

Assessment of Skills, through the lens of the 2020 History Examination in Eswatini

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Abstract

The study examines how students' responses to history examination items reflect their command of subject's stated skills. This was facilitated by the use of Subject Content, Pedagogy, and Knowledge (SCPCK) framework. The scripts were systematic and randomly sampled from fifty four schools which were also randomly sampled. These school's students sat for the Junior Certificate (JC) history examination in 2020. Sixty scripts were randomly sampled from 860 paper two history scripts. Content analysis was used as an analysing tool to ascertain students' command of subject's skills. Findings indicated that appropriate history concepts were taught and examined to ascertain students' skills but 36/60 (sixty %) of students had minimal understanding of some key history concepts. For example, students' had challenges in understanding complex relationship between missionaries' activities and land issues in Africa. Thirty two per cent of students had a bias or one sided understanding of social effects of missionaries' activities. This depicts that the students had some clue with regards to knowledge or understanding of the missionaries' complexities over land. Students had limited interpretation and synthesis skills to present appropriate historical evidence. 23/60 (thirty eight %) of students had minimal understanding and knowledge of missionaries' activities in Africa. They had challenges in using their cognitive skills to compare and contrast different concepts and to utilise double sources of historical evidence to draw conclusions. It can be concluded that students' limited understanding of certain subject concepts undermined their capabilities to display their skills. The Majority of students had difficulty in determining the relationships and patterns in historical sources and the use of multiple historical evidences to draw conclusions. Students' capability to display their skills was undermined by their limited command of English vocabulary which often supports students' thoughtful processes. Thus, students' competencies were shaped and reshaped by classroom pedagogical discourses. It may be recommended that teaching of competencies should be enhanced through training teachers on the enhancement of skills through the key subject's concepts and teacher sensitivity to classroom pedagogical discourses influence to students' learning.

Key words: *Assessment, exam items, history, skills, students*

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I. Introduction

In current globalised ideas, ideologies and propaganda, the top priority is to utilise education to respond to these by teaching people different competencies such as to think and communicate. Equipping them with various competencies will enable them to cope with a range of complexities, including Covid-19 related challenges. The complexities of today's global society is characterised by the continuous interaction amongst societal systems, social tensions, visible and invisible power struggles, oppression and other social injustices which require citizens who are competent (Johnson and Yanca, 2015), which require people with different skills and other competencies.

The years 2019 and 2020 presented complex, unfamiliar and unpredictable learning environments for students in Eswatini and elsewhere because of the Covid-19 pandemic global challenge. The pandemic destabilised the Eswatini Education and Training institutions in their effort to develop different competencies in all spheres of society. The destabilisation of the education system and its capability to enhance students' competencies became a matter of great concern for the Eswatini Government and the world. Today's ever changing world work-place demands professionals who are competent and effective in complex, unfamiliar and unpredictable contexts.

The destabilisation of the education system of Eswatini has reversed the educational gains made by the country's different Ministries. For example, the majority of Eswatini's high school students have been prepared for College and University content. This is one of the country's achievements in responding to the objectives of educational and other related policies. This suggests that policies implemented in the response to the

1980s' reports have influenced the number of students entering training institutions in Eswatini. The percentage of high school students entering Eswatini Colleges and Universities is reaching record proportions but the policies' influence on students' improved competencies remains unsatisfactory (see Malope, 2010). This suggests that the educational foundations of Eswatini society are currently being eroded by the rising number of people who lack some key competencies and this threatens the very present and future sustainability of the nation. Our society and its educational institutions seem to have lost sight and focus of the basic purpose of schooling, societal high expectations, disciplined commitment and effort needed to enhance students' competencies.

1. Lack of Competencies

Increasing awareness about the lack or absence of competencies amongst a certain section of Eswatini students and graduates have sparked a discussion of their systematic and purposeful development through the whole chain of the education system (See Ministry of Economic Planning and Development report, 2018/2019). This awareness contributed significantly to the discussion of the capability of educational institutions in the development of different competencies.

Competencies significantly increase an individual's purposeful productivity in society. A productive or successful society partly depends on citizens' command of certain skills or competencies. These may include an individual's capability to engage in self-reflection, understand matters and carrying out complex societal matters (Reder and Reder, 2001).

Competencies are important for the credibility of educational institutions' social standing. As trust in educational institutions continues to erode, meaningful teaching of different competencies remains one of the best strategies to provide credibility of the institutions and accountability to the public (Bogo et al, 2011). Competencies may be considered as the new raw materials for achieving the country's sustainable development.

