Homework, Feedback, And Assessment Strategies In Competency-Based Education For Kenyan Junior Schools

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Abstract—**This study investigates the use of homework as an assessment tool within Kenya's Competency-Based-Education (CBE) framework, which emphasizes 21st-century competencies. The research aims to understand how homework influences learning and engagement in a selected junior school setting. Research methods included interviews with teachers and parents, focus groups discussion with students, classroom observations, and document analysis. These methods provided comprehensive data on the role of homework within the CBE context. Findings reveal that well-designed, competency-aligned homework positively influences learning outcomes when accompanied by constructive feedback. However, challenges such as large class sizes, resource inadequacies, and the absence of standardized rubrics hinder implementation. This research underscores the importance of addressing these challenges to ensure equitable success under CBE. Recommendations include enhancing support structures and providing systematic guidance to educators. This study contributes valuable insights on leveraging homework effectively within the CBE, offering specific recommendations for policymakers and educators. By tailoring homework assignments, developing clear grading criteria, and empowering teachers, continuous learning and competency acquisition can be motivated outside the classroom. The findings of this study are crucial for policymakers and educators seeking to enhance the implementation of CBE. They demonstrate the potential of purposeful homework design in fostering 21st-century competencies among students. This serves as an invitation to explore practical strategies for optimizing homework within competency-based education frameworks**

I. INTRODUCTION

As education systems worldwide transit towards competency-based frameworks that emphasize applied knowledge and skills, optimizing methods for ongoing assessment outside the classroom becomes increasingly important. Homework represents a tool frequently utilized to reinforce curricular objectives and evaluate competency acquisition beyond scheduled lessons [31]. However, as [26] note, evaluations of homework effectiveness and alignment with competency-based structures remain limited. Kenya's shift towards its Competency-Based Education (CBE) in recent years motivates exploring homework's role and potential within this context. Previous research indicates homework assignments, when well-designed, influence learning outcomes positively through knowledge consolidation and skill practice [10]. Formative assessment via assignments also guides improvement by identifying gaps necessitating remediation [3]. However, studies notes that homework amounts and designs matter, with cognitively complex, open-ended assignments demonstrating clearer links to conceptual mastery compared to low-level drills [29].Effective feedback additionally promotes growth by clarifying paths to success [15].Therefore, alignment between assignments, outcomes, and evaluation criteria appears crucial. Educators must consider individual circumstances like socioeconomics threatening equitable participation [12];[19]. Supportive structures address constraints discouraging accessibility for

all learners. Motivation hinges partly on autonomy and ownership over personalized learning [40]. Assessments authentic to competencies better capture achievement than standardized tests [10] .

CBE aims to develop skills transferable beyond classrooms through experiential learning and continuous assessment (Republic of Kenya, 2017). Emphasizing process over product necessitates rethinking assessments ensuring competency, mastery, and documentation. Homework holds the potential to guide progression if strategically enhancing relevant skills. However, a paucity of Kenyan studies exploring homework within CBE constitutes a research gap. This study investigates homework utilization as an assessment tool within CBE implementation at a Kenya junior school to understand influences on learning and engagement. Exploring teacher and parent perspectives on design preferences and impacts supplements student viewpoints. Comparison between policy guidelines, classroom dynamics, and assignment influences offers comprehensive insights. Addressing these limitations and optimizing practice supports CBE objectives for preparing lifelong learners.

Three research questions guide the study:

1) What types of assignments do teachers prefer giving?
2) How do assignments influence CBE learning?
3) What challenges emerge in competency-based assessment?

A qualitative case study design incorporated semi-structured interviews, focus groups discussion, observations, and document analysis within an explanatory theoretical framework. The study seeks practical strategies enhancing homework contributions to 21st-century competencies, contributing valuable recommendations for educators worldwide navigating competency-based reforms.

