Grade 10 History teachers' engagement with essay-writing: A case study of a Gauteng High School

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DECLARATION

I declare that this is my own unaided work. All the sources I have used in this work from other authors have been acknowledged and referenced. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Education (MEd) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination at any other university.

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DEDICATION

This study has been dedicated to my sons, Beracah Caesar and baby Malcolm Berith Mazengenya, and my mum, Mary Joyce Banda, who have been a source of my inspiration.

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.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CAPS: Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements

DoE: The Department of Education

FET: Further Education Training

GDE: Gauteng Department of Education

NCS: National Curriculum Statement

PGCE: Post Graduate Certificate in Education

SOLO: Structure of Observed Learning Outcomes

WITS: The University of the Witwatersrand

LIST OF TABLES   **PAGE NUMBER**

APPENDICES

Appendix A: Interview and Observation Timetable

Appendix B: Interview Schedule

Appendix C: GDE Prescribed Assessment Rubric

Appendix D: Samples of Grade 10 Essays with Teacher's Feedback

Appendix E: Ethics Clearance – University of the Witwatersrand and Gauteng Department of Education

Appendix F: Consent forms

      F1: Invitation to participate
      F2: Teachers' consent form
      F3: Parent consent form

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION TO THE STUDY

1.1 Introduction

The research is framed around the importance of Grade 10 History teachers' engagement with essay-writing. Essay-writing in History is aimed at helping learners gradually develop writing skills within the discipline of History. These skills may include analysis of different sources, provide evidence of historical sources and provide a historical argument. The research emerged from the researcher's interest in investigating and exploring strategies of teaching History essay-writing in order to help learners write coherent essays and acquire the desired learning outcomes. These desired learning outcomes of essays include teaching learners to take a position in their own writing or write from their own point of view; write an acceptable conventional essay which includes an introduction, a body and a conclusion; as well as helping learners be aware of a variety of representations of the past and providing evidence for every claim made in writing.

 In fact the research was motivated by the challenges I personally faced as a History teacher in Zambia when I taught Grade 10 classes. I found that teaching learners to write appropriate History essays and grading these essays was not an easy task.

I found myself teaching my learners not to write acclamations of historical events but at least to acknowledge their sources even if it was from one textbook. This eventually affected my grading system as I placed more emphasis on developing historical arguments, although this was not explicit in our curriculum, and I found myself paying less attention to the final grade. I must admit that this kind of assessment was never liked by my learners where some of them even dropped History and opted for other subjects to avoid difficult essay-writing. Moreover, teaching Grade 10 was more challenging because this is where the foundation for Grade 12 final examinations is laid. Hence, intensive training on essay-writing begins.

History essay-writing has been found to be challenging to a number of learners. This is because History essay-writing depends on locating evidence and arguments appropriately in time and space in any account about the past. Essay-writing can be challenging because the writing process often confronts learners to display what they have understood about the topic or question

within the framework of conventional writing. This is where learners need to have a proper structure with an introduction, body and conclusion. However, this can be more challenging to structure and organise ideas.

De la Paz (2005) suggests that writing allows learners to explain and organise thoughts. Thus, a curriculum that centers on historical thinking should include opportunities for reading multiple documents and writing about them. Drawing from this, the recent past has seen a shift in the focus of History education from the traditional methods of focusing on content and learning which mainly implied memorisation of important facts to the learning of History that emphasises learning to read, think and write like historians (historical thinking). This implies that learners should be able to read, interpret and analyse historical documents in order to construct a narrative. Thus, History essays are analytical and the key to this writing is for learners to be able to display reasoning and their ability to communicate historical knowledge on a given question or topic. These consist of six components as identified by Seixas (2006) and Wineburg (2001). These components are considered to enable learners to understand History as well as social life in general as learners would have acquired the ability to argue about historical events rather than accept or reject them uncritically. Furthermore, this is what seems to be viewed as a significant capacity for participation in a democratic society (Van Drie & van Boxtel, 2008). Since History teaches critical skills and independent thinking, critical and thinking skill is a pre-requisite for good citizenship in a democratic society as people would not merely accept anything without questioning its cause and effects.

Drawing from all of this, South Africa has also shifted from teaching History as a way of memorisation and has incorporated its narrative nature with its inquiry nature, as evident in the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS). The curriculum demands that History should be a process of enquiry. Gone are the days when teaching and learning of History was about dates and rote learning of facts about important people and events. The process of enquiry in History education challenges learners to ask questions and think critically about the past rather than just merely accepting other people's narratives. This is a process that is now called *'doing history'* (Bertram, 2008*)* understanding events from the perspective of those times, recognising differing interpretations and arriving at conclusions only after considering both primary and secondary evidence (Barton & McCully, 2005).

However, the study conducted by Wineburg (1991) suggests that high school learners do not spontaneously use contextualisation, sourcing and corroboration when reading documents, as historians, do because corroboration is inseparable for historians as every account reflects a point of view. As a component of historical thinking, argumentation concerns putting forward a claim about the past with supportive evidence through weighing different possible interpretations and taking into account counter-arguments.

Hence, for my Master's research I decided to explore teachers' conceptions, practices and challenges associated with teaching of History essay-writing to their Grade 10 learners. Above all, I was motivated to carry out this research due to my exposure to the history course at the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) which made me rethink strategies other teachers use to teach writing and the skills they focus on.

This chapter presents the background to the study, rationale, aim, problem statement, research questions and an overview of the remaining chapters.

1.2 Background to the study

In any system of education, the demands of the curriculum play a crucial role. The South African school History curriculum at the time of National Curriculum Statement (NCS) reform (Department of Education (DoE), 2002) and Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS), Department of Basic Education (DBE), 2011) makes it clear that the vision is for learners to learn to think historically and to be able to "do" History. Thinking historically means appreciating the chains of the cause and consequence that explain how and why certain events happen. This could be local or personal. It has also been argued that, when studying a particular topic or event of the past, historians use specific disciplinary methods of analysis to evaluate and interpret these different types of evidence. Seixas (2006) identifies six features of historical thinking. These include establishing historical significance, use of primary sources, identifying continuity and change, analysis of cause and consequence, taking a historical perspective, and understanding the moral dimension of historical interpretation. These six features identified by Seixas are also known as aspects of historical thinking. That is to say that historical thinking involves analysing of evidence, interpreting the meaning of evidence and using the same evidence in the construction of historical accounts.

In addition to Seixas's interpretation of historical thinking, Wineburg (2001) asserts that historical thinking involves sourcing, corroboration and contextualisation of evidence. Thus in a school setting teachers should pose questions to learners that would stimulate historical thinking. It is evident that the present South African national curriculum (CAPS) continues to encourage learners to work like historians by analysing sources and providing evidence in their interpretations. This is shown by the CAPS (DoE) emphasis on learning History as a "process of inquiry" (DBE, 2011, p. 8). Learners are expected to be taught to think in a rigorous and critical way about the past by being analytical and critical thinkers, not just accepting someone else's interpretation. The development of historical thinking involves both the content (that is historical knowledge) and process (application of specific practice). Seixas (1999) emphasises that it is essential for learners to acquire both of these, that is, the substantive historical knowledge and the procedural knowledge of historians as these constitute the foundation of historical thinking. Van Sledright (2002, cited in Bertram, 2012) calls for teacher development and asserts that for teachers to be able to practise History in a school classroom, they need to acquire both deep substantive knowledge of the subject matter as well as deep procedural knowledge. In short, teachers themselves should master the subject matter before they practise with learners.

Bertram's (2008) previous research in KwaZulu-Natal, "Doing history? Assessment in history classroom at the time of curriculum reform", conducted in 2006, shows that as History is re-contextualised into classrooms, teachers tend to work differently to historians with both the content and procedural knowledge. As a result learners at that time were "mostly required to extract information from sources rather than engage with them as historians would do" (Bertram, 2008, p. 154). In addition, they (learners) were unable to demonstrate a strong and in-depth knowledge of History. This was so because both teachers and learners were not familiar with the reforms of the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) document.

If this was the case in 2006, at the time of the reform in History teaching, as an attempt to move away from rote learning and presentation of facts and dates and to foster historical thinking, then how did it affect teachers' engagement with essay-writing?

1.3 Essay-writing
An essay is a piece of sustained writing in response to a question, topic or an issue. It must consist of an introduction, several body paragraphs and a conclusion. The introduction must

consist of a clear statement that contains the significance of the argument. However, De la Paz (2005) points to the variation of the length of essay depending on the question and on the satisfaction of the teacher's requirements. The length of the essay would differ depending on the teacher's intended learning outcomes. In History, essay-writing is considered to be important because it helps learners develop abilities that would enable them to communicate and participate in a discussion of the past, these abilities include developing a reasoned argument and analysis. An argument in an essay should be supported by evidence of other historical sources. Above all, a History essay ought to be more analytical rather than descriptive.

Hounsell (1987) however stipulates that essay-writing in History occupies a central role in education as it serves two fundamental purposes: learning and assessment. As a learning tool, it demands learners display what they know within the framework of the topic or question. Learners are to display reasoning and their ability to communicate historical knowledge depending on the question given. As an assessment tool, a History essay could be used for assessing and evaluating learners' progress in reasoning and their ability to communicate historical knowledge of the given topic or question. When learning History, learners may often progress from simple and surface to deeper constructs of understanding (Biggs & Collis, 1982). Thus, essays test a wide range of skills including historical understanding, analysis and interpretation and planning, research and writing (Roden & Brady, 2000). In other words, History essays measure specific disciplinary skills such as analysis and interpretation because these skills are believed to foster critical thinking which an important aspect is if learners are to learn to read and work like historians.

Apart from measuring historical skills, History essay-writing is believed to prepare learners for academic writing in tertiary education, which is an aspiration for most secondary school learners, as they have to be prepared for the next level (Roden & Brady, 2000). In addition to academic writing, Drake and Burns (2004) state the practice of essay-writing has yet another important impact on learners which enables them to participant in the continued debate of the past as well as day to day life (implying life skills). Therefore, if learners are to write a coherent essay, they need to examine the question, understand its focus and requirements, and in addition acquire information and evidence through research and then construct a clear and well organised response (Llewellyn & Thompson, 2014).

It is from such an understanding of the importance of essay-writing that I believe that formative assessment of essays is essential to good writing of History essays; when properly constituted it is a process getting learners to write well-constructed historical essays. It becomes constructive in that the information gathered about learners' performance is used to improve their understanding and skills acquired. So when teachers use this information to relate to learners' performance to change their teaching activity, and adjust to suit the learners' needs, then it is formative assessment. Thus, the quality of interaction between teacher and learner is the backbone of pedagogy (Black & William, 1998). Black and William (2003) further argue that formative assessment is an on-going process that aims to guide the learning process in helping the learners develop their competence levels through the use of feedback.

In other words, formative assessment in History learning is aimed at improving learning so that the learners produce higher quality work and thinking. Thus in assessing learners work teachers may check for learners' understanding by asking question on a given topic. In doing so the teacher is collecting information that could be used to adjust the next instruction. Therefore, providing learners with effective and constructive feedback could help leaners improve.

The Department of Basic Education (DBE) in CAPS (2011) emphasises that learners who study History use the insights and skills of historians. The emphasis is one that often poses a change in thinking about history from thinking of History as merely a subject where one memorises vast quantities of unrelated facts to a subject in which one critically considers historical sources and other people's interpretations of the past as one writes his own interpretation within the same or similar framework. However, this is not an easy shift. This approach to learning History implies that assessment needs to change so that learners are not only tested on the factual information that they can remember but they also need to be assessed on whether they can read source material critically, how they use evidence that is presented to them, and whether they understand historical procedures and concepts (Bertram, 2008). The purpose of formative assessment in History essays would be to gather evidence about learners' understanding and interpretative skills involved within the discipline of History because these skills are consistent with those needed by citizens to evaluate information and make informed decisions.

Given Bertram's findings about the difficulty of getting learners to work like historians, I am interested to find out whether the teachers in my case study intend to achieve this historical

thinking through essay-writing and use formative assessment as a process of getting learners to write well thought-out historical essays.

1.4 The problem statement

One of the reasons for writing History essays is to get learners to act like historians and "do history". Historians take note of the sources of their evidence and consider their credibility as they develop an interpretation of the past (Wineburg, 2001). Doing History in Wineburg's terms means thinking historically. Historical thinking is said to have developed around the intention that it is central to History teaching and instruction and that learners should become competent History thinkers as they progress through their schooling (Wineburg, 2001). Thus, one difficulty in writing History is to help learners to learn to include evidence in their essay-writing (Monte-Sano, 2012). However, doing history has an intrinsic value that goes beyond the classroom.

If the learner is able to acquire these skills and be able to do that, then the teacher would know that learning has taken place (Wiggins & McTighe, 2005). This means that not only historical events but also disciplinary knowledge of how historians do what they do, how they analyse sources, how they reconstruct the past and how they take a perspective in their historical context would have occurred (Wineburg, 2001). But it is this act of getting learners to read, think and write like historians which has proven to be difficult and challenging. The skills used by historians to make meaning of the past demand a high level of thinking and decision making. However, learners often tend to be too narrative, assertive, lack structure or even fail to address the question at hand in their writing. As a result, Harris (2001) and Monte-Sano (2012) postulate that this task should not be left for an advanced stage of schooling because, if left for later in learners' school career, it may lead to more difficulties and frustrations.

Another problem is that of high stakes standards and accountability which has pressured teachers into aiming at achieving good grades as they are accountable for learners' performance through producing good results. Hence, the core of teaching and learning has been negatively affected in the sense that teachers and schools are encouraged to teach to the test to avoid punishment, and South Africa is no exception. As a result, teachers are holding on to traditional practices of assessment; that is, ticking of correct and making crosses on incorrect work of learners without providing them with appropriate feedback that could facilitate learning (Shepard, 2000). This has led to de-skilling and de-professionalisation of teachers, if they were skilled in the first place. In

addition, this has also encouraged learners to respond to external rewards and punishable testing rather than those of intrinsic value (Shepard, 2000).

This means that learners are motivated to only work hard towards tests that have punishable and rewardable values such as promotion to new grades or final examinations because of fear of repeating or failing the exams. In this case, tests that test their deep understanding of skills could be taken superficially. In the case of a History teacher s/he may be pressured into getting good grades and this may, as a result, lead to other aspects of History teaching suffering such as teaching of historical thinking and assessing formatively.

The desire to understand the challenges that secondary History teachers face with initiating and developing essay-writing is the reason for this study. It explores Gauteng Grade 10 History teachers' strategies to achieve good writing of history essays with their learners.

1.5 The purpose of the study
The purpose of this study is to investigate and explore History teachers' conceptions of why and how they engage with History essay-writing in Grade 10. Seeing learning to write a History essay as a process, it further examines the challenges they encounter and attempt to meet in relation to their practice in a Grade 10 classroom.

In Harris' (2001) opinion many learners find it difficult or are unable to effectively write History essays. He reports that this is not only because essays require learners to display their learning in an analytical and well-structured manner as historians do, but it is also because teachers have failed to explain to these learners the value of History essays or why history essays are written. Thus, some learners think essay-writing is something they have to do for exams only. In addition to this, Rothschild (2000) suggests that these failures are not due to learners' abilities but the fact that teachers have not yet mastered the teaching of History essay-writing. Thus, Rothschild believes that with time teachers will learn better strategies to teach History essay-writing which in turn would also help learners to write better essays.

My study was carried out under the premise that History essay-writing is a core component of "doing history", that is, of developing historical thinking and assessment is a key component of learning because it helps learners learn by seeing what and how they are doing in class. However, teaching learners to reason within the discipline of History is a challenging task and assessing the

essays is a daunting and time-consuming task. However, the main purpose of this study is not to find out whether or not history essay-writing works but rather the core purpose of this study is to find out how and why these high school teachers in the study engage with History essay-writing in the manner they do. In other words I sought to find out teachers' strategies for essay-writing and the value they attached to this teaching.

The other reason for this study is that, at the present time, I know of no other research into teachers' engagement with History essay-writing in Grade 10 in Gauteng. Therefore, the present research provides data specifically on this topic although it cannot be claimed to represent the views of all the high school History teachers in the country.

This study intends to:

    i.   Provide an understanding of how two Grade 10 History teachers engage with essay-writing.

    ii.   Gain an understanding of why they engage with History essay-writing in the way they do.

    iii.   Initiate further studies into the topic of teaching History essay-writing in South African schools as this study is of a very limited sample.

1.6 Rationale

Historians' work involves studying and analysing historical documents and making connections from the information to form a narrative of history. Writing in History is both the context and product of critical thinking. From this, History educators have called for development in school learners of historical thinking (Seixas, 2006; Wineburg, 2001). Therefore, if learners are to be socialised into the practice of historians, then historical writing means learners ought to interpret (make sense or understand a particular event) and integrate information from different sources to make a historical narrative (present the interpretation in the form of a story) with supportive evidence. Thus, History essay-writing is valued because it helps learners to obtain new knowledge and think critically about historical issues.

In short, the value of History essay-writing is to help learners apply historical thinking. However this seems to be a challenge for some teachers and learners. So whatever conceptions teachers

may have about the purpose of managing essay-writing with their learners, they should be able to encourage their learners to create an argument and use documentary sources, that is, both primary and secondary sources, to support an argument. They should be able to position themselves as learner-historians through their writing History essays.

Research into how this is and can be implemented in local schools is of value because it is a crucial part of good History teaching. Given that there is limited research on Grade 10 History teachers' engagement on essay-writing in Gauteng high schools, research by Bertram (2008) (Doing history?' Assessment in History classrooms at a time of curriculum reform) discussed the problematic aspects that historical thinking posed for learners as well as teachers. It was discovered that while discussing their claims, learners tended to work at a superficial level. They also did not use sources extensively and hardly used corroboration when studying historical documents. In other words, the study which was conducted by Bertram focused on learners' historical understanding and learning and not on History essay-writing. Thus, the current study suggests that both learners' historical thinking and writing should be conducted through essay-writing. Therefore, this study explores how Grade 10 History teachers engage with their learners' essay-writing (strategies teachers use to teach essays) and why they engage in the way they do.

