

A CURRICULUM AND TEACHER EDUCATION PERSPECTIVE: COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN MOZAMBIQUE

¹Pedro Jose Cossa, PhD

¹PhD in Education and Curriculum; Senior Lecturer of English as a Foreign Language

¹Faculty of Health Sciences

¹Wutivi University (Unitiva), Maputo, Mozambique

Abstract: English occupies an important position in Mozambique's education system, particularly because it provides access to international communication, higher education, employment and professional knowledge. Nevertheless, concerns about the communicative competence of learners completing General Secondary Education (GSE) have persisted. This article examines the relationship between English teacher education, curriculum objectives and the communicative competence of GSE learners in Mozambique. Drawing on evidence from a larger doctoral study, the article analyses questionnaire responses from 200 respondents concerning learners' speaking, listening, reading and writing abilities and examines the cognitive demands embedded in the Year 12 English curriculum. The study also considers the historical development of English teacher education at the Institute of Languages and the Pedagogical University between the 1980s and 2018. The findings indicate a substantial gap between intended learning outcomes and perceived learner performance. Across the four language skills, only 34.44 per cent of responses indicated that learners possessed the relevant competence, whereas 52.20 per cent indicated that they did not and 13.36 per cent expressed uncertainty. Writing produced the weakest positive result (32.96 per cent), while reading produced the highest (35.69 per cent). Analysis of Year 12 learning objectives further indicates an uneven distribution of cognitive demands, with evaluation, application and knowledge receiving greater representation than higher-order communicative production. The article argues that the problem should not be attributed to teachers alone. Rather, weak communicative outcomes emerge from an interaction among teacher preparation, curriculum design, teaching practices, assessment, instructional resources and opportunities for authentic English use. The article concludes by proposing a more practice-oriented model of continuing teacher development, stronger alignment between curriculum objectives and communicative assessment, longer teaching placements and greater access to authentic English-language resources.

Keywords: English language teaching; communicative competence; teacher education; Mozambique; secondary education; curriculum; English as a foreign language; Bloom's taxonomy

1. INTRODUCTION

English has become an increasingly important component of education in multilingual societies where learners require access to international academic, professional and technological communication. In Mozambique, English occupies a distinctive position. It is not a national or official language in the same sense as Portuguese, yet it has acquired considerable importance as a foreign language in education and as a language associated with regional and international communication. For learners completing General Secondary Education (GSE), English may therefore serve purposes extending beyond the classroom, including access to higher education, employment, professional literature, digital resources and communication across national borders.

The importance attributed to English, however, raises an important educational question: **what level of communicative competence should learners reasonably be expected to demonstrate at the end of secondary education, and to what extent does teacher education prepare teachers to achieve that level?**

This question is particularly important in contexts in which English is learned predominantly in formal educational settings. Unlike learners in environments where English is used extensively in everyday life, Mozambican learners generally have fewer opportunities to use English outside school. The quality of classroom interaction, therefore, assumes particular importance. Teacher preparation, curriculum design, classroom methodology, learning materials, assessment and opportunities for meaningful communication become interconnected components of the learning process.

The present article is based on a larger doctoral investigation conducted by the author (Cossa, 2023) into English teacher education and communicative competence in Mozambique. The original study examined English teacher-education curricula offered by the Institute of Languages (IL) and the Pedagogical University (UP), as well as the communicative competence expected of learners in General Secondary Education. The historical period examined in the teacher-education component extended from the early 1980s to 2018. The empirical component included responses from teachers, teacher educators, curriculum specialists and other respondents with knowledge of English education.

The article does not attempt to reproduce the entire thesis. Instead, it isolates one of its most significant findings: **the persistent gap between the communicative competence expected of secondary-school learners and the competence that respondents believed learners actually possessed.** It then considers this gap in relation to teacher education and curriculum design.

The argument advanced here is deliberately more cautious than a simple claim that teacher education causes poor learner performance. Educational outcomes are rarely produced by one factor. Teacher preparation interacts with curriculum requirements, institutional conditions, class size, resources, assessment practices, learners' previous educational experiences and

opportunities to use the language. The central proposition is therefore that teacher education constitutes one important component of a wider educational system, and that weaknesses in this system may contribute to the limited development of communicative competence.

