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The credit percentage of History learners in EGCSE completing class is showing a mediocre performance. A five year range study indicates that the highest credit percentage stood at 30.74% in 2020, hence the lowest was 26.76% in 2018 (ECESWA 2023). The range mentioned depicts that History Education credit percentage is not appealing to learners.

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Teachers' Conceptions on the Value of History Education in Eswatini

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Abstract- History as a subject is expected to instil a sense of unity, patriotism and veneration for the nation sublime heritage. Supposedly history education's sustainability has to emanate from the teachers' confidence and reflective practices in a history classroom. The History syllabus demands the use of socio-constructivism strategy which postulates that meaningful learning occurs through conversations and interaction, among learners and with teachers and that the realities are determined by their experiences (EGCSE History Teaching Syllabus 2022-2025). However, most educators tend to teach History mostly using the lecture method which then relegates the subject to being monotonous as largely considered by the learners.

The credit percentage of History learners in EGCSE completing class is showing a mediocre performance. A five year range study indicates that the highest credit percentage stood at 30.74% in 2020, hence the lowest was 26.76% in 2018 (ECESWA 2023). The range mentioned depicts that History Education credit percentage is not appealing to learners. Successful implementation of History Education curricula depends on teachers' ownership, attitudes and knowledge about the curriculum because they are the closest individuals to circumstances of the decision made and their role as educators gives them significant influence on successful curriculum implementation (Sengai and Mokhele, 2021).

The study answered the following questions 1. How do History teachers in Eswatini conceive the value of History education? 2. Are the teaching strategies used in History lessons in line with what is required by the History syllabus? 3. What could be done by the History educators to improve History teaching? Using a qualitative approach and purposive sampling, the phenomenological research design was adopted to establish the teachers' conceptions on the value of History Education in Eswatini. Classroom observations, Interviews and document analysis were used to collect data which will be analyzed using content analysis.

I. Background

With the History's value in cultural stabilization and integration, as it is meant to serve in the country, history educators and stakeholders need to forge a way forward to bring back the dignity of the subject, before, it becomes total history in the curriculum sphere. Such can be attained by what Yilmaz (2008) refers to as the PCK, "the blending of content and pedagogy into an understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction.

Instruction can be seen like a scissor. Content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge (PCK) are the two blades of the instructional scissor. In order to function effectively, these two blades should work together simultaneously. Since knowledge keeps growing rapidly in this information age, history teachers need to be devoted to improving their knowledge of content and pedagogy to keep abreast of the new developments in educational theory and research. As opposed to being stagnant and stable, content and pedagogy are in a state of quick change and growth.

Keeping in touch with professional organizations, reading educational journals, and participating in regional conferences and professional workshops are necessary for history teachers to stay on their cutting edge. It is generic and subject-specific pedagogical knowledge that helps the teacher transform the subject matter knowledge into effective learning experiences for students understanding of how particular topics, problems, or issues are organized, represented and adapted to the diverse interests and abilities of learners, and presented for instruction (Yilmaz, 2008).

II. Theoretical Framework

The study has been viewed through the lenses of the social constructivism theory. This theory is used to refer to progressive reforms in education (Richardson 1997). Adams (2006) describes constructivism as the position that individuals create their own understandings, based upon the interaction of what they already know and believe, and the phenomena and ideas with which they come in contact. In history education, the form of learning demands that the learners are fully engaged in finding processes and relates ideas to the real world to a larger degree.

History teachers have to foster a culture that supports critical and productive enquiry which gives learners opportunity to embark on research projects that will in turn give them opportunities in future through what they created form their enquiry studies. The priority is that the subject instills different competencies such as

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critical thinking and effective communication. These competences produce holistic meaningful social learning experiences which in turn gives broad personal development with the experience needed for knowledge construction.

III. Literature Review

Reviewed literature indicated that although most teachers' beliefs about the nature of history were conducive to teaching historical reasoning, their conceptions of inquiry-based learning (I B L) often remained limited to critically evaluating information, instead of using the available information to conduct inquiries to the past (Voet & Wever 2016). Conventional methods such as "teacher-led question and answer activities, student seatwork based on textbooks, watching videos and taking short answer tests" are still the common practices in teaching and learning social studies and history in the United States (Fogo, 2014).

