation, assessment and evaluation.

A documentary review of whether the need assessment was done indicated that the training evolved after the 2011 government survey showing challenges in implanting competency-based language teaching. The survey resulted in the development of a handbook and implementation guides. Nevertheless, since time lapsed from the survey to training initiation, the regional implementation guide allowed each region to customise the training objective and the content per need of the region by piloting and re-analysing the already prepared content to ensure that it relates to the actual EFL teachers' needs. Yet, from the organisers and trainees' perspectives in [Table 1](#), it was also not done. Organisers thought they needed to maintain content uniformity since materials (facilitation guide and handbook) were already in place.

Interestingly, despite the INSET objectives not emanating from actual EFL teachers' needs in the studied regions, respondents commented that they were relevant and congruent

with the curriculum implementation challenges they faced. Nevertheless, some respondents still viewed goals as irrelevant to real-classroom situations. For example, TIK remarked that the challenges she faced before the training continued to exist even after the training:

Yes, I had a challenge, and there is still a challenge. What we learn from the training is not related to the classroom situation. For example, you may be taught how to manage a class with many students, but what are the students' abilities? They take it too general and say that no student cannot be taught. When you have a lot of students in class with different skills/capabilities, and some don't know how to read and write, it is challenging (Teacher 1, Kilimanjaro).

The training objectives were perceived as irrelevant because they ignored the nature of the student and the class size.

Promotional of collective participation

The question of whether the training promoted collective participation was analysed based on the criteria used to select trainees, recommended size of the class and the characteristics of those who attended. The results are summarised and presented in Table 2.

Data in Table 2 indicate that trainees were selected based on the criteria. For example, EFL teachers residing in rural schools were preferred since they are unmotivated, neglected and receive fewer opportunities for training. On another occasion, the selection focused on active EFL teachers, as in the following quotations:

We have a list indicating all teachers, subjects they teach and schools. So it was easy to sort out. We contacted the heads of the schools to ensure that those selected were teaching the subject at

Aspect	Criteria	Interview quotes
Promotional of collective participation	The trainees were selected based on the established criteria	You check the performance of an individual teacher. Those who perform below the average may have weaknesses, so you help them improve their performance. Teachers in remote areas do not interact with other teachers, so they are considered first. For example, if you take teachers from Kibacha and Same Secondary, they are all in town and can meet for discussion and knowledge sharing. But there are teachers from Chalawe. Reaching Same and meeting with other teachers for discussion will cost 50,000/= Tshs. Therefore, those must be helped to receive training (Education Officer 1, Kilimanjaro)
	Forty (40) EFL teachers were trained at a time	Due to a lack of sufficient budget, there were very few teachers who participated in each training. For example, from Manyara Region, only twenty-seven English language teachers were involved in (Education Officer, Manyara)
	Training involved teachers from similar communities, teaching similar content areas and grades	**

Table 2.
Trainees' selection

Note: **Data were derived from a documentary review
Source: Authors' own work

the time. Some teachers have learned to teach English and other subjects; however, at that moment, they were not teaching English (Education Officer 2, Kilimanjaro).

Therefore, those who specialised in English language teaching and were actively teaching at the time of training were selected. Another factor observed was seniority, as elaborated by Education Officer 2 in the following quotation:

But we were also looking for seniority. Other schools received several newly employed teachers. Therefore, teachers with experience and know the challenges facing English language teaching were selected to attend the training to share and train with junior recruits.

Therefore, in some cases, experienced teachers were favoured as they were presumed to have more capacity for peer coaching. Secondly, on the number of trainees, the results from Table 2's interviews pinpointed that only twenty (20) English language teachers were trained in Kilimanjaro and twenty-five (25) in Manyara. The above finding was against established criteria in the implementation guideline, suggesting that 40 teachers should be taught simultaneously. Yet, despite the limited number of participants, each district in each region had a representative(s). Their profile is summarised in Table 3.

