What Works Hub for Global Education

The 2023 revised curriculum implementation in Tanzania: Insights from the phone survey

Insight Note

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Insight Note

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1 Revised curriculum reform

a. Description and objectives

In 2023, the Tanzanian government introduced a revised national curriculum aimed at further shifting from a teacher-centred, rote-based learning approach toward a more student-centred, competency-based approach. The reform also emphasises the development of 21st-century skills, including critical thinking, collaboration, creativity and communication. The reform achieves this by restructuring lesson planning around the IDDR Model (Introduction, Competency Development, Design, and Realisation), integrated with the 5E (Engage, Explore, Explain, Elaborate and Evaluate) instructional model to strengthen learner engagement and competency development.

To provide continuous professional learning, support curriculum implementation at scale, and equip teachers with new skills, in-person teacher training sessions were organised. As the rollout was staggered by grades, the focus of this insight note is on the first phase of training directed at pre-school, first- and third-grade teachers.

b. Implementation

General Training

General training sessions were organised to provide over 80,000 teachers with foundational knowledge of the revised curriculum. The content focused on key pedagogical elements, including the 5E instructional model and the 4Cs of 21st-century learning.

Trainings were conducted at schools and Teacher Resource Centres (TRCs) across districts in December 2023/January 2024 and February/March 2024. 75% of the teachers reported attending trainings that were one day (30%) or two days long and that were facilitated by a mix of Ward Education Officers (WEOs), School Quality Assurance Officers (SQAOs), and fellow teachers.

Specialised Training

To support the delivery of new course content, specialised training was provided to Standard Three primary school teachers, focusing on English and Science. These sessions took place over two days and were conducted in February–March 2024.

The sessions were delivered by curriculum coordinators, School Quality Assurance Officers (SQAOs), peer facilitators, college tutors and university lecturers, all of whom had previously been trained by Trainers of Trainers (ToTs).

These trainings were conducted at a mix of venues, including schools, teacher colleges and Teacher Resource Centers (TRCs) located at the district level across 184 Local Government Authorities (LGAs).

Administration of general training requires logistical arrangements including provision of funds for transport and food. However, some councils and schools were unable to provide these funds, leading to inconsistencies in training delivery across different locations. With regards to provision of specialised training, logistical issues were handled by the Tanzania Institute of Education and teachers were provided with allowance for food and transport.

2 Phone survey

a. Sample/Respondents

The survey was conducted between October and November 2024 for headteachers and between October and December 2024 for teachers. The original sample included 400 randomly selected schools across Tanzania, with remote schools being oversampled. We were able to collect data from only 322 schools (825 teachers, 264 Headteachers) due primarily to phone number inaccuracy and teacher transfers/turnover. Nevertheless, unreachable schools were similar in observable characteristics (pupil-teacher ratio, student enrolment, remoteness, total enrolment) to the schools we successfully surveyed.

b. Objective

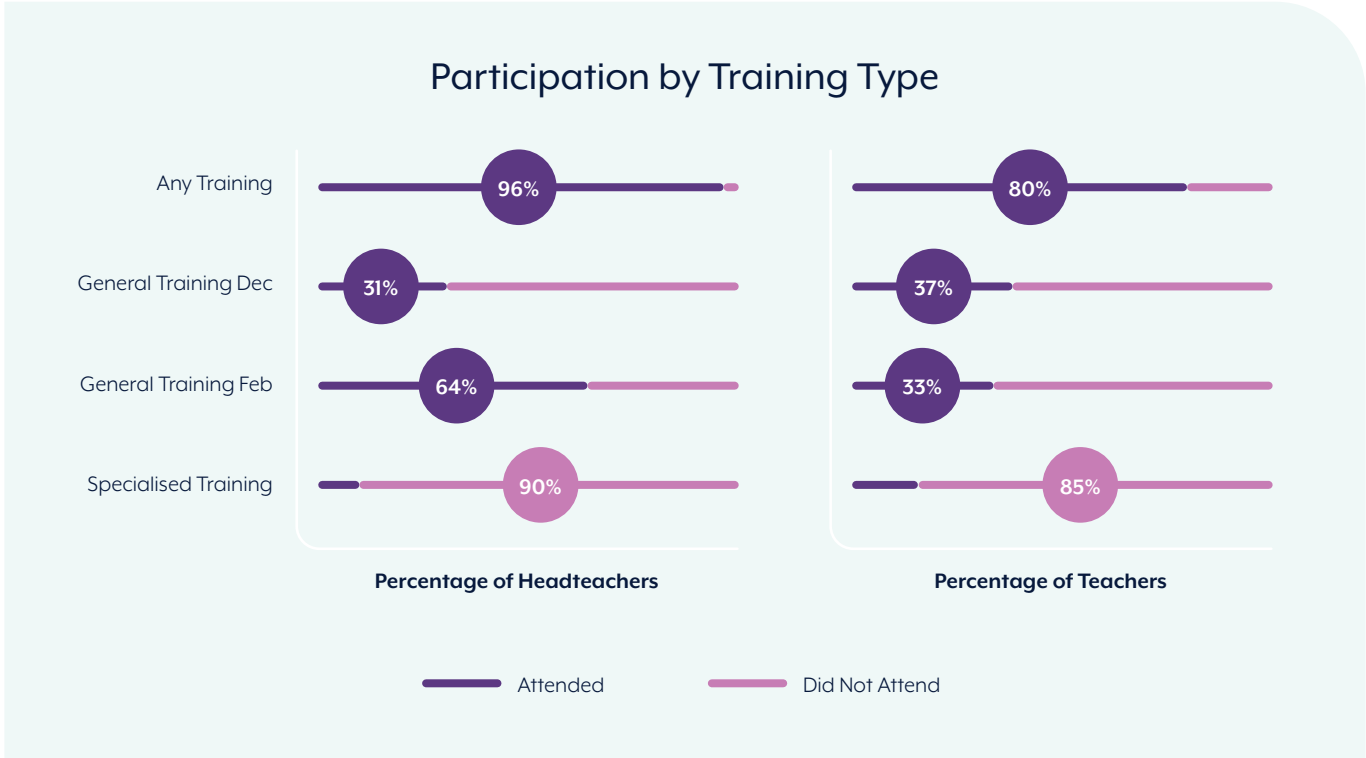
Teachers' and head teachers' surveys were very similar; the only difference was that the head teachers answered an additional module about the school characteristics. The data collectively aimed to gather feedback on the implementation of the revised curriculum and the Teachers' Continuous Professional Development (TCPD).

