

The New Lower Secondary Curriculum (NLSC) – with focus on History and Political Education – Taremwa Herbert

The Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC) in Uganda represents a significant shift in education, aiming to equip learners with essential skills, knowledge, and attitudes needed to thrive in a changing world. Launched in 2020, the CBC emphasizes active learning, critical thinking, and practical application, moving away from traditional rote memorization and exam-focused education. This change responds to the need for a more relevant and engaging learning experience that prepares students for the challenges of the 21st century. By prioritizing competencies over content memorization, the CBC promotes a holistic approach to development, focusing not just on academic success but also on personal growth and civic responsibility. This introduction of the CBC is a milestone in Uganda's education system, as it seeks to empower learners to become innovative problem solvers, effective communicators, and responsible citizens, contributing to both national development and global citizenship.

The New Curriculum emphasizes KUSVA—Knowledge, Understanding, Skills, Values, and Attitudes. This holistic approach recognizes that education should extend beyond content delivery; it should provide a framework that prepares learners for the complexities of modern life. While imparting knowledge through teaching and note-giving is important, knowledge alone is not sufficient for effective learning and personal development.

Knowledge forms the foundation for understanding. However, without a clear grasp of the concepts being taught, students may struggle to apply what they have learned in practical situations. Understanding is vital as it helps learners appreciate the significance of information and relate it to real-world scenarios. When students can connect theoretical knowledge to practical applications, they become more engaged and motivated to learn, enhancing their educational experience.

The New Curriculum acknowledges that simply acquiring knowledge and understanding is not enough; learners must also develop skills relevant to their lives and future careers. Skills encompass a wide range of competencies, including critical thinking, problem-solving, communication, and collaboration. These abilities are essential in today's workforce, where adaptability and the capacity to work effectively in diverse teams are highly valued. The curriculum aims to cultivate these skills through hands-on activities, collaborative projects, and practical applications that allow students to practice and refine their abilities in real-life contexts.

Equally important are the values and attitudes that learners develop throughout their educational journey. Values such as integrity, respect, and empathy are fundamental for building character and fostering positive interactions in personal and professional settings. Attitudes, including a growth mindset and a willingness to learn from setbacks, are essential for resilience and long-term success. By integrating values and attitudes into the learning process, the New Curriculum aims to produce not just knowledgeable individuals but well-rounded citizens who can navigate ethical dilemmas and contribute positively to society.

The New Curriculum's emphasis on KUSVA reflects a vision of education that goes beyond traditional teaching methods. While knowledge is important, it must be paired with understanding and the ability to apply that knowledge effectively. Developing workplace-relevant skills and instilling the right values and attitudes are crucial in preparing learners to succeed in their personal and professional lives. This integrated approach ensures that students are not only informed but also possess the competencies and character necessary to thrive in a changing world.

Knowledge refers to the information and facts that learners acquire through education. In the context of CBC, it includes both theoretical and practical knowledge relevant to various subjects. This foundational content is essential for engaging with more complex concepts, enabling students to build upon what they have learned. A strong knowledge base allows learners to make informed choices in their academic pursuits, careers, and daily decision-making. Additionally, CBC encourages students to connect knowledge across subjects, fostering interdisciplinary understanding that enhances critical thinking and problem-solving abilities.

Understanding involves grasping the meaning behind knowledge, including the ability to explain concepts and apply them in various contexts. It is about comprehending the 'why' and 'how' behind the information learned. When learners achieve a deep understanding, they are encouraged to analyze and evaluate information critically, leading to better problem-solving skills and creative approaches to challenges. Understanding allows students to apply their knowledge in real-world situations, promoting the transfer of learning across different contexts and disciplines. Furthermore, students are more likely to retain information when they understand it rather than merely memorize it, fostering a lifelong love for learning and curiosity.

Skills refer to the practical abilities that learners develop through practice and application. In CBC, skills encompass a range of competencies, including technical, interpersonal, and cognitive skills. These skills enable learners to apply their knowledge effectively in real-life situations. For example, a student learning about financial literacy can develop budgeting skills through hands-on activities. The development of various skills prepares learners for the job market, equipping them with the competencies needed in their chosen careers and fostering entrepreneurship. Additionally, skills such as teamwork and communication are essential for success in both academic and social settings, allowing learners to collaborate effectively and engage positively with others.

Values are the beliefs and principles that guide individuals' behavior and decisions. In CBC, values encompass moral and ethical considerations that shape how learners interact with the world around them. Emphasizing values such as integrity, respect, and empathy helps students develop a strong moral compass, guiding their behavior and interactions with others. Moreover, values education encourages learners to become responsible citizens who actively contribute to their communities and understand their roles in society. Teaching values also fosters an appreciation for diversity and inclusivity, enhancing learners' understanding of different cultures and perspectives.

