

Use of Instructional Methods Developing Higher Order Thinking Skills by Business Studies Teachers in Eswatini

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Abstract

Higher order thinking (HOTs) is the ability to transfer knowledge, think critically, and solve problems (Collins, 2014). However, there is no study conducted on the analysis of HOTs in Business Studies in the Kingdom of Eswatini yet the subject is the most poorly performed. Therefore, this study sought to determine the extent to which teachers use the instructional methods that are prescribed in the Eswatini Business Studies curriculum to develop higher order thinking skills in learners. A mixed method approach and convergent parallel design were used. Stratified random sampling technique was used to select seven teachers for participation in the study. An observation schedule having a 5-point Likert scale, face-to-face interview guide and document analysis protocol was used in data collection. Quantitative data were analysed using descriptive statistics such as mean, frequencies and percentages. Thematic analysis was used to analyse qualitative data. The findings of the study indicated that Business Studies teachers rely more on instructional methods which develop lower order thinking skills (LOTs) rather than higher order thinking skills (HOTS). The study concluded that a majority of the Business Studies teachers use Question and answer method, lecture method, and teacher-led discussion method. Question and answer method was the most used, even though teachers were asking learners closed-ended questions. Business Studies teachers did not use most of the instructional methods that are recommended for the teaching of Business Studies subject. The study concluded that the extent of using instructional methods prescribed by the curriculum to develop HOTs is inadequate and unsatisfactory. Therefore, Business Studies learners are not prepared well to succeed in EGCSE examination, the world of work and life in general. It was recommended that cluster workshops be conducted to help teachers understand how the instructional methods that potentially develop HOTS are applied using the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy.

Keywords

Business Studies, Eswatini General Certificate in Secondary Education, Instructional Methods, Higher Order Thinking

1. Introduction

Persistent global challenges in the 21st century require learners with critical thinking and entrepreneurial skills, and learners with an ability to communicate effectively, innovate, and solve problems through collaboration (UNESCO, 2013; Scotts, 2015; Pretorius et al., 2017). To address the societal business challenges, Business Studies learners are required to develop high-level thinking skills. This will enable the learners to come up with new business ideas in this complex world that is full of uncertainties and unpredictable conditions. Eswatini General Certificate in Secondary Education (EGCSE) Business Studies Syllabus (2018-2019) aims to make learners realize the importance of creativity, innovation, technological change, and the need to adapt to changes in the business environment. Saavedra and Opfer (2012) opined that new instructional methods are needed for 21st century: where learners are given opportunities to apply new knowledge in a variety of contexts.

New instructional methods should be skill-based and work-related to develop the entrepreneurial, problem-solving, critical thinking, and the transfer of knowledge in the uncertain flexible production environment (Collins, 2014). Researchers such as Brookhart (2015), Sowmya (2015) and Shukla (2016) indicated that these skills are developed through the development of higher-order thinking skills (HOTs) in the classroom when learners analyse, interpret, reason out, synthesize, evaluate and create new knowledge from new situation.

The Ministry of Education and Training of Eswatini emphasizes that teachers should engage learners more actively with the use of interactive techniques such as collaborative learning through group tasks, problem-solving; role-play and drama, projects, and field trips (MoET, 2018). The Eswatini Curriculum Framework of 2018 also stated that by nature, learners are creative, imaginative, knowledgeable, skills-oriented, inquisitive, and curious, and have different learning styles. A teacher should make an effort to reach a greater number of learners needs, but should constantly use problem-solving methods and active participation of learners to develop HOTs (MoET, 2018). It is noted that Business Studies curriculum for secondary schools in the Kingdom of Eswatini emphasizes on HOTs. However, the Eswatini General Certificate of Secondary Education (EGCSE) Business Studies examination reports indicated that learners fail to answer questions that require HOTs. Therefore, the aim of this study was to investigate the extent to which Business Studies teachers use the prescribed instructional methods in the Business Studies curriculum for the development of HOTs among senior secondary schools' learners. The following research questions were raised for the study:

- What instructional methods are used by teachers in Business Studies classroom?
- To what extent do the Business Studies teachers use the instructional methods prescribed by the curriculum to develop HOTS?

