



# COMPETENCY-BASED TEACHING FOR ENHANCEMENT OF CO-OPERATIVE KNOWLEDGE TRANSFER: A REFLECTIVE ANALYSIS OF PEDAGOGICAL PRACTICES AT MOSHI CO-OPERATIVE UNIVERSITY IN TANZANIA

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## ABSTRACT

Competency-based teaching is widely acknowledged as a crucial approach for fostering skill development and competencies among students at various educational levels. Since its adoption by the government of the United Republic of Tanzania in 2005, competency-based teaching has been integrated into both secondary and tertiary education systems, including at Moshi Co-operative University (MoCU). Despite its official implementation, the effectiveness of competency-based teaching methods has been hindered by a lack of comprehensive understanding among instructors, leading to a persistence of traditional teaching approaches. This study examined the impact of competency-based teaching on cooperative knowledge transfer at MoCU, with a specific focus on instructors' comprehension of competency-based teaching methodologies and assessment practices. Utilising a qualitative approach with a single case study, the research involved 40 participants, including instructors, head of departments, key informants, and students. Data collection methods encompassed interviews, classroom observations, document analysis, and focus group discussions, with analysis conducted through thematic analysis. The findings illuminate a notable gap in instructors' understanding of competency-based teaching, resulting in a limited application of its methods and assessment procedures. Traditional teaching techniques remain predominant, with learner-centred approaches such as field visits and cooperative learning being neglected. Additionally, instructors exhibited a lack of familiarity with diverse assessment methods, primarily relying on written tests. In light of these findings, targeted in-service training for instructors is recommended, with a specific emphasis on competency-based teaching strategies. Furthermore, there is a need to diversify teaching and assessment techniques to foster student engagement and critical thinking. Allocating additional time for competency-based teaching training and encouraging the adoption of varied instructional methods will contribute to enriching the cooperative learning experience at MoCU.

**Keywords:** Co-operative education, Competency-based training, Learner-centred learning, Knowledge transfer, Pedagogy.

**Paper type:** Research paper

**Type of Review:** Peer Review

## 1. Introduction

Competency-based teaching stands as a pivotal educational approach globally, diverging from traditional knowledge-centric methods by placing emphasis on the development of specific skills and competencies in students. This paradigm prioritises experiential learning, wherein students actively engage in practical tasks to refine their abilities (Açikgöz et al., 2024; Mohamed, 2023). Correspondingly, competency-based curriculum underscores the significance of quality education in fostering societal progress across various developmental sectors (Chong, 2016).



In Tanzania, cooperatives play a vital role in driving socio-economic progress by offering avenues for job creation and elevating living standards (Anania and Rwekaza, 2018). However, Tanzanian cooperatives face multifaceted challenges, including skill shortages, knowledge gaps, and governance issues, hindering their effectiveness and sustainability (Mohamed, 2023). In response, the Tanzanian government has taken proactive measures, including the establishment of Moshi Co-operative University (MoCU), which originated as Co-operative College Moshi in 1963. Transitioning into a Constituent University College of Sokoine University of Agriculture in 2004 as Moshi University College of Co-operative and Business Studies, it attained full-fledged university status as Moshi Co-operative University (MoCU) in 2014. Renowned for its excellence in co-operative and business management education within the East African Community (MoCU, 2020), MoCU provides a diverse array of programs spanning from certificate to PhD levels. These programs encompass various facets of co-operative management and accounting, community and co-operative development, and related disciplines.

Geared towards equipping students with the requisite knowledge, skills, and values to make meaningful contributions to the co-operative sector and society at large, MoCU's programs have witnessed a steady uptick in enrolment over the past five academic years, underscoring their burgeoning demand and relevance (MoCU, 2020). Research corroborates the positive impact of co-operative education and training on the performance of co-operatives, enhancing key areas such as customer care, financial management, and service delivery (Babadoğan et al., 2023; Komba et al., 2022).

The MoCU student registration report of 2018/19 academic year indicates that the University registered 872 students, with subsequent academic years witnessing a progressive increase: 1316 in 2019/20, 1462 in 2020/21, 2361 in 2021/22, and 2542 in 2022/23 (MoCU, 2022). Offering both on-campus and distance learning programs, MoCU, in tandem with other higher institutions in Tanzania, has embraced a paradigm shift in teaching and training methodologies. This shift, exemplified by the transition from content-based to competency-based curricula, has been underscored by the development of the University Qualified Framework (UQF) as a model to facilitate competency-based training (URT, 1995). Competency-based teaching represents an educational approach that prioritises the cultivation of specific skills and competencies in students over the mere dissemination of knowledge. This pedagogical paradigm often entails a hands-on, experiential mode of learning, wherein students actively engage in practical tasks and activities to hone their skills (Açıkgöz et al., 2024; Mohamed, 2023). This has also been the essence of competency-based curriculum, which emphasises that quality education, underpinned by such curriculum, is of paramount importance in nurturing society's quality in almost all calibres of its development sectors (Chong, 2016).

