HISTORY EDUCATION STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF ASSESSMENT AT A HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTION

BY

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this piece of work to my parents and family.

ABSTRACT

Assessment in History Education takes a wide range of strategies of which students have different experiences. Determining the mode and course of assessment is often the responsibility of lecturers, sometimes without seeking the students‟ contribution. Administering the different assessment strategies without understanding how they are experienced and their significance from the perspective of the student may drive the lecturers to a wrong direction. Literature acknowledges the power of assessment in enhancing higher education students‟ academic achievement. It also demonstrates how students experience assessment. However, there is limited literature on specifically History Education assessment. This research therefore investigates the voice of the student by tracing History Education students‟ experiences of assessment in a higher education institution.

Using social constructivism as a theoretical framework, and with specific reference to Vygotsky‟s ZPD model, I worked within the interpretivist paradigm to conduct a case study design focusing on 3rd year History Education students in a selected higher education institution. I employed both focus group and face-to-face interviews to gather data. Using inductive analysis, the study revealed that students experience History Education assessment through a four-stage process. The first stage is preparation, which involves all activities carried out before the final assessment task is done or written. The second stage is engagement, which is all about attempting the given assessment task. Feedback is the third stage, and it has to do with students getting to know the results of their assessed task/s. The fourth stage is reflections on growth where students tell if and how they benefit from the assessment task given. The study revealed that students acknowledged the power their assessment experience has in creating a huge Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), but few students were keen to push to their full potential. Instead, they preferred to stick to their comfort zone within the same ZPD. It can be concluded that History Education students‟ experiences of assessment largely comprise an easy-going approach to reading, consultation, preparation and engagement activities, resulting in limited growth to a new ZPD.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

DP   Duly Perfomed

MEDUNSA   Medical University of South Africa

OBE   Outcome Based Education

QAA   Quality Assurance Agency

SAQA   South African Qualifications Authority

ZPD   Zone of Proximal Development

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background and contextualisation

South African education has come a long way, and the current education system has been a direct response to the one that preceded it. During the apartheid era, the South African education system was characterised by imbalances and inequalities in a nation of people with divergent ethnicities (Woodrooffe, 2011). In the White dominated South Africa, there was limited or no access to education for Black people. Under the Bantu Education Act, the Blacks who had a chance were to only attend schools, technikons and universities set aside for their respective race group. According to Nkhumeleni (2012), English-speaking Whites had specific universities such as the University of Witwatersrand, Cape Town, Rhodes and Natal set aside for them. The University of South Africa (UNISA) operated as a distance education institution. White Afrikaans-speakers attended the Universities of Pretoria, Potchefstroom, Rand Afrikaans, and the Orange Free State. Officially, the University of Port Elizabeth instructed in both Afrikaans and English. The universities of Bophuthatswana, Zululand, Venda, Fort Hare, Transkei, Vista University and the Medical University of South Africa (MEDUNSA) were reserved for African students, while the University of the Western Cape and the Durban University of Westville served the Indian and coloured students respectively.

The apartheid era curriculum focused on the content to be taught, learnt and tested. According to Warnich (2008), this promoted two views: that knowledge was uncontested and neutral, and that the assessment was primarily set to measure and quantify how well students had memorised the information imparted to them. The transmission mode of teaching was the order of the day where the instructor acted as an expert transmitting information to passive students whose role, in turn, was to absorb the information and spout it back when tested. It was most likely to happen that many students would

graduate with good grades, but with inadequate knowledge, skills and expertise to apply in their respective careers.

In response, post-apartheid South African education experienced restructuring and reforms by the new government in an effort to do away with all that had been systematically linked with the apartheid education system. This involved newly designed education policies, bearing in mind that the country had a bad schooling success (Mouton, Louw, & Strydom, 2012). The necessity for curriculum change was influenced by the concerns, needs and dissatisfaction with the curriculum practices of the time by respective stakeholders. It was found to be necessary to have a new curriculum for a new dispensation putting into consideration the diverse cultures and social backgrounds of students and values in education among other things. As a result, Curriculum 2005 (C2005), which came to be alternatively known as the Outcomes-Based Education (OBE), was introduced in 1997.

C2005 shaped the curriculum differently from the traditional view of knowledge advanced by Warnich (2008) above. The learning outcomes of C2005 were framed as competencies that encompass knowledge, appropriate values and skills and that are in correspondence with the social constructivist application of knowledge. C2005 advocated that aims of OBE assessment should go beyond content-driven rote learning and memory skills and should be characterised by a learner-centred and activity-based methodology (Warnich, 2008). C2005 therefore aimed to meet the educational problems of the time and to consider the future-oriented needs of the learners and society by expanding assessment strategies from overreliance on the written test or examination to include a range of possibilities (Mouton et al., 2012). These formative and summative assessment approaches were to include a variety of assessment experiences such as field work study, quizzes, extended take-home essay writing and reflective assessment. As would be expected, implementing this new curriculum for the school system had implications on students" learning and assessment experiences at higher education level.

Post-apartheid higher education was expected to react to the developmental needs of the newly created democratic South Africa. The 1994 reconstruction and development programme particularly spoke of developing national human resources, meeting people"s basic needs, building the national economy and creating a democratic state and society (Badat, 2007). In order to deconstruct the entrenched apartheid social order and to promote a newly reformed, ethnically and racially neutral South Africa, the system of higher education had to be restructured firstly through institutional mergers. According to Woodrooffee (2011), former White institutions had to be merged with historically Black institutions – a move that turned out to being the most outstanding structural change in the country"s higher education system. The then Department of Education pronounced a strategy to consolidate the 36 national institutions into 21 consisting of 11 universities, 6 technikons and 4 comprehensive universities that were to offer both technikon and university programmes (Fiske & Ladd, 2004).

The merged higher education institutions were to not only focus on teaching, learning and assessment, but also research as well as community engagement. The different university programmes were intended to yield graduates of high standards with knowledge and skills that would enhance their progress both locally and internationally (Badat, 2007). It can therefore be observed that the post-apartheid higher education system was aimed at creating a competence-based curriculum which emphasised competence and compatibility rather than relocation of factual knowledge (Weurlander, Soderberg, Scheja, Hult, & Wernerson, 2012). For that matter, student-centeredness was to be given significance because the higher education system was now restructured to be compatible with the school education system. Student-centeredness would be crucial in advancing students" understanding of their natural and social worlds, to cultivate students" characters which made them critical and effective thinkers, be able to attain deep knowledge in some fields, be able to take personal decisions reflecting on the wider world they experience and to the historical forces that shaped it (Badat, 2007).

The students" role was to be at the core of the learning process if the new higher education system was to meet its desired goals. This is because at this level of education, what is important is not only to prepare students with the basic life skills, but

also other higher order skills like problem solving and critical thinking if students are to be effective in developing an awareness and control of their learning (Moodley, 2013). Assessment, most especially the formative form, was identified as one of the most recognised ways through which the above skills could be attained in higher education. The South African Qualifications Authority (SAQA, 2005) also emphasises that the most suitable instrument that can be used by instructors and institutions to drive a deep approach to students" learning is assessment. SAQA (2005) further highlights the core role that assessment plays in formal acknowledgement of teaching and learning achievements. It also recognises the power of assessment in certification by means of aligning student assessment practices according to four identified principles: validity, fairness, reliability, and practicability.

Being an essential part of teaching and learning, the new form of assessment"s focus was on student involvement and the varying of assessment forms (Falchikov, 2005). Embracing different forms of assessment was on the grounds that they all influence student learning in a number of ways. Each student may have a different orientation towards assessment as they encounter different types of assessment designed by different instructors (Weurlander et al., 2012). This therefore implies that students have varying interests and preferences and, as a result, benefit differently from the given approaches to assessment. It is therefore important to understand how students experience such assessment processes if the restructured higher education systems are to be effective and constructive to the students. According to Weurlanderet et al., (2012), the way students experience the different assessment practices equips instructors with crucial information on how assessment and learning relate to one another. This research therefore sought to investigate and develop an understanding of such experiences with particular regard to History Education students at the selected higher education institution.

History is among the most commonly established disciplines in the humanities and its teaching, learning and assessment according to Wineburg (2001) are always considered as appropriate forms of knowledge containing vital concepts, different form of analysis and approaches to forming certain truth claims. Being a sensitive and a

massively contentious subject, History has, in recent years, been treated with sensitivity in terms of curriculum design, approach and assessment. Its assessment in the recent years has evolved in order to address former disparities brought about by the previous regimes.

Since the end of apartheid, South African assessment systems, including in higher education have undergone a series of reviews. With the introduction of an all-inclusive education system, institutions of higher learning recognised that students from diverse backgrounds required assessment strategies that would be centred on both current ability and future potential (Murphy & Maree, 2006). In this respect, various measures have been implemented to promote alternative assessment strategies.

Murphy and Maree (2006) recommend the adoption of dynamic assessment – an approach to having an insight into the existing levels of competence and how particular educational interventions can influence such levels of competence (Artelt, Dorfler, & Golke, 2009). Dynamic assessment was therefore recommended on the assumption that it is process-orientated since it focuses on learning which happens in the course of assessment. According to Poechner (2008), dynamic assessment has its origins in Europe as it is found in the Socratic dialogues described by Plato. It became a subject of research in Europe in the 1920s and 1930s and was first researched in South Africa in the 1980s.Therefore it suits the requirements of humanities disciplines like History which require deep inquiry, reason, synthesis and analysis. Such an assessment model is consistent with the History Education assessment practices at selected the higher education institution. However, I found it essential to investigate how History Education students experience this assessment model from their own perspective.

Tests and examinations have for long been the traditional and dominant assessment strategies before the advent of more student-centred practices. But in the recent years, as observed by Booth (1993), the subject of History has undergone a testing period whereby the growing number of higher education students does not only make it overwhelming for instructors, but also leaves them with less time than ever to reflect on the important areas of their activities. Such a situation makes the environment ripe for

shifting demands in teaching and assessment, particularly adopting strategies that would be more beneficial to the student whilst making the instructor"s work more manageable. Under such circumstances, it is therefore important to have an understanding of how History Education students experience History Education assessment strategies.

