Mastery Level of Historical Thinking Skills (KPS) among Form Two Students

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Abstract: This study aimed to explore the Historical Thinking Skills among Form Two students. This study involved five aspects of the historical thinking skills: understanding chronology, exploring evidence, making interpretations, imagining and rationalizing while the focus of content standard referred to the four Content Standards in DSKP KSSM Form One History subject which are Introduction to Knowledge of History, Prehistoric Age, Ice Age and World Civilization and Its Contributions. The research instrument used in this study was a set of questionnaires in a form of multiple choice objective items about the History subject. The research participants involved were 388 Form Two students. Data were analysed descriptively to identify the level of students’ historical thinking skills. The following findings revealed the level of historical thinking skills among Form Two students in all five aspects: 60.7% for understanding chronology, 46.7% for exploring evidence, 65.4% for making interpretations, 68.5% for imagining and 64.9% for rationalizing.

Keywords: Historical thinking skills, understanding chronology, exploring evidence, making interpretations, imagining, rationalizing

1. Introduction

The Standard Based Curriculum for Secondary Schools (KSSM) had replaced the Malaysian Integrated Curriculum for Secondary School (KBSM) and was implemented for Form One in 2017. History subject is no exception in this implementation. The main focus of History subject in KSSM is to produce students who are knowledgeable and sensitive towards History and able to contribute to the formation of a society who are competitive in the future. This subject also emphasizes on the integration of three aspects: knowledge, skills and values, to provide understanding to students in building their identity and the spirit of love for the country. The elements of skills included are Historical Thinking Skills which need to be nurtured and developed among students such as skills to understand chronology, explore evidence, interpret, imagine and rationalize (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015).

2. Problem Statement

It is obvious that the five aspects of Historical Thinking Skills need to be nurtured and developed in the teaching and learning process of history subject in the classroom (Ministry of Education Malaysia, 2015). However, the question which arises is ‘How far have the Form One students in 2017 mastered the Historical Thinking Skills? (data collection was conducted in 2018 when these students were in Form Two) in which these students were the first group of students to study history subject in KSSM. Did they really master the Historical Thinking Skills which is clearly emphasized in the Standard Document for Curriculum and Assessment (DSKP) and is also stated in the relevant history textbooks? In addition, what is the mastery level of the Historical Thinking Skills which they acquired after learning the history subject based on this new History syllabus while they were in Form One in 2017. The mastery level of Historical Thinking Skills involved is to understand chronology, explore evidence, interpret, imagine and rationalize.

3. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to identify the mastery level of Historical Thinking Skills among Form Two students. The Historical Thinking Skills focus on five aspects: understanding chronology, exploring evidence, making interpretations, imagining and rationalizing. The content standard of history subject including Introduction to Historical Knowledge, Ice Age, Prehistoric Age as well as World Civilization and its Contributions.

4. Research Questions

This study is conducted to answer the following research questions:
1. What is the mastery level of Historical Thinking Skills (KPS) for the aspect of understanding chronology?
2. What is the mastery level of Historical Thinking Skills (KPS) for the aspect of exploring evidence?
3. What is the mastery level of Historical Thinking Skills (KPS) for the aspect of making interpretations?
4. What is the mastery level of Historical Thinking Skills (KPS) for the aspect of imagining?
5. What is the mastery level of Historical Thinking Skills (KPS) for the aspect of rationalizing?
6. What is the mastery level of Historical Thinking Skills (KPS) for the entire content standard?

5. Research Methodology

Instruments

The research instruments used in this study were self-constructed by the researchers. This instrument is divided into two parts: Part A is the background of the respondents and Part B is 30 multiple choice items which include the five aspects of Historical Thinking Skills namely understanding chronology, exploring evidence, making interpretations, imagining and rationalizing. Each item has four options: A, B, C and D. The total number of items for each aspect is six. This study employs a quantitative approach to identify the mastery level of Historical Thinking Skills for the four content standards: Introduction to Historical Knowledge, Prehistoric Age, Ice Age and World Civilization and its Contributions. The weighting for each aspect is balanced for which is 20% respectively. A pilot study was also conducted to test the reliability of the instruments used. The consistency and reliability of the questionnaire were tested using Cronbach’s Alpha and the result was 0.821.

Respondents

The research population consisted of Form Two students in the whole state of Selangor. The sample involved Form Two students (a total of 388) from 10 administrative areas of the District Education Office (PPD) in the state of Selangor. The sample was selected randomly. One school was selected from each area. In addition, the respondents’ backgrounds included gender, race, Primary School Achievement Test (UPSR) results, History subject results in the mid-2018 examination and school location.

