



Exploring the Integration of Grade 8 History Curriculum through Bernstein's Theoretical Concepts of Classification and Framing

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Abstract

Curriculum integration has become one of the transformative approaches in modern education systems that aim to foster meaningful, connected learning experiences among students. Instead of teaching subjects as separate entities, integrated curricula present subjects in ways that enhance understanding and relevance to students' lives. Therefore, this paper examines the integration of the Grade 8 History curriculum through Bernstein's theoretical concepts of classification and framing, focusing on the extent of integration between discourses and control relations in the instructional process, especially regarding content and pedagogy. This study used an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, with qualitative explanations following quantitative results for deeper insight. Purposive sampling was used to select content and pedagogy for assessing the level of integration. The findings reveal weak classification of content and weak framing in the pedagogy of the Grade 8 History curriculum. The study concludes that there is a high level of integration between discourses and control relations in the instructional process, as analyzed through Bernstein's theoretical framework, based on content and pedagogy. It recommends that the Ministry of Education and Training offer ongoing professional development to equip teachers with the necessary skills for successful curriculum implementation and to reform pre-service teacher education programs accordingly. The study also suggests reviewing the Grade 8 curriculum, as it emphasizes Western content more than African.

Keywords: classification; content analysis; content; document analysis; framing; pedagogy

Introduction

Curriculum integration has emerged as one of the transformative approaches in contemporary education systems that aim to promote meaningful, connected learning experiences among students. Instead of teaching subjects as separate entities, integrated curricula present subjects in a way that enhances understanding and relevance to students' lives. That is, education should empower its recipients by providing knowledge applicable to daily life, helping them to thrive. Accordingly, each country develops a curriculum that aligns with its national priorities and developmental goals. Lesotho's education system is also evolving. The Ministry of Education in Lesotho, through its Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP), has created an integrated curriculum in response to the needs of

the 21st century, which is also relevant and responsive to the needs of Basotho learners (MoET, 2019). Curriculum integration is recognized as an effective method for teaching 21st-century skills while preserving or enhancing academic performance. These skills include critical thinking, creative thinking, citizenship, character development, and communication, which cross disciplinary boundaries (Drake & Reid, 2018).

Challenges like HIV/AIDS, poverty, and globalization influenced reforms, as they aimed to connect education with community experiences and improve global competitiveness (Ministry of Education, 2009). The decision to implement Universal Basic Education and an integrated curriculum comes from the understanding that a well-educated and skilled workforce is crucial in

today's competitive global economy. Therefore, a strong foundation in secondary education is essential for further learning and employment (MoET, 2019). Additionally, the move toward curriculum integration in Lesotho sought to localize the O-Level curriculum and match education with national development needs (Mosisili, 1981).

Despite efforts through earlier reforms, progress remained limited until the introduction of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP), which established an integrated, learner-centered curriculum that promotes critical skills such as communication, problem-solving, technological literacy, and lifelong learning (Raselimo & Mahao, 2015; Selepe, 2016). CAP also introduced continuous assessment to monitor learner progress and support hands-on learning (Raselimo & Thamae, 2018). While these reforms reshaped both curriculum content and teaching methods to make learning more relevant and participatory, integrating subjects like History still presents conceptual and practical challenges for teachers and curriculum designers.

Integrated vs. Collected Type

Curriculum is divided into two main types: the collection type, which has clear boundaries and separation between subjects, and the integrated type, where knowledge areas are more openly connected and subject boundaries are weaker (Jacobsen, 1981). Furthermore, Bernstein (1975) suggests that power and control are maintained through the preservation of curriculum boundaries. He also asserts that these boundaries, embedded in the disciplinary structure, are not random but reflect wider social power relations. The disciplines that control access to their knowledge and decide how it is taught also control teaching and learning. In contrast, while strong classification increases teacher authority by enforcing content boundaries, it also limits their flexibility in delivering content (Pluim et al., 2021). Bernstein (1975) further explains that strong classification results in more collection codes, while weaker classification leads to integrated codes. These codes differ in the strength of their framing, meaning the extent of control

teachers and students have over the learning process.

