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Between Policy and Practice: Alignment of Learning Situations in Competency-Based Philosophy Teaching in Burkina Faso

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Abstract

Since 2013, Burkina Faso has undertaken a curriculum reform based on the Competency-Based Approach (CBA), which places learning situations at the heart of secondary school philosophy teaching. This study examines the alignment between official requirements concerning learning situations, CBA principles, and actual classroom practices in the Nazinon region. A mixed-methods design combined document analysis, questionnaires administered to 21 teachers and 60 students, interviews with 10 secondary education inspectors specializing in philosophy, and direct observation of 10 lessons. The findings show that official curriculum requirements explicitly emphasize learning situations and are broadly consistent with CBA principles, but lack operational clarity, as reported by 71.4% of teachers and 40% of inspectors. Although 61.9% of teachers reported regularly using learning situations, direct observation confirmed their actual use in only 30% of the lessons observed, while 78.3% of students reported the persistence of lecture-based teaching. Insufficient CBA training (81% of teachers), conceptual difficulties, and large class sizes (76.2%) were the main obstacles identified. A supplementary analysis of the raw survey data found no statistically significant association between teaching experience and the extent of self-reported CBA-aligned practices. The study concludes that alignment between policy requirements and practice remains partial and structurally constrained, and calls for substantially stronger training and pedagogical support.

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Competency-Based Approach, learning situation, curriculum requirements, philosophy education, Burkina Faso

Introduction

Schooling and society are fundamentally interdependent. Schools transmit the knowledge, norms, and values considered essential by the community, while also preparing students to act appropriately within their social environment. However, alignment between schooling and social needs can never be secured once and for all, which explains the recurrent introduction of curriculum reforms worldwide. Against this background, Burkina Faso embarked on a comprehensive curriculum reform in March 2013 to provide students with higher-quality education. This reform led to the adoption of the Competency-Based Approach (CBA), implemented through the pedagogy of integration (CBA/PI), as the reference curriculum framework. It replaced objectives-based pedagogy (OBP), which had notably been criticized for fragmenting learning and reducing its meaningfulness for students. Recognizing the challenges posed by this curriculum transition, Burkina Faso's education authorities have expanded training and support initiatives for education stakeholders since 2021. These

have included annual conferences for secondary education inspectors devoted successively to implementing the new curricula, assessment through integrative situations, and practical arrangements for CBA implementation, as well as regional training workshops held in 2023 and a national pedagogical day in 2024. These institutional efforts have nevertheless failed to close the gap between curriculum intentions and observed teaching practices, as noted in a ministerial memorandum issued in January 2025.

Philosophy teaching is fully involved in this reform process. The 2022 curricula require learning to be organized around contextualized, integrative situations, referred to as learning situations, designed as the principal means and setting for developing the discipline's core competencies in conceptualization, problem formulation, and argumentation. Yet observations of philosophy teaching, particularly during training and pedagogical development activities, reveal recurrent difficulties in understanding and applying the concept of a learning situation. It is frequently reduced to an introductory or motivational activity inherited from objectives-based pedagogy, at the expense of its integrative function.

Historical background to philosophy teaching in Burkina Faso

Philosophy teaching in Burkina Faso continues to bear the imprint of its origins. Until 1989, it was confined to the final year of secondary school and governed by the French official instructions of 1925, which organized the syllabus as a list of concepts, authors, and optional questions, accompanied by methodological guidance on essay writing and text commentary. The 1990 reform extended philosophy teaching to the penultimate and final years of secondary school, before the 1996 revision incorporated population education content, substantially increasing the volume of conceptual material in the syllabus. The 2008 revision sought to address these shortcomings by reducing content, extending the subject to all three years of upper secondary education, and developing pedagogical frameworks. However, as Bayama (2009–2010, p. 21) notes, it remained constrained by the absence of objectives framed around clearly formulated problems. The 2022 revision finally placed philosophy teaching firmly within the CBA framework, rationalizing content and linking it to the mobilization of competencies rather than the mere reproduction of knowledge. This historical trajectory reveals the depth of the transformation currently under way: it involves a shift in pedagogical paradigm rather than a simple adjustment of content, and, as the findings of this study show, its implementation remains incomplete.