In light of these developments, there arises a necessity to evaluate co-operative training processes at various levels by MoCU, with a view to proposing innovative teaching approaches, as advocated by the International Co-operative Alliance (2022). Central to this endeavour is the adoption of competency-based teaching (CBT) in co-operative education, aligning with Tanzania's broader shift towards competency-based curricula since 2006 (URT, 2019). This transition has engendered significant changes in teaching and learning methodologies, emphasising comprehension of concepts and acquisition of skills over rote memorisation of factual knowledge (Vavrus and Bartlett, 2017).

Curriculum revisions in universities and higher learning institutions, including MoCU, have profound implications for teaching and learning methodologies. Co-operative education teaching methods have evolved towards systematic and theory-based approaches, grounded in the principles of co-operative learning, with a focus on enhancing learners' ability to effectively apply co-operative knowledge (MoCU, 2020). Competency-based teaching approaches, characterised by learner-centred pedagogies, prioritise active student participation and knowledge construction (Banda, 2019). These approaches aim at fostering an interactive, inspirational learning environment wherein students are encouraged to challenge themselves, their peers, and their instructors (Mwakalukwa et al., 2019; Mwakalindi, 2016). In Tanzania, the adoption of competency-based teaching has supplanted traditional, instructor-centric teaching

methods, which were primarily textbook-based and test-oriented (Mwambene et al., 2018). The current co-operative course content at MoCU aims at cultivating students' ability to effectively apply acquired knowledge and skills within real-world contexts. In this context, competency encompasses knowledge, skills, and attitudes demonstrated within appropriate contextual frameworks (Cohen et al., 2017).

Against this backdrop, this study explores the contribution of CBT in enhancing co-operative studies competency at Moshi Co-operative University. Its specific objectives included exploring co-operative studies instructors' understanding of CBT, examining the utilisation of teaching and learning techniques, and evaluating assessment methods within the framework of CBT implementation. Hence, this study contributes to the expanding body of knowledge on CBT within educational institutions in Tanzania, particularly since the adoption of competency-based curriculum reforms in 2005. The successful implementation of CBT holds paramount importance in enhancing learners' knowledge and skills, as emphasised by the Tanzania Institute of Education (2005d). By identifying existing gaps and proposing measures for enhancing CBT within educational settings, this study furnishes empirical insights that can inform policymakers' decisions aimed at equipping learners with pertinent skills. Furthermore, by shedding light on any discrepancies observed in CBT implementation, the study paves the way for further research endeavours and remedial actions to be undertaken by policymakers and other stakeholders.

## 2. Theoretical Framework

This study draws insights from Understanding by Design (UbD) Theory, developed by Wiggins and McTighe in 2005 (Wiggins, 2005). UbD serves as the guiding principle for structuring curriculum, instructional methodologies, and assessment strategies (Bowen, 2017). Initially focused on standards-based curriculum and assessment in K-12 education, UbD has been adapted to suit various educational contexts (Wiggins and McTighe, 2019). The UbD Theory offers a systematic approach to understanding and enhancing teaching and learning practices in cooperative education environments (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005). Through leveraging UbD principles, this study aimed at identifying areas where instructors may need additional support to implement Competence Based Teaching (CBT) effectively and enhance student learning outcomes (Bowen, 2017).

UbD theory is characterised by three key stages: identifying desired learning outcomes, determining acceptable evidence of learning, and planning learning experiences and instruction (Wiggins and McTighe, 2005). These stages align closely with the objectives of this study, which include exploring instructors' understanding of CBT, examining teaching and learning techniques within CBT, and evaluating assessment methods within CBT. For the first objective, exploring instructors' understanding of CBT, UbD provides a framework to assess the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment with desired learning outcomes (Laughery-Hanby, 2022). This facilitates the identification of gaps in instructors' comprehension of CBT principles, informing targeted interventions for professional development (Wiggins and McTighe, 2019). UbD's emphasis on identifying desired learning outcomes ensures that educators focus on the essential knowledge, skills, and attitudes that students should acquire, thereby guiding instructional practices towards achieving those outcomes effectively.

Similarly, for the second objective, examining teaching and learning techniques within CBT, UbD offers a lens to evaluate instructional strategies' effectiveness in promoting student engagement and higher-order thinking skills (Lin, 2017). UbD encourages educators to design learning experiences that enable students to construct meaning and deepen their understanding through inquiry, problem-solving, and authentic tasks. Analysing the incorporation of UbD principles into teaching practices can identify areas for improvement and innovation in instructional design (McTighe and Wiggins, 2013).

