

## **Students Critical Thinking Skills and Thinking Disposition: Reflection of Training Institutions and Schools in ESwatini**

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**Abstract:** Critical thinking skills are considered as a valuable outcome of the ESwatini education system and considered a crucial aspect of the competence which citizens' need to possess. This study examines students' use of critical thinking skills and thinking disposition in the 2018 history examination. 579 students' history transcripts drawn from paper two of the fall 2018 were used as data. Content analysis was used as data collecting tool and as an analysing instrument. This was facilitated by the Parkins and Murphy 2006 model for identifying engagement in critical thinking. The study finding indicated that 264 of 579 or 46% of students had challenges in displaying critical thinking skills and thinking disposition. Their responses were characterised by the absence of their mind to assess and scrutinise the exam items before responding to them. The 46% of the students were only capable of stating the issues within the sources and making judgements but not able to express an understanding of the concepts on the exam items and making inference, showing connections among ideas, drawing appropriate conclusions by explaining the connections and non-connections among and between the sources. It is concluded that the application of critical thinking and thinking disposition remain a challenge in schools and training institutions because almost all the analysed students' transcripts depicted that they had some difficulties in displaying the skills in their responses. It could be further concluded that critical thinking skills and thinking disposition is not one subject or history subject problem but an institutional problem because these concepts cut across disciplines. It may be recommended that training institutions' and schools programmes need to be revisited to ensure that they support students to develop literacy in history. Exam designers should ensure that subject curriculum, instructions and the assessment communicate the same expectations, no culture of ambiguity on the exam papers and items.

**Key words:** Critical thinking skills, Exam transcripts, Thinking disposition

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### **I. Introduction**

*Although a higher education is traditionally thought to produce literate and sophisticated thinkers, there is growing awareness that many students are not leaving college or training institutions clothed with the literacy, intellectual understanding and depth of insight symbolised by the degrees they have earned (Chaffee, 1992 p 2).* More often than not intellectual understanding and depth of insight are depicted on students' capability to display their critical thinking skills and thinking disposition.

The number of students earning their degrees has been rising, but the number of who display critical thinking skills remain elusive (Chaffee, 1992), yet learning to think critically is an essential and powerful vehicle for developing literacy abilities and in constructing knowledge at all levels of education systems. This notes that schools and training institutions are related or intertwined; they mirror each other and have a responsibility to provide the relevant skills and knowledge to students and society. Students' achievement in schools and training institutions represents, for many the end products of the education process. As a result, it is important that schools and training institutions deliver as true reflection of students' learning and skills, as much as possible. The intimate relationship of schools and training institutions is demonstrated on the training of teachers or institutions' capabilities to train teachers and in their effort in refining students' critical thinking skills and thinking disposition (Facione, 2007). Thus, this study examines students' use of critical thinking skills and thinking disposition in the 2018 Eswatini history examination. There is little investigation into free form question often posed in subjects such as history (O'Donovan, 2005), where questions have been designed to assess certain cognitive capacities for analyses, recall, persuasion, logical reasoning and theoretical and practical

arguments. These need to be assessed in an examination to determine students' level of critical thinking skills and thinking disposition.

Critical thinking refers to a variety of interacting cognitive activities which may include exploring issues from multiple perspectives; discussing issues in an organised way, carefully analysing situations with appropriate questions, solving problems and making informed decisions, organising ideas and evaluating them (Chaffee, 1992), all these are the products of training institutions and schools. These institutions are expected to enhance and accelerate the development of students' reading and speaking skills, and inferential skills. They are expected to promote the culture of reflective practices among students and professionals. Herzog (2004) noted that professionals have to improve the reflective and critical thinking of their students. Professionals at training institutions and schools are expected to reflect on their practices and programmes on how they influence students' critical thinking skills acquisition and disposition. Black, (2004) noted that for students to become critical thinkers teachers must be good thinkers themselves, they should have the spirit of disposition towards learning, a prerequisite to developing students' critical thinking. Any educator, school and training institution has to be concerned about how its programmes shape and prepare students to develop critical thinking skills in order to fit in today and future interconnected and challenging world, which require the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills (Perkins and Murphy, 2006).

