



PROGRAMME AND ABSTRACTS

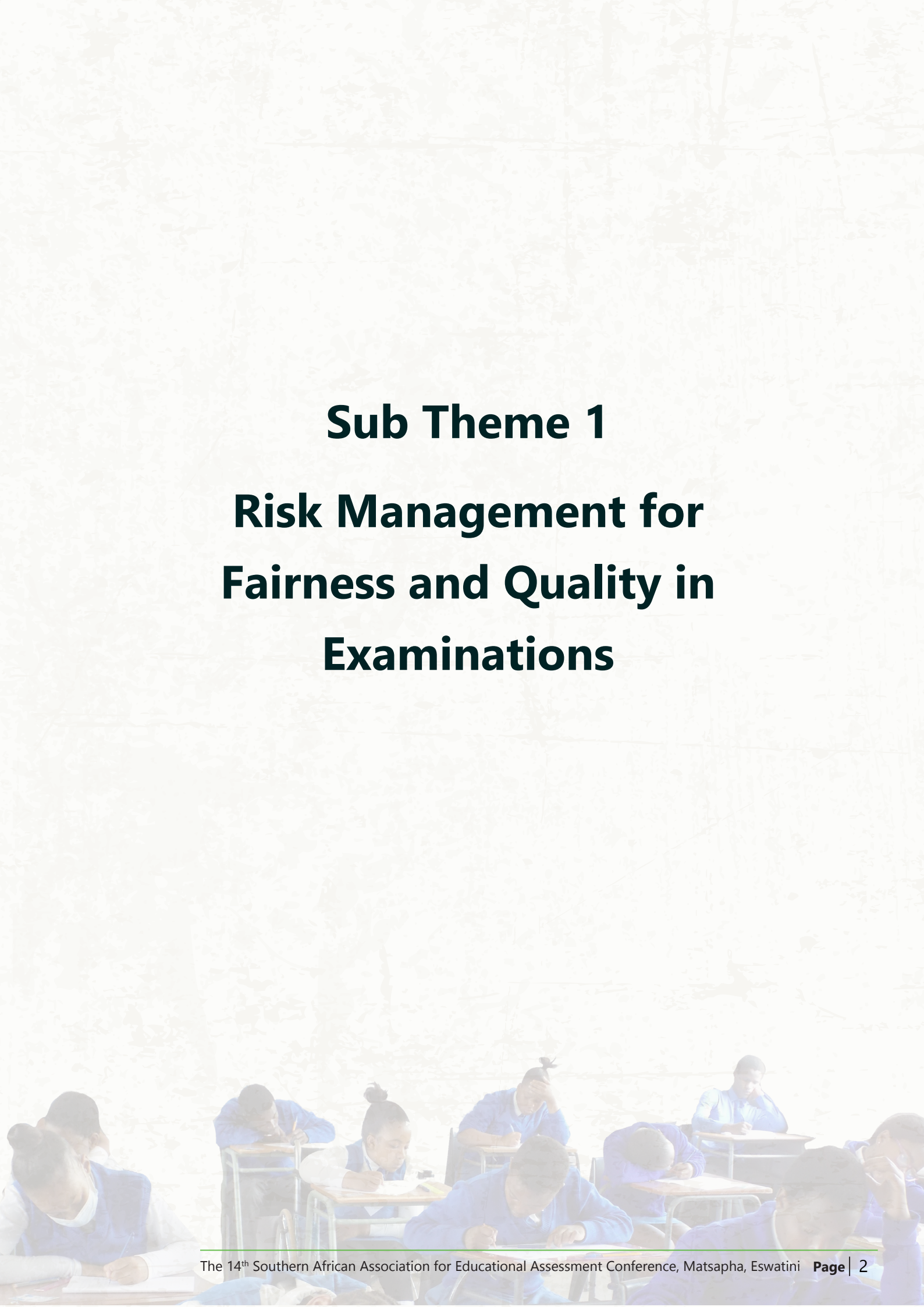
The 14th Southern Africa
Association for Educational
Assessment
(SAAEA) Conference
13th - 16th May 2024



THEME
Transforming Educational Assessment for Quality,
Equality and Fairness in the Fourth Industrial
Revolution (4IR).

HOST
The Examinations Council of Eswatini

VENUE
Esibayeni Lodge

The background of the slide is a photograph of a classroom. Several students, mostly of African descent, are seated at their desks. They are wearing blue school uniforms. Some students are looking down at their papers, while others are resting their heads on their hands, suggesting a tired or stressed state. The lighting is bright, coming from windows on the right side of the frame.

Sub Theme 1

Risk Management for Fairness and Quality in Examinations

101 Addressing The Challenges Of Continually Occurring Non-Compliance To Directives: A Case Of An Adult Qualification.

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Abstract

The General Education and Training Certificate, Adult Basic Education and Training qualification aims to among others, equip learners with foundational learning by acquiring knowledge, skills and values in specified learning areas. In addition, it also allows learners to choose Elective Unit Standards which relate to occupational type learning relevant to their area of interest or specialisation. At the end of each examination cycle, Umalusi issues directives to assessment bodies on issues of non-compliance which would have been observed during the quality assurance process. Over the years it has been observed that some of the issues identified during the moderation of question papers keep recurring. By conducting a qualitative document analysis, using thematic analysis the study sought to interrogate compliance of assessment bodies to the issued directives. The source documents were directives issued to assessment bodies over a period of five years starting November 2018 to date. The findings of the study indicate that there were recurring occurrences of directives that would have previously been issued to assessment bodies. Examination question papers that get submitted to Umalusi for external moderation often must undergo several moderation processes. Often, this will be because not all the content would have been assessed. At times set questions would be too difficult or too easy for the examination question paper to be regarded as fair. The study recommends that when assessment bodies address directives identified in one Learning Area, the feedback encompass all participants that deal with matters relating to the directive. Furthermore, the study recommends that assessment bodies provide evidence reports to Umalusi on how the directives were addressed. It is expected that if an educational system has policies that are result oriented it is able to align them in such a manner that requirements and demands of a targeted audience are better met.

Keywords: Unit standards; Directives; Moderation; Assessment bodies

102 Challenges In Preserving The Integrity Of National Examination In The Shiselweni Region Of Eswatini: The Principals' Perspective.

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Abstract

Examination integrity in schools has been compromised due to examination misconduct; this has led to a negative impact on the value of education. This study explored the challenges experienced in preserving the integrity in national examinations. The study was based on the following objectives: Exploring the challenges of preserving the integrity of national examinations and identifying the strategies for preserving the integrity of national examinations. This study was underpinned by the Planned Behaviour Theory and was located in the interpretive paradigm which followed a qualitative approach where a case study design was employed. The study purposively selected a sample of five (5) principals from five (5) urban schools in the Shiselweni region. Semi-structured interviews were used as data collection instrument, and thematic analysis was used to analyse data. The findings of the study revealed that the challenges of preserving integrity in examinations are: pressure to obtain high marks, lack of closed-circuit television, poor invigilation and exam paper leakage. Findings on strategies for preserving integrity of examinations are: improved training for teachers, and administrators, on the importance of examination integrity, clear policies and procedures for dealing with examinations irregularities, prohibit electronic personal gadgets in areas where exams are prepared to prevent leaks of examinations, and enhanced security, such as improved storage and traceable of examination materials. It was recommended that the schools should take the initiative to build strong rooms in all schools, provide money to schools for hiring external invigilators, and install CCTV cameras in all examination rooms.

Keywords: Examination Integrity, National Examination, Preserving Integrity



103 Investigating The Effects Of The Current Procedure Of Administering Practical Examinations In Malawi

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Abstract

Malawi National Examinations Board (MANEB) changed the procedure which it used to administer practical examinations for the Malawi School Certificate of Education (MSCE) examinations. In the earlier procedure, schools were given information both for sourcing materials and instructions for preparing the materials a week before examinations date. For security concerns, this system was changed in 2019, to the current procedure in which only the materials are communicated in advance, and preparation information is accessed by the subject teachers on the examinations day. The study used a mixed research design, to evaluate the current procedure of administering practical examinations. The study's specific objectives were: to establish the capacity of schools in handling practical examinations regarding human and material resources, and to identify the benefits and challenges of accessing the confidential instruction on the same day of practical examinations. Convenience sampling was used to select 198 schools out of 1223 schools where it targeted head teachers and teachers for Agriculture, Biology, Chemistry and Physics, which are major science subjects in secondary school education in Malawi. Data was collected using questionnaires. Quantitative data was analysed using MS Excel and SPSS programs by computing descriptive statistics, and thematic analysis was done for qualitative data. The results showed that some schools have no capacity to administer practical examinations under the current procedure such that 24% of them lacked resources for practical examinations, and 13% of the science teachers were not qualified to teach the subjects. However, the schools benefited from the system as it encourages stocking of laboratory materials, enable budgetary expenditure and controls cheating. On the downside, the system demands high levels of expertise for subject teachers to implement preparation instruction within the allowed few hours, which the unqualified teachers could not manage. It was concluded that the current procedure is more advantageous over the former. The recommendation is therefore that the approach be maintained, and schools should use in-service-trainings to promote the capacity of science teachers in handling practical examinations.

Keywords: Examinations Administration, Confidential Instructions Practical Examinations

104 Maintaining Quality and Fair Practices In Management Of Examinations In Eswatini: Merging Ethical Issues And AI Technologies.

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Abstract

Quality, fairness, and risk management continue to be pivotal issues in examinations. Risk management is a fulcrum on which all other operations in examinations are hinged. Stakeholders in education expect high quality examinations that are provided in a fair and equitable way. Examination boards including Eswatini, are faced with compliance risks called 'fair assessment risks' in most aspects of the examinations. Ensuring high quality and fairness in examinations requires compliance officers to understand that 'fair assessment risk' begins with identifying the main and sub-processes of examinations. Previous experience has revealed that non-compliance of invigilators, teachers, or candidates to ethical principles for handling examinations as outlined in the handbooks for centres remains a major challenge in most Sub-Saharan countries including Eswatini. After each examination there are numerous reports of malpractice which points back to incorrect management of examinations. This negatively impacts the validity and reliability of the examination and the credibility of the certificates. In this paper, the problem addressed relates to the feasibility of merging ethical principles as outlined in the handbook for centres and AI technologies in minimising risks in examinations. The purpose of this study is to explore how fairness and quality can be maintained in examinations by merging ethical principles with AI. This paper articulated ethical principles and common challenges, chief invigilators views on the application of ethical principles and AI, competency of chief invigilators to use AI and affordances and hindrances that comes with embedding AI in managing examinations. The study adopted a pragmatic, qualitative approach and action research was used to develop a conceptual framework. The stakeholder theory underpinned the study as it could ensure the legitimacy of the certification through a practical, effective, and ethical way of managing risks. Purposive sampling was used to select ten chief invigilators with at least four years in managing examinations, and three compliance officers who have worked in assessments for at least two years. Data from the participants was gathered using semi-structured interviews and administered telephonically. The data was coded and analysed using thematic analysis. The study contributes to the existing body of knowledge, and because of its significance, merging AI and the ethical principles could further improve fairness and quality in examinations.

Keywords: risk management, fairness, quality, AI, ethical principles

105 Providing Technical Support to Centres for Conducting A Fair And A Quality Examination

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Abstract

Examinations are an important part of learning which determine the level of knowledge and competency acquired by a candidate. Examinations determine the future of a candidate. For an Examination to be credible and globally comparative, it must be designed based on local and international standards. The Examinations Council of Eswatini conduct examinations for candidates on an annual basis. The Council provides guidelines and procedures which facilitate the smooth running of the examination, and these guidelines are reviewed on a yearly basis to ensure relevancy. All centres are provided with a handbook for centres to be used to conducting the examination. The centres are also supported technically through invigilation workshops and spot check. All centres are expected to comply with the guidelines and procedures. Some of the centres conduct examinations without following proper guidelines and procedures such as not attending invigilation workshops, using untrained invigilators. This results in maladministration and malpractice. It also results in an unfair competition among candidates and compromises the quality of the examination. The study therefore aimed at determining the effective and efficient method of managing risk during an examination process for fairness and quality. Desk review research was adopted specifically to investigate the impact of the technical support provided to centres in conducting a fair and a quality examination. Analysis of available guidelines and procedures was done to ascertain the impact. Findings revealed that the technical support provided by the Examination Council of Eswatini such as the provision of the examination handbook, conducting invigilation workshops, provision of invigilation manual, provision of invigilation video, spot check, ensures good quality standards. This reduces biasness among candidate and result in a credible examination. From the finding of the study, it can be concluded that the provision of technical support to centres minimises the risk of unfairness among candidates in an examination. It also indicates a quality examination which can be recognised worldwide. The study recommends that the Examinations Council of Eswatini should continue to provide technical support to centres and also enforce the usage of proper guidelines and procedures in conducting the examinations.

Keywords: Risk management, Fairness, Quality, Technical support, Guidelines and Procedure

106 Whole Script or Conveyor Belt marking? Exploring the way forward for public examinations in eswatini

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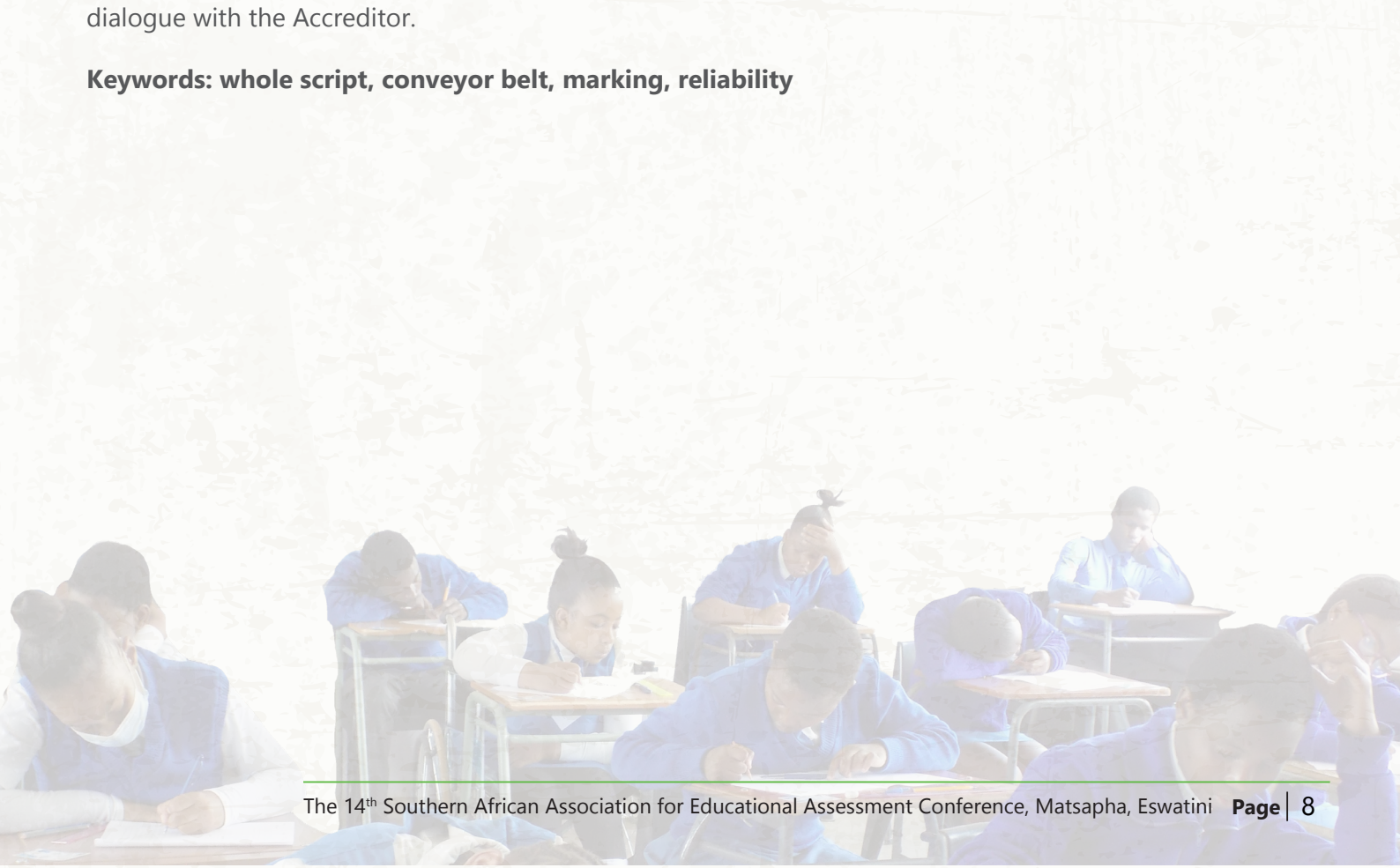
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Abstract

Without educational assessment learning outcomes are hardly realised; and even if by chance they do, stakeholders fail to prove such milestones because their attainment gets fuzzy. Unreliable marking can make the difference between candidates getting the grade they deserve and a grade that does not reflect their knowledge and skills, and that difference can be life – changing. Good assessments of learning are a product of reliable processes, among which there is marking of candidates' scripts. This paper attempted to evaluate the Conveyor Belt and Whole Script systems of marking through raising the following questions: (1) Does a relationship exist between marking system choice and the location of accrediting body among SAAEA member states? (2) To what extent do markers learn about marking systems at pre-service training level in Eswatini? (3) What factors influenced the choice of the currently used marking approach in Eswatini public examinations? The human factor theory and the models of both Conveyor Belt System and Whole Script System underpinned the study. A qualitative descriptive case study designed was adopted where 9 research forum members were interviewed and 19 purposively selected markers, one former senior ECESWA staff member and six current ECESWA staff members were interviewed. The findings revealed a pattern between nature of marking approach and location of accreditor. Markers were found to have not been trained on marking approaches at tertiary level. The voice of the accreditor, the level of accountability over one's marking errors were found to have been high priority factors in compelling ECESWA to mark through Whole Script systems. The study recommends ECESWA not to rush for Conveyor Belt System before engaging in deep dialogue with the Accreditor.