2. Literature Review

2.1. Theoretical Framework

The study was framed by the Experiential Learning Theory (ELT) postulated by Kolb in 1971 and the Revised Bloom Taxonomy of 2001. The ELT defines learning as the process in which knowledge is created through the transformation of experience. Learning can be achieved through concrete experience during a lesson, reflecting on what had happened in that lesson, generalizing and abstracting based on what happened in that lesson, and then transferring learning into the world of work and general life situations. Concrete experience is about grasping experience and perceiving “new information through experiencing the concrete, tangible, felt qualities of the world, relying on our senses and immersing ourselves in concrete reality” (Kolb, 2001).

The ELT is relevant as HOTS are developed when classroom knowledge is transferred into real life situations. Paul and Mukhopadhyay (2005) stated that educators recognize that practical experience is needed to master any business subject when incorporating a variety of experiential exercises in their teaching. Paul and Mukhopadhyay also mentioned that when Business Studies learners write business plans, develop job descriptions and marketing strategies, analyze business data, design and track performance of investment portfolios; learning become effective. Furthermore, Paul and Mukhopadhyay revealed that instructional strategies in business education include case studies, guest speakers, role play exercises, team/group exercises, business games and simulations, field trips. These instructional methods employ experiential learning techniques in business education classrooms.

In this study, the concrete experience can be a structured activity designed to generate facts related to the lesson objective, e.g. a role-play, business simulated and exercises involving problem-based learning and decision-making activities. Reflective observation is the process of taking in the experience and reflecting on it. It includes both the act of reflecting on one’s own hands-on experiences and the experience of watching others. For example, reflective writing assignments, and reflective discussion represent a variety of means through which students could demonstrate abilities to reflect on their practical experiences. Abstract conceptualization refers to the ability to take experience and relate it to predominant theory or to create new ideas from it. The ELT framework assisted in the collection of data since it talks about the processes and the importance of developing the HOTS through concrete experiences, reflective observations, abstract conceptualization, active experimentation (transformation of knowledge) of business concepts into real-world experiences, which is a focus of this study.

As already mentioned the study was also framed by the Revised Bloom Taxonomy (2001). Marley (2014) observed that the application of the Revised Bloom Taxonomy (2001) enable learners to transfer classroom knowledge into the world of work and general life experiences, through the creation of new information. The Revised Bloom Taxonomy has six levels: Remembering, understanding, applying, analysing, evaluating, and creating. These six levels are further grouped into two categories, namely, the lower-order thinking (LOTs) and higher order thinking skills (HOTs). Analysing, evaluating, and creating are the higher-level thinking skills while the other three levels are lower-order thinking skills (Forehand, 2010).

2.2. Empirical Studies

In Thailand, Shukla (2016) found that in order for higher institutions to develop HOTs among students, instructors should use instructional methods that enable learners to analyse, interpret, reason out, synthesize, and create so to prepare them for effective performance in their work places. Research participants were 126 teachers and 659 students, Mazaro's rubric for specific task and situation to assess the perceived level of higher-order thinking skills among students was used and a questionnaire. Data were analysed using the SPSS version 21, descriptive statistics of the t-test and correlation.

A study conducted by Kai (2009) in Canada found that learner-centred instructional methods were effective in improving critical thinking and metacognitive self-regulation. Likert scale instrument was used, and data were analysed using Pearson Correlation and unpaired 2-tailed student t-test. Wismath and Orr (2015) in a course designed to develop transferable problem-solving skill in Lethbridge in Canada also found that 21st century learners are inclined to learn with peers and learn through the use of technology to produce the information as the result of their collaboration. Instruments were in-class participant observations and focus group. Data were analysed using thematic analyses.