Name	Type of school	Gender	District	Education level	Subject majored	Teaching experience
T1K	Public	Female	D1K	Master degree	Environment Eng. (master degree) Geography; Literature (bachelor degree) English (diploma)	12 years
T2K	Public	Male	D2K	Bachelor degree	English; Kiswahili	9 years
T3K	Public	Female	D5K	Diploma	Kiswahili; English	33 years
T4K	Public	Female	D3K	Bachelor degree	Linguistics; Geography	4 years
T5K	Public	Male	D1K	Diploma	Geography; English	6 years
T6K	Public	Female	D5K	Bachelor degree	English	9 years
T7K	Public	Male	D3K	Bachelor degree	English; Geography	3 years
T8K	Public	Female	D4K	Bachelor degree	Linguistics; Literature	3 years
T9K	Public	Male	D6K	Bachelor degree	English; History	4 years
T10K	Public	Female	D3K	Bachelor degree	English; Geography (diploma) Geography (degree)	17 years
T11K	Public	Female	D4K	Bachelor degree	English Geography (diploma) English; Literature (degree)	11 years
T12K	Public	Male	D4K	Bachelor degree	Kiswahili; English	3 years
T13K	Public	Male	D4K	Bachelor degree	Linguistics, Geography	9 years
T1M	Public	Male	D3M	Bachelor degree	English	5 years
T2M	Public	Female	D1M	Bachelor degree	Kiswahili; English	12 years
T3M	Public	Male	D1M	Bachelor degree	English; History	14 years
T4M	Public	Male	D3M	Bachelor degree	English; Geography	5 years
T5M	Public	Female	D2M	Bachelor degree	English; Kiswahili	6 years
T6M	Public	Male	D2M	Master degree	English; Literature (bachelor degree) Ed. Planning (master degree)	6 years
T7M	Public	Male	D1M	Bachelor degree	English; History	11 years
T8M	Public	Male	D1M	Advanced diploma	English	6 years

Notes: T = teacher; D = district; M = Manyara region; K = Kilimanjaro region

Source: Authors' own work

Table 3.
Trainee's profile by
gender

Table 3 highlights that all participants were active English language teachers and came from public schools. Their level of education ranged from diplomas to master’s degrees. They all majored in English or linguistics as their teaching subject. Moreover, they were teaching different classes from Form I–IV. Their teaching experience also varied between 1–3 years, 4–6 years, 7–18 years, 19–30 years and 31–40 years, respectively. Thus, given the finding, collective participation in training could hardly be achieved as they varied in experience, school location and teaching varied grades.

Promoting leadership roles through cascading

The study findings on the INSET design indicated that the programme was designed to be conducted using a cascade model. National facilitators trained regional facilitators, who trained English language teachers in established regional centres. Trained EFL teachers were also expected to continue training other language teachers in their respective districts and schools. Thus, the study evaluated the extent to which cascading principles and leadership roles were considered for training sustainability, as proposed by Hayes (2000). The findings are presented in Table 4.

Table 4 stipulates that leadership roles through cascading were not promoted. Those who were expected to lead the training for their colleagues at the school and district level could not do so as they lacked confidence and could not handle a colleague’s follow-up questions.

Another challenge was that heads of schools were not trained or even involved in the training planning beyond selecting participant(s) who could attend training. As a result, they did not know how to lead those who were trained, as it was aired by a member of the regional management team that:

The challenge was that the head of the school was not part of the programme. As a result, they failed to be supervisors. Teachers have been receiving training, but when they return to school, they do nothing, and there is no one to account for (Education Officer 1, Kilimanjaro).