Finally, for the third objective, evaluating assessment methods within CBT, UbD provides a framework for designing authentic assessments that measure students' understanding and application of essential concepts and skills (McTighe and Wiggins, 2013). UbD advocates for the use of varied assessment methods that allow students to demonstrate their learning in diverse ways, moving beyond traditional tests and quizzes. Aligning assessment practices with UbD principles ensures that evaluation methods

accurately reflect cooperative education programs' intended learning outcomes (McTighe and Wiggins, 2013). Therefore, UbD Theory offers a systematic approach to understanding and enhancing teaching and learning practices in cooperative education environments, guiding efforts to support instructors in implementing CBT effectively and fostering student success. By utilising UbD principles, this study aims to provide empirical insights into the implementation of CBT at Moshi Co-operative University, thereby contributing to the enhancement of cooperative knowledge transfer and pedagogical practices in the Tanzanian context.

### **3. Research Methods**

This study employed a qualitative research approach, aiming to directly engage with instructors at Moshi Co-operative University (MoCU) to gain insights into their implementation of Competency-Based Education Teaching (CBET). To achieve this, a range of data collection methods were utilised, including interviews with instructors and heads of departments, classroom observations, and documentation of teaching strategies and CBET assessment techniques. The research adopted a single case study design, focusing exclusively on MoCU due to its central role as the primary provider of co-operative education programs in Tanzania. Participants in this study comprised instructors, heads of departments, and students enrolled in co-operative-related programs. Purposive sampling was employed to select participants, resulting in a diverse sample representing various educational roles and levels. Specifically, the sample included 20 students (10 Diploma and 10 degree), 10 instructors, two heads of departments (Department of Co-operative Education from Kizumbi Institute of Co-operative and Business Education, and Department of Co-operative Development and Management from the Faculty of Co-operative and Community Development), and eight key informants.

Data collection for this study occurred between the 5<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> of March 2023 and involved a combination of methods including interviews, observations, documentary review, and focus group discussions. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with instructors, heads of departments, and key informants, lasting between 30 to 45 minutes. Additionally, focus group discussions were held with third-year degree and second-year diploma students, with sessions lasting between 40 minutes to one hour. The collected data were subjected to content analysis, which involved transcription, translation, categorization, coding, and interpretation of emerging themes. The analysis was supported by participant quotes and the presentation of quantified responses. To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, several measures were undertaken. These included addressing credibility, transferability, dependability, and conformability. Credibility and dependability were enhanced through triangulation of data sources, rapport building with participants, and providing detailed explanations of the data collection and analysis processes. Transferability was considered by contextualizing findings to MoCU and suggesting potential relevance to other educational institutions. Conformability was ensured through the triangulation of data sources and adherence to ethical guidelines, including obtaining informed consent, maintaining confidentiality, and ensuring anonymity of participants.

### **4. Findings and Discussions**

#### **4.1 Instructors' conceptualisation of competency-based teaching**

Initially, instructors were interviewed to assess their grasp of Competency-Based Teaching (CBT). The investigation focused on four criteria: the ability to conceptualise CBT, understanding of CBT in teaching methods, perception of the roles of instructors and students in CBT, and comprehension of assessment procedures within CBT. Results revealed a significant discrepancy in the conceptualisation of CBT among instructors. When asked to define CBT, most instructors struggled to articulate a clear understanding. In terms of teaching methods, the predominant strategy mentioned was group discussions, with little mention of other learner-centred approaches. One instructor expressed this sentiment during an interview, stating, "As a instructor, I always implement CBT by using group discussion techniques during teaching and learning" (Instructor A, March 15, 2023).

Similarly, key informants exhibited misconceptions about CBT, associating it solely with the use of group discussion techniques. One informant remarked, "CBT is a new teaching approach which requires all

instructors to use group discussion methods” (KI1, 20th March 2023). Additionally, students showed a lack of awareness regarding CBT, with none able to describe it in the context of cooperative-related studies. However, like the instructors and key informants, students primarily associated CBT with group discussions. A student stated, “Competency-based teaching emphasises instructors to use group discussion when teaching” (Student A, March 10, 2023). These findings indicate a substantial gap between the perceived and actual requirements of CBT, particularly in terms of its alignment with learner-centred methodologies. Many instructors and students appear to have a limited understanding of CBT's broader scope and its potential applications beyond group discussions.

Furthermore, during interviews it was revealed that most instructors failed to conceptualise CBT in line with constructivist learning principles, which advocate for learner-centred methods such as group discussions, debates, role plays, and problem-solving. Instead, they primarily equated CBT with group discussion techniques, neglecting other essential teaching strategies advocated in the course content. This misconception is further evidenced by statements from both instructors and key informants, where CBT is narrowly defined as employing only group discussion methods. Such a limited understanding could hinder the development of critical thinking, problem-solving skills, and other competencies essential for students' holistic development.