1.7 The research aim
The research aim of this study is to identify the value teachers attach to essay-writing, strategies teachers employ to teach essay-writing, and challenges associated with essay-writing.

1.8 Research questions
> 1.   How do Grade 10 History teachers engage with essay-writing?
> 2.   Why do they engage with essay-writing in the manner that they do?
> 3.   To what extent do learners' essays provide evidence of achieving the teachers' purposes?

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

This chapter reviews the literature that informs history teaching and the formative process of teaching the writing of history essays in particular. This includes understanding what the study of history entails, how historical thinking has become a desired result of history education and how essay-writing is a key part of the process of developing historical understanding and skills. The review also touches on formative assessment as part of the process of shaping this understanding and developing these skills.

2.2 The nature of history

The study of history has not gone uncontested. Traditionally history has been seen as what happened in the past. That is to say that the focus of history education has been on the content and mainly the learning of history implied memorisation of important events of the past. However, this assertion has been disputed by most modern historians who see it as a construction of the past (Carr, 1961; Munslow, 2002). This entails that history is a process by which historians gather evidence and construct ideas about the past with supportive evidence. This further means that history as an account of factual events is being challenged with the assertion that historical accounts involve interpretation of events and this is a subjective interpretation though based on careful work with evidence. Thus historians look for evidence for what has happened in the past then make their own interpretation based on the evidence provided to them. This evidence comes from different sources; hence, according to Smuts (2006), historical knowledge is the outcome of a process of enquiry. This process is also known as *doing history*. This phrase was used by Carol Bertram (2008) in her *"'Doing history?' Assessment in history classrooms at the time of Curriculum Reform"*. Here she pointed out that the National Curriculum Statement puts great emphasis on its learners doing history through the process of enquiry. This was to allow learners who study History to gain insights into how historians work and acquire their skills**.**

Historians work with discipline-specific methods of analysis to evaluate and interpret different kinds of evidence (De la Paz, 2005). These include interpreting sources, comparing or corroborating information across documents and using contextual knowledge of the situation to

evaluate the accuracy and reliability of the sources (Wineburg, 2001). In other words, historians interpret the data of each source of information within the required process of their practice. Thus, Seixas (1999) argues that in doing history, historians work with both content and procedure. Given this, content and procedural knowledge complement each other. Therefore, it is impossible for historians to use one without the other. "Content knowledge in history is concerned with what historical knowledge is all about and procedural knowledge focuses on the *concepts* and the *language* that provide the structural basis of the discipline" (Seixas, 1999, p. 328). In addition, Van Sledright and Limon, (2006) argue that procedural concepts are comprehension and application of historical practices. Usually they are presented by categories of claim and evidence but they sometimes are overlapped by corroboration and contextualisation. However, Dean (2004, pp. 1-2) summaries the whole process of doing history by stating that:

> Historians pose questions of the past, they collect sources which they interpret by organising, analysing, evaluating, and extracting appropriate data in order to address the question they earlier posed and they construct their story based on the evidence collected and communicate their findings in a logical and systematic way to make what is called history.

The implication of this in history teaching is that teachers ought to construct essay questions that measure achievement of clearly defined learning outcomes. For instance if the purpose of the question is to measure specific skills of essay-writing following the conventional structure (introduction, body and conclusion) and content of historical thinking (analysis, interpretation and sourcing), then the question should be clear enough to direct the learners on what is expected of them. In the same way, learners should be able to select relevant events, use a variety of sources, pose questions, think and write historically. Thinking historically lies in the way a learner organises information about the past in order to explain a historical occurrence. In doing so a learner should be able to ask historical questions, contextualise and support claims with arguments based on evidence from sources.

In my research, I investigate the teachers' views of history and whether the essay-writing they teach works with the view of history outlined above.

2.3 Teachers' conceptions of teaching History
Conceptions consist of beliefs, attitudes and intentions that people have. This study adopts Brown, Lake and Matters' definition of conceptions to mean "all that a teacher thinks about the nature and purposes of an educational process and practice" (2011, p. 210). Research has shown

that teachers are instrumental in framing the ways they plan, implement and evaluate the curriculum activities. However their conception does not only affect their classroom teaching but also affects and influences learners' learning process to some extent. This is because conceptions involve all pedagogical acts. Thus, teachers' conceptions of the subject matter is important because it shows the value teachers attach to the subject they teach. Hence Brown (2004) suggests that it is critical that such conceptions and the relationships of those conceptions among and between each other are made explicit and visible.

Grossman (1989, p. 26) concurs with the above assertion in that understanding teachers' knowledge is pertinent as it "counts for how teachers plan and carry out instruction in a vision of what it means to teach a particular subject matter". This is so because the way the teacher conceptualises teaching and learning of a particular subject plays an important role in the way that teacher would teach and assess in the classroom implied by Shulman (1987). This means the teacher has to re-contextualise the content of the subject into small digestible components if epistemological access is to be enabled. Furthermore, this entails that an essential part of transforming information involves "analysing each educational purpose and goal of the subject matter to be taught" (Shulman, 1987, p. 16). Thus, the whole process of analysing the educational purpose of the subject matter to be taught presupposes teachers' beliefs about the goals or purposes of the subject.

Yilmaz (2008) claims that most history teachers' goals for teaching the subject are directly informed by the concept of citizenship. This kind of a citizen is obedient but also critical with a questioning attitude towards the country's history, hence this kind of citizen is a critical thinker. Other conceptions or goals include making the subject interesting, preparing learners for tests and college life, and life skills to make change in the world. Yilmaz further asserts that the goals for teaching history include presenting learners with an opportunity to develop basic academic skills such as reading, writing and analytical thinking. It has been argued that besides what learners decide to do in life, developing basic skills is important in their lives.

Understanding the importance teachers attach to the subject is important as it could inform my own teaching in future and could provide insights into helping other teachers and learners develop sophisticated understanding of the nature of teaching essay-writing which has been deemed as a major goal in History learning and in the development of historical thinking. All this

informs my research in that investigating teachers' perceptions of teaching History essay-writing would help me understand the values attached to their practices.

2.4 Teaching of History as a school subject
Levstik and Barton (1997) agree that in the teaching and learning of History it is crucial to be aware of the fact that historical accounts involve interpretation. On the other hand Monte-Sano (2012) acknowledges that teaching learners to write ordinary arguments in History is indeed valuable but teaching them to write historical arguments is even more valuable. However, teaching learners to think historically is a difficult task. It is, however, achievable although it requires specific teaching strategies such as explicitly modelling showing learners how to write well, sharing criteria with learners, having formulae to answer questions and explaining of concepts such as describe, discuss, or highlight. Nevertheless, teachers need to identify aspects of historical thinking they need to target and assess learners' progress towards those learning goals in their essays (Van Sledright & Hauver, 2002; Monte-Sano, 2006; 2012). However, Monte-Sano (2012) further accepts that this is not an easy task so it should not be reserved for advanced placement learners (as if to imply that it should not be left for advanced stages in secondary schools).

The role of interpretation in history has always been an issue of controversy. History is controversial and interpretive (Seixas, 1993). Thus, "if schools are to prepare learners for active citizenship in a democracy (like South Africa), then educators can neither ignore controversy nor teach learners to accept passively someone's historical interpretation" (Levstik & Barton, 1997, p. 8). But, in Van Sledright's opinion, this seems to be attainable if school curricula are upgraded to include teaching for historical thinking, and educators aim at in-depth understanding of historical issues so that learners can have an in-depth knowledge of the subject (Levstik & Barton, 1997). This is where learners are made aware that history is about a sequence of facts but also needs interpretation of those facts (Van Sledright & Hauver James, 2002). It has further been argued that learning historical writing is something which learners can achieve; it only requires teachers to support this aim or goal. This could be achieved through the integration of history learning and literacy development. In addition, teaching learners to write historical thinking can be achieved if teachers could look for historical qualities in learners' writing and

support their development. In short, it implies that there should be an alignment between instructional activities and assessment.

In light of this, in South Africa as a way to move from the use of history as grand narrative (telling of the best story), a great emphasis has been placed on doing History as an enquiry as evident in CAPS (DBE, 2011). This means that teachers should encourage their learners to take an inquiry approach, to understand events from the perspective of particular times, to recognise differing interpretations and to arrive at conclusions only after considering both primary and secondary evidence (Barton & McCully, 2005).

 A study was conducted in South Africa by Bunt (2013) to investigate the extent to which teacher's nurture creative thinking in the Grade 9 social sciences classroom through the choice of teaching methods. It shows that there is still a need for History teachers to be made aware of the different instructional and assessment strategies that nurture creative thinking. Bunt (2013) goes on to claim that the traditional teacher-centred methods are still prevalent in many History classrooms. So if this is the case, then the transition from the presentation of history as merely a matter of facts may not yet have been achieved. What are the proposed possible strategies for historical writing since essay-writing is generally based questions that demand that learners express their historical knowledge and understanding with their own opinion?

Studies by De La Paz (2005) and Monte-Sano (2008) have shown that certain teaching methods can lead to better historical writing by learners, as the skill of historical thinking is the key among the changes that History instruction has undergone. This also implies that there is a need for teachers to develop tools that would measure historical thinking skill when applied by their learners. It has been argued that learners who receive instruction in historical thinking with an emphasis on primary source interpretation are likely to produce better historical essays (De La Paz, 2005; Monte-Sano, 2008). Ellery (2008, p. 422) has argued that explicit instruction in writing and the practice of draft writing could also benefit learners in historical writing in that "the opportunities for learning are greatest in the formative assignments requiring drafts, where learners receive feedback and actively engage with feedback to improve the product such as essays".

A great emphasis in historical writing is teaching learners to write argumentative essays. In the same vein, Barton and Levstik (2004) point to the skill of argumentation as being fundamental to historical thinking. This is so because arguments require learners to write a claim, provide evidence to support the claim and explain the ways in which evidence supports the claim. Thus, the process of argumentation is closely related to the use of sources. These sources could either be primary or secondary. Furthermore, De La Paz and Monte-Sano have found that learners who are given explicit instruction and practise this kind of writing write better essays. Monte-Sano (2012) claims that some learners may have all the components of writing a historical argument and may have a strong well-structured essay but yet still lack the qualities of integrating historical thinking into the use of evidence. In an attempt to operationalise the concepts of historical thinking in essay-writing, she devised a table, which summarises and describes the list of what learners need to demonstrate if they are to acquire historical thinking skills in writing.

Table 1: Benchmark and indicators of evidence of historical thinking in learners' essays

Characteristic	Benchmark	Indicator
Factual and interpretive accuracy	Interprets the documentary evidence accurately – appropriate interpretation. Fair representation of people, issues, events as opposed to misinterpretation or misunderstanding. Factual details and chronology are also accurate.	• Got the facts straight (e.g. chronology of events, which countries were allied or enemies, etc.). • Comprehended the information in the documents used. • Interpreted documents historically, noting subtext and context.
Persuasiveness of Evidence	The essay substantiates the claim with evidence that is relevant, significant, and specific. The weight of the evidence is sufficient – even compelling.	• Incorporated evidence to support the claim. • Selected specific evidence that included precise historical details or quotations from documents. • Selected relevant evidence that related to the argument. • Selected evidence that was historically significant, given the topic. • Integrated multiple pieces of evidence in support of the claim.
Sourcing of Evidence	The essay notes authors of documents or other sources of evidence used to make the argument. The use of evidence recognises perspectives inherent in sources cited. Evidence is balanced and credible.	• Made reference to documents or cited documents that were relevant to the argument. • Recognized or referred to the authors of documents cited. • Attributed authorship to the correct person— recognised that a person who was discussed in a document was not always the author. • Recognised perspectives of authors or commented on credibility of evidence.
Corroboration of Evidence	The claim responds to and accounts for the available evidence. The essay synthesises multiple pieces of evidence that work together to support the claim. The essay recognises and addresses conflicting/counter-evidence.	• Recognised where documents might support the claim. • Used more than one document to support the claim. • Recognised and responded to counter-evidence.
Contextualization of evidence	Contextual knowledge is used to situate and evaluate the evidence available. In contextualising evidence and topic, the essay recognises historical perspectives and demonstrates an understanding of causation. The essay uses sources in a manner that is consistent with the contemporary meaning of the sources for the original audience at the time and place of their creation.	• Established the historical context and perspectives relevant to the topic. • Established clear, correct cause-effect relationships. • Established the correct chronology. • Connected excerpts of documents to their historical context - or, grounded and situated documents in their original context. • Used documents in a manner that was consistent with their original, historical meaning.

(Adapted from Monte-Sano, 2012, p. 295).

However, this table will be modified to integrate with SOLO taxonomy in analysing learners' historical writing in written essays.

Hence it has been suggested that teachers should try to draw out skills of argumentation, such as claim, evidence and analysis among others. Moreover, teacher feedback should be formative throughout the writing process instead of at the end so that learners have a chance to develop what they are writing (Monte-Sano, 2008). Learners themselves should create time to practise how to write.

However, it has been noticed that it is this act of writing that has not been easy for many learners as writing a historical argument has proven to be unique when compared to argument writing in other subjects. This is probably because of the nature of historical thought involved where learners are both encouraged to take a perspective of historical events (Monte-Sano, 2006) and this perspective has to be supported by evidence from historical sources. I believe this is how History essay-writing has become a key part in the process of developing historical understanding.

2.5 Why essay-writing is important in History

Essays are said to be good at assessing learners' reasoning and their ability to communicate historical knowledge depending on the type of question that is asked**.** This means that not only should a learner acquire the knowledge of the topic but should also show some understanding of the topic through writing. This is because essays are said to often test a learner's understanding of the topic or question by asking the learner to display that understanding by selecting and re-organising relevant historical material in order to write a historical event asked by the question. However, some History educators argue that History essays are important because they make specific demands of the learner. For instance, the learner must not only comprehend and just make sense of a question or topic but must venture beyond the topic or question and communicate what they know within the framework of formal and ordered statements (Hounsell, 1987). In addition, Harris (2001) says the demands include writing in a structured and analytical manner. However it is this venture of analytical writing that seems to be difficult for high school learners because learners have to go beyond the classroom notes, thus the process of inquiry is involved.

Another important aspect of essay-writing is that it embodies historical thinking in that learners are to be encouraged to look for other sources that can be traced, processed and their relevance evaluated in relation to the work at their disposal (Harris, 2001). It is this process of tracing

sources, evaluating, analysing and interpretation that requires critical thinking. However, the process of writing to display historical thinking is not an easy thing to do and above all putting everything together in a structured and analytical way is what is considered the biggest challenge to learners.

As a result, Harris (2001) argues that since it is difficult to get learners to write appropriately, if left until late in their school careers it may lead to more difficulties and frustration among learners. In the context of this study, I explore the motivation of teachers in beginning their intense work of teaching essay-writing with Grade 10 learners. Harris' assertion is relevant to my research because if the foundation is not set for matriculation in Grade 10, then the learners may find it difficult and may end up demotivated later on. In addition, Harris (2001) points to yet another apparent challenge in essay-writing - the importance learners and teachers attach to essay-writing. It has been noticed that most learners fail to realise the fundamental importance of essays in History. This raises a challenging question as to whether teachers do discuss with learners why these essays are written. So in my study I also seek to find out whether teachers discuss with their learners the importance of writing essays in History.

Schleppergrell (2002, cited in Bertram & Bharath, 2011, p. 8) postulates that essay-writing is important because "it is through writing that we learn to think and make meaning and writing has specific characteristics to the subject". Thus, in relation to History, essay-writing needs to reflect the disciplinary thinking of constructing arguments and reaching conclusions through the use of evidence, critical thinking and a detailed and analytical setting of the evidence (Harris, 2001; Bertram & Bharath, 2011).

It could be from such a background that History essay-writing has become an important part in the process of the development of historical thinking; and formative assessment serves as part of shaping these skills. This could also be a reason why History educators across the nations and those in South Africa regard History essay-writing as an important tool, because it is foundational for learners.

2.6 Assessment
Assessment is a decision about a person's skill or knowledge based on measurement and judgment. It identifies, describes and demonstrates evidence of a person's current skills and knowledge. It can also be used to recognise and record learners' achievements and assist in

identifying how learning and teaching can be improved (Black & William, 1998). In relation to History essays, essays can be used to see the depth of learners' understanding of a particular topic or question. The purpose will be to meet the demands of teaching and learning. The demands of teaching and learning provide guidance for learners to know what is expected of them. For instance, for History essay-writing, a fundamental aim for teaching and learning is to enable learners to read, think and write like historians. This further means that historical thinking would be the core type of knowledge teachers could be assessing. Thus assessment will take note of the knowledge a learner is to achieve, the complexity of the knowledge and historical understanding, the learner's level of thinking and structural complexity in linking the historical ideas, evidence and content. As a result, teachers are expected to explicitly inform the learners about the learning outcomes/goals because making the learning outcomes known would enable learners to demonstrate what is expected of them (Gipps, 1999). Therefore, assessment becomes part of learners' overall learning experience.

An important contribution in thinking about assessment is the work of Biggs and Collis (1982) on assessing learner performances of understanding. They argue that one can only know what a learner can do in their performance of understanding. They apply this to the design of tasks including History tasks and the criteria that could be used in assessing the coherence of thinking displayed in doing these tasks. In my case, this is the writing of History essays at a Grade 10 beginner level. This is of great use in my study, as I make use of the Structure Observed Learning Outcome (SOLO) taxonomy as the assessment tool for evaluating three of the learners' written essays. The SOLO taxonomy provides a way of describing how a learner grows in achieving structural complexity of the learning outcomes. Furthermore, the use of the SOLO taxonomy in evaluating learners' written essays would allow me to assess the quality of writing within the five stages. Biggs and Collis (1982, p. 87) describe the five levels of performance in written tasks as follows**:**

Pre-structural: Here learners are simply presenting bits of unconnected information, which have no organisation and make no sense. Here the learner misses the whole purpose and may also have poor structure. Or he may have one paragraph from introduction to conclusion.

Uni-structural: Simple and obvious connections are made, but their significance is not grasped. The learner can generalise only in terms of one aspect. The capacity to construct a coherent answer is minimal and the cue and response confused.