Furthermore, Jansen (2009) states that a collected-type curriculum organizes content into clearly separated, isolated subjects. Students are expected to acquire specific knowledge sets to meet particular assessment standards. However, an integrated curriculum allows content areas to overlap and is less strictly divided (Williams, 2023). The extent of content boundaries influences whether a curriculum is viewed as collected or integrated, emphasizing the importance of classification and framing (Jóhannsdóttir, 2008).

Integrated codes can be teacher-based, where one teacher manages multiple subjects with flexibility to blur disciplinary boundaries, or team-based, which requires collaboration among teachers. The latter is more challenging to implement (Bernstein, 1975). Integrated codes generally exhibit weaker classification and variable framing. During early implementation, weak frames usually dominate, although other factors can influence frame strength over time. Students may also experience different frame strengths. Integration can happen within a single subject or across disciplines, and the strength of the code may depend on the number of teachers involved and how well they coordinate (Drake & Reid, 2018).

According to Bernstein (1975), strong classification (C+) clearly separates contents, while weak classification (C-) suggests integration across boundaries. A curriculum with strong classification is called a collection code, whereas one with weak classification is known as an integrated code (Bernstein, 1996). Therefore, this study uses classification to develop an analytical tool for examining how content is integrated within the Grade 8 History syllabus, especially by analyzing sections that describe concepts and learning outcomes.

Although classification can include agents of instruction, this study mainly explores the relationships among subjects, content coverage, and everyday knowledge. The focus is on the content parts of the syllabus, especially the concepts and learning outcomes, which may also

suggest innovations in classroom practices and interactions between teachers and students.

Framing involves managing knowledge selection, sequencing, pacing, and evaluation, as well as the social relationships that support the transmission of knowledge (Bernstein, 1996). In classrooms with strong framing (F+), teachers maintain full control over the learning environment. Bernstein (1971) links strong framing with didactic methods and weak framing with progressive teaching. This study uses framing to analyze pedagogical approaches in the Grade 8 History syllabus, focusing on the learning experiences outlined in the curriculum. According to Selepe (2016), framing defines, maintains, and adjusts boundaries across discourses, spaces, and subjects.

Problem statement

Despite efforts by the Lesotho Ministry of Education and Training to implement an integrated curriculum aligned with 21st-century skills, it is unclear how well the Grade 8 History curriculum reflects this integration. Evidence from classroom observations and curriculum reviews (Raselimo & Thamae, 2018) indicates that History instruction continues to focus on factual recall and content delivery rather than inquiry-based learning. For example, lessons often emphasize memorizing historical events and figures, with few opportunities for students to engage in critical thinking, problem-solving, or interdisciplinary projects that connect History to current social and civic issues.

This gap between policy goals and classroom practice raises concerns about whether the curriculum effectively equips students with transferable skills relevant to real-world situations. Continuing to rely on traditional disciplinary boundaries and teacher-centered methods may limit students' opportunities to apply historical knowledge to everyday life, thus undermining the goals of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP).

These issues have important effects on educators and policymakers. For teachers, understanding how much curriculum is integrated can help develop better teaching methods that

focus on student-centered and skills-based learning. For policymakers and curriculum planners, insights from this study can guide curriculum review and professional growth efforts, making sure that integration principles are consistently applied in both the curriculum documents and classroom practices.

Therefore, this study aims to examine the level of integration in the Grade 8 History curriculum by applying Bernstein's concepts of classification and framing, to determine if the curriculum supports the desired educational transformation in Lesotho.

Purpose of the Study

This study aims to apply Bernstein's theoretical ideas of classification and framing to examine the Grade 8 History curriculum in Lesotho. Specifically, it seeks to evaluate how discourses and control relationships are integrated within the teaching process, emphasizing both content and instruction.

Main Research Question

What is the level of integration between discourses and control relations in the instructional process, focusing on content and pedagogy, as examined through Bernstein's theoretical concepts of classification and framing in the Grade 8 History curriculum?

Justification for the Study

This study is justified by the need to understand the dynamics of curriculum integration in Lesotho's education system. Using Bernstein's theoretical framework, the study aims to provide a detailed analysis of how classification and framing influence the integration of content and pedagogy in the Grade 8 History syllabus. The findings could inform curriculum development and teacher professional growth, helping to improve the implementation of integrated curricula.

