

## Sub-Theme 3: Stakeholders' Involvement in Education Change

### Readiness for the New Lower Secondary School Curriculum among Teacher Educators in Uganda

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#### Abstract

*The government of Uganda has rolled out the New Lower Secondary School Curriculum that emphasizes competence-based teaching as opposed to the previous one that was knowledge-oriented. The roll-out has come at a time when the country has been grappling with an examination-driven curriculum characterized by summative and continual assessment (also known as assessment of learning) as opposed to formative assessment (also known as assessment for learning). Whereas the implementation of the new curriculum is being spearheaded by the National Curriculum Development Centre, teacher training institutions (universities, national teacher training colleges) that are supposed to ensure the continuity of the training have not been deeply involved in the process. This implies that the training offered in these institutions is likely to yield deficiency in the competency of the graduates to handle the New Lower Secondary Curriculum. However, given that the curriculum is already in force, it is likely that the teacher training institutions have adopted some degree of readiness to train their teachers for the new curriculum. This study purposed to assess the degree of change readiness for the new curriculum among the teacher educators. Employing concurrent mixed methods design, quantitative data were collected from a cross-section of faculty selected using a simple random sampling technique while qualitative data were gathered from the institutions' administrators. The quantitative data were analysed to determine the levels of change readiness (acceptance and resistance) among the teacher educators. Qualitative data were analysed using an interpretative phenomenological approach to give meaning to the level of readiness for the change in curriculum. The findings would lend useful information for policy formulation regarding the relevance of teacher training institutions in curriculum reform and implementation for societal transformation.*

**Keywords:** Acceptance, Change readiness, Curriculum reform, Curriculum review, Lower secondary, Resistance, Teacher training,

#### Introduction

Globally, the availability of secondary education, its scope, duration, and age participation vary greatly (OECD, 2018). Despite the fact that many people have an idea of what secondary education is or should be, national perspectives on secondary education vary (Jacob & Lehner, 2012).

Secondary education in Uganda spans six years, from Senior One to Senior Six, with pupils averaging 14 to 19 years old (National Curriculum Development Centre, 2018). It is one of the available options for advanced education within the Ugandan educational system (Uganda National Commission for UNESCO, 2010) including four years of ordinary secondary level (Lower Secondary) and two for Advanced Secondary level (higher secondary) (JICA & IDCJ, 2012).

On successful completion of the ordinary level of secondary education, students are awarded the Uganda Certificate of Education i.e. UCE by UNEB (Nuffic, 2016). Successful senior four leavers have four possible paths through which they can attain further education: (i) they can either proceed to an advanced level of education; (ii) join two-year crafts courses in technical institutes; (iii) join a two-year grade III primary teaching programme (which government has now phased out based on the new MOES requirements of all teachers to have degrees despite the level of the class to be taught); (iv) or join any of the government's departmental programmes such as agriculture, health, veterinary, and cooperatives (Uganda Investment Authority, 2010). Students who successfully complete secondary school are conferred the Uganda Advanced Certificate of Education (UACE). Successful high school graduates attend college or enrol in two-year programs leading to an ordinary diploma in teacher education, technical education, or business studies, or they enrol in departmental programs.

According to Chapman et al. (2010), expanding access to high-quality secondary education is essential for achieving the objectives of human development, political stability, and economic competitiveness. This is only possible with ample resources for productive sector activities. Secondary education, which is a bridge between primary and postsecondary education, prepares students for the workforce and equips them with the social skills, competencies, and values they'll need to lead productive and satisfying lives as adults. Therefore, secondary education resources must be deployed so that institutions can meet the educational requirements of these young people. Accordingly, it has been suggested that secondary education with sound planning and funding has the potential to equip students with the knowledge and skills necessary for greater economic and social participation in a stable, democratic society. In addition, secondary education helps develop the skills necessary to avoid hazardous behaviour so that individuals can live healthier, longer lives (Venketsamy & Kinneer, 2020).

Uganda abruptly shifted from a secondary system for a limited academic class to a system for students of all ages promoting learner-centred approaches in teaching and learning. In sub-Saharan Africa, only South Africa has completed this transition; Botswana and Namibia are in the process. Uganda is therefore a pioneer. In the last two to three decades, several countries with middle-income and high-income levels have adopted this change process. This is beneficial because the outcomes and critiques of their change initiatives are accessible online. To enhance secondary education in Africa, it is imperative to first consider what students and institutions need to know to confront the challenges of the twenty-first century and promote economic growth. This necessitates a new curriculum framework, aspirational learning standards, cutting-edge evaluation tools, and assurance that assessments measure what they're intended to measure.