Similarly, in South Africa, Meintjies, Henrico and Kloon (2015) noted that business-simulated set-up for Grade 11 Business Studies enhanced learners' entrepreneurial competencies concerning problem recognition and problem-solving considerably. Data were collected using observations, interviews, and question-based scenarios. Finally, in Eswatini, Magagula (2015) assessed the integration of HOTs in Swaziland senior secondary schools siSwati prose and found that instructional activities rarely integrated HOTs in siSwati prose. Data were collected using a 5-point numerical rating scale, semi-structured interviews and document analysis. Data were analysed using frequencies, percentages and content analysis. Not much inquiry, however on the development of HOTs using the instructional methods that are prescribed by the Business Studies curriculum in Eswatini.

3. Research Methodology

The study used a Mixed-Method research approach employing a convergent pa-

parallel design. The target population of the study was senior secondary school teachers in the Manzini region, teaching Business Studies in Form IV and Form V in the academic year 2019-2020. Stratified sampling method was used to select a sample of seven teachers teaching Business Studies in seven senior secondary schools, in the seven clusters of the Manzini region. From the clusters, the researcher randomly chose one school from each cluster. The researcher accessed the list of schools from the Business Education inspector at the Manzini Regional Education Office (REO). All the senior secondary schools in the Manzini region were categorized into the seven homogeneous groups of clusters, based on the geographical location of the schools. A list of all the names of the schools per cluster was prepared; papers cut into pieces and put in a container. One school from each cluster was randomly selected, making a total of seven (7) schools. In each of the seven (7) selected schools, one teacher teaching Business Studies was randomly chosen in Form IV and V participated in the study. This gave a total of seven (7) teachers.

Three research instruments were developed and used for data collection: observation schedule, face to face interview guide and document analysis protocol. The observation schedule had a 5-point numerical scale for quantitative data collection. The numerical scale was coded and scored as follows: 1 = “not at all”, 2 = “rarely”, 3 = “occasionally”, 4 = “frequently” and 5 = “always”. The seven (7) teachers were observed five (5) times each for the duration of the study. Therefore, the total number of visits is thirty-five (35). During each observation, the researcher wanted to find out the instructional methods used by Business Studies teachers when teaching. The data were recorded using the lesson observation schedule’s 5-point numerical rating scale, to measure the extent of Business Studies teachers using the instructional methods prescribed by the curriculum to develop higher order thinking skills.

The interview guide had questions on the use of prescribed instructional methods to develop HOT skills by Business Studies learners. There were seven teachers that were interviewed. Finally, document analysis protocol also sought to establish the use of the instructional methods in lesson plans by Business Studies teachers. There were 20 lesson plans (5 of the lesson plans were analysed after each lesson during observation and 15 of them were randomly selected to be analysed for the duration of the study) for each of the seven Business Studies teachers. This makes a total of 140 lesson plans documents analysed on the instructional methods used during the period of the study (May to July 2019).

The quantitative data from the 5-point observational numerical scales were analysed using descriptive statistics: means, frequencies and percentages in Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS). Thematic analysis was used to analyse qualitative data from interviews and document analysis.

4. Findings

4.1. Research Question 1

What instructional methods are used by teachers in Business Studies classroom?

Table 1 revealed that the Question and answer method was the most used instructional method (n = 32, 91%). The next popular method was the Case study (n = 26, 74%) and then Lecture method (n = 22, 63%). None of the observed teachers used Films, audio-visuals and Computer-aided teaching to teach, as well as Field trips and Simulation and Games.