Barton and Levistic (2004) asserts that history helps to picture possible futures so, current approaches to teaching and learning history should include historical thinking and enquiry. However, a study conducted in Tanzania shows that despite history being core in secondary education curriculum, teachers dominantly use teacher-centered methods over the learner-centered methods (Namamba & Rao, 2017)

In Eswatini context, Zubuko (2015) argued that textbooks are very useful in the teaching of history. Teachers use them to prepare for lessons and establish how to use it to attain the required objectives from the prescribed topic. History is valued for inculcating critical thinking skills to learners through educational and intellectual value at most.

IV. Methodology

The target population of this study comprised history teachers in Eswatini. The sample for this study was twelve history teachers from six selected senior secondary schools in Eswatini from both urban and rural Eswatini within the Manzini region. Purposeful sampling was used to identify the population. Maximum variation sampling strategy in which the researcher deliberately selected participants with the most divergent forms of the experience with the intention to confirm as well as elaborate on any emerging descriptions or disconfirm any emerging pattern was also used (Creswell, 2005). This enabled the researcher to ensure that the participants used in the study had different perspectives and were more likely to yield a very broad range of information.

Semi-structured interviews were used for generating data. Data from the interviews was transcribed immediately after the interviews to enable the researcher to expand on the collected data. The data analysis process was based on Creswell's (2013) notion that data can be analyzed by building on the data from the research questions. All the data was then coded by segmenting it first into broad themes and then into sub-themes or data segments as informed by the questions of the study and any other sub-themes as determined by the respondents' responses.

The study used the thematic approach to data analysis. These themes were not predetermined but emerged from the data as it was analyzed. These research questions were used to organize and present the emergent themes to ensure coherence; how do history teachers in Eswatini conceive the value of history, are the teaching strategies used in history lessons in line with what is required by the syllabus and how can history education be improved in order to achieve what it is intended for?

V. Findings

a) Thematic Analysis on the values of History education

The themes that emerged from the first research question are: cultural and social, disciplinary values, sub-themes are identity, patriotism, grooming future leaders plus instilling respect. Under the sub-theme of identity the respondents highlighted that history is about coalition between the past, the present and the future. One teacher echoed that;

> "*If we don't understand where we are coming from how we would know where we are going to*."

We have to harmonise the three eras, past present and the future so that we are able to empathize with the situations that are prevailing with the ever changing times. Historical knowledge embraces us with the skills on how previous situations were resolved in a sustainable manner. History education promotes youths to uphold their roots, traditions that are part of the culture and Swazi society. Teachers had observed the identity zeal is slowly wearing away from the youth, hence that is supposed to be cultivated from the subject.

Patriotism value emerges because there is a need to instill knowledge to the learners that will inspire them to develop the quest to love their own country and the king and also their geographical land. From the subject history the learners acquirers knowledge about the past events that the country succumbed to be where it is today. Such information will inculcate appreciation of their leadership hence they will see the need to conserve the land that their forefathers fought for politically, economically and socially.

Under the disciplinary value, it appeared that history education plays a major role in grooming future leaders. This is infused through critical thinking, empathy, analytic skills, detecting biasness which sharpens the learner's capability to make sound decisions. Teachers believe that history is there to encourage critical thinking amongst the learners since

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it's packed with information and content that enhances critical thinking amongst the learners by exposing them on how things were in the past then compares them with the present day situation.

History education further instills respect among learners. The syllabus consists of topics that train the learners to always show respect for each other, respect for elders at home, community and at national level. Such topics include; Ummemmo (Paying allegiance to their majesties by weeding their fields), Umhlanga (Cultural Reed Dance), The Marula Festival and The Incwala Ceremony (National Prayer). Teachers believe that history is the major component which has allowed the country to enjoy its renowned status of being a respectful and peaceful country.

The second research question produced policy and classroom practice themes. Under classroom practices, the following sub-themes were discovered; learners' poor English proficiency, not enough time allocated for history, unavailability of teaching materials.

