

Co-teaching as a strategy for implementing a competency-based curriculum. A case of two teacher training colleges in Rwanda

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Abstract

In many parts of the world, co-teaching has been used as an alternative to lone-teaching approaches. Co-teaching entails the collaboration of two or more teachers in the planning, delivery, and evaluation of instruction. Given its flexible nature, co-teaching has been widely used in a variety of educational contexts. While research has extensively dealt with co-teaching in many contexts little is known about co-teaching that brings together expatriate teachers and local ones in settings where both collaborate to enhance the implementation of competence-based curriculum (CBC) goals. This study explored how co-teaching can be used as a tool to facilitate the cooperation of expatriate tutors and their local counterparts in the implementation of teacher training colleges (TTCs) Competency Curriculum. The study employed the qualitative research approach in which tutors from both Rwanda and Zimbabwe co-teaching in TTCs formed the purposive sample. This study employed the multiple case study design using two TTCs. Data was collected using in-depth interviews and observations. Findings from the study showed that despite somewhat positive indicators of mutual collaboration, tutors' practices lacked a deep understanding of co-teaching and how it could be used to steer a movement from a knowledge-based curriculum to a competency-based one. Other findings showed that concurrent with workshops used to introduce the concept more robust written policies were needed to effectively guide teacher development and implementation of the CBC in TTCs. The study recommends continuous professional development for both the expatriate tutors and the locals to create a common and shared understanding of co-teaching and effective implementation of the CBC in TTCs.

Keywords: co-teaching co-tutor collaboration capacity building competency-based curriculum

Background

In many parts of the world, co-teaching has been used as an alternative to lone-teaching approaches. As opposed to lone teaching approaches co-teaching entails the collaboration of two or more teachers in planning, delivery, and evaluation of instruction (Rabin, 2020). Given its flexible nature co-teaching has been used in teacher development, inclusive education settings, general education, and other contexts. Early research on co-teaching has involved multidisciplinary teaching endeavours by experts from diverse subject areas or some science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) disciplines (Baron et al., 2019). In this sense, teachers with shared enthusiasm work as equals in communities of practice to try and test novel pedagogical approaches, and consequently co-teaching is framed as a model for improving teaching environments (Jortveit & Kavao, 2022). In the area of teacher development, pre-service teachers work with their mentors or peers in various programmes meant to prepare them for practicum and professional practice. However, in inclusive education contexts, general education teachers and specialized ones collaborate and support learners with special educational needs. Co-teaching conceptualized within inclusive education frames it as both a teacher and learner support tool that enhances diversity in heterogeneous classrooms (Rytivaara et al., 2019). Drawing from the latter notion and a mentorship model viewpoint where an expert teacher collaborates with a novice or general education teacher, Johnson and King-Sears (2020 p. 51 citing Friend et al., 2010) define co-teaching as “...one general education teacher and one special education teacher assigned to a single classroom to jointly deliver general education curriculum instruction to students with disabilities and their typical peers in ways responsive to their diverse learning needs”. While research has dealt extensively with the contexts cited above little is known about co-teaching that brings together expatriate teachers and local ones in settings where both collaborate to enhance the implementation of competence-based curriculum (CBC) goals.

Competency-based curricula arose from the need to prepare citizens for greater participation in globalization and industrialization of the 21st century. According to Singer et al. (2014), industries in this era demand a future-oriented workforce with functional competences and life-related levels of literacy. Citing Parry (1998, Johnstone & Soare, 2014) define competences as a cluster of related knowledge, attitudes, and skills that fulfill criteria

related to a job description and its performance. Thus, competences are the abilities that become apparent by a certain achievement in specified situations. Such competences developed in contexts characterized by personal motivation, self-confidence, and willpower enable the participants to apply an integrated combination of knowledge, skills, and attitudes to accomplish tasks and organizational goals (Mbarushimana & Kuboja, 2016). A competency-based curriculum thus embodies a design representing an epistemological shift from a focus on inputs to complex learning outcomes that enshrine a diverse body of repertoire inclusive of skills, abilities, personality traits, capacities, knowledge, attitudes, and values (Johnsone & Soare, 2014). Accordingly, such a curriculum is distinguished by six characteristics, namely: orientation to professional practice, a grounding in social constructivism, environments structured for competences achievement, development of generic competences, an orientation towards the use of authentic assessment approaches, and an elaboration of learning profiles (Mbarushimana & Kuboja, 2016).