Competency-driven education promotes skills essential in an evolving world (OECD, 2018). Thoughtfully leveraging homework as a formative assessment potentially fosters intrinsic motivation and self-regulated capabilities through structured feedback [15];[40]. Addressing constraints impeding equitable learning positions all students for success. This study presents strategies empowering teachers to optimize homework to enrich daily lessons within CBE, establishing foundations for lifelong knowledge construction ahead.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

A. Homework and Learning Outcomes

The question of whether assigning homework enhances student academic performance and learning outcomes has been a topic of enduring debate in educational research. Some studies have suggested a limited relationship between homework and academic achievement [14]. However, a larger body of evidence supports the idea that well-designed homework can indeed yield positive learning results [10]. The efficacy of homework in achieving its intended outcomes depends significantly on its alignment with pedagogical objectives, instructional practices, and assessment criteria.

Meta-analyses consistently demonstrate a modest yet positive correlation between homework and academic achievement across different subjects and grade levels [13]. However, the nature of this relationship is influenced by various factors such as the type and amount of homework assigned, student characteristics, and the specific learning outcomes being targeted. For instance, homework tends to have a stronger impact in middle and high school compared to elementary levels, possibly due to students' cognitive development and their ability to engage in more complex independent learning tasks [13]. Moreover, the effectiveness of homework is not solely measured by standardized test scores but extends to more nuanced cognitive outcomes. Assignments that encourage ongoing conceptual understanding and reasoning skills are found to correlate more strongly with classroom assessments of depth of knowledge[14]. Therefore, homework tasks that promote critical thinking, analysis, and problem-solving can enhance students' capacity to apply their learning independently.

Student motivation, self-regulation, and study skills play crucial roles in the success of homework assignments [25]. Well-designed homework can foster these attributes by promoting student autonomy, goal-setting, and time management [30]. By challenging students appropriately and catering to individual strengths and needs, homework can sustain engagement and build persistence through difficult topics [5]. The method of assessment also significantly

influences the impact of homework on learning outcomes. Assessments that measure problem-solving and the transfer of skills to new situations are more sensitive to the effects of complex homework tasks compared to standard multiple-choice tests[10]. Additionally, authentic assessments of competencies developed through homework provide deeper insights into student learning profiles than traditional standardized tests[37].

In conclusion, the effectiveness of homework in improving learning outcomes hinges on its alignment with specific pedagogical goals and performance criteria[10]. Homework that challenges cognitive processes and cultivates essential skills like problem-solving can lead to deeper and more lasting learning effects. By fostering motivation, persistence, and independent study skills, well-designed homework assignments lay the groundwork for lifelong self-regulated learning [40]. Therefore, strategic homework practices that cater to diverse student needs and learning objectives can yield substantial dividends in academic performance over both short and long terms.

B. Feedback and Assessment in Homework

Feedback and assessment play pivotal roles in maximizing the effectiveness of homework assignments by promoting meaningful learning and continual improvement. Without timely and targeted feedback, homework risks becoming a routine exercise devoid of substantial learning gains [15]. Effective feedback should be tailored to individual student needs, focusing on task-specific processing and misconceptions rather than generic praise or criticism [1]. Digital platforms that offer immediate automatic assessment can efficiently identify conceptual gaps, allowing teachers to provide personalized follow-up guidance that supports each student's learning journey.

Different types of feedback serve distinct learning purposes. Basic "knowledge of results" feedback, indicating correctness, promotes surface-level mastery but may not facilitate deeper understanding [15]. In contrast, elaborative feedback that explains how to improve fosters analytical thinking and complements complex homework tasks aimed at developing higher-order skills. Peer feedback also contributes to formative assessment when structured to promote skill refinement and collaboration [16]. Ongoing assessment informs iterative revisions of homework assignments, ensuring that they remain relevant and challenging. When assessments reveal low engagement or mastery, redesigning assignments with differentiated support can reignite student interest and understanding [36].

Assessment should inform the design of future assignments through backward planning, ensuring that each task aligns with targeted competencies and fosters purposeful learning [21]. Well-structured item frameworks and performance-based tasks clarify expectations and sustain coherence between learning goals, activities, and evaluations. Technology can also be a valuable tool for providing systematic, differentiated feedback that promotes student ownership and problem-solving skills [40]. By leveraging digital platforms, teachers can track students' progress and tailor interventions to meet individual needs. Ultimately, the goal of feedback and assessment in homework is to cultivate self-monitoring habits and drive continuous improvement [40]. By establishing a growth-oriented approach to homework, educators can guide students toward conceptual mastery, sustained engagement, and lifelong inquiry.