Keywords: whole script, conveyor belt, marking, reliability



107 The Implications Of Non-Assessment Of The Speaking Skill In Eswatini Primary Certificate (EPC) English Language Examination.

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Abstract

In as much as all the four-language skill; speaking, reading, writing and listening are important, being competent in speaking precedes the other skills because proficiency in speaking promotes collaboration and communication amongst people from various cultural backgrounds in all facets of life, including education and work globally more especially in the 21st century. Although the EPC Examination syllabus covers the four skills, the final examinations assess writing and listening skills only. The study seeks to analyse the implications of non-assessment of the speaking on the learners' academic performance and to find out why the speaking skill is not assessed in the final examination. The study is underpinned by the Constructivism theory. The study adopted an interpretivist paradigm using the qualitative research approach and a multiple case study research design. Data were generated through a document analysis and semi- structured interviews in four urban primary schools where two teachers per school were purposively sampled. A thematic approach was adopted for data analysis. Findings revealed that non-assessment of the speaking skill lead to teachers focusing their attention on the writing and listening skill which are examined. The findings further revealed that most teachers teach for examination therefore less emphasis on the speaking skill which is supposed to build confidence in the learners' proficiency of the English language. Performance of learners who are competent in speaking than in writing and listening skill is compromised. It is therefore recommended that the speaking skill should be assessed in EPC examination and suggests that oral examinations should be considered in analysing their overall performance in the language.

Keywords: Assessment, English language, speaking skill, competency.

108 A Confirmatory Analysis Of The Fairness Of The JC Mathematics And Science Examinations

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Abstract

One of the overarching principles of ensuring quality in educational assessment is through ensuring validity of the assessment tools used. As such, validity is seen as a more encompassing test quality attribute as it brings together many pieces of evidence to demonstrate its existence. Fairness is one such piece of evidence that contributes to validity and needs to be reviewed or evaluated at all times especially during pre and post the test taking phase. This is in recognition of the fact that characteristics of populations of test takers such as language, ethnicity, gender or race usually have an influence or bearing on the candidates' test performance. The focus or objective of this study is therefore to assess the fairness of the 2018 Paper 1 items of the JCE Science and Mathematics examinations through examining differential item functioning in order to detect the potential of item bias. Three research questions were addressed in this study to confirm fairness or lack thereof of the examination papers and are as follows.

- To establish if the 2018 Paper 1 for JC Science and Mathematics functioned differently between the South East region and other regions
- To further determine, if any, the nature of DIF present, i.e Uniform DIF (constant for all abilities) or Crossing DIF (varied across different ability groups)
- Compare differences if any of the results for DIF between regions more especially against the Kgalagadi and Ghanzi regions

The entire population of the 2018 candidature who sat for these syllabuses in the public schools was considered for this study. This resulted in 38 274 examinees for Science and 38 227 for Mathematics. The test for DIF between South East region and the rest of the regions resulted in interesting results amid growing speculation regarding the lack of fairness exhibited by assessment instruments between regions. The Science items were found to function the same way in South East as with the rest of the regions except between South East and North West regions. In Mathematics, differences in the functioning of items were only detected on the analysis between South East and Central regions.

Keywords: validity, fairness, differential item functioning (DIF) uniform DIF, crossing DIF



109 Trend Performance Comparison In Double Science/Physical Science In Botswana And Eswatini

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Abstract

Science plays a significant role in the economic, technological, political, and environmental development of any nation because it has permeated all facets of human life. In view of the emphasis on the understanding of science, this research focused on the trend performance of physical science or double science in grade twelve in Eswatini and Botswana. Trend performance is important to determine if the learners are improving on a yearly basis. One of the key trend analysis benefits is the ability to chart a comparison between countries and industry standard. The purpose of this study is to provide detailed information on the performance of candidates in examinations in Botswana and Eswatini. This is a descriptive research design utilizing data for the past five years, which will be extracted from respective countries' database. Quantitative data will be analyzed descriptively, to determine the internal consistency (Cronbach Alpha) and correlations to establish the relationship between components marks.

110 Exploring The Quality Of Junior Secondary Business Studies Education Textbooks In Eswatini.

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Abstract

Schools today are confronted with the task of equipping learners to thrive in a swiftly evolving world. In light of this worldwide challenge, Eswatini has implemented a national curriculum that emphasizes the cultivation of 21st-century skills. This study examines whether and how the tasks in junior-secondary school Business Studies textbooks have been changed following the curriculum reform. The author conducted a content analysis of nine tasks in two topics (Business Ownership and Entrepreneurship) within Business Studies junior textbooks to determine their promotion of 21st century skills, specifically focusing on critical thinking and problem-solving skills. The study's findings revealed several gaps in the two sections, providing theoretical insights into the role of Business Studies as a subject to ensure the development of 21st century skills in learners. The quality of the textbook was at risk in these two chapters. The chapters featured extensive short answer tasks that assess lower order thinking skills (LOTS). It is suggested that relevant education authorities review and refine these chapters on Entrepreneurship and Business Ownership to cultivate greater critical thinking and problem-solving skills, in order to encourage authentic, context-driven deep learning that can serve as a foundation for entrepreneurial activity and promote 4IR.

Keywords: Quality education, Business Studies, textbooks, content analysis, HOTS, Assessment tasks

111 Developing Assessment Measures For Controlling Misuse Of ChatGPT Artificial Intelligence By Examinees In Generating Answers To Essay Questions

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Abstract

The intent behind creating ChatGPT, Artificial Intelligence (AI) powered tools, was to enhance the teaching and learning process, provide access to learning resources in educational sectors, and promote inclusive opportunities and personalized learning for disabled students. Many students today have developed the habit of misusing ChatGPT to generate answers to essay questions, especially when given an assignment, mini-project, or paper presentation, undermining their critical thinking in solving problems. The purpose of using ChatGPT has been defeated by users worldwide, especially in Africa. Contemporary assessment measures must be put in place in education by examiners and other examination bodies using various measurement tools. The tools may include standardized tests, quizzes, projects, paper presentations, and portfolios to gather evidence about the performance, understanding, knowledge, skills, and abilities of an individual or group in a specific subject or course in the area of study. This conceptual paper aims to demonstrate how teachers, examiners, and examination bodies can develop effective measurement tools and craft questions that encourage critical thinking among students to mitigate the misuse of ChatGPT. Drawing on conceptual analysis, the paper examines how question development can counteract the misuse of ChatGPT among students. In educational sectors, especially in developed nations, ChatGPT has already been embraced, but its adverse effects are overlooked in assessment procedures. In combating the issue of ChatGPT misuse among post-primary and post-secondary students, a comprehensive review of assessment measures in the technological age is essential. During an assessment, the educational setting should embrace problem-solving, open-ended, comparative, Socratic, critical review, analytical thinking, predictive and application questions.

Keywords: Assessment measures, ChatGPT misuse, essay questions, examinee, Artificial Intelligence.

112 Exploring the Possible Consequences Of Giving Teachers A Large(r) Part To Play In End-Of-School Assessments - Workshop – Role Play.

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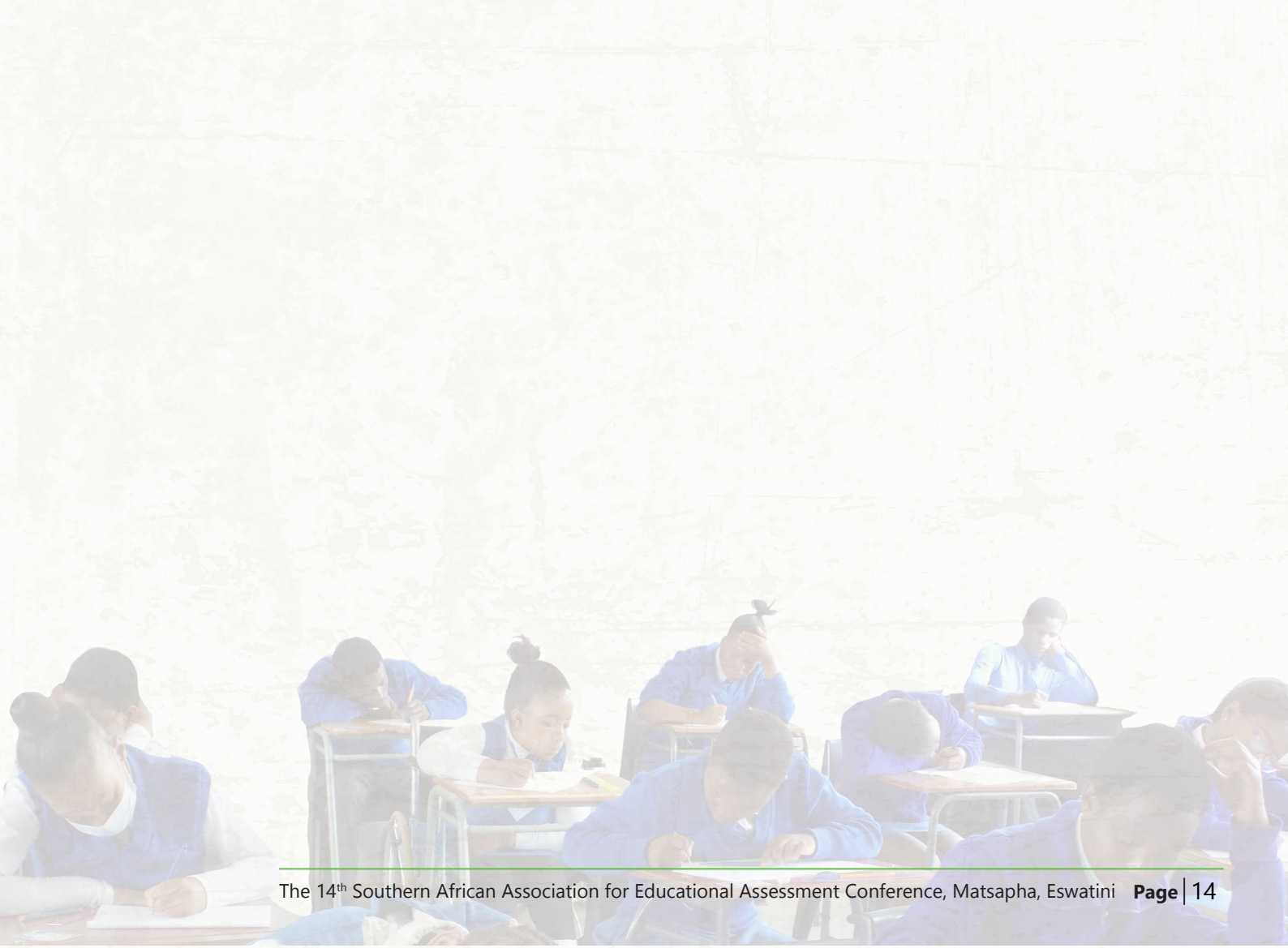
Abstract

A number of countries have revised their national, end-of school assessments to include significant elements of teacher assessment. Success depends on recognising and addressing the concerns and expectations of a wide group of diverse stakeholders.

This workshop is designed to provide an engaging opportunity for participants to explore the cultural, contextual, and individual positions at play within different stakeholder groups.

Participants will be organised into different groups, with each group representing a different category of stakeholder. All groups will be presented with the same scenario and relevant stakeholder questions to prompt their discussion and to explore the attitudes, concerns and standpoints on greater teacher involvement in high stakes assessment.

The workshop will conclude with a plenary session to provide opportunities to share key findings that were identified by the various stakeholder groups.



113 Emotions In Assessment: A Systematic Literature Review

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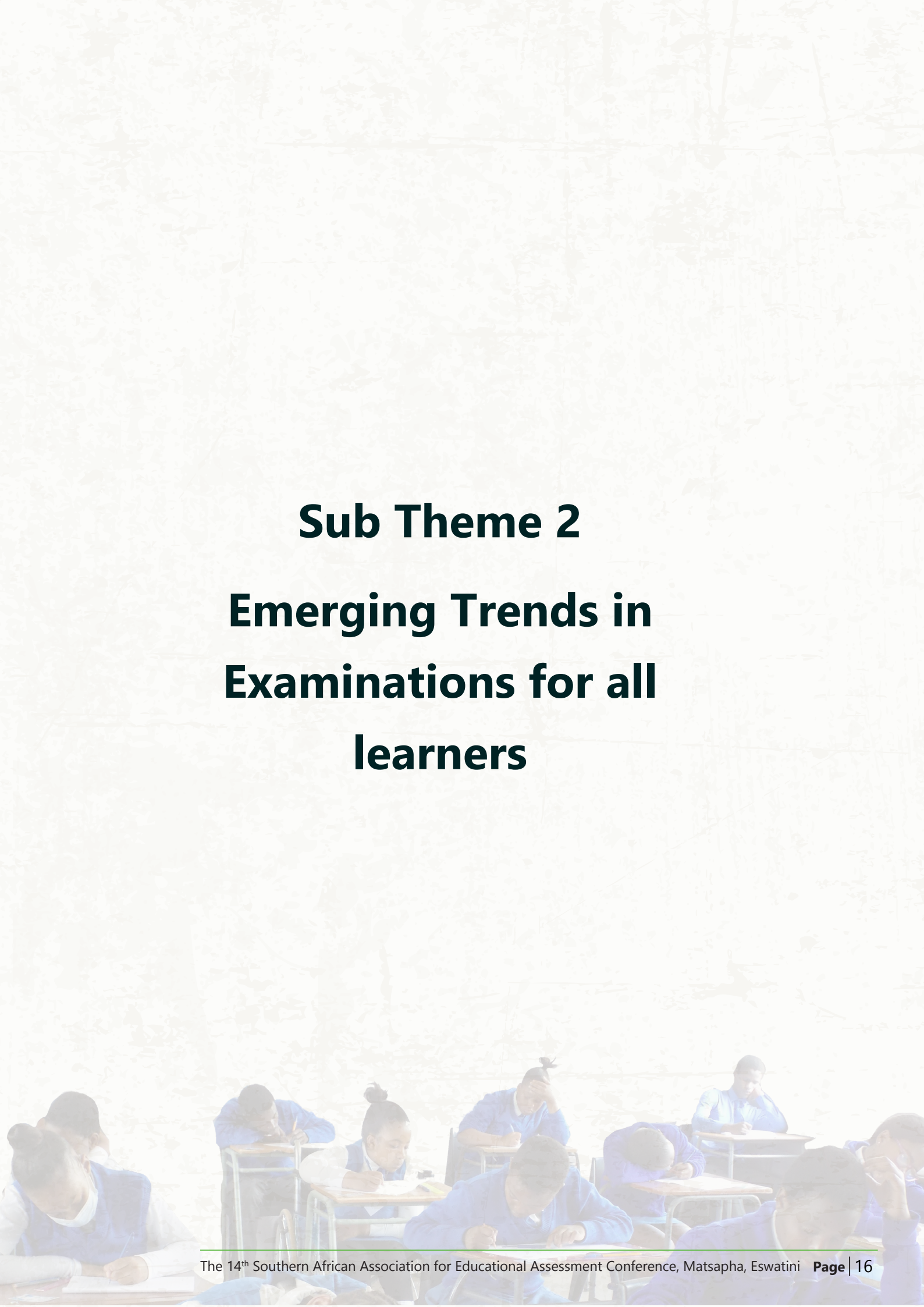
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Abstract

Achievement emotions are integral part of candidates' testing experience but are often overlooked. In order to gain a more comprehensive picture of the emotional experience of test candidates, that may include both positive and negative emotions, we have conducted a systematic review of the literature addressing three main questions:

1. What emotions do candidates experience throughout the assessment process?
2. Do candidates' emotions impact their academic performance?
3. What factors affect the relationship between tests and emotions?