3 Insights from the phone survey data

Insight 1: Participation levels were high

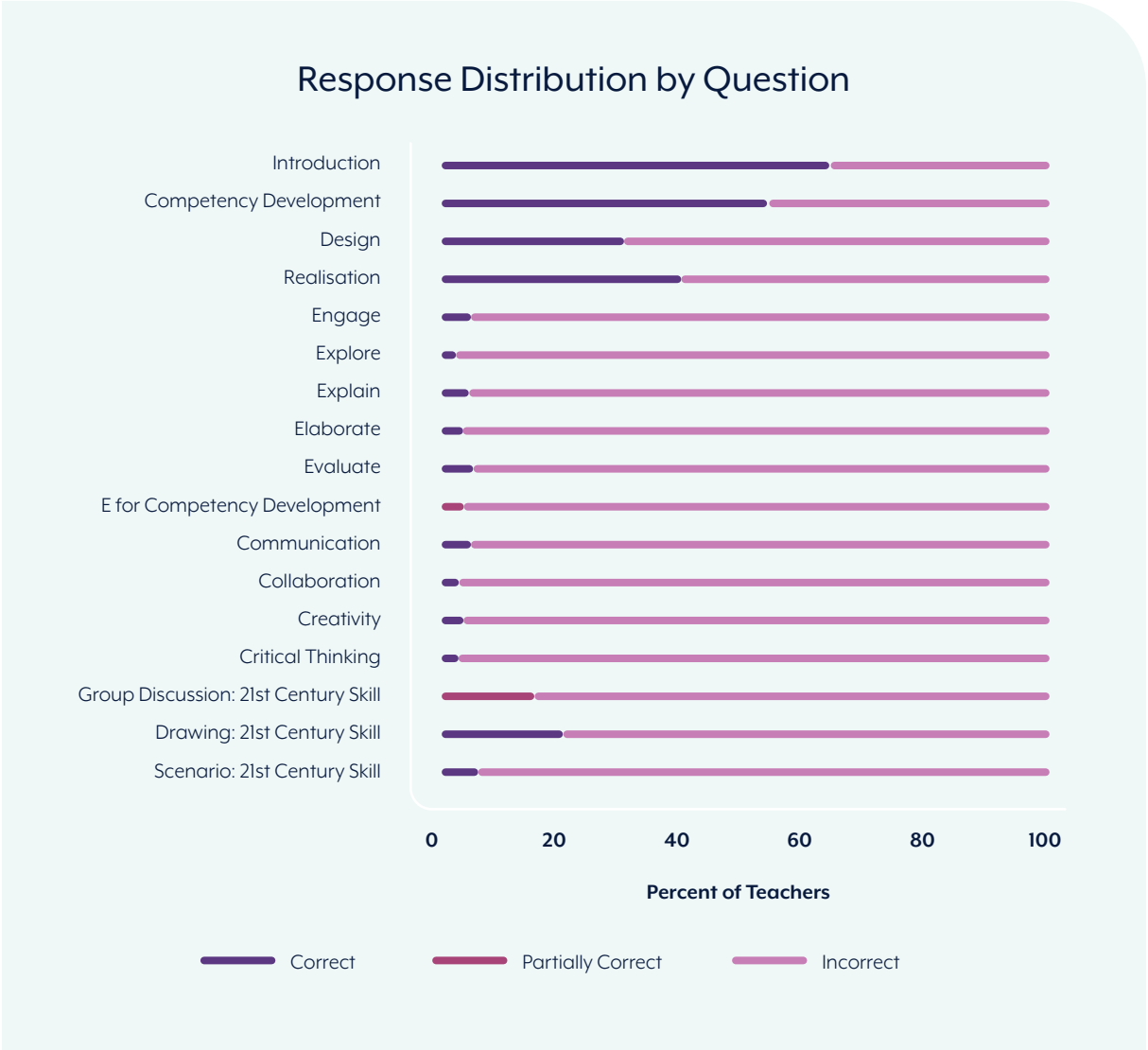
Participation in the revised curriculum training was high across both teachers and headteachers. Approximately **80% of teachers** and **over 96% of headteachers** reported attending at least one of the three training sessions. The figures below show the distribution of participation by training type.

Notably, only **1.7% of teachers attended both general trainings**, suggesting the two rounds reached different groups rather than repeating coverage. Teachers who did not participate in any general training were more likely to attend the specialised session.

