

Investigating Invigilators' Knowledge, Attitudes and Practices for High Stakes Examinations in Eswatini

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Sub-theme: Innovations and Strategies to Combat Examination Malpractices



Introduction

- Maintaining integrity of high-stakes public examinations is essential for fair access to educational progression and employment.
- EGCSE exams in Eswatini carry significant weight for students' futures.
- Invigilators are at the heart of safeguarding examination credibility.
- They ensure examination conditions are fair, secure, and compliant.
- Their knowledge, attitudes, and practical behaviours collectively determine compliance.
- Decisions made by invigilators, often under pressure, directly affect candidate outcomes.



Understanding Invigilation Quality – The KAP Framework

- The effectiveness of high-stakes examinations hinges on a combination of knowledge acquisition, attitudinal alignment and practical execution.
- The Knowledge, Attitudes, and Practices (KAP) theoretical framework (Launiala, 2009) encapsulates these dimensions.
- Originating from public health and behaviour change studies, the model has since been applied in educational settings to assess behavioural outcomes in relation to institutional compliance and quality assurance.
- In the examination context, knowledge pertains to an invigilator's understanding of regulatory requirements, procedural guidelines, and risk factors affecting assessment integrity (Abuya et al., 2014).



The KAP Framework

- Studies show that inadequate knowledge or reliance on outdated manuals can lead to errors in timing protocols, seating arrangements, and candidate verification (World Bank, 2020).
- Attitudes represent the beliefs and perceptions that invigilators hold about their roles, compliance expectations, and the value of procedural rigor.
- A positive attitude has been associated with higher fidelity to protocol, especially when reinforced by leadership and institutional culture (Tavakol & Dennick, 2010).
- Conversely, when invigilators perceive oversight as burdensome or believe minor deviations bear no consequence, their commitment wanes (Bolarinwa et al., 2012).



The KAP Framework

- Practices refers to the observable actions taken by invigilators during examination sessions. Even with knowledge and intent, practices can falter due to infrastructural constraints, role confusion, or fatigue (Kellaghan & Greaney, 2019).
- Importantly, the KAP framework underscores the interaction between its three dimensions: knowledge can shape attitudes, attitudes can motivate or discourage practice, and poor practices can erode both knowledge and belief in institutional processes (Launiala, 2009).
- For invigilation in Eswatini's EGCSE exams, this triangulation becomes a crucial lens for assessing both the compliance levels and the root causes behind deviations from expected standards.



ECESWA's Efforts and Context

- Examinations Council of Eswatini (ECESWA) organises annual training workshops for chief invigilators – who can bring one invigilator.
- Responsibility of cascading training often falls on headteachers.
- ECESWA also publishes a biennially revised Handbook for Centres outlining exam administration procedures.

Problem Statement

- Despite ECESWA's proactive training, discrepancies in examination conduct persist.
- Reports of malpractice and administrative inconsistencies continue to surface.
- Concerns about how well invigilators truly understand and apply guidelines crop up.



Study Significance & Research Questions

- Noticeable lack of empirical studies focusing explicitly on invigilation in Eswatini.
- This study fills an important gap using the KAP framework, providing evidence-based insights for policy, practice, and school leadership.

Research Questions

- What is the current state of knowledge among high-stakes examination invigilators in Eswatini regarding official regulations and best practices?
- What are the prevailing attitudes of these invigilators towards their role and examination integrity?
- What are the observed practices of invigilators during high-stakes examinations in Eswatini?
- What are the key challenges and influencing factors that affect invigilator performance and the overall integrity of examinations in Eswatini?



Methodology

- **Mixed-methods approach:** Integrating quantitative and qualitative strategies.
- **Descriptive survey design:** Documenting compliance trends and providing deeper insight into exam conduct.
- **Study Population:** All secondary schools in Eswatini participating in 2023 and 2024 EGCSE exams that underwent ECESWA training and inspection.
- **Sampling:** Purposive sampling of 77 schools, stratified across four regions (Hhohho, Manzini, Shiselweni, Lubombo).
- **Participants:** Heads of Centres/Chief Invigilators, school personnel involved in exam administration duties, and 2 Inspectors.



Methodology – Data Collection

- Structured compliance checklist used by Inspectors during inspections (quantitative).
- The checklist assessed observable compliance (e.g. script handling, attendance, security protocols etc.).
- Guided questions following the inspectors' observations that yielded post-exam narratives/reports about nature and causes of non-compliance (qualitative).