These findings diverge from the principles outlined in the Understanding by Design (UbD) Theory. According to UbD, effective teaching involves aligning curriculum, instruction, and assessment with desired learning outcomes, emphasising student-centred, constructivist approaches to learning. However, the results indicate a gap between instructors' understanding and application of CBT principles and the principles outlined in UbD. The disconnect between instructors' understanding of CBT and constructivist learning principles underscores the need for targeted interventions in instructors' professional development. By incorporating UbD principles into instructional design and assessment practices, instructors can create more student-centred learning environments conducive to deeper understanding and critical thinking. Ongoing training and support in constructivist pedagogy are essential to help instructors better understand and implement CBT principles. Ultimately, these efforts can enhance the quality of cooperative education programs and promote positive student learning outcomes.

#### **4.1.1 Instructors' knowledge of competency-based teaching in relation to teaching methods**

As the primary implementers of the curriculum, instructors were expected to demonstrate an understanding of Competency-Based Teaching (CBT) in relation to teaching methods. However, the findings from the interview sessions revealed a significant gap in their comprehension. None of the interviewed instructors exhibited an understanding of CBT that moves away from traditional teaching methods dominated by rote memorisation of co-operative concepts. This contradicts the essence of CBT, which emphasises the development of deep understanding and the application of co-operative values within contextual frameworks, rather than mere regurgitation of information provided by instructors (Yulia, 2021). Furthermore, when asked to explain how their teaching styles incorporated students' prior knowledge, rooted in a constructivist view of learning, the instructors struggled to conceptualise CBT in this context. One instructor's response epitomized this disconnect, stating, “Students typically lack foundational knowledge in co-operative studies at the university level. Therefore, I prefer to provide them with essential information during lectures and direct them to seek further reading afterward” (Instructor C, March 17, 2023).

This quote underscores the instructors' lack of understanding of the constructivist view of learning, which emphasises building upon existing knowledge to construct new understanding. It became evident that instructors continued to rely on traditional teaching methods that discourage students from utilising their prior knowledge in constructing new knowledge. However, in CBT, the incorporation of prior knowledge is crucial as learners construct knowledge through activities that draw upon scaffolding and promote competency development (Mwakapenda et al., 2021). Another instructor confessed, “I am unfamiliar with the concept of ‘prior knowledge’ as used in CBT; it's a new concept to me” (Instructor D, March 18, 2023). Similarly, several instructors expressed their unfamiliarity with the concept of utilising prior knowledge

during the teaching and learning process. Although many had attended pre-service or in-service training on CBT, these responses revealed a significant disparity between instructors' theoretical understanding of CBT and its practical implementation, deviating from the principles outlined in UbD Theory.

Despite the emphasis of CBT on fostering deep understanding and critical thinking, instructors predominantly adhere to traditional teaching methods characterised by rote memorisation, which contradicts the student-centred, constructivist approach advocated by UbD Theory. Moreover, the study exposed a lack of appreciation among instructors for the role of prior knowledge in learning, a fundamental tenet of CBT rooted in constructivist principles. This disparity between theory and practice underscores the need for targeted interventions to bridge the gap and promote the effective implementation of CBT principles. Professional development initiatives must prioritise training in constructivist pedagogy and CBT principles, empowering instructors to create student-centred learning environments conducive to deeper understanding and independent learning. By aligning teaching practices with UbD Theory principles, instructors can better support students in constructing knowledge autonomously, ultimately enhancing the quality of cooperative education programs and promoting positive student outcomes.

#### **4.1.2 Instructors' understanding of their roles in competency-based teaching**

During the interviews, instructors were asked to elucidate their understanding of competency-based teaching (CBT) in relation to their roles and those of the students. However, the findings revealed a significant gap in their comprehension of these concepts. Only two out of the ten interviewed instructors were able to articulate the meaning of CBT concepts in terms of the changing roles of both the learners and the instructors. One instructor expressed their perspective as follows:

“My role as a instructor is to deliver course content using the prescribed course outline and relevant textbooks, ensuring coverage within the stipulated semester timeframe. Given the constraints of time, we strive to adhere to the predetermined schedule” (Instructor B, March 16, 2023).

This response indicates a limited understanding of the instructor's role in CBT, with a focus on traditional teaching methods such as textbook-based instruction and adherence to semester schedules. These findings contradict those reported by Boahin (2020), which emphasise the importance of allowing students to interact with various learning materials rather than relying solely on textbooks. Additionally, Lukindo (2016) highlights the prevalence of traditional teaching methods in Tanzania, underscoring the need for in-service education to address this challenge. Another respondent remarked:

“I may have a different perspective, but I believe my role as a instructor is to facilitate learning and ensure my students excel in their examinations; nothing more. While I am aware of the concept you're referring to, it remains largely theoretical for most of us” (Instructor A, March 17, 2023).

