

Assessing the Alignment Between form one English Curriculum Competencies and Annual Examination Questions in Selected Secondary Schools in Morogoro Municipality

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Abstract

This study aimed to assess the alignment between Form One English curriculum competencies and annual examination questions in selected secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality. Specifically, the study sought: (1) to identify the key competencies outlined in the Form One English syllabus, and (2) to determine the extent of alignment between syllabus competencies and examination questions.

Study design: Qualitative research approach under case study design.

Place and Duration of Study: The study was conducted in three selected public secondary schools in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania, between January and February 2026.

Methodology: A qualitative case study design was employed. Data were collected through document analysis of the Form One English syllabus developed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology and six annual examination papers from the selected schools. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with six English language teachers. An alignment matrix was developed to map examination questions against four core competencies outlined in the syllabus. Data were analyzed thematically.

Results: Findings revealed that four key competencies are emphasized in the syllabus: managing information search from different sources, demonstrating mastery of English language skills, comprehending oral and written information, and communicating effectively in different contexts. Analysis showed partial alignment between syllabus competencies and annual examination questions. While comprehension of written information and mastery of grammar were frequently assessed, competencies related to managing information search and oral communication were minimally represented.

Conclusion: Although annual examinations reflect some syllabus competencies, gaps remain in assessing information management and oral communication skills. Strengthening assessment design and incorporating alternative assessment strategies are recommended.

Keywords: English Curriculum Competence, Alignment, Form One, Annual Examination Questions.

1. INTRODUCTION

The English Language syllabus for Form One in Tanzania is developed under the Competence-Based Curriculum (CBC), which emphasizes the acquisition of practical language competences that enable learners to communicate effectively in real-life situations [10]. Curriculum alignment ensures coherence between intended learning outcomes, instructional practices, and assessment strategies [8]. In Bangladesh, the examination system mainly relies on written tests, which attempt to reflect the competencies outlined in the primary school curriculum [7]. However, the study revealed that listening and speaking skills are not assessed. In practice, these two important language competencies have consistently been neglected at the primary

education level.

In the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), research indicates that teachers do not adequately implement appropriate assessments that encourage meaningful language production as required by the curriculum. Instead, they focus more on testing grammatical structures and language accuracy rather than designing assessments that require students to actively use the language [5]. As a result, many students complete their studies without being able to communicate effectively in English.

Similarly, a study conducted in Pakistan found a substantial mismatch between examination items and the stated curriculum objectives [9].

In competency-based education, assessment should directly measure the competencies prescribed in the

syllabus. In Tanzania, the secondary school curriculum developed by the Ministry of Education, Science and Technology emphasizes competence development in English language learning [3]. The Form One English syllabus outlines broad competencies that guide teaching and assessment practices. Despite these reforms, concerns remain regarding whether school-based annual examinations adequately reflect the intended competencies. Misalignment may compromise the effectiveness of competency-based education by focusing mainly on recall rather than meaningful skill development.

This study addressed two specific objectives:

1. To identify the key competencies outlined in the Form One English syllabus.
2. To determine the extent of alignment between syllabus competencies and examination questions

2. METHODOLOGY

2.1 Research Design

The study adopted a qualitative approach under case study design to enable in-depth exploration of curriculum-assessment alignment within selected schools.

2.2 Study Area

The study was conducted in Morogoro Municipality, Tanzania, involving three purposively selected public secondary schools.

2.3 Sampling Procedures

Purposive sampling was used to select:

- Three secondary schools
- Six English language teachers
- Annual Joint Examination Paper (2025)

2.4 Data Collection Methods

Data were collected through:

1. Document Analysis:

- Form One English syllabus [10].
- Annual joint examination paper (2025)

2. Semi-Structured Interviews

Conducted with teachers to understand assessment practices and alignment processes.

An alignment matrix was developed to map examination items against the four identified competencies:

1. Manage information search from different sources for lifelong learning
2. Demonstrate mastery of English language skills
3. Comprehend oral and written information
4. Communicate effectively in different contexts

2.5 Data Analysis

Data were analyzed thematically. Examination questions were categorized according to their alignment with the four competencies. Questions were classified as fully aligned, partially aligned, or not aligned. Interview data supported the interpretation of findings.