1.2 Purpose of the study

This study purposely seeks to investigate the History Education students" experiences of assessment at a higher education institution. It seeks to understand how students of History Education experience the different assessment strategies administered in the discipline at the higher education institution.

1.3 Research question

How do the History Education students experience assessment at a higher education institution?

1. 4 Objectives of the study

This study has one objective: to understand history education students" experiences of assessment at a higher education.

1.5 Significance of the study

There is limited research on History Education assessment at higher education level. This study explored History Education students" experiences assessment at a selected higher education institution focusing on particular assessment strategies used by the

lecturers in the discipline. This study is important because the conclusions it reaches may result in a more comprehensive understanding of the effectiveness of the strategies in enhancing students" historical understanding, students" preferences or challenges and devise suitable approaches to supporting them reach their desired academic goals.

The findings of the study may also provide a platform for History Education and actually higher education policy makers to consider students concerns when developing or implementing plans concerning assessment.

1.6 Problem statement

History Education learning and assessment have taken place for as long as the discipline has been on the national curricula of different countries. It has all along been traditionally authoritative in nature where the instructor or the faculty commands the whole process which involves designing the approach, content, context and criteria for assessment (Pharr & Buscemi, 2005). According to Maxwell (2010), within such a structure, the student"s role was to only await feedback to which he/she had minimal chances of appeal in case there is a query on the results. The post-apartheid South African education system greatly emphasised more responsive and flexible modes of learning and assessment which make the student an active participant (SAQA, 2005). These include approaches that commit students to deep learning, a phenomenon that does not look at assessment as separate from learning, but as an integral part of learning (Birenbaum, 2003). The student is therefore expected to take part in every learning and assessment-related activity. Such student involvement has been effected in History education at the institution under focus, but there has been no systematic research on students" opinions on the effectiveness of the assessment strategies they experience. It therefore became necessary to conduct this study and seek to understand students" experiences of History Education assessment.

Assessment has, over the past few decades, been a key discourse among stakeholders of the History discipline. It takes a wide range of strategies and approaches at large. However, such strategies and approaches vary in the intensity of their application

depending on the objectives of the assessor, nature of the syllabi and curricula, objectives of the given educational institution, and objectives of the national education system among others (Pace, 2011). At the selected higher education institution, alternative assessment strategies like presentation seminars, peer and self-assessment, course work and fieldwork have been adopted. This is intended to enable students to exhibit their knowledge of names, themes, ideas and the relevant historical facts (Frederick, 1997). The discipline authorities at the institution also intended to enable students exploit their abilities in communicating their historical knowledge and reasoning to others as well as their abilities in historical reasoning which specifically involves analysing, evaluating, and synthesising historical evidence (Frederick, 1997). However, how History Education students experience such strategies and their impact on students" academic growth are questions of concern. History Education is a discipline that is characterised by inquiry, reason, synthesis, deep thinking and understanding multiple truths. It therefore requires a deep interrogation that accords respect to the perspectives of the assessed students. Such research has been largely missed in different South African institutions, yet it could widen the scope of interaction about the subject matter in question and bolster a deeper meaning to the subject in the face of students. I therefore carried out this research to understand students" experiences of the assessment strategies administered and how they impact on students" academic growth.

1.7 Rationale and motivation

Although different factors influenced me to conduct such a study, the key rationale stems from my personal experience. As a teaching member of staff at the selected higher education institution, I was motivated to trace students" experiences of the assessment strategies we administer in the History Education discipline. All along, policies on assessment had been drafted by the discipline and the respective instructors. The instructors eventually make judgments depending on the students" performance, but I have never been sure that there are efforts made by the discipline to

understand the students" experiences. I have always thought that using students" assessment outcomes to judge both student and institutional performance is inadequate if there is no effort to understand how students go through the entire assessment experience.

I have also noticed that there were some students whose academic performance over three years was consistently either below or slightly above average. This has made me develop a feeling that some students" assessment experiences may be comprised of issues that require urgent attention; yet they cannot be revealed through the assessment tasks done. Instead, a systematic inquiry could help me understand such experiences from the History Education students" perspective. It would be very important to carefully note that although some research on assessment in History Education has been done, it has mainly focused on issues that do not put the student at the centre of focus.

The issues that have commonly been researched include the techniques for improvement (Frederick, 1997), assessment methods (Frost et al., 2011), literacy strategies in teaching and assessing History (Mountford & Price, 2004) and challenges (Rapetsoa & Singh, 2012) among others. Like in other disciplines, I find it important for History Education researchers to have students at the core of the research because a full understanding of issues in the discipline is largely dependent on a clear understanding of the student experiences. A critical look at all assessment aspects without knowledge of how the students experience the strategies used may drive us in a direction that is not compatible to their expectations as well as achievement of the intended goals of a contemporary History student. I was therefore motivated to carry out this research to fill that gap of knowledge on the experiences that History Education students have about the assessment strategies used in their History Education modules.

Another motivation is that although all policies are designed to find a way of making the best out of the student, my experience has shown that students are not involved in the entire assessment management. The student"s position is very delicate and therefore

the approach, content, context of assessment strategies and teaching and how they impact on the student matter a lot if the intended objectives of teaching the subject are to be achieved. The voices of the students need to be listened to because they are direct consumers of teaching and are exposed to a wide range of teaching and assessment methods (Booth, 1993). Once we understand students" experiences, there would be a higher possibility of developing assessment procedures that uphold the apparent positives and check on the perceived negatives (Hanraham & Geoff, 2001). It is for this reason and the others explained above that I found it worthwhile to embark on such a study.

1.8 Outline of the study

In Chapter 1, I have presented the background of the study, problem statement, the purpose and focus, the research question and rationale and motivation. I will now present an outline of all the chapters that the rest of this dissertation comprises of.

In Chapter 2, the literature related to the phenomenon of assessment is thematically reviewed. This phenomenon is conceptualised and then discussed in terms of aspects that I found relevant to the study. The literature acknowledges the power of assessment in enhancing higher education students" academic achievement, but emphasises that as regards assessment, the approach, timing, motivation and the nature of feedback are crucial in influencing student commitment as well as shaping their attitudes towards academic and assessment activities. The literature further demonstrates a number of aspects related to assessment in higher education and how students experience them. The literature also confirms that that students are central to the teaching, learning and assessment processes, yet their voice is greatly ignored as most of the findings in this regard are based on researchers, scholars and instructors" interpretations and observations. Therefore the literature review confirms the need to consider the students" experiences.

In Chapter 2, I also explain the theory underlying this research. I discuss the concepts of constructivism and present the theory of social constructivism as advanced by Vygotsky, briefly showing how it differs from Piaget"s cognitive constructivism. An explanation of how social constructivism applies to this study is done by showing that students" exposure to a variety of assessment techniques and their interaction with peers and instructors enables them to extract meaning from such experiences thereby constructing their own knowledge. Views of other social constructivists such as Bruner and Immanuel Kant are discussed, showing their relevance to the study. Within Vygotsky"s social constructivism, I single out the ZPD model as crucial to student-centred constructivist learning.

In Chapter 3, an outline and discussion of the research design and methodology adopted in carrying out this research is presented. The chapter discusses the qualitative case study design as well as the interpretivist paradigm explaining how they correspond with social constructivism. A case study is discussed as a design that focuses on a specifically chosen context, which in this study is the selected higher education institution. The chapter also presents the research methods employed (such as the face-to-face and focus group interviews) and data gathering tools such as the interview schedule, assessment artefacts and an audio recorder. I also provide reasons for choosing the specific methods and indicate how these methods and overall design suited my research study. I further explain how the data was analysed inductively through a process that involved open coding, categorisation of codes and development of themes. Attempts were made to ensure trustworthiness which included a triangulation of focus group and face-to-face interviews. A discussion of the ethical issues considered within such a qualitative study concludes the chapter.

In Chapter 4, I present the research findings according to their respective themes. The findings are presented by way of detailed descriptions of what respondents said. The chapter shows how students" experiences of assessment follow a four part process that flows from preparation to engagement, feedback as well as reflection on growth. These four stages are discussed as the major themes although the students" varied experiences of History Education assessment depend on the assessment strategy they

are reflecting on. Such experiences are shaped by and simultaneously shape students attitudes towards particular assessment strategies, modules, instructors and even the discipline of History Education as a whole.

In Chapter 5 comprises a discussion of the findings in light of the research question, theoretical framework and the relevant literature. This establishes a relationship between social constructivism (particularly the ZPD model) and student experiences in History Education assessment. The discussion links students" experiences and construction of knowledge to the different assessment strategies through interaction, dialogue and self-discovery. The chapter reveals scaffolding as a crucial element of the students" growth in their ZPD effected by a knowledgeable other. Since this is the final chapter, I also give the conclusions drawn from the entire research followed by recommendations and finally an acknowledgement of the limitations of the study.

1.9 Conclusion

In this Chapter, I have presented an introduction and contextualisation of the study. I have also presented the research question, objectives, and significance of the study. I have provided my motivation for carrying out this research with a clearly outlined problem statement. I finally gave an outline of the entire study in which I presented an overview the contents in other chapters. In the following chapter, I will review the literature related to my study.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW AND THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have presented a background and contextualisation of the study as well as the purpose, significance and rationale. In this Chapter, I will conduct a review of the existing scholarly work that is related to the study and explain the theoretical framework underlying this research. Hofstee (2011) argues that any successful research should be grounded on the body of works previously published by other scholars. Therefore this implies that reviewing the related literature would be a vital step in any research undertaking process. The ideas from the literature that I reviewed then informed and guided this study (Ndlovu, 2005). As noted in Chapter 1, the institution and particularly the instructors‟ perceptions of the assessment benefits to their students are usually in the university handbooks and course outlines, but it was crucial to find what scholars have written in relation to students‟ experiences of such assessment.

To realise my literature review objectives, I used Internet search engines, such as Google Scholar and Eric Data Base, and also searched in electronic journals in History Education such as *The History Instructor*. My literature survey also involved manual searches of hard copy journals and books available in the university libraries. This literature that I reviewed is therefore presented in this chapter. I conducted a thematic review of the existing scholarly work guided by the research question posed earlier on in the previous chapter.