This response suggests that instructors may require additional training to fully grasp their roles in CBT, which prioritises active engagement, participation, and discovery learning over passive absorption of knowledge (Boahin, 2020). Furthermore, the findings are incongruent with the CBT approach, which advocates for a shift in the instructor's role from an information provider to that of a facilitator. In the constructivist approach, instructors guide learners toward knowledge acquisition rather than dictating information to them (Mohamed, 2023). Only two out of the ten interviewed instructors were able to correctly explain the roles of Instructors and students in CBT. One of them stated:

“The role of the instructor in CBT is to facilitate learning by assisting learners in constructing their own knowledge to become proficient co-operators. I engage my students in various activities related to the topic, providing opportunities for interaction with the environment and their peers” (Instructor D, March 17, 2023).

Another instructor added:

“The role of my students is to actively participate in the learning process and utilise their prior experiences in knowledge construction. I view my students not as passive recipients of knowledge but as active participants in the teaching and learning process” (Instructor E, March 17, 2023).

These responses highlight the importance of understanding the roles of both instructors and students in CBT, with an emphasis on active engagement, collaboration, and knowledge construction. Notably, all the instructors who accurately articulated the concept of CBT had backgrounds in teacher education, underscoring the pivotal role of instructors in curriculum implementation (Mwambene et al., 2018).

The findings diverge from the principles of Understanding by Design (UbD) Theory in several aspects. While UbD emphasises student-centred learning and the alignment of curriculum, instruction, and assessment, the study reveals a gap between instructors' understanding of CBT and its implementation. Many instructors primarily rely on traditional methods and fail to grasp UbD's constructivist approach. Despite the emphasis on learner-centred methods in CBT, such as group discussion and problem-solving, most instructors cited only group discussion as a teaching strategy, indicating a limited understanding of the diverse instructional techniques advocated by UbD. Moreover, while UbD underscores the role of instructors as facilitators of knowledge construction, the prevailing didactic approach among instructors suggests a need for targeted professional development to align their practices with the principles of UbD and CBT.

#### **4.1.3 Instructors' understanding of CBT in assessment procedures**

An examination of how instructors conceptualised competency-based teaching (CBT) in terms of assessment procedures revealed notable insights. The findings indicate that the interviewed instructors struggled to grasp CBT in relation to authentic assessment methods. Most instructors predominantly mentioned traditional paper-and-pencil assessments, neglecting authentic techniques such as oral tests, interviews, and observations, which are more capable of assessing a wide range of skills including listening, writing, reading, and speaking. During interviews with key informants, a similar trend emerged, with all respondents associating CBT with written assessment techniques. One instructor expressed this sentiment during an interview:

“Competency-based training is essentially traditional teaching for us at the University level. We assess our students' progress using written examinations, and this has remained unchanged across all academic levels” (Instructor F, March 17, 2023).

This quote highlights the prevailing perception among instructors that CBT aligns with traditional assessment methods, indicating a significant misunderstanding of the principles underlying CBT. Such misconceptions not only hinder the effective implementation of CBT but also impact its overall effectiveness. Scholars like Banda (2019) and Mwakalobo et al. (2017) argue that implementing a curriculum that is not fully understood poses significant challenges. Furthermore, despite potential exposure to in-service education on CBT, instructors still demonstrated an inability to conceptualise it correctly. Interviews with the heads of Department A revealed that even with in-service training, instructors struggled to grasp the essence of CBT. This suggests that current professional development efforts may be insufficient in adequately preparing instructors to implement CBT-aligned assessment procedures. Barron and Hammond (2020) emphasise the importance of continuous, formative, and summative assessments in evaluating learners' skills rather than just their factual knowledge.

However, in terms of instructors' conceptualisation of CBT, particularly regarding assessment procedures, the results diverged significantly from the principles of Understanding by Design (UbD) Theory. While UbD Theory emphasises the alignment of assessment practices with desired learning outcomes and the use of authentic assessment techniques, the findings indicate a preference for traditional paper-and-pencil assessments among instructors. This disconnect underscores the need for targeted professional development to bridge the gap between instructors' understanding of CBT and implementation assessment practices while aligning with the principles of UbD Theory.

## 4.2 Instructors' implementation of competency-based techniques

The study's second objective focused on evaluating how instructors utilised competency-based techniques during the teaching and learning process. Observation guides, interview protocols, documentary reviews, and focus group discussions with students provided valuable insights. Among the observed teaching methods, the lecture method emerged as the most commonly used technique, favored by a significant number of instructors. However, the majority of instructors (6 out of 10) in this study preferred employing group discussion techniques, ranking it as the second most utilised method. Additionally, two instructors indicated a preference for question-and-answer sessions, ranking it third. Only one instructor reported using debate, ranking it as the fourth preferred strategy in CBT. Notably, other learner-centred strategies such as drama, brainstorming, and dialogue, which foster active engagement and cooperative knowledge development, were not utilised at all. One instructor highlighted the challenges associated with using group discussions:

"I frequently employ group discussions in my teaching approach, although it can be time-consuming. It involves dividing students into groups, guiding their discussions, and managing presentations, which can extend the learning process. Therefore, I also incorporate the lecture method" (Instructor G, March 19, 2023).