Our results indicate that negative emotions were the most measured, but positive emotions are nonetheless also present. In addition, there seems to be a relationship between emotions and performance, that is appears to be contingent upon the valence of the emotions, so that negative emotions may lead to lower exam performance while positive emotions may lead to higher exam performance. However, the relationship between emotions and achievement may not always be straightforward, as factors related to the candidate, the task (or test), the test and learning environment and the measurement instrument could impact the emotions a candidate experiences and their performance. These results provide a more complete overview of the emotional experience of test candidates, by focusing on both positive and negative emotions and through the analysis of potential intervening factors in the relationship between tests and emotions. Future research could further develop these initial findings, for example by addressing specific moderating factors or by focusing on individual emotions.

The background of the slide is a photograph of a classroom. Several students, mostly of African descent, are seated at their desks. They are wearing blue school uniforms. Some students are looking down at their papers, while others are resting their heads on their hands, suggesting a tired or stressed state. The lighting is bright, and the overall tone is somewhat somber due to the students' expressions.

Sub Theme 2

Emerging Trends in Examinations for all learners

201 Alternative Assessment For Learners With Special Needs In The Zambian Education System: A Case Study Of Grade 12 Candidates With Cerebral Palsy At Dagama School For The Physically Challenged

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Emerging Trends in Examinations for all learners

Abstract

A case study was conducted on Grade 12 candidates with cerebral palsy at Dagama School for the Physically Challenged in Luanshya District of the Copperbelt Province of Zambia who were very good at typing on the computer but could not write properly using a pen and depended on a teacher to transcribe the answers in an examination. The study objectives were to ascertain the skill learners with cerebral palsy find more difficult between handwriting and typing, establish the learner's abilities at using a computer when writing the examinations, establish the challenges candidates with cerebral palsy face when writing their exams as well as to find out alternative assessments that can be given to candidates with cerebral palsy in order to help them. The study used qualitative research methodology and adopted a descriptive research design. The target population included a Principal Examinations Specialist under the Special Education Unit from Examinations Council of Zambia, teachers from Dagama School for the Physically Challenged and from the University Teaching Hospital Special School as well as learners with cerebral palsy. Data was collected through structured interviews, participant observation and assessments typed by the students. The findings revealed that a good number of students with cerebral palsy found it easier to type their answers on a computer than writing using pens since their fine motor skills were weak. The findings also revealed that the Zambian Education system had not considered learners with cerebral palsy so much where assessment was concerned because they were using the same syllabus and question papers with the so-called normal candidates. It was also found that most learners with cerebral palsy were willing to use computers unlike writing answers using their handwriting. When using handwriting, they were slow and missed some letters or words which led to them writing wrong spellings and answers. The study made several recommendations. Some of them were that the assessment during regional and national examinations for learners with cerebral palsy should be optioned to using computers unlike writing using pens and that the Examinations Council of Zambia through the Ministry of Education should have a deliberate policy to help the learners with Cerebral Palsy to have an option to type their examination answers or give them online examinations.

Keywords: Alternative Assessment, learners with Cerebral Palsy, Education assessment

202 Transition To Online Assessments: The Future Of Eswatini High Stakes Examinations In The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR)

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Abstract

The advent of the Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR), political unrests and Covid-19 pandemic has pressurised many education systems in Eswatini to transform their traditional teaching and learning environments to online. However, equity and the writing of summative assessments remained a challenge. High-stakes examinations had to be rescheduled because face-to-face environments were not conducive. A transition to incorporating online assessments such as e-portfolios in education policies could benefit a large population of learners as this improves accessibility and fairness to education. Online assessments seek to enhance assessment designs through the use of 4IR technologies. Sociotechnical perspectives allude that assessment should be relevant to a 'technosavvy' society. The current challenge is the complexity observed when trying to understand the connections between assessment and 4IR technologies. This research aims at exploring how ECESWA assessment designers can use 4IR technologies to support online assessments and feedback, considering its powerful role. It is an extensive study that draws from diverse literature review, including an organising framework proposed by Bearman et al. (2023), assessment pedagogies, 4IR technologies literacy and educational technology. The study achieved the aim by investigating the current state of ECESWA policies to adopting E-assessments as an alternative to traditional assessments, how employing 4IR technologies aligns with ECESWA's underlying ethical principles for assessment plans, how 4IR technologies improves assessment plans, the cons associated with 4IR technologies especially AI and how these negative effects be mitigated in assessment plans. 4IR technologies like AI provides several benefits, some of which is allowing exams to be delivered securely online and malpractice being reduced drastically. This requires a review of Examinations Council of Eswatini's (ECESWA) current assessment policies and appreciating the individualism of every learner, their socio-economic and academic needs. The study also provides analytical tools required to comprehend the importance of 4IR technologies in assessment and feedback in this digital society. This also ensures that assessment is sustainable and authentic. This study employed an interpretive paradigm, a qualitative approach, participatory action research (PAR) and purposive sampling. Data was ethically collected using document analysis, participant observation and focus group discussions. Data was analysed thematically.

Keywords: Fourth Industrial Revolution, assessment design, assessment designer, online assessments, Artificial Intelligence

203 Reliability And Validity Of E-Assessment For E-Learning Pedagogy In Eswatini

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Abstract

The escalation in the use of E-learning has brought about changes in higher education across the globe. E-learning is a new trend of learning that has greatly enhanced the traditional forms of instruction, and further offered digital ways of assessing in teaching and learning. The advancement of electronic delivery and assessment methods have notable changes in the factors influencing reliability and validity in educational assessments. Reliability and validity are crucial for ensuring that assessment tools accurately measure what they are intended to measure, and that the results obtained from these tools are consistent and dependable. In Eswatini, E-learning and E-assessment are currently a standard part of the higher education system; therefore, this study seeks to explore the perceptions of educators on the reliability and validity of E-assessment for E-learning pedagogy in Eswatini. This study is underpinned in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) which requires educators to accept and find technology easy to use, useful and therefore experience its effectiveness which is a factor of TAM aligned with E-assessment. This is a qualitative study within interpretive paradigm and it adopted a case study research design where 4 participants were purposely selected. The results mainly showed that the educators are sceptical on the authenticity of students' results in E-assessed cases as compared to traditionally assessed students. It is important to note that while electronic delivery and assessment methods have introduced novel challenges, they have not fundamentally altered the core structures of reliability and validity. Therefore, this necessitates a re-evaluation of education and training approaches for both educators and students that encompass strategies for promoting ethical information use, fostering critical thinking skills, and ensuring the integrity of assessment processes in digital learning environments.

Keywords: Reliability, validity, e-assessment and e-learning pedagogy

204 Implementing Alternative Assessment For All Learners In Eswatini: Opportunities And Obstacles

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Abstract

Literature indicates that there is increasing criticism of traditional forms of assessment, especially considering current educational reform movements which has also brought into question the value of other alternative approaches to assessment. Groups representing both linguistically and culturally diverse students and students with special education needs have also advocated for a change in approaches to assessment. Current trends in assessment, no longer based on the view that learning entails a passive accumulation of skills, show a paradigm shift from traditional forms of assessment. Using the mixed methodology approach, the paper examines and explores educationists' attitudes towards the implementation of alternative forms of assessment by the Examinations Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) for the school leaving qualification. The paper investigates the various assessment models and procedures used by ECESWA as part of the assessment practice at the school leaving qualification, the Eswatini General Certificate Education of Secondary Education (EGCSE). It argues that alternative assessment ensures equity in educational opportunities and strives towards educational excellence for all learners as it allows them to perform, create or do. Through purposive sampling, the paper presents the opportunities and obstacles associated with implementing alternative assessment at the EGCSE level from the perspective of educators. Alternative assessments are also means to decide what students can and cannot do vis a vis what they do or do not know. Despite suggestions that it is false to assume that alternative assessment approaches automatically ensure equity for diverse populations, the study concludes that the implementation of alternative assessment has an important positive role in supporting, promoting and improving student learning in Eswatini high schools. Additionally, information from these alternative assessment procedures can constitute the sole basis for much educational and instructional decision-making. The paper recommends that traditional forms of assessment and other alternative forms of assessment should co-exist to achieve educational excellence for all learners in Eswatini schools.

Keywords: alternative assessment, educational reforms, implementation, opportunities, obstacles

205 The Perception Of Assessment In Schools: A Study Of Pre-Service Teachers In Maseru.

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Abstract

Assessment plays a key role in education systems as it is the process of collecting, interpreting, and using information to understand and improve learning. It informs educational decisions, helps measure the effectiveness of teaching methods, and guides curriculum development. The Higher Education Institutions offer teaching methodologies to the pre-service teachers. One of the aspects of being a teacher is to assess the learners at schools. This paper examines pre-service teachers' perceptions of assessment practices in schools as it proposes that accurate assessment is critical to supporting effective language learning. Also, it examines the influence of teacher training programs and explores the elements that contribute to pre-service teachers' understanding of assessment methodology while examining possible gaps between theoretical knowledge and practical application on assessment. The qualitative approach, using questionnaires and interviews will be followed to gather both data, offering a comprehensive understanding of pre-service teachers' viewpoints. The study will be anchored by Constructivism theory, which will be used to provide insights into how pre-service teachers interpret and make sense of assessment practices.

The findings shed light on the pre-service teachers' attitudes toward different assessment formats, such as traditional tests, project-based assessments, and formative assessments. Also, there was inadequate alignment of assessments with cultural contexts and the emphasis on inclusive evaluation that represents linguistic diversity. The recommendation is that the teacher training programs should be intentional in the curriculum development, foster a positive and culturally responsive approach to assessment, and integrate digital tools, including e-assessments and online platforms, in the evaluation process. This exploration is crucial for understanding the readiness of future educators to adapt to evolving technological trends in education. This research serves as a foundation for ongoing discussions and initiatives aimed at aligning pre-service teacher perceptions with effective assessment practices in diverse educational settings.

Keywords: Assessment, pre-service teachers, perceptions, curriculum development, constructivism theory

206 Teachers Views Of Assessing Learners Online In Primary School Science In Eswatini

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Abstract

In the Kingdom of Eswatini, technology has been adopted in teaching and learning as well as assessment in the education sector. However, teachers are facing difficulties in using technology to assess primary school Science. This study sought to explore teachers' views of assessing learners online in primary schools Science of Eswatini. The study was based on the following objectives: Determine teachers views in assessing learners online in primary school Science, determine challenges teachers face in assessing learners online in primary school Science and to determine how to enhance the use of online assessment in primary school Science. The study was underpinned under the technology acceptance model (TAM). The study was located in the interpretivist research paradigm. Qualitative research approach was adopted using an exploratory case study research design. The study conveniently selected 3 schools and purposely selects 2 Science teachers per school to make 6 participants of the study. Data were generated using a semi- structured interviews and analysed using thematic analysis. The findings of the study revealed that through the use of online assessment teachers and learners are able to get immediate feedback, online assessment is accessible and flexible and that communication is effective between teachers and learners. The study further revealed that, the difficulty to assess practical work, potential to cheating, lack of knowledge with digital tools, limited resources, time consuming of online assessment, development of online assessment tools were some of the challenges experienced Science teachers when using online assessment. The study concludes that the use of technology in assessment is appropriate and effective in assessing learners. The provision of digital tools and proper training is one of the recommendations made from the study. It is further recommends that the government through the Ministry of Education and Training should enact a policy that would guide the use of technology in assessment and further provide relevant digital tools for assessing the learners. Finally, it is further recommended that the schools, in-service and inspectorate should organize regular workshops for teacher development.

Keywords: Science, online assessment, Information and Communication Technology



207 Teaching And Learning In The Covid-19 Environment Botswana Case

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Abstract

COVID - 19 pandemic has caused Botswana to experience some loss of teaching and learning time due to the closure of schools. The loss might have affected candidates' performance as well as assessment processes; and issues of assessment fairness. The general objective of the study was to identify the challenges and effects presented by the COVID-19 pandemic and its protocols, on the teaching and learning of completing students. The study employed a two-phased design of mixed methods approach, but the qualitative data collection was predominant, to give more meaning to the results observed from the quantitative analysis. The questionnaires were administered online to teachers, school management and regional directors. The biggest setback for interventions by school management and teachers to ameliorate the impact of COVID-19 in teaching and learning was the lack of resources, like ICT equipment and gadgets, textbooks and teaching staff, especially for government schools. Nonetheless, many of the teachers and school management indicated that they were able to cover at least 75% of the curriculum before candidates set for their examinations though the learning environment(s) was different, dictating the use of advanced ICT learning platforms. It was recommended that the government should consider making online teaching and learning platforms a priority in reforming the education system to cater for eventualities that impede physical school attendance.