In this chapter, I start by presenting the different understandings of assessment by different scholars with a variety of its related concepts. I then discuss the purpose of assessment and its significance at different levels such as students‟ level, institutional and programme levels. I thereafter discuss assessment in higher education. I also present the relationship assessment has with teaching as well as student learning. I further discuss literature on assessment specifically in the context of History Education

followed by students‟ experiences of assessment. The last section of this chapter explains social constructivism as the theory underlying this research focusing Vygotsky‟s ZPD model. The implications of the literature and my arguments conclude the chapter.

2.2 Understanding assessment

Being at the pinnacle of teaching and learning processes, all higher education institutions have assessment as a bottom-line feature in all their semester programmes. Therefore, an important starting point is engaging with the understandings of assessment as a concept. Assessment is understood differently by different stakeholders in higher education and according to the Quality Assurance Agency (QAA) (2007), there is no collectively agreed upon description of the term. There are also debates over how assessment should be designed and administered (Miller, 2005).

There is adduced evidence that many instructors predominantly hold a view of multiple and interacting conceptions of assessment, and each instructor‟s conception of assessment is most likely to be influenced by the system within which each instructor works (Brown, 2003). In agreement with this, Jansen (2007) argues that when a certain system emphasises for example content, conformity and high stakes summative assessment (to be explained later), it may not be surprising for instructors in that system to believe that assessment is principally about student and institutional accountability. It is possible that once such conceptions are constructed, it would not be easy to change them.

The concept „assessment‟ itself has been used in different contexts and bearing different implications (Praslova, 2010). Therefore to understand the concept better, an understanding of other related concepts is very crucial. Marriot (2009) for example identified „testing‟, „motivation‟ and „evaluation‟ to be worthy of consideration when describing the outcome of higher education assessment processes. He uses the concept assessment in describing all aspects of evaluation and testing and therefore

maintains that higher education institutions" educational programs do not have to be only concerned with assessment, but also evaluation and testing. Yet Graue and Johnson (2011) still associate assessment with accountability and testing. They maintain that assessment is defined in line with accountability which is most of the times defined in terms of testing, a medium through which institutions entirely become answerable to the concerned public. This outlines the significance of testing in higher education assessment as regards determining quality and accountability.

Another aspect of assessment is about gathering evidence of students" knowledge. Such an understanding of assessment is advanced by scholars like John, Karp and Baywilliams (2010) as well as Bush and Stenmark (2003) who further present an understanding of assessment as a process. Such a process involves collecting evidence of students" knowledge of, capability to use, and the disposition towards a discipline and also making inferences from such evidence for various purposes. In this case, collecting evidence should be treated differently from giving a test or quiz because an attempt to restrict our views of assessment to such strategies will make us fail to see how instruction can be informed by assessment and how it helps students grow (Bush & Stenmark, 2003).QAA (2007) views assessment as a process which evaluates an individual's knowledge, his/her understanding, relevant skills and abilities.   While Palomba and Banta (1999) view assessment as a systematic process of grading students" achievement on any assessment task. This product-oriented conception of assessment speaks more to the aftereffects of the engagement process as it focuses on how the student is likely to academically grow.

Assessment is also understood in terms of certification and accreditation. According to Ewell (2001), assessment is linked to certification when it is used to certify any student and to award grades. For accreditation purposes, it is the gathering and use of combined data on student achievements to determine the extent to which institutional programs, learning and teaching goals are being achieved. Hence assessment provides data that can be beneficial at multiple levels including the classroom (student), programme and institution (instructor) (Evans, 2002; Bers, 2008). Such an argument therefore implies that assessment at higher education benefits different levels. In a

related point of view, Moon (2006) holds the idea that a combination of all levels of assessment should be considered in any arrangement of higher education assessment. This implies that any successful assessment exercise at a higher education institution should be characterised by assessment at different levels.

Understanding the concept of assessment wholly would be more viable if we develop our understanding of the most commonly known assessment approaches. Assessment takes two broad approaches: formative and summative. Heritage (2007) pronounces formative assessment as an orderly procedure to continuously collect evidence about student learning with the intention of identifying a student‟s present learning levels and to adjust to lessons that will assist the student in reaching their desired learning goals. It involves continuously tasking students with assessment activities from which they construct new knowledge. For this reason therefore, Toit (2008) refers to formative assessment as continuous assessment and suggests that it should be administered rapidly in order to provide immediate feedback from which students learn and eventually attain their higher education learning aims.

Summative assessment on the other hand, is all about determining the overall achievements of the student in a particular area of learning in a specific period of time (Moss, 2013). Another understanding presents summative assessment as an approach adopted to serve certain purposes such as accountability, ranking and certifying competence (Kennedy, Chan, Fok, & MingYu, 2008). One significant feature of summative assessment is that it takes place after a learning process has occurred. In other words, summative involves assessment activities administered at the end of learning purposely assigned to collect information to be used in making summative judgments (Brookhart, 2001). It can therefore be observed that both approaches to assessment take varying forms in terms of techniques applied, timing and objectives.

Of the two distinct assessment approaches, formative assessment has been more emphasised and recommended in the past few decades (Faulk, 2007). However, they are both significant and necessary in helping students achieve their academic goals. The same position is held by Lavy and Yadin (2008) who argue that the two approaches

should be adopted in assessment of a particular course and therefore instructors and students should treat them as important components of the teaching and learning processes rather than as final add-ons. They further argue that there is a link between expected learning outcomes, the content taught and learned as well as the skills and knowledge assessed. This implies that regardless of which approach would seem more appropriate in a particular context, the two are equally significant and should be embraced.

All the different understandings of assessment that are discussed above hold a view of measuring how much has been achieved in the process of teaching and learning after a specific period of time or session. However, understanding assessment is one thing, but the purpose it serves is another and this is to be dealt with in the next sub-section.

2.3 Purpose of assessment

Assessment occupies a very important place in higher education teaching and learning processes (Dreyer, 2008). It is an influential lever in any instructor"s toolkit that fulfils numerous vital purposes. Such functions include creating learning opportunities, motivating students and providing feedback (Rust, 2002). The core value is that attention should not only be driven to the product, but also the learning process and similar attention to the process has reviewed what constitutes paramount instructional practices in particular disciplines like History (Frost et al., 2012).

Assessment is increasingly becoming a key theme in the scholarship of teaching and learning as it enables assessors/instructors to measure the students" progress towards the common goal (Praslova, 2010). It also helps students to gauge the worth of their own learning and provides information to the assessor about students" own progress. This therefore implies that assessment plays different roles in teaching and learning situations (Kennedy, Chan, & Mingyu, 2008; Rapetsoa & Singh, 2012). For example, helping instructors understand their own performance requires an assessment form that is completely different from any approach intended to describe the general contours of

the student study outcomes. This makes assessment an aspect that unifies the dynamics of teaching and learning (Drake, 2001).

Different assessment practices can be directed towards different learning purposes depending on the context and values of the institution (Newton, 2007). It is essential to be conscious of the purposes and goals of a particular academic system when designing assessment criteria. This is because one system that fits a particular purpose may not necessarily fit all other purposes (Newton, 2007). Kennedy, Chan and Mingyu (2008) argue that cultural pressures prescribe some forms of assessment activities and their consequential validity is determined by how far a particular assessment activity, be it formative or summative, provides appropriate environments for students‟ learning. This implies that not all assessment practices can be effective at all times and places. Instead it is the situational demands of the institution or instructor that determine which assessment practice to adopt at the time.

To understand the purposes of assessment better, it is important to trace what assessment implies to higher education learning. On this, scholars such as Evans, 2002 and Bers (2008) recognise that assessment primarily serves to the students‟ benefit, but its significance should be viewed beyond the student assessment (classroom level) to other levels which include programme assessment level and institutional assessment levels.

2.3.1 Student/classroom assessment

This is a form of assessment concerning individual students in a given course. The instructor has powers over this process by presenting the information gathered through assessment practice/s to the institution (Evans, 2002). Assessment as a powerful dynamic in higher education is one tool adopted to punish and/or reward specific types of student‟s behaviour; it is a crucial signalling device for suitable behaviour to students (Coulson & Thomson, 2011). Students‟ behaviour that is rewarded in this case may seem broad and there is therefore need to have an understating of what it really entails.

However, QAA (2007) makes this clear by indicating that students" individual knowledge, understanding, abilities and skills are rewarded and appraised.

The assessment process can be aligned to the anticipated outcomes of learning of a given programme or course, making it a means of measuring and monitoring students" learning goals and expectations (Loots, 2008). Student assessment also aims at providing the instructor with instant feedback on whether students understood what was taught, have questions or remained confused (Marriot, 2009). This implies that whereas feedback is crucial in enabling a student to adjust in his/her academic endeavours, it is equally significant to the instructor to identify where to improve in the instruction process. However, the instructors" improvement still looks towards helping the students get the best out of their learning and assessment experiences.

Student assessment can also be seen as a medium through which students are provided with information about their general academic progress and provide grounds for improving learning (Gibbs & Simpson, 2004). However QAA, (2007) looks at the student assessment phenomenon beyond just enabling students to deal with learning outcomes, goals and expectations, but also its ability to create a fundamental effect on students" learning. In agreement with this, Allen (2006) claims that if designed as a continuing process aimed at monitoring students" learning, assessment would improve and effectively promote student learning by developing a motivation and commitment to learn (Nicol & Macfarlane-Dick, 2003; Rust, 2005).

Students find assessment as a means through which they channel their energies and generate feedback that provides them with an opportunity for reflection (Marriott, 2009) because the more they engage with subject, get assessed and then provided with feedback, the more they are likely learn and motivated to be more committed and engaged (Kuh, 2003).This emphasises the significance of formative assessment and its timely feedback in enhancing students" academic achievement. Therefore feedback stands out as an outstanding feature in assessment because without it the whole process would seem worthless. A more detailed discussion on students" feedback will be discussed later in this chapter.