Attitudes refer to learners' feelings and predispositions towards certain ideas, people, or situations. In CBC, cultivating positive attitudes is essential for fostering a growth mindset and resilience. Positive attitudes towards learning can lead to increased motivation, encouraging students to participate actively in their education and strive for excellence. Developing a positive attitude helps learners cope with challenges and setbacks, promoting resilience and a willingness to embrace change. Additionally, fostering a love for learning influences how individuals approach education throughout their lives, encouraging them to seek knowledge and self-improvement beyond formal education.

The components of Knowledge, Understanding, Skills, Values, and Attitudes (KUSVA) are integral to the success of a Competence-Based Curriculum. Together, they create a comprehensive educational framework that prepares learners not only to excel academically but also to navigate the complexities of life. By focusing on KUSVA, educators can cultivate well-rounded individuals who are informed, skilled, ethically grounded, and motivated to engage positively with their communities and the world at large.

Applying KUSVA in History and Political Education in CBC

As history and political education teachers, you have a unique opportunity to shape the minds and values of your students while preparing them for active citizenship. Integrating the KUSVA framework—Knowledge, Understanding, Skills, Values, and Attitudes—into your curriculum can create a more engaging and meaningful learning environment. Here's how you can apply KUSVA effectively in your teaching of history and political education:

1. Integrate KUSVA into Lesson Planning

When planning your history and political education lessons, consciously incorporate the elements of KUSVA. Set clear learning objectives that specify the historical knowledge students will gain, the political concepts they will understand, the skills they will develop, and the values and attitudes you want to foster. For example, in a lesson about migration and settlement patterns, outline how students will learn about historical migration trends (knowledge), understand the reasons behind migration (understanding), engage in group discussions about its effects on society (skills), appreciate cultural diversity resulting from migration (values), and cultivate an attitude of openness to different cultures (attitudes). By framing your lessons this way, you help students see the relevance of history and political education in their lives.

2. Utilize Active Learning Strategies

Employ active learning strategies that promote engagement and critical thinking in your history and political education classes. Use techniques such as role-playing historical figures, organizing mock elections, or facilitating group discussions on current political issues. For instance, when studying migration and settlement, have students simulate the experience of different migrant groups, discussing their challenges and contributions to society. This not only deepens their understanding of the material but also develops essential skills such as critical thinking, communication, and

collaboration. By making learning interactive, you foster a deeper connection to the content.

3. Incorporate Real-World Applications

Connecting historical and political concepts to real-world applications is vital for students to appreciate the relevance of their studies. Use current events to illustrate historical lessons, such as drawing parallels between past migration patterns and contemporary issues faced by migrants today. Encourage students to engage with their communities by organizing civic projects related to migration, such as awareness campaigns or community dialogues. For example, when discussing the impact of migration on local cultures, have students plan an event celebrating the contributions of diverse communities. This approach helps students see how their knowledge and skills can lead to positive changes in their communities, instilling a sense of civic responsibility.

4. Encourage Reflective Practices

Reflection is key to internalizing the values and attitudes associated with history and political education. Encourage your students to keep reflective journals where they explore their thoughts on historical events and political issues, considering how these relate to their own values and beliefs. After a unit on migration and settlement, for instance, have students write about what they learned and how it affects their understanding of community and identity. Facilitate discussions that allow students to share their reflections, fostering a classroom environment that values diverse perspectives and promotes empathy.

5. Adopt Holistic Assessment Methods

In your assessments, strive to evaluate not only knowledge but also understanding, skills, values, and attitudes. Use diverse assessment methods such as project-based learning, where students create presentations or reports on historical events or political systems related to migration. For example, have students research the history of migration in Uganda and present their findings on its impact on society and culture. This type of assessment encourages them to synthesize information, think critically, and articulate their ideas, while also allowing you to gauge their understanding of core concepts and their ability to apply them.

6. Foster a Supportive Learning Environment

Create a classroom culture that values respect and encourages open dialogue. Model the values of empathy and respect for differing viewpoints. Encourage students to express their thoughts and engage in constructive discussions. Establish ground rules that promote respectful communication and discourage personal attacks. By fostering a supportive learning environment, you help students feel safe to explore complex issues, cultivating a positive attitude toward learning and discussion.

7. Professional Development and Collaboration

Participate in professional development opportunities to deepen your understanding of the CBC and KUSVA framework. Collaborate with fellow educators to share best practices, resources, and strategies for effectively implementing KUSVA in your history and political education classes. Consider forming a professional learning community where you can collectively reflect on your teaching practices and explore innovative approaches. By working together, you can enhance your teaching and positively impact your students' learning experiences.