People who do not possess the levels of competencies are disfranchised from the opportunity to participate and contribute meaningfully to the nation's development. For a country to function, its citizens must have some capabilities to understand, some complex matters, to unpack conflicting and incomplete evidence, to exercise their control with wholesome discretion (National Commission on Excellence in Education, 1983). The world's recognition of the importance of competencies in education systems has resulted in many discussions related to assessments practices, classroom pedagogical changes and interventions.

The Education Sector and Training institutions in Eswatini are considered pillars of sustainable development. They are required to facilitate the achievement of sustainable goals through competent citizens. Citizens who are in command of different competencies can hope to secure gainful employment and to manage their own lives, serve their interests and contribute to sustainable development and progress of society.

These educational systems are also expected to enhance classroom pedagogical discourses and establish assessment methods to assess the required competencies. These assessment methods are expected to evaluate students' cognitive development and their capabilities to apply specialised knowledge or disciplined knowledge in a critical way. Applying their knowledge critically involves the use of divergent thinking, which is about the identification of issues and production of many solutions. It also involves students' use of convergent thinking which enhances meeting each subject parameters as established in each subject's examination instructions and acquirements. These may include manipulating or making sense of the subject sources. All these are expected to be examined in all subjects' examinations, including history national examinations because they form part of the Competency Based Education (CBE) in Eswatini, which is currently (in 2022) implemented at lower primary level of Eswatini.

2. Competency Based Education

Competencies in the education system of Eswatini are as old as the education system itself and important aspects due to the implicit obligation of the education system to the society it serves. The education system of Eswatini at lower level is currently (in 2022) uses the competency performance approach in primary level that demonstrates the integration and application of competencies in practice or in the work place. This approach is more about applied competencies, capabilities, skills and knowledge that help students and people to successfully perform in their examination or in their work places. It requires students to demonstrate what they know, what they understand and are able to do at the end of their schooling system or programme (Bogo et al, 2011). For example, the Eswatini national exit Junior Certificate (J.C.) examination and Senior Secondary Certificate or form five certificate requires students to display their specific skills and competencies.

Competency Based Education has been singled out as one of the recognised education system programmes for enhancing students' competencies in Eswatini. Every subject is expected to provide students with knowledge, skills and social values. Subject contents, skills, competencies and classroom pedagogical discourses are expected to align academic priorities, examinations' expectations, societal priorities and needs. More often, universal competencies are taught in all subjects. For example, these set of competencies, skills are

relevant for history and other subjects: critical thinking, analysis, problem solving and synthesis and these are key in shaping and reshaping any country's economic development.

Competency-Based Education centres on competencies, knowledge and skills that students are expected to acquire after completing their schooling. Subject content and assessments are expected to align with the competencies. The Eswatini education system has also moved towards assessing students through examinations which are supposed to provide a range of evidence that demonstrates students' mastery of competencies. This has been seen as more effective for gauging knowledge, skills and abilities in applied settings or work place. As today's work place demands on citizens who are competent in dealing with complex, unfamiliar and unpredictable circumstances.

When analysing the economic downturn experienced by Eswatini, the World Bank Investment Climate Assessment (ICA), World Bank Institutes (WBI) and the World Economic Forum (WEF, 2010) stated that it was a result of the inadequacy of the Kingdom's Education, Training and Skills Development Sector (ETSDS) to equip students with relevant competencies. Thus, the country's ETSDS failed to effectively contribute towards addressing economic challenges and the achievement of national development goals as presented in the Poverty Reduction Strategy and Action Plan, (PRSAP), 1997; Marope, 2010).

The World Bank claimed that the acceleration of economic growth, regional and global competitiveness could be knowledge-driven and technologically- driven (ETSDS, 2010). The World Bank's emphasis on knowledge and technologically- related skills as key factors for economic growth and sustainable development, influenced the Eswatini Government to adopt Competency-Based Education (characterised by knowledge, technological skills, communication skills, listening capabilities and moral values, and attitudes) to be implemented by educational institutions.

The Ministry of Education and Training accepted the Competence-Based Education model because of its internationally recognised contributions to the mission of future professional workers who can contribute towards the betterment of Eswatini and the world. Schools and other professional organisations are responsible for educating future practitioners in their fundamental ways of thinking and performing (Shulman, 2005), this is partly displayed through students' responses in an examination, where they demonstrate their cognitive capabilities in processing relevant knowledge gained from their interaction with their learning contexts. Learning contexts, more often affect how students learn and respond to examination items or situations they encounter in their professional work place (Johanson, 2010; Wild, et al., 2010; Shulman, 2005).