In relation to History and essay-writing this would imply that at this level the learners have no clear structure and there is no clear introduction. They do not accurately use historical evidence or evidence, if used, supports different claims. The learner may also use only one source of evidence and does not mention the author/purpose and furthermore, while also lacking evidence of understanding of the historical setting of sources.

Multi-structural: A number of connections may be made, but the meta-connections between them are missed, as is their significance for the whole. This means that learners can generalise only in terms of a few limited and independent aspects.

Applying this level to History writing would mean that a learner may have structure but only the introduction responds to the question; it does not have an original interpretation, each argument is insufficiently supported, and there are fewer than two pieces of evidence, which do not accurately support claims. If evidence is used, it is then used in isolation without reference to other sources and does not accurately determine the historical setting of sources or could mention historical context without analysing its impact on sources/interpretation.

Relational: Relevant aspects are integrated into an overall coherent structure. This level is what is normally meant by an adequate understanding of some topic.

The learner has a comprehensive structure and provides an original interpretation in the introduction of the topic. Each part of an argument is accurately supported by at least two pieces of historical evidence, and clearly relates evidence from at least two sources to each other in supporting the claim and, further, integrates both prior and new knowledge to determine the historical setting of the sources

At the **extended abstract** level, the learner is making connections not only within the given subject area, but also beyond it, is able to generalise and transfer the principles and ideas underlying the specific instance.

The learner has a comprehensive structure and introduction and provides a sophisticated interpretation within the framework of the topic or question. The learner uses convincing evidence and, in essay-writing, each claim is supported by specific evidence. In addition the learner relates both new and old knowledge to determine the historical setting of the source and uses that setting to interpret the source within the historical setting.

In relation to my research, the SOLO taxonomy is used in an attempt to assess how learners' performance improves when mastering a given task in relation to the teachers' intended learning outcomes.

2.7 Formative assessment and proposed strategies

The importance of essay-writing in history cannot be over-emphasised. As has already been pointed out, the main core is helping learners gradually to develop writing skills within the history discipline. Thus, assessment, should aim at testing whether the learners have met the intended goals which are also likely to be consistent with the kinds of teaching methods that would help learners learn. Thus formative assessment, as defined by Heritage (2010, p. 9), "is a process used by teachers and students during instruction that provides feedback to adjust on-going teaching and learning to improve students' achievement of intended instructional outcomes". Furthermore, Heritage (2010) suggests that the main purpose of the formative assessment process is to provide evidence that is used by both teachers and students to inform instruction and learning during the teaching and learning process. Effective formative assessment should, therefore, involve collecting evidence about how learners' learning is progressing during the course of instruction so that necessary instructional adjustments can be made to close the learning gap between learners' current understanding and the anticipated goals.

Formative assessment in a History classroom would imply focusing on improving learners' learning with the aim of producing high quality work or thinking. Hence the teacher may check for learners' understanding by asking questions. The teacher in this process is collecting information that could be used to adjust or determine the next instruction. Also, in a History class, assessment is believed to send powerful messages about what learning is conceived and valued. Peck and Seixas (2008, p. 109) stipulate that "assessment is a key component drawing on what is taught and learned in classrooms". In addition, providing learners with constructive feedback could help learners improve their performance as feedback is said to be effective when

it is related to criteria. But the question is whether teachers know that learners have learnt, and what it means to assess History essay-writing formatively. In my research I seek to find out how teachers use essays formatively.

2.8 Rubric

Sadler (1989) points to the importance of using set criteria or rating scales and states that it would allow a learner to determine whether something has been learned well or not as it shows learners' specific learning goals and helps them imagine what achievement of those goals looks like (Andrade, 2000). In other words a rubric could be used as a formative assessment tool in the sense that it demands that learners reflect on their own learning. In the case of History essay-writing, it would demand learners to reflect on their own writing provided that the learning outcomes are stipulated at the outset of the lesson. It is therefore worth noting that skills can be achieved by providing constructive feedback and experiences for learners to assess themselves and giving the rubric to the learners by making it clearly visible could increase the learners' capacity to take ownership of their own learning. However, Heritage (2010) points out that if learners lack the means to monitor their own work and fail to take corrective action, they will remain dependent on teachers' judgment as the core means of their learning. So by using the rubric, learners can regulate themselves as they progress through the topic of the lesson. In my study I examine the Department of Basic Education (DBE) rubric, both in its formative and summative role in essay-writing. I also discuss whether it aligns with the intended learning outcomes of historical thinking literature.

Unfortunately, research shows that teachers often do not make learning goals explicit (Trumbull & Lash, 2013). Therefore, this is relevant to my research in the sense that an exploration of teachers' sharing of criteria with their learners would reveal whether or not the teacher is explicit about the learning goals depending on the question under investigation.

Since feedback is the backbone of formative assessment, it could be argued that if teachers are to promote writing skills for learners in History essays, they should provide frequent and immediate constructive and descriptive feedback (Beyer, 1980). The opportunities for learning are high in formative writing, requiring drafts where learners receive feedback and have to engage with the feedback provided to improve their writing on the second write up (Ellery, 2008). In other words, formative assignments such as essays, with feedback between drafts, can provide

opportunities for learning to take place and thus improve the quality of work in that constructive feedback between learners' first drafts may be used to close the learning gap between where learners are (actual level) and where they ought to be (reference level) (Shepard, 2000). However, giving constructive or positive feedback has never been an easy task to achieve as it is a recurring and challenging task. Brookhart (2008, p. 31) points out:

> If only using "descriptive" versus "evaluative" feedback were simply matters of word-smiting! We could all learn how to write descriptive feedback just as we learned to write descriptive paragraphs in elementary school. Unfortunately, part of the issue is how the student understands the comment. Students filter what they hear through their own past experiences, good and bad.

Since it has been acknowledged that giving constructive or positive feedback is a challenging task, that is all the more reason why teachers need to explore strategies and work on how to give constructive feedback that will enable deep learning and improve teachers' formative assessment practices. In order to promote constructive/positive feedback in class, formative strategies can be used. These strategies include sharing of criteria/rubric with the learners for a task, explicit modelling to show learners how to write well and providing explanations, and providing learners with the opportunity to re-work their task. In my research a similar strategy was used one that is proposed by Wiggins (1998). He suggests that quality is achieved through a cycle of giving learners access to criteria and expected standards for the task, giving them feedback on their attempt (first drafts) and allowing them to reflect on the feedback in order to revise their work and then resubmit the work. With this in mind, I attempt to assess whether teachers give constructive feedback to learners and whether learners are given time to reflect on their own learning through constructive feedback.

Although the feedback is effective only if and when it is used to adjust instruction, research further shows that many teachers fall short in implementing such adjustments. This means that even if they are able to gather learning evidence and diagnose a learner's learning gaps, they are often not successful at undertaking specific instructional steps to close that gap (Trumbull & Lash, 2013). The reason for this may be that teachers are not competent because of lack of training on how to practice formative assessment during instruction. Hence there is need to develop a deep level of teacher expertise to deliver effective formative assessment. In addition, the teachers' formative assessment may conflict with school policy which is concerned with grading or marks as a way of showing the learners' achievement and performance. As a result

teachers may still be stuck in the traditional way of assessment which is more concerned with the effect of returning learners' work with scores or grades and not with comments (Shepard, 2000).

2.9 Conceptual framework

Miles and Huberman (1994) argue that a conceptual framework serves as an anchor for the study. It identifies who will and will not be included in the study at the level of data interpretation. It is further a system of concepts, assumptions, expectations, beliefs and theories that informs the research. Part of my conceptual framework is the position, adopted by many historians such as Munslow (2002) and stated in my literature above, that knowledge is constructed and requires an interpretative approach. In this study my choice of one school and two teachers rests on the understanding that their practices and insights are personal and not to be generalised. They do, however, work with a curriculum common to all South African government high schools, and are part of a discipline (history) which has widely-accepted defining practices.

Drawing on the literature discussed, the conceptual framework that will be used to analyse the data will include this understanding of history, and the goal of essay-writing as historical thinking which is defined in Seixas's (2006) and Wineburg's (2001) concepts of historical thinking as modified by Monte-Sano (2012) (see Table 1). Informing my analysis of classroom observations are Heritage (2010) and Gipps' (1999) principles of identifying clear outcomes and relevant instructional practices in the teachers. From this a thematic content analysis is possible.

A key concept is also that of performances of understanding as the way to identify what is actually learnt. Analysis of the learners' written essays depends on a modified conceptual framework that integrates historical thinking with performances of understanding as classified in the SOLO taxonomy (see Table 4).

The following chapter discusses the research design and methods that the research will use in order to address the research questions discussed in chapter 1.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

3.1 Choosing an approach or method

The nature of the problem or research question will determine the approach to be taken. Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2000) state that methods, represent several approaches used in educational research to collect data that could be used for inference, interpretation, explanation and prediction. The choice of research method influences the way in which the researcher gathers and interprets data. There are three main understandings or research paradigms in educational research: positivism, interpretivism and critical theory. I took an interpretivist approach to my study as it allowed me to understand and interpret the world of actors the way it is (Cohen et al., 2000). In addition, the interpretivist approach is founded on the ideology that reality is not objective but constructed and interpreted by humans through their value systems. It therefore rejects the notion of value-free research. In this study, Grade 10 teachers' engagement with essay-writing and challenges are derived from their experiences.

3.2 Qualitative research design

This study used a qualitative approach which is dependent on the research that happens in the natural setting of the participants. The data in a qualitative approach is gathered at the site as the participants experience the problem of the study. It has also been noticed that researchers are key instruments to the research, as they collect and analyse the data themselves (Creswell, 2007). This approach was, therefore, deemed appropriate in gathering Grade 10 History teachers' engagement with essay-writing and the challenges associated with their teaching. In addition, a qualitative research design was suitable for my study as it sought a deep understanding of people's experiences, behaviour, emotions and feelings; unlike quantitative research design, which emphasises objectivity in measuring and describing phenomena (Schumacher & MacMillan, 2014). It therefore rejects the notion of value free research. I investigated the real-life experiences of how different teachers practice essay-writing in their Grade 10 History classrooms. The qualitative data included recorded interviews with teachers of History, recorded class observations and documentation of learners' written essays.

3.3 Case study

The research utilised a case study approach of two Grade 10 History teachers in one secondary school in Gauteng. According to Schumacher and McMillian (2010) and Bell (2006), a case study has been defined as a "bounded system" in conducting research. This way a researcher defines each case within its boundaries. Worth noting also is that a case study is a presentation and interpretation of detailed information about a single subject, event or a particular individual or phenomenon studied in depth for a defined period of time (Leedy & Ormrod, 2010). For the purpose of my study, the interpretive lens of a case study provided me with a chance to probe deeply and analyse intensively the approaches History teachers undertake to engage with essay-writing. It also allowed me to understand the subjective views of the teachers in their specific contexts. Furthermore, a case study is said to utilise different methods of data collection which include observations, interviews and documentation. Hence the use of these different methods is perceived as facilitating triangulation, which I will discuss below.

3.4 Sampling

For this study I used purposive sampling which, according to Cohen et al (2000, p. 115), is when "participants are chosen because they hold particular characteristics being sought after" by the researcher. Purposive sampling is mainly used when a researcher is trying to gain in-depth knowledge from people who have certain skills and experiences about a particular topic. Therefore, this study recognised that the sample needs to have particular knowledge of learning, teaching and assessment of History essay-writing. Hence, the sample consisted of two teachers from one secondary school. The two teachers were Grade 10 teachers of History. The main purpose of choosing one school was to compare their common experience of working with one subject within the same grade. Grade 10 teachers were also selected because Grade 10 is the beginning of the FET (grade 10-12) phase, ending with matriculation, and the beginning of subject specialisation. It is also the point at which teachers are required to narrow the gap between Grades 9 and 10.

3.5 Participants and their biographical details

The two participants were two English-speaking white teachers, one male (Mr K) and one female (Ms M). Ms M had six years' teaching experience. She had previously taught at an independent school for five years. At the time of study she had been at the high school in this study for eight

months. She pursued her teacher's degree (B Ed) at Wits School of Education. During her training she specialised in English and History subject methodology.

On the other hand, Mr K obtained his teaching qualification after his Masters in International Relations. He obtained his Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) at Wits School of Education where he specialised in History, Life Orientation and Geography. He had eleven years of teaching experience at the same school (see table below).

Table 2: Biographical details of participants

Teacher code	Ms M	Mr K
Subject	History	History
Gender	Female	Male
Nationality	South African	South African
Teaching Experience	Six years	Eleven years
Qualifications	B Ed (Wits School of Education)	M A (Wits) PGCE (Wits School of Education)

The participants were suited to my research as they had the relevant qualifications and teaching experience in teaching of their subject (History). They had a reputation for being enthusiastic and committed to teaching History in academically challenging ways. They had both participated in running the SA Society for History Teaching (SASHT) conference at Wits School of Education in 2014. I felt that they were able to provide me with information that answered the research questions on their conceptions of the purpose of essay-writing with their Grade 10 classes and constraints they experience in their practices. In other words, the profile of the teachers enabled me to gather important information on teaching of essay-writing.

The table above shows their qualifications and teaching experience. The fact that both teachers obtained their qualification at a renowned institution and had intensive teaching experience ranging from six to eleven years would have an influence on their view of teaching of History essay-writing and this provided me with meaningful data that would contribute to an understanding of why and how they teach essay-writing. Due to these factors, I perceived that I was likely to get substantial responses from experienced, well-informed History teachers.

3.6 Research site

I conducted my study in one high school in Gauteng. The school is one of the oldest and most respected boys' public schools in Johannesburg, having been established in 1890 in a south-eastern suburb (Hawthorne & Bristow, 1993).

The school's history is intertwined with the history of Johannesburg. It was established due to the perceived need for education of white mineworkers' children. Despite its colonial roots, and since democratic changes from the 1990s, the school is comprised of a mixture of black and white management, staff and learners. The school is well resourced and equipped to provide for both teachers' and learners' needs.

The school was chosen because it was accessible to me by public transport, because of the qualities of the two teachers as discussed above, and the already established relationship I had due to my B Ed Honours research which was conducted at the same school.

3.7 Data collection

Data collection was done over a period of three days. An interview and observation schedule was drawn up and sent to the teachers in order for them to indicate the date and time they would be available (Appendix A). Fortunately they gave me the same date for interviews which were half an hour apart. This provided me with a similar context for the two interviews as they took place at the same time in the school calendar. Interview data utilised an audio-recorder to record the interviews and I jotted down field notes as evidence and insights emerged. Each interview took place at a time conducive to the participants. The interviews were approximately thirty to forty-five minutes each. The audio-recorded interviews provided me with data for transcription and could be returned to many times later as needed.   The interviews were followed by class observations on feedback of the previously written essays. During class observation the focus was on what teachers emphasised. Finally, class observations were followed by the sampling of learners' essays. The selection of these samples was based on the highest, average and lowest mark.

3.8 Research instruments and triangulation

There are a number of data collection instruments that can be employed in a qualitative study. My study used three of them, namely interviews, observations and document analysis. These

were necessary to enable data triangulation. The use of different techniques of data collection allowed me to explain how I arrived at certain conclusions and interpretations.

Cohen et al (2000) have defined triangulation as an approach to data collection which allows the researcher to use two or more methods of data collection. Additionally, triangulation is the use of more than one method to collect data on the same topic. This is also another way of ensuring reliability of the research or way of corroborating findings (Patton, 1990). Therefore, in this way, the researcher's biases and distortions this might have occurred when one method is used, could be minimised or even avoided. Triangulation further increases the reliability of the study. Reliability in this case refers to the degree of consistency that the data collection instrument or the procedure demonstrates. Since observations, interviews and documentation were used to collect my data, the assumption made is that triangulation was guaranteed as the combination of interviews, observations and document analysis provided data that complemented one another. Hence, I believe that the use of triangulation in this sense was able to strengthen my findings and in the process improved the reliability of my research.

3.9 In-depth interviews

Schumacher and McMillan (2014) argue that in-depth interviews use open response questions to obtain data on individuals' opinions of their world and how they make sense of the important events in their lives, and that there are different types of interviews. The three distinct types of interviews are open-ended, semi-structured and structured interviews. Of the three, I utilised semi-structured interviews. These provide a method of data collection that is used when the researcher wishes to question at the conscious level and intends to use personal interactions with the interviewee. In this case there was an interview guide approach where topics and issues to be covered were specified in advance in an outlined form (see Appendix B).

Interviews have been considered to be important in qualitative research as it allows personal rapport between an interviewer and interviewee and thus creates room for probing. In my study, Grade 10 teachers' engagement with essay-writing and challenges associated with their practices were valued. Semi-structured interviews were therefore considered relevant for this kind of study because I was provided with an opportunity to probe participants' initial responses. The interviews also provided me with an opportunity to identify the questions which teachers had

difficulty in responding to which I had to rephrase or explain further. The interviews, as already pointed out, were audio-recorded and later transcribed.

Data collection came from recording interviews with the two teachers on the same day (23rd August, 2016) and from my field notes. The notes provided as second evidence for reference and insights emerged. My first part of the interview schedule covered the teacher's biographical particulars including their qualifications and teaching experience. Getting the teachers' professional qualification was based on the assumption that, if teachers are aware of their conceptions of teaching and learning of the particular subject, then this would be reflected in the values they hold and the way they teach the subject. Therefore, the biographical data provided me with insights into interpreting the value teachers attach to teaching History as a subject as well as essay-writing as a component of History teaching. This personal information also provided an additional source of data in interpreting my findings.

The second part of my interview schedule consisted of several open-ended questions. The open-ended questions allowed my participants to freely express themselves about how they engage with History essays, why they engage in the manner they do and the challenges they face while engaging with essay-writing practice.

3.10 Observation
In order to capture all the essentials of Grade 10 History teachers' engagement with essay-writing, a class observation was imperative. A class observation was important in this study as it added an understanding of the interview data and secondly, it allowed for identification of patterns that had occurred in the behaviour of people.