Theoretical framework

The study was supported by Bernstein's theory of classification and framing, developed by Basil Bernstein in 1971. This theory provides a conceptual framework through which the curriculum is analyzed. It is essential for

understanding how different parts of the curriculum function together and how they are organized in educational settings. According to Bernstein (1975), classification refers to the boundaries that separate various subjects or curricula. Additionally, Selepe (2016) states that subjects become more isolated from each other when classification is strong, meaning there are strict boundaries, as seen in a typical curriculum with separate courses for Science, Math, and History. When the boundaries are weaker, the subjects tend to blend together. Bernstein (1971) also described framing as the level of control teachers and students have over the choice, sequence, pace, and assessment of knowledge in the classroom. Consequently, William (2023) suggests that in a curriculum where teachers have more control over what is learned, how it is learned, and when, there is strong framing. Conversely, if students have more input into what, how, and when they learn, then the curriculum displays weak framing.

In this study, this theory guided the methodology. The mixed methods aimed to operationalize Bernstein's theoretical concepts. It was used to examine the content, where the number of concepts and learning outcomes within the Grade 8 History syllabus showing relationships between History and other subjects were counted and coded as (C+). The number of concepts showing relationships between History content and other subjects was investigated and coded as (C--). The number of concepts showing relationships between History and everyday knowledge was also investigated and coded as (C-). Additionally, the theory was employed to analyze the pedagogies used in the Grade 8 History syllabus, where the number of learning experiences reflecting teacher-centered pedagogy was counted and coded as (F+), those reflecting learner-centered pedagogy were counted and coded as (F--), and experiences showing both teacher- and learner-centered approaches were counted and coded as (F+) and (F-).

Conceptual Review: Integrated Curriculum

The term "integration" refers to presenting content as a unified whole (Bernstein, 1975). Integrated curriculum draws on

constructivist pedagogical and epistemological principles, which argue that learners actively construct knowledge through meaningful experiences, often based on previous learning (Bacon, 2018). In this context, Beane (2005) indicates that curriculum integration encourages learners to become advocates for their own education. Importantly, it shifts learning from teacher-centered to learner-centered approaches, decolonizes teaching and learning, and promotes social justice in the classroom. History teaching that emphasizes identity and citizenship helps achieve broader developmental goals such as sustainable development.

Curriculum integration aims to reorganize knowledge, skills, and competencies to support holistic development aligned with societal, economic, and cultural needs (Drake & Reid, 2018). In practice, this occurs when learners engage with personally meaningful questions and collaborative tasks that transcend disciplinary boundaries. Integration is less about combining content for its own sake and more about designing learning experiences that create meaningful connections (Williams, 2023). It appears that subject integration involves more than just teaching content knowledge; it also encompasses acquiring practical knowledge relevant to the real-world problems students encounter in everyday life.

Rooted in Deweyan constructivism, curriculum integration emphasizes building on prior knowledge to generate new insights (Selepe, 2016). It functions as an instructional method that connects multiple disciplines to examine real-world issues (Adamu, 2003). Integration appears in three distinct forms: namely, multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and transdisciplinary integration.

Multidisciplinary integration involves including content from various fields to improve relevance. In the Lesotho Grade 8 History syllabus, this is shown through the inclusion of Religious Education, Art, Business Education, Geography, Life Skills, and Development Studies. History is not taught in isolation but through the perspectives of different social sciences. For example, when discussing the challenges faced by Moshoeshoe I, educators are encouraged to

connect historical content to current issues and life skills.

Interdisciplinary integration aims to break down barriers between disciplines by emphasizing shared goals. According to Mathison and Freeman (1997), an interdisciplinary curriculum places greater emphasis on content. In contrast, Springer (2013) argues that, although the interdisciplinary curriculum connects ideas, methods, and perspectives from different subjects, such as Science, History, Development Studies, Accounting, Geography, and Religious Studies, it still maintains the boundaries and identities of each discipline. In this approach, History teaching that emphasizes identity and citizenship helps achieve broader developmental goals such as sustainable development. Essentially, students combine knowledge from various subjects to solve complex problems; however, the core principles, methods, and content of each subject remain intact and are not merged into a single entity.