In conclusion, feedback and assessment are essential components of effective homework design. By leveraging these tools strategically, educators can ensure that homework assignments align with learning objectives, promote critical thinking, and empower students to take ownership of their educational journey. Ongoing evaluation and revision based on assessment data are key to optimizing homework experiences and achieving envisioned mastery outcomes.

Theoretical framework

The study was guided by Sociocultural Theory, developed by Lev Vygotsky in 1978. The theory states that cognitive development is a socially mediated process that occurs within the context of social interactions and cultural influences [36]. According to this theory, learning is influenced by the cultural tools, practices, and interactions that individuals experience in their social environments. The role of a more knowledgeable other (MKO), such as a teacher, parent or peer, is crucial in scaffolding and guiding learners to higher levels of understanding and skill

acquisition. In the context of researching homework assignments in Junior Schools, this theory is relevant in understanding teachers' preferences for specific types of assignments. Teachers' choices may reflect culturally rooted instructional practices and beliefs about how these assignments can scaffold students' learning experiences. Moreover, the influence of homework assignments on learners' educational development is closely connected to the social and cultural setting in which they are assigned. Tasks that foster cooperative opportunities for understanding, such as discussions with peers or relations with family, correspond with Vygotsky's stress on social communication as a trigger for intellectual progress. Homework that inspires shared discovery experiences taps into Vygotsky's theory highlighting interchange as a mechanism driving cognitive advancement. The socio-cultural environment inevitably shapes how homework activities are approached and their ability to facilitate learning. Assignments encouraging interactions and knowledge-building through partnership may be better positioned to boost development according to Vygotsky's socio-cultural perspectives on learning origination within communal experiences.

However, implementing homework assignments as an assessment tool in the context of CBE may encounter challenges related to aligning cultural practices and educational values. Understanding the cultural implications of specific homework tasks and ensuring alignment with CBE's learning outcomes becomes crucial for meaningful learning experiences. The role of the teacher as the more knowledgeable other (MKO) in guiding students while completing homework also influences the effectiveness of these assignments. Considering the socio-cultural dimensions of learning offers valuable insights into the design, implementation, and perception of homework assignments in Junior Schools within the CBE framework.

III. METHODOLOGY

A. Research Approach and Design

The research adopted a Social Constructivist perspective and employed a qualitative approach to directly explore how student homework as an assessment tool influences learning and engagement, aiming to interpret participants' experiences and meanings [2];[7]. This choice of method allowed for a deep understanding of participants' perspectives, feelings, and motivations regarding homework's influence [28], utilizing multiple data collection techniques for a comprehensive view of the topic. The study utilized an exploratory case study design to delve deeply into the role of homework in assessment and its influence on learning and engagement within the CBE framework [34];[38]. The study was conducted at a Public Primary School in Chonyi Sub-County, Kilifi County, Kenya (grade 7), the research site was purposively chosen for its richness in data and suitability to address the study's objectives. Emphasizing the significance of selecting a research area that can yield valuable insights [18]. This approach facilitated an in-depth exploration of various perspectives and experiences related to homework assessment practices in its natural educational setting.

B. Participants/Sampling

The study employed purposive sampling to select 14 participants comprising 8 students, 3 teachers, and 3 parents. This offered a manageable yet comprehensive representation of the target population and ensured in-depth exploration [9];[32]. The school selection process involved choosing a Junior School in Chonyi Sub-County based on factors like CBE implementation, data richness, accessibility, and willingness to participate [19]. Within this school, a specific grade seven class was chosen to ensure a diverse representation of students. Students were purposively sampled based on academic performance, gender, and demographic diversity (Patton, 2015). Teacher participants were selected based on their active involvement in assigning and evaluating homework within the CBE context [24]. Parents were chosen considering their child's enrollment in the school and diverse socio-economic backgrounds [33].