Programmes in training institutions have to be embracing in terms of critical thinking skills related content and methods of teaching, assessment items and procedures. Teaching and assessing critical thinking skills is an essential matter in any educational establishment or system (Facione, 2007), because of their influence on students' future participation in their work places. Halpern, (1999) re-emphasised the importance of equipping students with critical thinking skills and disposition. Halpern also noted that teaching and assessing critical thinking skills is more than teaching or assessing students how to use the skills in an appropriate context, it also involves teaching them how to develop an attitude to recognise when a skill is needed or could be used and the willingness to exert mental effort needed to apply it. Thus, it is important to examine students use of critical thinking skills and thinking disposition in 2018 Eswatini history examination. This examination requires students to display their skills in explaining or making something clear or easy to understand, provide reasons or explanations, explore, and investigate something in order to learn about it.

The ESwatini Ministry of Education and Training has recognised the need to integrate critical thinking instructions into the education system in general and into the history curriculum in particular (Ministry of Education and Training Curriculum Framework, 2014; Ministry of Education and Training Sector Policy, 2011). The ESwatini Ministry of Education expects schools and training institutions to teach and assess critical thinking skills. Critical thinking skills refer to the ability to develop and analyse arguments based on resources (Williams et al., 2004). It is also about a variety of concepts and abilities; gender conscious, culture conscious, health conscious (Ministry of Education and Training Sector Policy, 2011; Mazer et al. 2008; Facione, 1989).

The introduction of the critical thinking instruction into the education system and in history curriculum has become a crucial element of the education system in ESwatini and elsewhere (Ministry of Education and Training Sector Policy, 2011; Hunt et al., 2005). The history related art of communicating, interpreting sources is highly recognised within the ESwatini education system and elsewhere (Brown and Stuart, 2004) noted that most academics had agreed on the importance of critical thinking skills and communication as springboard for effective learning and sustainable development. Machine and Stevens (2004) noted that education matters for different reasons. It equips people with skills for their future life, generating economic and non-economic benefits to the individual person and society.

Researchers have agreed that critical thinking skills (CT) are necessary for everyone, not only in the classroom but also as a lifelong surviving skill for all (Perkins and Murphy, 2006). The presence of courses such as history provides an ideal context for the application of critical thinking skills because it provides students with opportunities to discuss and debate historical-oriented matters. History –related subjects content also provides an ideal chance for developing communication skills among the students (van den Broek, 2010). Herzog, (2004) stated that critical thinking skills are encouraged and strengthened through subject content that promotes the creation and the evaluation of arguments.

The creation of a highly skilled workforce was part of the ESwatini government vision, to be achieved through teaching different competencies such as esoteric knowledge and skills, such as critical thinking skills. Esoteric knowledge allows individual to make connections between objects and events that are not obviously related and to project beyond the presents to the future or alternative world (Bongo et al., (2011) noted that esoteric knowledge is embraced through subject content or text.

Critical thinking skills are considered as a valuable outcome of education systems (Bongo et al., (2011), and considered a crucial aspect of the competence which citizens' need to possess to effectively participate in key national economic related decisions. Critical thinking skills remain one of the key aspects of the ESwatini national education framework, government central prescribed education policy agenda necessary for enhancing competitiveness in globalising the economy. This depends on the workforce or professionals who

are in command of critical thinking skills and these are products of an effective examination assessment and education system. The ESwatini government's effort on improving the education system or teaching profession by putting more emphasis on supporting teaching pedagogical discourses, which include ensuring that critical thinking skills are embedded on curriculum pedagogical discourses, such as how the curriculum is taught and how examination instructions and items are crafted is highly appreciated.

## **II. Background**

### **ESwatini Junior Certificate examination**

Students who sit for the Junior Secondary are the ones who have completed the secondary phase of the education system in ESwatini (forms 1-3). Students are examined from a wider range of subjects including history. They are assessed from diversified subjects, which are studied in more depth compared to the Primary Certificate examination. The Junior Certificate examination is an external summative assessment designed to make an objective assessment of learners' different knowledge and skills, including critical thinking skills. Exam items and instructions must be designed in a manner that allows students to display their critical thinking skills and disposition.