My observations were recorded in the form of notes and audio-recording. In my study, I acted as a non-participant. I sat at the back of the classroom and recorded live observation of teachers giving feedback to learners. This role of non-participatory observer enabled me to record everything that I saw and heard without interrupting the teacher or learners. I spent approximately 30 to 45 minutes in each class. My focus was seeing what the teachers emphasised during feedback on previously written essays as a way of reflecting on the intentions of teaching. The reason for the class observation was to gain insights into the core issues identified and the strategies employed by the teachers when giving feedback to learners. The advantage of class observation is that it helped me to see what teachers were actually doing rather

than being told about what they do. I subsequently listened very carefully to the audio-recordings of the lessons which I eventually transcribed. The field notes acted as a supplement to my class observation activity.

I conducted a class observation of two History teachers in Grade 10 classes. Grade 10 is the first stage of the FET school level where History is specifically chosen as a matriculation subject. Teachers were observed in order to find out how they engage with essay-writing during class activity. In the initial proposal I had intended to conduct a two cycle observation on each teacher. One was when the teacher was introducing the essay topic to the learners i.e. the implementation of the essay topic and the other one was on the feedback. However things did not go as intended because by the time I conducted my interviews, on 23 August 2016, the teachers had already introduced their essays to the learners, and it was difficult to wait for another essay as they were already halfway into the third term. In the feedback lesson I was specially observing for the following: how teachers engaged with feedback about essay-writing (how teachers put into practice what they said during interviews), and what was emphasised and what was left out in relation to views given in the interviews. In order to analyse my lesson observations, the transcripts and field notes were read through in search for meaning that were essential in teachers' interviews.

To analyse the observation data, I developed a checklist which is presented in chapter 5, Table 6, p.51. The first part was the introduction of the lesson activity, where I looked for the way the teacher introduced his/her lesson. I looked for what was emphasised or clarified by the teachers in their introduction of the lesson and their lesson objectives. In Gipps' (1999) terms, were teachers clear from the outset about the objectives of their lessons? The second part of the analysis consisted of applicability. In this part I was looking for to see "how teachers operationalized their pedagogic beliefs" or how they put their action into practice. In line with Heritage (2010), I was looking for what instructional system teachers used to achieve their intended learning objectives. However, syntheses of the results for the two lesson observations were described in terms of factors raised by teachers during their interviews, where there analysis was based on emergent themes from the interviews.

Table 3: Summary of data collection and instruments

	Type	Instrument Assisting Data Collection	Prompt	Data collection method
Interviews	Individual Interview	- Researcher interviewing teachers - Interview schedule	- Discussion about teaching and the value attached to teaching learners and their experiences as Teachers. - Teaching strategies - Challenges experienced	- Informal field notes - Audio-tape transcription of interviews
Class observation	Classroom observation	- Researcher Observations. - Observation Schedule	- Nothing. Used natural field setting.	- Informal field notes - Audio recording
Document analysis	Written essays by learners	- Researcher collecting marked essays.	- Discussing the extent learners reflect teacher's intended goals.	- Thematic Analysis

3.11 Document analysis

Document analysis is said to be useful and appropriate to qualitative research as it provides stable data allowing for counter-checking of information. In addition, Merriam and Tisdell (2009) observe that document analysis enables the researcher to learn more about the situation or the event being investigated from written or visual documents. Furthermore, Bell (2006) states that document analysis may be a method used to enhance other sets of data that have been obtained. One document examined in this study is the official Department of Basic Education assessment rubric found in CAPS (DBE, 2011, p. 14) which is used by the teachers to guide and assess learner essay-writing (see Appendix C). The other important documents are learners' marked scripts from teachers after feedback. I wanted to find out the extent to which learners attempt to engage with teachers' teaching goals - with historical thinking, writing a conventional History essay and being prepared for matriculation. The three marked scripts were from Ms M. The essays were selected based on the highest mark, an average mark and the lowest mark in the class. (See Appendix D). Originally I had intended to analyse six essays in total, three from each teacher, but I could not have access to Mr K's marked scripts as they were written under test conditions and were not referenced research essays. I recognise that this is a methodological weakness but believe Ms M's marked scripts had the potential to corroborate evidence collected from other sources. It could also provide initial insights which could be used in further research.

3.12 Data analysis and findings

In qualitative data analysis there are a number of procedures involved but for the purpose of this research, the process of data analysis started with transcribing the interviews which I had audio-recorded and then coding the teachers' responses. I conceptualised and categorised data according to concepts that seemed to pertain to the same phenomenon. This followed Cohen et al. (2000) and Leedy and Ormrod (2010) who have argued that throughout the process of analysis, data sections will be identified and grouped into categories, compared and contrasted in order to identify similarities and differences. The purpose is to identify emerging themes and patterns that represent participants' perceptions and practices. As a result, I came up with themes in terms of the most common responses from the two teachers. The major themes which arose from the interviews were: teaching learners to be like historians (historical thinking), laying the foundation for matriculation, teaching for life skill and passing with distinction. I presented the data in relation to the research questions. Secondly, I transcribed my audio-recordings of the interviews and observation notes from the lessons. The analysis of the lesson observation was also organised in line with the themes from the interviews. See Table 6 on page 51

For the documentary analysis, an adapted form of the SOLO taxonomy integrated with historical thinking criteria was used. The table below has been modified to integrate the SOLO taxonomy with historical thinking criteria in order to provide a better analytical tool.

Table 4: Integrated SOLO taxonomy with Historical Thinking criteria

	Pre-structure/ uni-structural	Multi- structural	Relational	Extended abstract
Structure of the essay; (introduction, position taken, body and conclusion)	Misses the whole point. No explicit thesis.	Essay particularly responds to the prompt but does not have an original interpretation.	Comprehensive and provides an original interpretation.	Comprehensive and provides a sophisticated interpretation.
Evidence	Does not accurately use historical evidence.	Each argument is insufficiently supported. Fewer than two pieces of evidence and does not accurately support claim.	Each argument is accurately support-ed by at least two pieces of historical evidence. In writing (essays) - no more than one piece of evidence is used erroneously.	Uses persuasive evidence - shows understanding of the nuances of the evidence. In an essay - writing-extra claim is supported by specific evidence.
Corroboration	Evidence if used supports different claims. Uses 0-1 sources of evidence.	More than one piece of evidence is used to support a claim. Evidence used in isolation without reference to other sources.	Explicitly relates evidence from at least two sources to each other in supporting the claim.	Analyses the relationship of more than two pieces of evidence for a claim.
Sourcing	Accepts the source at face value. Does not mention the author/purpose.	Mentions author or purpose but does not relate it to credibility.	Considers how the author or purpose affects the content.	Analyses how sources' point of view affects the content.
Contextualisation	Lack of evidence of understanding of historical setting of sources. Lacking description of historical content.	Does not accurately determine the historical setting of source. Mentions historical context without analysing its impact on sources/interpretation.	Applies prior and new knowledge to determine historical setting of the sources.	Applies both new and old knowledge to determine historical setting of the source and uses that setting to interpret the source within the historical setting.

3.13 Credibility, dependability and trustworthiness

According to Patton (1990) credibility depends more on the richness of the information gathered and on the analytical abilities of the researcher than on sample size. In addition, Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that for data to be credible, the findings must reflect that they happened the way the researcher says they did and that the results are believable. I ensured credibility in that the findings came from the reliable transcription of the interviews with the participants, class observations and document analysis. Furthermore, credibility and dependability were ensured in

that data collected was consistent with the interpretation and through the advice of the research supervisor by checking whether the data was consistent and correctly transcribed and, above all, the interview questions (see Appendix B) remained constant and similar conditions were applied to all the participants. This is where the questions were asked in the same manner and sequence.

Lincoln and Guba (1985) state that transferability is when, findings can be applied to other contexts or the degree to which the results can be generalised to other settings. They further state that in order to ensure that data can be transferable to other contexts the researcher must provide rich and detailed explanations of the data collected. The study has explained in detail every method that was used. Under this study, the methodology used should enable other researchers to make judgments and use the findings of this study in other research studies. The issue of trustworthiness, even though the scope of study was limited, could be guaranteed as the evidence provided for the results was consistent and the argument made based on the results of three sources of data as indicated above

3.14 Ethical considerations

It is the responsibility of the researcher to seek and observe ethical procedures in order to protect both the participants and the researcher. There are basically three main ethical issues detailed below. Research ethics are focused on what is morally proper or improper when engaging with participants or when accessing archival data (Schumacher & McMillan, 2014). In this research, relevant ethical procedures were followed. They included obtaining ethics clearance for this study from the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg, and permission from the Gauteng Department of Education in order to gain access into the chosen school where interviews were conducted (Appendix E). Permission to go ahead was obtained from the school principal and the teachers.

The three pillars of ethics were considered with regard to the teachers. These were:

1. **Informed consent:**

Participants were explained their right to participate and to withdraw. In short, the participants were made aware that they were subjects of my research as well as the nature and purpose of the research (Ryen, 1992). Therefore, two informed consent forms were sent to my participants (Appendices F1 & F2). The first one was an invitation to take part in my research and the second one was an informed consent form which informed them of the procedures of the research,

specifying that they would be interviewed, observed and audio-taped through a digital recording device. For the learners, the two informed consent forms were also sent out: the first one was an invitation and the second was a consent form which was sent to their parents since the learners were under the age of 18 (Appendix F3).

ii. Right to withdraw
I informed the participants that their participation was voluntary, and they had the right to terminate it at any stage of the study without any penalty. They were also informed that the outcome of the research would not cause any harm to them and that they would not be held liable for withdrawing from the study.

iii. Confidentiality and Anonymity
In order to abide by the issues of confidentiality and anonymity, I made sure that the identity of the participants and that of the school remained anonymous. I used pseudonyms in place of teachers' and learners' real names. I named the teachers Ms M and Mr K while the learners were named Lebo, Brits and Jay. Furthermore, the details of the interviews were not discussed anywhere other than for the purposes of this study. All the raw data was kept in a password protected laptop and a remote flash disk to which only my supervisor and I have access until they are destroyed within the prescribed period given by the ethics committee (see Ethical Clearance in Appendix F2).

3.15 Conclusion
As a researcher I have discussed and explained the research methodology adopted in my study. The chapter locates the research methods in this qualitative paradigm and uses a case study. The qualitative approach has provided me with a framework to design a scheme for understanding the conceptions, practices and challenges teachers are associated with in their Grade 10 History classroom when engaged with essay-writing.

Choosing purposive and convenience sampling enriched the study because it was assumed that participants would have knowledge on conceptions and understanding of the values attached to essay-writing and how they are engaged with essays the way they do in their school and subject context. Semi-structured or in-depth individual interviews were conducted in order to find out why they value essay-writing in Grade 10 and how they go about it in practice and what

challenges are associated with essay-writing. Classroom observations provided insight into the forms of pedagogical choices teachers made and insights that can be gained from those practices.

In addition, teachers were later observed to find out how they implement what they said during the interviews. This was important as classroom observation is essential to ascertain how learning outcomes are promoted through teacher interaction in a classroom. Finally, scripts of three learners were analysed using the SOLO taxonomy to assess historical understanding and the learning outcomes achieved. This final step in the triangulation process enabled me to consider whether the intentions of one of the teachers had been realised in practice.

CHAPTER 4

DATA ANALYSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: THE TEACHER INTERVIEWS

4.1 Introduction

This chapter presents the data analysis of my teacher interviews followed by a discussion of the findings. The findings relate to the research questions that guided my study. Data was analysed to identify, describe and explore teachers' understanding of engagement with essay-writing in Grade 10 and challenges associated with it. The assumption made is that understanding what teachers' value in a subject is important because it affects the way the teacher teaches the subject. The information is presented in the order in which data collection was done. After completing the analysis, there is a discussion of the initial category of themes that emerged from the interviews showing how Grade 10 History teachers understand and engage with essay-writing.

Table 5: Interview data Summary

Question	Responses
How do teachers engage with essay-writing in a Grade 10 class?	- Give a question in advance - Discuss form of structure - Use strategies such as PEAL method, mind maps - Practise writing drafts - Refer to rubric
Why do they engage with essay-writing in the way they do?	- Develop historical skills - Lay foundation for matriculation, - Make subject interesting, - Prepare learners for future (life skill) - Prepare learners for tertiary education
Challenges teachers encounter when teaching essay-writing.	- Learners struggle with structure - Literacy skills such as comprehension - Selection of content - Synthesising of information and lack of linking evidence to argument
Measures to overcome challenges.	- Remedial work - Simpler language - Show videos
Criteria /rubric	Provided by GDE, explicit on essay presentation

4.2 Why teachers engage with essay-writing

A major theme that emerged from teachers' interviews was, firstly, the aim to develop historical thinking of learners. This involves writing of a historical argument where they have to take a position, make a claim and support it with evidence. It involved building a structure and helping

learners get through the structure. Other themes included laying a foundation for matriculation and achieving a distinction in this, making the subject interesting, preparing learners for the future (life skills) and preparing learners for tertiary education.

Historical thinking was referred to by both Mr K and Ms M as the most relevant set of skills to be applied by learners in their writing. These skills include formulating an argument and an opinion based on evidence, synthesising information and communicating that information in a well-structured manner. This claim is shown in the quotations below:

> Ms M: So these are the skills we teach in History - I think to be able to recognise reliability, validity - to recognise the context of information and they will be able to synthesise and understand the content to be able to formulate an argument and an opinion.
>
> Mr K: What you do is wanna apply some historical thinking in class. It's a form of communication.

This shows that teachers have content knowledge and are familiar with historical thinking and understanding skills. In fact, they strongly believe that historical thinking is the most critical skill in History and essay-writing as it enables learners to develop the ability to convey historical knowledge in writing. In saying this, the teachers are aligning themselves with key views in academic literature on historical thinking. Historical thinking has been identified as the most crucial skill in History education as a whole and it plays a fundamental role in essay-writing as learners have to display their reasoning abilities and what they have understood during instruction through writing. Here a learner must not only comprehend and make sense of the topic, but must go beyond just understanding of the topic and communicate his/her understanding in an analytical manner (Hounsell, 1987). Thinking historically is shown in the way a learner organises information about the past in order to explain a historical occurrence (Monte-Sano, 2012). In doing so a learner should be able to ask historical questions, contextualise and support claims with arguments based on evidence from sources.

The commitment of the teachers in this study to teaching essays for historical thinking is can be related to Brown et al.'s (2011) and Grossman's (1989) assertions on teachers' conceptions. Brown and Grossman assert that teachers' conceptions of subject matter is important because it shows the value teachers attach to the subject they teach. Hence Brown (2004) suggests that it is critical that such conceptions are made explicit and visible. In agreement, Grossman points to teachers' knowledge which is pertinent as it "counts for how teachers plan and carry out

instruction in a vision of what it means to teach a particular subject matter" (p. 26). Mr K's comment below exemplifies the value he has attached to History and the teaching of essay-writing.

> Mr K: Am quite passionate about letting kids know *why* they are doing it. So I tell the kids, Listen! Why do we want you to focus on essays? Why do we want you to write essays**?** *It's a form of communication.*

> Ms M: To develop skills you know sourcing skills! Teaches learners to think about what to include and what to exclude

This implies that teachers' belief about teaching essay-writing are connected to the importance attached to their view that this is the most important way to communicate historical knowledge and argument and develop skills.

Harris (2001) states that most learners fail to realise the fundamental importance of essays in History. This raises a challenging question as to whether teachers do discuss with learners why these essays are written. In this case Mr K demonstrates that he is aware that learners lack that fundamental understanding as to why essays are written, thus he intentionally begins in Grade 10 to explain the whole purpose of writing an essay. He further demonstrates that essay-writing is not only for communicating historical events, but also helps learners to develop communication skills that would be of benefit to the learners beyond the classroom.

On the other hand Ms M states that essay-writing is important in Grade 10 because it helps develop critical thinking skills which are necessary for learning to think historically. She sees essay-writing in History as helping learners to develop skills of analysis and interpretation of historical sources. In addition, it teaches learners to synthesise information. Instead of listing facts, they use those facts to justify an opinion. This is so that they are able to synthesise, understand content and formulate an argument using evidence "as all our essays are argumentative essays" (Ms M, 2016). She emphasised that:

> Historical skill is [to be] able to synthesise information and being a historian is [to be] able to synthesise information and being able to look at the context of the information. Look at validity you know, sifting through the evidence and create a narrative.

This could imply that Ms M's purpose in teaching essay-writing to Grade 10s is to begin to develop in them the skills of a historian. De la Paz (2005) argues that historians work within the confines of the disciplinary methods of analysis to evaluate and interpret evidence. In addition,

Wineburg (2001) stipulates that these disciplinary methods include interpreting sources, corroborating information across documents, contextualising information and evaluating the accuracy and reliability of the sources. In short, this shows that historians interpret the data from each source of information within the framework of their practice. So in relation to learning essay-writing, Ms M's learners should attempt to reflect the disciplinary thinking of constructing a historical argument and reaching conclusions through the use of evidence. I believe there is an attempt by the teachers to socialise Grade 10s to begin to think like historians. Although at this level (Grade 10) learners may not fully understand the concept of historical thinking, the teachers believe that the knowledge they create in class could socialise learners into the work of historians.

Having an opinion is yet another value teachers attach to teaching Grade 10 learners. This is because not only does a historical argumentative essay embody historical thinking skills but also embodies both writing skills and learning to support a point of view (in a well-structured essay). Understanding how to structure and write a coherent historical essay is a useful skill teachers intend to impart to learners. The teachers explicitly point out that, there is value in the process of writing an essay. This begins with discussion where learners are asked to provide an opinion or take a position thus teachers such as Ms M believe that it is very important that essay-writing is taught to Grade 10 learners.

> Ms M: I think it's important for everybody to be able to formulate proper opinions based on evidence. They should be able to synthesise and understand the content to be able to formulate an argument and an opinion.

The teacher's goal of teaching learners to take a position is an important aspect of writing in the development of a way of thinking as a part of the practice of history. This entails that in history writing, historians do not just offer an opinion about a topic but they go beyond that to attempt to give reasons supported by evidence for holding such opinions. In the same way learners are to be socialised to work like historians by taking a position backed with evidence to support the claim. In addition, supporting an opinion could help learners become better writers in that they remain focused to their work. Is it to just tell a story about what happened or does one want to engage with the story? It is therefore from such questions that a learner begins to think and write in a logical way and ultimately becoming a better writer.