The article addresses two questions:

1. What level of English communicative competence do learners in General Secondary Education demonstrate, according to the perceptions of the study's respondents?
2. How does the organisation of teacher education and secondary-school curriculum objectives help explain the gap between intended and perceived communicative competence?

The analysis is particularly relevant because the curriculum itself establishes expectations for what learners should be able to do. If curriculum objectives require learners to communicate, describe, explain, write, report, compare, debate and present information, but classroom conditions and teacher preparation do not provide sufficient opportunities to develop these abilities, a gap between policy and educational outcomes is likely to emerge.

2. ENGLISH EDUCATION AND COMMUNICATIVE COMPETENCE IN MOZAMBIQUE

2.1 English in a multilingual educational context

Mozambique is a multilingual country in which Portuguese has historically occupied a central role in formal education and administration while numerous African languages are used in everyday communication. English therefore occupies the position of an additional language rather than the language through which most learners conduct their daily social lives.

This distinction is important when communicative competence is considered. A learner studying English primarily within the classroom cannot be expected to develop exactly the same communicative profile as a learner who encounters English continuously in the home, community or workplace.

The objective of English education should consequently not be defined in terms of reproducing an idealised native-speaker model. Contemporary approaches to language education increasingly recognise the legitimacy of different linguistic repertoires, varieties and forms of intercultural communication. The Council of Europe's updated CEFR framework, for example, emphasises communicative activities involving reception, production, interaction and mediation rather than treating language knowledge simply as mastery of grammatical forms (Council of Europe, 2020).

This perspective is particularly relevant to Mozambique. The realistic objective is not to produce learners who are indistinguishable from native speakers, but learners who can use English effectively for the academic, social and professional purposes appropriate to their educational level.

2.2 From linguistic knowledge to communicative competence

The concept of communicative competence has developed considerably since the early distinction between linguistic competence and performance. Chomsky's work drew attention to underlying linguistic knowledge, but Hymes (1972) argued that knowledge of a language cannot be separated from knowing how, when and with whom language is appropriately used.

Canale and Swain (1980) subsequently conceptualised communicative competence in terms of grammatical, sociolinguistic and strategic competence, while Canale (1983) developed the model further by incorporating discourse competence. Later models, including those proposed by Bachman (1990) and Celce-Murcia, Dörnyei, and Thurrell (1995), further expanded the construct.

The significance of these developments for secondary English education is considerable. Knowing vocabulary and grammatical rules is necessary, but it does not automatically mean that learners can participate effectively in communication. Communicative competence requires learners to combine linguistic knowledge with discourse organisation, sociolinguistic appropriateness, pragmatic awareness and communication strategies.

The distinction is particularly important in the interpretation of the present findings. A learner may know how to form a grammatical sentence while being unable to participate effectively in a conversation, write a coherent letter, understand a spoken interaction or communicate an argument. Consequently, the measurement of communicative competence must extend beyond the recall of grammatical rules.

The contemporary understanding of language competence similarly emphasises what learners can **do** with language. The CEFR Companion Volume, for example, organises communicative language activities around reception, production, interaction and mediation and provides illustrative descriptors of performance at different levels (Council of Europe, 2001).

The present study adopts this broader perspective.

3. TEACHER EDUCATION AND THE MOZAMBIKAN CONTEXT

3.1 The development of English teacher education

One of the distinctive features of English teacher education in Mozambique has been its institutional evolution. The Institute of Languages (IL) played an important role in the preparation of English teachers during the 1980s and early 1990s. Its programmes were particularly significant because many trainees were entering the profession for the first time.

From the 1990s onwards, the Pedagogical University (UP) increasingly assumed responsibility for higher-level teacher preparation. This transition reflected a broader movement towards the professionalization and institutionalisation of secondary-school teacher education.

The programmes offered by the two institutions shared several characteristics. Both incorporated general and specialised components and included teaching practice. There was, however, an important difference in orientation. The IL programme was relatively short but placed substantial emphasis on practical teaching experience. The UP programmes were longer and more academically oriented.