208 Trends In Assessing Writing Skills Amongst Learners In Primary Schools

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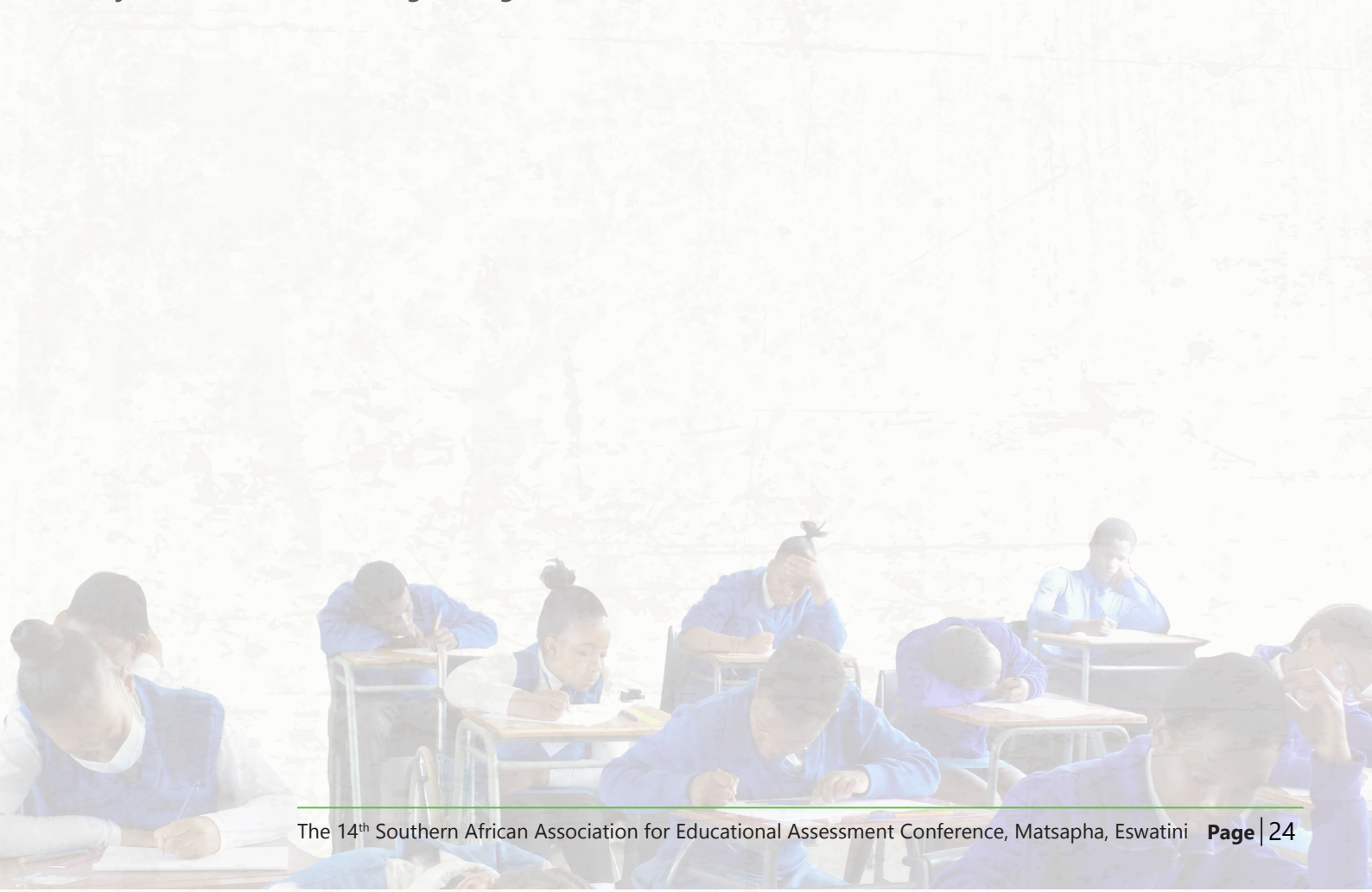
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Abstract

Teaching one of the productive skills of English language; writing skills involves developing the linguistic competence of the students which many English language teachers perceive as a challenging task. This 21st century learning brings better assessment tools hence assessment is becoming more learner-centric, hence offering English teachers the insights on how to make learning more personal for the individual learner. The main aim of the study is to look at trends in assessing writing skills amongst learners in classrooms in primary schools. This research focuses on exploring assessment strategies and approaches that are inclusive and equity- oriented that English language teachers' use when teaching writing skills. The research employs a qualitative approach founded on the interpretivist paradigm. Semi structured interviews were conducted to collect data amongst English teachers in the primary schools. The data were analysed using thematic analysis and interpreted in order to make findings. It was found that summative assessment is the dominating assessment strategy adopted by English teachers' in primary schools. To ensure fairness, learners should be evaluated using diversity of assessment strategies in primary schools.

Key terms: Trends, assessing writing skills, and learners



209 Investigating the Effectiveness of Information And Communications Technology (ICT) National Examinations' Administration In Lesotho Secondary Schools.

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Abstract

Cambridge International Education (CIE) publish suspected malpractice reports prior to the release of Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Examination (LGCSE) results every year. Recent research on examinations' administration revealed that in administering any test, time and examinations protocols must be spared to confirm that the testing environment is appropriate for that exercise and that none of the candidates taking the test are advantaged. This research paper aims to investigate the effectiveness of Information and Communications Technology (ICT) national examinations' administration in Lesotho secondary schools. To address this purpose, a qualitative methodology was used, and data was gathered using online questionnaires received from twenty in a total of thirty schools offering ICT in Lesotho. Twenty-five ICT invigilators were interviewed, and data gathered was analyzed. Analysis of data revealed that majority of the centres offering ICT do not take serious measures in adhering to protocols required for the running of the examination. Based on the findings from this study, it is recommended that close monitoring is necessary throughout the year until the centres register candidates for the examinations. This will help in ensuring the availability of necessary and adequate resources needed for the smooth running of ICT examinations.

Keywords: ICT, LGCSE, examinations' administration, examinations protocols, invigilators candidates.

210 The Opportunities And Challenges Of Online Assessment In The Age Of AI: A Case Study Of Academic Communication Skills

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Abstract

Online assessment is a form of evaluation that uses digital technologies to measure learners' knowledge, skills, and abilities. Online assessment can be enhanced by artificial intelligence (AI), which is the ability of machines to perform tasks that normally require human intelligence. AI can offer various benefits for online assessment, such as automation, personalization, adaptivity, feedback, and analytics. However, AI also poses some challenges and risks for online assessment, such as validity, reliability, fairness, security, privacy, and ethics. This paper aims to explore the impact of online assessment in the age of AI on the teaching and learning of academic communication skills at the University of Eswatini. The paper will review the current practices and policies of online assessment at the university, and examine the potential opportunities and threats of AI for online assessment in the context of academic communication skills. The paper will also discuss the implications of online assessment in the age of AI for the curriculum, pedagogy, and professional development of the academic communication skills department. The paper will draw on relevant literature, data, and case studies from the university and other sources. The paper will contribute to the emerging field of online assessment in the age of AI, and provide some insights and recommendations for the academic communication skills department and other stakeholders.

Keywords: online assessment, artificial intelligence, academic communication skills, curriculum and pedagogy

211 Online Education: The Revert To The Basics Of The Sociology Of Education To Inform Quality Assurance.Cynthia N Nhleko

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Abstract

Like many revolutions before it, the Fourth Industrial Revolution is a paradigm. The 4IR specifically describes the blurring of boundaries between the physical, digital, and biological worlds. The blurred boundaries are what characterise modern life and consequently modern wants and needs. Online education is one such blurred boundary in the education landscape in South Africa. As the Quality Council for General and Further Education and Training, Umalusi plays a vital role in accrediting private providers. Through the accreditation process, it ensures that educational institutions maintain and adhere to the set standards. The mushrooming of online schools necessitates regulation of the space, especially in the context of Umalusi, where the qualifications and their assessments comply with long-standing standards. In responding to this problem, Umalusi has commissioned a task team to explore online schooling in South Africa. The research question guiding this paper is, how can online education be understood as an emergent inclusive approach in the broader design of the educational landscape? This paper turns to the sociology of education theories in unpacking findings from online school site visits meant to understand the practice of online education in the absence of a regulatory framework. By framing findings within functionalist and critical theories, the paper allows for the variety in the establishment and archetypes of online schools/institutions to factor into the broader debates on equity, access, and the right to basic education in South Africa. The paper positions the types of assessment practices, not only within quality assurance, but the broader debates on inclusivity in quality assurance of assessments. Subsequently, the paper employs qualitative paradigms, utilising thematic content analysis to analyse data. Findings from the site visits enrich ongoing internal and bilateral debates on assessment standards set by Umalusi, as well as subsequent navigation of the space to other facets of quality assurance.

Keywords: 4IR, Sociology of Education, Online schooling, regulatory framework, inclusive education

212 Descriptive Analysis Of Candidates' Performance On Progressive Questions: A Case Of E-Marking In Mathematics

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Abstract

The 21st century is faced with the 4th industrial revolution (4IR) challenges which require the utmost and compatible utilisation of technology as imposed by the aftermath of COVID-19 pandemic. Mathematics due to its nature, require close assistance to the learners for a conceptual understanding. The normal teaching of mathematics and marking were greatly challenged due to the restrictions that go with the disease. As a result, e-marking was introduced as radical response to this impasse. In this context, e-marking refers to assessment, marking and evaluation of candidates' scripts using electronic devices. E-marking system stores statistical information per question per candidate and whole component. Assessment plays a critical role in the learning processes and for progression of candidates, and candidates normally find progressive questions challenging especially when the initial questions are not easy. The study gives descriptive evidence of the candidates' performance on four selected progressive questions (at least 8 marks). Quantitative descriptive method was used to explore and elucidate the performance patterns of the randomly selected 100 candidates on progressive questions. The four learning areas (Number, Algebra, Space and Shapes, Statistics and Probability) in Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education (LGCSE) mathematics with progressive questions were used. From such, total scores of the learning areas from each candidate were taken, computed, and analysed per question per learning area. This was followed by the interviews on three e-markers to obtain verbal evidence to adequately investigate the area(s) from which candidates mostly benefited. Even though progressive questions continue to be challenging, candidates have seemingly shifted to using learning areas to improve performance. Categorically, areas like Number and Space and Shapes contributed immensely to an increase in performance. The paper will offer routes that critically assist assessment processes and give a distinctive learning area on which candidates boost their performance.

Keywords: assessment, e-marking, progressive questions, 4IR, learning areas



213 Assessing For Equity: Exploring The Promise And Perils Of Emerging Trends Examination For All Learners In Sadc, Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) Context.

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Abstract

Many training institutions use traditional methods of assessment for learners which include tests, quiz, and written assignment. The fourth industrial revolution (4IR) is reshaping education globally by introducing emerging assessment trends for learners which include but is not limited to technology driven assessments, focus on 21st century skills, equality and access considerations, portfolio and virtual simulations which hold potential for personalized learning and improved outcomes. There seems to be concerns about their impact on equity and access to quality education for all learners. This paper assesses the emerging trends in examination for all learners in SADC, a case study for two schools in Eswatini and Namibia which are implementing some of the emerging trends. The mixed methods, qualitative and quantitative has been used to understand the depth to which emerging assessment practices promote equality and access to quality education considering the digital divide and resource disparities within the region. Semi structured interviews with stakeholders will explore their experiences and their challenges regarding the context. Quantitative data has been analyzed using statistical methods to identify correlations between access to emerging assessment tools and learners' outcomes across SADC. Qualitative data has been used to analyze uncover narratives related to equity and access within the case study. Findings have addressed the digital divide on participation in technology driven assessment, impact of resource disparities on the ability to move forward with 4IR in education and the perspective of stakeholders regarding equity and fairness in these assessments. Location, and access to resources is a determining factor as to whether the implementation of these 4IR trends is effective.

214 Implementation And Sustainability Of ECE Assessment Through Play-Based Approach In Preschools: A Qualitative Study In Kgalagadi Public Preschools.

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Abstract

This study aims to investigate the implementation and sustainability of play-based assessment in Early Childhood Education (ECE) and its effectiveness in promoting children's development and learning. Assessment is a critical component of ECE, and play-based assessment is a child-centered and holistic approach that can provide valuable information about children's skills, knowledge, and dispositions. However, there is a lack of research on the implementation and sustainability of play-based assessment in ECE settings, particularly in developing countries like Botswana. To fill the existing gap, this study investigated teachers' beliefs and values regarding assessment in early childhood education (ECE) and examined the challenges they face, as well as the strategies required to promote play-based assessment. Additionally, the study sought the perspectives of school heads regarding the implementation and sustainability of play-based assessment in ECE settings. The findings of the study might provide insights into the factors that facilitate or hinder the implementation and sustainability of play-based assessment in ECE and its effectiveness in promoting children's development and learning. The findings might also inform policies and practices related to assessment in ECE particularly in Botswana public preschools. Using a qualitative design, the study was guided by a socio-cultural theory paradigm. Purposive sampling method was used to select the population of the study. Data was collected through semi-structured interviews with 10 preschool teachers and 10 school heads. Observations and document analysis were used to triangulate data. Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis was used to identify patterns and themes in the data related to children's learning and development, as well as the effectiveness of play based assessment approach. The study also revealed challenges hindering its integration, including resource constraints, time limitations, and inadequate training. Recommendations include increasing resources, improving professional development opportunities, and creating supportive environments for teachers.

Keywords: Early Childhood Education, Play-Based Assessment, Sustainability



215 The Effectiveness Of Electronic Marking At Lesotho General Certificate Of Secondary Education Context.

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Abstract

Electronic marking (e-marking) refers to the use of digital technology in marking candidates' responses. In a case where candidates are not assessed electronically, their handwritten responses are scanned and uploaded into the electronic system for marking. This can be suggestive of less funds on resources as there is less or no use of pen and paper. However, there can also be some challenges faced especially in developing countries like Lesotho where there is unreliable supply of internet for a smooth running of the system. It is, therefore, the aim of this study to explore challenges and opportunities involved in the use of e-marking system at Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education (LGCSE) as well as their implications for quality and fair assessment. Grounded on the Theory of Planned Behaviour (TPB), the study purposely used 90 markers and two subject officers from the Examinations Council of Lesotho (ECOL) who participated in June 2023 e-marking. They were first issued with the semi-structured questionnaires and then interviewed. Inductively, this qualitative study disclosed that e-marking is efficient and time saving though demands sustainable internet supply. The study then proposed that government and all responsible stakeholders build infrastructure towards sustainable supply of the internet throughout the country.

Keywords: effectiveness, electronic marking, Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education, digital technology, opportunities, challenges and Theory of Planned Behaviour.

216 Assessing The Quality Of The E-Marking Of The June 2023 National Senior Certificate

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Abstract

The Umalusi Council for Quality Assurance in General and Further Education and Training was entrusted with standard-setting and monitoring by the General and Further Education and Training Quality Assurance (GENFETQA) Act No. 58 of 2001 as amended. Umalusi attains this mandate by employing different quality assurance processes, such as developing criteria and instruments for verifying the processes for the marking of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) examinations. In practice, Umalusi's quality assurance of the marking processes includes, marking guideline standardisation, monitoring the marking of examination, and verification of marking. The fourth industrial revolution has resulted in the piloting of e-marking of selected NSC subjects by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) in the Gauteng Province which required quality assurance of these processes. This paper emerged as part of a broader study on the transition from traditional marking to e-marking process piloted in Gauteng province. This study aimed to assess the quality of the e-marking for the June 2023 NSC by employing document analysis. The source document analysed was the verification of marking for the June NSC 2023 report from the external moderator. The analysis focused on the fundamentals of the Umalusi verification of marking tool which are: policy matters, adherence to marking guidelines, quality, and standards of marking and internal moderation. The study aimed to answer the question, "what evidence can be deduced from Umalusi verification of marking report about the quality of the e-marking for the June 2023 NSC?". The findings indicate that the e-marking of the June 2023 NSC was valid, reliable, and fair. Given the success of Umalusi's approach towards maintaining the online marking standards, it is recommended that the DBE may extend e-marking to more NSC papers and to other provinces.

Keywords: e-Marking, Verification of marking, Quality assurance



217 Assessing The Use Of Online Examinations In The Kingdom Of Eswatini Higher Education Institutions: A Pedagogical Innovation.

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Abstract

Paper-based examinations are gradually being replaced as a reasonable number of Eswatini Higher Education Institutions have adopted online examinations. As a new phenomenon the perspectives of both academic staff and students needs to be assessed. Hence, this study intends to assess the use of online examinations in the Kingdom of Eswatini Higher Education Institutions (HEI). The research will be qualitative in nature. PALAR research design pivoted on the transformative paradigm to unravel, understand the affects and effect of the pedagogical innovation as well as factors such as security and practicality so as to effect best action in the advancement of HEI in the country. The Cultural Historical Activity Theory (CHAT) theory will give insights to the study. For comprehensive data collection, participants from HEI who use e-exams will be purposively selected and interviewed. The sample will consist of 15 learners and 10 academic staff from HEI. The generated data will be analysed thematically, that is data will be transcribed, coded, and categorised to come up with major patterns and perceptions as themes. Conclusions of the study will be derived from the research findings. Recommendations will be proffered to the academic staff, students and HEI based on the research findings.