C. Data Collection and Procedure

Data collection for this study employed various methods including interviews, focus group discussions (FGDs), document analysis, and non-participant observation to gather insights from students, parents, and teachers regarding the influence of homework on learning and engagement [39]. The purposive sampling approach focused on a specific Junior School in Chonyi Sub-County, Kenya, facilitating an in-depth exploration of homework practices within

the CBE framework [7];[17]. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with teachers and parents to explore homework assignment types, experiences, and student attitudes, using interview guides to elicit detailed responses [4]. Focus group discussions were utilized with grade seven students to capture their experiences and perceptions through moderated discussions guided by a specific FGD guide [27]. Document analysis was employed to extract insights from school policies, student homework samples, and feedback records, providing a contextual understanding of homework implementation [20]. Non-participant observation documented classroom dynamics related to homework practices, offering real-time insights into instructional approaches, student engagement levels, and feedback mechanisms [35]. These data collection methods were systematically integrated to enrich the study's depth, triangulate findings, and provide a comprehensive understanding of the interplay between homework, student engagement, and learning outcomes in the CBE educational setting

D. Data Recording and Analysis

Data recording tools played a critical role in this study, facilitating systematic documentation and organization of research information. The researcher utilized a digital Android audio recorder for voice data during interviews and focus group discussions. This enabled detailed data collection and subsequent transcription to capture nuances and ensure data integrity [23]. Additionally, a research journal was maintained as a reflective and analytical tool to document decisions, reflections, and insights, enhancing transparency, self-evaluation, and maintaining a comprehensive record of the research journey [7]. This reflective practice contributed to the credibility and rigor of the study by providing a rich narrative of the research process. Data analysis commenced promptly after data collection, involving transcription of interviews and discussions followed by iterative thematic coding to identify recurring patterns and significant narratives [7]. Triangulation of qualitative findings from interviews, focus groups, document analysis, and observation enhanced the credibility and depth of analysis, providing meaningful insights into participants' perspectives within the research context. This meticulous approach to data recording and analysis enriched the quality and authenticity of research outcomes, presenting evidence directly derived from the research site.

E. Ethical consideration

Following ethical principles in research, the researcher obtained approvals from the Ethical Review Committee (ERC) at AKU-IED, EA, and NACOSTI in Kenya for data collection. Consent was sought from relevant authorities including education directors and the school principal before conducting the study. Participants, including students, teachers, and parents, were informed about the study's purpose and procedures and provided with consent forms. Confidentiality was maintained through the use of pseudonyms, and data was securely stored on a password-protected computer. Participation was voluntary, and participants had the right to withdraw without consequences. Parental consent was obtained for student participants to ensure ethical compliance and protect participant interests.

F. Limitations and Assumptions

The study assumed permission would be granted despite government restrictions in the third term, and that participants would provide honest and genuine information reflecting their experiences. It also presumed teachers' awareness of homework as a formative assessment. Limitations included the study's focus on one school and grade, potentially limiting representativeness and the findings' applicability to other schools. Language barriers necessitated translators for accurate communication, while transcription accuracy and participants' nervousness during interviews posed challenges to data collection and response depth.

G. Rigor and Trustworthiness

The study prioritized trustworthiness by acknowledging biases and embracing diverse viewpoints, maintaining rigor through triangulation, member checks, and detailed descriptions. Prolonged engagement-built rapport with participants, fostering credibility and dependability of findings. Bias mitigation was achieved by valuing and incorporating diverse participant contributions, ensuring research integrity and transferability [8].