This distinction is relevant because the relationship between theoretical knowledge and practical competence has long been debated in teacher education. Knowledge about language teaching does not automatically translate into the ability to manage communicative classroom interaction. Conversely, classroom experience without sufficient theoretical preparation may produce teaching practices that are difficult to adapt, analyse or improve.

Effective teacher education therefore requires integration rather than opposition between theory and practice.

3.2 The theory-practice relationship

The evidence examined in the thesis suggests that the teacher-education system did not always provide sufficient opportunities for prospective teachers to develop their own communicative competence while simultaneously learning how to teach communication.

This is an important distinction. A teacher may understand the principles of communicative language teaching theoretically while continuing to use predominantly teacher-fronted, grammar-oriented practices if the teacher lacks confidence in spoken English, has limited access to resources, works with large classes or has been assessed primarily through written examinations.

The problem therefore extends beyond the question of whether communicative language teaching is included in a teacher-education curriculum. What matters is whether trainee teachers experience communicative learning themselves and whether they have sufficient opportunities to observe, practise, receive feedback and reflect on communicative teaching.

Research from Mozambique has similarly identified difficulties among teacher trainees in oral communication and teaching practice, suggesting that the development of teachers' own communicative ability remains an important issue (Gonçalves, 2019).

The implication is that teacher education needs to be understood as a developmental process rather than a finite period of professional preparation.

4. METHODOLOGY

4.1 Research design

The findings presented in this article derive from the empirical component of a larger doctoral study examining English teacher education and communicative competence in General Secondary Education in Mozambique.

The broader investigation employed a mixed evidence base comprising documentary analysis, questionnaire responses and information obtained from individuals involved in English teaching, teacher education and curriculum development.

For the present article, particular attention is given to two sources of evidence:

1. respondents' assessments of the communicative abilities of GSE learners; and
2. analysis of the cognitive demands expressed in the Year 12 English curriculum.

The purpose of combining these sources is to compare **intended learning** with **perceived learning outcomes**.

4.2 Participants

The questionnaire component involved **200 respondents**. Respondents were asked to evaluate a series of communicative abilities using three response categories:

- **Yes** – the learner possesses the ability;
- **No** – the learner does not possess the ability; and
- **Perhaps** – the respondent was uncertain.

The same or closely corresponding abilities were also used to obtain respondents' assessments of their own communicative competence upon completion of General Secondary Education.

The use of the "Perhaps" category was important because it prevented uncertainty from being artificially classified as either competence or incompetence.

4.3 Data analysis

The questionnaire data were analysed descriptively using frequencies and percentages. Results were then aggregated across speaking, listening, reading and writing.

A second analytical procedure examined verbs appearing in the Year 12 English learning objectives. These verbs were classified according to the cognitive categories used in the thesis's application of Bloom's Taxonomy.

The purpose was not to claim that a single verb inevitably represents a single cognitive process. Rather, the classification was used as an analytical device for examining the distribution of cognitive demands in the curriculum.

This distinction is important because contemporary revisions of Bloom's taxonomy distinguish processes such as remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating and creating (Anderson and Krathwohl 2001). The terminology used in the original curriculum and thesis sometimes differs from the terminology used in the revised taxonomy. The article therefore treats the taxonomy primarily as a heuristic for examining curriculum expectations.

5. FINDINGS

5.1 Overall communicative competence

The most significant finding concerns the overall perception of learners' communicative competence.

Table 1. Perceived communicative competence of GSE learners by language skill

Skill	Yes (%)	No (%)	Perhaps (%)
Oral skills	33.90	54.12	11.98
Listening	35.20	52.65	12.15
Reading	35.69	51.25	13.06
Writing	32.96	50.79	16.25
Average	34.44	52.20	13.36

Source: Author's calculations based on questionnaire data from the doctoral study (Cossa, 2023).

The pattern is striking. Across all four language skills, the proportion of respondents selecting "No" exceeded the proportion selecting "Yes."

The average positive response was **34.44 per cent**, compared with **52.20 per cent** negative responses. A further **13.36 per cent** of responses fell into the "Perhaps" category.

Reading produced the highest positive assessment at 35.69 per cent, followed by listening at 35.20 per cent and oral skills at 33.90 per cent. Writing produced the lowest positive assessment at 32.96 per cent.