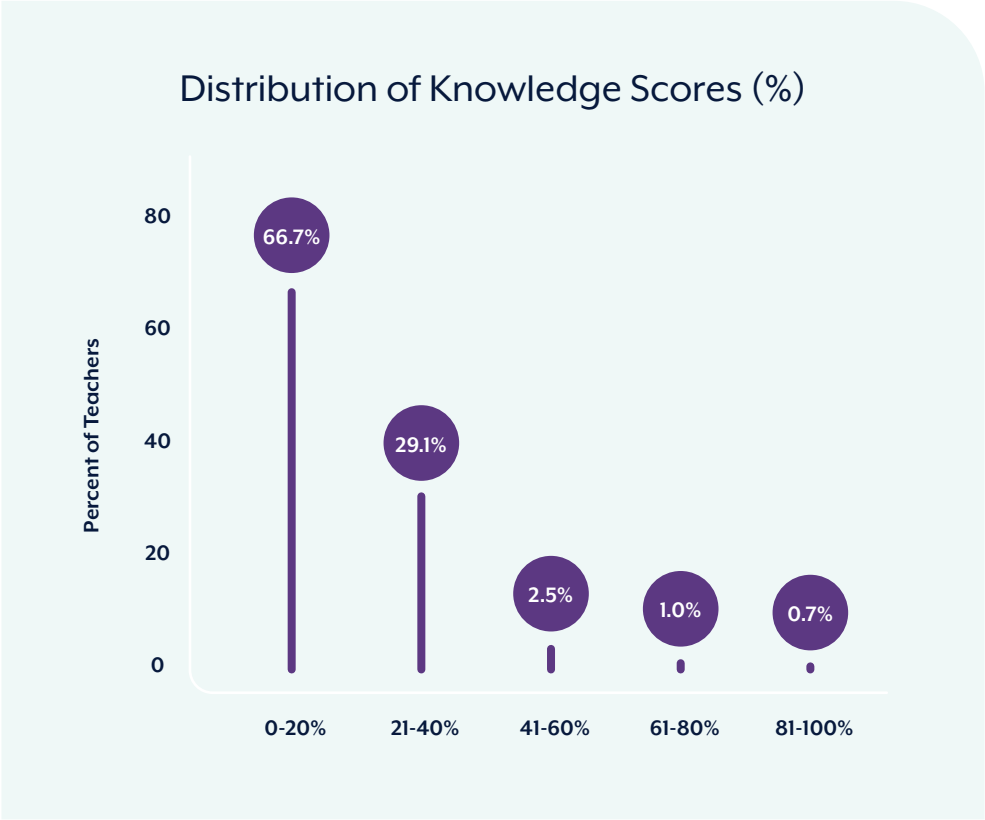


Insight 2: Knowledge of the revised curriculum was generally low

We assessed teachers' knowledge of the new curriculum by asking questions that evaluated the knowledge and application of the training's content (5Es, 4Cs, etc). We assigned scores to the responses by awarding one point for each correct answer (ie correct recall of the foundational concepts captured in the training), half a point for partially correct answers (ie responses that captured only part of a multi-component answer), and zero points for incorrect answers. Below is the breakdown of the percentage of teachers who were correct by each question (see Appendix A for detailed questions).

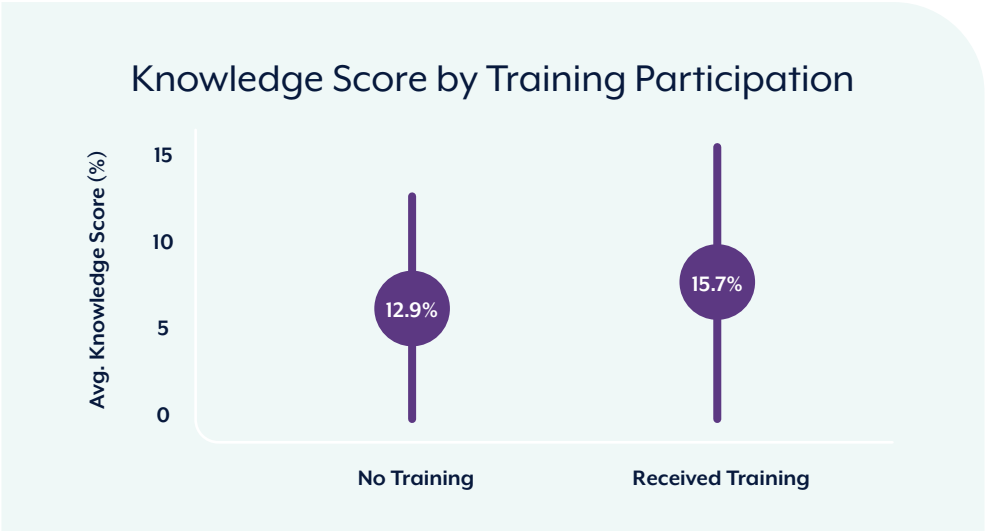


Teachers performed better in questions related to the knowledge of the revised curriculum concepts compared to their application. Our measure of knowledge is expressed as a percentage of the total possible score of 17. The average score was only 15.2%. 47% of teachers correctly identified the elements of a lesson plan based on the improved curriculum, and only 4% of teachers enumerated the 5Es. 95% of the sample scored less than 40% on the test. Two thirds of the sample scored less than 20% on the test, and only 4% scored more than 40%.