Uganda is one of the first African nations to contemplate overhauling its secondary education system to meet the demands of the labour market and the continent's economic development. To make fundamental adjustments to the structure of the secondary education curriculum, there must be consensus among key stakeholders, substantial support for educators and institutions, and a sustained commitment from legislators. Clausen-May and Baale (2014) proposed a "dominant pattern of expository, whole-class teaching" as a strategy to deliver the secondary school mathematics curriculum in Uganda, which was designed during colonial times to service a small, select group of academically gifted students. Since the implementation of the Universal Primary and Secondary Education Policies in 1997 and 2007, the curriculum has become increasingly ineffective and inaccessible for the majority of students.

The curriculum for Lower Primary levels P1 to P3 was aligned with that of the Early Childhood Development (ECD) program to ensure that the learners' acquisition of knowledge was based on recognizable themes and language. At this stage, the emphasis was on assisting students in acquiring the necessary literacy, math, and social skills.

The Upper Primary Curriculum was subsequently reviewed with the intent of converting it to a Competency-Based approach. This was implemented grade by grade, commencing in 2007 with P1 and concluding in 2013 with P7. It places a significant emphasis on both language and content competency acquisition. After evaluating the upper primary curriculum, it was crucial to align the Lower Secondary Curriculum with the primary curriculum. In 2007, the Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) conducted research and compiled a report on the Lower Secondary Curriculum, Assessment, and Examination, which identified the following deficiencies in the current curriculum:

- i) There are too many topics, the majority of which are expensive to implement.
- ii) It does not conform to international standards in important subject areas.
- iii) "Book learning" is prioritized over aptitude and talent competence.
- iv) When selecting learners for the subsequent cycle, academic achievement is given the utmost priority. This disqualifies many students.
- v) The test system determines what is taught and how it is taught, rather than the reverse. The majority of examination questions are comprehension-based and require study. Tests and evaluation methods cannot accommodate a wide diversity of skills.
- vi) Existing texts are dense with information and written for readers with higher literacy levels than the average individual.

The Ministry of Education and Sports (MoES) began reviewing the lower secondary curriculum in 2008. The 1992 Government White Paper on Education, Vision 2040, National Development Plans I and II, Education Sector Strategic Plans (ESSPs) of 2004/05 - 2019/20, NRM Manifesto 2016-2021, East African Secondary School Harmonized Curriculum Framework, Sustainable Development Goal 4 and subsequent studies conducted by the MoES served as the primary sources of guidance for the review. In addition, according to UNESCO's department of curriculum, for nations to achieve Sustainable Development Goal No. 4 "Ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all," then reforms in the curricula are inevitable.

### **Rationale for Lower Secondary School Curriculum Reform in Uganda**

According to the Ministry of Education (1989), both the government and the general public voiced concern about the education system's lack of relevance and inability to satisfy societal requirements. Among other things, education was failing to transmit the kind of science and technical knowledge, cultural values, literacy, and sense of social responsibility that society liked to see. It also failed to promote a sense of national unity, self-reliance, social fairness, and equality. In response to the rapidly transforming demands of their labour markets, the majority of middle-income and high-income countries have adopted a continuous curriculum revision process. Uganda therefore needed to make a more fundamental adjustment to the post-primary system in order to: (a) enable universal secondary education (USE) to develop in line with 21st century economic development demands; (b) address the rising number of primary graduates; and (c) reduce the unaffordable high cost of the current system.

The transformation of Uganda's educational system from one that was exclusive to the elite to one that is open to all and supports each person's endeavour to advance as far as they can in their education is a significant one that will affect every step of the curriculum-creation process.

Long-term political choices must be made, and expert employees at all levels must undergo a significant re-orientation process. It has frequently been noted that those nations that have handled this shift the best and with the support of the majority of the population are those that have also experienced other social upheavals, such as the process of recovering from a war or the kind of social changes connected with obtaining political freedom. Both of these circumstances do not exist in Uganda, and the challenges posed by change management cannot be overstated.