Transdisciplinary integration goes beyond traditional subject boundaries to address comprehensive and real-world issues. This curriculum design approach emphasizes the interconnectedness of knowledge and its application in everyday situations. It is accurate to say that, within this framework, history instruction serves as a platform for developing values such as advocacy, tolerance, and patriotism, while also improving communication skills and ethical awareness. Campbell (1999) asserts that a transdisciplinary curriculum is inherently research-focused, as it involves students in systematic problem-solving. Similarly, Amaliyah et al. (2017) argue that transdisciplinary integration offers students a well-rounded educational experience that promotes cognitive, social, emotional, and physical development.

Benefits of an Integrated Curriculum

The integrated curriculum is praised for minimizing content overlap and fostering meaningful interdisciplinary connections (Phosisi, 2019). For example, writing skills acquired in English can be applied to writing history essays.

Drake and Reid (2018) point out that integrated curricula allow educators to customize

instruction to meet students' needs and interests, encouraging a deeper understanding. Williams (2023) agrees, stating that such curricula foster productive, community-oriented learners. As described by Beane (1995), Jacobs (1991), and Vars (1991), an integrated curriculum emphasizes the context, needs, concerns, and social issues, linking learning to the real world and encouraging participation in meaningful activities. When effectively implemented, integrated curricula can also help address systemic problems, such as youth unemployment.

Furthermore, integrated curricula promote experiential learning, thereby overcoming the limitations of instruction that depends only on textbooks. Dambudzo (2015) and Mezieobi et al. (2014) confirm that integrated teaching improves learners' problem-solving, critical thinking, and teamwork skills. However, challenges in implementation remain. Teachers often lack the necessary competencies (Lekhanya & Raselimo, 2022), and Makumane (2021) found that integrated pedagogies are rarely applied in practice. These findings highlight the gap between curriculum planning and classroom execution.

Empirical Review

Olovsson (2021) conducted an ethnographic study to examine how integration in social studies influences teaching and learning in Sweden. The study revealed that grading directs attention toward subject-specific goals. Although students were motivated and focused on performance, teaching was mainly affected by dominant disciplinary discourses, which limited full integration.

Selepe (2016) examined the challenges primary teachers face in implementing Lesotho's integrated curriculum. The results showed varying understandings of integration, often oversimplified to superficial links between concepts. Although teachers recognized the theoretical importance of learner-centered pedagogy, their actual practice mostly remained didactic; many viewed integration as merely merging subject boundaries, which made them uncomfortable. Challenges included a lack of professional development, limited support, and an increased workload. Selepe concluded that clear

guidance on implementation is scarce, and teacher practices often reinforce traditional methods.

Raselimo and Thamae (2018) analyzed the alignment of the Lesotho General Certificate of Secondary Education (LGCSE) with curriculum goals in Geography and Sesotho. Using Bernstein's framework, they found limited integration and alignment with Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP) objectives, particularly in the areas of citizenship and democracy. Both syllabi emphasized disciplinary knowledge over integrated knowledge, with integration only seen in isolated cases.

Lekhanya and Raselimo (2022) explored how Development Studies (DS) teaching matches workplace skills. While teachers saw the value of project-based learning, classroom routines stayed traditional and exam-oriented. Projects, even though part of the syllabus, were often ignored. Challenges included heavy syllabi, exam pressure, and limited resources. The study concluded that teacher training programs should be updated to promote teaching methods that support CAP goals and workplace skills.

Makumane (2021) examined enactment strategies in the French integrated curriculum. Results indicated that teachers favored factual methods and were hesitant to adopt reflective or action-oriented approaches. The study recommended using action research and exploring additional theories of enactment to support the implementation of contextualized curricula.

Gap Appraisal

Although many studies have been conducted on curriculum integration in Lesotho, little attention has been paid to applying Bernstein's theoretical concepts of classification and framing to assess the level of integration in the History syllabus. Therefore, this study aims to analyze the extent of integration between discourses and control relations in the instructional process, specifically within the Grade 8 History syllabus, focusing on content and pedagogy.