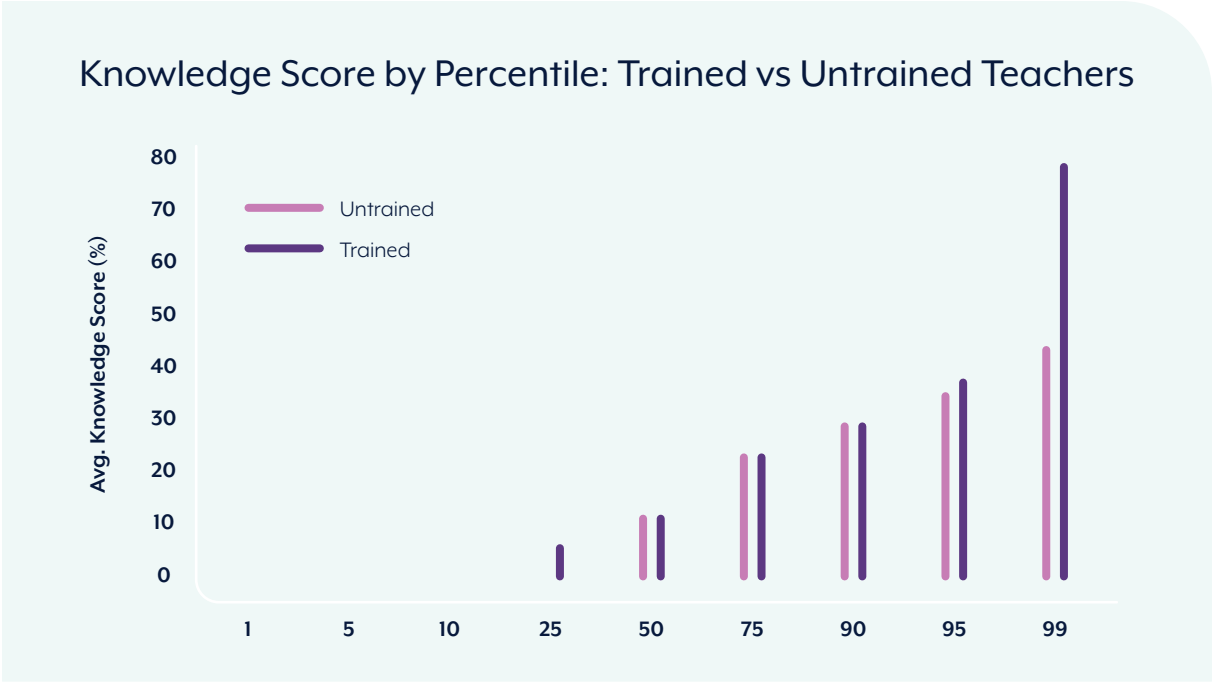


Insight 3: Participation in teacher trainings is not correlated with higher curriculum knowledge

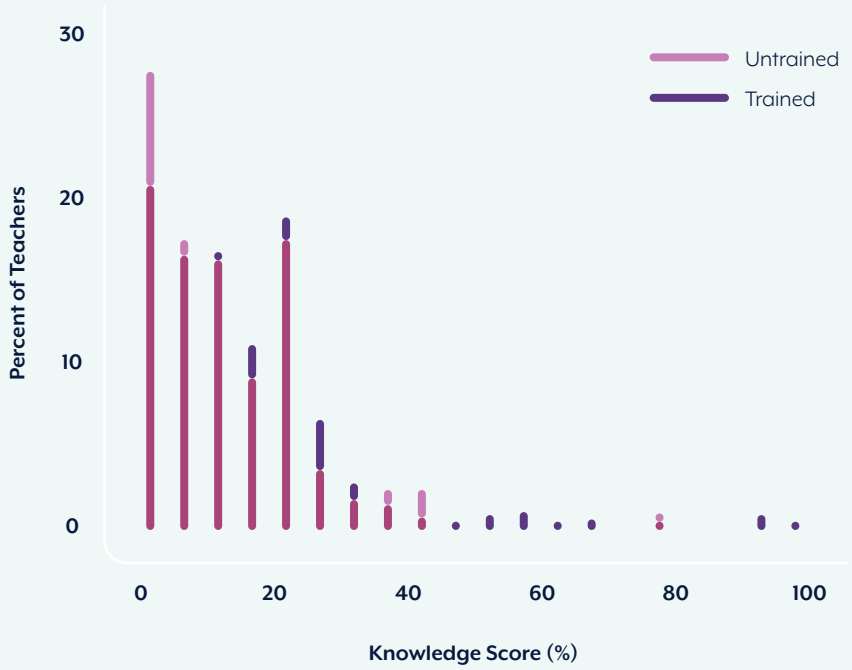
Attending a training session was associated with an increase in the average score from **12.9% to 15.7%**. This increase, however, appears to be primarily driven by a small subset of high-knowledge teachers – the top 5% among those trained.



Most notably, only **1.2% of trained teachers scored above 75%**, compared to **0.6% of untrained teachers**. Similarly, only **3.3% of trained teachers scored above 50%**, versus **0.6% of untrained teachers**. This trend suggests that **participation alone did not drive substantial improvements in curriculum knowledge.**

