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Original Article

Adapting Competency-Based Innovative Pedagogies in Higher Education for East African Universities: Pathways to Human Capital Development and Economic Transformation

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Higher education is under increasing pressure to produce graduates equipped with the competencies required for rapidly evolving knowledge economies, technological change, and sustainable development. However, despite widespread competency-based education reforms across East Africa, teaching in many universities remains predominantly lecture-centred, limiting the development of critical thinking, problem-solving, creativity, collaboration, digital competence, entrepreneurship, and other transferable skills required by contemporary labour markets. This study employed an Integrative Literature Review (ILR) and thematic analysis of contemporary literature to synthesise global evidence on competency-based innovative pedagogies (CBIPs) in higher education, and examine their contextual adaptation within East African universities. The findings indicate that CBIPs promote learner-centred, active, real-world, collaborative, technology-enhanced, and experiential learning that strengthens graduate competencies for lifelong learning and employability. Rather than advocating direct transfer of international pedagogical models, the study proposes a context-sensitive adaptation framework that integrates curriculum and assessment reform, academic staff development, digital transformation, university–industry collaboration, and enabling institutional and policy environments to support sustainable implementation. The framework demonstrates that pedagogical transformation, rather than curriculum reform alone, is essential for strengthening graduate competencies and advancing sustainable higher education transformation. The study concludes that context-sensitive adaptation of CBIPs can enhance graduate employability, foster innovation and entrepreneurship, and position East African universities as strategic contributors to sustainable human capital development and regional economic transformation.

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INTRODUCTION

Higher education is increasingly recognised as a strategic driver of human capital development, innovation, and sustainable economic transformation. In today's knowledge-based economy, universities are expected not only to generate knowledge but also to produce graduates equipped with competencies that enable them to respond effectively to rapidly evolving social, technological, and economic challenges (UNESCO, 2023). Advances associated with the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), artificial intelligence (AI), digitalisation, and automation have fundamentally transformed workforce expectations, placing greater emphasis on graduates who possess critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, digital literacy, adaptability, and entrepreneurial capabilities alongside disciplinary expertise (Marginson, 2023). Recent studies further indicate that higher education institutions must increasingly align teaching and learning with innovation ecosystems to remain relevant to national and global development agendas (World Bank, 2024).

These developments have exposed the limitations of traditional lecture-based instruction, which often prioritises content transmission and examination performance over the development of practical competencies. Consequently, competency-based education (CBE) has emerged as a transformative approach that emphasises learner-centred instruction, authentic assessment,

experiential learning, and the demonstration of measurable competencies required in professional practice (Brauer & Kettunen, 2021). Contemporary evidence consistently shows that innovative pedagogies like problem-based learning, project-based learning and experiential learning are more effective than conventional teaching approaches in developing higher-order cognitive and professional skills essential for lifelong learning and employability (OECD, 2023; Biggs & Tang, 2022). Similarly, recent reviews highlight that pedagogical innovation, rather than curriculum reform alone, is central to improving graduate preparedness for rapidly changing labour markets (UNICEF, 2023).

Across East Africa, governments have introduced competency-based education reforms as part of broader efforts to improve education quality and support regional development priorities, including the African Union Agenda 2063 and the East African Community Vision 2050. Countries such as Kenya, Uganda, Tanzania, Rwanda, and Burundi have increasingly recognised the importance of producing graduates with competencies that promote innovation, entrepreneurship, productivity, and sustainable development (Mukhwana et al. 2023; Ssenkusu et al., 2023). Nevertheless, teaching practices in many universities continue to be characterised by lecture-centred instruction, summative examinations, weak university-industry collaboration, and limited opportunities for authentic learning experiences (Ludigo et al., 2024). These challenges are compounded by

inadequate digital infrastructure, limited investment in educational technologies, and insufficient academic staff development, which collectively constrain the effective implementation of competency-based pedagogies (African Development Bank, 2024). Recent regional studies further report persistent skills mismatches between university graduates and labour market expectations despite continued expansion of higher education systems (African Union, 2024).