The results therefore do not suggest that one particular language skill was responsible for the problem. Instead, they point to a broader weakness affecting the four skills.

This is significant because communicative competence is multidimensional. Effective communication requires learners to receive and interpret language as well as produce it. A weakness across speaking, listening, reading and writing indicates a systemic problem rather than a narrowly defined deficiency.

5.2 Writing competence

Writing provides particularly revealing evidence.

Respondents were asked whether GSE learners could perform a series of writing tasks. The results were consistently negative.

Table 2. Selected writing abilities reported for GSE learners

Writing ability	Yes (%)	No (%)	Perhaps (%)
Write a clear and detailed text on topics of personal interest	22.5	70.0	7.5
Write invitations, business letters and simple stories	26.0	63.5	10.5
Write personal letters describing experiences and impressions	38.5	60.0	1.5
Write simple, coherent texts on familiar topics	28.0	65.0	7.0

Source: Author's calculations based on data from the doctoral study (Cossa, 2023).

The strongest negative result concerns the ability to write a clear and detailed text on a variety of topics related to learners' interests. Only 22.5 per cent of respondents answered positively, while 70 per cent answered negatively.

The results for invitations, business letters and simple stories were similarly weak. Only 26 per cent considered learners capable of performing these tasks, compared with 63.5 per cent who did not.

Even the comparatively stronger result for personal letters remained problematic: 38.5 per cent responded positively and 60 per cent negatively.

These findings suggest that the problem is not simply grammatical accuracy. The abilities examined require learners to organise information, express personal meanings, construct coherent texts and adapt writing to different purposes.

The results also contrast with the intended cognitive demands of secondary education. By the end of secondary schooling, learners would reasonably be expected to move beyond the reproduction of isolated language forms towards sustained written communication.

5.3 Respondents' perceptions of their own writing competence

An interesting contrast emerged when respondents evaluated their own competence.

Across the writing tasks, approximately **47 per cent** of respondents believed that they themselves would possess the required writing skills at the end of GSE, while approximately **41 per cent** believed that they would not and 12 per cent were uncertain.

Thus, respondents were considerably more positive about their own competence than about the competence of GSE graduates generally.

This difference deserves attention. It may indicate that respondents perceived their own educational experiences as more successful than the system as a whole. Alternatively, it may reflect differences in self-assessment, confidence or expectations. Self-reported competence cannot be interpreted as a direct measure of actual performance.

Nevertheless, the difference is analytically useful. It suggests that perceptions of learner competence are not simply a reflection of individual confidence. Respondents distinguished between what they believed they themselves could do and what they believed GSE graduates generally could do.

6. CURRICULUM OBJECTIVES AND COGNITIVE DEMAND

The second major finding concerns the cognitive orientation of the Year 12 English curriculum.

The thesis identified 25 principal verbs describing learning objectives across the 15 units of the Year 12 English programme. These included verbs such as *describe*, *explain*, *name*, *list*, *make*, *write*, *compare*, *express*, *identify*, *correlate*, *answer*, *contrast*, *design*, *distinguish*, *report*, *ask*, *compile*, *debate*, *illustrate*, *present*, *read*, *retell*, *summarise*, and *use*.

These verbs were classified according to cognitive domains.

Table 3. Distribution of Year 12 learning objectives by cognitive category

Cognitive category	Number of objectives	Percentage
Knowledge	4	16%
Comprehension	2	8%
Application	7	28%

Cognitive category	Number of objectives	Percentage
Analysis	3	12%
Synthesis/creation	1	4%
Evaluation/assessment	8	32%
Total	25	100%

Source: Author's synthesis of the Year 12 English syllabus analysed in the doctoral study (Cossa, 2023)

The distribution indicates that the curriculum contains objectives at several cognitive levels. This is important because it would be inaccurate to characterise the programme as exclusively focused on memorisation.

Indeed, 28 per cent of the identified objectives were classified as application, while 32 per cent were classified as evaluation/assessment. Objectives related to analysis accounted for 12 per cent.

However, only 4 per cent were classified as synthesis/creation.

This pattern raises an important question concerning the relationship between cognitive objectives and communicative performance.