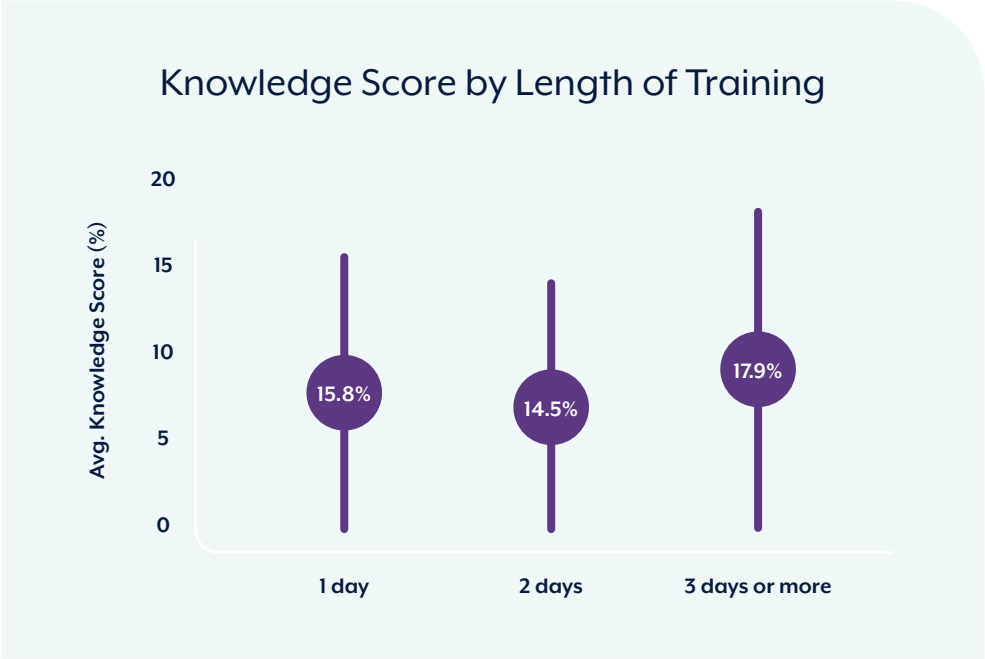


Knowledge Score Distribution by Training Status



Insight 4: Training duration is weakly correlated with higher curriculum knowledge

Teachers who engaged in the training for 3 or more days demonstrated a slightly stronger knowledge of the revised curriculum than teachers who trained for only one or two days, as shown in the figure below. Teachers who received three or more days of training had the highest knowledge score (18%). Teachers with two days of training scored lower (15%) than those with just one day (16%). **This pattern suggests that simply increasing training does not guarantee substantially higher knowledge; the highest level of training (three days or more) might be most effective.**

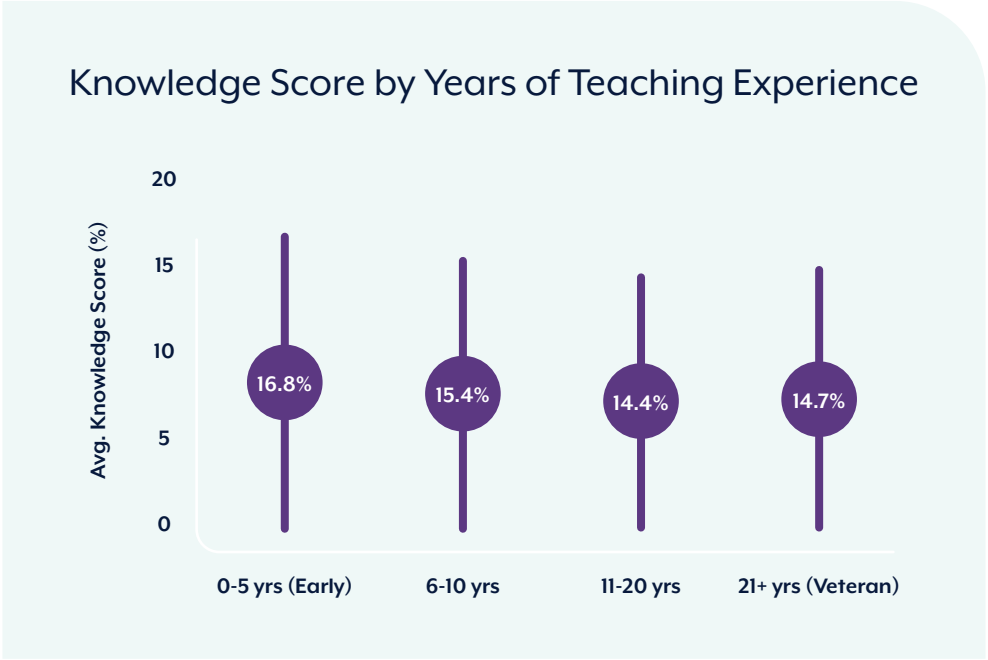


However, teachers who did not attend any training consistently performed poorly. This suggests that, as currently designed, whether or not a teacher receives training is more important than the **duration of training**.

Insight 5: Teaching experience is not correlated with higher knowledge of the new curriculum

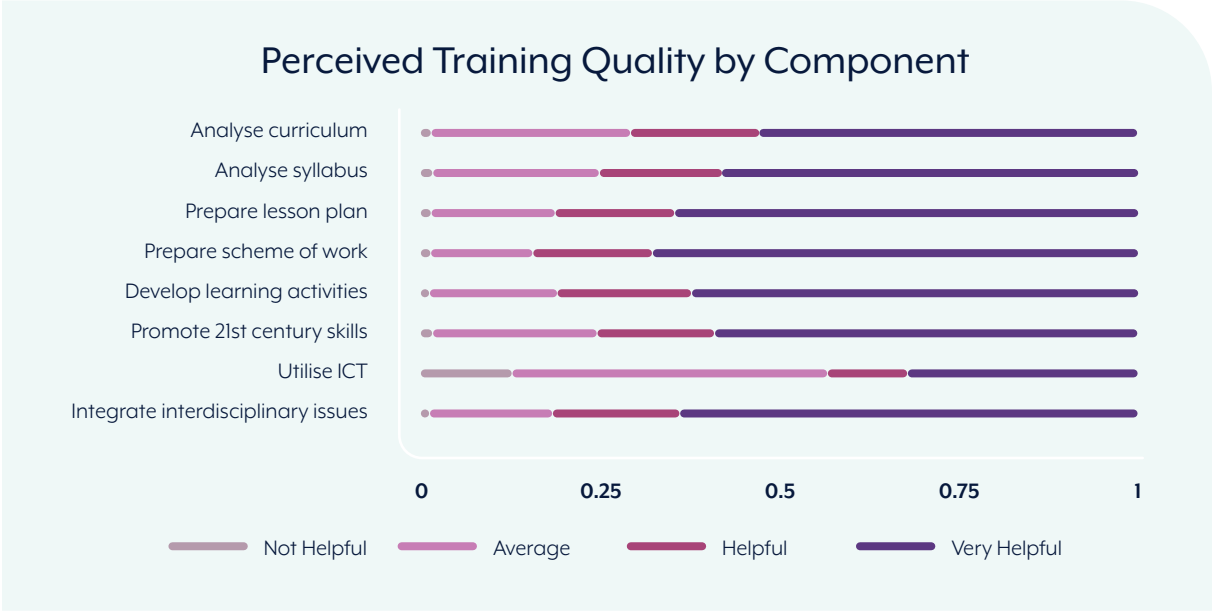
There is little variation in knowledge scores between early-career, mid-career, and veteran teachers with over 20 years of experience, as shown in the figure below.