Keywords: e-exams, pedagogical, PALAR, transformative, CHAT

218 The Effectiveness Of The School-Based Showcase Portfolio As A Teaching Practice Assessment Tool: Voices Of Lecturers In One Government-Owned Tertiary Institution In Eswatini

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Abstract

Following the migration from traditional to blended learning, many institutions have been compelled to find more contemporary means to conduct assessments. The same applied to teacher training colleges who found alternative means to assess teaching practice in place of the traditional face-to-face teaching practice assessment. The purpose of this study was to explore lecturers' voices on the efficiency of the School-based showcase portfolio as an assessment tool compared to traditional face-to-face assessment. To achieve this, the study used a mixed-method approach to compare the assessment methods for the portfolio to the ones used in the traditional teaching practice assessment process. A purposive sample of ten (10) participants was drawn from the college lecturers. Questionnaires, focus group discussions, and document analysis were used to collect data. The data were analyzed using both Descriptive Analysis and Content Analysis. The findings of the study revealed that there were substantial differences in the scoring of the teaching practice exercise during face-to-face assessment and assessment using the portfolio, and there was a lack of consistency in the way the lecturers marked the portfolio. Based on the findings, the study recommends that lecturers undergo intensive training before grading the portfolio, specialized portfolio guidelines per subject be provided, and the lecturers schedule periodic occasions for review and conferencing.

Keywords: Assessment; portfolio guidelines; face-to-face assessment



219 Re-Imagining The Future Of Assessments Marking In The Era Of The Fourth Industrial Revolution: Voices Of Selected Stakeholders On The Use Of Technology For Marking External Examinations In EswatiniTertiary Institution In Eswatini

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Abstract

The Fourth Industrial Revolution (4IR) has generally transformed human lives in different ways. This current study discusses the implications of the 4IR on education, specifically high-stakes assessment marking. One of the major developments that come with technology is its anticipated use for marking which has been historically done by human markers. This innovation is likely to bring about varied perceptions from various stakeholders. This study explores the perceptions of specific stakeholders on the planned use of technology to mark senior Geography examinations in Eswatini. We adopted the qualitative approach, within the interpretivist paradigm. Face-to-face semi-structured interviews and focus group discussions were employed to generate data from twelve (12) stakeholders to understand their acuities to this development. Thematic data analysis was done. Findings showed variations in the stakeholders' perceptions of introducing technology for marking. The evidence indicates that the country's education sector is unprepared for the introduction of the marking technology. On the one hand, there is fear emanating from the possible replacement of human markers. On the other hand, there are indications for opportunities to harness the potential of the much-anticipated technology which would help eradicate the possible barriers to the technological innovation. Moreover, the evidence reveals a mutual, symbiotic relationship between the education sector and technology innovations. The findings contribute to the theory and practice of technology in education and the limited literature on 4IR in the education sector, particularly in the assessment aspect in Africa.

Keywords: Education; Fourth Industrial Revolution; Assessment; Marking, Stakeholders; Technology

220 Exploring The Incorporation Of Authentic - Ethical Assessment Practices In Higher Education Online Teaching-Learning In Eswatini

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Abstract

Grading and assessment are critical components of higher education in the digital era where both students and educators are compelled to shift and employ blended learning as a major instructional strategy. By adhering to the ethical principles of fairness, objectivity, accuracy, integrity, confidentiality, and professionalism, instructors can ensure that assessments are conducted in a manner that is both effective and ethical. This study sought to establish the understanding of authentic-ethical assessment in higher education online teaching-learning, primarily the authentic-ethical practices that are mostly prevalent. It employed a mixed-method approach, where semi-structured interviews, a questionnaire, and document analysis were used in collecting data. Participants were drawn from final-year college students, instructors, and senior management. Results reveal that authentic ethical assessment is one of the most complex aspects to attend to in the higher education online educational context. There is an existence of major limitations and associated sub-problems, both of internal and external nature that affect the essence of the process, all of which indicate the need for pre-service to capacitate trainees and instructors in authentic ethical assessment practices in online teaching-learning.

Keywords: authentic assessment, ethical assessment, online teaching-learning, higher education

221 Exploring The Use Of Talking Calculators In Lesotho General Certificate Secondary Education Mathematics Examinations: A Case Of A Special School In Maseru.

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Abstract

Visual impairment (VI) and blindness can limit learners' academic potential. This has been evident in Lesotho schools where learners with VI and blindness could not sit Mathematics examinations due to their inability to use calculators. The Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training provided talking calculators to these learners to achieve inclusive education. The use of assistive technologies offers learners with VI and blindness access to full curriculum. The present study is framed within the theories of assistive technologies for Mathematics which advocate for audio support to access Mathematics materials. The study explored the use of the talking calculators with the aim to find out any possible risk that could be posed by this new technology towards the Lesotho General Certificate Secondary Education (LGCSE) Mathematics examinations. Participants included four candidates with low vision and made use of the talking calculators, special education manager, Mathematics teacher and principal. Data for this study came from interviews with teachers and learners; and classroom observations. The results were analysed using qualitative methods and revealed that this type of assistive technology under study enables candidates with VI and blindness to participate fully in the secondary school leaving examinations. Findings indicated that the majors taken in the use of the talking calculators have successfully maintained fairness and quality in the LGCSE mathematics examinations. It can be concluded that management of assistive technologies encourages learners with VI and blindness to progress academically in mainstream settings.

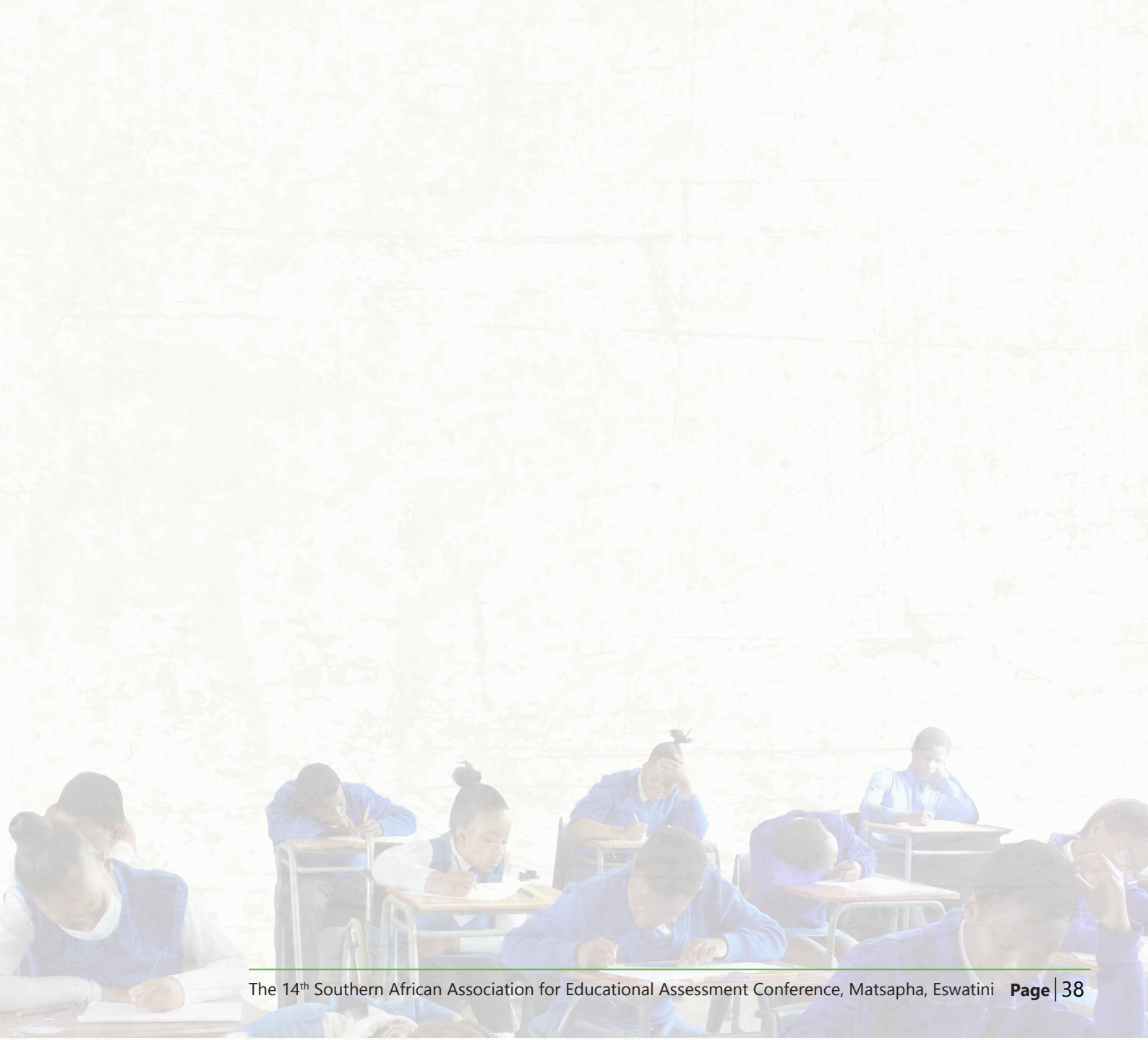
Keywords: Talking calculators, visual impairment and blindness, fairness, assistive technologies

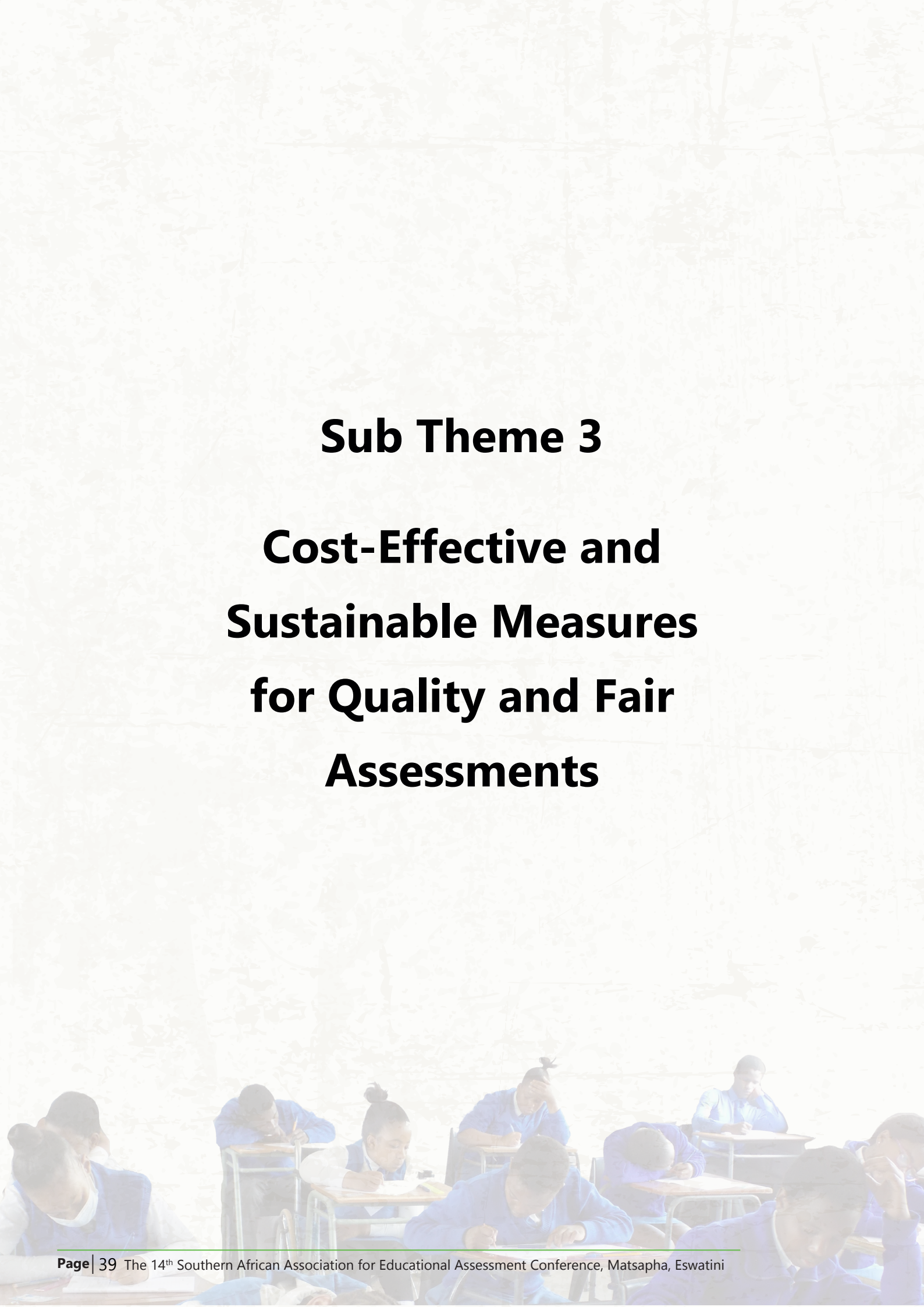
222 Ensuring Fairness In Assessment Materials So That Students Can Communicate Their Knowledge Effectively And With Confidence.

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Abstract

The presentation will explore what makes an exam appropriate and fair. It will cover clarity of language and purpose, so questions do not present unnecessary barriers for students. The presentation will discuss the design of accessible assessment materials that communicate what is required of students to ensure that their performance reflects their true potential. We will also explore how cultural bias can affect how language is used and interpreted in exams (and how this can be avoided). A focus will be made on how teachers can design learning materials that will prepare students by exploring examples of 'appropriate' and 'inappropriate' language in exam questions. The presentation will conclude with a discussion of how students can respond appropriately and confidently to key command words and address the structure of extended writing responses to enable candidates to structure responses appropriately for the question and evaluate confidently.



The background of the slide is a photograph of a classroom. Several students, mostly of African descent, are seated at their desks. They are wearing blue school uniforms. Some students are looking down at their papers, while others are resting their heads on their hands, suggesting a tired or stressed state. The lighting is bright, and the overall tone is somewhat somber due to the students' expressions.

Sub Theme 3

Cost-Effective and Sustainable Measures for Quality and Fair Assessments

301 Examining Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) Teaching Approaches for Teaching Geography in Secondary Schools in the Manzini Region

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Abstract

Several researchers have noted that many learners do not practice what they have been taught at schools regarding sustainable development. This is evident as the environmental issues are continually increasing, and this threatens our existence. This study sets out to explore and examine the teaching approaches that Geography teachers use to teach sustainable development in Manzini region high schools. The main purpose of the study is to examine teaching approaches that were used by Geography teachers to teach ESD concepts to learners. The study purposefully targeted Geography teachers and learners in high schools in the Manzini region. This study is Qualitative and is located within the interpretivist paradigm. The first research instrument administered was semi-structured interviews and focus groups to solicit teaching approaches that Geography teachers use to teach sustainable development and their conceptions about environmental issues. These were further explored by focus groups in class and around the school premises. Six Geography teachers were purposively selected as participants. For generation of data, three data generation methods were used: a focus groups and one-on-one semi-structured interviews. A conceptual framework was produced from literature on approaches to teaching, which was also utilised in analysing data. Literature on curriculum development approaches afforded three curriculum approaches which influence the teaching approach a teacher uses in enacting the curriculum: technical, communicative, and pragmatic approaches. Limitations, and recommendations for future research and more fruitful teaching of sustainable development were discussed in the last chapter. The results revealed that teachers are facing challenges in instilling sustainability-oriented values. This is because there is no correlation with what learners are encultured with at schools and at home. Although most participants are keen on using technology to unpack sustainable development but skills and availability of resources to do so are limited. The critical analysis of findings further revealed that teachers use strategies that are convenient to them as time is limited by curriculum demands. Furthermore, the most of the teachers involved in sustainable development initiatives were not necessarily Geography teachers.

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Abstract

The study was conducted to provide a concise guide in the identification and use of Item response Theory (IRT) Rasch measurement software for educational research. The study's specific objectives were to: Investigate capabilities of some selected Rasch measurement software, and to evaluate their strengths and weaknesses. The comparative analysis qualitative study. A purposive sampling was used to select twenty (20) Rasch measurement software. The selection of the software for the study based on the diversity of their features in performing Rasch analysis. These were ability to perform multidimensional analysis, test equating, Differential Item Functioning (DIF) analysis, and ability to model polytomous data. Data was collected from software user manuals or other written information obtained from the developers' websites. Comparative analysis was done on the data to explore software that best suit some specific functions. Findings revealed that Bayesian-regression and Conquest software were recommended for performing multidimensional Rasch analysis, PASCALE, IRTPro, and RUM2030 were recommended for performing test equating and DIF analysis. BILOG, RASCHTEST and RaschFit were proved to be good for computing expected scores. The study concluded that, the capabilities of the software are not distinct, but rather they overlap each other, hence, researchers take this advantage to advance the application of IRT in educational research.