Although substantial international scholarship has documented the effectiveness of competency-based innovative pedagogies, relatively limited literature has synthesised these pedagogical approaches and examined how they can be systematically adapted to the institutional, technological, and socio-economic realities of East African universities. Existing studies largely focus on individual pedagogical approaches or specific disciplines, providing limited guidance on how universities can integrate multiple competency-based pedagogies within resource-constrained contexts to strengthen graduate competencies and contribute to broader economic transformation (Henderson et al., 2022; Ellis & Goodyear, 2023). This paper addresses this gap by synthesising contemporary global evidence on competency-based innovative pedagogies and proposing context-sensitive strategies for their adaptation within East African universities.

Problem Statement

Despite expanding higher education and implementing competency-based education reforms across East Africa, many universities continue to rely predominantly on lecture-centred teaching and examination-oriented assessment. Consequently, many graduates lack the critical thinking, problem-solving, digital, entrepreneurial, and collaborative competencies increasingly required by contemporary labour markets, contributing to persistent skills mismatches, graduate unemployment, and limited innovation.

Although competency-based innovative pedagogies have demonstrated significant potential for developing graduate competencies, existing literature provides limited synthesis of how these pedagogies can be contextually adapted to the institutional and socio-economic realities of East African universities. This paper addresses this gap by synthesising contemporary global evidence and proposing context-sensitive strategies for adapting competency-based innovative pedagogies to strengthen human capital development and promote sustainable economic transformation in the region.

Research Questions

The paper is guided by the following research questions:

- What contemporary competency-based innovative pedagogies are supported by global evidence for transforming higher education?
- How can competency-based innovative pedagogies be contextually adapted within East African universities to strengthen human capital development and promote economic transformation?

Purpose of the Study

The aim of this study was to synthesise global evidence on competency-based innovative pedagogies and examine how these pedagogies can be contextually adapted within East African universities to strengthen human capital development and promote economic transformation.

THEORETICAL AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

This study is anchored in Human Capital Theory and Constructivist Learning Theory, which together provide the theoretical foundation for understanding how competency-based innovative pedagogies (CBIPs) contribute to graduate competency development, human capital

formation, and economic transformation. Human Capital Theory explains the economic value of developing graduate competencies, while Constructivist Learning Theory explains the pedagogical processes through which these competencies are acquired. Together, the two theories provide a coherent framework for examining the contextual adaptation of CBIPs within East African universities.

Human Capital Theory

Human Capital Theory, advanced by Schultz (1961) and Becker (1993), views education as an investment that enhances individuals' knowledge, skills, and competencies, thereby improving productivity, employability, innovation, and economic growth. In higher education, the theory supports competency-based pedagogies that prepare graduates with the practical, digital, entrepreneurial, and problem-solving competencies required in contemporary knowledge economies.