Knowledge scores are slightly higher for the least experienced teachers but are low across the spectrum. It is also worth noting that the gap between early-career teachers and those with 21+ years of experience is nearly as large as the gap between teachers who received training and those who received no training.

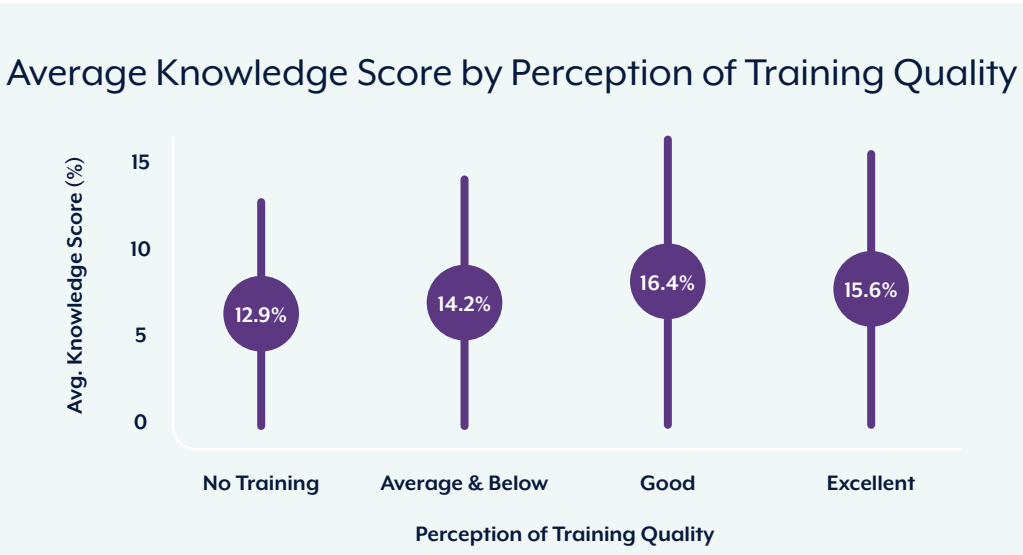


Insight 6: Perception of training quality among participants was largely positive

Of the 661 teachers who reported attending at least one training, **77% (507 out of 661) rated the overall training quality to be good or excellent**. Additionally, teachers assessed how helpful the training was in supporting different aspects of their teaching. As shown in the graph below, teachers most frequently rated the training as 'helpful' or 'very helpful' for preparing lesson plans (81%), preparing schemes of work (81%), and developing learning activities (85%). In contrast, 57% of teachers found the training 'average' or 'not helpful' for utilising ICT.



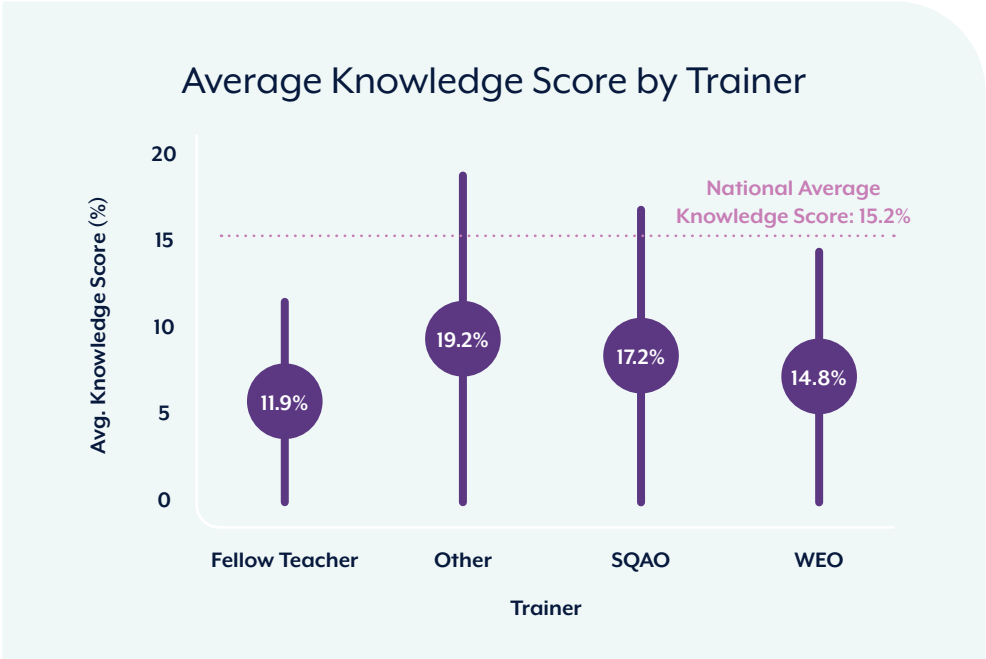
However, we find that **individuals' positive perceptions of training quality did not translate into substantially greater knowledge of the curriculum.**