Producing sustained communication frequently requires learners to integrate language resources in order to construct a meaningful message. Writing an essay, participating in a debate, giving a presentation or negotiating meaning involves more than recalling information or identifying language forms.

The presence of higher-order verbs in a syllabus does not necessarily mean that higher-order learning occurs. The classroom activities, assessment procedures and resources used to realise those objectives are equally important.

7. THE CURRICULUM-OUTCOME GAP

The combination of the two sets of findings provides the central argument of this article.

On the one hand, the curriculum contains objectives requiring learners to describe, explain, compare, write, design, debate, present and report. On the other hand, the questionnaire results suggest that only approximately one-third of respondents believed that GSE learners possessed the required communicative abilities.

This indicates a curriculum-outcome gap.

The gap should not, however, be interpreted as evidence that the curriculum is inherently defective. Curriculum documents express intentions; they do not guarantee what happens in classrooms.

A curriculum may contain sophisticated communicative objectives while implementation remains constrained by:

- insufficient teacher preparation;
- limited opportunities for teachers to develop their own English proficiency;
- limited teaching and learning materials;
- large classes;
- examination practices;
- insufficient classroom time;
- restricted opportunities for authentic English use;
- weak alignment between objectives and assessment; and
- limited continuing professional development.

The British Council's work with English teachers in Mozambique, for example, explicitly highlights the importance of professional development and access to practical resources for teachers and learners (British Council website).

The implication is that curriculum reform without corresponding investment in implementation may produce limited change.

8. TEACHER EDUCATION AS PART OF THE EXPLANATION

The evidence from the thesis supports a cautious interpretation of teacher education's role.

The historical analysis demonstrated differences between the teacher-education approaches of the IL and UP. The former was comparatively practice-oriented, whereas the latter incorporated a stronger academic component.

Neither approach should be viewed as sufficient in isolation.

A highly practical programme without sufficient theoretical grounding may limit teachers' ability to analyse and improve their practice. A heavily theoretical programme without sustained classroom experience may leave teachers inadequately prepared for the realities of teaching.

The central requirement is therefore integration.

Teacher education should provide prospective teachers with:

1. strong personal English proficiency;
2. knowledge of language systems;
3. knowledge of communicative language teaching;
4. classroom-management skills;
5. opportunities for supervised teaching;
6. experience designing communicative tasks;
7. training in assessment;
8. opportunities for reflective practice; and
9. access to authentic language and teaching materials.

The teaching practicum is particularly important. The thesis found that teaching placements at the IL were considerably longer than those undertaken within the university programmes examined. This suggests that the transition from theoretical preparation to classroom practice deserves greater attention.

A longer practicum, however, is valuable only when accompanied by effective supervision and feedback. Simply increasing the number of weeks spent in schools does not automatically improve teacher competence.

9. BEYOND THE NATIVE-SPEAKER BENCHMARK

The findings should not be interpreted as suggesting that Mozambican secondary-school learners should achieve native-speaker proficiency.

Such an expectation would be neither pedagogically necessary nor realistic.

Second-language acquisition research has long demonstrated that learners' ultimate attainment varies and that age, exposure, motivation, context and opportunity affect development. Stern (1983), for example, cautioned against assuming that second-language learners will necessarily achieve full native-like proficiency.

Contemporary perspectives also question the assumption that "native speaker" represents a single ideal model. English exists in numerous varieties, and communicative effectiveness does not require conformity to one particular national variety.

For Mozambique, a more useful question is therefore: Can learners use English effectively for the academic, professional, social and intercultural purposes relevant to their lives?

This formulation shifts attention away from imitation and towards functional communicative ability. The Council of Europe (2001) provides one possible conceptual framework for such an approach because its descriptors focus on what learners can accomplish through language. The 2020 Companion Volume further expands this perspective to include online interaction, mediation and plurilingual / pluricultural competence (Council of Europe, 2020).

Although the CEFR was not designed specifically for Mozambique, its action-oriented logic provides a useful conceptual reference for discussing communicative outcomes.