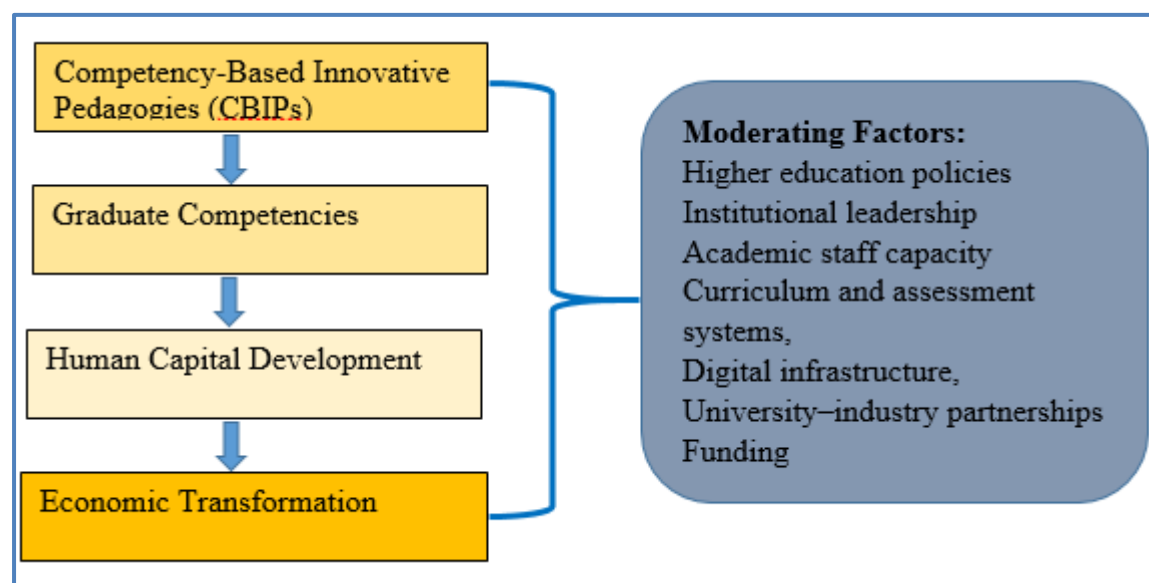
Constructivist Learning Theory

Constructivist Learning Theory, developed by Piaget (1972) and Vygotsky (1978), views learning as an active process in which learners construct knowledge through inquiry, collaboration, reflection, and authentic experiences. The theory underpins competency-based innovative pedagogies by emphasising learner-centred teaching approaches that promote critical thinking, creativity, communication, collaboration, and lifelong learning.

Conceptual Framework

The study conceptualises competency-based innovative pedagogies as the mechanism through which universities develop graduate competencies that strengthen human capital and contribute to economic transformation. This relationship is influenced by institutional and contextual factors, including higher education policies, academic staff capacity, curriculum and assessment systems, digital infrastructure, university-industry partnerships, institutional leadership, and funding. This is demonstrated in Figure 1.

Figure 1: Conceptual Pathway



METHODOLOGY

This study employed an Integrative Literature Review (ILR) to synthesise contemporary

evidence on competency-based innovative pedagogies (CBIPs) and examine their adaptation within East African universities. The ILR approach was appropriate because it enables the

integration of empirical, theoretical, and policy literature to develop a comprehensive understanding of complex educational issues and generate contextually relevant conceptual insights (Snyder, 2019; Torraco, 2016).

A systematic search of peer-reviewed literature published between 2021 and 2025 was conducted using ERIC, Scopus, Web of Science, ScienceDirect, SpringerLink, Taylor & Francis Online, and Google Scholar. Relevant policy documents from UNESCO, the OECD, the World Bank, the African Union, and the East African Community were also reviewed to provide global and regional policy perspectives. The selected literature was screened for relevance, quality, and alignment with the study objectives before being analysed thematically to identify contemporary competency-based innovative pedagogies, the competencies they promote, and strategies for their contextual adaptation within East African universities.

Documents were included if they addressed competency-based or innovative pedagogies in higher education, graduate competency development, employability, or related institutional and contextual issues, and were published between 2021 and 2025. Peer-reviewed studies and relevant scholarly and policy documents were considered. Documents were excluded if they were unrelated to higher education or competency development, duplicated other sources, lacked sufficient relevance to the research questions, or fell outside the specified period, except for foundational theoretical and methodological works retained where necessary.

RESULTS

This section presents the results of the study, beginning with global evidence on contemporary competency-based innovative pedagogies and their synthesis.

CONTEMPORARY COMPETENCY-BASED INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES: GLOBAL EVIDENCE AND SYNTHESIS

Higher education is increasingly shifting from traditional lecture-based instruction to competency-based innovative pedagogies (CBIPs) that emphasise active learning, authentic assessment, and the development of transferable competencies required in contemporary knowledge economies. Grounded in Constructivist Learning Theory, these pedagogies promote learner-centred approaches that strengthen graduate preparedness for rapidly evolving professional and societal contexts (OECD, 2023; UNESCO, 2022).