Methodology – Ethical Considerations & Validity/Reliability

- **Ethical:** Formal approval from ECESWA, anonymisation of school/personnel names, implied consent through institutional endorsement.
- **Validity:** Checklist adapted from Cambridge Assessment protocol, piloted, content validity enhanced via experts.
- **Reliability:** Consistency checks across inspections, inter-rater agreement via briefings, triangulation of checklist scores and narratives.



Methodology – Data Analysis

- **Quantitative Data:** Frequency distributions and regional cross-tabulations for compliance rates.
- **Qualitative Data:** Thematic content analysis using inductive coding of inspection reports giving deeper insight into challenges and practices.
- Interpretation through the KAP theoretical framework to link behaviour to cognitive and contextual factors.



Results and Findings

Region	Completely Satisfactory	Satisfactory with minor points	Some Cause for Concern	Serious Concerns	Total Centres	% compliance (compliant)	% compliance (Not Compliant)
Hhohho	3	7	4	4	18	55.56	44.44
Manzini	4	9	6	3	22	59.09	40.91
Shiselweni	2	6	6	5	19	42.11	57.89
Lubombo	1	6	5	6	18	38.89	61.11
Total Centres	10	28	21	18	77	49.35	50.65

- Compliance with invigilation protocols is uneven across the four regions.
- **Manzini** is the most compliant region at 59.09%
- **Lubombo** is the least compliant region at 38.89%.
- Across all regions, only **49.4%** of centers met acceptable standards



Results and Findings

Invigilator Knowledge

- **Impact of Knowledge on Compliance:**
 - **High awareness** of regulations (in centres where all key boxes were ticked during inspection) led to full compliance
 - **Partial awareness** e.g. in 8 cases (some invigilators saying ‘some rules are still confusing’) led to errors, such as incorrect syllabus codes displayed suggesting knowledge gaps (training or retention)
- **Understanding of regulations:**
 - Clear understanding of procedural knowledge ensured timely and secure handling of materials.
 - Confusion of key regulations (e.g. ‘*Key times is the time of starting and ending the exam*’) posed risks to exam integrity.



Results Continued

Attitudes of invigilators towards their roles

- Sense of responsibility:
 - 9 cases where invigilators showed a strong sense of duty (*'caretakers of integrity and fairness'*), resulting in consistent adherence to protocols.
 - 7 cases where invigilators displayed an indifferent attitude (*'It's just a job'*), leading to passive compliance.
- **Attitudes Towards Integrity:**
 - 11 invigilators had a **strong stance** on integrity (*'cheating must never be tolerated'*), demonstrating vigilance.
 - 6 invigilators were **permissive**, occasionally overlooking minor procedural lapses (e.g. incomplete documentation), an attitude that poses.



Results and Findings

Invigilator Practices

- Adherence to procedures:
 - In 7 cases invigilators showed full compliance, meticulously handling scripts and adhering to script handling and sealing steps.
 - In 9 cases invigilators showed partial compliance, admitting to overlooking minor details like ticking attendance lists.
- Time Management:
 - 8 invigilators demonstrated effective timekeeping (*'I kept strictly to the timetable because we know that exam time each minute counts'*).
 - 10 invigilators reported ineffective time management, with delays caused by logistical confusion.



Results and Findings

- **Resource Utilisation:**

- 6 invigilators reported adequate resource utilisation, with no issues getting needed materials.
- 11 invigilators reported inadequate materials, such as delays in receiving essential help, forcing improvisation.
- ECESWA Handbook: in 10 cases invigilators reported not receiving an updated Handbook or receiving it late, contributing to procedure misinterpretations or omissions.
- Invigilation Checklist: 9 invigilators lacked a checklist for invigilators, leading to inconsistent procedural steps..

Results and Findings

Challenges faced by invigilators

- **Insufficient training** was the most frequent challenge (12 cases), leaving invigilators unsure of protocols.('We were told there would be training, but only the headteacher attended.'; 'I received no training this year.')
 - 6 cases where invigilators reported adequate training ('the training helped me a lot') which led to greater confidence and procedural clarity.
- **Resource and Logistics**
 - 11 invigilators reported missing or delayed materials, disrupting exam flow.
 - 8 invigilators were in adequately resourced centres, experiencing procedural ease.



Results and Findings

- **Stressful working conditions** were cited by 8 invigilators, leading to cognitive fatigue and missed procedural steps.