10. RETHINKING BLOOM'S TAXONOMY IN LANGUAGE EDUCATION

The thesis used Bloom's Taxonomy to interpret communicative competence and curriculum objectives. This provides a useful analytical perspective, but it requires some qualification.

Bloom's taxonomy concerns cognitive processes; communicative competence is a broader construct. Being able to "analyse" something cognitively does not automatically mean being able to communicate effectively in English.

For example, a learner may be cognitively capable of analysing an argument in Portuguese but unable to express that analysis in English. Conversely, a learner may communicate effectively in familiar contexts without demonstrating sophisticated abstract analysis.

Consequently, Bloom's Taxonomy should not be treated as a direct scale of language proficiency. Its value in the present study lies instead in identifying the kinds of intellectual activity expected by the curriculum. This distinction becomes particularly important when interpreting the thesis's conclusion that learners were positioned within the lower levels of Bloom's taxonomy.

The stronger conclusion is not that learners necessarily possess a particular "Bloom level" of English proficiency. Rather, the evidence suggests a mismatch between the cognitive and communicative demands implied by curriculum objectives and the level of performance respondents perceive among learners.

A contemporary curriculum should therefore combine cognitive objectives with explicit communicative performance descriptors.

11. DISCUSSION

The findings of this study point towards a systemic explanation of weak communicative outcomes.

The first element of the system is teacher education. Teachers need both linguistic and pedagogical competence. They need to know English and to know how to create conditions in which learners can use English.

The second element is curriculum design. Objectives need to be sufficiently clear, realistic and communicative. The verbs used in objectives should correspond to tasks learners will actually perform.

The third element is assessment. If learners are assessed predominantly through written examinations testing grammatical knowledge, teachers and learners have strong incentives to prioritise what is tested. Communicative objectives are unlikely to be fully achieved if assessment does not measure communication.

The fourth element is resources. Communicative language teaching requires access to texts, audio, visual materials, opportunities for interaction and tasks connected to real-life purposes. Resource limitations do not make communicative teaching impossible, but they can constrain the range and frequency of communicative activities.

The fifth element is exposure. In a foreign-language context, classroom time is particularly valuable. Learners require opportunities to hear, read, speak and write English regularly.

The sixth element is teacher professional development. Initial teacher education cannot reasonably be expected to prepare teachers for every future challenge. Language education changes continuously and teachers need opportunities to update both their language proficiency and pedagogical knowledge.

The above elements are interconnected.

For example, a teacher may receive training in communicative language teaching but work in an environment where assessment prioritises grammar, classes are large and teaching materials are scarce. Under these conditions, returning to teacher-centred methods may be an understandable adaptation to institutional pressures rather than simply a failure of teacher knowledge.

This is why the article argues against attributing the problem to teachers individually. The more useful interpretation is that teachers operate within an educational system that needs stronger alignment between teacher education, curriculum, pedagogy, assessment and resources.

12. IMPLICATIONS FOR ENGLISH TEACHER EDUCATION IN MOZAMBIQUE

The findings suggest several implications for teacher education policy and practice.

12.1 Strengthen continuing professional development

Initial teacher education should be complemented by systematic continuing professional development (CPD).

Such programmes should not consist primarily of occasional theoretical workshops. They should involve practical classroom problems, demonstration lessons, peer observation, collaborative planning and reflection.

Professional development should also include opportunities for teachers to develop their own English proficiency.

12.2 Increase the quality and duration of teaching practice

Teaching practice should occupy a substantial part of teacher education. Trainees should have opportunities to:

- observe experienced teachers;
- plan lessons;
- teach complete units;
- receive structured feedback;
- assess learners;
- reflect on lessons; and
- revise their teaching.

The author's thesis recommendation that teaching placements should extend to at least one academic term remains particularly relevant.

12.3 Improve alignment between curriculum and assessment

If curriculum objectives emphasise communication, assessment must also assess communication. For example, assessment could incorporate:

- oral presentations;
- interviews;
- role plays;
- information-gap activities;
- listening tasks;
- written correspondence;
- summaries;
- reports; and
- collaborative projects.

The above statement does not mean abandoning grammar. Rather, grammatical knowledge should be evaluated as part of meaningful communication.

12.4 Develop low-cost communicative materials

Resource limitations should not prevent communicative language teaching.