3. Examinations

The Eswatini, examinations focus on assessing different competencies and skills which align with the country's national education system expectations and societal needs. It entails assessing students' effective use of the knowledge, skills acquired by students in a wide variety of subjects, which are important for preparing them for complex reality of social and future professional life.

The Government of Eswatini's interest in developing and assessing students' skills and competencies is fully justified in different educational sector policies. For example, the Government of Eswatini needs to strengthen peoples' capacity for creativity and innovation in order to effectively facilitate sustainable development. The education system is not only interested in enhancing students' set of facts and knowledge but also in developing general skills or soft skills that are useful in a wide set of real life situations.

4. Examination Items as site of Practice

Examinations items and students' responses are expected to reflect each subject's stated expected skills and competencies in terms of breadth and depth. Indirectly, reflecting the teaching and learning of a particular knowledge, skills and specifically the students' ability to apply knowledge and skills to specific questions or resolve simulated situational context (for example, interpreting history sources).

An examination serve the needs of an education system and society (Bachman, 2005), it offers information for the Ministry of Education on where to base sound and pragmatic decision-making on students' capabilities and performance and their relevance to society. Thus, examinations are developed from a behavioural perspective, intending to identify core behaviours and skills needed in a wide range of occupations and societal contexts. They are not seen as mechanistic, devoid of context and societal demands and expectations. As they are expected to challenge students to use their cognitive faculties to process relevant knowledge based on their interaction with a particular subject content and societal contexts.

Examinations are aimed at assessing students' competent practices, skills and knowledge as well as qualities that enable them to participate effectively in society. For example, history examinations require students to identify and apply relevant skills and competencies. These include thinking critically, reflecting the histories expected skills, competencies and exploring situations to advance possible solutions. An examination is a site of practice, where acquired competencies, procedural skills, higher order skills and an array of multidimensional abilities are expected to be demonstrated by students. Skills and competencies are ways

which provide credibility of the schooling system and accountability to the public. Education systems are required to document how students have obtained the necessary skills and competencies that support their respective certificates and degrees.

Students' responses to examination subject items are expected to reflect the subject's stated skills and competencies in terms of breadth and depth or students' competency development. This involves showcasing subject knowledge acquired or built, recalling of subject material, comprehension and the ability to express the meaning of the exam item concepts. This forms part of the expected history lesson and learning outcomes because it describes the expected significant and essential learning that students have to achieve and be able to demonstrate in their examination responses. The subject matter, which represents a certain class of knowledge, is central in helping students to respond to examination items. The subject matter cannot typically be possessed or held by non-specialist subject students or by any student who knows little of that subject. Of note is that a good command of the subject content depends on, or is a product of thoughtful interweaving of the subject content, classroom pedagogical discourses, school attendance and classroom assessment processes.

5. Examination processes and Covid-19 pandemic contexts.

There is a high statistical relationship between the 2020 examination and the Covid-19 pandemic's influence on students' performance. The Covid-19 pandemic changed the educational landscape in Eswatini and elsewhere, as it disrupted the known and familiar learning processes and examination practices in schools and colleges. Thus, it is important to briefly examine the interaction between Covid-19 pandemic students' learning and examination.

The pandemic also disrupted the culture of school attendance and thus undermined teachers' pedagogical practices, teaching and learning. This has resulted in many pedagogical interventions and focus on assessments procedures to monitor students' competencies such as their thinking processes and checking progress towards the achievement of national goals. Critical thinking is a valuable outcome of the Eswatini education system. Being able to think critically allows people to control their emotions, and other behavioural tendencies. Critical thinking skills allow people to challenge or be critical of what is presented to them as self-evident. Competencies also free individuals to consider different and nuanced ways of judging information that is presented. They help individuals to anticipate alternative implications of any one given solution to a certain problem, weighing solutions for different conditions to see which is fit for purpose. This has a potential of alleviating people to a better platform to discriminate among inferences, recognise untested assumptions and reason deductively (Ku and Ho, 2020; Magno, 2010).

The Covid-19 pandemic contexts tilted the pattern of school attendance, and gave both teachers and students an opportunity to enhance their educational practices and professional expectations (Harnish, 1981). The pandemic became one of the factors which increased the popularity of online-learning. Online-learning became one of the learning modalities with capabilities to facilitate constructive learning strategies. This includes self-directed and active learning by allowing students to have more time for interaction and increased responsibility for their learning (Ayala, 2009).