Findings from interview sessions revealed that many instructors were unfamiliar with competency-based teaching techniques that promote active engagement and knowledge construction through the integration of prior knowledge. Instead, students appeared to rely on memorisation and recall of factual information from lectures and textbooks. This observation aligns with the findings by Mwakalindi et al. (2016), who argue that lecture-based teaching methods tend to limit learner autonomy, fostering passive learning characterised by note-taking and memorisation. According to Mwakalobo et al. (2017), in Tanzania, although teachers may incorporate group work and question-and-answer sessions in their teaching, these strategies often inadvertently promote memorisation rather than active knowledge construction through peer interaction. The study's findings underscore a gap between the intended use of competency-based techniques and the actual pedagogical practices employed by instructors. Moving forward, bridging this gap will require targeted interventions to promote the adoption of learner-centred teaching approaches that facilitate cooperative knowledge construction and active engagement among students. For details see Table 1.

Department Code	Participant	Responses Provided by the Instructors
A	L1	The technique I usually use is group discussion which administrators insist us to use but the lecture method also is used in order to make them understand the session.
B	L2	The technique I usually use is group discussion and lecture method. Group discussion is not possible to be used every day. I mostly use lectures in teaching.
A	L3	The method I use is participatory method which is group discussion and sometimes I use the lecture method because in our environment, English is neither our first or second language. So, our students usually speak Swahili.
A	L4	The technique I use is the lecture method and sometimes group discussion
B	L5	The technique I use during teaching and learning is group discussion and sometimes oral questions
A	L6	When I teach, I use group discussion method and question and answers

**Table1. Instructors' views on techniques used in implementing CBT**

**Key:** L1= Instructor one; L2= Instructor two; L3= Instructor three; L4 = Instructor four; L5= Instructor five; L6 = Instructor six

Responses in Table 1 highlighted a concerning trend: instructors' understanding of learner-centred methods was limited primarily to group discussion. Moreover, the application of group discussion techniques often deviated from competency-based principles, reflecting a tendency towards traditional teaching modes. Other teaching strategies designed to incorporate the diverse aspects of cooperative-related studies remained largely unfamiliar or unused by instructors. This discrepancy may stem from a



lack of in-service training, which would equip them with a broader repertoire of skills for implementing competency-based teaching strategies. According to TIE (2005), authentic learner-centred strategies encompass problem-solving, inquiry methods, brainstorming, drama, demonstration, dialogue, narration, cooperative learning, class discussion, debate, projects, role play, and simulation games. However, as one instructor pointed out:

“In our environment, especially with certificate students, language proficiency, particularly in English, poses a challenge. If I were to instruct them to engage in group discussions in English, effective learning would be compromised. Therefore, I often resort to the lecture method, despite knowing that participatory teaching methods are preferred” (Instructor F, March 17, 2023).

This response underscores the challenges associated with implementing group discussion strategies in practice, leading many instructors to default to the lecture method. Language barriers, particularly English proficiency, further exacerbate this reliance on traditional teaching approaches. Nevertheless, findings from students’ focus group discussions (FGDs) revealed that instructors frequently organised small group discussions during the teaching and learning process. However, this practice often perpetuated rote learning, wherein students relied solely on reading texts and memorisation. According to Hartfield (2020), this approach to learning reflects a traditional behaviourist view that prioritises repetitive learning of facts for exam recall rather than fostering deeper understanding among learners. Responses to questions about instructors’ teaching methods indicated that many instructors entered the classroom and immediately began lecturing, while students passively copied notes. A participant in one recorded FGD encapsulated this sentiment:

“When instructors enter our class, most of them begin teaching right away, and we are left to copy what they say. Occasionally, we are instructed to form groups to discuss certain topics or questions. Additionally, the instructor provides notes for us to write in our notebooks” (FGD, Program A; March 16, 2023).

This response highlights the continued use of instructor-centred teaching methods, which limit student autonomy in the classroom and prioritise memorisation and rote learning. Consequently, students are not encouraged to engage in deep learning or higher-order thinking, but instead focus on memorising exam questions to pass assessments. These findings suggest a gap in instructors’ awareness and implementation of teaching techniques required for effective competency-based teaching.

**Table 2: Students' Responses on the teaching techniques used by their Instructors**

Department Code	Participant Student	Participants' Responses
A	R1	Our instructor enters the classroom and starts teaching while talking and writing some notes on the blackboard for us to copy and sometimes he tells us to be in groups.
	R2	Our instructor teaches us well by giving us some notes to write in our exercise books and if there are questions, he shows us an example by talking and writing on the blackboard.
B	R1	The instructor usually enters the classroom and starts asking us about the previous session. Then he writes some notes on the board and sometimes he tells us to be in our groups so that we can discuss some questions.
	R2	Our instructor gives us some notes to write in our exercise books and very rarely we do discussions.
C	R1	First of all, our instructor starts by asking if we still remember what he taught us in the previous session, then he continues talking while writing some notes on the board and we copy the notes.
	R2	Our instructor writes some notes on the board and asks us some questions but sometimes she tells us to be in groups and discuss some questions.
D	R1	We usually listen to the instructor while reading the passage for us and take some notes, and on other days we sit in our groups, we have six groups which are permanent in our class.
	R2	Our instructors teach us well because they tend to elaborate to us some difficult concepts and also ask us some questions.
E	R1	During the Co-operative based studies, we usually learn through group discussions
	R2	When our instructor enters the classroom he asks us some questions orally, thereafter we listen to him while talking and writing some notes on the board.