Research rationale and problem statement

Research on CBA, particularly the work of Jonnaert (2009), Roegiers (2010, 2011), and Perrenoud (1997), has firmly established its conceptual foundations and instructional requirements. Within philosophy education specifically, Tozzi (1993, 2012) has contributed to conceptualizing how philosophizing can be taught. However, these contributions remain largely theoretical and do not provide systematic empirical evidence on the actual practices of philosophy teachers in Burkina Faso's secondary schools. Recent studies by Nana (2024), on the implementation of the new philosophy curricula in the first year of upper secondary school, and Bicaba (2022), on the transfer of philosophical learning to other contexts, address related issues without specifically examining alignment between requirements concerning learning situations and observed practices. The present study addresses this research gap, which defines its distinctive contribution and rationale.

This study addresses the persistence of teaching practices that remain poorly aligned with CBA, even though learning situations form the core of the prescribed philosophy curriculum. This observation raises questions about the clarity and practical applicability of official requirements, the extent of teacher training and support, and the actual conditions of classroom implementation.

The overarching research question is therefore: how are CBA learning situations implemented in philosophy teaching in Burkina Faso? Three specific questions follow: to what extent are official requirements concerning learning situations aligned with CBA principles? To what extent are these requirements aligned with philosophy classroom practice? What are the main difficulties hindering the implementation of CBA learning situations in philosophy?

The overall objective is to examine alignment in the implementation of CBA learning situations in philosophy teaching in Burkina Faso. Three specific objectives follow: to determine the extent of alignment between official requirements and CBA principles; to examine alignment between these requirements and classroom practice; and to identify the main difficulties hindering the effective implementation of learning situations.

One general hypothesis and three specific hypotheses were formulated. The general hypothesis posits that the implementation of CBA learning situations in philosophy in Burkina Faso is partially aligned with CBA principles and official requirements. The specific hypotheses respectively propose that official requirements are partially aligned with CBA principles (SH1); classroom practice is moderately aligned with official requirements (SH2); and insufficient training, conceptual difficulties, certain inappropriate teaching practices, and inadequate resources constitute major obstacles to the effective implementation of learning situations (SH3).

The article proceeds in four stages. Following this introduction, the research methodology is presented, followed by the findings from the three categories of participants. These findings are then discussed in relation to the theoretical framework and existing literature, before the conclusion revisits the initial research problem and outlines the study's contributions and limitations.

Conceptual and theoretical framework

Clarification of key concepts

Within CBA, the concept of competency marks a departure from approaches focused solely on accumulating knowledge. Jonnaert (2009, p. 33) defines it as "an individual's ability to mobilize an integrated set of internal and external resources to address a problem situation successfully." This definition highlights three constituent elements: the active mobilization of resources, their dynamic integration, and their grounding in a concrete situation, which alone gives competency meaning. Similarly, Roegiers (2010) emphasizes the functional and contextualized nature of competency, understood as a complex capacity to act based on the effective coordination of diverse resources in meaningful situations. Applied to philosophy, this conception frames philosophical competency as a student's ability to formulate problems, conceptualize, and construct arguments in response to concrete human situations, rather than simply reproduce memorized doctrines.

CBA itself can be defined as a pedagogical approach focused on developing complex competencies and resting on three pillars: students' active involvement in their own learning, the integrated mobilization of resources, and grounding in meaningful situations (UEMOA, 2014). It entails a paradigm shift from content to competency, from lectures to learning situations, and from exclusively summative assessment to assessment that also serves formative purposes.

Learning situations occupy a strategic position within this framework. In the field of didactics, Brousseau (1998, p. 57) defines a situation as "a set of relationships established explicitly and implicitly between a student, an environment, and an educational system with a view to acquiring knowledge." From a compatible perspective, Jonnaert, Depover, and Malu (2020) define a learning situation as a structured set of four components—a context, supporting material, an instruction, and a purpose—that enables students to mobilize prior learning to develop competencies. As Jonnaert (2009, p. 91) states, "without a situation, there is no competency; there are only available but unmobilized resources," underscoring the organizing role of situations throughout the curriculum framework. In philosophy, this requirement entails an additional disciplinary specificity: the learning situation must generate an authentic intellectual tension that engages students in a reflective process of problem formulation, conceptualization, and argumentation (Tozzi, 2012).