The convergence of classroom and online education became the single greatest recognised trend in both the schooling system and higher education in Eswatini. This move resulted in the merging of Internet based and conventional face-to-face traditional education with the aim of providing educational opportunities that can promote students' learning. In the event of Covid-19, education systems became a mixed mode, hybrid, web-enhanced or blended (Miller and King, 2003).

The hybrid or blended learning system in Eswatini represented a new educational and pedagogy paradigm shift and a new layer of educational complexities in its implementation processes. It brought anxiety to both classroom teachers and management because of its multifaceted requirements and expectations. It required teachers to be fundamental thinkers of the subject design and thoughtful pedagogical integration of face-to-face and online learning. It challenged teachers to engage in critical thinking and thinking disposition because there was no one-fits-all formula for designing and teaching blended courses (Perkins and Murphy, 2006), in turbulent times.

This study examines students' competencies in the 2020 Junior Certificate exit history examinations. This examination was perceived as a unique academic activity in the history of the education system in Eswatini. The 2020 academic year pedagogical discourses were influenced by multifaceted factors, such as the different platforms of subject delivery modes. For example, the success of both blended learning and traditional models require more attention of subject reconceptualization and redesign, students' school attendances and mastery of skills for teaching in both online and face to face learning environments.

6. Covid-19 and School Attendance

Students' school attendance and non-school attendance are important concepts for the study because the years 2019 and 2020 were characterised by either students' school attendance or non-school attendance due

to Covid-19 related challenges. The pandemic's contexts destabilised students' learning environments and the education system landscape. In this sense, Covid-19 could be perceived as a form of a unique disruption of students' learning and other key educational norms, such as school attendance. Students' class attendance is central to students' learning and it cannot be easily replaced by other learning modalities. Covid 19 introduced a new hidden culture of absenteeism among students through the newly designed rotational school attendance practice which was not easily monitored by parents and teachers.

Studies reveal that students' class attendance has positive effects on their performance or they obtain greater benefits from attendance (Chen and Lin, 2008). There is an interaction between students' daily school attendance, their subject content knowledge, teacher pedagogy and performance or responses to exam items (see Figure 1 below). Students' school attendance provides them with an opportunity to acquire specialised concepts, language and different path- ways of thinking and knowing. Students' school attendance facilitates the re-conceptualisation of the subject content for a particular educational mission (Moretione and Sereci, 2009; Edmunds, 2006), it allows teachers to find out what their students are thinking and what meaning they have taken from their interaction and from the subject content. Students' school attendance gives teachers an opportunity to display their teaching skills. This is important because successful teaching and learning depend on the observable skills of an impassioned and committed teacher which help to draw a student into the intellectual mind-set of learning a subject and show them that they are committed to their educational success. Through teachers' commitment and dedication, students may begin to internalise practice and values associated with successful learning. This includes devotion, respect and passion. In this sense, education could be viewed as a form of interruption or disruption of students' existing practices, values, and worldviews. These could influence how some students respond to examination items (Rebuschart and Williams, 2012). For example, students from unique background experiences and motivational disposition (exam anxiety) may find it very difficult to respond to some examination items.

Non-attendance has a potential of promoting objectives-led teaching and culture of target-driven performance, which reduce education to a tick-box matter, rather than learning of factors which could be attributed to an unusual response pattern. The tick-box approach, which is a product of non-attendance, denies the students an opportunity to access subject knowledge with a potential of enhancing their independent thought, imagination, critique and reflective practice. Subject-knowledge introduces students to disciplinary specific ways of thinking, enquiring, reflecting different ways of thinking (examining, exploring matters). These aspects form part of the history syllabi and competencies in Eswatini education system (Staeher, 2008).

More often, history skills transcend specific areas of knowledge and consist of cognitive and interpersonal skills. The cognitive skills include critical thinking, creativity, judgement, problem solving and the ability to acquire and use information. While interpersonal skills include oral and written communication, collaboration and adaptability. These skills frame an individual's ability to assess and respond to a situation or examination item effectively. Today's place of work demands citizens who are trained to be effective in complex, unfamiliar and unpredictable contexts. Citizens need to be agile to meet the needs of the ever changing work place and world contexts and to meet the needs of the current, rapidly evolving environment.

7. The 2019 and 2020 Education era in Eswatini

The 2019 and 2020 period was a unique era because of the covid-19 pandemic and its negative effects on socio-economic development of Eswatini and other countries. The covid-19 pandemic destabilised learning crucial cognitive and interpersonal skills. These skills require different kind of teaching modalities some of which were disrupted by the covid-19. For example, the learning environment which gives students the opportunity to share ideas, feedback and questions on the subject knowledge were disrupted. Teachers had difficulties in teaching students to learn in order to improve their thinking processes. Teachers had challenges in modelling the desired behaviours and providing students with opportunities to make and correct mistakes and refine their behaviours. Teachers were not able to create an environment that fosters higher order thinking skills, which involve teaching students how to learn, so that they can evaluate and improve their own thinking processes.