Apart from considering student assessment in the perspective of university education achievement, it would be more productive if it is designed to measure students" abilities outside university (after graduation). In agreement with this, Murphy and Muree (2006) – who argue that due to the educational and socio-economic disadvantages that a number of students have experienced in the past and perhaps in present day – assessment procedures focusing on students" future potential than their current capability are urgently needed

Muree and Murphy (2006) also suggest that higher education institutions adopt alternative assessment which is largely process-oriented and focuses on learning taking place in the course of assessment. Du Toit and Moreeng (2013) reveal that higher education instructors should adopt Powerful Learning environments (PLE). He described these as places where the curriculum, instruction and the learning contexts come together to elicit in learners the learning processes that facilitate the acquisition of productive knowledge as well as competent learning and thinking skills. Through PLE, Du Toit and Moreeng (2013) advocate for productive learning and problem solving. They emphasise that tasks used in assessing students" knowledge and what they can potentially do have to reflect what they will experience in their life after school, but not those that are limited only to school settings. For that matter therefore, the tasks given to students for assessment should not only reveal solutions that students should formulate, but also their approaches to solving a problem. This justifies the need for instructors or institutions to design assessment practices which are not limited to the curriculum, but relevant to allow students to exhibit intelligent adaptation of the knowledge that they presumably acquired.

It can therefore be observed from this section that the student is the core object in the entire assessment process if all is designed, monitored and administered to the students" benefit. The students" engagement in assessment is unavoidable because the instructor must effect assessment, whether formative or summative, on the student to determine his/her level of achievement and where possible take informed action.

2.3.2 Institutional assessment

As indicated earlier, confining our understanding of assessment to only the student at classroom level provides a partial view of assessment. Therefore, as suggested by Evans (2002) & Bers (2008), the significance of assessment should be viewed beyond just the student. Other levels of assessment are equally important and among them is institutional assessment.

Institutional assessment is important as an element of quality assurance. Pounder (2000) for example, considers institutional assessment as a fundamental quality assurance mechanism designed to establish higher education institutions" potential for accreditation by external bodies or to define the worthiness of already accredited institution to continue enjoying its status. It therefore implies that institutional assessment is all about evaluating campus-wide issues and characteristics. This is because data obtained from assessment inform the instructors and the institution of instructional decisions (Viki & Debbie, 2010). Evans (2002) adds that institutional assessment provides evidence needed to show that student learning is occurring and improving. Therefore institutional assessment informs action to be taken at classroom/student assessment. This implies that there is a strong relationship between the two levels of assessment.

Institutional assessment also provides information about teaching effectiveness (Ramsden, 2003; Yorke, 2003). Matutu (2006) recognises it as a tool that can be utilised to address a number of challenges faced in the complex higher education context if appropriate assessment tasks are implemented. This view is also held by Evans (2002) who, however, maintains that institutional assessment can only be a significant tool if the whole assessment process is viewed as important and related to an institution"s mission and core values. Bers" (2008) research reveals that institutional assessment varies across higher education institutions. Therefore, assessing and reporting on students" learning is of great continuing importance. The reason for this, according Bers (2008), is that institutions would realise how crucial student learning would be in accomplishing their missions. It would also enable stakeholders to realise

their expectations. They would for example observe that their investment in higher education leads to students" acquisition of skills, knowledge, behaviours and attitudes in line with course objectives and programs.

2.3.3 Programme assessment

Besides being conceptualised as a means of fostering change that increases student learning, assessment is also understood as a mechanism for evaluating the overall academic programme. Evans (2002) defines programme assessment as a way of bringing curricular improvement to an academic programme in two ways; by affirming that things are going on well in terms of the curriculum and courses offered, and identifying what is not going on well. He adds that because of assessment, individual courses or programmes may be added, removed, or modified and course structures may be evaluated or changed. Like it may happen with all other forms of assessment, programme assessment also varies according to the purpose and objectives set. More specifically, Loots (2008) argues that it varies according to certain aspects like the scope of the programme, the services rendered and the nature of information needed. Programme assessment seeks to effectively measure the intended outcomes a particular course in a transparent and reliable manner (Bloxham & Boyd, 2007). Therefore, programme assessment"s general purpose is improvement, which takes time to be effected because it is a process (Loots, 2008). Before a new programme is introduced there is time needed to verify the performance of the old one. This can all be possible if instructors develop an understanding of how students experience assessment through the programmes introduced. This implies that assessment at all levels influences or is influenced by student assessment. Based on the centrality of the student, for the sake of this study, assessment is used to particularly refer to students" assessment. In the following sub-section, I discuss the nature of higher education assessment.

2.4 Assessment in higher education

Assessment throughout the higher education sector is taking a unique trend. According to Joughin and Macdonald (2009), it is experienced by almost all those involved in higher education ranging from students, instructors, policy makers, institutional leaders, students" unions, library staff and administrators among others. The authors emphasise that it would be important to seek an understanding of the relationship between these complex groups and how students experience the entire assessment process.

Higher Education assessment is increasingly becoming driven by externally designed principles and presentation of outcomes at various grades and levels. This may be appreciated because society demands accountability from instructors as there are high hopes for higher education playing a role in serving the public good (Chambers & Burkhardt, 2015). External constituencies to higher education often ask for greater accountability with respect to not only costs, but also productivity (Harrington & Timothy, 2004). In line with this, among the outstanding features of higher education assessment is the use of moderators and external examiners. Andresani, Ferlie, & Musselin (2008) suggested that the teaching and learning scholarship must entirely be open to public scrutiny with externally derived instruments and institutional arrangements that seek to govern academic behaviours with higher education institutions. The authors are implying that higher education must be subject to critical reviewing and evaluation and at the same time be made accessible for exchange and use by associates of one"s scholarly community.

There are varying expectations from the students, instructors, instructors, and administrators regarding assessment in higher education. These range from implications to interpretation, applicability, relevance and outcome. One of the most identified expectations of assessment, according to Evans, (2002) is to provide accountability. This necessitates instructors and their individual institutions to provide higher learning standards and create methods suitable for systematically gathering, analysing and interpreting data. This would help in determining how well standards have been met and what developments can be made (Praslova, 2010). Paying maximum

attention to the nature of the assessment practice and how it is administered may help to make assessment beneficial to students. This would be more practical if we put into consideration the students" expectations and the standards that have to be met. This is because many students enter class with almost all the necessary pre-requisites in preparing them for handling the new course work. It is most likely to happen that at this time, they have little knowledge about what they are supposed to know and therefore what they are to be assessed about (Wilson & Scalisep, 2006). This explains why sometimes their reaction to feedback is often negative and confused (Niven, 2009).

The South African higher education setting focuses too much on what to teach and on testing the knowledge and understanding, while ignoring the opportunities and challenges of developing and using assessment to support high-level learning (Beets, 2007). Thus it is easy to lose sight of a crucial pedagogic assessment role of improving learning and enhancing productive learning. Being an advanced academic level, higher education is expected to enhance productivity and produce outstanding graduates through teaching and assessment. The „we do things differently" mentality advanced by Harrington and Timothy (2004) applies to the notion of „business process alignment" suggested by (Loots, 2008). Thus assessment is crucial when it comes to retention of students at higher education level and to help them to academically grow. Such growth is intended to enable them to impact on society and look critically at the process and functions of various structures even outside school. This therefore signals the importance of adopting learning and assessment models that put higher education students into a self-regulated position to be a suitable approach. Such a process would enable students construct knowledge, acquire skills through interaction with a given subject content, discussing such content with parents, instructors, fellow students, and where possible the public purposely to internalise meaning and connect it with the already existing knowledge (Bose & Rengel, 2009).

Observing higher education, Geyser (2004) noted that the main paradigm shift can be summarised as a shift from assessment as an add-on experience towards or at the end of learning, to assessment that is encouraging and supporting deep learning. In agreement, Menthowski (2000) emphasises the need for a shift from determining and

reporting grades to tapping the potential of assessment in order to improve learning. Therefore, it would be significant to view learning from assessment and learning for assessment as two corresponding purposes of assessment in higher education. Such a shift from the traditional view of the purpose of assessment to the new trend is what Birenhbaum (2000) referred to as a „new assessment culture" in education.

The above arguments reveal the need to design assessment and teaching approaches in a way that will benefit the student both cognitively and practically and not only to support and cultivate educated citizens in higher education, but assessment should itself be treated as a learning process.

2.4.1 Assessment and teaching

The purposes of higher education are principally to enhance development and growth of students through actively engaging with the intellectual challenges of a given educational discipline. To achieve all this, assessment should be designed in a way that provides a foundation to student"s learning and reflective instructional activities (Morris, Porter, & Griffiths, 2003). As an essential means to improve teaching and learning, assessment would be more productive if it involves students so that it brings about construction of new knowledge through assembling individual identified skills and content (Louis & Harada, 2012). Assessment is recognised as an essential teaching tool, but Louis and Harada (2012) observed that it is even more constructive when shifted from instructor-centred to a student-centred model. This is because it requires a dramatic paradigm shift in what is taught and how it is taught. They also observed that this is more possible with formative than summative assessment. Another study confirms that continuous assessment that is marked rapidly in order to provide immediate feedback in the discussion between instructor/instructor and students is the best way to achieve students" higher education teaching aims (Toit, 2008). Therefore although both summative and formative assessment approaches are relevant in higher education, the formative approach is more effective in enhancing deep learning.

Another significant aspect regarding formative assessment relates to student-centeredness. This is recognised by Louis and Harada (2012) who refer to Patty"s experimental study which supported the adoption of the student-focused model in a higher education institution in California. Patty redesigned her library lessons" instruction to reflect the shift from assessment as an end of the project activity to modelling assessment as an on-going measurement of learning in progress. What she found out was that such formative assessment aided students in making direct connection between how well they were working and how much they were learning.