Some studies have shown that achieving the demands of a competence-based curriculum is not easy. Nsengimana (2021) opines that the competency-based curriculum and its inherent goals are a novel yet complex notion that some countries in Africa are grappling with. The authors' study conducted in Rwanda sought to demonstrate that moving teachers from their traditional approaches that focus on purely content and knowledge acquisition to a constructivist-oriented approach manifesting through active construction of knowledge, critical thinking, innovation, problem-solving, research, collaboration, and development of lifelong learning skills may be daunting for most countries in Africa. In Sub-Saharan Africa, the implementation of the competence-based curriculum in science was found to be stagnated by an over reliance on traditional teaching approaches (Nsengimana et al., 2020). Elsewhere in Tanzania, Makunja (2016) observed that while the country had adopted the competence-based curriculum, its implementation was met with challenges. A lack of in-service training for teachers in the new approaches, insufficient teaching and learning materials, large class sizes and learners not adequately prepared for learning in a curriculum-based curriculum were some of the challenges identified in Makunja's (2016) study. Teachers therefore need support to enact such a curriculum. Ndiokubwayo (2018) concurs. The author argues that the intricacies of a competency-based curriculum require that teachers be supported in maneuvering complex teaching skills and shifting from traditional teaching approaches to participatory and interactive ones. Additional research is therefore still required to explore the various approaches, inclusive

of co-teaching, that can be used to support teachers in effectively implementing the competence-based curriculum, especially in the context of teacher training colleges.

Context of the study

In 2015 the Rwandan government moved from a knowledge-based curriculum to a Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC). The thrust of CBC is on the acquisition of knowledge, skills, values, and a positive attitude. The Rwanda Basic Education Board (REB), in its effort to improve the implementation of the CBC, hired Zimbabwean educators to join their Rwandan counterparts in different sectors of the education system in the country. Some of the Zimbabwean teachers were deployed at Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) while others were placed at Technical and Vocational Education Training (TVET) colleges. The Zimbabwean personnel at TTCs were in two categories. Some were researchers while some were tutors with specialisation in different subjects. The subject specialists were paired with their Rwandan counterparts to allow them to share experiences and promote collaboration and communication in the execution of their duties. The pairing culminated in teachers co-teaching in the classrooms, a strategy viewed from a pedagogical perspective as having many advantages in the implementation of the curriculum (Brendale, Lock & Piazza, 2017). For instance, all learners can benefit from this arrangement in that since learners are different and have different learning styles the two teachers' efforts in helping learners are complemented. Learners can get individual attention from the two teachers, a practice likely to increase the learners' grasp of concepts.

During the second term of 2023, REB conducted some workshops on co-teaching in all TTCs in which both Zimbabwean and Rwandan tutors participated. The workshop aimed to sensitise participants on the significance of co-teaching as a strategy for implementing CBC. It was also a platform to create a good working environment for both tutors by providing an opportunity for skills transfer, enhanced communication, and capacity development. It is against this background, that a study was conducted to establish the effectiveness of co-teaching as a strategy in implementing the CBC to proffer some recommendations on how co-teaching could improve the implementation of CBC in TTCs. Co-teaching was new to the tutors and implementation of CBC was known to be problematic. Therefore, a practical problem existed that warranted investigation.

Statement of the problem

Change and innovation in curriculum refer to the introduction of inventive methods of delivering content to the learners in the education system of a country. The curriculum innovation is introduced by the policymakers to the user system and is expected to be complied with by the teachers who are at the centre of the curriculum implementation process without question. However, there is usually resistance by the teachers at the grassroots level for a number of reasons. Chief among the factors that can contribute to resistance is that the teachers at the grassroots level may not be aware of the expectations of the policymakers. They may not have been staff-developed adequately for them to understand the essence of the innovation from the perspective of the policymakers (Riadi, 2019). Similarly, the teachers, who are key players in the implementation of the curriculum may not be comfortable to have some changes that disrupt what they are used to in terms of pedagogical practice. On the other hand, the innovation, like in this case, the co-teaching strategy may not be understood as a concept and its essence in the curriculum implementation process. The notion of co-teaching as a strategy in CBC implementation is unfamiliar to the tutors. As a result, the implementation of co-teaching at the research sites is not being implemented to the satisfaction of policymakers hence the need for research of this nature to unravel the underlying causes. Though there is extensive literature on co-teaching there seems to be a dearth of research on co-teaching, particularly at TTCs in Rwanda. This research study aims to fill that gap.