Compliance is not just about training; it is deeply influenced by an invigilator's attitude, sense of responsibility, and working conditions.

- **Candidate misconduct** (7 cases) e.g. cases where candidates were heard whispering required invigilators to intervene without clear guidance.
- **Centre-level constraints** (9 cases) such as overcrowded rooms, institutional gaps in planning and coordination, hindered effective supervision.

Challenges are systemic. Institutional gaps in planning and coordination, not just individual shortcomings, lead to procedural variability and threaten exam reliability.



Findings overview

- **Invigilators' Knowledge of Regulations and Best Practices**
- Invigilators exhibit varying levels of knowledge and understanding of official examination regulations.
- Training is either insufficient or not well reinforced.
- Attitudes towards invigilation duties varied widely.
- Some invigilators demonstrated a strong sense of duty while others displayed an indifferent attitude



Findings overview

- Observed practices frequently diverged from ECESWA regulations.
- Inconsistencies were noted in announcing key times, displaying clocks, sealing scripts, and completing documentation.
- Lack of accountability fostered a culture of improvisation, replacing established norms with convenient, yet unofficial, practices.
- Findings point to a disconnection between knowledge, attitudes and practice when systemic support is weak or absent.



Discussion of Findings

Knowledge: Invigilator knowledge is a decisive factor in procedural compliance.

- High-compliance centres had invigilators with a strong understanding of regulations and access to procedural tools like the ECESWA Handbook and invigilation checklists. This supports Abuya et al.(2014) who argue that procedural clarity and access to updated materials are essential to examination integrity.
- Widespread knowledge gaps echo findings by Nyagah and Obiero (2015) that training alone does not ensure retention or comprehension.



Discussion of Findings

Attitudes: Invigilator attitudes also emerged as a powerful determinant of compliance behaviour.

- Those who saw their role as ‘*caretakers of integrity*’ were proactive and consistent. This aligns with (Tavakol and Dennick, 2010) who found that positive role perception enhances fidelity. Those who viewed their role as routine or burdensome showed passive compliance.
- Stress and fatigue in under-resourced centres eroded attitudinal engagement. This is consistent with Bolarinwa et al. (2012) who highlight the the demotivating effect of poor working conditions on compliance.



Discussion

Practices: Invigilator practices were also varied.

- Full compliance was observed in centres prioritising time management, resource availability, and procedural clarity. These findings support Kellaghan and Greaney (2019) who emphasise that practise depends not only on knowledge and intent but also on operations.
- Partial compliance was more prevalent due to logistical confusion, delayed materials, and unclear instructions. Common lapses, such as not ticking attendance registers, mirror findings by UNESCO (2022) that infrastructural and logistical bottlenecks frequently undermine examination integrity.
- The KAP interplay is evident: poor practices reflect knowledge and attitude gaps and perpetuate procedural instability.



Discussion

Challenges faced by invigilators: These were predominantly systemic.

- Insufficient training was the most cited issue, with many invigilators lacking formal orientation as there is a tendency not to cascade training. This echoes Singh et al. (2020), who argue that behavioural compliance in educational settings requires structured and repeated training interventions.
- Resource delays, like delayed delivery of scripts to exam room, missing documents(e.g. seating plans/registers), disrupted the examination flow, consistent with UNESCO (2022), which identifies logistical preparedness as a cornerstone of credible assessment administration.
- External influences, such as candidate misconduct and poor infrastructure, compounded difficulties.

Findings underscore the need for institutional reforms addressing individual capacity and environmental conditions.



Conclusion

- Invigilation performance is shaped by an intricate interplay of knowledge, attitudes, and practices.
- Knowledge gaps persist due to ineffective reinforcement and weak monitoring.
- Attitudes are vulnerable to burnout and perceived redundancy.
- Practices diverge from policy due to infrastructural limitations and delegation issues.
- Compliance cannot be sustained by knowledge alone – positive attitudes and supportive environments are equally critical.



Recommendations

- Systemic Shift: improve training e.g. frequency.
- Continuous Support: Invest in continuous professional development and practical simulations, promoting ethical ownership of the invigilation role through attitudinal reinforcement and stress/fatigue mitigation strategies.
- Accountability: Enhance school-level accountability mechanisms
- Prioritise infrastructural and logistical improvements
- Goal: Ensure all three KAP dimensions reinforce each other in safeguarding examination integrity.



THANK YOU