Insight 7: Larger training sessions were associated with higher perceived quality, with limited effect on curriculum knowledge

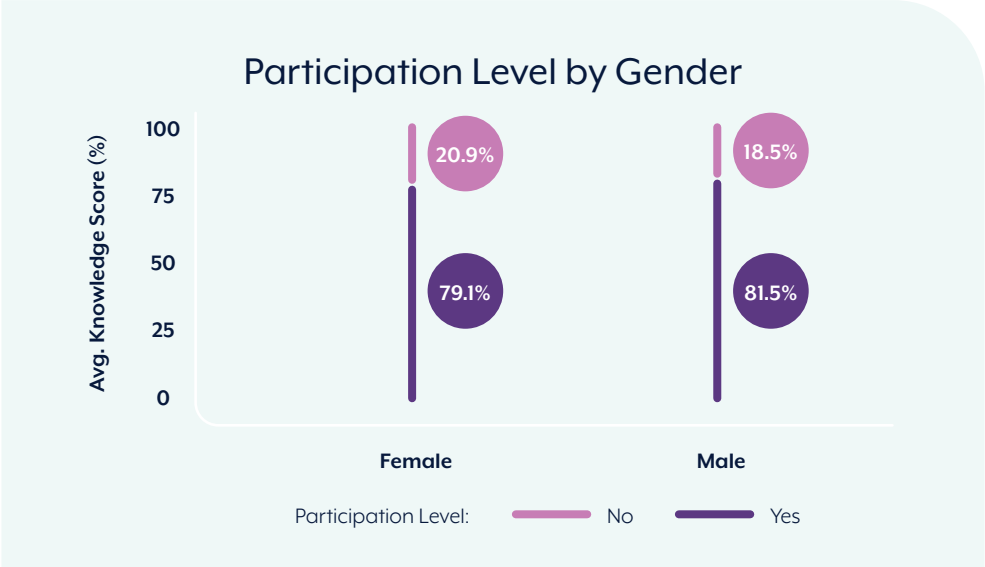
Larger training sessions were associated with an increase in perceived quality. Teachers were more likely to perceive the training quality as 'good' or 'excellent' in larger training cohort sizes.

This might be because larger training sessions were often conducted by master trainers, SQAOs or WEOs. In contrast, smaller groups were often trained by other fellow teachers who attended these large trainings. This is reflected in the average score by trainer type:

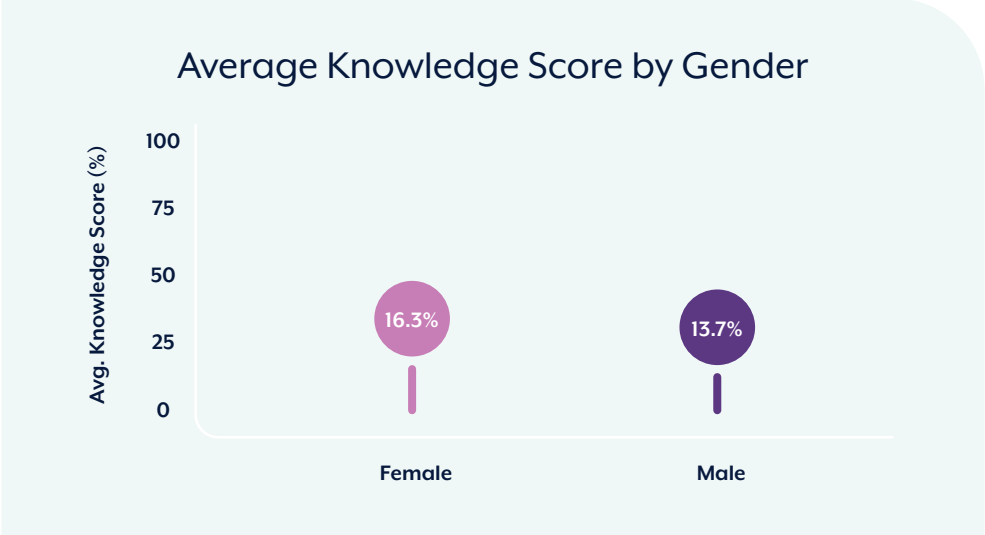


Insight 8: Gender composition by training participation is uniform, even though women had a higher knowledge score

57% of respondents identified as female, while 43% of them identified as male.