The findings from the interviews also reiterated those from the observation. The table also depicted that all the teachers (n = 7, 100%) interviewed stated that Question and Answer was the most used instructional method. However, the teachers picked Lecture (n = 6, 86%) and discussion (n = 6, 86%) methods as the second most used instructional methods. The table further indicated that the least used instructional methods include Problem-Based learning (n = 1, 14%), role playing (n = 1, 14%), team teaching (n = 2, 29%) and brain storming (n = 2, 29%). The findings revealed that teachers are not using instructional methods that can help learners develop HOTS skills. The teachers were also quoted verbatim. One of the interviewed teachers said “I never used problem-based method; I don’t know how to teach using it”. Finally, **Table 1** also presented the instructional methods used by Business Studies teachers as observed from the lesson plans. The findings confirmed those from the observations and interviews as the Question and answer method was commonly used (n = 126, 90%). Other commonly used instructional methods were Lecture method (n = 89, 64%) and Discussion (n = 75, 54%).

Table 1. Instructional methods used by Business Studies teachers from observation, interview and lesson plans.

Instructional method	Observations (n = 35)		Interviews (n = 7)		Lesson plans (n = 140)	
	f	%	f	%	f	%
Role-Playing	5	14	1	14	0	0
Lecture	22	63	6	86	89	64
Question & Answer	32	91	7	100	126	90
Debates	13	37	3	43	0	0
Brainstorming	6	17	2	29	10	7
Demonstration	12	34	2	0	19	14
Discussion	9	26	6	86	75	54
Case Studies	26	74	3	43	0	0
Peer Tutoring	2	5	0	0	0	0
Research-Based Project	3	9	1	14	0	0
Problem-Based Learning	5	14	0	0	0	0
Team-Teaching	0	0	2	29	0	0
Fieldtrips	0	0	0	0	0	0
Simulation and Business Games	0	0	0	0	0	0
Films, Audiovisuals and Computer-Aided Teaching	0	0	0	0	0	0

The findings revealed that the Question and answer method is the dominant instructional method used by the Business Studies teachers from the three data collection methods. Unfortunately, the instructional methods that develop HOTS such as Research-Based Project, Problem-Based Learning, Team-teaching, Fieldtrips, Peer Tutoring and Simulation and Business games were the least used.

4.2. Research Question 2

To what extent do the Business Studies teachers use the instructional methods prescribed by the curriculum to develop HOTS?

The findings on the extent of use of prescribed instructional methods by the Business Studies teachers to develop HOTS were presented guided by the three data collection methods: Observation schedule, interview guide and document analysis protocol. **Table 2** indicated that from the observation, Question and answer method (n = 32, 91%) was always used by teachers of Business Studies. The findings of the study also revealed that Case study method (n = 26, 74%) was used frequently. However, the prescribed instructional methods that develop HOT skills such as Problem-Based Learning (n = 5, 14%); Project-Based Learning (n = 3, 9%), Role-Playing (n = 5, 14%), and Brainstorming (n = 6, 17%) were among methods that were not used at all by the Business Studies teachers.

Table 2. Extent of using instructional methods prescribed in the SGCSE curriculum to develop HOTS from the observation.

Instructional methods	Extent				
	Not at all	Rarely	Occasionally	Frequently	Always
Problem-Based Learning	5 (14%)	0	0	0	0
Project-Based Learning	3 (9%)	0	0	0	0
Simulation & Game	0	0	0	0	0
Role-Playing	5 (14%)	0	0	0	0
Use of Film, Audiovisual and Computer Teaching	0	0	0	0	0
Peer Tutoring	2 (6%)	0	0	0	0
Fieldtrips	0	0	0	0	0
Group Discussion	0	9 (26%)	0	0	0
Case Studies	0	0	0	26 (74%)	0
Debates	0	13 (37%)	0	0	0
Question and Answer	0	0	0	0	32 (91%)
Brainstorming	6 (17%)	0	0	0	0

Score Interpretation: 1 - 19 = Not at all; 20 - 39 = Rarely; 40 - 59 = Occasionally; 60 - 79 = Frequently; 80 - 100 = Always.