Though the covid-19 era supported the judicious use of technology to expanded learning applications, such as assigning learners to communicate ideas through moodle, Wiki and other online applications there were still other challenges. These included the characteristics of the schools themselves-such as teachers' technological capacities to utilise technological tools and students' willingness to engage into self-directed learning and other learning practices. These included teachers and students' capabilities to share their experiences with other colleagues and help them get acclimated to using technological tools to improve teaching and learning.

II. Methodology

The study focuses on examining how students' responses to examination items, reflects the history subject's stated competencies. Responding to examination items requires a demonstration of students' development of a subject situated form of knowledge, skills and other competencies, ways of thinking and knowing at a particular level. Competencies cannot be easily assessed but can be inferred from students' responses and performances.

The process of examining students' competencies in the 2019 and 2020 Junior Certificate exit history examinations was facilitated by the use of the SCPK framework (Subject Content, Pedagogy, and Knowledge see Figure 1).

This framework was used because of its potential capabilities to unpack the influence of the interaction of the learning environment, subject matter, content; knowledge and pedagogy in students' capabilities to respond to examination items (see Figure 1). For students to be successful in an examination, they have to be positively influenced by the subject content and classroom pedagogical discourses they had experienced. Responding to examination items is an educational process grounded in classroom contexts of practice which are designed to offer information on which to ascertain students' possession of specific knowledge, skills, and other subject related competencies.

Figure 1: SCPK framework: Inter-Section of Subject matter, Competencies and Students' responses to examination items

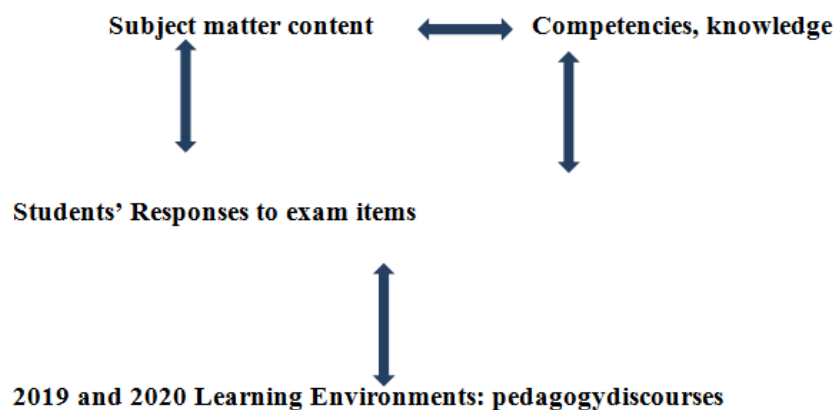


Figure 1 provides logic and a set of procedures for assessing students' competencies and supporting claims about their competencies in the 2020 history examinations. Figure 1 depicts that students' competencies are not assessed in a value-free psychometric-test tube scenario; they are embedded within and influenced by different educational contexts. This enhances the interpretative argument, which facilitates the process of making some inferences about students' competencies from their exam items responses.

For students to be successful in a history examination and application of historical reasoning, they have to display their abilities to analyse, synthesise and evaluate historical evidence, communicate historical knowledge and reasoning. These are influenced by different factors such as the subject content and classroom pedagogical discourses they had experienced (see Figure 1, the interaction of the learning environment and pedagogical discourses). There is always an interaction between different concepts in a learning situation as depicted in figure 1. Responding to examination items more often, is influenced by the interaction of these different concepts and other processes that are grounded in classroom contexts.

In this study, subject content and classroom pedagogical discourses were considered as most germane to students' capabilities to respond to examination items. It may be inappropriate to view students' responses to examination items as being isolated from classroom learning contexts and the covid-19 educational contexts. There is a complex interplay between these learning contexts (classroom learning environment and covid-19 environment) and students' responses to examination items. These environments have direct and indirect influence on the learning processes and subject content which was taught or learned by the students. For students to respond to examination items, they should know and understand the subject matter, including knowledge of key facts, concepts and procedures within history. For example, knowledge of history explanatory frameworks could help learners to organise and connect ideas and presents evidence ((Rissi and Gelmon, 2014; Shulman, 2005). Students with limited explanatory frameworks may misrepresent or have difficulties in organising and connecting ideas and presenting historical evidence (Shulman, 2005). History explanatory frameworks help students to apply their historical reasoning (which is the ability to analyse, synthesise and

evaluate historical evidence, communicate historical knowledge and reasoning), which embraces all the historical competencies.