Student-centeredness would also entail making students aware of the intended learning and assessment outcomes. Marriot (2009) acknowledges the power of effective assessment in the teaching and learning process. The author shows that assessment practices have a fundamental effect on students" learning provided such a student is focused on the learning goals and receives feedback on his/her performance that is timely and meaningful. Marriot (2009) adds that such practices provide performance indicators not only for students, but also members of staff as they (assessment practices) serve purposes of evaluation, feedback and motivation. From Marriot"s (2009) argument, two major issues can be identified: aligning students with teaching goals and feedback as conditions to be satisfied if assessment is to enhance learning. Doyle, FitzPatrick, Genge, & Hawboldt (2015) identifies „alignment" as the basic requirement for establishing a connection between outcomes and assessment claiming that it can improve the quality of education system. According to the authors, alignment is all about the degree to which expectations and assessments are in agreement and serve in conjunction with one another to guide the system toward students learning what is expected. Alignment is therefore important for the students by clearly defining the teaching objectives, assessment and the anticipated outcomes. It is an assumption, therefore, that if students are made aware of the objectives and anticipated outcomes, they will then focus on achievement.

As an important feature of alignment, feedback plays an extraordinary role that should not be overlooked. Bransford, Brown and Cocking (2000) consider it as the key issue in student development as long as it is well administered. They note, for example, that

instructor feedback grades on worksheets, examinations and tests more often represent summative assessment intended to measure learning results. As students receive grades, they usually choose to focus on a new topic to work harder for another set of grades. Bransford, Brown and Cocking (2000) advise that feedback would be more valuable if an opportunity is given to students to use it in revising their thinking as they work. Therefore feedback is positive and constructive when students make meaning of it and it is more effective when formative assessment is adopted.

There are other strategies which look beyond alignment which emphasises on making students aware of assessment goals and feedback. For example, as a way of using assessment as a teaching tool, Wilson and Scalisep (2006) suggest an „embedded strategy" – a wide-ranging and integrated system used to asses, interpret, monitor and respond to students" performance that was adopted by the University of California. They argue that within the system, assessment activities are embedded or turn out to be part of the class teaching activities. There are, however, circumstances which can help make them applicable, which means that such activities are not all the times embedded. Avargil and Dori (2014), for example, show that assessment activities can be considered embedded only if students are provided with an opportunity to reflect on their learning through timely and immediate feedback. The latter would enable them establish a connection between their current knowledge and what they are expected to know. This means that when assessment activities are embedded, students are able to acquire elevated knowledge which yields improved learning outcomes.

Assessment is therefore an important teaching tool that instructors embark on to help students construct knowledge. As noted, assessment would be more constructive and positive if formative assessment is increased and feedback is timely.

2.4.2 Assessment and student learning

Assessment takes a reasonable amount of time, effort and resources. Students apportion their valuable time and usually focus on only what they think is likely to be

assessed or from which they trust they can get good grades (Gibbs, 2006). Assessment takes up a key position in the students" academic experience, and, according to Marriot (2009), it enables a student to perceive the beneficial impact on learning, motivation and engagement.

Assessment has gradually become a significantly highlighted topic in the scholarship of learning (Frost et. al, 2012). In fact, Corbett and Kasonga (2008) view it as a learning approach which is critical in determining a student"s success as far as educational goals are concerned. As they pursue their higher education, students" attitudes and strategies of learning consciously or subconsciously vary in order to cope with the system of assessment at hand (Yorke, 2006). They adopt learning approaches in their attempt to accomplish specific learning tasks. Two general approaches to learning through assessment can be identified: surface or rote and deep learning (Yorke, 2006).

Yorke"s (2006) argument is that students adopt surface learning for a more peripheral component. They have an extrinsic aim of carrying out the given task for specific external achievements instead of the current task itself. Such students seek to avoid failure by investing minimum efforts. Donnison and Penn-Edwards (2012) argue that surface learning is characterised by rote learning which is all about reproduction of content. In achieving this, students do a lot of memorising of what they perceive to be most significant. Therefore, the surface leaners" focus is on isolated facts whose relationships they fail to see. Surface learning is thus used purposely to reproduce content and not to understand it. Surface learning is also about absorbing information without the intention of processing it mentally. The sole motive of a surface learner is to meet the requirements of externally imposed tasks such as examinations, since achievement is arguably the major goal of the majority of students (Troskie-de Bruin & Otto, 2004).What we have to be sceptical about is whether surface learning is a student"s choice or it is just an issue of limited capability. In this case the alignment strategy as suggested earlier by Doyle *et al.* (2015) would assist students in understanding the motives behind assessment thereby adopt deep learning.

Deep learning is an alternative approach to surface learning. In deep learning, students have an intrinsic inspiration grounded on interest in the task. According to Yorke (2006), deep learners adopt the approach to parts of the study programme they identify as vital for future employment. A major characteristic of deep learning is that students are motivated to understand fundamental principles, search for meaning, and identify relationships between particular concepts and ideas (Kreber, 2003).The strategies adopted by a deep learner are task-specific and the learner"s target is to seek as well as understand the meaning of what is being studied or learnt. Such students do not only relate the different pieces information with one another, but also relate them to their earlier personal and learning experiences. However, in Birenbaum"s (2002) view, assessment has over the past few decades been administered as a process that does not only aim at determining how far a student has learned but regarded as an essential element of both teaching and learning processes. This therefore suits a deep learning approach which Birenbaum (2002) describes as the new assessment culture in education. Therefore deep learning can be associated with assessment practices that are student-centred.

Although surface and deep learning appear to the predominant student learning approaches, there are also other forms. For example, Bloomfield, Emilia and Rotem, (2012) suggest an achieving approach that is based on the developing the motivation to attain relatively highly and a sense of competition. They add that students adopting the achieving approach aim at being successful by all necessary means they feel would produce the best results. However, Yorke (2003) maintains that the achieving approach would still be associated with either deep or surface learning approaches. He argues that a student may study the information systematically either by rote with an aim of getting higher scores, or to extract meaning from such content. This therefore constitutes both surface-achieving and deep-achieving approaches respectively.

In addition, as a way of catering for students" needs as far as academic achievement is concerned, an assessment strategy administered should cater for all student learning preferences whether rote or deep. On this note, formative assessment can play a crucial role as it involves feedback that equips students with valuable information

required to modify their current approaches to learning and thereby take ownership of their education (Jonn, Karp, & Baywilliams, 2010). In fact, John, Karp and BayWilliams recommend administering assessment on a daily basis as an integral part of instruction in order to inform the instructor"s decision-making regarding the next steps to be taken in the learning progression.

A study by Gilmore and Smith (2008) reveals that assessment completely dominates students" experiences. They describe how students managed to negotiate their way through the unbelievably huge curricula while trying to work out what according to the university is worthy maintaining and all that may be safely ignored. In other wards students filter out what is important in the course. Such types of students are what Aerts (2014) describes as the „cue conscious" because they concentrate on cues given by the instructor about examination and use such cues as guidelines for their learning. Gibbs and Simpson (2004) argue that students" approaches to learning are not influenced by the way they are taught but by the way they are assessed. It may therefore be quite difficult to understand all what is studied whether for deep or surface learning purposes. It may also become difficult for students who try to study everything quickly to understand and work out what to study. This implies that filtering out what is important in the course is not merely an approach, but a necessity as regards learning and assessment.

In addition, assessment makes up a critical part of student learning because students value the outcomes of different assessment activities administered while they, at the same time, work hard to score highly in their assessed work. This gives them a sense of academic achievement and in most cases they do not look beyond feedback to practical implications.

While I have so far reviewed literature on assessment in general, the different academic disciplines have different approaches to assessment and different techniques of assessment, assessment demands, and modes of accountability. An understanding of all assessment issues in all disciplines is quite impossible, but since this study is

focusing on assessment in History Education, a review of literature in that context is done in the following section.

2.5 Assessment in History Education

One on the most dominant features of History Education assessment over the preceding decades has been written assessment in form tests and examinations which Pharr & Buscemi (2005) refer to as „traditional" assessment strategies. As part of advancing to new assessment trends, traditional assessment strategies have been challenged with a view that they give an overall impression towards or at the close of the quarter, semester or term of product of students learning in the entire course (Frost et al., 2012). What has been given priority eventually is „alternative assessment" which Struyven, Dochy and Jansens (2005) describe as a process of intergrating a variety of assessment techniques that are not just tests and examinations. Therefore, since alternative assessment calls for more strategies, it is administered throughout the course and not at the end.

The implication is that alternative assessment appeals more to formative than summative assessment approaches. Frost et al. (2012) maintain that it would be more valued if historical evidence of the student learning process is gathered and analysed throughout the course so that the nature of and justifications for students" advancement in their knowledge can be determined. Frost et al. adds that such an analysis would make it possible as well to determine students" understanding of the course in terms of the content that is covered and methods that are adopted. Therefore, instructors are most likely to observe the appropriate strategies in fostering such advances in student learning and those that do not. In other words, Frost et al. (2012) recommend continuous/formative ahead of summative assessment when teaching History in higher education. If student learning is to be effective at the university, it should become a host for the theories that tell the instructor"s approach (Salvatori, 2002). Such theories can better be gathered through multiple assessment activities.

Assessment is a major issue in the scholarship of teaching and learning History as it is in other fields (Frost et al., 2012). History Education however, has got its unique nature of teaching and assessment. History Education is a discipline where undergraduate students enter contested spaces from their first day studying a subject that is as varied as the cultures that have left a trace on the planet (Frost et al., 2012). Such contested spaces are delicate and according to Pace (2011), make it difficult to develop a consensus on what constitutes evidence. Students" prior exposure, experience, and knowledge lay grounds for varied perspectives on particular historical events that they find in the university curriculum. Students also have different styles of learning, perhaps reflecting different cultural backgrounds (Maxwell, 2010). Therefore maximum care has to be taken to accommodate all styles and backgrounds and, in so doing, it would be important if instructors adopted systematic means of teaching and assessing (Pace, 2011). Besides being an fundamental aspect of higher education learning and teaching (Evans, 2002) assessment is also a core element in evaluating the validity of the students" varied claims, dealing with understanding and interpreting narratives as well as perceptions in teaching and learning History (Pace, 2011). This implies that students" exposure and backgrounds inform assessment in the History Education.