Table 3 presents findings from the face to face interviews on the extent to which the prescribed instructional methods were used by the Business Studies teachers. The table reveals that three instructional methods were always (n = 7, 100%) used by teachers when teaching Business Studies: Case Study, Discussion, Question and Answer methods. Disappointingly, the prescribed instructional methods such as Role-playing, Problem-based learning; Project-based learning; Peer tutoring; Simulation and games; and the Use of film, audio-visual and computer teaching among others were not used.

Finally, **Table 4** presents findings from the document analysis on the extent to which the prescribed instructional methods were used by the Business Studies teachers. The table reveals that there were five prescribed instructional methods that were planned by the teachers. The instructional methods (Question and answer, Discussion, and Brainstorming) developing HOT skills (n = 211, 66%) were more than the instructional methods (lecture and demonstration) that develop LOT skills (n = 108, 34%). Among the instructional methods that develop HOT skills, the Question and answer method (n = 126, 39%) was dominating followed by the discussion method (n = 75, 24%).

Table 3. Extent of using instructional methods prescribed in the SGCSE curriculum to develop HOTs from the interview.

Instructional method used	PBL	CS	RP	DISC	PT	DEB	BRS	PJBL	S + G	F + CT	FT	Q + A
Number of teachers	0	7	0	7	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	7
Usage (%)	0	100	0	100	0	29	0	0	0	0	0	100

Key: PBL: Problem-Based Learning; CS: Case Studies; RP: Role Playing; DISC: Discussion; PT: Peer-Tutoring; DEB: Debates; BRS: Brainstorming; PJBL: Project-Based Learning; S + G: Simulation + Games; F + CT: Film, Audio-Visual + Computer Teaching; FT: Field Trips; Q + A: Question and Answer. **Scale:** 0 - 19 = Not at all; 20 - 39 = Rarely; 40 - 59 = Occasionally; 60 - 79 = Frequently; 80 - 100 = Always.

Table 4. Extent of using the instructional methods that develop both HOTs and LOTs from lesson plans.

Instructional method	T1	T2	T3	T4	T5	T6	T7	Total	%
Question and answer	20	20	15	11	20	20	20	126	39
Brainstorming	0	0	0	0	10	0	0	10	3
Discussion	7	20	0	6	10	20	12	75	24
Instructional methods for HOTs	27	40	15	17	30	40	32	211	66
Demonstration	0	2	5	1	6	0	5	19	6
Lecture	20	7	20	7	0	15	20	89	28
Instructional methods for LOTs	20	36	25	14	18	40	49	108	34
Total	47	49	40	25	46	55	57	319	100

Scale: 0 - 19 = Not at all; 20 - 39 = Rarely; 40 - 59 = Occasionally; 60 - 79 = Frequently; 80 - 100 = Always.

5. Discussion of Findings

The findings of the study revealed that Question and answer was the most used instructional method by the teachers when teaching Business Studies. Other methods used are Lecture and Discussion. Amongst these instructional methods used; Question and answer and Discussion develop the HOT skills in the learners. However, it can be noted that the way these methods were used during the lessons was teacher-centred and they seem not to develop HOTs in learners. They were also not encouraging learners to transfer knowledge into new situations. Most questions asked by the teachers did not promote learners' ability to make suggestions or to create their knowledge. Most of the discussions were teacher-led, not the group discussions that are controlled by the learners themselves. Few teachers used Case studies and Debates instructional methods. Learner-centred methods such as students-led Discussion; Problem-solving learning; Research-based projects; Peer tutoring; use of Field trips among others were rarely used by the teachers. Some of the instructional methods observed during the lessons were not the ones that were planned for in their lesson plans. For example, some teachers would write group discussion in their lesson plans while in the classroom they would use teacher-led discussions.

The findings of the study further revealed that the following instructional methods were less used yet they are prescribed in the curriculum to develop the HOT skills: Problem-based learning, Role playing, Team teaching, Brainstorming, Films, audio-visuals and computer-aided teaching, Field trips, Simulation and games.