Research objectives

The research study was guided by the following objectives:

1. To identify gaps in the use of co-teaching as a strategy for implementing CBC.
2. To establish the effectiveness of co-teaching as a strategy in implementing CBC in TTCs.
3. To make recommendations on how co-teaching could be improved.

Methodology

Within the phenomenological framework, the study employed the qualitative research approach. Qualitative research examines phenomena within the cultural and social context in which it takes place (Salkind, 2018). In a study of this nature, there is a need to understand tutors' views and opinions from their lived experiences of co-teaching as a strategy for implementing the CBC in TTCs (Magwa & Magwa, 2015). At TTCs the tutors' experiences in

co-teaching could be understood through interaction with the tutors in their settings, thus the college and classroom setup.

Sample and sampling procedure

Purposive sampling enables the researcher to use his/her discretion to choose cases that are best suited to answer some research questions (Green & Thorogood, 2018). In this study tutors from both Rwanda and Zimbabwe working at the TTCs particularly those who were paired (6 pairs in TTC A and 8 pairs in TTC B) for the sake of practicing co-teaching formed the sample. These participants were purposefully chosen based on their understanding of pedagogical issues in the teacher education curriculum, their involvement in the co-teaching exercise, and their participation in the workshop on co-teaching held in TTCs. This discretionary method of sampling was meant to intentionally select only those tutors who were likely to produce the most valuable data on the specific issue of co-teaching in such a way that as researchers we could gain insights into how co-teaching was being handled at TTCs.

Research design

This study employed the multiple case study design. Wyse et al (2017) argue that a case study is a comprehensive investigation of a unit of interest within a real-life situation. This study on co-teaching by both Rwandan and Zimbabwean tutors at TTCs was an instrumental, collective/multiple qualitative case study. Investigating a unit of interest extending to several cases which, when studied, may lead to a better understanding of a larger collection of cases. The choice of the multiple case study design is justified because co-teaching in TTCs captures the unique aspects of contexts by interrogating tutors in action (Croker 2009). The findings from the different contexts can also be used for comparison and analysis to enhance deep understanding of co-teaching as a strategy in CBC implementation in TTCs.

Data collection

In this study, the researchers employed the in-depth interview guide with the selected tutors who were engaged in the co-teaching experience. At each of the selected TTCs, all the tutors who were paired and were working together with their peers were interviewed to get an emic view of co-teaching from the tutors' lived experiences. The researchers probed participants as a way of eliciting rich information which was done where the views and opinions of participants were not clear. The interview guide was triangulated with the use of an observation schedule. The observation schedule was administered over two weeks observing how the tutors were behaving regarding the collaboration to do with co-teaching on planning, teaching,

marking, assessing and evaluating their work. The interviewing and the administering of the observation schedule were carried out by the researchers personally to start the data analysis process. Data collection and analysis started during the interview and observation sessions as the researchers were on the lookout for information that enabled them to answer the research questions.

Results and Discussion

The findings of the study were organised according to themes discerned from the interviews and complemented with observations. Results from the two teacher training colleges were reported separately.

The case for TTC A

Tutors' conceptualisation of co-teaching

The study established that there was a common understanding of the concept of co-teaching by the tutors. Although their definitions differed in terms of expression, it, however, explained their understanding of the concept. The tutors were unanimous that co-teaching was a shared responsibility between the two tutors manning a class in terms of lesson delivery, marking, and planning of lessons. The term co-teaching was defined within the context of explaining the tutors' roles in the teaching and learning process. Co-teachers were found to be the teachers who work together in a class to facilitate learning in the classroom. One of the local tutors aptly summed it up by emphasizing role-changing as follows:

It is a collaborative approach to instruction in which two teachers typically work together to plan, mark, and deliver instruction in a class together. Some kind of division of labour between two tutors as they plan, teach, and evaluate together.

The participants went further to explain that the learning activities included planning, lesson delivery, evaluation of the learning process, and assessment of learners. Two teachers in one class changed roles and helped each other. This was found to be in tandem with the views of Brendle, Lock, and Piazza (2017) who prefer to call the roles played by the teachers in the classroom as co-instructing, co-planning, co-assessing to emphasise working together of the two teachers for the benefit of learners.