How such assessment is administered matters a lot in determining successful endeavours. Shulman"s (1998) view of opening History assessment to public scrutiny through a critical review and evaluation by members of the History Education field is one way of ensuring successful assessment. However, Pace (2011) cautions that public scrutiny is challenging because of lack of a consensus on how to assess learning of the subject. This implies that there will always be variations in understanding issues contained in the discipline, but how students are introduced to the whole system, taught and assessed in the respective contexts must be the History instructors" great concern and responsibility to make students benefit.

Over the past few decades, scholars in History Education have challenged old thoughts about assessment which Booth (1993) refers to as „traditional assessment practices" and advanced to newer concepts whereby, the assessment functions have shifted and extended beyond just grading, ranking and enabling students" academic development to

supporting students" learning (Falchikov, 2005; Frost et al., 2012). This is another outstanding feature of the paradigm shift discussed earlier on. Assessment has been used as an influential and profound technique of shaping what and how History Education students learn with innovations that give consideration to the progression rather than the product (Booth, 2003; Frost et al., 2012).

It is Drake"s (2001) view that traditional methods of assessing students" historical knowledge do not only hamper their ability to disclose how much knowledge they have about the subject, but also challenges them to seek more knowledge. Drake therefore advises that traditional methods should be supplemented by fresh assessment methods that can bolster learning and teaching the discipline of History. He adds that historical reasoning should to be upheld as the core aim of studying History and can be best achieved through alternative assessment to enhance historical literacy.

Pace (2011) acknowledges that there already is methodological diversity in History Education assessment where instructors use different techniques in handling semester assessment. Maxwell (2010) refers to this methodological diversity as diverse approaches/strategies, while Seixas (2008) describes it as multiple approaches. Methodological diversity is important as it provides students with numerous primary sources to construct an original version of a given historical event (Seixas, 2008). It is most likely to widen their scope of reasoning as it exposes them to a variety of learning and assessment experiences. The approach also equips students with diverse ideas about what undergraduate education should entail as well as providing instructors with different types of information (Maxwell, 2010). Methodological diversity is most likely to have notable implications on the conclusions that can be drawn about students" competency. Instructors are then able to demand complex cognitive processes from their students and the subjects of their inquiries are often the perspectives, perceptions, and system of power of earlier eras. Such assessment according to Cooper and Foy (1967) is done through essay examinations, short answer identification questions or multiple choice questions. All of these assessment strategies provide information about student success and thus provide information about learning.

Since different assessment approaches play different roles in students" learning, debates over the most appropriate approach are common among History Education scholars. However, there is a general view that written work is still the most heavily weighed item in History Education assessment (Maxwell, 2010). Written work in History Education may take different forms. Whether it is in the form of a students" extended written essays, research monographs or journal articles, it has always been a foundation of the assessment historical endeavour (Sundberg, 2006). However, some written assessment strategies are more preferred to others. For example, Maxwell (2010) endorses written assessment, he argues against the importance of an essay written for a History Education exam or test referring to it as a "rush job". He argues that 2, 3 or 4 essays written at a time during a 2 or 3 hour exam are not reflective examples of historical analysis. Maxwell"s argument is that a 2 to 3 hour exam confines students to only their memory or a few sources made available by the instructor. In addition, Pharr and Buscemi (2005) explain that many students fear tests and examination essays. The students may become nervous and write under pressure – which may limit them from writing to their full abilities (Maxwell, 2010). This implies that although written assessment is the most weighed item in History Education assessment, some written assessment strategies are seen as having weaknesses.

There are many other alternatives to tests and examinations. Maxwell (2010) suggests administering take-home assignments, independent research projects and writing long essays over a period of weeks or months to enhance a lengthy process of reflection. This is important because what matters in the discipline of History Education is not students" capacity to repeat events and key dates from memory, but rather their ability to think historically. It should also be considered that assessment in History Education rests on judgments that are relative not absolute (Pace, 2011).

Besides essay examinations and tests, multiple choice questions have also featured in History Education assessment. Maxwell (2010) indicates that multiple choice questions are an effective pedagogical choice when dealing with large numbers of students. Instructors also embrace them for their ability to target isolated pieces of knowledge including places, personalities, concepts, doctrines and ideologies among others. Such

skills are also crucial in enabling students to think historically because they complement skills attained from extended essay tasks. Sundberg (2006) supports this when he indicates that complementing essay writing questions with multiple choice examinations and short answer question has a positive effect on student learning. She adds that retaining factual historical knowledge is related to historical reasoning that is essential for essay writing. The ability to establish links can best be attained through the administration of a number of assessment activities regularly (Frost et al., 2012). This therefore means that while classroom examinations and tests may have weaknesses, they are also useful and therefore should be used as complimentary to other assessment techniques.

In order to accommodate diverse assessment strategies, instructors have to spread them across the course. Francis, Read and Robson (2005) reason that continuous assessment in History Education is unique as it is not only designed to simplify students" mastery of particular historical content methods and skills such as use of sources, writing proficiency and way of knowing rather than merely describing the past. Since the choices of classroom procedures and ways of assessing student learning are intimately linked, assessment should not be viewed as a means of evaluating student learning, but should serve to further learning; as part of the learning process (Drake, 2001; Pace, 2011).

It should be noted that increasing assessment tasks may make work for the students harder. Frost et al."s (2012) study revealed that persistent pressure affected the students" desire to learn while for the staff, it meant to nearly go 20% over the allocated workload for marking. Such experiences can be learned from. This would be more possible if we critically look at how students experience alternative assessment in order to draw effective planning on how to make the subject understandable (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). It is on this basis that the next sub-section will explore History Education students" experience of assessment.

2.6 Students' experiences of assessment

Assessment is an influential element on student learning. In fact, the manner in which students think about learning determines the way in which they experience the assessment tasks (Struyven, Dochy & Jansens, 2005). Furthermore, the way students experience assessment and evaluation determines the students" approach to learning. Student assessment experiences are therefore essential features of their approach to learning (Gibbs and Simpson, 2004). This can be evidenced by the results from Dochy and Gijbel"s (2006) study which found out that students who adopted a deep approach preferred assessment procedures that allowed them to demonstrate their understanding. The results further showed that students do change their approaches to learning after experiencing properly administered formative assessment. It can therefore be observed that the nature of students also has implications on their approach to learning and assessment experiences.

In relation to the above argument, the way students experience the different assessment techniques determines their approach to learning. For instance, inappropriate assessment is likely to encourage surface learning. Learning approaches are also shaped by their attitudes towards particular assessment techniques. Such an argument can be based on studies carried out on History Education students" assessment experiences. For example, students under investigation in a study conducted by Zeidner (1987) preferred essay examinations to multiple choice questions. In another study, by Traub and McRury (1990), it was discovered that from their experiences of examinations and multiple choice tests, students reported more positive attitudes towards the former than the latter. Such an experience made them prefer the multiple choice questions to constructed response types of assessment. This implies that students experience the different assessment strategies differently and they also prefer some to others. The concern of any instructor would therefore be over how to deal with the less preferred strategies.

By the time they reach higher education, students are already assumed to have been exposed to a wide range of assessment right from childhood, through their primary and

intermediate schools to high schools (Gilmore & Smith, 2008). However, some assessments may be too closely related to the learning experiences to be discernable such that some students may be unaware that they are being assessed. It is therefore important to trace how they experience such assessment and how assessment influences students in a variety of ways (Gilmore & Smith, 2008). Such experiences should be traced across all students‟ academic life and not only classroom assessment. On the same grounds, Struyven *et al*. (2005) challenge the tendency to speak of student assessment in singularities as if it were a uniform activity preferably controlled by a single agent. They add that assessment is multiple and has to relate to the whole work of teaching.

The final aspect in this section concerns attempts to conceptualise students‟ experiences of assessment. Galimore and Smith (2005) argue that assessment is better conceptualised as a process rather than an event or activity because it involves threads of activities (such as instructional activities, learning experiences and assessment preparation). Such a process involves the activities and responses, social, emotional and cognitive that students go through during assessment. It may also include the following nexus points as suggested by Galimore and Smith (2005):

- The point at which an assessment is announced/communicated
- The process of preparing for an assessment or working on an assignment
- Handing in the assignment
- Waiting for results
- Receiving the results/feedback from instructors.

Galimore and Smith‟s (2005) points are applicable in trying to understand students‟ experiences of assessment. Such experiences of assessment can be better understood when assessment is looked at from the student‟s perspective (Brown & Hirschfeeld, 2008).

From Galimore and Smith‟s (2005) model, it is clear that some stages do not entail actual physical activity. For example, the point at which the assessment is

communicated has little to do with much physical activity, although there will be mental activity. However, there is physical activity at the stage of preparation for or working on the assessment. Preparation would involve consultation, looking for sources and study material and actually attempting the assignment. After attempting, assessment takes place which is followed by a moment when students are waiting for feedback until when they get it.

Of the issues identified above, feedback is the most outstanding feature considering its power to influence learning both positively and negatively (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Indeed, effective use of the feedback places the student in a better position as he/she is challenged to self-adjust in his/her academic endeavours. The student is therefore in a position to identify where he/she experiences academic weaknesses and choose where to put more effort and what to maintain. Feedback is to be discussed in the next sub-section, based on the fact that it is identified as a crucial aspect of assessment.

2.6.1 Students' experiences of feedback

Feedback is one of the most important elements of assessment in higher education, even for History Education students. It is the key factor in improving students" learning because when effectively used, it encourages mindfulness in students" responses to feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Feedback can be viewed as the information a student receives and uses to approve, overwrite, supplement to, or streamline information that is in memory. Such information is provided by an agent (who may be an instructor, parent, peer, book, experience or self) regarding one"s understanding or performance (Hattie & Timperley, 2007). Therefore, feedback is a consequence of performance. It is also part and parcel of assessment without which it (assessment) seems incomplete.