303 Upholding Impartiality in Summative Assessments: Managing Undetected Errors in Approved Question Papers.

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UMALUSI Abstract

The Umalusi quality assurance assessment framework is aimed at ensuring that all assessments leading to the award of certificates are of the required standard. This is achieved through various quality assurance processes, one being the external moderation of question papers. Therefore, Umalusi moderates question papers to ensure that their standard is acceptable and comparable across examination cycles. There are instances where question papers may have errors, despite the rigorous moderation process undertaken. The errors could be administrative, technical or content based. In instances where questions have errors, they may negatively impact on learner performance. The purpose of this paper is to explore the extent to which undetected errors on question papers impinge on the fairness and quality of examinations. There have been considerable discussions by policy makers, reviewers, ministerial task teams and Umalusi, on the quality of assessments. The consensus is that there is a need for an education system which is capable of setting quality assessments. Where errors are detected, marking concessions may be granted by Umalusi. There is currently a dearth of literature on managing undetected errors and its impact on the quality of question papers. A qualitative research method which allows for flexibility in understanding the topic holistically will be pursued. The sample will be purposively selected from the post school qualifications question papers of the past three years. The data collection method will mainly be document analysis. Analysis will include new concepts and ideas that will produce themes and patterns for arriving at recommendations. Coding will be used to enhance and assess the quality of the research. A differentiated quality assurance approach for question papers and accompanying marking guidelines for the development of a framework that will ensure fair, valid and reliable assessments is discussed.

Keywords: Moderation, fairness, marking concession, performance, quality assurance.



304 Preparing French Teachers Of Tomorrow In Eswatini And Beyond: How Assessment Can Build Confidence And Inspire Life-Long Language Learning

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Abstract

This paper explores effective methods for assessing students' language competence and communicative skills in French as a Foreign Language (FFL) as part of Bachelor in Education degrees preparing for teaching careers in primary and secondary schools in Eswatini and beyond. Frequent, authentic formative and summative assessments provide crucial feedback for FFL learners. However, traditional pen-and-paper testing presents limitations in measuring real-world linguistic performance. Integrating multimedia resources, online tools, project-based assignments, peer reviews, self-reflection and other innovative performance assessment strategies can offer a more empowering evaluative experience which inspires long-life language learning. This paper reviews theoretical foundations for communicative language assessment and arguments for more dynamic FFL assessment design suited for teacher education contexts. Both qualitative and quantitative analysis of existing FFL evaluation approaches in comparable tertiary-level teacher preparation programs allows identification of current assessment gaps, challenges and areas needing improvement. Finally, targeted recommendations are provided for implementing more diverse, holistic FFL assessment techniques – including student group debates, video recordings of microteachings, podcast creation for pronunciation analysis or electronic portfolios to showcase written compositions. Recommended best practices aim to boost student confidence using French professionally while better preparing aspiring educators for the evolving multilingual classrooms of today.

Keywords: Language acquisition in teacher education programs, French language assessment, Teacher preparation, Communicative competence, Performance-based assessment, Language portfolios

305 Exploring The Strategies Teachers' Employ In Assessing The Reading Culture Among Learners

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Abstract

Some of the strategies teachers employed when grading learners' reading culture included: giving learners a reading passage and asking them questions based on the passage; and asking learners to dramatize the passage they have read about. These strategies were employed to measure learners' comprehension abilities and learners' ability to chronologically state events in the story. The grading strategies disadvantage some learners because some learners might have read the passage but they might have challenges in answering the questions that were asked by the teacher. The study sought to explore issues of fairness on the means used to measure learners' reading culture, and to examine the scales teachers utilise when grading learners' reading abilities. This study engaged the qualitative research approach and data was collected through semi structured interviews. The findings of the study were that some teachers considered the reading culture grading strategies disadvantageous to some learners but it was difficult to devise other better grading means when it comes to reading. The scales teachers used in measuring learners' reading abilities were based on teachers' individual judgement. It was then recommended that the Ministry of Education should create a standard scale that would be used to measure learners' reading culture.

Key-words: Reading culture, assessing, strategies



306 Exploring Procurement Management Strategies That Enhance Quality And Fair Education Assessment

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Abstract

Procurement management plays a fundamental role in ensuring cost-effective and sustainable measures for quality and credible yearly assessments. This study explored the significance of strategically managing procurement in education assessment to guarantee quality and fair procedures and outcomes that can be successfully adopted at regional or global level. There has been a growing need for assessment institutions to reduce their investment and operational costs in a sustainable manner without compromising on their core values but however limited research exists on how procurement management practices impact the quality and fairness of education assessments. This necessitates an investigation into the relationships, challenges, and opportunities within this critical domain. The findings of this study provide valuable insights on what assessment institutions can adapt to and implement in order to achieve cost effectiveness and sustainability in their assessments without compromising on the quality, credibility and security of examinations. The main objective for undertaking this research was to determine the strategies in procurement management that enhance quality and fair assessments. The study's specific objectives were to find the cost-effective procurement strategies that help in achieving high-quality educational assessments and to identify best practices in procurement that enhance fairness in assessments. Data was collected from 40 MANEB Staff and 20 stakeholders using a questionnaire and the data was analysed descriptively using SPSS. The findings revealed that establishing long-term contracts with service providers not only led to advantageous pricing but also guaranteed a consistent level of service quality in the production of examination papers and other materials used in national examinations. In addition, the procurement process considered the needs and perspectives of diverse student populations, including special educational needs candidates in a timely manner. In conclusion, the study therefore recommended using the proper strategic procurement management procedure which is a fundamental principle as 70% of the assessment board's expenditure is through procurement.

Keywords: strategic procurement, cost effectiveness, sustainable measures, quality and fair assessment

307 The Role Of NECTA On Insisting School-Based Assessment For Enhancing Learning

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Abstract

This study emanated from the performance of majority pupils in PSLE 2020 - 2022 to get C grade and below. The main objective of the study was to find out to what extent the school-based assessment done by teachers at school play role in enhancing Competence-Based Learning for pupils in accordance with the guide from the NECTA. Specifically, this study dealt with the following objectives: To identify the types of questions used by teachers in enhancing competence-based learning in cognitive, psychomotor and affective domains; to find out the assessment criteria used by teachers for enhancing competence-based learning; and to find out the approaches used by teachers for monitoring learning outcomes as strategy for enhancing competence-based learning. This was a case study that used mixed research methods. The instruments used for data collection were observation, questionnaires, documentary review and interview. Stratified -random sampling and purposeful sampling techniques were used to obtain a sample. The findings showed that 80% teachers used questions that based on cognitive domain. However, only 50% of teachers could construct questions that are enhancing competence-based learning. On the other hand, 90% of teachers had inadequate questions towards pupils for enhancing learning in psychomotor and affective domains competencies. On the issue of assessment criteria, a hundred percent of teachers used the criterion of accuracy as the criteria for assessing learners at school. Other criteria such as speed, and attitude were not adequately adhered during the assessment. The study also found that 80% of teachers used irrelevant approaches of monitoring pupils' learning outcomes when doing assessment activities. For that matter, the study concluded that the role of assessment in enhancing competence-based learning at schools is still low. Hence, the need for assessment bodies to build capacity to teachers on school competence-based assessment for enhancing competence learning.



308 Ethics In Using Digital Tools To Enhance Educational Assessment

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Abstract

The 4th Industrial Revolution has introduced digital tools to enhancing assessment which has become a pressing issue in the education sector. The purpose of the study is to explore the ethical concerns associated with the use of digital tools to enhance assessment in schools in Eswatini. The research objectives were to: explore the ethical implications of using digital tools to enhance educational assessment, determine the challenges of using digital tools to enhance educational assessment and to examine the strategies to mitigate the challenges of using digital tools to enhance educational assessment. The study is grounded on the Deontological Ethical Theory; the use of digital tools in assessment should be conducted in a way that is ethical and responsible. This study used an interpretive research paradigm and a qualitative case study design, with data collected through semi-structured interviews and analysed using thematic analysis. The study was conducted in 4 schools, 1 teacher from each administrative region of Eswatini, systematically sampled. The findings indicated a number of ethical concerns associated with the use of digital tools include test security; risk that unauthorised individuals could access and manipulate test data, bias and fairness; digital tools may not be able to account for individual differences. In mitigating the challenges: clear policies and procedures should be implemented, and provision of professional development for teachers. It is recommended that the Examinations Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) together with the Ministry of Education and Training should review regulations and improve digital tools to ensure fairness, privacy and security.

Keywords: Educational assessment, digital tools, ethics.

309 Accessibility And Fairness Of Assessment For Learners With Special Needs In Natural Sciences

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Abstract

Learners with special needs in the Namibian education system experiences several challenges related to accessibility and fairness of assessment. These challenges act as barriers to their holistic participation in education and hence impacting on learning achievement and outcome. The Directorate of National examinations and Assessment (DNEA) ensures that all learners registered for every subject gets the same question paper irrespective of their circumstances. Anecdotal evidence has shown that learners with special needs do not perform well in national examinations for natural sciences.

The sector policy on inclusive education of 2013 focuses on among others, identifying and addressing challenges and barriers in the education system. However, the study conducted by the Ministry of Education, Arts and Culture in 2017 to assess inclusive education in practice in Namibia has concluded that learners with special needs continues to face challenges in Namibian schools. Although much research had been conducted on inclusive and special education, no research has been found that focused on accessibility and fairness of assessment for learners with special needs in Namibia. The findings of our study revealed a lot of challenges faced by learners both in accessing learning and assessment. Policy makers and educators can make use of these findings to review existing policies, especially to include an improved design for the assessment of learners with special needs.

The study used the qualitative approach, collecting data through document analysis and questionnaires. It aimed at analysing existing policy documents on inclusive education, past performance of learners with special needs in natural sciences and exploring the perception of learners and teachers of the assessment tools used in national examinations for the Namibia Senior Secondary Certificate for Ordinary level in Natural Sciences as well as the challenges that the Ministry of Education Arts and culture, particularly the DNEA faces in adapting question papers for the learners with special needs.

Keywords: Inclusive education, Special needs, Assessment, Accessibility, Fairness, Natural Sciences



310 Cost-Effective Strategies For Quality Education Assessment In The Examinations Council Of Eswatini.

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Abstract

Efficient examination assessment is crucial to ensure fair evaluation of students' knowledge and skills. However, the rising costs and environmental impacts associated with traditional examination methods have prompted the need for cost-effective and sustainable assessment measures. This research aims to explore innovative approaches that meet the twin objectives of delivering high-quality assessments while minimizing costs and environmental footprint.

This paper presents the strategies on identifying cost-effective measures for ECESWA while maintaining quality and fair education assessments. Ensuring the integrity and reliability of examination processes is vital for providing accurate assessments of students' knowledge and skills. However, the associated costs can be substantial, making it crucial to explore cost-effective strategies. This study examines a variety of sources, including studies, reports, and best practices, to identify potential measures for ECESWA to optimize resources and minimize costs while upholding quality and fairness in education assessments. The findings emphasize the need to consider technology implementation, process streamlining, capacity building, and stakeholder engagement as key aspects to achieve cost-effective quality assessment while preserving the integrity of examinations. Practical recommendations are provided to guide the Council towards implementing these measures successfully.

In conclusion, this paper illuminates the path towards cost-effective and sustainable examination assessment approaches by integrating academic research, stakeholder perspectives, and the growing demand for ethical and ecological practices in line with the aspirations of Sustainable Development Goal number 4 of the United Nations. By facilitating fair and reliable evaluation methods while simultaneously reducing costs and environmental impact, this study endeavours to pave the way for a more equitable and sustainable educational landscape.

Keywords: Cost-effective, Strategies, Quality, Education Assessment.

311 Ineffectiveness Of Alternative To Practical Assessment In Biology At Lesotho General Certificate Of Secondary Education (LGCSE)

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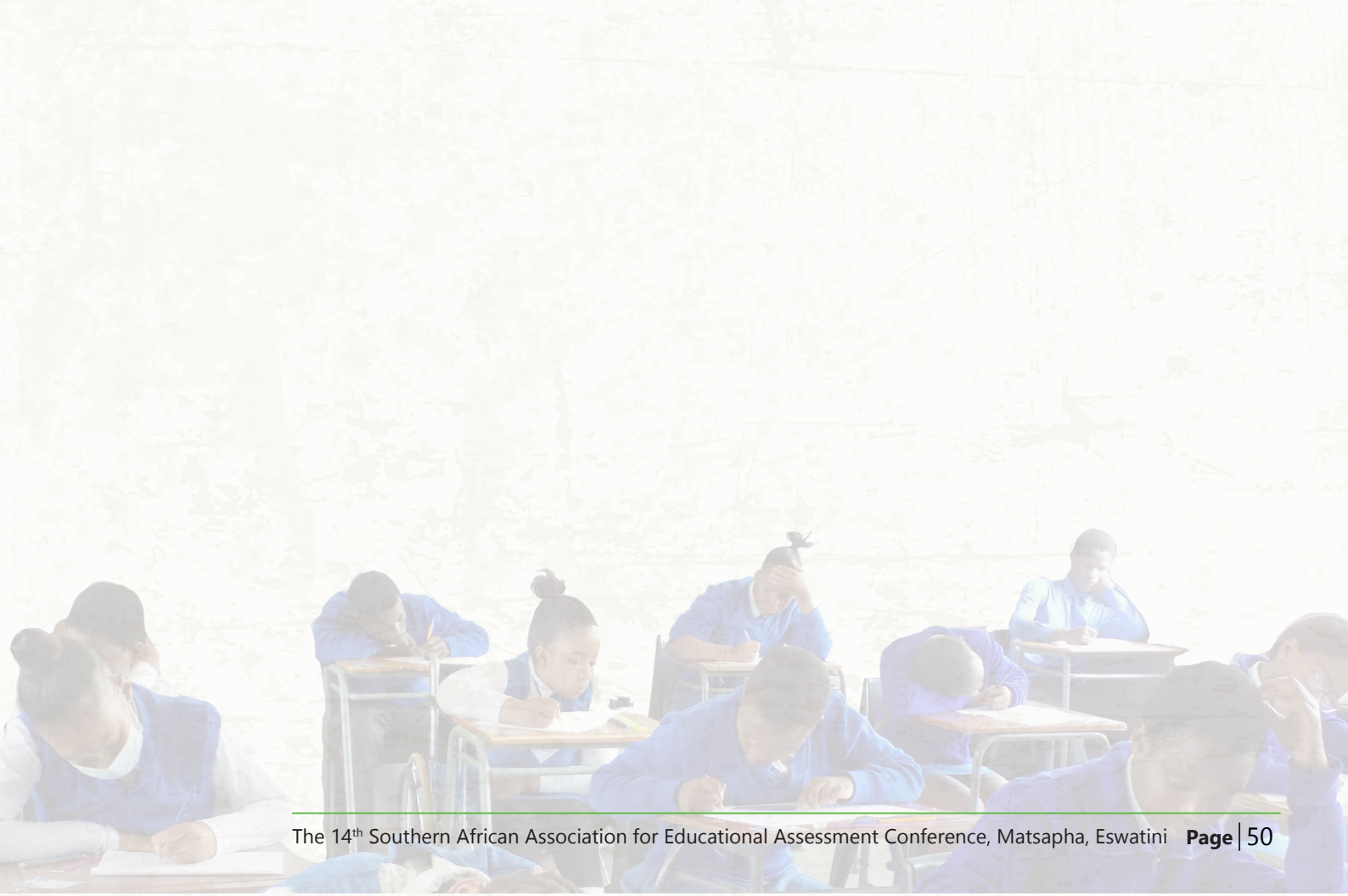
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Abstract

It is a major concern that after completing Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education (LGCSE), candidates are not prepared well enough to solve their day-to-day scientific problems, and that they may not be fit enough to tackle biological courses beyond LGCSE level which is evident in high failure rate in such courses. The purpose of the study was to investigate the effectiveness of assessing practical skills and investigations in Biology subject at LGCSE level through alternative to practical. The research question focuses on whether the alternative to practical (Paper 3) assessment the effective strategy of is assessing candidates' attainment of practical skills as opposed to the practical examination. The study follows a qualitative approach as guided by the conceptual framework. Questionnaires which required open-ended responses based on the research question were sent out to Grade 11 Biology learners, teachers, and markers, for them to complete. Data was collected from questionnaires of 10 learners, 5 teachers and 5 markers randomly selected. Thematic analysis was then done to identify patterns in the responses which were then categorized into themes. The study results after analysis, indicate a need for a reform in the strategy used to assess practical skills and investigations with majority emphasizing that Biology paper 3 is purely "theoretical" and can be passed without having attained practical skills but by memorization of laboratory methods and apparatus. In conclusion, it has been suggested that for effective assessment of Biology paper 3, practical examinations be administered.