Level of awareness

All participants demonstrated awareness of the demands by REB that they should engage in co-teaching with their peers. Interviews conducted with concerned tutors showed that they were

quite aware of co-teaching as a concept and that it was a policy guideline introduced in the education system, particularly at TTCs. The participants were unanimous that the idea of introducing co-teaching was meant to share experiences between local and expatriate educators. In the process of sharing experiences, there was also a staff capacity-building process that went along with the exercise. Despite the high level of awareness among tutors and the recognition of sharing experiences, the advantages of co-teaching as a strategy for implementing CBC in TTCs were not explicitly articulated by tutors. Ways in which co-teaching enhanced implementation exhibiting key tenets of the CBC were not explained and difficult to ascertain if they were understood.

The Level of Tutor's Compliance

The researchers wanted to establish the level of compliance of the tutors in the college regarding participating in co-teaching as a strategy for implementing CBC. It was noted that, in the majority of cases, the two tutors collaborating in the co-teaching arrangement played alternating roles. Where one tutor delivered a lesson, the other one would assist in the management of the learners during learner-learner interaction and even during tutor-learner interaction. This is compatible with the views of Friend and Cooke (2022) who assert that this kind of co-teaching is called differentiated teaching where one tutor delivers a lesson to a large group of learners while the other one is assisting a small group of learners. The researchers too, observed that tutors played complementary roles which helped in the effective implementation of the curriculum.

When REB carried out a Continuous Professional Development (CPD) workshop it was meant to sensitise tutors on the need to collaborate in the teaching-learning process. It had put a policy in place for the user system to implement. REB is cognizant of the fact that co-teaching develops classroom practitioners professionally so that they can execute their duties effectively. From the interviews and observations made by the researchers, this role was being played although there were some reservations. For instance, input from some tutors helps to shed some light on the fact that co-teaching is being practiced but is not fully complied with. One local tutor had this to say:

Am working collaboratively with my partner, and all is going on well.

An expatriate who was reluctant to elaborate on her view had this contribution:

Yes, we are working together but I can't say it is fully implemented because collaboration needs tutors who are accommodative of each other's ideas.

In curriculum implementation, the user system is compelled to implement the curriculum through a policy document such as a statutory instrument, a circular, a general letter, a curriculum framework, or a syllabus. However, the researchers did not find such a policy in place to compel the paired tutors to do the co-teaching as expected by REB as the employer. Participants were unanimous that there were no efforts to coerce tutors to implement co-teaching to the latter. One tutor noted that there was no mechanism to enforce the implementation of co-teaching in the TTC and thus remarked:

Can co-teaching, good as it is, benefit us much if there is no one enforcing it through some kind of policy? I wonder.

There is a policy vacuum, no wonder the co-teaching is not being implemented fully and has some teething problems. Chindaro (2013) is of the view that policy initiative in education is critical as it clarifies and articulates issues that affect curriculum implementation. REB should pluck a leaf from this assertion to compel tutors to engage in co-teaching and help student teachers in the acquisition of teaching pedagogical skills. The REB policy would also guide on how co-teaching can be implemented in TTCs. Perhaps what can be discerned from this contribution is that co-teaching deserves better attention than what is being experienced in TTCs at the moment.

The tutors' experiences

It was noted from the interviews and observations that the tutors who were practicing co-teaching were benefitting from employing this strategy in the implementation of the curriculum. The co-teaching was conspicuous in terms of lesson delivery and marking. Participants expressed some reservations whereby planning and reflection on the lesson delivered were not done together by the tutors. Each tutor tended to do the planning alone. Probing further revealed that because of other commitments, the tutors could not work together, particularly in the planning and evaluation of the learning episode.

Other views expressed by the participants were that the tutors engaged in the co-teaching had different professional backgrounds. When they share their experiences, learners benefit at the same time this improves the implementation of CBC. However, participants felt that the content in all subjects was overloaded such that it became difficult for tutors to practice co-teaching. For instance, one learner covers thirteen subjects, (Physics, Chemistry, Biology, Mathematics, English, Kinyarwanda, Entrepreneurship, Teaching Methods, and Practice,

Special Needs Education, Fine Arts, Music, Kiswahili, and French) with a lot of content in each subject.