Apart from providing historical thinking skills and writing skills in developing a well-structured essay, teachers believe that essay-writing imparts life skills to learners and these go beyond the classroom. This assertion is in line with the following comments from the teachers:

> Mr K: And it can suit them in life if they have anything they want to put to the editor or if there something they want to say to the political party or anything they wanna take off the chest in a legal format.

> Ms M: They are now journalists writing to the newspapers and they don't know how to structure properly?

Teachers are aware that essay-writing is not only about historical arguments for History classrooms and examination purposes but it is a practice that goes beyond the classroom as it offers critical thinking skills which are needed in a democratic society. These skills are consistent with those needed by citizens to make informed decisions (Yilmaz, 2008).

In addition to the life skills that the learner gains from the practice of essay-writing, Ms M also believes that she is preparing her learners for university or college life.

> Ms M: And build up so that by the time they get to university and they have to write their first essay it won't be overwhelming.

Roden and Brady (2000) confirm that apart from measuring historical skills, History essay-writing is believed to prepare learners for academic writing in tertiary education, which is an aspiration for most secondary school learners as they have to be prepared for the next level.

Not only do teachers build up on knowledge of essay-writing for the preparation for matriculation, they also value essay-writing as they think that it lays the foundation for tertiary education. It has been argued elsewhere that getting learners to write appropriately is difficult and hence, if left to senior years at school, could lead to frustration and difficulties (Harris, 2001). Teachers in this particular school believe that they have to introduce essay-writing to learners early on. Actually it was mentioned that essay-writing in this particular school starts in Grade 8 so that in Grade 10 they are building up on the already laid foundation for essay-writing.

> Ms M: We start in Grade 8 and 9 trying **to build up what goes** into an introduction

These teachers believe that if they do not continue with the practice of essay-writing and leave it later than Grade 10, it could lead to failure. This assertion was emphasised by Mr K when he said,

> So the jump from Grade 9 to 10 is quite large and so the Grade 10s have too many components to learn [about] what the marks are going to be based on [for] matric. So we start with the *basic structure of an essay* and how it will be assessed in matric. It's important because you need to do that to lay the foundation right in Grade 10 because if you are not doing it in Grade 10, then you are setting [up] for failure in Grade 11 and 12.

From the above reflection, it can be suggested that a learner's achievement can directly or indirectly be affected by the way the teacher teaches. This implies that a teacher can either teach in a way that encourages the learner to gain skill in the subject and flourish or discourage the learners from flourishing. Therefore teachers need to possess skills that can groom learners for success. Examination oriented teaching has been found to fail to impart desired values and attitudes in learners. This is because, as Shepard (2000) argues, teaching and learning may be focused on the rewardable outcomes while ignoring its intrinsic value.

Yet another extrinsic value of teaching essay-writing to Grade 10 is evident in teachers' responses and this is to help learners to get a distinction for History in their Grade 12 matric examination as reflected in Mr K's comment:

> So we address this by teaching for a distinction. So we tell the boys that we don't care [about] your passing, we care for distinction. You get [a] distinction, you automatically pass. We approach the essay with this is what you need for a distinction.

This value is associated with high stakes testing which both the school and the teachers cannot avoid. It is part of a wider pattern where high stakes standards accountability has not only pressured schools but has also put pressure on teachers to aim at achieving good grades as they are accountable for learners' performance (Shepard, 2000). Thus, most schools have come to rely on standardised tests to compare learners' performance. Therefore, teachers have found themselves prone to preparing the learners for the test and school History has become a product of test-driven teaching and learning (Yilmaz, 2008). This implies that for some teachers the main value of teaching has been reduced to raising the score standard of learners. In this study, it could be that Mr K is also implicitly pressured to achieve good grades hence the emphasis on teaching for a distinction. Nevertheless, test driven teaching and learning may be an effective instructional tool if teachers are sufficiently trained to achieve this systematically.

Finally, the other value attached to teaching essay-writing is to make the subject more interesting. All good and valid reasons have been shown as to why History should be taught in schools. An

additional one is to make the subject interesting, as acknowledged by Ms M when she said the other value she attaches to teaching essay-writing was to make the subject more interesting.

The preceding section has explored the implication of teachers' conceptions of engagement with essay-writing with Grade 10 classes. I now move to a more detailed exploration of how teachers in the study engage with teaching and learning in essay-writing. The major aim of my discussion is to explore the knowledge required to teach effective essay-writing under the research question: how teachers engage with essay-writing in Grade 10 class.

Contemporary historians have long challenged the teaching of History based on facts and dates. Although facts and dates are deemed relevant to the study of history, EH Carr (1990), for example, emphasises that the study of history has to deal to a greater extent with evidence rather than a list of facts and dates. Thus, it is from such a perspective that different views of history teaching have been understood to affect how teachers teach the subject (Wineburg & Wilson, 1991). Teachers' understanding of the subject matter and its disciplinary structure would relate to their teaching strategies. These would change when teaching historical thinking rather than merely introducing learners to a set of facts to be learned. Shulman (1987) emphasises that the value teachers give to their subject matter may influence their selection of content, pedagogical strategies and instructional choices. This refers to why, what and how to teach.

It is in this vein that the two secondary school teachers' responses show more specific importance attached to History essay-writing in their Grade 10 classes. Having discussed the teachers' responses, I proceed to look at the process with which teachers engage with Grade 10 History learners.

4.3 Why teachers engage with essay writing the way they do
Teaching of structure, content and use of strategies such as mind maps and the PEAL method, and writing of drafts were the main pedagogical and instructional approaches employed by the teachers in attaining their intended learning outcomes. These were also treated as themes in my discussion, because they were common responses by teachers. The choice of instruction depended on what seemed to have corresponded with the teachers' educational values and also subject area values. In my study teachers approached essay-writing with an emphasis on relevant content.

Ms M: The type of information they put in. For example if they are writing an essay about Shaka. If they put information about Julius Caesar it will be mark down. So you know if they are any omissions or irrelevant information then they will be marked down. So relevant information has to link to the topic.

Mr K: They must get used to the content. So you've got your content which is your understanding and your presentation which is your skill of showing your understanding.

This implies that learning the content is important as it helps learners develop the understanding of history through its historical context. It is through the exploration of historical events that learners are able to comprehend ideas of the past in a given context. However, the content should be used in an analytical way to bring out an argument. The information should be synthesised and communicated in a historical argument. For instance, as Ms M (2016) points out, the learner's marks may be affected when he talks about Julius Caesar if the question is about the different portrayals of King Shaka of the Zulu.

The teachers further believe that if the learners are able to master the content of the topic they will be able to communicate the information. This information ought to be presented in a well-structured manner. Ms M and Mr K approach essay-writing with a lot of emphasis on the structure. Generally an essay structure is a piece of writing that responds to a question or topic and consists of three main parts: introduction, body paragraphs and conclusion (Llewellyn & Thompson, 2014). The extracts below show teachers' emphasis on the basic structure.

Ms M: We start with the basics. So they need to know what goes into an introduction, body and conclusion. We have tricks and gimmicks and rhymes that help them remember how to structure their essays...

Mr K agrees with Ms M: Grade10s have too many components to learn on what the marks are going to be based on [in] matric. That is the reason why they start with basic structure of the essay. So I am quite passionate about spending time and getting it right to the kids to have an understanding of the structure. A lot of people say, "Write the essay, make it happen" but **nobody** takes time to explain to those kids.

The means that the teachers both believe that learning of basic structure is of value as it is a way of getting learners to organise ideas and communication in a coherent manner.

I further noticed that in order to help learners to master content and communicate that content in an organised structure, teachers have devised a number of tricks, gimmick and rhymes (which I

called teaching strategies) which include mind maps, use of different colours and the PEAL method.

> Ms M: We have tricks and gimmicks and rhymes that help them remember how to structure their essays … So, essay writing in grade 10 we do a lot of mind maps, we use different colours. Usually we have a mind map on the board and I will put the arguments in the middle and we put the evidence around.
>
> Mr K: With regard to the structural breakdown, we focus on what we call the **PEAL** method. So **P**oint **E**xplained **A**rgument **L**inked.

As has already been pointed out, learners are not only to write an essay but they have to express an opinion, and if they are to write a well-structured essay, the PEAL method is used. This is something which the teachers were not taught in their training but find very useful and helpful in getting through the structure of the essay with the learners. Thus teachers' main focus in the approach to essay-writing is the structure. However, in spite of the effort teachers make to teach learners to become better writers, they are still faced with challenges in getting the learners to write essays.

4.4 Challenges teachers face in teaching learners essay-writing

Teachers acknowledge that there is a number of challenges learners face. These include struggles with structure; selection of relevant content; and literacy skills. In addition they have problems with the vocabulary needed to communicate the ideas effectively. However, the main challenge is the level of literacy. For instance, Ms M pointed out that:

> A lot of them struggle with how to structure. They forget to put in an introduction, a body and a conclusion. They forget to link the evidence to the argument. So that's something we struggle with. And sometimes they do select irrelevant content that doesn't actually answer the essay question. And they struggle with comprehension. So basically literacy skills are a problem.

Mr K points to challenges which he considers as minor such as bad handwriting, lack of time to get through all the essay topics and also learners who join the subject late.

> Mr K: I don't always have that time; another one is that kids who come to join the subject half way done and bad handwriting.

4.5 How teachers overcome challenges

Teachers have taken a number of measures to help learners with various challenges. They do provide extra lessons for reading and writing. This includes a one on one lesson with a struggling

learner and they try to explain to the learner in a different but much simpler language. They also use pictures and videos and, for those with bad handwriting, the teacher calls the learner to read for him and he will be marked according to what he reads out to the teacher. All these measures are taken to bridge the gap.

4.6 Conclusion

This chapter has dealt with the data analysis, findings and discussion of two History teachers teaching at Grade 10 level in a secondary school. The analyses showed that the two teachers have similar perceptions about the importance of teaching essay-writing to Grade 10 History learners as discussed above. The next chapter discusses the analysis and findings of class observation

CHAPTER 5

DATA ANAYLSIS, FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION: THE CLASS OBSERVATION

5.1 Introduction

The following chapter presents data analysis from observation of lessons in which the two teachers discussed essays which learners had completed and had been marked. The observation, tabulated in Table 6 below, relates to my first and second research questions by examining the way teachers develop essay-writing in practice and why they do this. It also looks for signals as to why they were doing this in a particular way. Heritage (2010) argues that feedback and assessment are a central part of teaching and learning. Furthermore, assessment provides feedback to learners in relation to the demonstration of particular learning outcomes. In this view teachers' learning outcomes describe knowledge and the skills that learners are expected to demonstrate upon successful completion of lessons on essay-writing. Therefore, assessment should align with the intended learning outcomes (Biggs, 2003). In my observation, I looked at what the teachers emphasised in their feedback and how this related to the themes emerging from my earlier interviews with them about the purposes and practices of History essay-writing. I was looking at the cycle of setting out goals (intended learning outcomes), use of teaching strategies (e.g. PEAL, group work) getting the essay marked with the rubric (assessing for performance), returning the scripts and going through the revision lesson (feedback). The major themes during these revision classes were clarity of structure and sophisticated writing and historical thinking. They also emphasised the use of the PEAL method, the practice of draft writing and use of the rubric and writing for distinction.

Originally I had planned to have two classroom observations of each teacher - one was to observe the teacher's introduction of the essay topic and the second one was to observe the teacher giving feedback to the learners after marking the essay. This did not go as planned because, by the time I had interviews with the teachers, they had already introduced the essay topics to the learners. Instead I observed each teacher only once when they were giving feedback on the essay. As mentioned, the purpose of these class observations was to see how the teachers put their

intentions into practice. In other words I wanted to see if the interview responses (about the learning objectives) were carried out in practice.

Table 6: **Lesson observation checklist**

Lesson objectives stated clearly	Ms M	Mr K	Findings/comments
	- To do revision. Clarify structure: "There are some of you who … who do not know how to lay out an essay. So let me quickly hand you out your essays and we are going to do revision and lay out how this essay should have looked like." - Writing a historical argument: "Remember in History our essays are argumentative essays, so it's asking for your opinion." - Development of an argument using the PEAL method. - Use of the rubric.	- To do revision. Clarify the genre of the essay: "Today's essay is a descriptive essay. Just from the term itself, it asks you to describe." - "This essay needed you to have a clear structure." - Writing of an argument using the PEAL method "Sum up your argument by supporting with evidence in your conclusion." - Use of the rubric - Use of drafts - Write to get distinction	- Clear instruction was evident in teachers' teaching. This got the learners to focus on what was needed of them on that day. - Emphasis on structure of the essay was their main focus which is in line with their intended learning outcomes. It is also consistent with the global conventions in writing. - Apart from structure, the teachers also emphasised writing a historical argumentative essay - where learners need to take a position in making a claim and that claim is supported by evidence. - Teachers explain the use of the rubric to clarify mark allocation. This is a principle of formative assessment and constructive feedback. - Use of drafts is an aspect of formative assessment [as learners are able to assess themselves against the rubric before they write final essay]. - Teaching for distinction has both a summative and formative aspect to it. - It all depends on how the teacher addresses this. Because learners can easily list the requirements of the essay without fully engaging with the content. [The use of the PEAL method (my own thinking) could be linked to sophisticated writing.]
Questioning and reinforcement	"Now you gonna ask yourself this question, who said this about Shaka and why?" - Responses are written on the board clearly - Gives verbal praises "good". - She checks for understanding (when Jay was confused she clarified that confusion).	"What have you noticed by reading your own introductions? These are the questions you should ask yourselves: Have I made the case, did I make the statement clear or did I waffle? Do I have that background information? Are my subtopics in chronological order?	Learners participation was very good as learners responded well to teachers, Class environment is conducive to encourage participation Good questioning technique is an aspect of formative assessment as it promotes thinking in this case historical thinking

		- Did I show clarity?" Learners were given time to read out their introduction of the essays to each other in pairs. - He checks for learners understanding when he asks the class whether what Phil had done was right.	
Organisational strategies for learning	Probing, going round the class, posing questions and group work.	Probing and group work	

5.2 Classroom observation

At the beginning of the lesson the teachers handed out the marked essays to the learners and they instructed their learners to read through the essays and teacher's comments. Most learners in both classes seemed to have been aware of what they had to look for in the marked scripts.

Ms. M: Grade 10, there are some of you who are still getting or who do not know how to lay out an essay. So let me quickly hand you out your essays and we are going to do a revision and lay out how this essay should have looked like.

Mr. K: Today's essay is descriptive essay. Just from the term itself, it asks you to describe. The question is: Describe the role the British played in shaping South African's Political Landscape. Use your text book as a guide for the subtopics (remember this carried 50 marks). This essay needed you to have a clear structure. How many parts does an essay have?

Both teachers were very clear and bold in the way they spoke and did not hesitate to answer the questions posed by the learners. Even if the two teachers did not share the same classes of Grade 10 or topics, the objectives of the lessons were similar. Mr K was giving feedback on an essay on the topic of the British influence on South African political landscape; Ms M was giving feedback on the topic of different portrayals of the Zulu king, Shaka.

From the outset of each lesson, the teachers made the learners aware of the objectives of the lesson which was to do revision. The main emphasis was on clarifying the structure of the essay with the use of the PEAL method as a way of writing sophisticated essays. The teachers call this a basic structure.

An essay format includes an introduction, a body and a conclusion. This is what is considered a structure. In other words a structure is the extent to which the learners are able to display information in a generally accepted history essay-writing format (Llewellyn & Thompson, 2014).

The format is assumed to always be the same irrespective of the kind of information provided. Each of these sections may be one or more paragraphs long. Using this basic structure helps the reader understand the flow and logic of the learner's thought. Thus, the learners in this study had to know how to fit information within the format. But there are learners who seem not to understand why the format is like this and why they had to conform to it. This was vividly noticed as Ms M pointed out that:

> Ms. M: There are some Grade 12s who cannot lay out an essay. That is why the basic structure is stressed in Grade 10 (This was highlighted during interviews with Ms. M).

However, it was not only her Grade 12s who were still struggling with the basic structure but also her Grade 10s. During the Grade 10 lesson observation Ms. M made her disappointment known about poor structure. Furthermore, she asked the learners the following question: "So who can tell us what an essay consists of?"

> Learner: The basic structure of every essay should consist of an introduction, body and conclusion
>
> Ms M: Class quiet, is he right?
>
> Learners: Yess…..!! (*Choral response*)

Ms M then wrote the response on the board: "introduction, body, and conclusion".

On the other hand Mr K explained the basic structure to his learners with the emphasis on using the PEAL Method.

> Mr K: You should have used the PEAL method in your main body to provide an argument. What is the PEAL?
>
> Learner: Point Explained Argument Linked
>
> Mr. K: So here you need to make your point, explain that point, argue it out and then link it to the next paragraph.

This is in line with Gipps' (1999) claim that making learners aware of the lesson objectives at the outset is important because it regulates learners' attitudes towards working on attaining the goals to improve learning. In addition, Biggs (2003) states that intended learning outcomes should be clear as they (learning outcomes) are sought-for qualities of performance. At this stage it could be noticed that teachers' intended learning outcomes were displayed and were also consistent with the emerging themes from the interviews. So, to answer the first research question - "how do

Grade 10 History teachers engage with essay-writing?" - They were in the first place explicit about intended outcomes.

They also repeatedly referred to and engaged with particular methods of structuring and writing. It seems to me that the use of the PEAL method allowed for the development of sophisticated writing which could be assessed by using the SOLO taxonomy.   The PEAL method in essay-writing has been deemed as a key by both teachers in helping to improve learners' written responses. The findings reveal that as far as writing in a structured way is concerned the desired results were met. This implies that best results in teaching history essay-writing come when a teacher can integrate good historical and skills by using a method like the PEAL.