Keywords: ineffectiveness, alternative to practical, LGCSE, practical skills, practical examination.



312 A More Cost-Effective Model: The Implementation Of Electronic Moderation Of Oral Tasks By The Independent Examinations Board In South Africa

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Abstract

As the fourth industrial revolution reshapes the educational landscape, the imperative to ensure validity, reliability and fairness in assessment practices has taken on new dimensions. This paper presents a case study of the Independent Examinations Board (IEB) in South Africa, which has embarked on a transformative journey in educational assessment through the adoption of electronic moderation of oral tasks.

The need to accommodate the growing number of online schools, and to ensure that the results from these schools should be comparable to those of more traditional schools while remaining cost-effective, compelled the IEB to investigate alternate ways of moderating oral assessments completed at schools.

Traditionally, the assessment of oral tasks has been fraught with challenges, primarily due to the subjective nature of evaluation and the potential for variance in interpretation among assessors. Many assessment bodies have refrained from assessing oral work altogether, fearing the compromise of assessment validity and qualification integrity. However, as oral proficiency is integral to mastery of any language, the IEB has continued to assess oral skills. Technology has improved the IEB's capacity to do so. By leveraging technology to assess oral tasks electronically, IEB moderators can view and make a judgment on precisely the same evidence that the initial assessor did. This innovative approach not only mitigates against the variance in interpretation but also enables a transparent appeals process, thus ensuring greater fairness and accountability.

This paper explores the implementation process of electronic moderation by the IEB, highlighting the benefits, challenges, and lessons learned. Drawing on empirical evidence and stakeholder perspectives, it demonstrates how electronic moderation has not only provided effective opportunities to assess the growing number of online schools but has also improved the reliability and fairness of the process for the more traditional IEB-registered schools.

By sharing insights from this pioneering initiative, this paper contributes to the broader discourse on validity in educational assessment. It underscores the potential of technology-enabled solutions to foster reliability and fairness in assessment practices.

Keywords: Oral moderation; cost effective; fairness; reliability

313 Maintaining Assessment Standards: The Efficiency Of E-Moderation Of Marking For The National Senior Certificate

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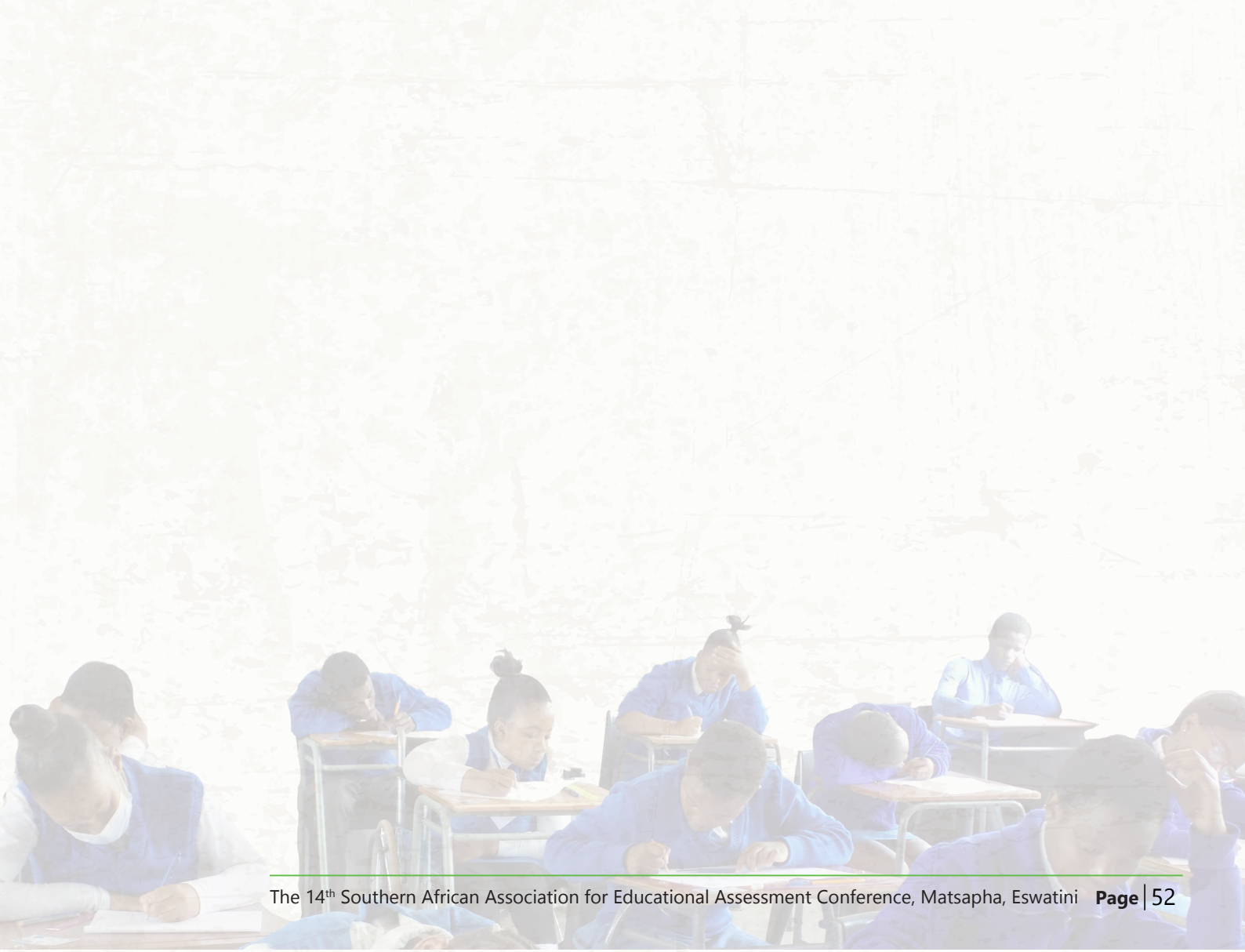
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Abstract

Umalusi quality assures the marking of the National Senior Certificate (NSC) conducted by all assessment bodies to confirm the fairness, validity and reliability of marking and thus give credence to the NSC qualification. The quality assurance of marking entails two processes: the standardisation of the marking guidelines and the verification of marking. The Gauteng Department of Education piloted e-marking of NSC subjects from 2019 to 2022, in different subjects. The purpose of this study was to investigate the efficiency of e-moderation for the NSC qualification. This study contributed towards quality assurance of assessment in digital platforms. The research question underpinning this study was: What were the benefits identified in the e-moderation pilot? To respond to this, the study employed qualitative approaches, using semi-structured interviews from Umalusi moderators who participated in the e-moderation process in Gauteng. The results broadly indicated that the benefits of e-moderation were accuracy, cost effectiveness and efficiency. It was recommended that this approach be extended to other NSC subjects.

Keywords: e-moderation, e-marking and digital platforms

Keywords: Rash Measurement, Software Features. Software Capabilities.



314 Quality Assurance Of Internal Examinations In Selected Primary Schools In Eswatini

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Abstract

Reported in this paper are the findings of a study on quality assurance of internal examinations of selected primary schools in Eswatini. This is a qualitative case study embedded within the interpretative paradigm which enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of how quality is assured in internal examinations in primary schools. Data was generated from five purposively and conveniently selected schools where two teachers from each school participated in the study by completing an open-ended questionnaire. Five principals from the selected schools were part of the study by participating in semi-structured interviews. Document analysis also formed part of the data generation process where in each school a sample of examination papers and marked examination scripts were reviewed to assess for quality assurance. The findings showed that ensuring the quality and integrity of internal examinations in Eswatini's primary schools remains a significant challenge. Five key factors were identified as potentially compromising the fairness, reliability, and validity of the examinations and these are; limited resources, lack of second opinion in prepared exam papers, inadequate standardization, subjectivity in marking, and weak supervision of exams. Addressing these challenges is crucial for improving student learning outcomes, building trust in the education system, and strengthening assessment practices. Recognising the need for quality assurance in internal examinations, the study emphasises the importance of extensive training for both teachers and principals. Consequently, the study recommends regular implementation of training programs specifically tailored to equip teachers and principals with the necessary skills and knowledge to manage school-based assessments.

Keywords: Internal examinations, Quality assurance, Assessment, Standardization, Reliability, Validity

315 Investigating Teachers' Vocabulary Instructional Practices in Response to Examination ESwatini

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Abstract

Summative Assessment aims to provide evaluation, feedback and reports on students learning. It provides information about learners' performance in their academics. Following recurring vocabulary problems cited in the yearly ECESWA reports, this qualitative study investigated English as a second language teachers' instructional practices as they responded to ECESWA's final examination reports about vocabulary. The objectives of the study were; to find out ESL teachers' perspectives about ECESWA reports on vocabulary; investigate ESL teachers' vocabulary instructional practices in response to ECESWA reports. The study used the qualitative approach. Ten participants from two schools were selected. Simple random sampling of schools and purposive sampling of participants was used. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews, using open-ended questions. Content analysis was used to analyse data. Findings revealed that not all teachers were aware of the yearly ECESWA reports that, often than not, stated that candidates could not demonstrate accurate vocabulary usage which ultimately had a significant negative impact on candidates' performance in the subject. Teachers who knew about that report mentioned that even though they were willing to employ different strategies to teach vocabulary, time was not permitting. Few teachers considered extensive reading a basis for enlarging vocabulary size. They pointed out that most learners were not self- driven to practice extensive reading.

It was concluded that teachers did not have enough time to cover a wide range of vocabulary in class. Classroom activities could not adequately cater for all factors that contribute to vocabulary growth. The recommendation was, to expect improved performance on vocabulary usage, teachers needed to cultivate the culture of extensive reading on all learners instead of relying on classroom activities only; and teachers needed to keep abreast with current strategies on instilling extensive reading on all learners.

Keywords: Vocabulary, assessment, examination report



316 SiSwati teachers' use of Junior Certificate Examination Report for SiSwati paper 1: Creative writing skills

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Abstract

To ensure quality during teaching and learning of the mother tongue, SiSwati, the Examinations Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) provides feedback on the learners' performance. The purpose is to inform teachers on the learners' achievement outcomes. The main aim of this study was to examine SiSwati teachers' use of Junior Certificate (JC) Examination Report for SiSwati paper 1. Its objectives were to ascertain teachers' knowledge of JC Examination Report for SiSwati Paper 1, other syllabus documents that inform the examination report and how teachers use the feedback from the examination report. It used interpretivism paradigm, qualitative research approach and case study design. Document analysis and semi-structured interviews were used to generate data. A document analysis guide with four (4) items and a four (4) item semi-structured interview guide, both designed by the researcher were used to generate data. Purposive sampling was used to select two (2) schools under Manzini region, peripheral cluster, six (6) teachers were used as participants. Data was analyzed using content analysis. The findings revealed that teachers were made aware of the JC Examination Report for SiSwati Paper 1 during workshops and through Heads of Departments. It is useful in that it reveals candidates' common errors and expected responses. Teachers reported that they used it to prepare learners for the final examination, not to inform their teaching practices. Consequently, the report has recurrent suggestions. Some teachers also showed poor understanding of the link between the JC SiSwati Assessment Syllabus and the examination report. The same thing applies to the differences between the JC Teaching Syllabus for SiSwati and the Assessment Syllabus. It was concluded that teachers had limited time to attend the issues raised in the examination report. It is recommended that the examination report be read and understood alongside the teaching and assessment syllabus.

Keywords: Examination report, assessment syllabus, quality assurance

317 Use of Electronic Systems in National Examinations in Southern African Countries: The Case of

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Abstract

The Examinations Council of Zambia has over the years been embarking on the automating its processes. This is reflected in the institutions' strategic plan which states 'Zambia is part of the global community where the use of ICT's is growing and impacting on the commercial and social fabric of communities across the globe. Through the SAAEA Research Forum, the ECZ conducted research to explore the use of e-systems and how this has impacted the operations. The main objective was to investigate the use of E-Systems in national examinations. The study employed a descriptive Survey design. The target population was the ECZ employees in various departments and units, and stakeholders who included head of schools, teachers, parents and learners. The total sample size was fifty (50) comprising of Fifteen (15) ECZ employees, and Thirty-five (35) stakeholders from six (6) provinces . However, forty-two (42) responded to the questionnaires comprising of Thirteen (13) institution members and 32 stakeholders, bringing the response rate to 92 percent. Data was collected through questionnaires, interview and document analysis. The findings revealed that there were a number of innovations centred around the use of e-systems in the operations of the institution. Among the e-systems innovations at the council included the use of e-registration, e-payment of examinations fees, e-results capture and transfer, e-management of examiners, e-statements of results, the e- item bank. The ECZ was also developing e-certificates. The council was also in the process of automating its quality assurance processes (audit). These systems have brought about a number of benefits in terms of effectiveness and efficiency. For instance, the reduction in missing marks and low error rates, minimised centres; under or over payment, and has shortened the time it takes in processing and release of results. However, there are still some teething issues in the use of e-systems by some stakeholders, centres around internet connectivity in some parts of the country as well as low computer skills in some stakeholders. The Council has established a support desk to mitigate some of the challenges.

Keywords: e-systems, e-registration, e-payment, e-statement of results, e-management of examiners



Sub Theme 4

Examinations within Competency-Based Education

401 Teachers' Perceptions On "Assessment Of Learning" In Competency Based Education (CBE) In The Primary Schools Of Eswatini

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Abstract

This study sought to explore teachers' perceptions on assessment of learning in Competency Based Education (CBE) in the primary schools of Eswatini. The objectives of the study were to explore teachers' perceptions about the assessment of learning in CBE, explore the challenges experienced by teachers during assessment of learning in CBE. The constructivism theory was used to underpin in the study. The study was located in the interpretivist research paradigm, where qualitative research approach was chosen which applied a case study design. Semi structured interviews were conducted on a purposive sample of 8 primary school teachers from 4 schools conveniently selected from Mbabane CBD. Data were analysed using the thematic analysis and conclusions were drawn. The findings of the study revealed that teachers have unfavourable perceptions towards the practices of assessment of learning in CBE. The results further revealed that teachers' assessments of learning in the primary schools focus more on the theoretical part than what learners are competent to perform. Teachers lack strategies and skills to enable learners to be responsible for their own learning. Teachers' still give priority to passing of examinations rather than developing learners' competences. The study concluded that teachers' lacked clarity on competence-based assessment in the primary schools. The study therefore, recommends that in-service trainings for teachers be routinely done to orient teachers to assessments to be in line with CBE.

Keywords: Competency Based Education (CBE), competency-based assessment, perceptions, assessment of learning.