Sampling Processes

The scripts were systematic randomly sampled from fifty-four (54) randomly sampled schools which sat for the Junior Certificate history examination in 2019/2020 academic years. Sixty (60) scripts were randomly sampled from 860 history paper two scripts. The paper two history examination scripts were targeted because they required students to display different competencies under trying conditions. This paper is sourced-based examinations, which are characterised by the assessment of different constructs: divergent thinking, convergent thinking, problem finding and problem solving. These are the key components of the Eswatini education system and a vehicle for the achievement of the country’s national imperatives.

Content Analysis a Data Analysis and Collection Tool

The 2020 paper two history scripts and students’ responses were used as data. This is because inferences about their competencies were made on the basis of their capabilities to show case interpretative arguments, characterised by clarity of responses, argument and evidence.

Content analysis was used as a data collecting and analysing tool to ascertain students’ competencies (see Figure 1 and 2: Assessment Matrix for 2019 and 2020 paper 2: section A). Students’ responses were used as data and inferences made on the basis of an interpretative argument of the students’ responses (Bachman, 2005). About sixty (60) students’ responses were systematically reviewed to tease out their command of historical competencies as stipulated on the subject specification and focus.

Assessment matrixes were used to evaluate students’ competencies: historical reasoning, abilities to analyse, synthesise and evaluate historical evidence, communicate historical knowledge and reasoning. These competencies transcend across all life situations.

Figure 2: Assessment Matrix for 2020 paper 2: section A)

Students’ capabilities to describe Chronological relationships.	Students’ capabilities to evaluate history sources.	Students’ capabilities to use multiple of sources of historical evidence to draw conclusions.	Students’ capabilities to identify, interpret, and synthesise appropriate historical evidence to answer questions.	Students’ capabilities to articulate and defend an informed position about issues in history.
This involves students’ understanding of events, narrative flow and ability to see patterns.	This involves students’ use of cognitive skills such as comparing and contrasting different views.	This involves the use of source-based multiple evidence to draw conclusions.	These involve making sense of issues, developing specific interpretation, and defend that interpretation with factual information on issues.	These involve making a case for a specific decision, - ability to present a clear argument in favour of a particular argument /point of view factually defence of the argument.

A systematic review of students’ responses to examination items was guided by the above assessment matrix in Figure 1. It was carried out with the aim of assessing students’ divergent thinking through the identification of related concepts, ideas, production of many related supporting ideas and solutions to an examination item. Students’ capability to apply or use convergent thinking and their effort in suggesting related solutions or views to relevant situations were assessed.

The analysis of the students’ responses and their capabilities to display their competencies were based on the requirements of each examination item. The analyses of the examination items and students’ responses led to different themes drawn from the exam items. The discussions and findings were anchored on the subject themes.

III. Discussions and Findings

Missionaries’ Arrival and Land Issues

Missionaries’ arrival and land issues were some of the concepts which students were expected to showcase the different competencies, such as understanding their complexities. Sixty per cent 36/60 (60%) of the

students had minimal understanding of the relationship between missionaries and land issue in central Africa. The responses showed that the students had some inkling of knowledge or understanding of the concepts, missionaries and their complexities over land. This was demonstrated in two ways, providing link between Missionaries and land but their responses conveyed no understanding of the concepts. Students' responses were characterised by a simple recording of words on the question with no other words added.

The exam item required the students to understand the arrival of the missionaries and their complexities, their aims, their influences on land matters and on the people of the native land. The students had challenges in identifying and describing the relationship between Christians' operations and the loss of land by the natives. There were no interpretation and synthesis of appropriate historical evidence to answer the question. The development of specific interpretation and capacity to defend the interpretation with relevant factual historical knowledge and information was minimal.

Thirteen percent (8/60) of the students had partial understanding of the concepts on the examination item, knowledge of the concepts and capacity to connect the historical information to the exam item. This includes the identifying, interpreting the implications of the arrival of the missionaries on key land issues such as land dispossession. These students had also limited capacity to present an argument in favour of a particular view point.

Agreement on Missionaries' Activities

Thirty-eight percent (23/60) of the students had minimal understanding and knowledge on missionaries' activities in Africa and limited capabilities to identify the key activities and ascertain where the sources converge and diverge or their agreements and disagreements. They had challenges in evaluating missionaries' activities, comparing and contrasting them, interpreting and defending their interpretations with factual information and to articulate an informed position. These students had limited capabilities to evaluate history sources and use them to draw conclusions related to the questions.