The “CURASSE Roadmap” report examined the reasons behind the need for the curriculum shift in depth. The primary reason was the need to switch from an exclusive curriculum with high entrance requirements and high failure rates to an inclusive curriculum that is open to everyone and honours success. Currently, secondary education costs roughly seven times as much as elementary education, whereas, in other nations, this ratio is closer to two times. The causes of the high cost include the high cost of many topics currently taught and the ineffective management of the program; the secondary PTR is reportedly around 20, which is extremely low when compared to what is possible globally. The fact that the present curriculum does not provide the kind of skills that the labour market needs to satisfy the country’s emerging requirements is a third crucial factor.

The current curriculum does not use instructional strategies that support efficient learning and skill development. The teaching and textbooks focus on getting the best mark on the test because the current programme is mainly made up of examination syllabi. For demonstrating an understanding of how to implement information on the exams, very few points are given. Except for a few comparatively unimportant assessments, such as practical scientific exams, skills are still largely not evaluated—a big mismatch if we are to promote employability. As a result, skills are rarely taught even when mastery of them is a declared curricular goal. It has been established that thoughtful curricular design, in conjunction with efficient testing and learning resources, plays a key role in improving teaching. The active learning strategies that distinguish successful contemporary teaching place value on the learner’s previous knowledge and promote its incorporation with new information. Despite being a key component of building the kinds of competencies needed by the shifting societal and workplace responsibilities of the 21st century, it is claimed that very little of this is presently taking place in secondary classrooms in Uganda.

The bulk of students who are now attending secondary school do not have their requirements met by the current curriculum. The current program is exclusive; it serves as a filter to keep out everyone but the intellectual elite. The redesign of the curriculum should be inclusive, meet the needs of all children, and set the groundwork for better teaching (and evaluation processes) that will help learners more fully achieve their potential, no matter how restricted it may be. In other words, rather than simply setting norms, it should be a powerful tool for raising them.

The existing school curriculum does not adequately address the economic and social needs of the nation. Uganda, like the rest of Africa, is experiencing a period of steady economic growth. This will require a workforce at all levels that is adaptable and digitally proficient. Numerous pieces of evidence indicate that the current curriculum falls short of these requirements. In full first (GDP) growth is driven by the considerably larger groups of competent middle-level specialists, not the academic elite. The current structure does not support these social classes adequately. When developing the expanded secondary program, both their needs and those of the academically privileged should be considered.

The existing curriculum is not adaptable enough to cover new areas of knowledge. It was developed in the 1970s. Many of its ideas and the methods it supports are outdated. Periodic updating has brought more contemporary material but little has been removed to make space for it; this is a significant factor adding to the present overload. This process has now hit its breaking point and is unable to adapt to the ever-increasing changes required of it to properly handle new areas of knowledge, especially those related to technology.

In addition to allowing for a fresh start to ensure that these areas are covered, a new curriculum was thought to be necessary to enable a much more adaptable design so that future changes can be more easily met. According to Muhangi (2019), the existing education system is largely ineffective with a low-quality teaching force that lacks the required skills for effective teaching leading to poor learning outcomes. The present teacher policies are also ineffective at luring top talent, supporting capable head teachers, and helping teachers in their efforts to enhance teaching (World Bank, 2018). Additionally, there is a dearth of topic expertise, and these factors all affect how well students learn. Even though 90% of secondary school teachers in Uganda possess the necessary formal credentials, a study by UNESCO (2014) has shown that secondary teachers lack the necessary pedagogical skills and subject-matter expertise to effectively instruct. For instance, only 66%, 70%, and 17% of instructors, respectively, are experts in biology, arithmetic, and English (Ministry of Education & Sports, 2013).

To realize its promise, Uganda requires a competency-based curriculum. A competency-based programme founded on cross-curricula or subject-bound core competencies should stress complicated outputs like knowledge, skills, and dispositions to be implemented by learners rather than conventional topic material. The New Lower Secondary Curriculum meets the needs of the competence-based curriculum because it is learner-centred and flexible enough to change with the needs of the students, instructors, and society. A program like this chooses learning activities and environments to assist students in applying their information, abilities, and dispositions to real-world situations.