Teachers can produce locally relevant materials using newspapers, magazines, photographs, advertisements, forms, maps, posters, mobile-phone content and other authentic materials.

Such materials can also make English more meaningful because they connect classroom learning to learners' social environment.

12.5 Provide authentic opportunities for English use

The thesis's recommendation for opportunities for teaching placements or short intensive courses in English-speaking countries is one possible strategy, although it should not become the only model.

Authentic exposure can also be created through:

- online communication;
- recorded interviews;
- English-language media;
- international virtual exchanges;
- professional English materials;
- academic reading;
- guest speakers; and
- English clubs.

The goal should be to increase meaningful exposure rather than simply increase the amount of grammar instruction.

13. IMPLICATIONS FOR CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT

The evidence also suggests that curriculum developers should reconsider how learning outcomes are formulated.

A curriculum should state not only what learners should know but also what they should be able to do with English.

For example, instead of an objective such as: "Students will know vocabulary related to health", a communicative objective might state: "Students will be able to use appropriate English vocabulary to describe common health problems and provide basic information about symptoms."

Similarly, instead of: "Students will learn the language of invitations", the objective could be: "Students will be able to write and respond to a simple invitation for a social or academic event."

Such objectives connect language knowledge to communicative performance.

The revised Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR) approach is useful in this respect because it provides descriptors focused on reception, production, interaction and mediation (Council of Europe, 2020).

A Mozambican framework need not reproduce the CEFR. Rather, it could develop locally appropriate descriptors reflecting the linguistic, educational and socioeconomic context of Mozambican learners.

14. LIMITATIONS

Several limitations should be acknowledged.

First, the questionnaire findings are based on **respondents' perceptions**, rather than direct standardised tests of learner performance. Consequently, the percentages should not be interpreted as objective measurements of proficiency.

Second, the use of "Yes," "No" and "Perhaps" provides useful evidence of perceived competence but does not capture the complexity of language ability.

Third, the application of Bloom's Taxonomy to individual verbs is necessarily interpretive. A verb such as *describe* may represent different levels of cognitive complexity depending on the task and context.

Fourth, the historical analysis of teacher education covered a specific institutional and temporal period. Teacher education in Mozambique has continued to evolve since the period examined.

Finally, the article focuses primarily on formal educational factors. Learners' motivation, socioeconomic circumstances, prior exposure to English, home languages and access to digital resources may also influence outcomes.

These limitations do not invalidate the findings. Rather, they indicate that the results should be interpreted as evidence of a perceived systemic problem requiring further investigation.

15. CONCLUSION

This article examined the relationship between English teacher education, curriculum objectives and communicative competence among learners completing General Secondary Education in Mozambique.

The evidence reveals a substantial gap between intended and perceived outcomes. Across speaking, listening, reading and writing, only 34.44 per cent of responses indicated that learners possessed the relevant communicative abilities, while 52.20 per cent indicated that they did not.

Writing was particularly problematic, with only 32.96 per cent of responses indicating competence.

The analysis of the Year 12 curriculum also revealed a complex distribution of cognitive objectives. Although the curriculum included verbs associated with application, analysis, evaluation and creation, this did not necessarily translate into effective communicative performance.

The central conclusion is therefore that curriculum objectives alone cannot guarantee communicative competence.

The problem must be understood systemically.

Teacher education is one component of that system, but it interacts with curriculum implementation, teaching methodology, assessment, resources and opportunities for authentic English use. The evidence from the doctoral study suggests that teacher preparation contributed to learner outcomes, but it would be inappropriate to regard teachers as the sole cause of weak competence.

The challenge is consequently not simply to train teachers differently. It is to establish stronger alignment among what teachers are taught, what curricula require, what teachers do, what learners practise and what assessment measures.

For Mozambique, this means strengthening the practical dimension of English teacher education while maintaining a sound theoretical foundation. It means extending supervised teaching practice, providing continuous professional development, increasing teachers' opportunities to use English, developing accessible teaching resources and creating more meaningful opportunities for learners to communicate.

Ultimately, the success of English education should be judged not primarily by the amount of language knowledge learners can reproduce but by what they can accomplish through English.

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