Global Evidence on Contemporary Competency-Based Innovative Pedagogies

Among the most established competency-based pedagogies are problem-based learning and project-based learning, both of which engage students in solving authentic problems that mirror professional practice. Problem-based learning develops analytical reasoning, inquiry, collaboration, and self-directed learning by requiring students to investigate complex issues, while project-based learning extends this process by guiding learners to design and implement practical solutions that culminate in tangible products or innovations (Karan & Brown, 2022; Hmelo-Silver & Eberbach, 2022). Together, these pedagogies strengthen critical thinking, creativity, communication, teamwork, and problem-solving, making them highly effective approaches for preparing graduates for contemporary workplaces (Carrió et al. (2022).

Similarly, experiential learning and work-integrated learning bridge the gap between theory and practice by embedding learning within authentic professional and community contexts (Ellis & Goodyear, 2023). Experiential learning promotes knowledge construction through experience, reflection, and application, whereas work-integrated learning strengthens professional competence through structured internships,

apprenticeships, and workplace placements. Evidence consistently demonstrates that these complementary approaches improve graduate employability, adaptability, professional identity, and workplace readiness by enabling learners to apply theoretical knowledge to real-life situations (Jackson & Tomlinson, 2022; Ellis & Goodyear, 2023).

The increasing integration of digital technologies has further accelerated the adoption of flipped classrooms and blended learning, which combine technology-enhanced instruction with active classroom engagement (Graham, 2022). Flipped classrooms shift content acquisition outside scheduled class time, allowing classroom interactions to focus on discussion, collaboration, and problem-solving, while blended learning combines face-to-face teaching with online learning to enhance flexibility, learner autonomy, and digital competence. Research indicates that these approaches improve student engagement, conceptual understanding, and self-directed learning when supported by appropriate instructional design and institutional digital capacity (Boelens et al., 2023).

The development of higher-order cognitive and professional competencies is also strengthened through inquiry-based learning and simulation-based learning (Lateef, 2023). Inquiry-based learning encourages learners to investigate questions systematically, analyse evidence, and construct knowledge through research and critical reflection, while simulation-based learning provides safe environments for practising professional skills, decision-making, and complex problem-solving. Together, these pedagogies enhance analytical thinking, research competence, procedural skills, and learner confidence, particularly in professional disciplines that require practical application of knowledge (Pedaste et al., 2022; McGaghie et al., 2022).

As universities increasingly promote innovation and entrepreneurship, design thinking and entrepreneurship education have emerged as complementary pedagogical approaches for

developing creativity, opportunity recognition, and innovation capability (Fayolle & Gailly, 2023). Design thinking equips students with human-centred approaches to solving complex problems through empathy, ideation, prototyping, and testing, while entrepreneurship education develops the competencies required to identify opportunities, create value, and generate sustainable ventures. Integrated within higher education, these pedagogies foster innovation, resilience, and entrepreneurial mindsets that enable graduates to contribute meaningfully to socio-economic development (Brown & Wyatt, 2022; Nabi et al., 2022).

Competency development is further enhanced through collaborative learning and challenge-based learning, both of which emphasise teamwork, interdisciplinary engagement, and authentic problem-solving. Collaborative learning enables students to co-construct knowledge through shared inquiry and peer interaction, whereas challenge-based learning extends collaboration by engaging learners in addressing real societal, environmental, and economic challenges. Together, these approaches strengthen communication, leadership, systems thinking, innovation, and collective problem-solving while reinforcing the social dimensions of learning required in contemporary professional environments (Johnson & Johnson, 2023; Nichols & Cator, 2023).

Synthesis of Global Evidence

The evidence consistently demonstrates that competency-based innovative pedagogies promote critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, digital literacy, problem-solving, and entrepreneurship through active and authentic learning. Their successful implementation, however, depends on supportive institutional environments, including curriculum and assessment alignment, academic staff capacity, digital infrastructure, and enabling policies. These findings provide a strong foundation for examining how such pedagogies

can be contextually adapted within East African universities.