IV. RESULTS

A. Homework and Learning Outcomes

i. Engagement and Motivation

Teachers emphasized the role of well-designed homework in capturing students' interest and fostering active participation in the learning process. Interviews with Teacher John highlighted the use of homework to keep students engaged, especially during untaught lessons due to limited teacher availability. Student's perspectives from Emma, Daniel, and Sarah reinforced the notion that culturally relevant and personally meaningful homework assignments contributed to sustained motivation and interest in learning. Observations conducted during classroom sessions provided tangible evidence of heightened student engagement during lessons, potentially influenced by the quality of homework tasks. Student responses during focus group discussions revealed varying levels of enthusiasm towards homework, with some, like Samuel, expressing genuine interest in reading assignments. Overall, findings underscored the importance of aligning homework tasks with students' interests and cultural backgrounds to enhance motivation and sustained engagement within the CBE.

ii. Feedback and Improvement in Academic Performance

Teachers emphasized the value of targeted feedback on homework assignments, which informed personalized instruction and addressed individual learning needs. Interviews with Teacher Amos highlighted the importance of timely and specific feedback in guiding students' understanding and growth. Student perspectives from focus group discussions revealed a positive response to feedback received on homework assignments, with participants like Emma, Sarah, and Joseph acknowledging its role in guiding their learning and improvement. Parental feedback, exemplified by Agnes, underscored the motivational impact of teacher comments on student assignments. Document analysis of students' exercise books further demonstrated the systematic feedback process embedded within homework assessments, emphasizing its importance in aiding student progress and achievement within the CBE.

Teachers also noted significant improvement in test scores and grades correlating homework with higher academic achievement as students also acknowledged homework helped them perform better, especially in core subjects like Mathematics and Integrated Science. This view was supported by document analysis of teacher mark books showing assignments tied to elevated scores, suggesting a positive impact on understanding and application of concepts. Interviews with parents further validated perceptions of enhanced performance attributable to homework.

iii. Reinforcement of Classroom Learning and Scaffolding

Students stated through FGDs that homework helped them remember content taught in class and prepared them for exams. It provided additional practice reinforcing subject mastery as per knowledge consolidation theories. Assignments encouraged practical application of knowledge and problem-solving skills aligned with CBE objectives. Teachers also viewed homework as facilitating independent learning within students' Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) through appropriate challenge levels. Well-designed tasks supported competency development by enabling practice at each learner's proximal level of development according to sociocultural learning perspectives. Project work in particular fostered practical competencies.

iv. Critical Thinking and Problem-Solving Skills:

Teachers emphasized that homework assignments that involve analysis, synthesis, and application of knowledge provide students with opportunities to develop critical thinking and problem-solving skills. By engaging in tasks that require deeper understanding and application of concepts. students learn to approach problems from multiple perspectives, evaluate information critically, and devise effective solutions. This fosters cognitive development and prepares students to tackle complex challenges in academic and real-world settings.

v. Self-Regulated Learning and Lifelong Learning Habits

Through homework, students learn to regulate their own learning process by setting goals, monitoring progress, and adjusting strategies based on feedback. Teachers noted that homework assignments encourage students to take ownership of their learning journey, fostering independence and self-efficacy. By engaging in self-regulated learning practices, students develop essential skills for lifelong learning and academic success.

When students are tasked with completing assignments independently and seeking

clarification when needed, they take initiative in their academic pursuits. This sense of ownership enhances motivation, engagement, and accountability, empowering students to actively participate in their educational experiences. Regular engagement in homework assignments cultivates lifelong learning habits by encouraging students to continue seeking knowledge and developing skills beyond the classroom. By establishing routines that prioritize learning and skill development, students internalize the value of continuous improvement and intellectual curiosity. This lays the foundation for a lifelong commitment to education and personal growth, preparing students for success in an evolving global society.

B. Feedback and Assessment in Homework

i. Nature of Feedback Provided on Homework

The study explored the nature and quality of feedback provided on homework assignments within the educational context. Through interviews with teachers and analysis of students' exercise books, it was revealed that feedback varied in terms of specificity, timeliness, and effectiveness. Teachers highlighted the importance of personalized feedback that addressed specific strengths and areas for improvement in students' work. Amos, a teacher, emphasized the role of timely feedback in guiding students' learning process and supporting their academic growth.