The students had limited exposure to evaluative skills, or judgemental ability. They were simply re-ordering the examination items as a form of factual information. There were no interruption of their existing thinking and existing historical ideas. The history subject did not introduce them to different ways of thinking and knowing.

Twenty-eight percent (17/60) of the students had partial understanding of the examination item and on the key Missionaries' activities in Central Africa and limited abilities to identify and differentiate health related Missionaries' works such as teaching, preaching, writing books or repairing guns. Students had challenges in using their cognitive skills such as comparing and contrasting different concepts and in using double sources of historical evidence to draw conclusions and making a case for a specific decision or presenting a clear argument for a particular view or stand.

Thirty-three percent (20/60) of students had the expected knowledge and understanding of the concepts and examination item of missionaries' health related work in Central Africa. They had the capability to identify and differentiate health related missionaries' work from non-health related work. They were also capable of using the double sources historical evidences to present their arguments or point of view.

Missionaries' Social Effects on Africans

Forty-eight per cent (41/60) of students had limited understanding of the question and concept-social effects related to missionaries' activities and their influences on Africans lives. Thirty-five per cent (21/60), were not aware that there were positive and negative social effects of the missionaries' activities in Africa and elsewhere. Some students provided did not provide any answers or gave wrong answers which indicated lack of understanding of the concept-social effects. Some students' responses were characterised by simple reordering of the words of the term social effects, with no other words added. Their responses indicated that the students had some inkling of knowledge and understanding of the concepts. There was limited effort or attempt to identify, interpret, analyse and synthesise the social effects of missionaries' activities in Africa. This is demonstrated by incorrect answers, which convey limited understanding of the significance of social effects of missionaries in different sectors of society in Africa and beyond. Students' limited understanding of the term "social effects" undermined their capabilities to make sense of the historical sources, develop specific interpretation and defend the interpretation and argument with factual historical information.

Thirty-two per cent (19/60), of the students had one-sided understanding of the concepts and examination item and knew how to connect them to the question and provided relevant historical factors in a bias-manner. Twenty per cent (12/60) of the thirty-two per cent, had cognitive capabilities to identify the social effects from the historical sources, describe, interpret, synthesis and evaluate them as per the examination item. The multiple sources were used to draw historical responses, evidence and conclusions. They demonstrated their capabilities to present an argument in favour of their point-of-views.

Publication of Slavery

Thirty-three percent (20/60) of the students had minimal understanding and knowledge of the examination item and concepts. They had difficulties in identifying the key aspects of the source and specific reason for the publication or marketing of slavery in 1860 in Europe. They struggled in linking the source messages to the period of publication in 1860. There was limited attempt to connect the information from the source to the examination item or to provide historical factual examples to substantiate their argument in favour of the particular argument or view.

Sixty-seven percent (40/60) of students had some understanding and knowledge of the exam item. They had attempted to connect their responses to the question, related to the 1860 period and provided historical examples to support their answers. A correct association was provided which conveys an understanding of the relationships between the historical sources and slavery practices of the 1860s in Africa. For example, it was demonstrated that the sources on slavery was published in 1860 to show the ill-treatment of Africans. Students demonstrated in their responses that slavery was perceived by some missionaries as sinful, ungodly, unjust and unfair. This was a practice which needs to be abolished through support from European countries. Thus, it was published in some European countries in 1860 to gain support for its removal. This highlights the integrative function of the history subject and others, where their purpose is to enhance students' capabilities to synthesise different meanings from different realms of knowledge, experiences and then present a convincing case or point of views. This requires students to have a command of language which facilitates the students' ability to work in disciplinary subject-knowledge based platform.

IV. Findings

The paper assesses students' competencies in the 2020 history examination. Students were assessed on their capabilities to identify related concepts in an examination item, ideas, display subject knowledge and produce related supporting historical evidence in response to an examination item. Based on what was discussed, threads and patterns observed on the analysis the following varying research findings were revealed.

The research findings indicated that sixty percent (60%) of the students who responded to the history examination items displayed certain competencies, such as identifying, describing and analysing existing relationships between the missionaries' roles and the land dispossession by Africans. They were challenged to use multifaceted historical sources to see the existing patterns and relationships between Missionaries' roles and the dispossession of land experienced by Africans. They struggled in developing specific interpretation and defending their interpretation with factual information related to the examination item. This implies the multifaceted student' inefficiencies, including poor command of the subject matter. Feynmann's, (2005) study puts more emphasis on a teachers' command of a subject matter in enhancing students' competencies, through making teaching and learning creative processes of finding hidden clues and patterns and hidden realities. This makes students to engage with the subject knowledge, not alienated from the knowledge and from the teaching and learning processes. His findings also stress that the alienation of students from their learning processes emanates from what is taught and how it is taught and assessed. How students access and experience subject content is important for the development of their competencies. The students who sat for the history examination, had challenges in understanding missionaries' related practices in Africa and also in the ability to see patterns in missionaries' practices across their religious activities.