The Junior Certificate examination may be considered as the first exit level from the education system because after this level some students may start their independent adult life and enter non-formal education, employment or create their own employment (Ministry of Education and Training Sector Policy, 2011; Ministry of Education Curriculum Framework, 2014). Critical thinking skills are expected to be taught and consolidated during this phase of the education system. This is also a critical part of the education system, the students and the state. The examination is expected to maintain its validity status as a national assessment tool. This is important for the credibility of the school graduates and the education system itself. This notes that what is important for today's students in ESwatini and elsewhere is their ability to access and organise information, apply knowledge wisely in current situations, learn, and relearn and use their knowledge to understand matters and solve real problems they face (Halpern, 1999). This is one of the key objectives of teaching history in ESwatini and the training programmes of history teachers is guided by this objective. Schools and training institutions are inextricably related, dynamically interactively. Though schools begin as distinct establishments but they become intertwined at a later stage of their academic development and rapidly become so integrated through different academic related activities.

The intimate relationship between schools and training institutions is clearly demonstrated on the development of their critical thinking-oriented programme content to nurture students towards increasing complex reasoning and analysis (Mark and Relbold, 2005), teaching critical thinking skills is one of the desirable goals of higher education, shaping its curriculum, pedagogy (Halpern, 1999). King and Kitchener, (1994) noted that educators have the responsibility to teach students the habits of mind associated with making interpretive analysis and thoughtful reasoned arguments p 222, and to assess students' arguments through subjects tests and exit examinations.

The history Junior Certificate examination is an assessment oriented process because it involves a series of history sources based inferences, subject knowledge evidence provided by students to support their inferences. Every examination item use involves inferences or interpretation, logical argument and historical knowledge to enhance the conclusion. These require students to display their critical thinking skills and disposition. Thus, this study examines students' use of critical thinking skills and thinking disposition in the 2018 ESwatini history examination.

## **III. Methodology**

This study examines students' use of critical thinking skills and thinking disposition in the 2018 ESwatini history examination. Research has been done into the question answering process for subjects such as mathematics (Pollit, 2002), where responses tend to be brief or one digit and in history (Dlamini, 2018), where the focus was on the end product, the marks not on response processes. There is little investigation into free form question often posed in subjects such as history (O'Donvan, 2005).

Students' history transcripts drawn from paper two of the fall 2018 were used. The instructions of the paper indicated that students were expected to demonstrate many aspects of critical thinking skills in their responses or answers, thus both the question paper and students' responses were used as data.

Content analysis was used as a data collecting tool and as an analysing instrument. This was facilitated by the Parkins and Murphy 2006 model for identifying engagement in critical thinking. This model is characterised by four different categories (Clarification, Assessment, inferences and strategies). However, in this study three of the four categories were used because of the expectations or nature of the exam items. The category of clarification helps in identifying students' capability in stating, clarifying and describing the issues as per the exam item requirement. The assessment category helps in identifying students' engagement in critical thinking through their capabilities to make judgements and provides reasons to substantiate the point or evidence on the

concepts under discussion. The inference category helps in identifying issues, displaying their capabilities in showing connections between and among ideas and concepts in each question and drawing appropriate and convincing conclusion as required by the question.

The application of the model involved reading the history paper two exam paper's instructions, exam items and their arrangement, and students responses in each question. These issues are important because students' capabilities to apply their critical thinking skills could be influenced by them. Paper two was used because it is a source based paper (where sources are used by students to respond to the questions), which challenges them to apply their critical thinking skills and show case or depict their thinking disposition (see the sources questions and below).

**Table 1** Sources for question 2, for Option B: Swaziland from King Sobhuza 1 to King Mswati 111.

<p><b>Source B</b> Missionaries used schools and hospitals to attack some aspects of Swazi society and its values and customs such as polygamy and divination. From a book published in 1981.</p> <p><b>Source C</b> Missionaries built schools and ran hospitals out of the spirit of a humanitarian service but also as an attack on the values of the Swazi society. The Medical mission was to destroy the use of traditional medicine, doctors and diviners. From a history book published in 1981.</p>
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**Source:** Examinations Council of Swaziland History paper 2, 2018

**Table 2** Instructions and Questions for Option B: Swaziland from King Sobhuza 1 to King Mswati 111.

Instructions: Study source B and C and respond to the question

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>How far do these sources agree about the missionary work in Swaziland? Explain your answer using details of the sources</li> </ul>
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**Source:** Examinations Council of Swaziland History paper 2, 2018

Option B of this paper was used because it was chosen by the majority of the students, perhaps because it covered issues familiar to them. Option B focuses on Swaziland from King Sobhuza 1 to King Mswati 111, while option A focused on the struggle for independence in Rhodesia.