Teaching practice refers to the actions, decisions, and interactions through which teachers organize, conduct, and regulate classroom learning. It cannot be reduced either to pedagogical intentions or to institutional requirements. According to Altet (1994, p. 38), it constitutes "a coherent set of purposeful actions embedded in a particular professional situation and directed towards learning." Teaching practice is simultaneously reported (what teachers say they do), enacted (what they actually do in class), and constructed (what they gradually develop through experience). The connections or discrepancies between these three dimensions are precisely one focus of this study. Finally, official requirements refer to the normative documents—curricula, official instructions, and teaching guides—through which education authorities specify educational aims, content, target competencies, and expected methods.

Theoretical framework

Three theoretical frameworks guide the interpretation of the findings. Curriculum evaluation theory, established by Tyler (1949) and developed further by Stabback (2016), distinguishes several levels of curriculum—the prescribed, implemented, learned, and assessed curriculum—and posits that discrepancies between these levels underpin the very need for curriculum evaluation.

This theory provides a basis for examining the coherence of requirements concerning learning situations, their alignment with CBA principles, and the extent to which teachers implement them.

The theory of professional practice analysis, developed notably by Altet (2000) and Schön (1994), views teaching as a complex, reflective activity whose transformation requires an examination of the underlying rationales, effects, and limitations of professional action. Schön (1994, p. 77) summarizes this requirement by emphasizing that "a competent practitioner is one who can reflect in and on action." This perspective discourages reducing observed shortcomings to individual failings, instead interpreting them as the outcome of institutional constraints, inherited pedagogical beliefs, and insufficient support for reflection.

Finally, educational change theory, informed by Fullan (2007), Huberman (1973), Bareil (2004), and Gather Thurler (2000), examines the processes through which educational reforms are introduced, taken up, and embedded in practice. Fullan (2007, p. 30) emphasizes that "educational change is a process, not an event, involving changes in beliefs, practices, and structures." This theory provides an interpretive framework for understanding resistance, hybrid practices, and institutional conditions that may support more effective CBA implementation. Together, these three frameworks connect the analysis of curriculum requirements, actual teaching practices, and the institutional conditions for their transformation—the three dimensions central to the findings presented below.

Methodology

Research design

This study adopted a mixed-methods approach combining quantitative and qualitative components. The quantitative component, based on questionnaires, sought to identify general trends and relationships between variables using numerical data. The qualitative component, drawing on interviews, classroom observation, and document analysis, explored the complexity of the phenomenon through an examination of participants' accounts, practices, and perceptions.

Study setting

The study was conducted in the Nazinon region, specifically its three constituent provinces: Zoundwéogo, Bazèga, and Nahouri. This setting was selected because the researcher's professional experience in the region provided extensive contextual knowledge and access to a network of education stakeholders that facilitated the survey.

Study population

Three categories of participants were selected because of their direct involvement in implementing philosophy learning situations: students in the first, penultimate, and final years of upper secondary school, as both beneficiaries and active participants; philosophy teachers—professeurs des lycées et collèges (PLC), professeurs certifiés (PCLC), and professeurs agrégés (PA)—as the main actors responsible for implementation; and secondary education inspectors specializing in philosophy (IES/Philo), because of their pedagogical supervision role. Within the selected geographical area, the study population comprised 9,338 upper secondary students, 57 philosophy teachers, and five secondary education inspectors specializing in philosophy.

Sample and sampling strategy

Purposive sampling was used to select participants according to criteria aligned with the research objectives. The final sample comprised 91 respondents: 60 students, 21 teachers, and 10 secondary education inspectors specializing in philosophy. Because only five such inspectors worked in the Nazinon region, five additional inspectors from other regions of Burkina Faso were included to diversify the professional experiences represented and reach the intended sample size.

Data collection instruments

Four instruments were used. Questionnaires containing closed and open-ended questions were administered electronically to students and teachers through Google Forms. Semi-structured interviews with inspectors provided direct interaction, allowing questions to be rephrased and responses explored in greater depth. Classroom observation, using a purpose-designed observation grid, covered ten lessons to verify the actual use and assess the quality of the learning situations implemented. Finally, document analysis covered the official philosophy curricula, the Guide to Implementing the Curricula through CBA, the Official Instructions, and the UEMOA Reference Manual.

Data collection procedures

Fieldwork took place in April 2026 in selected schools in the Nazinon region. Of the 100 data collection instruments originally planned—60 student questionnaires, 30 teacher questionnaires, and 10 inspector interview guides—91 yielded usable data, giving an overall completion rate of 91%. All student questionnaires were completed (100%), and all scheduled inspector interviews were conducted (100%). Twenty-one of the 30 targeted teachers responded, giving a teacher response rate of 70%.