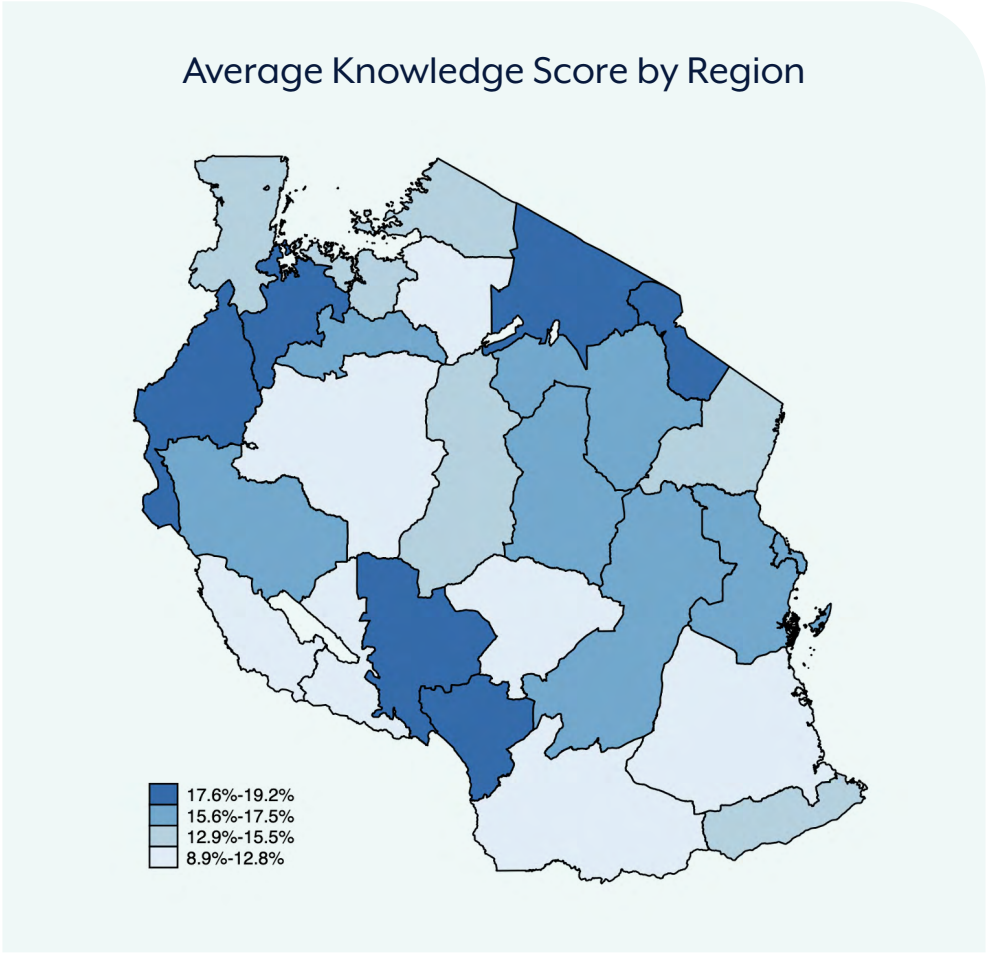
As shown in the graph above, there was no variation in participation based on gender; it was evenly distributed across the reported genders, despite expectations that barriers to participation may be higher for female teachers. Overall, female teachers outperformed their male peers by 2.5 percentage point.



Even though male teachers were more likely to report having attended a training, their knowledge scores were lower.

Insight 9: Geographical variation in knowledge score and training

There is geographical variation in both training participation rates and knowledge scores. The map below shows regional average knowledge scores grouped into four categories, each representing a quartile of the overall score distribution. Northern and Northwestern regions had better average knowledge scores than those in the southern parts of the country.



While participation in at least one training was high across most regions, average knowledge scores varied. Regions like **Kilimanjaro** and **Arusha** had among the highest knowledge scores despite lower participation, while **Rukwa** and **Ruvuma** had high participation but very low scores. Some regions, such as **Mbeya** and **Njombe**, showed both high participation and high scores, but this was not consistent across all cases. These patterns suggest that regional differences in knowledge outcomes are **not strongly correlated with training participation rates alone**.

Knowledge Score by Regional Training Participation

4 Conclusion

The phone survey evidence underscores both the achievements and limitations of the 2023 revised curriculum implementation in Tanzania. High rates of teacher and headteacher participation in training activities reflect substantial buy-in at the system level and the logistical success of organising large-scale professional development initiatives. Moreover, the overwhelming majority of the teachers had a positive perception of these training sessions. This shows that the reform has built a foundation of goodwill and motivation among educators, which is an important prerequisite for long-term success.

But despite the overwhelming positive perception of the training sessions, the consistently low knowledge scores reveal a gap between participation and effective mastery of the revised curriculum. This suggests that while the current model of delivery has been successful in reaching a wide audience, teachers likely need continued support, perhaps through enhanced observation and coaching by Ward Education Officers, improved continuous training by leveraging and strengthening MEWAKA and its short demonstration videos, model lessons and self-paced modules, as well as sessions conducted through TIE's Smart Classrooms technology, and more effective weekly Communities of Learning meetings.

A | Appendix A: Knowledge of the revised curriculum

Sr No	Section 5 Questions	Correct Answer	% Correct
1	Can you list the elements of a lesson plan that is based on an improved curriculum?	introduction	64.12
2		Competency	53.7
3		Design	30.18
4		Realisation	39.52
5	Can you enumerate the 5E's? As they are being used/integrated into the preparation of the lesson plan?	Engage	4.85
6		Explore	2.42
7		Explain	4.48
8		Elaborate	3.52
9		Evaluate	5.21
10	Which of the 5Es are relevant for the competency development element in the lesson plan of the improved curriculum?	Explain & Explore	0.41
11	What are the 4Cs in 21st-century skills as emphasized in the improved curriculum?	Communication	4.22
12		Collaboration	2.37
13		Creativity	3.19
14		Critical thinking	2.26
15	Which of the 21st-century skils does the student mainly develop when performing the activity of Group Discussion?	Collaboration and communication	0.85
16	Which of the 21st-century skils does the student mainly develop when performing the activity of Drawing a Picture?	Creativity	20
17	Which of the 21st-century skils does the student mainly develop when performing the activity of Analysing a Scenario?	Critical thinking	6.06

Note: Each row is worth 1 point i.e. maximum points = 17, mean = 2.69 points (i.e. 14.6%)

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