Students' responses did not depict a good command of the subject content. Yet, the Eswatini education system has adopted the Competency-Based Education which aims at developing the necessary knowledge, skills, and abilities among students. Detailed examination or analysis revealed that development of students' competencies can not be achieved in isolation, from the subject content. These findings correspond to those of Hugo, (2014) which had emphasised that subject content introduces students to disciplinary specific ways of knowing, thinking, practice and opportunities to reflect different competencies. These entail students' capabilities to display subject knowledge, recall subject material, comprehend or the ability to express what was learned in history, including application, analysis, synthesis and evaluation of sources or materials.

The results indicated that thirty-eight percent (38%) of the students had limited capabilities to make fair judgement about missionaries' contributions to the development of the African continent. There were students who were incapable of comparing and contrasting missionaries' activities and their impact on societal development. However, twenty-eight percent (28%) had partial understanding of the concepts and thirty-three percent (33%), displayed good understanding of missionaries' contributions towards the African continent's social and economic development.

The results showed that thirty-eight percent (38%) of the students had minimal understanding of the concepts on slavery in the 1860s and limited cognitive capacity to evaluate the related history sources on slavery. In addition, they could not adequately interpret and link slavery to the slave trade industry. The students' responses were characterised by the absence of disciplinary knowledge and different path ways of thinking, which usually depict that students have not acquired the historical frameworks and capacities for

thinking about historical sources, their relationships and patterns. Sources introduce students to interpretative skills, to infer relations between concepts, as new concepts are inferred and developed from existing concepts (Young, 2014).

About sixty-seven percent (67%) of students had understanding of the concepts of slavery and knowledge of the missionaries' activities in the 1860s'. They attempted to connect their responses to the question and provided historical evidence to support their arguments. They displayed their abilities to present an argument in favour of their views. These findings correspond with Rissi and Gelmon, (2014) findings which indicate that students are expected to reflect their judgemental ability in the examination item, subject knowledge and use of historical resources. Harnich and Linn's (1981) findings also emphasise that students reflect on their judgement ability when they have the exposure to the subject matter, knowledge and are influenced by the manner in which the subject matter has been taught.

Missionaries' Arrival and their Social Effects

The results showed that some sixty-eight percent (68%) of the students had limited understanding of the examination item, which adds to the failure of the students. About twenty-one percent (21%) of these students had difficulty in understanding that the missionaries had both positive and negative social effects in the African continent. Thirty-two percent (32%) of had a bias or one sided understanding of the concepts (social effects), though they knew how to link or connect them to the question. About twenty percent (20%) of the thirty-two percent (32%) of students were able to display their cognitive capabilities in identifying the Missionaries' social effects. They also described, interpreted, synthesised, and evaluated the sources in a holistic manner.

V. Conclusion

From the study, it can be concluded that students' limited understanding of certain subject concepts undermined their capabilities to display their competencies. For example, students' limited understanding of the broader meaning of the social effects of missionaries in Africa and their challenge to determine the relationship between missionaries' activities and land dispossession were part of the broader problem.

From the findings it can be concluded that the majority of students had difficulty in determining relationships and patterns in historical sources and the use of multiple historical evidences to draw convincing conclusions. It can be concluded that, good responses to examination items and students' display of different competencies were undermined partly by their limited command of the history content and English Language vocabulary which more often supports students' thoughtful processes as they respond to the examination items.

It can be concluded that students' limited understanding of historical sources and their relationships and interconnectivity of issues within them mirrors the larger problem of teaching history sources and perhaps the complexities of teachers' training system in multiple ways. Competencies are cut-crossing matters within the Eswatini schooling and education system, which need to be the focal point of every classroom's pedagogical discourses. Competencies are shaped and reshaped by the classroom pedagogical discourses and teachers' sense of professionalism. Competencies are the key ingredients of the education system and government national goals.

It could be recommended that the teaching of skills and competencies should be enhanced through the training of teachers and the improvement of classroom pedagogical discourses which facilitate students' capabilities to work in disciplinary knowledge-based or history knowledge-based.

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