Data analysis

Quantitative data were processed using descriptive statistics based on electronically collated questionnaire responses (frequencies and percentages), with tables and charts produced in Microsoft Excel. Qualitative data from interviews, classroom observations, and open-ended questions underwent thematic content analysis organized around the main research dimensions: official requirements, classroom practices, and difficulties. In preparing this article, supplementary statistical analyses were also conducted directly on the raw datasets appended to the original study: individual responses from 21 teachers and 60 students, and the coded corpus of ten inspector interviews. These supplementary analyses, clearly distinguished from the descriptive findings reported in the source text, included a Spearman correlation between teaching experience and a composite score of self-reported CBA-aligned practice, as well as chi-square tests of independence examining the associations of student gender and grade level with the frequency of collaborative work in philosophy lessons. Student's t-test, analysis of variance (ANOVA), and Pearson correlation could not be used because most variables were categorical or ordinal rather than continuous. Spearman correlation, which is suitable for ordinal data, was therefore calculated only for variables to which it could appropriately be applied.

Ethical considerations

The original study does not report formal approval by an institutional ethics committee, consistent with customary practice for end-of-training dissertations in Burkina Faso. Nevertheless, anonymizing respondents through codes such as EI1–EI10 for inspectors and A1–A60 for students reflects a concern to protect participants' identities.

Results and Discussion

Data collection completion rates

Table 1 summarizes completion rates for the data collection instruments by participant category.

Knowledge and perceptions of official requirements

Teachers' responses indicate relatively satisfactory familiarity with official documents: 85.7% (18 of 21) reported knowing the official philosophy curricula, and 66.7% (14 of 21) reported using the Guide to Implementing the Curricula through CBA. However, although 57.1% (12 of 21) considered these requirements appropriate, a substantial proportion, 71.4% (15 of 21), felt that some guidelines remained insufficiently explicit. Inspectors' perceptions were more varied: half (5 of 10) considered official requirements broadly consistent with CBA principles, while four (40%) reported difficulties translating them into practice. As one explained, "the curricula and CBA guide provide important guidance for teaching philosophy through a competency-based approach, although some aspects remain difficult to apply in classrooms" (I1).

Implementation of learning situations in the classroom

Self-reported practices varied considerably in the frequency with which learning situations were used. A minority of teachers (23.8%, 5 of 21) reported using them systematically, 38.1% (8 of 21) frequently, and 28.6% (6 of 21) occasionally. Overall, therefore, 61.9% (13 of 21) described themselves as regular users. Regarding supporting materials and activities, large majorities reported using philosophical texts (90.5%, 19 of 21), organizing debates (76.2%, 16 of 21), and drawing on social issues (71.4%, 15 of 21). However, these reports contrasted sharply with direct classroom observations: only 30% of the teachers observed (3 of 10) actually incorporated an authentic learning situation into their lessons. In the observed cases, these consisted of two accounts of concrete situations and one source text used to teach text commentary methodology.

Inspectors' accounts partly corroborated this discrepancy: 40% (4 of 10) reported frequently observing the use of learning situations during classroom visits, while the same proportion (40%) observed only occasional use. One inspector stated: "some teachers do use learning situations, but in several cases these remain

superficial and poorly aligned with the actual logic of CBA" (I4).

Students' perceptions

Most students reported participating in reflective activities: 68.3% frequently analyzed concrete situations, 71.7% regularly participated in collaborative activities or debates, and 73.3% encountered questions that stimulated reflection. Regarding competency development, students reported improvements in text comprehension (78.3%, 47 of 60), analysis of philosophical problems (81.7%, 49 of 60), and argumentation (76.7%, 46 of 60). A large majority (83.3%, 50 of 60) recognized the usefulness of philosophy in addressing problems both within and beyond school. The same proportion expressed strong interest in the subject, reinforced by an attraction to debate (75%, 45 of 60). As one student put it, "learning situations help us understand society's problems and think for ourselves" (A50). However, one quarter (25%, 15 of 60) expressed mixed interest, mainly because of the requirement to memorize quotations, while 16.7% (10 of 60) expressed a clear dislike of the subject.

When asked about difficulties, 78.3% of students (47 of 60) reported that teachers dominated classroom talk, while half of all respondents (50%, 30 of 60) explicitly criticized this practice. As one student summarized it, "I think the teacher should speak at the end" (A10).