Data analysis

The data obtained from the questionnaire were analysed using The Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) Version 23.0 for Windows. The research findings obtained were analyzed descriptively and presented in a form of frequency and percentage. Then, to identify the level of Historical Thinking Skills, the data analysis process was calculated for the percentage of scores obtained in the five aspects: understanding chronology, exploring evidence, making interpretations, imagining and rationalizing. Respondents with a score of 100 or 100% showed the highest level of historical thinking skills for History content standards and on the other hand low scores showed a low level of Historical Thinking Skills. Frequency and percentage distributions are used to explain about certain variables such as gender and UPSR results. The data analysis program selected was also able to provide the percentage and the mean.

6. Findings and Discussion

Respondents’ achievement of historical test questions involved five aspects of Historical Thinking Skills: understanding chronology, exploring evidence, making interpretations, imagining and rationalizing. The findings for the achievement of respondents’ for each aspects are explained as follows:

Aspects of Understanding Chronology

In the Historical Thinking Skills questionnaire, six items were developed to assess the basic knowledge of history related to aspects of understanding the chronology of the entire content standard. Table 1 below shows the mastery level for the aspect of understanding chronology based on the content standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Content Standard</th>
<th>% Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Introduction to knowledge of history</td>
<td>65.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ice Age</td>
<td>52.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Prehistoric Age</td>
<td>76.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>World Civilization and Its Contributions</td>
<td>48.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Average</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Based on Table 1 above, the aspect of understanding chronology based on the content standards, only Prehistoric Age (76.5%) was answered correctly with more than 70% followed by content standard for Introduction to Historical Knowledge (65.5%) with more than 60%, Ice Age obtained 52.6% correct and World Civilization and its contribution was only 48.2% correct. Overall, it can be concluded that the aspect of understanding the chronology of the four content standards, Form Two students mastered more in the aspect of understanding the chronology of the content of the Prehistoric Content compared to other content standards. The average for the overall mastery level for the aspect of understanding the chronology of the entire content standard is 60.7% correct indicating a good level of achievement.

**Aspects of Exploring Evidence**

In the Historical Thinking Skills questionnaire there are six items developed to assess the basic knowledge of history related to aspects of exploring evidence for the entire content standard. Table 2 below shows the mastery level of exploring evidence aspect based on the content standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Standard content</th>
<th>% Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Introduction to knowledge of history</td>
<td>73.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ice Age</td>
<td>27.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Prehistoric Age</td>
<td>24.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>World Civilization and Its Contributions</td>
<td>61.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>46.7</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Table 2 above, the aspect of exploring based on the content standards, only the Prehistoric Age (73.2%) was answered correctly with above 70%, followed by the content standard of World Civilization and its Contribution (61.7%) which is over 60%, Ice Age and Prehistoric Period respectively obtained 27.1% and 24.7% respectively for the aspect of exploring the evidence.

Overall, it can be concluded that the aspect of exploring evidence for the four content standards, Form Two students are more proficient in the aspect of exploring the evidence for the content standard Introduction to Knowledge of History than other content standards. The average for the overall mastery level of exploring the evidence for the entire content standard is 46.7% correct by achieving the minimum level of mastery.

**Aspects of Making Interpretations**

In the historical thinking skills questionnaire, there are six items developed to assess the basic knowledge of history related to the aspect of making interpretations for the entire content standard. Table 3 below shows the mastery level for aspects of making interpretations based on the content standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Content Standard</th>
<th>% Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Introduction to knowledge of history</td>
<td>77.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ice Age</td>
<td>62.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Prehistoric Age</td>
<td>69.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>World Civilization and Its Contributions</td>
<td>52.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>65.4</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Table 3 above, the aspect of making interpretations based on the content standards, only the content standard Introduction to Historical Knowledge (77.3%) was answered correctly for more than 70%, followed by the content standards for the Ice Age (62.4%) and Prehistoric Age (69.6%) in which each exceeded 60% respectively and finally World Civilization and its Contribution obtained 52.1% correct answer for the aspect of making interpretations.

Overall, it can be concluded that the aspect of making interpretation for the four content standards, the Form Two students master more the aspect of making interpretation of the content standard for Introduction to
Knowledge of History compared to other content standards. The average for the overall mastery level of aspects of interpretation for the entire content standard is 65.4% correct at a good level.

