The Neurodivergent Perspective on CBC Implementation

Towards an Inclusive and Equitable Educational Landscape in Uganda

Author: Agum Manuella Okello Elizabeth

Organization: Shared Ground Uganda

Location: Kampala, Uganda

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9 / 10 **surveyed teachers (90%) reported receiving no formal training on supporting neurodivergent learners in mainstream classrooms.**

This finding is presented alongside lived-experience accounts highlighting sensory, assessment, workload, disciplinary and accessibility barriers.

About the Research

Shared Ground Uganda presents this exploratory mixed-methods study examining the implementation of Uganda's Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) from the perspectives of neurodivergent learners and their families, alongside an examination of teacher preparedness to support neurodivergent learners in mainstream classrooms.

The research explores an important implementation question: *How can an inclusive curriculum become accessible in the everyday classroom experience of learners?*

The study combines lived-experience perspectives with teacher survey data to identify practical barriers and possible approaches for strengthening neuro-inclusive CBC implementation.

Abstract / Research Summary

Uganda's Competence-Based Curriculum represents a shift towards learner-centred education, practical competencies and the application of knowledge. However, curriculum inclusion depends not only on written policy but also on the conditions under which learners participate in everyday classrooms.

This exploratory mixed-methods study examined CBC implementation from the perspectives of neurodivergent learners and their families, while also examining teacher preparedness. The qualitative component involved semi-structured online interviews with four participants: two neurodivergent students and two parents of neurodivergent learners. A short survey was also administered to ten practising teachers.

Nine of the ten teachers surveyed (90%) reported receiving no formal training on supporting neurodivergent learners.

Participants identified barriers including sensory overload associated with loud bells and shouting, punitive disciplinary practices, excessive workloads, inflexible assessment practices and limited classroom accommodations. Parents also described how access to appropriate support may be affected by household financial resources.

The study argues for practical neurodiversity-focused teacher preparation, sensory-responsive learning environments, flexible assessment, Universal Design for Learning (UDL), responsive disciplinary practices and meaningful participation of learners and families in curriculum implementation decisions.

The study is exploratory and uses a small sample; its findings are therefore not statistically generalisable. Instead, it provides practice-oriented evidence and identifies questions and priorities for larger studies.

What the Research Examines

- Teacher preparedness for neuro-inclusive classrooms
- Sensory accessibility in school environments
- Flexibility in assessment
- Workload and classroom participation
- Disciplinary approaches and behaviour as communication
- Access to appropriate support
- Family and learner participation in implementation
- Universal Design for Learning
- The gap between inclusive curriculum intentions and everyday classroom experiences

Research Approach

Design	Exploratory mixed methods
Qualitative component	Semi-structured online interviews with 2 neurodivergent students and 2 parents of neurodivergent learners
Quantitative component	Short questionnaire completed by 10 practising teachers
Analysis	Interview responses were analysed thematically. Survey responses were summarised using descriptive statistics.

Recommendations

The study recommends that:

1. NCDC and teacher-education institutions incorporate practical neurodiversity and UDL content into teacher preparation and professional development.

2. Schools identify and reduce avoidable sensory barriers, including unnecessary shouting and abrupt high-volume signals where feasible.
3. Teachers receive support to use clear, staged instructions, visual supports, predictable routines and appropriate processing time.
4. Assessment guidance encourage appropriate flexibility in how learners demonstrate competence while maintaining curriculum standards.
5. School disciplinary systems incorporate supportive, behaviour-informed responses rather than assuming that distress-related behaviour is deliberate defiance.
6. Curriculum implementation monitoring include indicators of learner accessibility, participation and experience.
7. Future research expand to larger and more diverse samples, including rural and urban schools, teachers, school leaders, learners and families.

Limitations

The study uses a small, non-probability sample and should not be interpreted as representative of all Ugandan teachers or neurodivergent learners.

The research is intended to identify implementation questions, lived-experience perspectives and possible priorities for further research.

Why This Research Matters

Inclusive education cannot be measured only by what curriculum documents say.

It must also be examined through what learners experience in classrooms — whether they can participate, communicate, demonstrate competence and learn without unnecessary barriers.

This research contributes a neurodivergent perspective to conversations around CBC implementation in Uganda and highlights the importance of connecting curriculum policy with classroom accessibility, teacher preparation and lived experience.

Publication & Conference Context

The research was developed in connection with the 2nd International Conference on Curriculum Development (ICCD) held on 20–21 August 2026 and prepared for consideration by the NCDC Journal of Curriculum Development, Evaluation, and Education (JCDEE).