Participants expressed the view that co-teaching was quite beneficial to them, particularly as regards lesson delivery and marking of written work. However, the collaboration was not evident in the assessment of learners at the end of the term when tests were written for the end of a unit or a term. According to the participants it was one tutor who would do the item writing without consulting the other partner. One expatriate tutor remarked:

While co-teaching is being done in other aspects of the tutor's role, it is not done at all in assessment. Only the local tutor writes test items without the input of the co-tutor.

The idea that collaboration excluded some aspects vital to CBC implementation meant co-tutors were not fully benefiting in all aspects that entail co-teaching (Brendale, Lock & Piazza, 2017). This means there was no cross-pollination of ideas by the two tutors when such a scenario is obtained where one tutor assesses learners unilaterally.

Regarding demonstrating collaboration by the two tutors assigned to work together, the participants expressed reservations about the way the co-teaching strategy was being handled. Some participants argued that the tutors were not on an equal footing in terms of how they should exercise their mandate. According to Friend and Cooke (2022) co-teaching is supposed to be an alternating role experience where one teaches while the other one observes and the same applies to other teaching-learning duties. However, the expatriate tutors concurred that some tutors take the whole teaching load and the other tutor would just sit and watch without taking an active role as expected. Below are excerpts of their contributions during the interview:

It is a bit biased as there is no co-relationship between tutors. There is one tutor who has the upper hand and the other one just follows the lead.

I think the employer has not fully explained the significance of co-teaching to staff members because what I observed was that some local tutors are not willing to cooperate because they fear that expatriate teachers would end up taking over their jobs, which is not true.

The observations and issues raised by participants regarding one tutor in the pairing arrangement having an upper hand and the other one simply following compromises the purpose of co-teaching where the thrust is on pedagogical skills transfer. The local tutors are expected to acquire skills that have a bearing on their professional development. Conversely,

the expatriate tutors are also expected to gain from the shared experiences in the co-teaching arrangement.

It was established from the participants that learners enjoyed working with the two tutors allocated to a subject area. Participants echoed the feelings of learners who expressed gratitude for being exposed to two different teachers in a subject whose presentation of the subject matter differed to their advantage. In the same vein, the tutors interviewed expressed on behalf of local tutors without some tutors to pair with, sentiments regarding the co-teaching arrangement. They felt left out and missed a lot of the sharing of experiences with their expatriate counterparts. The local tutors were eager to enjoy the pedagogical capacity building that co-teaching develops. This becomes interesting in the sense that other tutors have been afforded this opportunity but seem not to be taking full advantage of being paired for co-teaching as they are not equally assigned active roles during teaching.

The case for TTC B

In the second case (TTC B) three themes emerged, namely: cooperation, some practices hampering the shift towards a competency-based curriculum, and inherent challenges besetting co-teaching. These were used to report and discuss the findings.

Mutual cooperation

Co-teaching was done in English, Foundations of Education (FOE), Inclusive Education, Social Studies, Science and Mathematics. Although a tutor could have up to a total of 18-24 forty-minute periods not all were co-taught. Reasons given for not co-teaching ranged from work overload, shortage of teaching staff in departments, a packed timetable, and a negative perception of the programme by some local tutors. Similar findings are shared in Rabin's (2020) study where candidates (7%) reported having not co-taught at all due to time restraints, strained relationships, and work overload. However, the tutors in TTC B showed some appreciation of co-teaching and what it entails. They understood it as load sharing. Their conceptualization of co-teaching was in line with Barron et al. (2020) who framed co-teaching as sharing responsibilities and accountability for student achievement. Data generated from the interviews and lesson observation showed that the tutors supported each other, assigning each other roles to teach and manage the classroom. They also complimented each other on content delivery. One local tutor remarked:

I am not aware of what is happening with others but for us, we are working together very well. I do not see any challenges. I see co-teaching as a good practice. You support each other and learners co-operate by participating fully.

Another, an expatriate said:

Then the other issue is when you co-teach you share approaches. Like here when they teach quadratic equations they begin from the background point of view with the topic, elaborating the topic first without the mathematics. Yet from my experience in our country and also in South Africa where I have taught, we go straight into solving equations, using graphical representations and others.