402 Investigating The Use Of Performance Based Evaluation Rubrics As An Assessment Tool In Competency-Based Education.

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Abstract

Rubrics are being used in a wide variety of disciplines in education to evaluate assessments and provide feedback to learners. This study seeks to investigate the practicality of performance based evaluation rubrics as an assessment tool in Competency Based Education. . The study is based on the following research questions: What are the experiences of primary school teachers in assessing learners in Competency Based Education? How do primary school teachers assess learners using the performance based evaluation rubric in Competency-Based Education? What challenges do primary school teachers face when assessing learners using performance-based evaluation rubric? Framed within Foundational Model of Formative Assessment, the study adopted the interpretivist research paradigm which used qualitative research approach and the multiple case study design. The sample comprised of ten (10) teachers who were purposively selected from five (5) schools. Data was generated through the use of semi-structured interview guides and an open-ended questionnaire. The data was analysed using content analysis to derived themes in response to the research questions. The findings will be discussed in line with the research questions, literature review, and the theoretical framework where conclusions are to be drawn and recommendations given. Findings revealed that most teachers had negative experiences with the use of performance based evaluation rubrics mainly because of lack of expertise and inadequate time. In the context of large classes, teachers were unable to assess all learners during lessons and rubric was completed on their spare time which might result in unreliable and biased feedback. The performance evaluation rubric as an assessment tool increased the work load for teachers. Study recommends that in-service professional development should be provided to all teachers in developing understanding and skills of assessment.

Keywords: competency based education, formative assessment, performance based evaluation scoring rubric.

403 Assessing Primary-Level Competence In French In Eswatini's New Curriculum Era

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Abstract

With a recent shift to competency-based curricula in Eswatini, evaluating primary school learners' proficiency in key subjects like French requires fresh perspective. This mixed methods study examines how primary-level French assessment aligns to modernized educational priorities under the new framework. A desktop review analyses the content and structure of current French curriculum and examinations against competency building principles. Additionally, a short questionnaire distributed to 20 primary French teachers across Eswatini investigates educator opinion on the validity of existing assessments and gathers suggestions for enhancing assessments to better fit transformed objectives.

Preliminary questionnaire results reveal teacher views favouring more continuous, skills-based assessment over reliance on final summative exams only. Many express needing better resources and training for tracking incremental student progress in applying French listening, speaking, reading and writing abilities. Analysis of the revised curriculum guidelines and a sample of previous French exam questions also shows room for growth towards encouraging creative application of language instead of pure memorization. Study outcomes will include specific recommendations for adapting primary French assessments to emphasize communicative competence and real-world usage, while mapping levels of competency attainment through new diagnostic tools. Enhancing primary French assessment is key for enabling success under the future-focused Eswatini curriculum.

This conference presentation made by two primary school French teachers and their university lecturer shares timely insights on aligning assessments to evolving priorities for primary learners in a key African context for French language education.

Keywords: competency-based curriculum and assessment, Primary school foreign language teaching, learning and assessment, Teacher perspectives, Authentic assessment



404 Tracking Competency-Based Education: History, Implementation, Identified Promoters And Examination

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Abstract

The concept of a Competency-Based Education (CBE) dates to the 1960s and it is continuously changing. CBE has slightly differing meanings around the world and of all these meanings have common elements which are competence needed by a 21st century worker and learner centredness. However, this assertion is viewed differently by other scholars who question whether CBE is bringing anything different and improved from what is in existence, that is, content/subject-based curriculum. The place of public examinations within CBE is still murky. Even literature does not provide much on examination within the context of CBE. Some countries adopted the CBE concept and never implemented it, those who implemented it backtracked within a few years of adopting it. This paper used both a review of researched papers and an argumentative approach. It argues that CBE will not bring much of a solution to the educational needs of developing and underdeveloped countries based on the analysis of researched papers that tracked the history, implementation, identified promoters and administration of examinations within CBE. The purpose of this paper is to analyse researched papers on CBE and argue that it will not solve educational needs of developing countries. Global reforms as a one size fits all can never solve educational needs of all countries of the world as if they are universal. The paper recommends that, it is of paramount importance for any country to subject any global educational reform to vigorous scrutiny before adopting and implementing them.

405 Assessing The Competency-Based Education English Language Curriculum: Experiences Of Lower Primary School Teachers In The Hhohho Region Of Eswatini

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Abstract

The role of assessment in Competency-Based Education is inherently connected and critical to the teaching methods used in the classroom as it is integrated in the learning process. This interpretive qualitative research study which utilised the case study research design, explored the experiences of lower primary school teachers of assessing the Competency-Based Education (CBE) English language curriculum in the Hhohho region of Eswatini. The study engaged nine (9) lower primary school English language teachers who were purposely selected from five (5) schools. The study was based on the following questions; what are the teachers' experiences of assessing the CBE English Language Curriculum at lower primary school level?; how do English language teachers assess the CBE English Language Curriculum at lower primary school level?; what challenges do teachers face when assessing the CBE English Language Curriculum at lower primary school level?; which strategies do English Language teachers use to minimise the challenges encountered when assessing the CBE English Language Curriculum at lower primary school level? The data were collected through classroom observations and face-to-face, semi-structured interviews. The data were analysed using thematic analysis. The study was framed within the Curriculum Implementation Theory by Gross (1971). The study found that the lower primary school teachers' experiences of assessing the CBE English Language curriculum were unpleasant. This is because they were struggling to assess the curriculum as they were not adequately trained on how to successfully implement the CBE curriculum. Another finding was that the assessment was challenging when monitoring student progress because of large class sizes and too much paperwork when it comes to record keeping. The study also found that in order to minimize the challenges, asked resource persons (teachers from other schools to assist them), they also had workshops among themselves, grouping learners as well as tailoring competencies to the individual learner. In line with the findings the study recommended that schools and the MOET carry out regular in-service training on CBE to capacitate the teachers. Another recommendation was that the government should hire more teachers to reduce the teacher-pupil ratio.

Keywords: Assessment, Assessing, Competency-Based Education, Experiences, Lower primary school level, Competencies, Core skills



406 Investigating The Impact Of Competency-Based Assessment Strategies In Outcome-Based Education

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Abstract

Malawi made Continuous Assessment (CA) an integral part of the Outcome-Based Education (OBE) in primary education to address Knowledge and skills mastery gaps which existed because assessment within OBE prefers results than processes. CA, a form of assessment within the Competency-Based Education (CBE) was introduced to evaluate students throughout a prescribed course. However, much as integration of CA in primary education seemed to be a solution to closing mastery gap amongst students, there was need to find out the practicability of CA in primary teacher education. The main goal of this study was to investigate the impact of CBE assessment strategies, particularly CA, on OBE assessments. The study aimed at evaluating the integration of CA in OBE versus the benefits of CBE assessment systems. Specifically, the study investigated the type of assessment tasks used for CA, and the teacher educators' experiences and perceptions towards the use of CA in teacher training colleges. The study employed qualitative approach. Convenience sampling was used which generated a sample size of 12 teacher educators from 6 colleges in southern Malawi. 2023 CA data for 90 pre-service teachers were also used. Data was collected from secondary sources and through interviews and was analysed thematically. The findings revealed that some teacher educators used low order questions while others used high order questions. Some teacher educators indicated that they lack expertise in developing assessment tasks for CA. Time intervals for administration also varied, some administered assessment twice per term. The study concludes that disparities in CA assessment tasks across colleges was as a result of insufficient trainings. With such disparities, it is difficult for integration of CBE assessment, CA in particular, to transform educational assessment in OBE in Malawi. The study calls for a re-orientation of teacher educators. CA processes should be monitored by authorities, probably experts in the field of assessment, to ensure validity and reliability of CA scores.

Keywords: Continuous assessment, competency-based education, outcome-based education

407 Evaluating The Assessment Of SiSwati Oral Literature Within The Competency Based Education (CBE).

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Abstract

The Kingdom of Eswatini is known for its rich culture which is the pride of the EmaSwati. The SiSwati culture is passed on from generation to generation through folktales in which it is deeply rooted. This enhances SiSwati culture learners to learn SiSwati culture with ease. This study sought to evaluate the SiSwati oral literature within the competency based education (CBE). Oral literature is the repository of the critical knowledge, philosophy and wisdom for non-literate society. Curriculum Based Education is the new system used in Eswatini Schools which allows for in-depth assessment of students understanding through interaction and dialogue. However, the SiSwati language and culture is a very broad subject, that needs ample time yet the (CBE) system has shortened some of the concepts especially the folklore and folktales yet our culture is mostly embedded on folktales which contains moral and cultural values. This has led to the elimination of folktales during SiSwati lessons because teachers believe it consumes time when it comes to assessment. The study adopted an interpretive research paradigm where a qualitative approach was used. The study further used a case study design and schools that participated in the study were also purposively selected. Data was collected through interviews and questionnaires. The findings of the study revealed that folktales inform learners of their historical background, origin as well as gain respect for other cultures. It was also a finding in this study that folktales possess a common history with the SiSwati culture to reinforce cultural values or highlight important traditions. SiSwati language culture learners are exposed to folktales and SiSwati culture alike as these are interrelated and inseparable. It was established that SiSwati language culture teachers often encounter challenges when teaching SiSwati culture using folktales. This is because some SiSwati language culture teachers may not be familiar with the content in the folktale as well as some words may be too difficult for the teacher to comprehend. The study concluded that cultural related knowledge enables comprehension and offers a linguistic rich environment for learning and teaching SiSwati culture language. This study established that without folktales, teaching SiSwati language culture is insufficient. For SiSwati language culture learners, having folktales properly assessed in teaching and learning is so advantageous. Therefore, it was recommended that SiSwati be allocated enough assessment time so as to attain quality results as well as enrich learner's oral literature knowledge. Additionally, curriculum designers should add a reasonable number of folktales in the SiSwati syllabus and devise proper assessment plans for teachers to follow.

Keywords: Folktales, culture, Language proficiency and Language acquisition



408 Assessment Used To Measure Practical Skills In Competence Based Curriculum In Primary Schools In The Shiselweni Region In Eswatini

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Abstract

Curriculum change is a pre-occupation of all countries, regardless of their political, social or economic status. Eswatini adopted competency based education in 2019 after a comprehensive study that indicated that the objective based education did not cater for all learners. The purpose of this study was to explore the assessment used to measure a Competency Based Curriculum in primary schools in selected schools in the Shiselweni region. The study was guided by the following research objectives, identify the assessment modes used in the implementation of competency-based curriculum in primary schools, determine the adequacy of resources for the assessment of the implementation of competence based curriculum in primary schools, Assess the teacher's skills and competencies in assessing competence-based curriculum. A Sequential Exploratory Mixed Method employing both qualitative and quantitative data collection techniques were employed. The target population for the study were teachers teaching in eight primary schools (N= 120) Data were collected using a semi-structured interview guide and document analysis for qualitative data. Focus Group discussion was used to generate items for the survey questionnaire. A sample of 92 teachers was drawn from the population using simple random sampling technique. The findings revealed that assessment skills in Competence Based Curriculum are not satisfactory. The mode of assessment used in schools was pen and paper. Lack of learning resources and large class sizes pose a challenge in the assessment of practical skills. The study concluded that most teachers lacked competence in assessing practical skills. The study recommended that the In-service department should prepare a document on assessment of practical skills and hold in service courses to equip teachers with skills they need to handle Competence Based Curriculum.

Keywords: assessment, competency based education, curriculum, practical skills

409 NASCA Pass Requirements: Lessons From International Practices

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Abstract

Umalusi plays a pivotal role in maintaining and enhancing qualification standards within the General and Further Education and Training Qualifications Sub-framework (GFETQSF). This paper focuses on the anticipated National Senior Certificate for Adults (NASCA) at National Qualification Framework (NQF) level 4, by exploring possible unique pass requirement approaches for this qualification. The paper aims to examine pass requirement approaches for NASCA within the GFETQSF, considering its distinct character, structure, outcomes, and systemic fit regarding its purpose to empower and provide access for adults. Utilising a qualitative approach through document analysis, this paper investigates international practices, mainly the General Education Development (GED) Test and the High School Equivalency Test (HiSET) to derive insights into setting pass requirements. The GED and the HiSET offer standardized test scores without class attendance and school-based assessment requirements, these align with NASCA's unique characteristics. Based on the analysis, the paper found that both the GED and HiSET use the score criteria to set their pass requirements. It also found that the tests in both qualifications are aligned with the most recent college and career readiness standards for adults. Therefore, the paper recommends that NASCA draws its pass requirements approach from both the GED and HiSET, to fairly provide adults with an opportunity to obtain their high school equivalent certificate to access higher education and the world of work.

Keywords: Pass Requirements, NASCA, GED, HiSET, Adult Qualifications.



410 A Comparative Analysis Of Outcome Based Education And Competency Based Education Assessments: A Case Study Of Se-lected Primary Schools In Eswatini

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Abstract

Prompted by the shift from Outcome-Based Education (OBE) to Competency-Based Education (CBE), this study aimed to understand how Upper Primary Phase teachers navigated the assessment of pupils at the Upper Phase of primary schooling. Guided by Constructivism and working within the interpretive paradigm, this qualitative study employed individual interviews with ten (10) teachers as a primary data generation tool. Focus group discussions and document analysis were also utilized to validate and acquire an in-depth understanding of the data initially generated from the interviews. The objectives of the study were: to establish Upper Primary Phase teachers' perceptions of Competency-Based Education and to explore the experiences of Upper Primary Phase teachers on the assessment of Competency-Based Education. Data were analysed using Thematic Analysis, which revealed that some of the participants did not understand the difference between Outcome-Based Assessment (OBA) and Competency-Based Assessment (CBA). Moreover, participants' assessment practices were still heavily influenced by the formerly used OBA methods. Moreover, due to their own inadequacies in using formative assessment techniques in CBE, teachers were not confident that pupils do develop the desired competencies and skills. In light of these findings, the study recommends that teacher-student ratios be considered for efficient and sufficient OBE assessment, and that in order to effectively carry out CBAs, multiple assessors per class be made available, which translates to the dire need for more trained teachers on CBA.

Keywords: Outcome-Based Assessment; Competency-Based Assessment; Competency-Based Education; Outcome-Based Education; Constructivism

411 Eswatini Teachers' Practices Of Assessment Of Competency Based Education (CBE) In The Teaching Of French Foreign Language At Primary School

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Abstract

In the years 2019-2020, the education sector has experienced an immense transformation, due to CBE, which is pursued vigorously within the education sector. In this article, I first examine if there is pedagogical renewal of assessment practices in the Middle Primary Phase, Grades 3 and 4. Secondly, I investigate the role and teacher competencies needed to accomplish the CBE goal. Thirdly I propose ways to design a rich environment for alternative assessment. The study will target 20 primary schools located in all four regions of the country and 20 teachers. Moreover, it will assume a mixed method research design, both quantitative and qualitative modes of inquiry. An online structured questionnaire and will be developed to gather data needed, semi structured interviews and documentary technique. The data will be analysed using content analysis.

Keywords: Assessment, French as a foreign language (FFL), Primary education, Eswatini.



412 Assessment Skills Needed By Agriculture Teachers For The Practical Component Of Eswatini Primary Certificate

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Abstract

The assessment of the practical component of Agriculture requires teachers to possess special skills. Unfortunately, there has been no study that has been conducted on the skills that must be possessed by markers in order to effectively assess the practical component of Agriculture in Eswatini. Therefore, the study seeks to identify the assessment skills needed by agriculture teachers for the practical component in Eswatini. A phenomenological qualitative research design employing an interview and document analysis in data collection will be used. The target population will be past and present examination markers for the agriculture practical paper [Paper 2] of the Eswatini Primary Certificate. Trustworthiness will be ensured by credibility, transferability, dependability and confirmability. Credibility will be ensured by the triangulation of both data collection (interview and document analysis) and data sources (examination markers and documents); debriefing and member checks. Transferability will be established by thick description on the concept of assessing a practical subject. Dependability will be established through triangulation and audit trail. Lastly, confirmability will be addressed by audit trail where by the researchers will ensure that the findings, interpretations and recommendations are supported by the data. Ethical considerations will be ensured informed consent, confidentiality, privacy and autonomy. Data will be analysed using thematic analysis.

Keywords: assessment, agriculture practical, examination markers, phenomenological research, Thematic analysis



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