Document analysis of students' exercise books demonstrated the diverse approaches to providing feedback, including written comments, grades, and annotations. Findings revealed that constructive feedback often included detailed explanations of errors, encouragement, and suggestions for improvement. However, challenges related to consistency and timeliness of feedback were identified, reflecting the need for streamlined feedback mechanisms to enhance student understanding and progress.

ii. Formative Feedback on Student Learning and Improvement

The study investigated how feedback on homework assignments influenced student learning and improvement. Interviews with teachers highlighted the role of feedback in promoting reflective practice and guiding instructional decisions. Teachers noted that targeted feedback helped students identify areas of weakness and provided direction for further

study. Student perspectives from focus group discussions revealed a positive response to feedback received on homework assignments, with participants acknowledging its role in clarifying concepts and facilitating learning. Emma, Sarah, and Joseph emphasized the importance of constructive feedback in guiding their revisions and enhancing their understanding of subject matter. Parental feedback, exemplified by Agnes, underscored the motivational impact of teacher comments on student assignments. Interviews also revealed teachers utilized comments on assignments to guide individual progress per principles of formative assessment. Students acknowledged feedback and identified strengths and weaknesses, thereby informing their learning goals. This process enhanced competency attainment in CBE via personalized growth strategies

Document analysis of students' exercise books further demonstrated the systematic feedback process embedded within homework assessments. The analysis revealed patterns of improvement over time, highlighting the effectiveness of feedback in supporting student progress and achievement. Overall, the findings emphasized the critical role of timely and specific feedback in facilitating student learning and improvement within the homework assessment framework.

iii. Challenges and Opportunities in Providing Effective Feedback

The study identified challenges and opportunities associated with providing effective feedback on homework assignments. Teachers highlighted constraints related to time and workload, which sometimes compromised the quality and consistency of feedback. Limited resources and varying student needs also presented challenges in tailoring feedback to individual learning styles and preferences. lack of standardized competency-based rubrics for grading homework presented difficulties. Participants also mentioned challenges in providing timely individualized feedback due to large class sizes. The absence of dedicated sections for recording homework within CBE report forms highlighted the need for streamlined evaluation approaches.

However, opportunities for improvement were identified, including the use of technology to streamline feedback processes and provide personalized recommendations for student development. Teachers expressed interest in

professional development opportunities focused on enhancing feedback practices and promoting student-centered assessment strategies.

iv. System for gauging understanding

Teachers reported homework assisted in tracking understanding through grading according to CBE criteria. Document analysis showed mark books systematically captured assignment evaluation over time, signifying homework's role as a formative diagnosis tool.

IV. Discussion

A. Homework and Learning Outcomes

i. Influence of Homework on Learning Performance

The study findings reveal a consensus among teachers, parents, and students regarding the positive impact of homework on learning performance. Participants emphasized that well-designed homework assignments contributed to improved academic performance, particularly in subjects like mathematics and integrated science. Teacher Nancy highlighted the role of homework in reinforcing classroom instruction and facilitating knowledge retention, which ultimately enhanced students' examination performance.

These findings align with existing literature suggesting a positive correlation between homework completion and academic achievement [13]. The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) framework [36] offers a theoretical lens to understand how appropriately scaffolded homework assignments can support competency-based learning outcomes. By providing the right level of challenge and support, homework assignments can help students reach their ZPD and achieve academic success.

ii. Engagement and Motivation

The discussion further explores the role of homework in fostering student engagement and motivation. Teachers emphasized that well-designed homework assignments captured students' interest and curiosity, encouraging active participation in the learning process. Student perspectives from focus group discussions echoed this sentiment, with participants expressing enthusiasm for homework tasks that aligned with their interests and cultural backgrounds.

The concept of autonomy and relevance in homework design is consistent with the self-determination theory of [6], which posits that students are more motivated when they perceive activities as autonomously chosen and relevant to their personal goals. Aligning homework with students' interests and providing opportunities for choice can enhance motivation and engagement within the competency-based education (CBE) framework.

iii. Feedback and Improvement

The discussion delves into the critical role of feedback in homework assignments for promoting student improvement. Teachers highlighted the importance of timely and specific feedback in guiding student learning and addressing individual needs. Document analysis of students' exercise books demonstrated the influence of constructive feedback on student progress over time.