ADAPTING COMPETENCY-BASED INNOVATIVE PEDAGOGIES TO EAST AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

While competency-based innovative pedagogies (CBIPs) are widely recognised for enhancing graduate competencies as seen in the preceding section, their successful implementation in East African universities requires adaptation to local institutional, technological, and socio-economic contexts. This section examines how these pedagogies can be contextually adapted to strengthen human capital development and support sustainable economic transformation across the region.

Contextual Adaptation

This section outlines how contemporary competency-based innovative pedagogies can be adapted to the institutional, technological, and socio-economic realities of East African universities. Rather than replicating international models, the emphasis is on contextualising each pedagogy to address regional priorities, resource availability, labour market needs, and sustainable development.

Problem-Based Learning (PBL)

Problem-Based Learning (PBL) can be adapted by organising learning around authentic local challenges such as youth unemployment, food security, public health, and environmental sustainability. Global evidence shows that PBL enhances critical thinking, collaboration, and self-directed learning through inquiry and problem-solving (Hmelo-Silver & Eberbach, 2022; Loyens et al., 2023). In East African universities, its effectiveness depends on contextualised case studies, structured group work, and assessment that values inquiry rather than memorisation. Such adaptation enables universities to produce graduates capable of addressing real societal

challenges while strengthening human capital development.

Project-Based Learning (PrBL)

Project-Based Learning (PrBL) develops creativity, innovation, teamwork, and communication by engaging students in authentic projects that produce practical solutions (Karan & Brown, 2022). In East Africa, projects should be linked to community development, agriculture, entrepreneurship, environmental sustainability, and local enterprise. Using locally available resources and community partnerships makes PrBL both feasible and relevant in resource-constrained institutions. Consequently, project-based learning supports graduate competence while contributing directly to local innovation and socio-economic development (African Development Bank, 2024).

Experiential Learning

Experiential learning strengthens employability, professional competence, and adaptability by integrating academic learning with practical experience and structured reflection (Kolb & Kolb, 2023; Yardley et al., 2022). In East Africa, universities should expand internships, fieldwork, service-learning, and community engagement beyond the formal private sector to include government agencies, NGOs, cooperatives, and small enterprises. Embedding reflective activities and competency-based assessment within these experiences enhances learning transfer and better aligns higher education with workforce and community needs (World Bank, 2024).

Work-Integrated Learning (WIL)

Work-Integrated Learning (WIL) links academic study with structured workplace experience, improving graduate employability, professional identity, and workplace readiness (Jackson & Tomlinson, 2022; Smith et al., 2023). In East Africa, WIL requires stronger partnerships between universities, employers, government institutions, and community organisations. Given

the limited formal employment sector, placements should also include innovation hubs, social enterprises, and public institutions. Such an approach strengthens the transition from education to employment while aligning graduate competencies with labour market demands and national development priorities (African Union, 2024).

Flipped Classroom

The flipped classroom shifts content delivery outside the classroom and uses face-to-face sessions for discussion, collaboration, and problem-solving. Research shows that this approach enhances student engagement, conceptual understanding, and self-directed learning when supported by appropriate instructional design (Zainuddin & Perera, 2023). In East African universities, where digital infrastructure varies considerably, flipped learning can be implemented using low-bandwidth technologies, downloadable resources, printed materials, and mobile learning platforms. This flexible approach demonstrates that pedagogical innovation depends more on effective instructional design than on advanced technology, making flipped learning feasible within resource-constrained institutions (UNESCO, 2024).

Blended Learning

Blended learning combines face-to-face instruction with digital learning to enhance flexibility, learner autonomy, and continuous engagement. Evidence indicates that well-designed blended learning improves academic performance and digital competence while supporting more personalised learning experiences (Boelens et al., 2023; Graham, 2022). Following the COVID-19 pandemic, many East African universities have adopted blended approaches, although implementation remains uneven due to digital inequalities. Expanding affordable connectivity, lecturer capacity, and learning management systems will enable universities to strengthen competency-based

teaching while improving equitable access to quality higher education.

Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL)

Inquiry-Based Learning (IBL) promotes critical thinking and research skills by engaging students in questioning, investigation, and evidence-based reasoning (Pedaste et al., 2022; Spronken-Smith, 2023). Within East African universities, IBL can be strengthened through community-based research addressing local challenges such as climate change, public health, agriculture, and sustainable development. Even where research resources are limited, partnerships with communities and the use of locally available data can provide meaningful inquiry experiences. Such contextualisation strengthens graduates' analytical capacity while encouraging universities to contribute directly to national and regional development priorities.

Simulation-Based Learning

Simulation-based learning enables students to develop practical skills and professional judgement within safe and controlled environments. Studies consistently show that simulation enhances decision-making, confidence, and procedural competence, particularly in professional disciplines such as medicine, engineering, and teacher education (Lateef, 2023; McGaghie et al., 2022). In East African universities, where high-cost simulation facilities may be limited, institutions can adopt low-cost alternatives such as role-play, case simulations, virtual platforms, and scenario-based learning. These approaches provide authentic learning experiences while ensuring that competency development remains achievable despite financial and technological constraints (African Development Bank, 2024). Studies from African health professions education increasingly show that context-appropriate simulation improves clinical reasoning and professional competence without requiring expensive infrastructure, making it a feasible strategy for competency development.

Design Thinking

Design Thinking is an iterative, human-centred approach that develops creativity, innovation, collaboration, and entrepreneurial problem-solving by engaging learners in empathy, ideation, prototyping, and testing (Brown & Wyatt, 2022; Razzouk & Shute, 2023). Its relevance to East African universities lies in its capacity to address local development challenges through innovation-driven learning. Emerging evidence from African higher education shows that integrating design thinking within entrepreneurship programmes, innovation hubs, and community-engaged projects enhances students' ability to develop practical solutions for challenges such as agricultural productivity, digital inclusion, healthcare, and sustainable livelihoods (UNESCO, 2024). Embedding design thinking across academic programmes, rather than limiting it to specialised innovation centres, would strengthen graduates' innovation capacity while supporting regional socio-economic development.

Entrepreneurship Education

Entrepreneurship education develops graduates' capacity to recognise opportunities, create innovative solutions, and generate employment rather than relying solely on formal labour markets. Recent evidence indicates that experiential entrepreneurship education significantly enhances entrepreneurial intention, innovation capability, business creation, and employability when integrated with practical learning, mentorship, and enterprise incubation (Nabi et al., 2022; Fayolle & Gailly, 2023).

For East African universities, entrepreneurship education should move beyond theoretical business courses towards experiential models involving business incubation, innovation competitions, industry mentorship, and community enterprise projects. This shift is particularly important given the region's high youth unemployment and expanding informal economy. Embedding entrepreneurship across

disciplines can strengthen graduates' capacity for self-employment, innovation, and local economic development while contributing to broader human capital formation.

Collaborative Learning and Challenge-Based

Challenge-Based Learning (CBL) extends competency-based education by engaging students in interdisciplinary teams to address authentic societal, environmental, and economic challenges. Because effective challenge-based learning depends fundamentally on collaboration, integrating collaborative learning within this pedagogy provides a more holistic approach to competency development. Evidence shows that collaborative, challenge-oriented learning strengthens critical thinking, communication, teamwork, systems thinking, leadership, and innovation by enabling students to co-create solutions to complex real-world problems (Nichols & Cator, 2023; Johnson & Johnson, 2023).

Within East African universities, this approach aligns closely with regional priorities such as climate resilience, food security, public health, digital transformation, and youth employment. Universities can partner with government agencies, communities, industry, and civil society to design authentic interdisciplinary projects that address local development challenges. Even within resource-constrained environments, structured teamwork, peer learning, and community engagement provide cost-effective strategies for developing graduate competencies while strengthening universities' contribution to sustainable socio-economic development.

Synthesis of Contextual Adaptation

The successful adaptation of competency-based innovative pedagogies in East African universities depends on aligning global best practices with local institutional realities. Context-sensitive implementation, supported by academic staff development, curriculum and assessment reform, digital infrastructure, and strong university–

industry partnerships, can strengthen graduate competencies and enhance higher education's contribution to human capital development and sustainable economic transformation.