The Ministry of Education and Training, through the National Curriculum Center provides the policies that govern the teaching and learning of History education in Eswatini schools. The philosophy of the History subject in Eswatini stipulates that one of the most influential methodology of delivering this history in the 21st century is socio-constructivism. The syllabus provides guidelines on how teachers can impart it by allowing learners to acquire historical knowledge and skills from their original sources.

This means learning should occur through conversations and interactions among learners with teachers and that realities are determined by experiences (EGCSE History Syllabus, 2022-2025). These sentiments advocate for the learner centered teaching approaches. The learners must use their own personal experiences to relate what they learn from the syllabus in order to create their own understanding of the world around them. Suggested teaching methods includes: discussion, debate, presentation, exposition, role playing, question and answer, resource person and excursions and lecture (ECESWA, 2023).

Data collected from schools revealed a different perspective from what the policies require. History educators seem to be opting for the conventional approaches which are interactive and does not make the subject thought-provoking to the learners. Several reasons were given by the teachers for the choice of teaching methods.

b) Challenges faced by Teachers in the history classroom

Unavailability of teaching materials emerged as the prominent challenge that force teachers not to conform to the dictates of the policy. The introduction of the new SGCSE syllabus appears to have generated challenges for teacher's in as far as teaching materials are concerned. Teachers believe that the facilitators of the new syllabus did not do justice when preparing for the introduction of this syllabus. Teachers face encounters when formulating learner centered lessons since they do not have materials that should be used by the students for the duration of the lessons.

Learners' poor English proficiency emerged as another reason why teachers don't adapt to the required learner-centered teaching pedagogy. The poor command of the English language was sighted as one key reason why teachers are reluctant to allow learners to take control of their learning experiences. Teachers argued that learners are not able to effectively communicate in English and this makes it very difficult for them to allow the learners to drive the learning process. One participant highlighted that;

> "As a rural school, the major challenge is English, they can't express themselves well in the English language yet history is one subject that when you are answering you must be able to put your points clearly in the English language, which the learners will find it challenging.''

Limited command of English vocabulary has resulted in teachers tending to dwell on the lecture method in order to feed the learners' with the most suitable grammar which is alleged to be deficient from the learner's due to the lack of English proficiency within the students terminology.

Not enough time allocated for history lessons is another hindrance that downtrodden teachers' efforts to comply with policy decrees on pedagogical matters. Teachers mentioned that history education has suffered a huge blow in the past years of curriculum diversification in the Eswatini education system. The introduction of new subjects in the curriculum has seen traditional subjects like history competing for spaces in the school time tables. This has resulted in history being given few teaching periods per week.

VI. Recommendations for Solving the Challenges

In order to align policy with practice, it was recommended that the value of the subject could be improved if it could relate more to what is popular in the country so that the learners could see the importance of studying History. This also include maximizing the local content which relates more to local historical events for the learners to make history rather than learning it. Teachers are not empowered with historical content that closely relates to our local context. Such information can help the teacher to navigate from the known to the unknown with the involvement of local to general perception of historical activities.

Teachers further suggested that, one of the things that needs to be done is to teach learners about other job opportunities that are available from studying the history subject. We need to expand the horizons for

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job opportunities that are earned from history educations i.e. working in the archives department, working in cultural villages, such as Mantenga cultural village in Eswatini and as far as starting their own cultural groups, such as Babukisi in Eswatini.

Moreover, schools could invite history academicians to market the subject and tell learners its importance and even students from colleges to help young learners about the importance of the subject history. Give excelling students in the subjects' incentives. Learners be given more historical educational trips so that the learners can feel and touch the past, like going out to the places like museum, archives. Inviting resource persons like the Umsizi regiments (war veterans) to class to share their experiences of the Second World War could make the subject a bit more interesting.

Teachers need to incorporate more learning technologies in the classroom i.e. projector, access to the internet whereby you may have video clips, have pictures and cartoons that will be interesting to the present-oriented students. These students rely much on the media technological advancements where they tap to get historical knowledge. The technologically inclined learners understand better the historical knowledge when sipped through the media that is at their fingertips contrary to the conventional methods which sound too remote to the students.

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