The findings of the study were consistent with those for Sithole (2010), who found that teacher-centred pedagogy was the dominant mode of instruction used to teach Business Studies in Botswana junior secondary schools even though curriculum planners advocated for a paradigm shift from teaching to learning through learner-centred entrepreneurial-directed teaching methods for Business Studies in Botswana. A descriptive survey design, a questionnaire and interviews were used in this study. Similarly, MoET (2018) Curriculum Framework in Eswatini advocated that SGCSE curriculum; Business Studies included has to be taught using the learner-centred method instead of the teacher-centred method where learners are passive. The MoET (2018) curriculum framework document prescribed for learner-centred methods that include Problem-solving, Project-based learning, Collaboration learning among others. These methods tend to develop problem-solving skills and critical thinking skills in learners.

On the extent for the use of prescribed instructional methods; the findings of the study revealed that the Question and answer is always used by the Business Studies teachers to develop HOT skills on the learners. The Case study and Discussion were considered to be frequently used instructional methods that also develop the HOT skills in the learners. However, the findings of the study revealed that the following instructional methods were not or rarely used: Problem-Based Learning; Project-Based Learning; Role-Playing; Brainstorming; Peer

tutoring; Simulation and games; and the use of Film, audio-visual and computer teaching.

A study by [Vijayarajnam \(2012\)](#) found that adopting real-world tasks for students to work in small groups energizes language classes and helps students relate theory with practice. The study was on exploring the effectiveness of group problem-solving in developing student's HOTS, problem-solving and team skills through project in Malaysia international university. The study established that this practice unconsciously develops HOTS in students. Practice for students adds credibility to the task and provides an opportunity for the students to showcase their problem-solving, teamwork and other interpersonal skills. Instruments used were questionnaire, interviews, observation and document analysis.

The findings of the study were consistent with those of [Saavedra and Opfer \(2012\)](#), who reported that the use of student-generated ideas, student participation in class with high levels of cognitive questioning and answering, and student interaction during a course were educational practices that help to develop critical thinking and HOTS skills. [Tikhonova and Kudionova \(2015\)](#) study where they used experimental design together with a post-study questionnaire, found that critical thinking skills is enhanced by instructional methods such as using online discussion to promote deeper thinking, question and challenging students through individual and team presentations in class. Consequently, the Eswatini [MoET \(2018\)](#) through the curriculum framework document recommended that SGCSE curriculum should be taught using problem-based learning, group projects, field trips, and all learner-centred methods to develop critical thinking skills, creativity and problem-solving skills in learners. [Meintjies, Henrico and Kroon, \(2015\)](#) also emphasized the use of problem-based learning in the teaching of Business Studies to develop entrepreneurial knowledge among learners.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

It was concluded that a majority of the Business Studies teachers in the study used Question and answer, Lecture and discussion methods. Question and answer method was the most used, even though teachers were asking learners closed-ended questions. Business Studies teachers did not use most of the instructional methods that are recommended for the teaching of Business Studies subject. The study also concluded that the extent of using instructional methods prescribed by the curriculum to develop HOTS is inadequate and unsatisfactory. However, only few teachers used Case study method and Debates when teaching Business Studies.

The study recommended that the Business Education regional inspectors need to organize cluster workshops whereby Business Studies teachers could be trained on the use of instructional methods that are prescribed in the EGCSE curriculum to develop HOTS among learners. Teachers could also be assisted on how they could utilize local materials to develop their case studies when teach-

ing. During cluster workshops, teachers can be assisted with the application of the Revised Bloom Taxonomy in the teaching of Business Studies. There is a need for teachers to apply all the higher-order cognitive levels of the Revised Bloom's Taxonomy (analysing, evaluating and creating) when teaching every Business Studies topic.

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Conflicts of Interest

The authors declare no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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