### **Justification for a Change Readiness Study on the New Curriculum among Teacher Educators**

Executing the CURASSE Roadmap will inevitably necessitate reflection on the roles and duties of the various “education management actors.” The MOES and its decentralized units, as well as the institutional framework need to ensure the quality and efficiency of the services provided and its outputs (i.e., quality of graduates, teaching, and managers and teachers). The suggested Roadmap would work to improve the efficiency of secondary educational and vocational services at lower unit costs, allowing for more inclusion to be attained over time) and quality (to better support Uganda’s economic development objectives).

Numerous institutions engaged in curriculum development, assessment, teacher education, professional development, and quality control need to work together to create, execute, and monitor the new curriculum. The ability of these institutions to offer the required assistance should be evaluated, and any gaps should be filled. These institutions need new policies, guidelines, and practices, which should be created with the aid of study tours, professional support, and other resources. The different organizations involved—teacher education institutions, the standards agency, the examinations council, etc.—should be completely prepared to perform their respective roles. On the basis of foreign experience, it can also be deduced that many parts of the Ugandan educational system will be impacted by and subject to change as a result of the Curriculum, Assessment and Examination (CURASSE) implementation. Additionally, since curriculum changes are ongoing, Uganda’s secondary education and training subsystem needs to continue to adjust in order to keep up with the nation’s economic development after this more basic change. The most able-serving aspects of the current system will not be compromised by such a change, in fact, it should be improved. The review process should not, under any circumstances, ‘throw the baby out with the bathwater.’

The Teacher Education curricula at Teacher Training Institutes (TTIs) and Universities need to be reviewed in light of the shift in the new curriculum. Teaching staff need to be informed on the revised lower secondary school curriculum, its revised material, and its revised methods through brief training sessions. These contributions ought to be coordinated with efforts to change teacher education programmes.

In addition, staff development is necessary for experienced and motivated instructors as well as a large portion of the teaching staff at teacher education institutions to plan and carry out in-service training programs. The TTIs and Universities need to coordinate similar professional training initiatives. Such a structure does not currently exist but is essential for the training of teachers implementing the new curriculum. This should be done with the teacher education institutions in a central role. In particular, the TTIs and universities are well-placed to take up this role. The proposed staff development activities at TTIs and universities need to take into account the creation and implementation of programs to retrain serving teachers. It is upon these arguments that the researchers set out to investigate the readiness of the teacher educators to adapt to the demands of training teachers to be relevant and competent in handling the new lower secondary curriculum. In line with Nyenje and James's (2016) postulates, we further argue that the success of the reformed lower secondary school curriculum in Uganda will depend on the extent to which the teachers understand the reasoning that lies behind the changes in curriculum and teaching.

## Methodology

The study employed a quantitative cross-sectional survey design. This design was used to quantify the participants' levels of resistance to the New Lower Secondary Curriculum in Uganda. The study participants included teacher educators in national teachers' colleges and universities (both public and private) in Uganda. Contacts of the participants were retrieved from the social media platforms (mainly WhatsApp fora) of teacher educators. We used a structured questionnaire that was translated into an online google form to gather quantitative data from the consenting participants. Those whose contacts were not in the archives were followed by snowballing. In total, we obtained quantitative data for this study online from 99 participants.

The online instrument consisted of three sections. Section A gathered information on the participants' institutional backgrounds including type of institution, regional location of the institution, ownership of the institution, and position within the institution. Section B was an adapted version of the Change Readiness Questionnaire containing 17 close-ended questions to provide data on participants' evaluation of their resistance to adopting the New Lower Secondary Curriculum in their teacher education practices. The evaluation was based on five core aspects/subscales of the change readiness: (i) affective, (ii) cognitive, (iii) functioning, (iv) work effectiveness, and (v) work relationships. The close-ended items were scored on a 5-point Likert scale, from 1 (strongly disagree) to 5 (strongly agree). The Cronbach  $\alpha$  of each subscale was above 0.70. Hence the instrument was highly reliable for evaluating teacher educators' resistance to change in adopting the New Lower Secondary Curriculum. Section C had open-ended questions that sought participants' responses on suggestions for effective adoption and implementation of the New Lower Secondary competency-based education (CBE) curriculum.