All the students' transcripts were analysed in most schools, except in those schools which had more than 80 students who picked option B. In those schools, more than half of the chosen scripts were analysed using the Parkins and Murphy 2006 model (see table 3). The transcripts selected were coded and this aimed at examining students' capabilities to engage in critical thinking skills and thinking disposition and this helped in ascertaining the category or categories which were mostly used. The transcripts helped in ascertaining the students' capabilities to take a stand as required by the question give examples to clarify their stand and support it and make inferences, connections between related and unrelated concepts and ideas from the sources, from their knowledge, experiences and then give defensible perspective and point of view.

Applying this model to students' scripts helped in revealing the critical thinking processes which were mostly used by the students. This is crucial information which teachers and other educators need in deciding which specific skills to encourage and in determining how successful their efforts were in supporting specific skills (Perkins and Murphy, 2006).

#### IV. Target population and Sample

28 schools were randomly sampled and the purposive stratified sampling was used to sample 579 students' scripts. These scripts were from 25 schools because students from the other three schools did not choose Option B, yet the study focuses on students who chose option B. Question one and two of option B was used to examine students' capabilities to use their critical thinking skills and thinking disposition.

**Table 3:** Sampled schools and coding of students' application of the three categories (Clarification, Assessment and Inference), per school in question 1 and 2 of paper two

Schools	Number of students who chose Options A or B	Keys for the codes categories	Observations based on students' responses regarding the application of categories (see Plate 1,2,3 and 4)
1.FUN	A36, B58	.?31, -27	No students had the ability to of making inferences, they only make contradictory statement
2. MHL	A12, B 7	*2, - 5	2 displayed good skills and others depicted lack of inference and contradictory statement
3.LB	A3, B21	*4, .?7, -10	4 displayed good use of skills others depicted lack of inference and contradictory statement
4. SIE	A 19,B37	*13, .?23, -1	13 displayed good skills and others depicted lack of inference and contradictory statement
5.GDS	A26, B7	*4, .?2, -1	4 displayed good skills and others depicted lack of inference and

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			contradictory statement
6.HLUC	A8 , B11	*5, .?2, - 4	<b>5</b> displayed good skills and others depicted lack of inference and contradictory statement
7.STM	A3, B 21	*7, .?13, -1	<b>6</b> displayed good skills and others depicted lack of inference and contradictory statement
8.LAM	A 12, B 34	*14, .?16, -4	<b>14</b> displayed good skill and others depicted lack of inference and contradictory statement
9. STA	A 12, B 30	*12, .?18,	<b>12</b> displayed good skills and others depicted lack of inference and contradictory statement
10. PHUME	A 2, B 4	*2, -2	2 display the skill but Lack of inference
11.MZE	A 23, B 121 (64 of 121)	*31, .?15, -18	<b>31</b> displayed good use of the skill others lack of inference and showed contradictory statement
12. BG	A 16, B 4	-4	Absence of clarity, inferences,
13. HRN	A0, B 18	* 12, .?6,	<b>11</b> displayed use of skills, others lack of inference and contradictory statement
14. LG	A 4, B 21	*8, .?10,-3	<b>8</b> displayed the skills others lack of inference and showed contradictory statement
15. BE	A7, B 80 (48of 80)	*27, .?14, -7	<b>27</b> displayed the skills others lack of inference and showed contradictory statement
16.MK	A0, B8	*6, .?3,-0	<b>6</b> displayed the skill, lack of inference and contradictory statement
17.MDL	A18, B5	*1, .?3, -1	<b>1</b> displayed the skills, others lack of inference and showed contradictory statement
18. LUS	A 0, B 5	*2, .?3, -0	<b>2</b> displayed the skills, lack of inference and contradictory statement
19.MSU	A 5, B 40	*7, .?29, -4	<b>6</b> displayed the skills, others contradictory statements and lack of inference
20.KB	A 5, B23	*10, .?9, - 4	<b>10</b> displayed good use thinking skills, contradictory and lack of inference
21.LC	A 15,B19	*5, .?9, -5	<b>5</b> displayed the skills, others contradictory statements and lack of inference
22.CHR	A 22, B9	*3, .?5, -1	<b>3</b> displayed the skills other had contradictory statement and lack of inference
23.MLB	A 27, B 17	*4, .?12, -1	<b>4</b> good use of thinking skills, others contradictory statements, lack of inference
24.HLAC	A 7, B 20	*14, .?5, -1	<b>14</b> good use of the skills,
25. SNS	A 61, B58	*12, .?29, -17	<b>12</b> displayed good use of the skills, others lack of connection of idea and contradictory statements.
26, 27 and 28. B not chose	-	-	
Total <b>1001</b> students who sit for this exam	<b>579</b> /687 Scripts		