Key; R1=Respondent 1, R2= Respondent2

The findings from students' focus group discussions (FGDs), as presented in Table 2, mirror those from the interviews with instructors. They revealed that the techniques most frequently employed by instructors included the lecture method and group discussions. Many instructors appear to have narrowed down Competency-Based Teaching (CBT) to an approach that primarily emphasises the use of group discussion techniques, while neglecting other interactive cooperative education teaching methods recommended in the course content. Table 3 presents the results from classroom observations conducted by the researcher. The objective of these observations was to validate classroom practices in implementing CBT. Each of the ten sampled instructors was observed in their respective classrooms.

**Table 3: Classroom observations of Instructors**

s/n	Observed aspect	Number of Instructors implementing aspect (n=10)	Percentage
1	Instructor engages students with different activities	4	40
2	A instructor uses different learner centred teaching strategies	3	30
3	Instructors provide enough autonomy to students to share their ideas with their fellow students	2	20
4	Instructor uses different assessment techniques	0	0

Key: n=Total number of instructors observed

The findings from Table 3, derived from classroom observation checklists, indicate that most instructors did not actively engage their students in various classroom activities. Instead, students remained passive listeners during lectures. Despite the course content requiring students to participate in more activities, there was little evidence of active engagement in the observed classrooms. These classroom practices contradicted the expectations outlined in the 2020 modified course contents. Furthermore, the observations revealed that none of the ten instructors utilised diverse assessment techniques, including peer assessments, as part of the students' learning process. This aligns with the assertion made by Komba et al. (2022) that teachers in Tanzania often implement CBT by adhering to traditional teaching methods. Assessments, when conducted, typically focus on the recall of facts rather than encouraging deeper understanding and knowledge acquisition among students.

### 4.3 Utilisation of assessment techniques in implementing competency-based teaching

This study aimed to evaluate the assessment techniques employed by instructors in implementing competency-based teaching (CBT). To achieve this objective, documentary reviews, observation checklists, and interviews were utilised. Specifically, instructors were queried about the assessment methods they frequently employed to evaluate their students' performance. All ten interviewed instructors indicated a predominant use of written assessment techniques such as tests, quizzes, and terminal exams, which primarily assess writing and reading skills. Notably, other assessment methods targeting speaking and listening skills, such as oral tests and interviews, were seldom utilised. For instance, a instructor from Department A remarked, "As far as I know, in our department, we typically rely on written tests and assignments; I have never conducted oral examinations for student assessment" (Instructor H, March 18, 2023). Consistently, similar responses were echoed by all interviewed instructors, deviating from the recommendations outlined in the competency-based teaching guidelines of 2005, which advocate for the use of diverse assessment techniques assessing all four language skills: speaking, writing, reading, and listening (TIE, 2005).

Results from the documentary reviews revealed that the quality of written assessments largely failed to gauge higher-order thinking skills. Typically, these assessments comprised objective questions in the form of matching items, multiple choice, true or false, and completion of provided terms. The scrutiny of written examinations, including University Final Examinations and class tests, conducted over the past two years (from 2021 to 2022), illustrated this trend. Data extracted from final examination documents indicated that 70% of the marks in the University final examinations in Department A were allocated to objective questions testing factual recall, while a mere 30% were devoted to subjective questions probing deeper knowledge. Similarly, in Department B, approximately 60% of the total marks in the University final examinations comprised objective questions, whereas 40% were allotted to questions testing a deeper understanding of the subject matter.

Conversely, the analysis revealed that a substantial portion (80%) of the total marks in these examinations constituted objective questions assessing lower-order thinking skills, with only 20% devoted to subjective questions examining students' ability to Analyse, synthesise, and evaluate various concepts. Scholars like Mwakalukwa et al. (2019) and Mwambene et al. (2018) emphasise the importance of employing subjective questions that necessitate learners to Analyse, evaluate, and synthesise, as they foster higher-order thinking, unlike objective questions that predominantly test factual recall. Furthermore, the examination of Final University examinations administered to students indicated a prevalent focus on assessing fact-based knowledge rather than a deeper understanding of the content. Notably, questions geared towards promoting rote memorisation for examination success were prominently featured.