The data collection procedure involved seeking consent of the participant first; whoever clicked "no" to the consent question of whether they were willing to participate or not could not proceed to the next items. Only those who consented "yes" participated in the study. In total, 99 responses were obtained, which speaks to a low response rate of online data collection. The filled-in forms were retrieved as Excel data files which were then imported into SPSS Version 20, further coded for analysis.

The participants' ratings of their resistance to adopting the new lower secondary school curriculum into teacher education practices were interpreted in frequencies, percentages, means, and standard deviations. Generally, the mean scores were interpreted as follows: 1.00–2.33 (low), 2.34–3.73 (moderate), and 3.74–5.00 (high).

As already alluded to, the planning, collection, and processing of data was undertaken with full ethical considerations. Participants consented to take part in the study.

Those who did not could not access the subsequent items. Those who consented and felt like withdrawing along the way were free to ignore hitting the “submit” button. Generally, the participants were assured of voluntary participation, freedom to withdraw from the study at any time, privacy, confidentiality, and anonymity. Documents such as journal articles, reports, books, and book chapters used as sources of information in the study were all duly credited by citing in text and referencing.

## Results

### Demographic Characteristics of the Participants

The background information of the participants was sought and presented in Table 1.

**Table 1: Demographic Characteristics of the Participants**

Background information	Category	Frequency	Percent
Institution type	TTI	21	21.2
	University	78	78.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Region where the institution is geographically located	North	12	12.1
	Central	9	9.1
	East	51	51.5
	West	27	27.3
	<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Ownership of the institution	Private	15	15.2
	Public	84	84.8
	<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100.0</b>
Position in the institution	Lecturer	63	63.6
	Head of Department	9	9.1
	Deputy Dean/Deputy Director/Deputy Principal	9	9.1
	Dean/Director/Principal	18	18.2
	<b>Total</b>	<b>99</b>	<b>100.0</b>

Majority of the participants, 78 (78.8%) were teacher educators at universities while the rest were in TTIs. Majority (84.8%) were serving in public institutions. The distribution of the participants by positions of responsibility was as follows: lecturer, 63 (63.6%); head of department, 9 (9.1%); deputy dean/deputy director/deputy principal, 9 (9.1%); and dean/director/principal, 18 (18.2%).

### Resistance to the New Lower Secondary Curriculum

The level of resistance to the New Lower Secondary Curriculum in Uganda was measured in four dimensions: affective, cognitive, functioning, and work relationship. The participants’ levels of agreement/disagreement with items relating to resistance to the curriculum in these dimensions are presented in Table 2.

Table 2: Resistance to the new lower secondary curriculum

Affective response to the new curriculum	SD	D	N	A	SA	M	SD
I'm worried about what things will be like after the introduction of the new curriculum in the college and university programmes.	21 (21.2)	18 (18.2)	15 (15.2)	27 (27.3)	18 (18.2)	3.03	1.432
I feel the new curriculum will be overwhelming when introduced in the teacher training programmes.	18 (18.2)	30 (30.3)	6 (6.1)	27 (27.3)	18 (18.2)	2.97	1.432
I try not to think about the move to adopt the new curriculum because when I do I get too stressed out.	42 (42.4)	21 (21.2)	6 (6.1)	12 (12.1)	18 (18.2)	2.42	1.566
It would be much better to include the new curriculum in the training of teachers at the university/college.	3 (3.0)	0 (0.0)	3 (3.0)	15 (15.2)	78 (78.8)	4.67	0.808
This whole new lower secondary school curriculum thing makes me kind of angry.	60 (60.6)	15 (15.2)	6 (6.1)	18 (18.2)	0 (0.0)	1.82	1.173
I'm really sad that the original education of this country is being diluted by the introduction of a new lower secondary curriculum.	48 (48.5)	18 (18.2)	6 (6.1)	18 (18.2)	9 (9.1)	2.21	1.438
<b>Cognitive evaluation of the new lower secondary school curriculum</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>
I don't really think the change of O-level curriculum was necessary.	57 (57.6)	18 (18.2)	6 (6.1)	18 (18.2)	0 (0.0)	1.85	1.164
Our teacher trainees will be better off after adopting the new O-level curriculum in teacher education colleges and universities, in comparison with the situation before.	0 (0.0)	3 (3.0)	6 (6.1)	30 (30.3)	60 (60.6)	4.48	0.747
I think it is good to adopt this new lower secondary curriculum in colleges and universities.	0 (0.0)	3 (3.0)	9 (9.1)	18 (18.2)	69 (69.7)	4.55	0.786