**Key for codes expected categories:** □Students who displayed critical thinking and dispositions; ?Students find it had to display their capabilities in using the assessment and inference categories.

Plate 1 Students' display their critical thinking skills and disposition

Question 2, Option B

Write on both sides of the paper

Both sources agree that missionaries did not only build schools and hospitals to show humanity, but also ~~desired~~ <sup>4/5</sup> to change the values and customs of people in Swaziland. In Source B, missionaries provided schools and hospitals in Swaziland to ~~attack~~ <sup>4/5</sup> values and customs of people in such as polygamy and divination which they missionaries considered to be wrong activities ~~to~~ done by people in Swaziland. In Source BC, they provided schools and hospitals to destroy the use of traditional medicine, doctors and diviners, which meant that the missionaries wanted to convince people in Swaziland to stop doing what they had been doing for a lot time and it became their values and customs, by building this hospitals. This attests that the provision of schools and hospitals by missionaries for Swaziland was a way of slowly changing the minds of people in Swaziland about their values and customs, but end up believing in values and customs of the missionaries. <sup>4/5</sup>

57  
18  
SV

**Plate 2 Students' display their critical thinking skills and disposition**

Question Option B Question 2

Write on both sides of the paper

A

2. Source B and C both agree about the missionary work in Swaziland because they both give an evidence that somehow the missionaries were to give ~~that~~ <sup>things</sup> that will benefit and destroy Swazis. Source B tells us that missionaries built schools and hospitals this shows us that it was going to benefit Swazis. But their main purpose was to destroy Swazis using kill this ~~mat~~ buildings or using their offer. Also source C tells us that they used schools and hospitals which was a benefit to Swazis. But this things were to destroy Swazis because their medical mission was to destroy the use of traditional medicines, doctors and diviners. This shows us that their main purpose was to destroy Swazi culture and customs, but they only wanted their beliefs to be spreaded. They also wanted the land of Swazis because their buildings are in Swaziland and now they are owning the place where their buildings are. kill

( 1 / 8 SV )

Plate 3 Students' lack of critical thinking skills and disposition

Question .....<sup>2</sup>  
Write on both sides of the paper

Only source C agrees on missionary work in Swaziland. This is because source C states that missionaries built schools and ran hospitals out of the spirit of humanitarian service. Doing it out of the spirit of humanitarian service shows that it was indeed missionary work. ~~However~~ as source B does not mention any work being done by missionaries on the basis of humanitarian service. L|||

However, Both sources B and C disagree on missionary work in Swaziland. This is because source B states that the missionaries only used schools and hospitals to only attack some aspects of Swazi society, and its values and customs which included polygamy and divination. L|||

On the same note, source C disagrees on missionary work because they also attacked the values of the Swazi society. This is seen shown in source C where it states that the medical mission was to destroy the use of traditional medicine, doctors, and diviners. This shows that both sources B and C disagree on missionary work. L|||

1  
8 SV

Plate 4 Students' lack of critical thinking skills and thinking disposition

Question .....?