2.6 Ethical Considerations

Permission was obtained from the relevant school authorities. Participants' confidentiality and anonymity were maintained.

3. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

3.1 Identification of Key Competencies

Document analysis of the syllabus revealed four core competencies for Form One English students:

1. **Manage information search from different sources for lifelong learning** – locating, interpreting, and synthesizing information from various sources, including texts, media, and ICT tools.
2. **Demonstrate mastery of English language skills** – grammar, vocabulary, sentence construction, tense usage, and correct language mechanics.
3. **Comprehend oral and written information** – understanding, interpreting, and analyzing written texts and spoken messages.
4. **Communicate effectively in different contexts** – expressing ideas coherently through speaking and writing for diverse audiences.

3.2 Alignment of Annual Examination Questions with Syllabus Competencies

The annual joint examination paper were mapped against the four competencies. Table 1 summarizes the alignment:

Table 1: Alignment of Examination Questions with Form One English Competencies by using Webb's (1999) categorical Concurrency Model [13].

Exam Section & Question	Competency Addressed	Justification / Notes
Section A – Q1 (MCQs: grammar, vocabulary, sentence structure)	2. Demonstrate mastery of English language skills	Tests correct grammar, tense usage, vocabulary knowledge, and sentence formation.
Section A – Q2 (Match words with meanings)	3. Comprehend oral and written information	Requires understanding the meaning of words and interpreting written information.
Section A – Q3 (Comprehension passage about Alice)	3. Comprehend oral and written information	Students extract information and demonstrate understanding of a passage.
Section A – Q4(a) (Verb forms)	2. Demonstrate mastery of English language skills	Tests correct verb usage in different contexts and tenses.
Section A – Q4(b) (Negative sentence formation)	2. Demonstrate mastery of English language skills	Assesses students' understanding of sentence structure and grammar.
Section A – Q5 (Parts of speech identification)	2. Demonstrate mastery of English language skills	Evaluates knowledge of nouns, verbs, adjectives, pronouns, and conjunctions.
Section A – Q6 (Arrange sentences into paragraph)	3. Comprehend oral and written information; 4. Communicate effectively in different contexts	Students organize sentences logically and communicate meaning clearly.
Section A – Q7 (Opposites)	2. Demonstrate mastery of English language skills	Tests vocabulary knowledge and understanding of word relationships.
Section A – Q8 (ICT benefits)	1. Manage information search from different sources for lifelong learning; 4. Communicate effectively in different contexts	Students relate ICT to real-life applications, synthesizing information and expressing ideas clearly.
Section A – Q9 (Short description about family)	4. Communicate effectively in different contexts	Students write coherently, demonstrating the ability to communicate ideas in writing.
Section A – Q10 (Friendly letter writing)	4. Communicate effectively in different contexts; 2. Demonstrate mastery of English language skills	Requires structured, coherent writing with correct grammar, vocabulary, and context-appropriate communication.

Source: Author's own analysis based on Form One English syllabus [10] and annual joint examination paper (2025).

Table 2: Frequency of Examination Items per Curriculum Competency

	Curriculum Competence	Number of Exams Items	Webb Minimum Requirement (6 Items)	Alignment Status
1.	Manage information search from different sources	1	6	Not aligned
2.	Demonstrate mastery of English Language Skills	6	6	Aligned
3	Comprehend Oral and Written Information	3	6	Not aligned
4	Communicate effectively in different contexts	4	6	Partially aligned