Hounsell (1987) and Harris (2001) for instance claim that History essays are analytical; that is they deal with why something happened, rather than being merely descriptive and saying what happened. Some descriptions might be used at the same time, when presenting evidence which is crucial to historical analysis when learners have to discuss why something happened. In De La Paz's (2005) opinion, argumentative essays require learners to take a position or present an opinion and this opinion needs to be supported by quotations or paraphrasing. How did the teachers in this study engage with essay-writing? Both description and analysis were required in the Grade 10 essays written for Ms M and Mr K. Where analysis was asked for, learners were reminded to take a historical position. For instance, Ms M said:

> Most of you did not understand [the word "misinterpreted"] so the question says, "Shaka has been misinterpreted as a cruel tyrant". So misinterpreted means incorrectly portrayed. In other words he has been misinterpreted means incorrectly portrayed as tyrant. Okay, so you need to say, "Yes, I agree he has negatively been portrayed" or "I don't agree that he has been negatively been portrayed as a cruel tyrant" (*teacher pauses*) yes!

While Mr K said:

> Today's essay is a descriptive essay. Just from the term itself, it asks you to describe. The question is: "Describe the role the British played in shaping South Africa's political landscape".

At this point the teachers drew the learners' attention to the needs of the content of the essay and the need to take a historical position.

> Ms. M: So then you have to say, "It is true" because it is asking you for your opinion. Discuss the validity of the statement by stating if you agree or not. Remember in History our essays are argumentative essays, so it's asking for your opinion.
>
> Okay, so that's where your content is going to come from. But Jay, remember you should have an introduction. In your introduction you need to have an argument. Yes, so that is the first thing you

need to write in that introduction is whether you agree or disagree with that statement. Do you believe having studied this section, having looked at various ways that Shaka has been represented? Do you believe that statement is true or false? Okay!

Learner: False

At this moment Ms M asked learners to make a mind map about the content of the essay since the essay question about the different portrayals of Shaka Zulu was asking for the learner's voice. Teaching history essay-writing involved focus on content, and on learners taking a historical position. Taking a historical position is making a point by using evidence from a specific time and place. In line with Seixas's (2006) assertion that could imply that, since periodization is about describing, analysing and evaluation of historical accounts, then particular contexts in which one (historian) work shapes one's interpretation about the past. In this instance Ms M asks her learners to take a historical position of Shaka who has been portrayed as a cruel tyrant. She wants her learners to take that position by either agreeing or disagreeing with the statement but they should provide evidence. Mr K on one hand encourages his learners to write an argument by linking it to the PEAL method and support that argument with evidence.

An argumentative essay requires learners to take a position in making a claim and to support that claim with evidence. This is in line with the call for historical thinking which is one of the values teachers attach to teaching History essay-writing and answers the second research question –why teach essay-writing in the way they do?. Developing an argument and organising evidence to support that argument is socialising learners into the practices of professionals (historians). By doing so, the learners are exposed to critical thinking and how to develop this when writing about historical events within the discipline of history.

During the observations it was evident that feedback was an important feature of the teaching process and that the teachers got their learners to relate their work to a clear rubric. This is the CAPS (DBE, 2011) rubric which each learner could find in the textbook (see Appendix C). Wiggins (1998) suggests that quality is achieved through a cycle of giving learners access to criteria and expected standards for the task. Ms M read it aloud and explained what each symbol meant on the learners' scripts. For example C stood for content and P for presentation.

Ms M: Look at the rubric on p.101. This column down here (*teacher pointing at the column on the rubric in one of the textbooks*) and the top part - look here all of you - is the presentation or structure. This doesn't mean how pretty your handwriting is. Hey no, it's about your argument using the PEAL method. If you had no presentation, you just had one page, no introduction, no body and no

conclusion. The least I could give you is a two. Look at the rubric again. We have been using this since term one and we will continue using it until matric. If you had the content, the least I gave you is 24. Your presentation is the ability to lay out your essay. Some of you had all the content.

If your mark is C3, P3 means that content is relevant but doesn't … but is not used to answer the essay question. E.g. if you said how Shaka was born and how his mother wandered, its okay, but that does not show how he was portrayed as a cruel tyrant. If you leave things out you get marked down. But if you write it well, you use the PEAL method and your structure is intact, where you have the introduction, body and conclusion and sustained and defended your points and then used your PEAL method. Then let's take one point. Ah Shaka was a military genius. Why?

Mr K: You were marked according to the global marking rubric found in your textbooks. Do you have questions?

Teachers explained the use of the rubric to clarify mark allocation. This is a principle of formative assessment and constructive feedback. The use of a rubric can enable teachers to know at which level their learners are and how this information could be used to inform their next instruction. For instance this is demonstrated when the teachers pointed out how well or badly the learners had achieved in their essays. Ms M was able to identity that some of her learners still struggled with the structure, while on the other hand; Mr K was impressed with the achievement of some of his learners. This shows that they were able to identify the level of their learners' achievement with the help of the assessment rubric they used. Engagement with the rubric enabled learners to see how they were being judged unlike being passive learners who accept marks without understanding (Andrade, 2000). This is a process of formative assessment. The formative use of rubrics, in other words, enabled the learner to look at the rubric then compare it with their own work so as to identify where they had gone wrong. In addition, rubrics support assessment of learner's performance by providing clear criteria to which to measure achievement. But there is also a possibility of learners using the rubric superficially, without being engaged with its criteria.

The use of drafts is an important aspect of achieving quality writing among learners. Mr K explicitly encouraged his learner to practise draft writing of the essay, the topic for which was given seven days before the final essay was written in class under test conditions.

Mr K: What is the difference between the first and second drafts?

Learner: First you write freely and second one you time yourself

Mr K: How many of you did that?

Learners: None (*each learner had his own excuse*)

Mr K: How many days do you have before submission?

Learner: A week, sir

Mr K: So if you had a week to do so then that does not mean you played soccer the whole time. If you want a distinction you have to manage your time despite what you think about yourself. You can do better.

This becomes a formative process as learners are able to assess themselves (principle of self-assessment) during the learning process which a teacher such as Mr K wants to achieve. This can only lead to better writing of essays if learners become committed to the practice of draft writing. This simply implies that, if learners are able to practice draft writing before the final submission of their essays, they can write well because they would have been done with editing and re-drafting.

Teaching for a distinction has both a summative and formative aspect to it. It all depends on how the teacher addresses this. The danger is that learners can easily list the requirements of the essay without fully engaging with the historical content and argument. However, ultimately getting a distinction was among the objectives which Mr K had emphasised during feedback. This is in line with the emerging theme from the interview with him.

So if you had a week to do so it does not mean you played soccer the whole time. If you want a distinction you have to manage your time despite what you think about yourself. You can do better. Still using the PEAL method if you want to get distinction you have to get the linkage correctly.

Gipps (1999) further stipulates that the role of feedback is to enhance the learning goals. In this regard, both lessons that were observed developed based on the objectives and were presented in the way learners understand. The two teachers started by handing out the learners' written essays, then read out the question and explained what the essay question required of the learners. Key words were explained to learners. Both teachers were very active in seeing that learners were engaging with the revision by going round to check whether learners were making corrections or not. They did this by probing, questioning and getting learners to read their work to each other. Teachers also provided individual feedback to learners who needed guidance. In some instances teachers would refer a question posed by a learner to the entire class.

Some of the answers given by the learners were assessed for accuracy by referring them back to the other learners. For instance Mr. K asked his learners if they were satisfied by Phil's response when he was asked to mention at least one point on the question being discussed. But in some

instances I observed Ms M asking the question which she later answered herself at the same time. This to some extent did not stimulate the learners' thinking. Questioning as a formative assessment strategy is said to promote learners' engagement and thus high level questioning stimulates thinking and deepens understanding of the acquired knowledge (Shepard, 2000). However, in my opinion I think teachers tend to unconsciously fall into this trap of answering their own questions. Possibly this is because it is not easy to wait for learners' responses. Since formative assessment has been associated with learning gain (Black and William, 1998), learning has been influenced through adopting learning strategies which are aligned to learning and teaching. Formative assessment may be undertaken through questioning, peer and self-assessment. Formative assessment is said to help identify learner's individual learning needs that could help teachers find means of bridging the learning gap. However, in this case the implication of this finding is that to some extent a teacher's formative practice on questioning was compromised.

What was also observed in their implementation is that to make sure those learners did not only memorise the content, teachers probed and expected learners to give reasons for their responses. For instance Jay in Ms M's class gave an example of one of the portrayals of Shaka as a military genius. Then Ms M asked who had portrayed him as a military genius and why was he portrayed as a military genius? This kind of probing encouraged learners to think deeply about what they were saying, creating or developing critical thinkers. Apart from stimulating critical thinking it also encourages sourcing skills. Critical thinking and sourcing skills are important in History as these challenge learners to begin to think historically and just not accept the information that they are given but question that very information. This in turn is an important aspect of being a historian. So being a historian according to Seixas (2006) and Wineburg (2001) means being able to analyse and interpret the past using various sources. The implication is that since historical thinking is the kind of thinking about any content through disciplined analysis and assessment, then to study history is to learn to think critically in a disciplined way.

Generally teachers seemed to understand how learners learn and thus they had different teaching strategies to help the learners achieve the learning goals. During the interviews Ms M had shown concern that there were some Grade 12s who could not lay out an essay. That is why structure is stressed in Grade 10. Therefore she thinks it is important for learners to begin to read, think and

write like historians in Grade 10. For this reason she tries to have a number of mind maps and gimmicks in order to help the learners remember the essay structure and think historically. Even though the teacher did not put the mind map on the board, she constantly reminded her learners about it and said this is where and how to come up with content for the essay.

5.3 Conclusion

This chapter presented data analysis and discussion from the teacher lesson observation. The discussion was in line with the emergent themes from the teacher interview. This relates to my first and second research questions by examining the way teachers are developing essay-writing in practice. It looked for signals as to why they are developing this in a manner they do. The findings demonstrate that much emphasis was put on clear knowledge of learning outcomes related to historical thinking; of clarity of structure, and use of PEAL and the CAPS rubric to develop coherent argumentative essays. They were also very actively probing, questioning and giving feedback with the hope, as well, of and teaching for distinction. These findings are consistent with data from teacher interviews of the value they attach to teaching essay-writing and why they do it in the way they do.

CHAPTER 6

DATA ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION: DOCUMENT ANALYSIS

6.1 Introduction

This chapter intends to answer my third research question: "To what extent do learners' essays provide evidence of achieving the purposes of teaching essay-writing?" It provides a comprehensive data presentation, analysis and discussion of three learners' written essays on different portrayals of King Shaka of the Zulu. The analysis was carried out on the premise that Biggs and Collis's (1982) **S**tructure of the **O**bserved **L**earning **O**utcome (SOLO) or SOLO taxonomy can be used to assess the achievement of teachers' intended learning outcomes in any activity or task in a subject like History. This is because the SOLO taxonomy provides criteria which describe the structure of the learning outcome or performance of achievement (Biggs & Collis, 1982). To undertake my analysis, the framework of the SOLO taxonomy has been integrated with historical thinking criteria as set out by Seixas and Wineburg but applied by Monte-Sano (2012) (see Table 1 and Table 8 below). Therefore, in the study I use the amplified taxonomy to assess the extent to which a teacher's intended learning outcomes in teaching essay-writing are achieved.

6.2 Analysis and discussion of learners' written work (essays)

In this documentary analysis of learners' written essays, the SOLO taxonomy is used as a framework to assess learners' learning outcomes within the five hierarchical levels that reflect the quality of learning of a particular task, namely pre-structural, uni-structural, multi-structural, relational and extended abstract. As already noted in the literature review, the SOLO taxonomy is particularly helpful as a tool for evaluating the quality of learning and this was evident in my study when I evaluated the learners' marked scripts. By using the SOLO taxonomy as a framework when evaluating the work produced by the learners, I began to understand what type of learning the teacher's instructional methods was yielding and how the learners were performing. I was able to evaluate the characteristics of learners' scripts against the progress indicators of the SOLO taxonomy developed to show progress against teachers' intended learning outcomes.

The SOLO taxonomy makes it possible to assess the quality of essays and learners' historical thinking because in writing the learners have to display what they have learnt in the process of essay-writing described in the previous chapters. The SOLO taxonomy enables a teacher to analyse if learners are able to show historical understanding through the process of corroboration, questioning and making coherent arguments (Yilmaz, 2008) and can use it to provide feedback to learners who have produced surface responses and guide them to deeper levels of learning (Smith & Colby, 2007). On the other hand, Biggs and Collis (1982, p. 5) further claim that well written essays tend to be "increasingly longer and so make more points they could be judged qualitatively too". However, this does not necessarily mean that the longer the answer, the better it is.

The teachers who were interviewed and observed emphasised both the use of the PEAL method in writing essays and the CAPS (DBE, 2011) rubric in assessment of the essays and providing feedback. (They used the rubric as a guide in the development of History essay-writing skills.) The rubric aligns with the CAPS notion of what it means to do history and understanding of the disciplinary concepts of the subject matter, as I have shown in Table 7, p.61. This is evident in that the rubric seems to advocate for learners to go beyond the coverage of basic facts as shown on level one (1) of the presentation and content to include skills and reasoning (thinking) as seen on level seven. (See Appendix C). These skills include, working with data, providing and using evidence to support claims, constructing and communicating ideas and building a well-structured argument. It can be argued that the criteria for historical thinking and essay-writing presented in the PEAL method and in the GDE rubric are covered by Seixas' and Wineburg's historical thinking criteria. The table below demonstrates a good correspondence between historical thinking, PEAL and CAPS criteria, particularly in terms of structure, argument and the use of evidence.

Table 7: Alignment of historical thinking criteria with PEAL and CAPS (2011)

HISTORICAL THINKING	PEAL METHOD	CAPS ASSESSMENT RUBRIC
Structure	**L** – for **L**inked points	Well-planned, structured and well-synthesised
Argument	**P** – for **P**oint (s) made **E** - point **E**xplained **A** – for Argument	Developed a well-built, independent line of argument.
Evidence	**E** - Explained. Explain how this evidence proves the points.	Evidence – used to build and defend argument
Corroboration - point supported by separate sources	[Not explicit. Could be included in asking for different sources to support argument.]	[Not explicit. Could be included in asking for different sources to support argument.]
Sourcing - begins to evaluate origins of the document; works with primary sources.	[Not explicit. Could be included by asking about reliability of sources.]	[Not explicit. Could be included by asking about reliability of sources.]
Contextualization – locate document in time and space	**L** – Linked. Contextualise to reinforce original claim in time and space	[Not explicit but necessary for building the well-structured and defended argument.]

In order to analyse the essays of three learners, Jay, Lebo and Brits (pseudonyms), I then constructed Table 8 as the amplified taxonomy. The table includes a few examples from the learners' work but a full, detailed discussion is presented below.

Table 8: Characteristics of possible responses in learners' essays for each level of the SOLO taxonomy integrated with Historical Thinking criteria.

	Pre- or uni-structural	Multi- structural	Relational	Extended abstract
Structure of the essay (introduction, body and conclusion) Position taken. Cohesion – clear links between paragraphs leading to conclusion?	**No clear introduction**	**Introduction: Partly responds to the question/topic but does not have an original interpretation** E.g. Lebo: "Shaka Zulu the son of Senzangakhona and Nandi. *Many* believed that Shaka was a <u>tyrant</u> and he was <u>blood thirsty</u>. Others believe he was a strong leader who wanted the Zulu nation to grow. But I believe he was a good leader who protected the Zulu in every way."	**Introduction: Comprehensive and provides an original interpretation** E.g. Brits: "Shaka was portrayed through many ways. But I am pointing three. He was a <u>nation builder</u>, <u>cruel tyrant</u> and a big <u>military leader</u>. He was a nation builder by looking out for his people, he was also a very good leader and that is why he was a good military leader. And this is why I disagree by saying that he was only a tyrant." (position taken) **Body:** He had five paragraphs-well linked evidence of PEAL	**Introduction: Comprehensive and provides a sophisticated interpretation** E.g. Jay: "In this essay, I will be <u>proving</u> (*position taken*) that it is incorrect of some historians to name Shaka as a <u>cruel tyrant</u>. This will be done by proving how he was negatively portrayed as a cruel tyrant, how he was a military genius, how he was a <u>good diplomat,</u> how he was portrayed in <u>the 20th century</u> and how seen today. It is understandable to people to call Shaka a tyrant because the earliest account by <u>colonial writer</u> did this." **Body:** He had three main paragraphs, well linked (evidence of PEAL).

		Body: He had seven paragraphs, poorly linked **Conclusion:** Evident, although poorly linked to the question	**Conclusion**: Evident and well connected with introduction.	**Conclusion**: Evident and well connected to the introduction
Evidence	**Does not accurately use historical evidence**	**Each argument is insufficiently supported Fewer than two pieces of evidence used and does not accurately support claim Lebo:** See in Appendix D when he talks about amabutho system in connection to military genius. (Para 2-3)	**Each argument is accurately supported by at least two pieces of historical evidence. No more than one piece of evidence is used erroneously. Brits:** There is an attempt to use historical evidence and link it to the claim made e.g. the learner links nation builder, protect-tion,amabutho system,loyalty,consolidat-ion,conquering the other chiefdoms (Para 2) He erroneously used evidence when he pointed to Shaka having made re-quest of the British to bring the <u>British tribe</u> in so he could justify <u>colonial conquest</u> (Para 3)	**Uses persuasive evidence - shows understanding of the nuances of the evidence In essay-writing, extra claim is supported by specific evidence Jay:** To some extent uses persuasive evidence by stating that, "Shaka was misrepresented by colonial writers as a cruel bloody thirsty dictator.'' - He talks about unreliability of the sources which were written from memory and manipulated by British traders. He makes an extra claim that the reason for manipulating the sources was for the British government to send more troops because the traders wanted to control trade (para 2)
Corroboration	**Evidence if used supports different claims; Uses 0-1 sources of evidence**	**More than one piece of evidence is used to support a claim Evidence used in isolation without reference to other sources**	**Explicitly relates evidence from at least two sources to each other in supporting the claim.**	**Analyses the relationship of more than two pieces of evidence for a claim Jay**: See (para 2-3) "Colonial writers exaggerated accounts and were biased for personal gain." Praise poems depicted Shaka as a military genius (para 3)
Sourcing	**Accepts the source on face value Does not mention the author/ purpose**	**Mentions author or purpose but does not relate it to credibility**	**Considers how the author or purpose affects the content**	**Analyses how sources point of view affects the content Jay:** as in corroborating evidence.
Contextualisation	**Lack of evidence of understand-ing of his-torical setting of sources.**	**Does not accurately determine the historical setting of source. Mentions historical context without analysing**	**Applies prior and new knowledge to determine historical setting of the sources**	**Applies both new and old knowledge to determine historical setting of the source and uses that setting to interpret the source within the historical setting. Jay:** Was able to point out how the 20th century

	Lacks description of historical content	its impact on sources/ Interpretation		historians depicted Shaka and how the ANC depict him as a brave and courageous leader (para 4 - conclusion)

From the teacher interview and class observation, the teachers' main objectives of teaching essay-writing are to develop historical thinking and argumentative essay-writing. In analysing the objectives against the progress indicators developed by the amplified SOLO taxonomy and against the teachers intended learning outcomes, Jay, made an attempt to meet the intended outcomes at an abstract level although he used a wrong scientific term by stating that he was "proving" his point. His essay showed the extent to which his teachers' purposes in teaching writing were achieved.