Just as is the nature of most phenomena, there are variations in feedback, meaning that not all feedback is beneficial at all times and to all students. It is therefore imperative to contemplate on what to consider as effective feedback. To Hattie and Timperley (2007),

feedback can be effective when it focuses on a particular task and how to do it, when it addresses the students" intended goals or when it addresses the processes necessary for task completion. According to Gilmore and Smith (2007), effective feedback can be measured by its effect on students" performance and how the instructors perceive it. However, they emphasise that feedback will be effective only when it becomes basically beneficial to the students. Still, it is important to consider feedback to be effective if it goes beyond just looking at students" academic performance. Improvement in students" performance should be beyond the scores and what instructors observe in just a particular activity. A study by Lipnevich and Smith (2009) concludes that feedback is effective when it comprises a detailed description specific to individual work together with grades and praise. It should also be noted that grades and praise can complicate patterns of benefit. However Lipnevich and Smith"s (2009) argument only applies to feedback from formative assessment activities and ignores the fact that grades and praises may bring satisfaction to students who value the grades and get motivated to take their academic work more seriously.

In support of the above argument, QAA (2009) showed that all students regardless of their age require similar assistance, applause and rewards related to the recognition of competence alongside the provision of appropriate approaches to developing critical evaluation. Therefore it is not just about giving feedback, but the approach, timing and appropriateness of the feedback to the assessment activity administered. Students benefit more from feedback if the information it is providing is specifically relates to the task or learning process that fills a gap between what the students currently understand and what they are yet to understand (QAA, 2009).This implies that not all feedback is good, but what matters is how it is administered that makes it beneficial to students.

Students" experiences of feedback may vary, but what is important is how they benefit from the whole process. Assessment feedback is vital for promoting learning and motivating students to improve by extending, refining and deepening their understanding to reach more sophisticated levels of expertise. It also facilitates reflection and self-evaluation by helping them challenge their own mistaken conceptions and move to higher understanding (Case, 2007). Therefore, there is great need for an

instructor to provide forms of feedback that will maintain students" active commitment to learning and its progress (Cowie, 2005). Cowie"s study further demonstrates that students curiously want information that indicates whether their ideas are right or wrong. They also want their instructors to explain why their work may not be excellent or just good, and the instructors should instruct and assess in a language that all understand. Finally they expect personalised feedback and suggestions from their instructor about where to next.

Another important aspect regarding students" experiences of feedback is how it influences their attitude towards assessment and the whole learning process. Effective feedback can shape students" attitudes thereby greatly influencing their academic endeavours. A study carried out by Baker, Moni and van Kraayenoord (2002) revealed that the attitudes that students had towards assessment feedback affected their engagement levels in further assessment and the significance they subsequently attach on the assessment tasks and methods. The attitudes that the students had towards assessment were determined by their prior experiences of assessment, their individual abilities, confidence, and the nature of assessment tasks given. Therefore the first tasks set by the instructor and the feedback for the activities assessed is very important as regards the development of students" confidence and motivation.

The above argument shows that while instructors are instrumental in effecting learning and teaching, students are also important and must be put into consideration when administering an assessment task. While engaging with assessment, they actively construct knowledge through prior and current experiences and their interactions with one another. Therefore ignoring the power of students in the whole process regarding their experiences, perceptions and understanding of assessment activities may hamper the effectiveness of assessment. This makes it imperative to involve students as active participants in the process of learning teaching and assessment, a phenomenon which the next section deals with.

2.6.2 Students' experiences as active participants in higher education assessment

Being at the core of learning and assessment, students" involvement is crucial and likely to produce positive results in terms of academic achievement. Such a notion is not only recognised by scholars and instructors, but also students themselves. For example, from her study about student commentaries on assessment, Cowie (2005) concludes that students take themselves to be full-time participants in all classroom assessment activities and that their participation has multiple and often competing cognitive, social and affective consequences and purposes. Students" understanding of the assessment and learning aims as well as the criteria for success influence their performance and academic achievement (Timperly & Parr, 2005). The core argument here is that such a success is not a matter of student ability, but rather their understanding of what they are supposed to be learning and the associated success criteria. Timperley and Parr"s study confirms this by claiming that students improved when let into the secrets of success.

Much as the students" involvement may be crucial, it must be moderated and guided by the instructor. This implies that the instructor"s ability and nature of interaction should not be underestimated. On the contrary, Gilmore and Smith (2005) are concerned with the instructor"s ability to engage in solid assessment behaviour and what might influence that behaviour. They argue that the teaching materials available in some higher education institutions lack the forms of systematic and sensitive assessment that both instructors and students need to spark and make visible student thinking. Instructors in this case need to recognise the details of student progress in order to inform subsequent action. Therefore on top of the instructors" ability to devise, administer and mark assessments, their ability to effectively incorporate them in broader assessment processes need more attention. Equally important is an understanding of how students experience different assessment techniques.

2.6.3 Students' experiences of alternative assessment

As discussed earlier in this chapter, alternative assessment has become the most appreciated form of assessment in History Education. It is important to have a sense of how students experience such new trends. Some students perceive traditional assessment tasks as irrelevant, which is enough to hamper effective learning since students will now aim at learning purposely in preparation for specific assessment and not intending to maintain the knowledge in any long term way (Struyven, Dochy, & Jansens, 2005). The foregoing authors add that traditional assessment is not suitable as a measure since it only measures memory or capability to master huge amounts of detailed facts in case of essay writing. In a study carried out by Struyven et al. (2005) investigating the impact of alternative assessment in teaching and learning history, students claimed that alternative assessment was fairer because it measured relevant skills, qualities, and competencies that are significant in other settings than the immediate of assessment. In a study carried out by Janssens, Boes, and Wante (2002), students identified portfolios as the most appropriate because of the way they felt stimulated to reflect on what they studied and demonstrate their professional growth as potential instructors. The literature in this section therefore confirms that besides tests and examinations, other strategies of assessment are significant as well and therefore a favourable justification for adopting alternative assessment.

Although alternative assessment applies to all teaching and learning environments, there are circumstances where it is more appropriate than others. Mooreng and Du Toit (2013), for example, identify a multi-cultural society as one of such cases. The authors argue that an alternative approach is very important in a multi-cultural community such as South Africa because it guides learners towards critical thought, accommodating others‟ views and being tolerant and responsible. This implies that alternative assessment as adopted in the selected South African higher education institution is a suitable approach, but how History Education students experience it is a matter of concern which this research sought to investigate.

In reviewing the literature, the conceptualisation of the term assessment has been done showing how it is related to and is experienced in higher education. This set a foundation for me to present the theoretical framework underlying this study. In support of this, Lewis, Nicholls, Ormston and Ritchie (2013) showed that any researcher should depend on theory in order to proceed with carrying out a given study. The authors characterised such a relationship as a dialect. They refer to it as a transaction in which the data to be gathered is determined by theory and the findings from the research provide challenges to accepted theories. In the next section therefore, I will present the theoretical framework of the study.

2.7 Theoretical framework

This research draws on a social constructivist theory as presented by Lev Vygotsky. It is a theory that views students as active participants, constructing their historical understanding as they participate in a variety of assessment practices while interacting with others (Adams, 2006). However, in order to develop an understanding of social constructivism, it is crucial to firstly understand constructivism as a concept.

2.7.1 Constructivism

„Constructivism"" and „constructionism"" are two concepts that some scholars use interchangeably as an expression of a theory of learning and its subsequent impact on instruction (Mahoney, 2005). According to Swan (2005), constructivists hold the view that learning takes place in our minds as we create and adjust internal mental structures to accommodate our ever growing and ever changing stores of knowledge. Thus, according to constructivists, all learning is an active process and all knowledge is unique to the individual, whether acquired from lecture and text or discovered through experience. Therefore it can be observed that learning is a result of experience regardless of the circumstances under which it takes place.

Constructivism is also a theory that has inspired reforms of education system rejecting the ideas of pure scientific facts. It is an epistemology, a philosophical explanation about knowledge; specifically its nature and how students acquire it (Simpson, 2002). From a constructivist perspective therefore, knowledge is just constructed. The constructivist perspective can be seen as part of a long tradition in educational thought, but in its modern form has its basis on how people make sense of the world (Adams. 2006). Knowledge results from our experiences of life and conveying it in an exact manner (Applefield, Huber, & Moallem, 2001).

Constructivism has been among the most prominent learning theories over the preceding few decades and has presented a dramatic change in the epistemology of knowledge and learning view (Applefield et al., 2001). A simplistic version of the theory of constructivism, according to Mahoney (2005), argues that any student should build individual content with new knowledge and that information is found within those established constructs. For instance, a number of assessment tasks are administered at the university under study and many require student individual efforts, thus helping the student build individual content and knowledge. The students also construct personal realities based on individual observations of previous experiences (Applefield et al., 2001). This is relevant to my study in the sense that some assignments ask the students to give responses based on their direct life experiences, observations and feelings when writing their History essays (Frost et al., 2012). A combination of all these aspects leads to the construction of new knowledge as students process all the information historically. Thus each student"s knowledge is a function of his/her previous life experiences putting into consideration how they are perceived and organised. The ability to independently make such interpretations symbolises a development in historical thinking and historical literacy.

Within a constructivist view, having a student as an active role player is the overriding goal. The student"s existing knowledge structures and beliefs support or militate against new learning (Shepard, 2000). In order to construct meaning, the student should actively endeavour to make sense of their new experiences and in the process, they should relate such experiences to the knowledge they already have of a particular

theme (Applefield et al., 2001). The students do not acquire knowledge through passive reception of instruction but through a process of active construction, and therefore in the classroom situation, learning is an active student-centred process (Chrenka, 2001). It would be the expectation, therefore in the case of this study, that the History Education students would experience a student-centred assessment through different strategies leading to growth in their knowledge.

If students must build their own understandings, then the nature of the instruction and support that they receive is of major significance (Applefied et al., 2001). It is important to put emphasis on the connectedness in knowledge acquisition as students are provided with opportunities to engage in authentic activities, search for patterns, identify concepts, and construct and develop their own models and strategies (Simpson, 2002). In the case of History Education, the students would be provided with opportunities to think historically as they deal with historical concepts, develop the ability to make moral judgements and deal with controversial issues in History. Bruner (1996) echoes this when he argues that the student‟s understanding is represented by the ability to make sense of the knowledge that is newly-constructed and establish a connection between this knowledge with what had been understood previously.