Although not representative of the entire sample, the two sentiments show mutual benefits that accrued to both categories of co-tutors. According to Rabin (2020), collaborators in the co-teaching process contribute to each other's efforts and have opportunities to learn from each other. However, what is not clear is how the sharing of the experiences shaped the tutors' practices in the implementation of CBC. This naturally led the researchers to explore the next theme.

Practices hampering the shift toward a competency-based curriculum

Although some practices observed in this study were found to be commensurate with the characteristics of a CBC, lesson observation reports showed that some were not. The bulk of how tutors taught was inconsistent, particularly with some aspects of a competence-based curriculum such as a grounding in social constructivism and environments structured for competences achievement. Lesson observations showed that tutors dominated much of the interactions in the classroom. In other words, there appeared to be a skewed one-way communication that favoured the tutors. Tutors talked for much of the time. Despite enjoying participation in the lesson, learners were relegated to taking notes and answering low-order questions which in some instances was done through chorus answers. Social constructivism requires that learners work in small groups on inquiry and problem-solving tasks (Mbarushimana and Kuboja, 2016). It also requires that learners engage actively in critical thinking, co-creation of knowledge, research life-long learning, and other interpersonal life skills (Nsengimana, 2021).

The other vital finding relates to two of the lessons taught in the English subject. In addition to a focus on content, structures of language were taught outside contexts. The tutors failed to create an environment and context for learners to practice the language. Assessments

based on gap filling rather than authentic ones, absence of functional communication, and a focus on purely the rules of grammar were the observed indicators of an absence of environments structured for competency achievement vital for shifts towards competency-based curriculum. The overarching goal of communicative language teaching is to “...develop communicative competence which *is* what a speaker needs to know to be communicatively competent in a speech community” through an emphasis on context and authenticity (Sabrina, 2020 p. 18). It therefore meant the co-tutors failed to make significant shifts from a knowledge-based curriculum to a competence-based one. This shift is characterised by language teaching that is functional and immersed in authentic contexts (Eddie & Aziz, 2020). The shift also has challenges not only in language teaching but in co-teaching in general.

Inherent challenges besetting co-teaching

Although the co-teachers in most teams worked together mutually some observations pointed to the existence of unbalanced power relations. According to Sundqvist (2023), unbalanced power relations exist where participants in the co-teaching arrangement work as unequal partners. Power dynamics come into play in contexts where one teacher is regarded as a novice and the other as an expert or specialized SNE tutor versus the general education tutor. In the context of the current study, expatriate teachers co-taught with the local teachers. During the lesson observations, the local tutors were keen to demonstrate their edge and dominance over the expatriate ‘newcomers’. This dominance manifested itself through a keen desire to take a leading role in the local tutor and sometimes brazen attempts to dissolve the dominance of expatriate tutors. For instance, in one of our lesson observations when the expatriate tutor took to the stage the local tutor would ‘interrupt’ with additional comments and eventually asked to be given another opportunity back on stage when his colleague still had issues to explain. As if to confirm the power dynamics between the two categories of co-tutors one of the expatriate tutor said in an interview after their lesson:

Another thing is the homework that I give. The students do not bring or do the homework. My colleague does not assist me enforce compliance. At the end of the day, I sometimes feel I play second fiddle. Hence when I go into the class alone without the local tutor I face classroom management challenges.

When such power dynamics play out in front of the learners they observe and capitalize on this to their advantage, a scenario likely to weaken the impact of the co-teaching endeavour. Jortveit and Kovač (2022) made similar observations in a study that explored collaboration that works

in special and general educators' contexts. The authors aver that collaboration that is grounded in mutual recognition and enthusiasm in balanced power relations worked better to elicit student respect and participation.