Jay's essay had a clear introduction, with a clear position taken, well-structured body with three main paragraphs and a conclusion with well-linked sentences to the original point or question (Appendix D, pp.80-2). In relation to the taxonomy, his thinking showed an attempt to integrate ideas with appropriate content, and sequence it according to the purpose of the essay. In other words, his essay was able to integrate the ideas into a whole and recognise relationships and connect ideas to each other. Jay's essay could be said to be consistent with the teachers' teaching and learning expectations.

In assessing Jay's historical understanding and thinking, it is clear that the learner was able to use historical concepts to analyse the past and communicate historical understanding. For instance, the learner used historical concepts such as "tyrant" and "colonial rule". He was able to support his views with evidence, for example when he stated that "Shaka was misrepresented by colonial writers as a cruel bloody thirsty dictator". In his opinion, the reason for manipulating the sources was for the British government to send more troops because the traders wanted to control trade (para 2, Jay's essay). This showed an awareness of cause and effect. He further provided persuasive evidence when he pointed to the praise poems as having portrayed Shaka as a military genius (para 3, Jay's essay). This was a way of disputing that Shaka was not only a cruel tyrant, but he was also a military genius as evident from the praise poems. This relates to De la Paz (2005) who claims that argumentative essay-writing requires taking a position which is supported

by evidence. And above all he was able to make a reasonable judgment about the past; this was evident in his conclusion.

Jay was beginning to think and write like a historian, using the skills of interpretation, evaluating sources and taking a perspective even though the learner only worked with secondary sources from the textbook. I noted this during the class observation when both teachers encouraged learners to use their textbooks for content.

In relation to learning and one of the levels identified by Biggs and Collis (1982), Jay's written work reveals the characteristics of taking a position, integrating essay points with supportive evidence and providing critical reflection on the essay question involved. The learner revealed learning outcomes at a high cognitive level when he was able to contextualise a source within the historical setting. The levels of analysis and synthesis evident here are approaching SOLO level five – the extended abstract level. As seen from Jay's essay, the learner did not only make connections within the given subject area but he was able to go beyond it and was able to make generalisations within the subject matter. For instance he was able to generalise how the Zulu king Shaka was perceived in the 20th century by historians and how the African National Congress (ANC) leaders such Albert Luthuli saw him as a brave and courageous leader.

Brits equally presented a successful essay (Appendix D, pp.83-5) which was consistent with the teacher's learning outcomes and level four of the SOLO taxonomy: relational thinking. This is a level where writing demonstrates thinking that integrates the whole question into a coherent structure and meaning. This level also reveals that the learner has several relevant ideas although he might have missed out on some by making a misleading linkage. For instance, Brits used evidence erroneously when he pointed to Shaka as having made a request to the British to bring the "British tribe in doing so he could justify colonial conquest" (para 3). However, he was able to link the ideas of essay-writing and historical concepts. In his paragraph 2, there was an attempt to use historical evidence and link the claim made. For example the learner linked nation builder to protection through the amabutho system and to conquering the other chiefdoms (para 2, Brit's essay).

The learner also pointed to different portrayals of Shaka and stated, "Shaka was portrayed through many ways. But I am pointing to three. He was a nation builder, cruel tyrant and a big military leader. He was a nation builder by looking out for his people, he was also a very good leader and that is why he was a good military leader. And this is why I disagree by saying that he was only a tyrant". In this first paragraph of Brits' essay, he took a clear position.

The body had three main paragraphs with three main points which he wanted to write about, and there was a conclusion which linked well to his introduction. There was an attempt to use the PEAL method as a way of writing a coherent and well-structured essay where a point was explained, argued and linked. The body had three points, with an attempt to discuss each one in its own paragraph and his conclusion was linked to his introduction.

Brits' essay, in relation to Seixas' and Wineburg's historical concepts, could be said to have had an argument, a position was taken, although he lacked persuasive evidence in some of his writing, and an opinion as to why Shaka was not only not a tyrant, as portrayed by some historians (para 4 of Brits' essay). To some extent the teacher's purpose of teaching essay-writing was achieved.

Lebo, on the other hand, tended to concentrate more on single disjointed points. The challenge Lebo experienced seems to have been more of recalling factual details presented during class activity or from a textbook. The essay was not logical and not precise (Appendix D, pp.86-87). It showed superficial learning. However, there was a partial attempt to comply with the teacher's expectations of essay-writing structure. The learner had partially structured his essay in accordance with the teacher's expectation where he had an introduction and a body but had a poorly connected conclusion. In his introduction he attempted to respond to the question/topic but did not have an original interpretation. For instance, Lebo stated, "Shaka Zulu the son of Senzangakhona and Nandi. Many believed that Shaka was a tyrant and he was blood thirsty. Others believe he was a strong leader who wanted the Zulu nation to grow. But I believe he was a good leader who protected the Zulu in every way" (para 1). He did not reflect on the original question as to why and how Shaka was portrayed as a cruel tyrant. He had six main paragraphs

which were poorly connected and a poor conclusion which did not reflect the original point or question He further did not link his conclusion to the introduction like the other learners.

In the terms of historical thinking, he had made an attempt to point to evidence but did not sustain this. For example in paragraph 2 of his essay, Lebo wrote about the amabutho system in connection to military genius but did not convincingly sustain his writing by saying anything more on the point. In relation to the SOLO taxonomy, he is at a multi-structural level because the learner had more than one connected idea, even though the significance of ideas for the whole was partially missed. This means that Lebo could generalise only in terms of a few limited and independent aspects. One can conclude that Lebo had some idea of what was required but had not mastered what was expected of Grade 10 essay-writing at the school. He had not been able to build a clearly sustained argument supported by relevant evidence.

It has to be noted that these are only Grade 10 learners who were beginning their formal writing journey. The teachers do not seem to have exposed learners to much of Wineburg's criteria of sourcing and corroboration as part of historical thinking, criteria which get learners to work with primary sources and to think about the origins, biases and points of agreement in sources. This would be very relevant in a discussion of the views of Shaka but was apparently not done. Another thing worth noting is that, there is a possibility of Grade 10s working with historical thinking concepts as a checklist that needed to be filled in without understanding and engaging properly with the concepts. This would happen if learners were given essays to learn rather than to construct for themselves – a practice which did not occur in the school in this case study.

6.3 Conclusion
In analysing the learners' written essays, a modified SOLO taxonomy and historical thinking framework provided a comprehensive lens for looking at the extent to which one teacher's purpose in teaching essays was achieved. Furthermore, this use of the SOLO taxonomy affirms the claims made by Biggs and Collis (1982) that it can be applied to measuring cognitive learning outcomes in assignments for different academic subjects. This was demonstrated in the analysis of the three learners' History essays above. The taxonomy did work for assessing History essays in which particular analytical and communication skills were required. However, in assessing the learners' essays, I felt that the pre-structural level of the taxonomy could be excluded for all

learners in the study. This was because, based on the written essays, there was no learner who had made only one point in his History essay or missed the whole purpose of writing. At least each learner attempted to meet the teacher's learning objectives. This was evident from the application of the structure of the essay, in integrating some elements of historical thinking at the level of one of the SOLO taxonomy. The findings from the above analysis make substantial contributions to the researcher's understanding of learners' learning and cognitive levels. In answering my third research question, it can be affirmed that Ms M's learners show evidence of acquiring characteristics of historical thinking and of expressing it in their writing. As Smith and Colby (2001) also point out, an expanded taxonomy such as that developed to analyse the essays could also be used to provide feedback to learners who have produced surface responses and guide them to deeper levels of learning.

CHAPTER 7

CONCLUSION, LIMITATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 Conclusion

This case study of teaching history essay-writing in a Gauteng secondary school involved a three-pronged investigation into:

- the value teachers attached to history essay-writing (research question 1);
- the strategies and practices teachers employed in teaching essay-writing (research question 2);
- the extent to which learners' written essays provided evidence of achieving teachers' intended purposes in teaching essay-writing (research question 3).

I believe that the triangulation in the case study was successful in providing data for the analysis of what the teachers in the research hoped to achieve, how they went about achieving this and provided some valuable insights into what Grade 10 learners were able to produce.

The interview data was analysed using Seixas' (2006) and Wineburg's (2001) concepts of historical thinking and the findings were organised and discussed under key emergent themes. Lesson observations were analysed following Gipps' (1999) and Heritage (2010) who emphasized having clear teaching outcomes and instructional systems to achieve these. The discussion was done in line with the emergent themes from the interviews. The learners' written essays were analysed and discussed using the modified integration of the SOLO taxonomy with historical thinking as adapted by Weibe (2014).

An overarching interpretation is that the two History teachers, both white South Africans although with different teaching experience, have similar values attached to History essay-writing. The findings suggest that the teachers' understanding of the value of History essay-writing is to give learners the knowledge and skills the subject imparts. These include historical thinking (teaching learners to read, think and write like historians) and life skills which go beyond the classroom. They were concerned to teach them writing skills in general with much emphasis on creating a comprehensive structure for their essays. The ambition to achieve good final grades was also evident in the comments on teaching for distinction.

The teachers' pedagogical and strategic choices in providing feedback show the value they attached to achieving the learning goals. One of their key strategies was not acquired during their teacher training. This was the PEAL method which, with the help of mind maps, was identified as the appropriate teaching aid for writing sophisticated essays. The use of the textbook throughout the lessons suggests, however, that teachers barely worked with primary sources. At this level, teachers' practices were only partially consistent with Seixas's and Wineburg's concepts of historical thinking relating to sourcing, and particularly of working with primary sources and how they do or do not corroborate one another.

Lesson observation data showed how feedback reflected teachers' intended learning goals. Furthermore, the findings showed that teachers' pedagogic and strategic choices enabled learner active participation in the learning process. It showed the formative assessment practice in the use of questioning, probing, letting learners read essays to each other and through the teachers moving around the class to give guidance to individual learners. Issuing the rubric to learners in advance and explaining how the marks were allocated had a formative value. This is because the learners became active participants in their own learning process. What was not fully clear from my lesson observations was how actively learners engaged with the rubric, and this would be needed if they wanted to improve, as Andrade (2000) notes.

Teachers experienced challenges as learners struggled with structure, selection of relevant content and literacy skills. To meet these challenges, teachers provided extra lessons and remedial consultations. They were also prepared to listen to oral presentation of essays where handwriting was a problem. All of this demonstrated teachers' conceptions of their subject and approaches to teaching essay-writing as a whole. Teachers' commitment to get learners to succeed was seen in their perseverance in getting learners to write their own essays in spite of the challenges they faced.

The assessment of the learners' essays using an integration of the SOLO taxonomy with the historical thinking model revealed a number of things. Firstly, it showed that the CAPS rubric could be consistent with the development of historical thinking if used properly. Use of the taxonomy showed that it was possible to identify what a learner could do in their performance of understanding in a given task. In this case, it was possible to begin to identify the extent to which the learners were able to meet with the teacher's learning outcome of historical thinking as shown

in the essay analysis above. Secondly, it was possible to begin to assess the quality of learners' thinking in essays through the five levels. In this case essays ranged from multi-structural to an extended abstract level. Thirdly, and very importantly, it can be said that it was possible for the Grade 10 learners at the school in the study to meet many of the teachers' expectations of essay-writing outcomes based on structural complexity. In the study, it has been shown that Grade 10 learners were beginning to answer an essay question, taking a position in an argument and structure their response over a number of paragraphs.

7.2 Limitations of the study

My study was affected by various limitations. The first constraint was that since I utilised a case study, one secondary school was used as a case and this school is in the largely urban Gauteng province. Because of this, the results cannot be generalised. Case studies have been criticised for attempting to provide generalisations and conclusions based on a single study. But one of the advantages of the case study is that it allows for an intensive study of the particular quest, thus, generating insightful information if properly handled.

I recognize that a weakness of my study was the limited opportunities I had to collect data and the resulting limited scope of some data. My research was affected by a number of changes due to timing of the study, which occurred in the third school term. It was my intention to conduct a cycle of class observation, with two spaced observations per teacher. The first observation was when they were introducing the essay topic to the learners and the second was when they were giving feedback. However, this did not go as planned because by the time I conducted interviews, on 23 August 2016, the teachers had already introduced the topic so I could not see the initial implementation. As a result I had to observe the lessons when feedback was given on the already marked essays. Apart from that, I had intended to work with six essays from the learners but I could not have access to Mr K's essays as the learners had written the essay under test conditions. I could not work with them as they did not fit in my initial idea of examining class essays. This meant that I worked only with Ms M's three essays. But, I now realize that if I had worked with Mr K's test essays, they could have provided me with a better comparison of learners' performance in many aspects of extended History writing.

I nevertheless believe that the data from three different research interventions was generally quite rich and has enabled me to meet the objectives of this study. Since this is a qualitative study, the compromise did not adversely impact my study as it was not about the numbers but the quality of data collected. I believe that even though I had a limited number of scripts my objective to show the extent to which one of the teachers' teaching goals was achieved through essay-writing is realised.

Finally, since I am a novice researcher, I feel I did not have the expertise to probe some responses. This, I believe, could have adversely affected my data collection. Above all, there was no pilot study. Perhaps if I had conducted a pilot study it could have clarified some issues and my probing skills improved.

In spite of these limitations, I have gained valuable insights into the topic. Firstly it showed that getting learners to write historical essays is not an easy task; as a result, the process requires highly skilled teachers who themselves need to be knowledgeable about the subject matter. Secondly, the SOLO taxonomy is suitable for assessing learners' historical thinking because the assessment criteria center on what learner can do in their performance of understanding of the given task. Finally, the study has informed my approach to the History essay-writing process and the interpretation of the value attached to essay-writing. In turn it has informed my own teaching of the topic. I also believe that I have learnt that the importance teachers attach to the subject or topic does not only affect them but also shapes learners' conceptions about their own learning.

As I worked through this study I gained insight into teachers' engagement with essay-writing and how important they are in shaping learners' performance. Moreover I gained clarity as revealed by the findings that teachers' understanding reflects in the way they teach and assess a history skill. It is my hope that this study could contribute to further studies on how the SOLO taxonomy can be used to show the extent to which teachers' intended learning outcomes are achieved through written essays. This then could be used for feedback and development of learners' writing.

7.3 Implications and Recommendations

History essay-writing is a great challenge for high school learners. This is because History essay-writing is ultimately about historical thinking. This historical thinking fosters critical thinking and encourages learners to have reasoned conclusions about the past.

The findings have revealed that historical thinking is key in getting learners to write appropriate essays and that teachers still find it a challenge to get learners to write historical essays. This challenge needs to be addressed in order to help to better implement essay-writing. The study therefore suggests that historical thinking should be taught explicitly in History Education. Secondly, the study also suggests that time spent in developing essay-writing should be extended in order to benefit both the teacher and learner. Many opportunities should be given, in the context of different lengths of writing, to synthsise historical material and to write historical arguments; not just a few isolated essays each year. This would provide learners with full understanding of how to write appropriate essays.

Lastly, further research is recommended in order to determine the factors that affect the development of essay-writing, not only in the school under study, but in other schools across the province. Further research is also suggested into issues of integration of the SOLO taxonomy with historical thinking for assessing essay-writing. This would help to find out the extent to which the proposed assessment criteria could reflect a teacher's intended learning outcomes.

This study could be a model for further research. This is strongly proposed as developing History essay-writing at school is a very important part of learners' intellectual development and extends to tertiary education.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX A: Interview and Observation Timetable

DAY	PARTICIPATION/ CODE	ACTIVITY	TIME	DATE
1	ALL	MEETING		23rd June, 2016
2	Teacher 1 (T1)	Interviews		
3	Teacher 1 (T1)	Lesson 1 Observation		
4	Teacher 2 (T2)	Interviews		
5	Teacher 2 (T2)	Lesson 1 Observation		
6	Teacher 1 &2	collection of first marked scripts of learners' activities		

APPENDIX B: Interview Schedule for History

Main Question	Possible probe Questions	Reasons for asking them
How do you engage with essay writing in your Grade 10?	Many people think of History as content based and memorisation subject. What is your response?	Gain the conception of history as a subject. The central question and the intention are to open up the discussion. Am interested in gaining the understanding of strategies of essay-writing in line with formative assessment.
Why do you engage with essay-writing the way you do?	What is your understanding of why teaching history essay writing is part of the grade secondary school? Why do you think it is important to teach essay writing to grade 10? From experience do you think history teachers share this view?	Gain the importance attached to their practices. To gain teachers' conceptions on the reason why essays are important to grade 10. To gain teachers' experience on teaching.
What criteria do you use to guide your assessment?	How often do you assess learners through written essays? And why? What do you assess in learners' written essays? And what do you do with the information you get from the assessment process? What is your understanding of formative assessment in History education?	To see whether the criteria promote Historical Thinking e.g. to build an argument. To see whether assessment is used formatively and/or summatively. To gain insight into teachers' understanding of formative assessment in developing History essay-writing.
What challenge if any do you encounter in assessing your learners' essays?	Why do you think some of your learners still experience such problems? How do you overcome them?	
Are there any challenges you encounter when practicing formative assessment?		