Methodology

This study used an explanatory sequential mixed-methods design, where qualitative

explanations followed quantitative findings to provide a deeper understanding. The researcher first identified the concepts, learning outcomes, and learning experiences in the Grade 8 History syllabus, then used qualitative examples and theoretical interpretation to clarify these concepts by examining the level or extent of integration between discourses and control relations in the instructional process. Document analysis was the primary data collection method.

This study examined Lesotho's Grade 8 History syllabus as the primary document, focusing on sections related to content and pedagogy. Specifically, it analyzed learning outcomes and concepts for their content, while also assessing learning experiences for pedagogical methods. The researcher intentionally selected specific sections of the Grade 8 History syllabus—namely, the learning outcomes and recommended learning experiences for both teachers and students—because they contained relevant data about content and pedagogy. Data were collected by reviewing these sections to evaluate how well the discourses and control relations were integrated into the instructional process.

The learning outcomes were categorized based on Bernstein's theory of classification as follows: strong classification (C+), powerful classification (C++), indicating no integration; weak classification (C-); and very weak classification (C--). Similarly, the pedagogical dimension was examined using Bernstein's framing categories: strong framing (F+), indicating teacher-centered approaches; powerful framing (F++); weak framing (F-); and very weak framing (F--), indicating more learner-centered approaches.

The data were then interpreted using these eight classification and framing categories and summarized in a table. Content analysis was used to examine the qualitative data. In this study, the content analyzed came from the Grade 8 History curriculum, specifically from the learning outcomes, key concepts, and learning experiences. Learning outcomes and concepts were reviewed to evaluate content, while learning experiences were analyzed to assess pedagogy.

Data collection and scope.

This study involved analyzing Lesotho’s Grade 8 History syllabus from a desktop review as the primary data source. The syllabus was obtained from the Ministry of Education and Training’s website (accessed April 20, 2024). The researcher intentionally selected sections that clearly described learning outcomes, key concepts, and suggested learning activities for teachers and students, as these elements directly relate to the study’s focus on content and pedagogy. Data collection involved systematically reading and extracting items (such as counts of concepts, learning outcomes, and learning activities) into a pre-designed extraction sheet. To ensure consistency, a pilot extraction was conducted on one unit of the syllabus, and the extraction criteria were refined. Since this study analyzed a single official curriculum document rather than published empirical studies, a systematic literature review using PRISMA was not applicable. Nonetheless, the study connected to existing knowledge through a focused narrative review.

Results as per the syllabus concepts

Ethical considerations

Although this study involved desktop research and did not include human participants, ethical considerations were still observed. The researcher examined publicly available curriculum documents, ensuring no confidential or personal data was used. All sources and theoretical frameworks were credited correctly to maintain academic integrity. The analysis was conducted objectively and transparently to minimize bias and ensure accurate data representation. When necessary, institutional ethical approval was obtained to comply with the university’s research ethics policy.

Results

The study aimed to apply Bernstein’s theoretical concepts of classification and framing to analyze the Grade 8 History curriculum or syllabus, in order to evaluate the level of integration between discourses and control relations in the instructional process, with a particular focus on content and pedagogy.

Concepts	Indicators	Coding
Examples	# of concepts showing Relations between History and other subjects (5)	(C+)
Examples Types of trade: Local; International: exports; and imports. Civil rights Political rights Worship	# of concepts showing Relations between History content and other subjects (27)	(C--)
Examples Guideline for solving a problem: Understand the problem. Understand the causes. Come up with the solution. Peaceful ways Moshoeshoe 1 used to solve problems: Matsema. Mafisa.	# of concepts showing Relations between History and everyday knowledge (24)	(C--) (C-)

The table above shows the results of applying concepts from Bernstein’s classification and framing theory, specifically analyzing the content within the Grade 8 History syllabus through the lens of the classification concept. It provides examples as an excerpt of those concepts. It also displays the number of concepts that show relations between History and other subjects, totaling 5; the number of concepts that show relations between History content and other

subjects, totaling 27; and the number of concepts that show relations between History and everyday knowledge, totaling 24. Concepts showing relations between History and other subjects are coded C+, while those showing relations between History content and other subjects are coded C--. Lastly, concepts showing relations between History and everyday knowledge are coded C- and C--.