Incorporating KUSVA into history and political education not only enriches the curriculum but also prepares students to become informed and responsible citizens. By focusing on Knowledge, Understanding, Skills, Values, and Attitudes, educators can create a comprehensive learning experience that engages students, fosters critical thinking, and instills a sense of civic responsibility. As history and political education teachers, you have the opportunity to inspire your students and empower them to navigate the complexities of society with confidence and integrity. Embrace the KUSVA framework in your teaching, and watch your students flourish as active participants in their communities and the world around them.

Example of Applying KUSVA in Teaching - Migration and Settlement in East Africa

As educators teaching the chapter on Migration and Settlement in East Africa, you have a unique opportunity to engage students with important historical and socio-political themes that shape the region. By integrating the KUSVA framework—Knowledge, Understanding, Skills, Values, and Attitudes—into your lessons, you can foster a deeper understanding of these complex issues. Here's how you can effectively apply KUSVA in your teaching:

1. Integrate KUSVA into Lesson Planning

Begin your lesson planning by clearly defining the learning objectives associated with the chapter on Migration and Settlement. For instance, students should acquire knowledge about the causes and effects of migration in East Africa (knowledge), understand the historical contexts and socio-political implications of these movements (understanding), develop analytical skills by evaluating migration patterns (skills), appreciate the diverse cultures that arise from migration (values), and cultivate attitudes of empathy and respect towards migrants and their experiences (attitudes). By outlining these objectives, you help students connect the content to broader themes of identity and belonging.

2. Utilize Active Learning Strategies

Implement active learning strategies to engage students in exploring the themes of migration and settlement. Consider using role-playing activities where students represent different groups affected by migration, such as indigenous populations, migrants, and policymakers. This immersive approach encourages students to step into the shoes of others, fostering empathy and deeper understanding. Additionally, facilitate group discussions or debates on topics such as the impact of migration on local communities, where students can share their insights and

critically analyse different viewpoints. This method not only enhances their understanding but also develops their communication and critical thinking skills.

3. Incorporate Real-World Applications

Link the historical content of migration to contemporary issues in East Africa. Encourage students to investigate current migration trends and their effects on society, such as urbanization and the integration of migrants into communities. Organize projects that require students to engage with local migrant communities, allowing them to conduct interviews or participate in community service initiatives. For example, they could organize a cultural exchange event that showcases the diverse backgrounds of migrants in their area. This real-world application helps students see the relevance of their studies and reinforces values of inclusivity and respect for diversity.

4. Encourage Reflective Practices

Reflection is a crucial component of understanding migration and settlement dynamics. Encourage your students to keep reflective journals where they explore their thoughts and feelings about migration, considering how these issues relate to their own lives and communities. After discussing historical migration patterns, prompt students to reflect on the challenges faced by migrants today and how these parallels can inform their views on social justice and human rights. Facilitate class discussions where students can share their reflections, fostering a safe space for dialogue and diverse perspectives.

5. Adopt Holistic Assessment Methods

In assessing students' understanding of the chapter on Migration and Settlement, employ a variety of assessment methods that capture knowledge, understanding, skills, values, and attitudes. For example, you could have students create a multimedia presentation that illustrates the historical journey of a specific migration group in East Africa and its impact on the region. This project requires them to research, synthesize information, and communicate their findings effectively. Additionally, consider using peer assessments to encourage collaboration and constructive feedback among students, further enhancing their learning experience.

6. Foster a Supportive Learning Environment

Create a classroom culture that values open dialogue and respect for diverse opinions, especially when discussing sensitive topics related to migration. As a teacher, model the importance of inclusivity and understanding by welcoming diverse perspectives and facilitating respectful discussions. Encourage students to express their thoughts and feelings about migration, helping them develop social skills and emotional intelligence. This supportive environment promotes trust and encourages students to explore their values and attitudes regarding migration and settlement.

7. Engage in Continuous Professional Development

To effectively implement KUSVA in your teaching of migration and settlement, engage in continuous professional development. Participate in workshops or seminars focused on best

practices for teaching social studies, and collaborate with fellow educators to share innovative teaching strategies. Stay informed about current events and trends in migration, which can enrich your teaching and provide relevant context for your students. By enhancing your knowledge and skills, you empower yourself to create a more dynamic and impactful learning experience for your students.

By applying the KUSVA framework in your teaching of the chapter on Migration and Settlement in East Africa, you play a vital role in shaping informed, empathetic, and responsible citizens. Integrating knowledge, understanding, skills, values, and attitudes into your lessons enriches students' educational experiences and prepares them to engage thoughtfully with the complex realities of migration in their communities. This holistic approach not only enhances their academic achievement but also fosters a sense of social responsibility and cultural awareness, equipping students with the tools they need to navigate and contribute positively to society. Your commitment to applying KUSVA will leave a lasting impact on your students, encouraging them to embrace diversity and understand the rich tapestry of human experiences that shape our world.