Write on both sides of the paper

*A*

Source B and Source C do agree about the missionary work in Swaziland, because in both Source B and C do talk about building of schools and having hospital in Swaziland to help them

Source B and Source C <sup>Do Agree</sup> do not agree about the missionary work in Swaziland, because in both sources B & C are using their work which are schools and hospitals to attack on the values of the Swazi Society which include breaking & customs such as polyamy and divination stated in Source B also in Source C Missionaries are using their work to attack on values of swazi society inverting hospitals was to break or stop Swazis from using traditional medicines, medical mission was to destroy the use of traditional medicines, doctors and diviners.

However Source C do agree on the missionary work in Swaziland. It is stated that missionaries built schools and ran hospitals out of the spirit of a humanitarian serves. Missionaries with their work they helped Swazis to learn in schools that they inverted and in hospital that they built Swazis would treat their sickness in order to feel better and stop dying when they gave them medicines and treatments from the western doctors.

*SM* *SV*

## V. Findings and Discussions

The study findings revealed that the students' capabilities to display their thinking skills and disposition differ per school and students (see table 3). For example, 9 of the 25 schools had a double digit number of students who were capable of displaying their critical thinking skill and thinking disposition in their responses (see table 3; plate 1 and 2). On the other hand, 10 of the 25 schools had a double digit number of students who had some challenges in displaying their critical thinking skills and thinking disposition (see table 3; plate 3 and 4).

The study finding indicated that 264 of the 579 or 46% of students from the 25 schools had challenges in displaying their critical thinking skills and thinking disposition (see table 3). Their responses were characterised by the absence of their mind to assess and scrutinise the exam items before responding to them. They did not display the willingness to identify issues, recognise important relationships within and between the sources (such as source B and C) and make inferences and deduce conclusions (see plates 3 and 4).

The 46% of the students were only capable of stating the issues within the sources and making judgements but had challenges in clarifying or expressing an understanding of the concepts on the exam items and making inference, showing connections among ideas, drawing appropriate conclusions by explaining the connections and non-connections among and between the sources. They had challenges in identifying the relevant and irrelevant elements or concepts and statements within source B and C. For example, concepts such as missionaries built schools and ran hospitals out of the spirit of a humanitarian service but also an attack on the values of the Swazi society were misunderstood by some students. For example, one of the students, responses revealed: *both sources agree about the missionary work in Swaziland this is because in source B its stated that missionaries build schools and hospitals to attack some aspects of society while in source C its stated that missionaries built schools and ran hospital out of the spirit of a humanitarian service. However, source B differ from source C this is because in source B its stated that missionaries used schools and hospitals to attack some Swazi aspects and values such as polygamy and divination while in source C its stated that the medical mission was to destroy the use of traditional medicine, doctors and diviners.* These responses depict the absence of application of critical thinking skill and thinking disposition or lack of the ability to entertain different thoughts at once because both responses are in agreement, don't differ in content. These also depict the students, lack of subjects content particularly interdisciplinary content, which is necessary for critical thinking. Interdisciplinary content provides rich ground for critical thinking. In this context, the students needed interdisciplinary content, religious-oriented and historical-oriented content to heightened awareness of multiple points of view of the exam item. This shows that critical thinking is the mantra of higher education or training institutions, where every faculty or school is expected to nurture students towards complex reasoning and analysis.

The findings of the study indicated that 115 of the 579 or 20% of the students whose scripts were analysed were not able to state even the key issues within the sources and no expressing an understanding of the concepts on the exam items and making inference, showing connections among ideas, drawing appropriate conclusions by explaining the connections and non-connections among and between the sources (see table 3). For example, this student's transcript notes the absence of the participant's engagement in critical thinking and thinking disposition or logical reasoning: *in source B missionaries used schools and hospitals to attack some aspects of Swazi society; this was because missionaries did not believe all the cultures that were done by the Swazi people and customs including ancestors. Source B was also taken from a history book published in 1981. Also missionaries did not even like the part of acting a polygamy because they thought it was not a good thing. In source C missionaries built schools and ran hospitals out of the spirit of humanitarian service but also as an attack on the values of the Swazi society. This was because they did not like the use of the traditional medicine, they thought this was what destroyed humanity. Also source C was take in the history book of 1981. Missionaries built schools in order to teach about Christianity in schools. Both sources attacked by the missionaries by building schools and hospitals in order to destroy the medical mission that in Swaziland used.* A detailed analysis of this student's responses revealed that there was lack of logical reasoning because the key aspects of the expected answers were mentioned but in a haphazard manner. In addition, the aspects, which include stating his or her stand as per the question, clarifying or defining the issues being discussed, were overlooked. This further revealed that there was lack of heightened awareness of multiple points of view on the particular student. This undermined their critical thinking skills application and thinking disposition, yet critical thinking skills and disposition emphasize a heightened awareness of multiple points of view and context.