APPENDIX C: GDE Prescribed Assessment Rubric: (CAPS, FET, 2011, p. 41)

4.4.3 Global assessment of essays

	PRESENTATION	LEVEL 7	LEVEL 6	LEVEL 5	LEVEL 4	LEVEL 3	LEVEL 2	LEVEL 1
CONTENT		Well-planned and structured essay. Good synthesis of information. Developed an original, well-balanced and independent line of argument with the use of evidence, sustained and defended the argument throughout.	Well-planned and structured essay. Relevant line of argument. Evidence used to defend the argument.	Well-planned and structured essay. Developed a clear argument. Conclusions drawn from evidence. Independent conclusion. Evidence used to support the conclusion.	Planned and constructed an argument. Evidence used to support argument. Attempts to sustain a line of argument. Conclusions reached based on evidence.	Shows some evidence of a planned and constructed argument. Attempts to sustain a line of argument. Conclusions not clearly supported by evidence.	Attempts to structure an answer. Largely descriptive, or some attempt at developing an argument.	Little or no attempt to structure the essay.
LEVEL 7 Question has been fully answered. Content selection fully relevant to line with argument.		47 - 50	43 - 46	38 - 39				
LEVEL 6 Question has been answered. Content selection relevant to the line of argument.		43 - 46	40 - 42	36 - 37				
LEVEL 5 Question answered to a great extent. Content adequately covered and relevant.		38 - 39	34 - 35	30 - 33	30 - 33			
LEVEL 4 Question is recognisable in answer. Some omissions or irrelevant content selection.				30 - 33	28 - 29	26 - 27		
LEVEL 3 Content selection does relate to the question, but does not answer it, or does not always relate to the question. Omissions in coverage.					26 - 27	24 - 25	20 - 23	
LEVEL 2 Question inadequately addressed. Sparse content.						20 - 23	18 - 19	15 - 17
LEVEL 1 Question inadequately addressed or not at all. Inadequate or irrelevant content.							15 - 17	0 - 13

Jay

92.

c - 7 } 46/50   JAY 15 August 2016

History .2   Ms _____.

In this essay I will be proving that it is incorrect of some historians to name Shaka as a cruel tyrant. This will be done by proving how he was negatively portrayed as a cruel tyrant, how he was a military genius, how he was a good diplomat, how he was portrayed in the 20th century and how he was is seen today. It is understandable [to people] to call Shaka a tyrant, because the earliest accounts by colonial writers did this.

Shaka was portrayed as a cruel tyrant by colonialists only for [their own] personal gain. Shaka was misrepresented by colonial writers as a cruel bloodthirsty dictator and we know that these sources are unreliable because they were not written by observing and recording rather written from memory and it is proven that all estimations made were guessed. Another reason these sources are unreliable is because they were manipulated by British traders so that the government would send in more troops so that the British could control the trade in that area. White settlers also portrayed the Zulu chiefdom as blood thirsty to justify why they conquered and destroyed the Zulu kingdom. Another reason why colonial accounts of Shaka were exaggerated and biased was because colonial writers wanted to gain more European readers wanting to know more about Africa. These points of evidence have proven that it is wrong for historians to believe that Shaka was a tyrant as colonial writers manipulated these sources for personal gain. Shaka was

not blood thirsty but he was a warrior and an ~~xxx~~ excellent obrabergist who was able to come up with military ~~xxx~~ 1ovations to grow the Zulu chiefdom.

Shaka was a military genius who was able to create new tactics and military innovations to defeat enemies and decrease Zulu casualties. Shaka was a good military leader that was able to defeat even the strongest chiefdoms of that time period ~~xxx~~ such as the Ndwandwe. Praise poems passed down through oral tradition also depict Shaka as a mighty warrior of the Zulu Kingdom. Shaka was a military strabagist that came up with new tactics ~~techniques and~~ such as the flank and the Horns of a Buffalo. Shaka also brought forth new innovations such as the ~~illegal a~~ shorter spear rather than the conventional long assegai. All these reasons prove that Shaka was a good leader in warfare and was able to change forms of warfare throughout the country and cannot be blamed for mfcane as it happend before his birth and on other parts of the ~~xxx~~ country. Shaka was not only a leader that loved warfare but he was also able to grow the Zulu chiefdom as a good diplomat.

Shaka was a good diplomat that was able to grow the Zulu kingdom and unite it. Shaka was able to consolidate the Zulu chiefdom after the defeat of the ~~Ndwe thwa~~. He was also a leader that ~~pro~~ allowed other tribes to join the Zulu and be protected. He had loyal subjects where he provided land and cattle for their loyalty. He was also able

②

to have first breakings with peaceful breakings with the Zulu chiefdom. Shaka could not only be seen as a cruel tyrant as he was able to grow the Zulu chiefdom through diplomatic ways. Shaka's portrayal as a good leader began to be seen in the 20th century.

Shaka began to be seen by historians in the 20th century as a leader. He was praised by the ANC leaders such as Albert Luthuli for his courage, bravery and ability. He began to be praised and recognised by a wider audience. He stopped being seen as a cruel tyrant and most leaders of the century would disagree with that statement. He was only admired by few in the 20th century and today by a wider audience.

Brits

Brits

30/50 = 60%   History Essay.
Miss. _____ M

15 August 2016

opt 2

How Shaka was portrayed? shaka was portrayed through many ways, but I'm pointing three points, He was a Nation Builder, Cruel Tyrant and a big Military leader. He was a nation builder by always looking out for his people, he was he was also a very good leader and that is why he has a good military Leader. And this is why I disagree by saying that he was only a Tyrant.

Shaka would build his chiefdom in numbers, he would help people and this is what makes him a Nation builder and not only a Tyrant. To help the people he'd offer protection. Shaka offered protection to his people. he'd give them protection if they they joined his tribe, this made him a good Nation builder. By having people he could start his own system. Shaka started what was called the Amabutho system. This helped him grow and this why I think he was a good nation builder. By shaka having the Amabutho Amabutho system he had to come with loyalty. Shaka was very loyal to his people, you can see he was loyal because he just kept growing, this made him a big Nation builder. By doing this he'd consolodate. Shaka had to consolodate, this grow him as a leader and nation builder and thats why I think he was g a good nation builder and disagree with most people by saying he was only a Tyrant. With the Amabutha system shaka could conquer other chiefdoms this showed that he was strong and a good Nation builder.

Shaka is when shaka came into power he used new military techniques, this helped him conquer other chiefdoms and thats what made him a big huge military leader, he had

84

(L)
to use new techniques, One of Shaka new technique was to attack with Flanks This made it hard for other chiefdoms to defeat him. And this is why I say he was not only a Tyrant but a good military leader too.

Shaka had made a request to the british through ~~fanas flynn~~, X no 6 this request was to bring ~~british tribes~~. ~~By~~ By doing this Shaka could ~~justify colonial Conquest~~ and this is why I think Shaka was a Tyrant. He knows what he needed to do and how he would do it. Shaka was a ~~blood thirsty autocrat~~, this made ~~him feral~~ people fear him and respect him, because the people knew what Shaka was capable of. This is why Shaka was a Cruel Tyrant. And a good one too.

I'll have to ~~disagree~~ with most historians by saying Shaka was only a Tyrant. I highly disagree because ~~Than~~ there are points that prove he was not only a tyrant, he was also a ~~Nation Builder~~, a ~~Military leader~~ and a ~~Cruel Tyrant~~.

p - 5
30
4

85

Lebo

Shaka zulu the son of Senzangakhona and Nandi. Many believe that shaka was a tyrant and he was blood thirsty. Others believe he was a strong leader who wanted the zulu nation to grow. But I believe the was a good leader who protected the Zulu in every way.   Good attempt!

Shaka's leadership was amazing, believing in the zulu and guiding them to sucess. His ways of of being a leader were diffirent from others but for him they worked. We might not all belive in shake being a leader but his leading skills led the Zulu into being a strong kingdom. He also had the amabutha to help him.

The amabutho system I belive help king shaka conquer every thing he has, and protect zulu under the leadership of shaka. Amabutho were warriors trust by the zulu nation and shaka to him protect the people, and make the zulu nation strong. Shaka's generals were incharge of the amabutho, they made sure that they are ready and that the practise their tactics. We also know that shaka was a military Generus genewis who thought military tactics.

Shaka being a mility geneuis made the zulu win most of their battles. Him also being a strong leader made the amabutho

obey him and listens to his rules. The tactics he thought the amabutho made sure he had victory. One of the most tactic he thought was the flank. Shaka also changed the zulu weapons.

Shaka changed the older weapons totally. he shortened the spear making the head wider and the shield shorter. He also changed the shield which he made it wider and smaller so it can block the spears from coming in. Shaka also made the amabutho not wear candles so that they got quiker. Shaka was also described as a tyrant.

Shaka was said to be a cruel tyrant, who was blood thirsty. They believe shaka was the cause of mfecane and that he was not a greater leader. Shaka won battles, took over chiefdoms so that the zulu nation could grow. He was a nation builder.

Shaka was a nation builder, all he wanted to see was the zulu nation growing. When shaka took over chiefdom, he took the people and introduced them to zulu to build his nation. Shaka was a hero.

What about other views?

Sustain argument.

87

APPENDIX E: Ethics Clearance – University of the Witwatersrand and Gauteng Department of Education

Wits School of Education

WITS UNIVERSITY

27 St Andrews Road, Parktown, Johannesburg, 2193 Private Bag 3, Wits 2050, South Africa. Tel: +27 11 717-3064 Fax: +27 11 717-3100 E-mail: enquiries@educ.wits.ac.za Website: www.wits.ac.za

14 July 2016

Student Number: 910044

Protocol Number: 910044

Dear Doris Banda

Application for ethics clearance: Master of Education

Thank you very much for your ethics application. The Ethics Committee in Education of the Faculty of Humanities, acting on behalf of the Senate, has considered your application for ethics clearance for your proposal entitled:

History essay-writing in grade 10: Teachers' Conceptions, Practices, Experiences and Challenges of Formative Assessment: A Case Study of a High School in Gauteng

The committee recently met and I am pleased to inform you that **clearance was granted.**

Please use the above protocol number in all correspondence to the relevant research parties (schools, parents, learners etc.) and include it in your research report or project on the title page.

The Protocol Number above should be submitted to the Graduate Studies in Education Committee upon submission of your final research report.

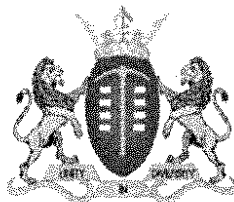All the best with your research project.

Yours sincerely,

MMabeh

Wits School of Education

011 717-3416

cc Supervisor - Dr Helen Ludlow

GAUTENG PROVINCE
EDUCATION
REPUBLIC OF SOUTH AFRICA

GDE RESEARCH APPROVAL LETTER

Date:	1 July 2016
Validity of Research Approval:	1 July 2016 to 30 September 2016
Name of Researcher:	Banda M.D.
Address of Researcher:	107 Pallister Road; Unit 77; Eden Terrace; Edenvale; 1609
Telephone / Fax Number/s:	073 260 3713
Email address:	910055@students.wits.ac.za; dm.bandamazengenya@gmail.com
Research Topic:	History essay-writing in Grade 10: Teachers' conceptions, practices, experiences and challenges of formative assessment: A Case Study of a High School in Gauteng
Number and type of schools:	ONE Secondary School
District/s/HO	Johannesburg Central

_Re:_ _Approval in Respect of Request to Conduct Research_

This letter serves to indicate that approval is hereby granted to the above-mentioned researcher to proceed with research in respect of the study indicated above. The onus rests with the researcher to negotiate appropriate and relevant time schedules with the school/s and/or offices involved. A separate copy of this letter must be presented to the Principal, SGB and the relevant District/Head Office Senior Manager confirming that permission has been granted for the research to be conducted. However participation is VOLUNTARY.

The following conditions apply to GDE research. The researcher has agreed to and may proceed with the above study subject to the conditions listed below being met. Approval may be withdrawn should any of the conditions listed below be flouted:

CONDITIONS FOR CONDUCTING RESEARCH IN GDE

1. _The District/Head Office Senior Manager/s concerned, the Principal/s and the chairperson/s of the School Governing Body (SGB.) must be presented with a copy of this letter._
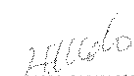
2016/07/04

1

Office of the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management ER&KM)
9ᵗʰ Floor, 111 Commissioner Street, Johannesburg, 2001
P.O. Box 7710, Johannesburg, 2000 Tel: (011) 355 0506

2. The Researcher will make every effort to obtain the goodwill and co-operation of the GDE District officials, principals, SGBs, teachers, parents and learners involved. Participation is voluntary and additional remuneration will not be paid;

3. Research may only be conducted after school hours so that the normal school programme is not interrupted. The Principal and/or Director must be consulted about an appropriate time when the researcher/s may carry out their research at the sites that they manage.

4. Research may only commence from the second week of February and must be concluded by the end of the THIRD quarter of the academic year. If incomplete, an amended Research Approval letter may be requested to conduct research in the following year.

5. Items 6 and 7 will not apply to any research effort being undertaken on behalf of the GDE. Such research will have been commissioned and be paid for by the Gauteng Department of Education.

6. It is the researcher's responsibility to obtain written consent from the SGB/s; principal/s, educator/s, parents and learners, as applicable, before commencing with research.

7. The researcher is responsible for supplying and utilizing his/her own research resources, such as stationery, photocopies, transport, faxes and telephones and should not depend on the goodwill of the institution/s, staff and/or the office/s visited for supplying such resources.

8. The names of the GDE officials, schools, principals, parents, teachers and learners that participate in the study may not appear in the research title, report or summary.

9. On completion of the study the researcher must supply the Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management, with electronic copies of the Research Report, Thesis, Dissertation as well as a Research Summary (on the GDE Summary template). Failure to submit your Research Report, Thesis, Dissertation and Research Summary on completion of your studies / project – a month after graduation or project completion - may result in permission being withheld from you and your Supervisor in future.

10. The researcher may be expected to provide short presentations on the purpose, findings and recommendations of his/her research to both GDE officials and the schools concerned;

11. Should the researcher have been involved with research at a school and/or a district/head office level, the Director/s and school/s concerned must also be supplied with a brief summary of the purpose, findings and recommendations of the research study.

The Gauteng Department of Education wishes you well in this important undertaking and looks forward to examining the findings of your research study.

Kind regards

Dr David Makhado

Director: Education Research and Knowledge Management

DATE: ....

APPENDIX F: Teacher consent forms

Appendix F1: Invitation to participate

Unit 77, Eden Terrace

<div align="center">

107 Palliser Road

Edenvale

<u>1609</u>

15 May 2016

</div>

Dear Madam,

My name is Doris Banda and I am Masters Student in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I am doing research on Grade 10 History teachers' engagement with essay-writing: A case of a High School in Gauteng.

I intend to explore and examine teachers' conceptions or understandings, practices, and challenges associated with practices in promoting history essay-writing.

My research involves interviewing, audio- taping and observing class sessions when the teacher is giving instructions to learners on a specific essay and when giving feedback (either oral / written). This involves a history teacher currently teaching grade 10 class, who is qualified and experienced. The interview will be after school teaching hours.

The reason why I have chosen your school is because of its outstanding performance. In addition it has qualified and experienced history teachers who have the information which can help me in achieving my research objectives.

Please may I officially invite you to participate in my research by interviewing, observing and audio taping you? Your name and identity will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic

writing about the study. Your individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study as I will use pseudo names for coding and data interpretation.

All research data will be destroyed between 3-5 years after completion of the project.

You will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. Your participation is voluntary, so you can withdraw your permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating and you will not be paid for this study.

Please let me know if you require any further information.

Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,

Doris Banda

Email:910044@students.wits.ac.za/dm.banda@yahoo.com

CELL: 073-2603713

Appendix F2: Teacher's consent form

I, _____ give my consent for the following:

Permission to review/collect documents/artifacts Circle one

I agree that (learners' marked scripts) can be used for this study only.
YES/NO

Permission to observe you in class

I agree to be observed in class.   YES/NO

Permission to be audiotaped

I agree to be audiotaped during the interview or observation lesson   YES/NO

I know that the audiotapes will be used for this project only   YES/NO

Permission to be interviewed

I agree to be interviewed for this study.   YES/NO

I know that I can stop the interview at any time and don't have to

Answer all the questions asked.   YES/NO

Informed Consent

I understand that:

- My name and information will be kept confidential and safe and that my name and the name of my school will not be revealed.

- I do not have to answer every question and can withdraw from the study at any time.

- I can ask not to be audiotaped, photographed and/or videotape

- All the data collected during this study will be destroyed within 3-5 years after completion of my project.

Sign_____ Date_____

Appendix F3: Parent Consent form

Dear Parent

My name is Doris Banda and I am a Master's student in the School of Education at the University of the Witwatersrand.

I am doing research on Grade 10 History teachers' engagement with essay-writing. A case study of a Gauteng High School

My research involves observation of teacher's classroom using an audio-recorder and taking down of notes. By the nature of me observing the class lesson as the teacher is teaching it means that even your child automatically becomes part of participants. However, my attention is not on learners but their teacher. I will observe their class on a two cycle system; first day will be, when the teachers is giving instruction on the topic/ essay to be written and the second time or day will be when the teacher is providing feedback to the learners on the written essay.

The reason why I have chosen your child's class is because she/he is a member of that class the teacher will be teaching, that is grade 10 classes.
I was wondering whether you would mind if your child could be part of the observation and if I could collect your marked transcripts for analysis.
Your child will not be advantaged or disadvantaged in any way. S/he will be reassured that s/he can withdraw her/his permission at any time during this project without any penalty. There are no foreseeable risks in participating and your child will not be paid for this study.

Your child's name and identity will be kept confidential at all times and in all academic writing about the study. His/her individual privacy will be maintained in all published and written data resulting from the study.

All research data will be destroyed between 3-5 years after completion of the project.

Please let me know if you require any further information.
Thank you very much for your help.

Yours sincerely,
D. Banda,
Doris Banda
Address: 107 Palliser Road,
Email: 910044@students.wits.ac.za/ dm.banda@yahoo.com
Tel: 0732603713