The findings resonate with research on formative assessment [3], emphasizing the value of ongoing feedback in supporting student growth and development. Effective feedback mechanisms embedded within homework assignments can empower students to self-regulate, build confidence, and foster positive teacher-student relationships.

iv. Challenges and Opportunities

Lastly, the discussion addresses challenges and opportunities associated with homework implementation in the CBE context. Teachers identified constraints related to time, workload, and resource limitations, which sometimes hindered the quality and consistency of homework assignments. However, opportunities for improvement were identified, including leveraging technology to streamline feedback processes and enhance personalized learning experiences. Professional development opportunities focused on enhancing homework design and assessment strategies could further support teachers in overcoming challenges and maximizing the educational benefits of homework assignments.

In conclusion, the discussion synthesizes key findings related to homework's influence on learning outcomes within the CBE framework. By examining themes of performance, engagement, feedback, and challenges, this discussion contributes to a deeper understanding of effective homework practices and their implications for student success in competency-based education settings. Future research should continue to explore innovative approaches to

homework design and assessment to optimize learning outcomes and promote student engagement within diverse educational contexts.

B. Feedback and Assessment in Homework

i. *Role of Feedback in Homework*

The study findings underscore the critical role of feedback in homework assignments. Teachers emphasized the importance of providing timely and specific feedback to guide student learning and improvement. Participants highlighted that constructive feedback, delivered through marked assignments and written comments, played a pivotal role in enhancing students' understanding and skill development.

The significance of feedback aligns with the literature on formative assessment [3] emphasizing the value of ongoing feedback in supporting student growth and academic achievement. Effective feedback mechanisms embedded within homework assignments can empower students to self-regulate, address learning gaps, and foster continuous improvement.

ii. *Influence on Student Learning and Engagement*

The discussion further explores how feedback influences student learning and engagement within the competency-based education (CBE) framework. Students reported that feedback from teachers motivated them to strive for improvement and provided clarity on areas needing attention. Parent perspectives highlighted the positive influence of constructive feedback on their children's academic progress and self-confidence.

According to [6] which posits that meaningful feedback can enhance intrinsic motivation and promote a sense of autonomy in learning. By incorporating feedback into homework design, educators can create opportunities for personalized learning and student-centered assessment practices.

iii. *Assessment Strategies and Improvement*

The discussion delves into assessment strategies embedded within homework assignments to support student improvement. Teachers noted that homework assignments served as valuable assessment tools, allowing them to identify individual learning needs and tailor instruction accordingly. Document analysis of student exercise books revealed evidence of systematic feedback processes contributing to student progress over time.

These findings highlight the importance of aligning homework with competency-based learning outcomes. By integrating assessment strategies within homework tasks, educators can promote skill development, mastery of concepts, and goal-oriented learning experiences. The continuous feedback loop created through homework assessments facilitates personalized learning and supports students in achieving desired competencies.

iv. *Challenges and Opportunities*

Lastly, the discussion addresses challenges and opportunities associated with feedback and assessment practices in homework. Teachers identified constraints related to workload, time constraints, and resource limitations, which sometimes hindered the quality and consistency of feedback provided to students. However, opportunities for improvement were identified, including leveraging technology to streamline feedback processes and promote individualized learning experiences.

Professional development opportunities focused on enhancing assessment literacy and feedback strategies could further support teachers in overcoming challenges and maximizing the educational benefits of homework assignments.

In conclusion, the discussion synthesizes key findings related to feedback and assessment practices within homework assignments. By examining themes of feedback's role in learning and engagement, assessment strategies, and associated challenges, this discussion contributes to a deeper understanding of effective homework practices within the competency-based education framework. Future research should continue to explore innovative approaches to feedback and assessment in homework design to optimize learning outcomes and promote student success in diverse educational contexts.