**Table 4: Instructors' responses on assessment techniques used in CBT**

Department code	instructors' responses on assessment techniques
A	In assessing students, I usually give them some written assignments and at the end of the month I used to give them monthly tests. But because the University has introduced the Centralised Assessment Tests (CATS), I use that opportunity to test my students.
B	The assessment techniques used are quizzes and written exams
B	In assessing students' progress, I often use written tests and exams
A	I often use written tests and quizzes after every session
B	Assessment techniques used in my sessions are written quizzes, tests and term papers.
A	I usually use written assignments, tests and quizzes as techniques of assessing my students' progress.

According to Jacobs and Farrell (2003) and Nkwetisama (2020), instructors adhering to traditional teaching methods often resort to paper and pencil assessment techniques, which fail to adequately assess students' comprehension of cooperative-related studies. Furthermore, an analysis of documents such as students' notebooks, course contents, class tests, and Final University Examinations revealed a focus on

testing the coverage of course content, albeit at a superficial level of understanding, rather than probing students' deeper comprehension. This trend was consistent across various assessments. Similarly, heads of departments echoed sentiments similar to those expressed by their respective instructors, as illustrated in Table 5.

**Table 5: HODS' responses on the assessment techniques in CBT**

S/N	Assessment tools	Expected frequencies (n=2)	Attained frequencies	Percentage of attained Frequencies	Remarks
1	Written tests and exams	2	2	100	Frequently used
2	Classroom written quizzes	2	2	100	Frequently used
3	Portfolios	2	0	0	Not used
4	Oral tests	2	0	0	Not used
5	Interview	2	0	0	Not used
6	Projects	2	0	0	Not used
7	Observation checklist	2	0	0	Not used
8	Questionnaires	2	0	0	Not used

Key: n= Total number of heads of departments

The data presented in Table 5 offers a summary of responses from six sampled heads of departments regarding the assessment techniques employed by instructors in implementing CBT. The results reveal a consistent reliance on written exams, quizzes, and tests across all departments, with other assessment tools such as oral tests, interviews, portfolios, observational checklists, questionnaires, and projects being either rarely used or not used at all to assess students' progress. Confirming this trend, the head of department B stated:

"Instructors predominantly utilise University final exams conducted twice a year, along with two centralised assessment tests. Additionally, at our university, instructors have the autonomy to conduct seminars, quizzes, and other assessments as they deem fit. Furthermore, instructors often assign assignments to students at the end of each session" (Head of Department B, March 18, 2023).

Thus, it is evident that the assessment techniques familiar to heads of departments, and consequently to their instructors, primarily revolve around written exams, quizzes, and tests, failing to comprehensively evaluate all four cooperative-related studies as intended by CBT. These findings are in line with those reported by Mwakalobo et al. (2017), who noted that instructors lacking adequate knowledge in assessment procedures were inclined to prepare students primarily for summative examinations, focusing predominantly on the recall of factual information within their areas of specialisation.

Feedback from FGDs with students regarding the assessment tools used by instructors in implementing CBT also highlighted a reliance on written exams as the primary mode of assessment. Consequently, instructors were unable to assess students' listening and speaking skills adequately. This sentiment was echoed by a participant in an FGD, stating, "At the end of the session, our instructor provides us with questions to answer in our notebooks. Additionally, we have two monthly tests, quizzes, and final exams, all of which require written responses" (FGD conducted at Department "A" on March 13, 2023).

## 5. Conclusions and Recommendations

The study concludes that instructors' understanding and implementation of CBT in educational institutions, particularly at Moshi Co-operative University in Tanzania, remain limited and uncertain. Despite the theoretical knowledge available, their practical application of CBT principles appears to be narrow. Furthermore, the reliance on traditional teaching methods such as lectures and group discussions indicate a need for diversification and modernisation in pedagogical approaches. There is a clear gap between recommended teaching methods outlined in cooperative-based studies course contents and

actual classroom practices observed among instructors. To address these challenges, the following recommendations are proposed for action:

- (i) Given the lack of sufficient understanding and training among newly employed instructors regarding CBT, it is imperative for the university management to allocate more time and resources for in-service training. This extended training period would allow instructors to bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical implementation of CBT in their teaching practices.
- (ii) In-service training programs on CBT should be inclusive, involving all instructors rather than just a select few. By ensuring that all instructors receive training, the university can foster a more uniform and effective implementation of CBT across various departments and programs.
- (iii) Instructors should be encouraged to explore and utilise a variety of assessment techniques outlined in course contents for educational institutions. Techniques such as debate, drama, demonstration, and role-play can provide valuable alternatives to traditional assessment methods, facilitating a more comprehensive evaluation of students' higher-order thinking skills.

In addition to these actionable recommendations, there is a need for further research to deepen our understanding of the challenges and opportunities associated with implementing CBT across different areas of specialisation within the university. Conducting similar studies in other departments or programs can provide valuable insights into the effectiveness and applicability of CBT principles across diverse academic contexts. This comprehensive approach to research and action will contribute to the continuous improvement and refinement of CBT practices within the university setting.

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