Analytical tool for learning outcomes

Learning Outcomes	Indicators	Coding
<p>Examples Demonstrate appreciation of unity in the rise of chiefdoms and kingdoms. Demonstrate an understanding of the different stages of development and various political ideas. Demonstrate appreciation of the changing pattern of colonial rule in Lesotho. Demonstrate appreciation of the Constitution.</p>	<p># of learning outcomes showing Relations between History and other subjects (4)</p>	<p>(C+)</p>
<p>Examples Describe local and international trade. Explain the industrialization, establishment, and classification of secondary industries in Lesotho. Demonstrate understanding of democracy. Demonstrate understanding of civil and political rights. Appreciate the excellent work of creation by God. Explain the origin of sin.</p>	<p># of learning outcomes showing Relations between History content and other subjects (33)</p>	<p>(C--)</p>
<p>Examples Demonstrate physical fitness components in different sporting activities Describe the consequences of a lack of tolerance. Demonstrate understanding of empathy.</p>	<p># of learning outcomes showing Relations between History and everyday knowledge (11)</p>	<p>(C-) (C--)</p>

Integrating Grade 8 History Curriculum through Classification and Framing

The table above shows the results of learning outcomes based on Bernstein’s theory of classification and framing, which uses the concept of classification to analyze content within the Grade 8 History syllabus. It provides examples as an excerpt of those learning experiences. It also shows the number of learning outcomes indicating relations between History and other subjects, totaling 4, the number of outcomes showing relations between History content and other

subjects, totaling 33, and the number of outcomes indicating relations between History and everyday knowledge, totaling 11. The outcomes showing relations between History and other subjects are coded F+, while those indicating relations between History content and other subjects are coded C--. Lastly, the outcomes indicating relations between History and everyday knowledge are coded as C- and C--.

The analytical tool for pedagogy focusing on learning experiences

Learning Experiences	Indicators	Coding
Examples The teacher explains the guidelines for solving problems	# of learning experiences showing Teacher-centred pedagogy (49)	F+
Examples Learners discuss the importance of working together. Learners identify reasons that led to the growth of the Lesotho Kingdom.	# of learning experiences showing learner-centred pedagogy (114)	F--
Examples	# of learning experiences showing both teacher and learner-centred pedagogy (92)	F+ F-

The table above shows how learning experiences are organized in the grade 8 History syllabus. It categorizes the experiences based on the following: 49 experiences use teacher-centered pedagogy; 114 experiences use learner-centered pedagogy; and 92 experiences combine both teacher and learner-centered approaches. Experiences with teacher-centered pedagogy, according to Bernstein’s theory of classification and framing, were coded as F+ using framing as an analytical tool. Experiences with learner-centered pedagogy were coded as F-- to reflect their frequency in the syllabus, while those incorporating both approaches were coded as F+ and F-. The table includes examples for each category.

Discussion

The findings of this study showed that, out of 34 concepts in the syllabus, five demonstrate

connections between History and other subjects. Additionally, 11 out of 34 learning outcomes also show links between History and other disciplines. These connections were evident in the content discussing Moshoeshoe’s challenges during the formation of the Basotho nation. According to Bernstein’s theory of classification and framing, weak classification indicates minimal separation between contents, where disciplinary boundaries are blurred (Bernstein, 1975).

Furthermore, the study found that 27 out of 34 concepts and 33 out of 34 learning outcomes show connections between History content and other subjects, including Life Skills, Development Studies, Business Education, Geography, and Religious Education. This indicates a generally weak separation between History and other disciplines, aligning with Bernstein’s (1975) description of an integrated curriculum. The implication is that knowledge is delivered through

more open and interconnected relationships, with fewer rigid boundaries between subject areas (Pluim et al., 2021).