Difficulties reported by teachers and inspectors

Insufficient CBA training was by far the leading difficulty identified by teachers: 80.95% (17 of 21) regarded it as a major obstacle. This was followed by large class sizes (76.19%, 16 of 21); difficulties assessing competencies, overloaded syllabi, conceptual difficulties, and insufficient weekly teaching time (each reported by 71.43%, 15 of 21); lack of teaching resources (66.67%); and examination pressure (61.90%). Among inspectors, 70% (7 of 10) reported persistent conceptual confusion among teachers regarding CBA foundations. One summarized the situation as follows: "many teachers, and even inspectors, have remained within OBP because of a lack of training" (I9). Another confirmed this diagnosis: "training remains insufficient, and several teachers continue to confuse CBA with a simple change of method" (I2). A third highlighted a systemic difficulty: "how will teachers be trained if their trainers have not been trained?" (I6).

Supplementary analysis of the raw datasets

Beyond the descriptive statistics reported above, direct analysis of the individual-level data files appended to the original study enabled three supplementary analyses, clearly distinguished from the preceding findings.

First, a composite score of self-reported CBA-aligned practice was constructed from five ordinal variables in the teacher questionnaire: frequency of learning situation use; the extent to which problem formulation, competency-based work, and independent reflection were encouraged; and perceived alignment with official requirements. These variables were coded on a scale from 0 (never) to 4 (always). The Spearman correlation between this composite score and reported teaching experience, calculable for 19 of the 21 teachers because the remaining two provided non-numerical descriptions of their experience, did not reach statistical significance ($\rho = 0.355$; $p = 0.136$; $n = 19$). This finding suggests that, in this sample, years of teaching experience alone were not statistically associated with greater self-reported alignment with CBA principles, qualifying the intuitive assumption that professional experience automatically facilitates the uptake of curriculum innovation.

Second, chi-square tests of independence were calculated from the individual responses of the 60 students to examine the associations of gender and grade level with the frequency of collaborative work in philosophy lessons, dichotomized as "frequent" (often or always) versus "infrequent." No statistically significant association was found for either gender ($\chi^2 = 0.03$; $df = 1$; $p = 0.872$; $n = 59$, excluding the "unspecified" category) or grade level ($\chi^2 = 2.70$; $df = 2$; $p = 0.259$; $n = 60$). These results indicate that the perceived frequency of collaborative activities did not differ significantly by these student characteristics in the sample.

Third, analysis of the coded corpus of ten inspector interviews quantified the frequency of spontaneously mentioned barriers and enabling factors. All inspectors (10 of 10) identified insufficient initial and continuing training as obstacles to CBA implementation and professional capacity development as a priority response. Lack of teaching resources and conceptual difficulties were each mentioned by six inspectors, time overload by five, and resistance to change by four. Among enabling factors, the production of teaching resources and closer pedagogical supervision were each cited by eight inspectors, curriculum revision by five, and stronger pedagogical leadership by only two. This quantification

of the qualitative corpus independently supports the central importance of the training deficit identified in teachers' self-reports.

Assessment of the hypotheses

Taken together, the findings support specific hypothesis 1, which proposed partial alignment between official requirements and CBA principles: although the curriculum requirements explicitly endorse CBA, they lack operational clarity, as acknowledged by most teachers and a substantial proportion of inspectors. Specific hypothesis 2, proposing moderate alignment between classroom practice and official requirements, is also supported: the gap between reported practices (61.9% regular use) and observed practices (30% actual implementation) indicates that uptake remains partial and uneven. Specific hypothesis 3, concerning the combined effects of insufficient training, conceptual difficulties, and inappropriate teaching practices, is fully supported by triangulation across the three participant categories and by the supplementary analysis of the coded inspector interviews. Support for these three hypotheses also supports the general hypothesis: the implementation of CBA learning situations in philosophy in Burkina Faso is indeed only partially aligned with CBA principles and official requirements. This partial alignment occurs at two interdependent levels: insufficient clarity in curriculum requirements and a substantial gap between those requirements and actual classroom practices.

