

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this case study was to investigate how and why Grade 10 history teachers engage in essay-writing. It firstly focused on the value teachers attach to history essay-writing and the teachers' strategies to develop this writing. Secondly, the study looked at the issues focused on during feedback and noted that there was a formative process of assessment supporting the learning of essay-writing. Thirdly, a sample of learners' written essays was analysed using criteria from an amplified SOLO taxonomy. Historical thinking criteria from P. Seixas and S. Wineburg were integrated with those of the SOLO taxonomy to provide a useful analytical tool. Data were collected from interviews with two Grade 10 history teachers from one secondary school, class observation on feedback about completed essays, and document analysis from three essays of learners.

The findings suggest that the teachers' way of teaching History was influenced by the values they hold relating to the subject. These included teaching for historical thinking and encouraging learners to develop their own essay-writing skills with the help of a very structured approach using the PEAL method and standard rubric for assessment. While class observation suggested that the teachers had an understanding of the purpose of formative assessment and were involved in a process of developing skills of essay-writing over time, there was a lack of written feedback on marked essays. This could have assisted learners more directly in the development of essay-writing. The document analysis of learners' written essays does, however, suggest that teaching and learning outcomes were met, although at different levels.

Keywords: History essay-writing, historical thinking, SOLO Taxonomy, Grade 10 history teaching.