Aspect	Criteria	Interview quotes
INSET cascading	Knowledge promoted during INSET was cascaded to other EFL teachers who did not attend training at the regional level	During the department meeting, I tried to say that the curriculum had changed . . . , but I was not that serious. Why could I be serious when I was not that good (Teacher 6, Manyara)? After the seminar, we were told to share it with our colleagues. We have come across a challenge that they don’t understand. It is just a disturbance, a considerable disturbance. They will question, like, why should we live this out? Why is it like that? (Teacher 5, Kilimanjaro)
	All stakeholders were involved in the preparation of the training	You are just involved when they tell you to bring teachers for training. It may come in two faces: they either send names and release them, or you appoint them (Head of School 1, Manyara)

Table 4.
Promoting leadership role through cascading

Source: Authors’ own work

Thus, since heads of schools were not involved during planning, they could neither take a lead role in supervising or guiding the INSET cascading at the school level nor motivate those trained to do the same.

Discussion

The findings indicate strengths and weaknesses in how in-service training was planned. The strength perceived includes coherence between the need for INSET and the national 2025 vision to equip members of society with creativity and problem-solving skills (URT, 1999). The vision led to the successful introduction of CBC across the disciplines, creating the need for INSET to allow teachers to “re-conceptualise their understanding of teaching, learning and their identities formed in an examination-orientated education system” (Guo, 2013, p. 91). While that was the case, there was no customisation of the training objectives, creating a lack of coherence between training objectives and actual teacher’s needs.

According to Waters and Vilches (2001), large-scale curriculum reform, as the 2005 Tanzania curriculum reform was, tends to follow centralised decision-making, ignoring those implementing the ideas. However, that is true; the study finds that it is not the centrality of decision-making that hindered the customisation process; instead, those required to supervise the process were unaware of its importance. Organisers believed there was no need for content analysis since training materials were already in place. Thus, making adjustments would have affected programme content, hindering uniformity. Yet, Wedell (2009) affirms that the need for in-service training may vary across the country, even among teachers in the same school. Even more, they may also differ depending on the career stage they are in (Richards and Farrell, 2005).

Thus far, despite the INSET rationale and participants’ appraisal of the objectives, they were not based on EFL teachers’ actual needs. Instead, they were derived from what Atai and Mazlum (2013) call grant documents. No wonder some participants felt that the objectives were not relevant. One reason could be that their voice was included in deriving them. The above findings, though similar to what was found in Aliakbari and Ghoreyshi (2013), Hayes *et al.* (2016), Hung (2016) and Molope and Oduaran (2019) studies, are against features of effective in-service training which insist on planning in-service training that attends to teachers’ actual needs (Matherson and Bulletin, 2017).

Furthermore, the promotion of collective participation was somewhat not observed. It is good that the trainees were active and professional English language teachers. However, all English language teachers attended one training regardless of their geographical location, class level and work experience, making it a one-size-fits-all kind of INSET. Equivalent findings were also documented by Yan and He (2015), whereby general INSET provision affected the quality of short-term INSET for EFL teachers in China. Their observation, however, was contrary to Raud and Orekhova’s (2017) study. They found that in Estonia, neither EFL teachers’ level of education, seniority, school location, nor the level of school they teach played a significant role in EFL teachers’ interest in participating in continuing professional development courses. Even though that was the case for Estonia, the study still finds that the teachers’ needs in rural areas differed from those in urban areas. Clarke and Dede (2009) stress that one-size-fits-all approaches do not work since they ignore contextual factors determining interaction efficiency in particular local situations.

The number of participants per district and region also hindered collective participation. First and foremost, it was good that every district had a representative. Extensive inclusion makes it possible “to evenly distribute the training capacity throughout the country and minimise time-off needed (due to travel) to conduct training” (Hiner *et al.*, 2009, p. 4). Nevertheless, one or two trainee(s) per district cannot conduct peer coaching for all EFL

teachers who did not attend INSET in their respective communities. The limited number of participants hinders peer support, leaving the majority excluded from the initial training unaware of the proposed changes (Haney and Lumpe, 1995b; Petrie and McGee, 2012).