The findings illuminate several aspects of the complex process through which a major curriculum reform such as CBA is taken up in philosophy teaching. The formal consistency identified between official requirements and CBA principles—with 85.7% of teachers reporting familiarity with the official curricula—can be interpreted through curriculum evaluation theory, developed by Tyler (1949) and revisited by Stabback (2016), which distinguishes the prescribed, taught, and learned curriculum. This distinction clarifies the study's most salient finding: formal consistency in requirements does not guarantee their implementation, because curriculum uptake depends on multiple contextual, institutional, and individual factors. The fact that 71.4% of teachers and 40% of inspectors considered some guidelines insufficiently explicit illustrates the lack of clarity separating the prescribed curriculum from its practical enactment. This difficulty translating requirements into practice echoes Roegiers's (2010) analyses of the pedagogy of integration, according to which a competency-based approach requires sufficiently explicit instructional tools and extensive training to enable teachers to design appropriate learning situations.

The persistent gap between the 61.9% of teachers reporting regular use of learning situations and the 30% whose use was confirmed through direct observation reflects Perrenoud's (1997, 2001) analyses of the structural difficulty of moving from knowledge transmission to competency mobilization and development. For Perrenoud, this transition entails more than a technical adjustment: it requires a profound transformation of teachers' relationships to knowledge, instructional time, and their own role. Such transformation requires substantial support and an extended period of adaptation, both evidently insufficient given the training deficit reported by 81% of teachers and 70% of inspectors in our sample.

The persistence of lecture-based practices, reported by 78.3% of students in relation to teachers' domination of classroom talk, can also be interpreted through the theory of professional practice analysis developed by Altet (1994, 2000) and Schön (1994). From this perspective, teaching practices are embedded in deeply internalized patterns of action, developed through professional experience and reinforced by contextual constraints. Transforming them requires sustained reflection supported by continuing professional development and practice analysis, both currently inadequate according to participants. Our supplementary analysis of the raw data offers a more nuanced perspective: the absence of a statistically significant association between teaching experience and the extent of self-reported CBA-aligned practices ($\rho = 0.355$; $p = 0.136$) suggests that experience alone does not guarantee more effective uptake of the reform, and that uptake may depend more on the quality and recency of training than on years of service. Although not statistically significant in this small sample, this finding is consistent with inspectors' qualitative assessment of the chronic inadequacy of continuing professional development.

These findings also fit within Fullan's (2007) theory of educational change, which views change as "a process, not an event," involving the gradual transformation of beliefs, practices, and institutional structures.

Table.1 Data collection completion rates

Instrument	Participant category	Target sample	Completed	Rate
Questionnaire	Students	60	60	100%
Questionnaire	Teachers	30	21	70%
Interview guide	Inspectors	10	10	100%
Total		**100**	**91**	**91%**

Source: field survey data, April 2026.

This process-oriented interpretation helps explain the hybrid practices observed—the coexistence of CBA-aligned strategies, such as debates and philosophical texts, used by 76.2% and 90.5% of teachers respectively, with more traditional transmission-based methods—as a transitional phase inherent in curriculum innovation rather than a failure of reform. This hybridity also resonates with what Gather Thurler (2000) calls the "system effect": pedagogical innovations cannot become sustainably embedded if organizational conditions remain unchanged. This helps explain the decisive influence of large class sizes (76.2% of teachers) and examination pressure (61.9%) in sustaining transmission-based practices perceived as more "efficient" for covering syllabi within limited time.

From the specific perspective of philosophy didactics, Tozzi's (1993, 2012) analyses provide further insight. CBA-based philosophy teaching requires three shifts: an epistemological shift from doctrinal exposition to problem formulation; an instructional shift from lectures to debate and the collective construction of meaning; and an assessment shift from testing factual knowledge to assessing thinking competencies. Our findings show that, although teachers use some materials consistent with this orientation, their use remains largely shaped by a transmission-based logic, as reflected in the limited active student participation reported in interviews. According to our findings, the tension between CBA's emphasis on contextualization and the abstract, universal dimension of philosophical thought constitutes a subject-specific instructional challenge insufficiently addressed by current training arrangements. This observation aligns with Jonnaert's (2009) theoretical insights into the need to ground learning situations in authentic problems that students find meaningful.

The findings also extend and provide empirical detail for earlier Burkina Faso studies on related topics. At the outset of CBA adoption, Ouali (2012) had already identified the risk of a gap between curricular ambitions and the education system's actual implementation capacity. Conducted more than a decade later, our study shows that this risk remains highly relevant to philosophy teaching. Nana (2024), examining the new philosophy curricula in the first year of upper secondary school, identified implementation difficulties similar to those documented here across the upper secondary cycle. This suggests that these obstacles extend beyond a particular grade level. Likewise, Bicaba's (2022) research on transferring philosophical learning to students' lives resonates with our findings: because most students recognized philosophy's usefulness in addressing problems beyond school, the issue appears to concern less the subject's perceived relevance than the pedagogical methods through which its content is taught and applied in class.