The adoption of the new curriculum in the teacher education colleges and universities will do us all good.									
Overall	0 (0.0)	3 (3.0)	12 (12.1)	18 (18.2)	66 (66.7)	4.48	0.825		
<b>Functioning: Avoiding adoption of the new curriculum in teaching</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>		
Generally, I avoid incorporating the demands of the new curriculum in my teaching as much as I can.	39 (39.4)	24 (24.2)	18 (18.2)	15 (15.2)	3 (3.0)	2.18	1.198		
I find myself trying to minimize planning and preparation of teaching in line with the demands of the new curriculum.	42 (42.4)	18 (18.2)	15 (15.2)	15 (15.2)	9 (9.1)	2.30	1.388		
Overall						2.24	1.293		
<b>Work effectiveness</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>		
Due to the change in O-level curriculum, I tend to be very distracted in my content delivery these days.	33 (33.3)	24 (24.2)	18 (18.2)	9 (9.1)	15 (15.2)	2.48	1.424		
I find that I'm not as efficient or productive when using the new curriculum approach as I used to before.	39 (39.4)	18 (18.2)	15 (15.2)	21 (21.2)	6 (6.1)	2.36	1.351		
These days I find it particularly difficult to motivate myself to do the things I know I should in teaching because of the demands of the new O-level curriculum.	30 (30.3)	18 (18.2)	24 (24.2)	24 (24.2)	3 (3.0)	2.52	1.240		
Overall						2.45	1.340		
<b>Work relationships</b>	<b>SD</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>N</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>SA</b>	<b>M</b>	<b>SD</b>		
During the implementation of the new O-level curriculum I find that I am less tolerant to others.	39 (39.4)	21 (21.2)	18 (18.2)	21 (21.2)	0 (0.0)	2.21	1.180		
My relationships with my co-workers are negatively influenced by this change in O-level curriculum.	15 (15.2)	8 (8.1)	4 (4.0)	5 (5.1)	1 (1.0)	2.06	1.223		
Overall						2.135	1.202		

The results in Table 1 indicate moderate overall affective resistance to the new lower secondary curriculum. An appreciable proportion (45.5%) of the participants were worried about what things will be like after the introduction of the new curriculum in the college and university programmes. Some (45.0%) felt the new curriculum will be overwhelming when introduced in the teacher training programmes. Still others (30.0%) showed resistance by trying not to think about the move to adopt the new curriculum because the mere thought stressed them out. To the contrary, only 3.0% of the participants disagreed with the idea of having to include the new curriculum in the training of teachers at the university/college. A few (18.2%) expressed anger about the new lower secondary school curriculum and others (27.0%) felt very sad that the original education of the country is being diluted by the introduction of a new lower secondary curriculum. These findings indicate an appreciable degree of affective resistance to adoption of the new lower secondary curriculum in the programmes of teacher education institutions in Uganda.

There was a generally high level of cognitive acceptance ( $M = 3.84$ ,  $SD = 0.88$ ) and hence low level of cognitive resistance of the new lower secondary curriculum. Very few, 18(18.2%), of the participants felt that the change of O-level curriculum was not necessary. Instead, majority, 90(90.9%), believed that their teacher trainees would be better off after adopting the new O-level curriculum in teacher education colleges and universities, in comparison with the situation before. Also, majority, 87(87.9%), thought that it is good to adopt the new lower secondary curriculum in colleges and universities. A greater proportion of the participants, 84(84.9%), similarly believed that the adoption of the new curriculum in the teacher education colleges and universities will do everyone good.

The participants' level of resistance to functioning, that is, avoiding adoption of the new curriculum in teaching was generally low ( $M = 2.24$ ,  $SD = 1.293$ ). Only 18(18.2%) generally avoided incorporating the demands of the new curriculum in their teaching as much as they could. However, another 18(18.2%) remained neutral with regard to avoiding to incorporate the demands of the new curriculum in their teaching. Similarly, 24(24.3%) tried to minimize planning and preparation of teaching in line with the demands of the new curriculum.