Additionally, 24 of the 34 concepts and 11 of the 34 learning outcomes showed connections between history and everyday knowledge. These connections were most evident in sections involving life skills and religious education. According to Bacon (2018), curriculum integration occurs when learners engage with personally meaningful questions and participate in collaborative experiences. This indicates that the Grade 8 history curriculum is designed to support meaningful interdisciplinary learning. These findings align with those of Raselimo and Thamae (2018), who observed that although integration is limited in some syllabi, it still fosters links between formal academic knowledge and students' daily experiences, especially in subjects like Sesotho.

Regarding pedagogy, the study found that out of 255 learning experiences, 49 reflect teacher-centered pedagogy, coded as F+. These cases usually occur when the teacher introduces a new topic. In such situations, strong framing limits the learner's autonomy over content, sequence, and pace of learning, while reinforcing the teacher's authority in the educational relationship (Bernstein, 1975).

In contrast, the study by Lekhanya and Raselimo (2022) found that Development Studies (DS) teachers seldom used learner-centered teaching methods like fieldwork and practical projects, despite their inclusion in the curriculum. The implementation gap suggests that although curriculum documents may encourage integration and active learning, actual classroom practice might not reflect these goals. The specific situation in Lesotho's Grade 8 History curriculum remains unclear, emphasizing the need for further empirical research. Makumane (2021) recommends ongoing action research as a way to empower educators and promote reflective teaching practices.

The present study also found that 114 out of 255 learning experiences reflect learner-centered pedagogy (coded F--), indicating weak framing. According to Williams (2023), weak

framing allows learners to have more control over the sequence and pace of instruction. However, similar to the findings in DS, the implementation of learner-centered methods may be inconsistent. Since History and DS teachers often receive similar training, it is reasonable to suggest that History teachers may also struggle to fully adopt learner-centered methods.

Furthermore, Olovsson (2021), in a study conducted outside of Lesotho, found that students were more engaged and performance-focused when instruction aligned with subject-specific objectives, even within integrated social studies teaching. This supports the idea that the nature of instructional goals can greatly influence student motivation and learning results.

Finally, the study identified 92 out of 255 learning experiences that reflect a mix of both teacher- and learner-centered pedagogy (coded F+ and F-), indicating the presence of both strong and weak framing. In these cases, teachers introduce concepts, and learners then engage with the material through guided activities. Although this shows an effort to balance pedagogical approaches, the teacher's dominant role in leading the process still leans toward strong framing.

Limitations

Although Bernstein's theory of classification and framing offers valuable insights into understanding the structure and integration of the History syllabus, its application has limitations. The theory's abstract nature makes it challenging to apply its principles to practical curriculum reforms. Additionally, implementing changes that weaken classification and framing, such as increasing cross-curricular integration, often encounters obstacles. These include teachers' resistance to change, a lack of professional development, limited instructional resources, and education policies that uphold traditional subject boundaries. Recognizing these challenges emphasizes the complexity of curriculum reform and strengthens the overall argument by providing a balanced and realistic view.

Conclusion

This study aimed to assess how well the Grade 8 History curriculum in Lesotho aligns with the integration of curriculum as outlined by the Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP). The study found that, despite the Ministry of Education and Training's efforts to promote 21st-century skills, the integration within the Grade 8 History syllabus remains limited, and traditional disciplinary structures still largely influence classroom practice.

Using Bernstein's concepts of classification and framing, the analysis showed that only a few syllabus elements had strong links between History and other subjects, indicating clear classification and limited cross-curricular integration. In contrast, more concepts and learning outcomes exhibited weak classification, suggesting some internal connections within History content but little interdisciplinary engagement. Similarly, while several learning experiences pointed toward a move to learner-centered pedagogy, many still reflected teacher-centered practices, demonstrating that instructional control remains mostly with teachers. The moderate presence of hybrid practices indicates an ongoing but incomplete shift in teaching approaches.

Therefore, the study concludes that there is a persistent misalignment between curriculum policy intentions and classroom realities. Although integration is promoted at the policy level, the Grade 8 History syllabus continues to emphasize factual recall and content transmission over inquiry, problem-solving, and application to everyday life. This challenge may stem from teachers' limited professional preparation for implementing integrated pedagogies, as well as the enduring influence of examination-oriented teaching.