At a school individual level, the study indicated that all the schools their students had some challenges in displaying their critical thinking skills and thinking disposition in their responses (see table 3), those students who displayed some capabilities were far less than the half of those who attempted the exam item. This further revealed the absence of students' capacity to think critically or show the presence of their mind in responding to the exam item. Critical thinking requires the presence of the individual's mind to assess and scrutinize knowledge in relation to the exam items.

## **VI. Conclusion**

The study concludes that the application of critical thinking and thinking disposition remain a challenge for most students because almost all the participating schools had some difficulties in displaying these skills in their responses. It could be further concluded that critical thinking skills and thinking disposition are not a history subject problem but an institutional problem because these concepts cut across disciplines. For example, this study revealed that those students with good command of English displayed their critical thinking skills and thinking disposition (see plate 1 and 2). It has been concluded that teaching students to think critically is an essential matter in educational settings because of its significance to students' learning and it has no subject boundaries because the students have to be in command of interdisciplinary content. Interdisciplinary content provides rich ground for critical thinking, students' learning and in enhancing their capabilities to respond to exam items.

Based on the information on plate 3 and 4, the study concluded that students' lack of critical thinking skills and thinking disposition was a broader problem which cuts across educational settings: schools and training institutions or professional practices. Plate 3 and 4 helps us to conclude that critical thinking skills and thinking disposition remain only an educational objective in educational settings than their actual encouragement in educational settings or classrooms. Thinking disposition was not displayed by students in their responses, as demonstrated in plate 3 and 4, thinking disposition or their attitudes, willingness and efforts need to be demonstrated in their responses.

The study also concluded that the majority of students were not fairly equipped with the skills of learning history from a text which contributes to the development of reading comprehension skills, inferential skills and communication skills as demonstrated in table, 3; plate 3 and 4. These are skills gained or acquired and enhanced through continuous exposure to texts that vary in structure, difficulty and content.

Based on the information on plate 3 and 4 it is concluded that schools and Training institutions have a challenge in using history texts to teach history because most of the students had difficulties in identifying relations among the elements in source B and C. Yet central to comprehension of and learning from history texts or sources is the identification of relations among the elements in the texts and between these elements and the application of students' prior knowledge and experience. Students are not supported enough to develop literacy in history, which help them to grapple with ideas, share their ideas, thoughts and engage in the critical thinking that history examinations require.

## **VII. Recommendations**

Training of teachers on supporting students to develop literacy in history should be improved to enhance students learning and critical thinking and disposition. The key instructional and curricular features that may enhance and support students in developing literacy in the context of history should be re-emphasised. These may include connecting multiple representations of ideas in a text or source and supporting students' engagement with the discourses of history and other related subject content to promote the use of multidisciplinary content.

Exam designers should ensure that curriculum, instructions and the assessment communicate the same expectations, no culture of ambiguity on the exam papers and items (see paper 1 and 2 of 2018 instructions related to sources). The instructions or materials and activities that are more of a distraction than an enhancement should be avoided because may exact cost on students' comprehension of the question and on their responses. For example, the nature of the sources, they should be in coloured form for visibility purposes and the questions should be placed immediately below the relevant source, not on the third page of the exam paper. This becomes destructive to the students and eventually affects his or her ability to display his/her critical thinking skill and thinking disposition. Sensitivity to supplemental materials and activities which may increase the likelihood of simultaneous activation of the related information should be encouraged to enhance the learning and development of history literacy or critical literacy practices for participation in a global society. For example, instructions related to the use of the background information should be clear so to help the students to construct a coherent mental representation that integrates the source or textual information and relevant background knowledge. The processing of sources requires incorporation of the comprehended information from the source to students' background knowledge. This depends on the identification of meaningful relations between instructions, source or text elements and between these elements and background knowledge. This has an influence on students' ability to identify or fail to identify important relations in the source.

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