V. Conclusion

Examination of homework, feedback, and assessment strategies offers valuable insights into enhancing student learning and skill development. Homework serves as a crucial tool for reinforcing and assessing learning outcomes when appropriately designed and aligned with pedagogical goals. By carefully crafting

homework assignments that align with specific competencies, teachers can promote student engagement and facilitate skill mastery outside the classroom. Effective feedback mechanisms, such as timely and specific feedback, play a critical role in promoting deeper understanding and supporting students in their competency attainment journey. Feedback that is constructive and actionable provides students with guidance on areas of improvement and reinforces their learning progress. Assessment strategies within a CBE framework prioritize competency mastery over rote memorization. Teachers utilize diverse assessment methods, including formative assessments, rubrics, and performance tasks, to measure students' proficiency and growth across various competencies. This holistic approach to assessment goes beyond traditional standardized tests, allowing educators to gain a comprehensive understanding of each student's strengths and areas for improvement. By aligning assessments with competency-based objectives, educators can tailor instructional approaches to meet individual student needs and promote meaningful learning experiences.

However, implementing effective homework, feedback, and assessment strategies in CBE settings presents challenges and limitations. One key challenge is ensuring equitable access to resources and technology for all students, particularly in underserved areas. Professional development for teachers is also essential to equip educators with the necessary skills and knowledge to implement CBE practices effectively. Additionally, adapting traditional teaching methods to align with competency-based approaches requires ongoing support and collaboration among stakeholders. Moving forward, it is crucial to continue research and collaborative efforts to refine practices and maximize the potential of homework, feedback, and assessment strategies in CBE for Kenya's junior schools. By addressing challenges and leveraging opportunities, educators can create inclusive and engaging learning environments that foster competency development and academic success for all students. Embracing innovative approaches and incorporating feedback from various stakeholders will be instrumental in advancing CBE initiatives and improving educational outcomes in Kenya's junior school settings.

VI. FUTURE RESEARCH

Future research could focus on conducting a comparative study of homework as an assessment tool across different subjects and disciplines under the CBE system. Researchers could explore effective time management strategies to address challenges in balancing homework with other activities. There is also an opportunity to research innovative digital platforms / technology-based homework models to enhance learning experiences.

To strengthen the reliability and broader applicability of the outcomes, future studies would benefit from broadening their scope to include various educational institutions as part of an extensive multi-site investigation. Expanding the parameters of the research design to systematically analyze and compare patterns across different learning environments would generate findings with increased validity and generalizability. This broader approach will facilitate a more comprehensive understanding of the potential commonalities or distinctions in the application of homework as an assessment tool across various school environments.

VII. RECOMMENDATIONS

Drawing from the findings of this study, the following recommendations are tailored to the context of homework as an assessment tool within the CBE framework in Junior Schools in Kenya:

Augmentation of Teaching Staff: Given the significant time required for customizing homework assignments as assessment tools, it is advisable for the Ministry of Education (MOE), in partnership with the (TSC) Teachers Service Commission of Kenya, to bolster the recruitment of more teachers in Junior Schools. Expanding the teaching workforce will alleviate teachers' workload, granting them more time to tailor homework assignments to meet the individualized needs of students.

Construction of Additional Learning Spaces: Prioritizing the construction of additional classrooms by the MOE is essential. This initiative is aimed at ensuring that teachers are responsible for manageable class sizes, facilitating individualized learning, and enabling the effective use of homework as an assessment method.

Sustainable Resource Provision: The MOE should ensure consistent and comprehensive

resource support for schools. Specifically, within the CBE framework, where digital literacy plays a pivotal role, ensuring uninterrupted access to internet connectivity is imperative. This support will facilitate access to digital resources vital for effective teaching and learning.

Intensive Practical In-Service Training: To deepen teachers' comprehension of the role of homework as an assessment tool within the CBE framework, the MOE, in collaboration with relevant educational institutions, should intensify in-service training programs. These programs should pivot towards a practical, hands-on approach, equipping teachers with the skills and strategies necessary for the seamless integration of homework into their teaching practices.

Activation of Teachers' Professional Communities: The establishment of professional communities among teachers is recommended. These communities should serve as forums for ongoing support, and collaboration, coming up with a uniform rubric for the grading system for homework and the swift resolution of challenges associated with using homework as an assessment tool. This collaborative approach will foster intrinsic motivation among teachers and promote the effective utilization of homework assignments, thereby enhancing student learning and engagement.

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