Another challenge that emerged was related to co-planning. Although a few of the research participants said they co-planned before, during, and after the lesson the evidence on the ground suggested otherwise. In lessons that were observed, the researchers asked if the tutors had co-planned and all of them confirmed they had not. In one of the lessons, the expatriate tutor was not aware of what his colleague wanted to teach. In another case, the expatriate tutor was not aware of when and at what stage in the lesson delivery to hand over to his colleague. Furthermore, the expatriate tutors lamented being left out in some teaching activities such as scheming, lesson planning, and examination setting. The researchers made similar observations. An absence of co-planning was a challenge that exposed the other partner to unforeseen scenarios because it meant standing in front of the class without adequate knowledge of the strategies for the lesson development (Brendle et al., 2017). Essentially, the co-tutors lacked what Jortveit and Kovač (2022) referred to as a 'cognitive contract'. A cognitive contract exists when co-tutors possess a shared vision of the philosophy and pedagogy of their teaching. It manifests itself through shared expectations and goals, co-planning of the teaching activities, delivery, evaluation, and reflections on teaching and assessment approaches (Jortveit & Kovač, 2022). Given that the co-tutors in the present study were working in a recently adopted competence-based curriculum a cognitive contract was called for. Co-planning embedded in such a contract would perhaps assist them in reflecting on which of the six characteristics of a competence-based curriculum to adopt for a particular lesson and how to do it.

The other finding that became apparent was the tutors' limited knowledge of the various co-teaching arrangements. In the interviews, the tutors professed ignorance of alternative co-teaching models. Data generated from lesson observation showed that the co-tutors were only familiar with the co-delivery model in which one teacher is teaching and the other is assisting. The other models such as parallel teaching, station teaching, team teaching, alternative teaching, and observation as outlined initially by Cook and Friend (2013, cited in Montgomery and Akerson, 2019) were not utilized. Perhaps co-tutors required further training on the co-teaching models to provide a 'head start' for other innovative and creative ways to co-teach. Knowledge of alternative co-teaching models could have presented tutors with more alternatives and more blended versions of co-teaching to suit their contexts. Some of the

challenges practitioners face in co-teaching may emanate from a lack of deep understanding of co-teaching strategies as their choices are from a restricted sphere.

Conclusion and recommendations

In making recommendations on how co-teaching could be improved, participants from both TTC A and TTC B were unanimous that the school administration could distribute resources for use in the teaching and learning process fairly. This was emanating from their submissions in which they observed that of the two tutors practicing co-teaching one could have teaching and learning resources at the expense of the other. Stationery items such as ballpoint pens and chalk should be accessed by both tutors fairly to avoid antagonism. The equal sharing of resources resonates with the concept of co-teaching which assumes that the tutors are equal partners in all their teaching responsibilities. The practices of tutors could be anchored by a deep understanding of co-teaching in teacher development programmes. Teacher training institutions could be advised to include co-teaching in their curriculum.

In the case of some tutors demonstrating a negative attitude towards working collaboratively with the other tutors attached to them, participants reiterated the need for staff development workshops to be conducted. The staff development workshops could have a thrust towards explaining the significance of co-teaching as a fundamental aspect of the curriculum implementation process. Furthermore, the staff development workshop could also emphasize those issues that promote the changing of the tutor's attitude. A positive mind-set helps the tutors appreciate the need to work collaboratively with their significant peers so that they grow professionally by learning from each other's experiences. Kursch and Veteska (2020) also found in their research that one of the advantages of co-teaching was that there was mentoring of each other by the two teachers working together in the co-teaching arrangement. Reciprocity in mentoring as a result of co-teaching comes from the realization that there are opportunities for life-long learning when tutors collaborate. Valuing teamwork and accepting alternative ways of planning, teaching, assessing, evaluating, and reflecting enhances co-teaching practices. In their analysis of how mentoring was possible and effective, they attributed this to the conducting of workshops for teachers by policymakers as a way of improving the execution of their duties. As a result, REB could have ongoing workshops to capacity-build tutors as some tutors have not been familiar with co-teaching during their teacher education programmes.

CBC calls for the use of a learner-centered approach to the implementation of the curriculum. However, this is not possible in situations where there is a demand for content coverage which, according to participants, is voluminous in preparation for local and national examinations. In addition, participants viewed co-teaching as slowing down the coverage of the considered wide content. Consequently, participants recommended the reduction of the content in the syllabus coverage. However, it may not be the amount of content that is challenging but how it is covered that may be problematic. The introduction of co-teaching was meant to enhance how CBC was to be implemented in TTCs as the tutors shared their experiences and expertise compared to the previously practiced lone approach to classroom practices. The reduction in content to be covered by learners may not be the panacea that facilitates the use of a learner-centered approach to the delivery of lessons. The recommendation is for further research that will culminate in the acquisition of competencies, skills, and values deemed necessary for preparing learners for their roles in adult life when tutors are engaged in co-teaching.

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