**Aspects of Imagining**

In the historical thinking skills questionnaire there are six items developed to assess the basic knowledge of history related to the aspect of imagining for the entire content standard. Table 4 below shows the mastery level of aspects of imagining based on the content standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Content Standard</th>
<th>% Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Introduction to knowledge of history</td>
<td>78.6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ice Age</td>
<td>59.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Prehistoric Age</td>
<td>80.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>World Civilization and Its Contributions</td>
<td>55.3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>68.5</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Table 4 above, the aspect of imagining based on the content standards, only the content standards for Introduction to Historical Knowledge (78.6%) and Prehistoric Age (80.7%) are answered correctly with more than 70%, followed by the content standard for World Civilization and its Contributions and Ice Age which obtained 59.5% respectively and 55.3% correct answers for the imagining aspect. Overall, it can be concluded that the aspect of imagining for the four content standards, Form Two students master more on the aspect of imagining of the content standard for Introduction to Knowledge of History and Prehistoric Age. The average for the overall mastery level of the imagining aspect for the entire content standard is 68.5% correct at a good level.

**Aspects of Rationalizing**

In the historical thinking skills questionnaire there are six items developed to assess the basic knowledge of history related to the rationalizing aspect for the entire content standard. Table 5 below illustrate the mastery level for the aspects of rationalizing based on the content standards.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No</th>
<th>Content Standard</th>
<th>% Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Introduction to knowledge of history</td>
<td>88.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Ice Age</td>
<td>80.2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Prehistoric Age</td>
<td>47.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>World Civilization and Its Contributions</td>
<td>43.0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>64.9</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Table 5 above, the rationalizing aspect based on the content standard, only the content standard for Introduction to Knowledge of History (88.9%) was answered correctly with above 80%, followed by the content standard for the Ice Age (80.2%) which was above 70%, Prehistoric Age with 47.4% and The World Civilization and Its Contribution with 43.0% correct answers in term of rationalizing aspect. Overall, it can be concluded that the rationalizing aspect for the four content standards, Form Two students are more in control for the rationalizing aspect for the content standard for Introduction to Knowledge of History and the Ice Age compared to other content standards. The average for the overall mastery level for the rationalizing aspect for the entire content standard was 64.9% answer correct at a good level.

**Mastery Level of Historical Thinking Skills for Overall Content Standards**

In this study, five aspects of Historical Thinking Skills are assessed, namely the aspects of understanding chronology, exploring evidence, making interpretations, imagining and rationalizing. These five aspects are assessed based on the four content standards, namely the Introduction to Knowledge of History, the Ice Age, the Prehistoric Age, and World Civilization and its Contributions. Table 6 below illustrate the mastery level of historical thinking skills for the entire content standard.
Table 6. Mastery Level of the Historical Thinking Skills for Overall Content Standards

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>No.</th>
<th>Aspects of Historical Thinking Skills</th>
<th>% Correct</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1.</td>
<td>Understanding Chronology</td>
<td>60.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2.</td>
<td>Exploring Evidence</td>
<td>46.7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3.</td>
<td>Making Interpretations</td>
<td>65.4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4.</td>
<td>Imagining</td>
<td>68.5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5.</td>
<td>Rationalizing</td>
<td>64.9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td><strong>Overall Average</strong></td>
<td><strong>61.2</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Based on Table 6 above, the overall mastery level of Historical Thinking Skills based on the overall content standard was at a good level with the correct average percentage of 61.2%. The percentage for each aspect is as follows: understanding chronology is 60.7%, making interpretations is 65.4%, imagining is 68.5% and rationalizing is 64.9%. These results indicated a good level of mastery, while for the aspect of exploring evidence with 46.7% had reached a minimum level.

7. Conclusion

Overall, the above discussion has described in detail the findings of data analysis descriptively to answer the six research questions outlined. Descriptive analysis for the five aspects of Historical Thinking Skills for the entire standard of History content among Form Two students in the state of Selangor is 61.2%. Students' mastery and understanding of each aspect, namely understanding chronology, exploring evidence, making interpretations, imagining and rationalizing for historical content standards is very important because it gives an overview of students' Historical Thinking Skills. Overall, the findings show that the mastery of these Historical Thinking Skills can be further enhanced.

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References

5. Informasi Pentaksiran Berasaskan Sekolah (PBS), (2014), Kementerian Pendidikan Malaysia.