DISCUSSION

The study demonstrates that competency-based innovative pedagogies (CBIPs) represent a fundamental shift from lecture-centred instruction to learner-centred approaches that promote critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, communication, digital literacy, entrepreneurship, and problem-solving. These findings support Constructivist Learning Theory by affirming that meaningful competency development occurs through active, authentic, and collaborative learning experiences, while reinforcing Human Capital Theory by highlighting the contribution of these competencies to graduate employability, innovation, and sustainable economic development.

The findings support existing evidence that innovative pedagogies like problem-based, project-based, experiential and work-integrated learning promote critical thinking, creativity, collaboration, innovation, practical problem-solving, digital competence, and entrepreneurship through active and authentic learning (Silver & Eberbach, 2022; Loyens et al., 2023; Johnson & Johnson, 2023). It also strengthens graduate employability and workplace readiness (Jackson & Tomlinson, 2022; Yardley et al., 2022).

Overall, the findings agree with previous research that pedagogical innovation requires more than curriculum reform and depends on staff capacity, institutional support, infrastructure, alignment of teaching and assessment, digital infrastructure, and strong university–industry partnerships (Henderson et al., 2022; Ellis & Goodyear, 2023). These factors create an enabling environment for developing graduates whose competencies respond to the changing demands of contemporary labour markets.

For East African universities, the study suggests that contextual adaptation, rather than direct adoption of global pedagogical models, offers the most sustainable pathway for implementation. By integrating locally relevant problem-based, experiential, collaborative, and technology-enhanced learning within existing institutional capacities, universities can strengthen graduate competencies, foster innovation and entrepreneurship, and enhance their contribution to human capital development and sustainable economic transformation.

Recommendations

The successful adaptation of competency-based innovative pedagogies (CBIPs) in East African universities requires coordinated action by universities, governments, regulatory agencies, industry, and development partners. The following recommendations are proposed.

Strengthening Institutional Capacity in Universities

Universities should strengthen institutional capacity by:

- Redesigning curricula, teaching, and authentic assessment to embed learner-centred, competency-based, and interdisciplinary approaches.
- Continuous professional development for academic staff in innovative pedagogy, digital teaching, and authentic competency-based assessment.
- Investment in digital infrastructure, learning technologies, virtual laboratories, and flexible learning environments
- Establishment of innovation hubs, incubation centres, and entrepreneurship programmes that connect learning with real-world problem-solving.

Enhancing Policy and Regulatory Support

Governments and higher education regulatory bodies should:

- Develop enabling policy, funding, and quality assurance frameworks that support competency-based pedagogies and digital transformation.
- Align accreditation, curriculum standards, and assessment systems with competency-based learning outcomes and labour market needs.
- Promote regional collaboration and equitable access to digital resources to strengthen higher education transformation across East Africa.

Promoting University–Industry and Community Partnerships

Universities should strengthen partnerships by:

- Expanding internships, apprenticeships, collaborative research, and work-integrated learning through sustained engagement with industry, professional bodies, government, and communities.
- Supporting innovation, entrepreneurship, and knowledge exchange to improve curriculum relevance, graduate employability, and socio-economic development.
- Supporting entrepreneurship ecosystems through mentorship, business incubation, and start-up development.

CONCLUSION

This study concludes that adapting competency-based innovative pedagogies in East African universities is essential for developing the critical, digital, entrepreneurial, and problem-solving competencies needed for sustainable economic transformation. Drawing on Human Capital Theory and Constructivist Learning Theory, the study argues that pedagogical transformation is not merely an educational reform but a strategic investment in developing a skilled, innovative, and adaptable workforce capable of driving sustainable socio-economic development. However, successful implementation in East African universities requires context-sensitive adaptation supported by curriculum and

assessment reform, academic staff development, stronger university–industry collaboration, digital transformation, and enabling institutional and policy environments. Embedding these learner-centred pedagogies will enhance graduate employability, innovation, and entrepreneurship, enabling universities to position themselves as key contributors to sustainable national and regional development.

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