Source: Researcher 2026

3.3 Interpretation of Alignment

- Competency 1 (Manage information search):** Addressed partially through Q8 (ICT benefits), where students synthesize information and reflect on practical applications. Other exam items do not explicitly assess information management. This is in line with the explanation given by the English teacher of school A: say *'It is true that the competency is not assessed as stipulated in the syllabus due to time allocated to accomplish the exam'*. This explanation is in line with the study done by [9]. This implies that the examinational items are not adhered to competency as stipulated by the syllabus.
- Competency 2 (Demonstrate mastery of English skills):** Strongly represented through grammar, vocabulary, sentence construction, verb forms, and parts of speech (Q1, Q4, Q5, Q7, Q10). This is in line with the explanation given from the English teacher in school B. He says *'It is true that I observed the competency 2 when constructing the examinational items since it was easy to assess'*. It is similar to study done in DRC by [5] where student are tested for grammatical competences other skills like speaking and listening are neglected. This implies that the competences are not adhered.
- Competency 3 (Comprehend oral and written information):** Assessed in Q2, Q3, and Q6. Students are required to read passages, match words to meanings, and logically sequence sentences, demonstrating comprehension. This is in line with English teacher from school C who insisted that *it is easier to prepare a passage for students to read and respond the questions that follow after than preparing oral text since teachers are not enough to administer oral assessment*. This observation is similar to the study in Bangladesh by, [7] whose examinations are based on written form. This shows that oral competence of students is rarely assessed. This prohibit them from being competent in listening and speaking similarly the study conducted in China by Wallace [13] who made the alignments between English content and Language test by using Webb's Categorical Concurrent Model he discovered the number of items measured listening and speaking were low according to this model. This suggests that the items measured which are listening and speaking are less considered by the teacher. In Dutch the study done by Roufett et al [12] indicates that assessments predominantly focused on grammar and vocabulary which are out of the contexts. This prohibits learners from using language as per contexts.

The study conducted in Nigeria by Alade O.M, et al. [1] finds the lack of significant correlation between teachers test construction competencies and the quality of multiple choice test items. The study signifies about the presence of problematic items that may compromise overall assessment validity. This indicates that the studies on alignment between examination items and curriculum competencies have been largely ignored to an extent that teachers are said to be compromising the test validity. This proposes that the Curriculum reform, policy changes and pedagogical approaches could be constructed by under worth assessments information. In Tanzania the study [4] finds incoherence between Curriculum standard, teaching instruction and examinations.

- Competency 4 (Communicate effectively):** Evident in Q6, Q8, Q9, and Q10. Students produce coherent written texts and letters, explaining ideas, describing personal experiences, or expressing opinions. This is in line with the explanation from English teacher in School A who says *'Students are assessed to produce coherent written text by filling gap provided and composing letter'*. It is similar to the examination done in Bangladesh [7] and DRC. They prefers written examinations that are to assess and administer. This implies that communicating effectively is well assessed in written form.

Observations:

- The examination heavily favors lower-order cognitive skills, such as recalling vocabulary and applying grammar rules.
- Higher-order competencies, such as managing information from multiple sources and critical evaluation, are minimally assessed.
- Oral communication skills are entirely absent from written examinations.
- Integration of project-based, oral, or ICT-based assessments could strengthen alignment with the intended syllabus competencies.

4. CONCLUSION

This study identified four core competencies in the Form One English syllabus: managing information search, mastery of English language skills, comprehension of oral and written information, and effective communication in different contexts.

Analysis of annual examination questions revealed:

- Partial alignment with syllabus competencies:** Written exams strongly assess mastery of English language skills and comprehension of written information.
- Limited assessment of information management:** Only Q8 (ICT benefits) required students to synthesize information from multiple sources.

- **Absence of oral communication assessment:** Listening and speaking competencies are not evaluated in the annual examinations.
- **Predominance of lower-order cognitive skills:** Most exam items target recall, understanding, and application rather than analysis or evaluation [6].

Recommendations:

1. Examination design should include tasks that assess all four competencies, particularly higher-order skills and information management.
2. Alternative assessment strategies, including oral presentations, projects, and ICT-based tasks, should be integrated.
3. Teacher training on competency-based assessment should be strengthened to ensure comprehensive coverage of all syllabus competencies. Addressing these gaps will improve curriculum-based assessment, promote higher-order thinking, and ensure students develop the full range of competencies prescribed by the syllabus.

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DISCLAIMER (ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE)

I/we (Author(s) hereby declare that generative AI technologies such as (ChatGPT,) have been used during the analysis of data or the editing of this manuscript.

CONSENT

As per international standards or university standards, Participants' written consent has been collected and preserved by the author(s).

COMPETING INTERESTS

The author declares no competing interests.

AUTHORS' CONTRIBUTIONS

The author designed the study, conducted data collection and analysis, and prepared the manuscript.

ETHICAL APPROVAL

Permission to conduct the study was obtained from relevant school authorities. Participants' confidentiality and anonymity were maintained.

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