These findings must nevertheless be interpreted in light of the research design. Although the sample included diverse participants—students, teachers, and inspectors—the study focused on the Nazinon region, limiting generalization to Burkina Faso as a whole, where material conditions and institutional dynamics may differ considerably. Teachers' self-reported data may also be affected by social desirability bias, with some potentially overstating their innovative practices. The gap between reported practices (61.9%) and observed practices (30%) makes this explanation plausible, although the available data alone cannot establish it conclusively. Finally, the small teacher subsample available for supplementary correlation analysis (n = 19) calls for caution; this finding should be replicated in a larger sample before any generalization.

Practical implications

The findings suggest several complementary courses of action, proposed by participants and informed by our observations. Pedagogically, students sought greater involvement in constructing knowledge through more interactive activities. Inspectors similarly advocated more systematic use of active learning methods and philosophical debates, regarded as essential to

developing conceptualization, argumentation, and problem formulation competencies. Teachers and inspectors also agreed that assessment practices should be better aligned with competency-based principles, particularly through more systematic formative assessment. This requires targeted training in its principles and techniques for both groups.

Institutionally, participants prioritized professional capacity development through regular continuing training, closer pedagogical supervision, and stronger arrangements for collaboration among teachers and between teachers and inspectors. Our quantified interview analysis confirms this diagnosis: every inspector mentioned capacity development. A bank of learning situations tailored to philosophy teaching, proposed by several teachers, would provide practical support for designing and conducting classroom activities, especially given the difficulty of contextualizing inherently abstract philosophical content discussed above. Such contextualization should also preserve philosophy's distinctive critical, reflective, and emancipatory purposes, which cannot be reduced to the application of generic methodological procedures.

Finally, reorganizing secondary education inspectors' annual conferences, particularly by extending their duration and holding at least two sessions each year within each subject-area network, alongside curriculum revision to improve the balance between syllabus volume and available teaching time, appears necessary for curriculum reform to produce lasting changes in classroom practice beyond its formal adoption.

In conclusion, this study examined alignment between official requirements concerning learning situations, CBA principles, and actual classroom practices in philosophy teaching in Burkina Faso. In response to the central research question on how these learning situations are implemented, findings from a mixed-methods survey of 91 education stakeholders in the Nazinon region provide a nuanced but consistent answer: official curriculum requirements explicitly place learning situations at the center of teaching and are broadly consistent with fundamental CBA principles, yet this formal consistency is undermined by insufficient operational clarity and a substantial gap between reported and observed classroom practices.

When used, learning situations are still frequently reduced to introductory activities, without genuinely integrating students' cognitive and methodological resources. Observed practices remain largely shaped by traditional teaching methods, particularly lectures, despite the growing use of CBA-aligned materials and activities such as philosophical texts and debates. This gap reflects a combination of difficulties: structurally insufficient CBA training, persistent conceptual confusion, large class sizes, and the combined pressure of syllabi and examination requirements. Supplementary analysis of the raw datasets usefully qualified these findings, notably by showing that teaching experience alone does not guarantee more effective uptake of the reform.

The study's main contribution is its empirical demonstration, triangulated across three participant categories and four distinct data collection instruments, of misalignment at two levels: between CBA principles and curriculum requirements, and between these requirements and actual teaching practices. This finding calls for a systemic approach to reform uptake that moves beyond a strictly normative interpretation.

Several limitations should nonetheless be reiterated. The regional focus and small sample constrain generalization to the national level, while self-reported data remain susceptible to social desirability bias, which methodological triangulation can reduce but not eliminate. The study therefore opens several avenues for further research: extending the investigation to other regions of Burkina Faso to compare practices across contexts; examining the actual effects of learning situations on measurable development of students' philosophical competencies; and investigating the instructional design of these situations in greater depth to equip teachers with subject-specific tools. Ultimately, the findings suggest that successful CBA implementation in philosophy depends less on the formal existence of official requirements than on the practical capacity of appropriately trained and supported education stakeholders to transform classroom practices into settings that enable students to mobilize knowledge and develop intellectual autonomy.

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