Lastly, the INSET failed to promote leadership roles through a cascading model. For the model to continue working effectively and achieve cost, resource, and time efficiency, trained EFL teachers needed to continue coaching those who were not trained. Yet, even the few teachers honoured to attend the training could not take the lead role in coaching and mentoring others because they lacked the confidence and capacity to do so. Similar findings were observed by Dichaba and Mokhele (2012) that even though teachers were taught by trainers who had mastered the content and had skills for knowledge transmission, they were still not confident to share with others.

In addition, it was impossible for every trained English language teacher at the regional level to be used for the cascading purpose. Unless all trainees demonstrate exemplary performance in mastering the content to be taught, have confidence in taking the lead role and sharing the knowledge and can use the new knowledge in an actual classroom setting. So far, from the trainees' comments, that was not the case. That was contrary to what was observed in Japan, where every school has a certified teacher who has mastered the competencies that the system wants to cascade (OECD, 2009). Thus, a personal cascading had to be selected, trained and certified, not just trained, as was observed to be the case in this study.

Likewise, another limitation of the training model was that it did not give everybody an equal chance to be involved in planning. Specifically, that was the case for the heads of schools. According to Mwesiga and Okendo (2018, p. 92):

[...] school leaders are vested with the overall responsibility of ensuring successful implementation of curriculum and school programmes, supervising and monitoring day-to-day activities of teaching and learning, motivating teachers, and ensuring their commitment and school performance among other responsibilities.

When a novel paradigm needs implementation, the heads of the schools can set a vision and strategy for implementing it, involve teachers in planning and implementing change and prepare a conducive environment for change implementation (Meyer *et al.*, 2022). Mwesiga, Okendo and Meyer *et al.* indicate that heads of schools are the key to successful innovation implementation; unexpectedly, their involvement in training planning was only to nominate participants.

Principally, while English language teachers were being trained, their advisors and supervisors were not. Implementing the 2005 curriculum requires not only EFL teachers to be prepared but also their immediate supervisors. Hence, if the heads of schools are to provide EFL teachers with good support, advice and recommendations relating to CBC in English language teaching, they also need to be part of training planning and be trained. The content could have been on general matters emphasised across the curriculum, irrespective of the subject. Mmbando and Hongoke (2010) believe that heads of schools lack in-service training because of a lack of funds. However much that is true, it is also true that they do receive training to familiarise themselves with new responsibilities and affairs in their line of work. Thus, even when they meet for different agendas, a part CBC should be accommodated so they become comfortable with the approach.

Implication and limitation of the study findings

The study findings imply that the planning of in-service training is generally weak in Tanzania. Thus, the study recommends that the Ministry of Education, Science and

Technology, and other education stakeholders plan and design INSET while considering the conditions and best practices contributing to their effectiveness. Moreover, the study findings indicate the INSET was centrally planned and diffused to lower levels through cascading. While that may be cost-efficient, the study recommends balancing country needs against those of teachers, schools and the community to increase training relevance and ownership and facilitate effective knowledge transfer.

As far as the limitation of the study is concerned, first, the study was limited to evaluating in-service training planning. A detailed analysis should be extended to how participants perceived the organisation's support and the effectiveness of the implementation process, as they also contribute to training effectiveness. Secondly, the study evaluated in-service training planning at the regional level. More views should be obtained from those planning and organising in-service training at the national level.

Conclusion

The study evaluated the effectiveness of in-service training planning in improving competency-based English language teaching among EFL teachers in Tanzania. Based on the findings, it can be concluded that the training did not consider all the conditions for effective in-service training planning onboard. The key stakeholders were passive during in-service training planning. Yet, according to [Patton et al. \(2015\)](#), planning in-service training that can transform teachers' practice is a collaborative process, not a one-person or specific group task. Therefore, it is crucial that in-service training planning pay attention to collective participation, inclusive planning, content customisation or need identification and ensure that those responsible for cascading are adequately trained, tested and certified. Otherwise, planning contextually relevant and effective INSET that can facilitate implementing CBC in English language teaching and learning will remain challenging.

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Further reading

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