There was moderately low level of resistance that negatively impacted the participants' work effectiveness ( $M = 2.45$ ,  $SD = 1.340$ ). The participants who tended to be very distracted in their content delivery due to the change in O-level curriculum numbered 24 (24.3%). Some (27.3%) noted that they were not as efficient or productive when using the new curriculum approach as they used to before, with 15(15.2%) remaining undecided. A similar number, 27(27.3%) agreed that they found it particularly difficult to motivate themselves to do the things they knew they should do in teaching because of the demands of the new O-level curriculum, with 24(24.2%) choosing to be undecided in this regard.

The introduction of the new lower secondary school curriculum caused low level of friction in work relationships ( $M = 2.135$ ,  $SD = 1.202$ ). A relatively small proportion (21.2%) of the participants agreed that during the implementation of the new O-level curriculum, they found that they were less tolerant to others. A far smaller number, 6(6.0%), expressed agreement that their relationships with their co-workers were negatively influenced by the change in O-level curriculum. These findings speak to the fact that there was still a need for buy-in among a section of teacher educators to impart the requisite competencies to the teacher trainees as they join the field.

## Discussion

This study aimed to assess the readiness for change among teacher educators in Uganda regarding the new lower secondary school curriculum. The findings reveal a generally moderate level of resistance, and correspondingly, a moderately high level of acceptance of the new curriculum.

This suggests gaps in buy-in among the teacher educators. As highlighted by Mubangizi (2020), a key challenge in implementing the new lower secondary curriculum is the ineffective policy implementation, which results in suboptimal outcomes and the wastage of significant resources, time, and effort. Notably, the formulation phase involved inadequate consultation, leading to insufficient buy-in from all stakeholders, including teacher education institutions. Consequently, it is not surprising that the new curriculum has encountered resistance from key stakeholders, including teacher educators. This situation underscores the need for a concerted effort by institutions to foster change and ensure comprehensive buy-in among all stakeholders. As Wheeler (1980) suggested, the education sector should not be viewed merely as another public sector; it is an investment sector, one that is crucial to developing human capital. To achieve the desired benefits, both individually and nationally, it is essential to make appropriate investments in the quality of human capital.

Chemonges (2022) emphasises that teachers must teach practical topics “practically” for the new curriculum to equip students with the necessary skills. This necessitates that teachers themselves receive extensive training in handling the curriculum, ideally during both preservice and in-service education. Unfortunately, as Tumushabe and Arinaitwe (2013) point out, the teaching profession in Uganda has been significantly undervalued. Addressing this issue requires a comprehensive approach to improve the teacher education system by continuously enhancing the pedagogical skills and knowledge of teacher educators. Moulton (2002) suggests reducing wastage in teacher education, improving classroom performance, and enhancing the capacity of universities and Teacher Training Institutions (TTIs) to continually refine the teacher-training curriculum.

Mubangizi (2020) argues that while the quantity of teachers may not be a significant concern, their quality remains a topic of debate and criticism, particularly in the context of the new lower secondary curriculum. As Senteza-Kajubi (1992) famously stated, “No country can have a better quality of education than the quality of its teachers, as teachers are molders of tomorrow’s generation, who should be prepared to live in a complex global world.” The profound impact that teachers can have on their students is often difficult to measure, yet they play a crucial role in shaping the future generation to create a better and safer world. Factors such as inadequate pedagogical preparation for student teachers entering teacher education programs, low motivation, and limited opportunities for professional growth contribute to poor teacher quality. This, in turn, leads to poor planning, ineffective use of class time, authoritarian teaching styles, the use of inappropriate teaching methods, and a lack of focus on practical work and active learning.

## Conclusion

While teacher educators in Ugandan universities and TTIs are somewhat prepared, there is an urgent need to fully engage these institutions. Delaying their involvement could lead to higher costs and missed opportunities to provide Uganda’s youthful population with the high-quality education promised by the lower secondary education reforms. The quality of education in the country is directly tied to the quality of its teachers, which in turn depends on the quality of teacher educators. Therefore, it is essential to gain the support of teacher educators in universities and TTIs for the new curriculum. Additionally, these educators require professional development in technological, pedagogical, and content knowledge to effectively teach the updated curriculum. This will enable them to equip teacher trainees with the necessary skills to provide market-relevant education in secondary schools. The MoES could benefit from adopting international best practices, particularly from countries such as South Korea, Singapore, Vietnam, and European nations like Scotland, England, and the Netherlands.

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