Future research should explore how teachers interpret and implement integration principles in their classroom practices, as well as how teacher training and assessment policies impact the adoption of learner-centered, competency-based approaches. A comparative analysis across subjects could further clarify how

integration is understood and applied within the broader junior secondary curriculum.

In conclusion, for Lesotho's education system to achieve the transformative goals of the CAP, policymakers, curriculum designers, and educators must work together to incorporate not only curriculum documents but also teacher development, instructional materials, and assessment systems. This will ensure that History teaching moves beyond memorization and equips learners with critical, reflective, and transferable skills essential for active participation in modern society.

Implications

The review of the Grade 8 History syllabus shows a curriculum with strict disciplinary boundaries but few chances for integration with other subjects and everyday life experiences. These results have significant implications for teaching methods and curriculum design in Lesotho.

The variation in framing strength (F^+ to F^-) within learning experiences also holds practical significance. When strong framing (F^+) dominates, the teacher controls the pace and sequence of instruction, ensuring curriculum coverage but potentially limiting student independence. Conversely, weaker framing (F^-/F^-), as seen in group work, discussions, and problem-solving activities, encourages participatory and student-centered approaches. This balance suggests that teachers should be supported in intentionally adjusting their framing: using structured guidance for complex historical analysis while employing flexible, exploratory activities to help students connect history to their lives.

The limited integration seen in the Grade 8 History syllabus affects how well students can use classroom knowledge in real-world situations. When the curriculum keeps subjects separated and operating in isolation, students are encouraged to think within strict disciplinary boundaries. This setup emphasizes mastering historical facts, dates, and events but offers few chances for students to connect history to current social, economic, or civic issues. As a result, students may end up with

knowledge that is theoretical and disconnected from real life, which limits their ability to apply what they learn to everyday situations.

Similarly, strong framing where teachers control content, pacing, and learning processes reduces learners' participation and decision-making in the learning process. This hinders the development of essential life skills such as critical thinking, problem-solving, collaboration, and adaptability, which are vital for functioning effectively in today's society. When learners are not encouraged to explore the connections between historical concepts and current issues, they miss the chance to develop analytical and reflective skills that enable them to understand and address community or national challenges.

From a broader educational perspective, limited integration conflicts with the goals of Lesotho's Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP), which promotes competency-based learning designed to equip students for meaningful participation in society. Without deliberate links between History and other subjects like Social Studies, Economics, or Life Skills, students may leave school with factual knowledge but lack the skills necessary for practical decision-making, citizenship, and nation-building.

Finally, the findings suggest a gradual and careful approach to curriculum integration. For successful implementation, teacher training programs and curriculum reviews should emphasize interdisciplinary planning, learner-centered teaching methods, and contextualized historical inquiry. These adjustments would better align classroom practices with the wider objectives of Lesotho's Curriculum and Assessment Policy (CAP), which advocates for competency-based, relevant, and value-driven education. The findings also point to a need for more research on how teachers understand and implement the integrated syllabus in their classrooms. Investigating these lived experiences could result in more effective support strategies.

Recommendations

The study recommends that the Ministry of Education and Training conduct regular, structured in-service training to equip teachers

with the skills necessary for effectively implementing the integrated curriculum. This training could involve periodic workshops, mentorship programs, and peer collaboration sessions aimed at enhancing teachers' understanding of interdisciplinary teaching methods and learner-centered pedagogy. To ensure sustainability, these sessions should be held at least twice a year and be complemented by monitoring and evaluation activities, such as classroom observations, feedback surveys, and performance reviews, to assess the training's effectiveness.

Furthermore, teacher training programs must be revised to better prepare pre-service teachers for teaching integrated curricula. This includes integrating theories of curriculum integration, such as Bernstein's, into teacher education courses. The Ministry of Education and Training should also provide sufficient teaching and learning resources, including textbooks, instructional guides, and digital tools, to support the implementation of the integrated Grade 8 History curriculum. Ultimately, more empirical research is needed to assess how the integrated curriculum is actually being implemented in classrooms, which can help identify gaps between policy and practice.

Disclosure

Conflict of interest

The author declare no conflict of interest.

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