Proponents of constructivism discard the historic philosophy of instruction which assumes that meaning can be passed on to the students through transmission and symbols (Frosnot, 2005). This represents a turn away from the traditional approaches of instruction that involved transmission in a top-bottom strategy to strategies that proceed from a natural need to develop skills and an understanding that is required to complete major tasks (Applefield et al., 2001). Frosnot (2005) supports this by showing that constructivism is a non-positivist phenomenon that positions itself on new ground regularly in direct conflict with behaviourism and maturation rather than skills and behaviours as instructional goals. Therefore constructivist assessment would also entail the paradigm shift from traditional approaches as explained earlier in this chapter.

Still from the literature, Harada (2012) observes that assessment is more constructive through a move from instructor-based to a student-centred teaching approach where

more work is left to be accomplished by the student. In addition, Galimore and Smith"s (2005) model explained earlier shows that classroom activities like tests, examinations and seminar presentations require adequate preparations prior to the final event itself. The student does such preparation individually and then later gets correcting and guiding feedback from the instructor or examiner. What should be noted is that constructivism does not downplay the role of the instructor; it instead agitates for giving the room for self-discovery and knowledge construction with the instructor"s guidance.

Constructivists also recognise the possibility of constructing the world in many different ways. Thus, a single and universally accepted way of understanding constructivism does not exist because as one scholar"s view differs from the other"s (Simpson, 2002). According Baker, McGaw and Peterson (2007), although all constructivists agree on the fact that knowledge is constructed, they disagree on how it is constructed. This introduces us to different forms of constructivist theories and these are broadly represented by two types, that is cognitive constructivism (masterminded by Piaget) and social constructivism (masterminded by Vygotsky). Before we discuss social constructivism which is the theory within which this study is framed, it is also important to have a brief insight into cognitive constructivism.

2.7.1.1 Cognitive Constructivism

Cognitive constructivism as a theory is centred on the philosophical works of Swiss psychologist Jean Piaget who emphasised that all of our knowledge is a personal construction (Taber, 2011). Cognitive constructivism is all about a process of constructing mental structures rather than just reproducing products at hand (Iran-Nejad, 2001). Piaget"s core focus of constructivism is on the individual particularly and how he/she is able to construct his/her knowledge (Katherine & Kalina, 2009). Iran-Nejad (2001) further argues that in cognitive constructivism the student"s mind is assumed to be self-organised by continuous antagonism between internal and subjective mental state against external reality. Therefore, the knowledge known by organisms is not just acquired, but is self-created.

Piaget"s core theoretical assumption of cognitive constructivism represents students as active thinkers who cannot just be given information that they immediately understand and use; instead they construct their own knowledge (Ultanir, 2012). Therefore argument students do not necessarily wait to be provided with information in order to possess knowledge. They actively construct individual knowledge which comprises of an integration of new experiences with prior understandings (Katherine & Kalina, 2009).

The above illustration implies that cognitive construction of knowledge is not an event, but a process that gradually drives the student towards reality. On this issue, Iran-Nijad (2001) argues that as humans grow, a relationship between individual construction of reality and actual reality advances to a level that distinguishes between subjective and objective experiences. They eventually attain the capability to deal with the nature of physical relationships to form an objective interpretation which is reliably refined by one"s experience.

Iran-Nejad"s argument corresponds with Piaget"s model of development through ages and stages in which the level of cognitive construction of knowledge advances to higher levels as children grow. Piaget (1950) claims that, students engage in various thinking styles while going through the different developmental stages. This is an indication that their learning is not through practicing adult knowledge. Jean Piaget adds that knowledge develops through a process that advances as students turn away from prior thinking modes to adopt new ones. The intellectual development is a result of students" attempts to solve problems which eventually enables them to constantly reconstruct external knowledge based on individual experience.

As children"s knowledge develops through ages and stages, two processes – assimilation and accommodation – are at play. Katherine and Kalina (2009) show how children"s schemas (thinking) are constructed through processes of assimilation and accommodation. According to Katherine and Kalina students go through the two processes while searching for knowledge balance or equilibration. Piaget (1953) describes assimilation as a process during which students take in new information to their individual schemas while accommodation is about their ability to change their

schemas in order to provide accommodation for their new knowledge. Such an adjustment process encapsulates the cognitive constructivist learning process.

Cognitive constructivism is viewed differently by different psychologists although they all do not deviate from the core assumption of Piaget‟s model. For example, Immanuel Kant (1724-1804), a prominent epistemologist who some consider to be the first in presenting constructivist ideas, clearly indicated that the mind as an organ, is always active in transforming the entire chaos of human experience into an arranged thought (Pritchard & Woollard, 2010). It is worth noting therefore that some of the ideas promulgated by Kant influenced Piaget‟s thoughts on constructivist learning. Immanuel Kant‟s description of the mind is a clear implication that one‟s mental effort is entirely directed interpreting one‟s experiences along the journey of life as well as constructing an understanding of the varied life experiences (Pritchard & Woollard, 2010). There is evidence that although Kant is a celebrated cognitive constructivist, there were hints of social constructivism in some of his ideas.

Kant‟s ideas correspond with the thoughts of other constructivists into part of a relatively wide constructivist school of thought. A good example is Hans Vaihinger (1852-1933), another German psychologist best known as „Kant‟s son‟. Loewenberg (1912) is also of the view that the mental processes and the mind serve the purpose of supporting individuals on their passages through varied circumstances in life but not in reflecting reality. Vaihinger‟s thoughts also influenced the works of an American personality theorist Kelly (1905-1967) who is at the same time known to be the mastermind behind cognitive clinical psychology through his theory of personality (Ryckman, 2013). Kelly (1963) suggests that human beings live in two essential worlds. One of them is existent out of an individual human understanding while the other is centred on how we actually make meaning of our primary world. This, according to Kelly is an individual effort in form of representations or constructs. Therefore, Kelly‟s theory corresponds with the other cognitive theorists discussed above on the issue of assimilation and accommodation.

The cognitive constructivist theory therefore indicates that the mind is the most active organ in knowledge construction. However, other aspects like experience, interaction, society are equally important because they bring the knowledge closer for cognitive processing thereby leading to knowledge construction. In that sense, some theorists embark on the world outside human understanding to enhance knowledge construction and they present this through the social constructivist theory.

2.7.1.2 Social Constructivism

Social constructivism presents knowledge development as a social process where interaction is an important and critical ingredient for learning to take place (Taber, 2011). The theory has Russian psychologist Lev Vygotsky (1896-1934) as the founding father, whose work has continued to have an influence on learning and development theories (Driscoll, 2005). Unlike cognitive constructivism which considers the mind as the most active organ in knowledge construction, Vygotsky‟s social constructivist theory forwards that the individual‟s development stems from several sources such as culture and communication with others. Therefore, within the circles of social constructivism, great emphasis is placed on the significance of social context. This means that the knowledge that students construct is partly influenced by their lived experiences of assessment activities such as seminar presentations and classroom debates. It is for this reason that scholars such as Katherine and Kalina (2009) regard the social constructivist theory as the most effective approach to teaching and learning in terms of benefiting students.

Social constructivism assumes that the student comes to knowledge by recognising the meaning of what is found in the environment. As a result, the object or event in the environment is assumed to have some inherent meaning which the student is able to identify and so add to their store of knowledge around the universe (Taber, 2011). This implies that perception is about recognising the inherent meaning of what is experienced. The process by which we come to experience our environments are

processes of interpretation and therefore one has to actively construct expressive interpretation of all that he/she observes, hears or experiences.

The social constructivist model of teaching and learning identifies the students" role as one of „building and transforming knowledge" (Applefield, Huber & Moallem, 2001, p. 3). An individual student constructs his own understanding of the world he/she lives in through the process of thinking that is based on what one observes or experiences (Pritchard & Woollard, 2010). The role of the student is relevant to this study in that the processes that the students experience can be revealed. Different assessment activities imply different experiences and all these experiences leave the student with more rounded constructed knowledge. Pritchard & Woollard, (2010) refer to Bruner"s argument that instructors must only guide students and give them a chance to transform the information they learn into a format appropriate to their current state of understanding. So through assignments, take-home essays and research projects, students are able to select information and construct hypotheses which they integrate into the existing knowledge and mental constructs which leave them transformed.

Learning in the social constructivist theory can be effected through a variety and combination of elements. Teague (2000) identified two major elements of social factors which affect the progress and the extent to which learning takes place: first, are the systems that students garner from their cultures like the language which develops throughout life. Secondly is the student"s social interaction with more knowledgeable others. Teague argues (2000) that language is always a flexible determinant of the exact meaning of the participants" actions while cultures are influential in social interaction because they place on the participants differing values and beliefs. As they socially interact with people especially adults, students develop skills of thinking which implies that social interaction is a significant feature of constructive learning (Katherine & Kalina, 2009). This confirms Pitchard & Woollard"s (2010) argument that construction of knowledge is effected by students, but not imposed by the instructor.

Vygotsky"s theory of social constructivism recognises the significance of context and environment under which learners learn. Lianrui and Wilson (2007) entrust the

responsibility of setting up such an enabling environment to the instructors. They advise that such an environment should exploit different learning purposes. According to Pitchard and Woollard (2010), learning and knowledge are social phenomena only that the former is a process and the latter is the product. They add that meaning and understanding are results of an agreement met by social partners enhanced by their interaction socially. Such an interaction must be enhanced by an appropriate medium adopted and the language assumptions. This means that issues of diversity should always be considered if all students are to be brought to a common learning ground through interaction and dialogue.

Understanding students" backgrounds would provide a good ground on how to effect such a dialogue in a class of diverse students. Katherine and Kalina (2009) recommend that instructors should recognise the diversity of their classes and embrace their differences in the process. The authors show how dialogue over the learning material should be promoted to facilitate students thinking critically about what they are learning which enables them to walk away with personal meaning that is socially constructed. Regarding diversity, Kozulin (2003) advises that students must interact socially not only among their peers, but also with instructors and other adults. However, Kozulin adds that for communication to effectively occur, all participants must be on the same ground, meaning that the instructor should try to communicate at the level of the student. This brings Kozulin (2003) in agreement with Teague (2000) over the importance of language usage as a process in the constructivist classroom. Therefore, students should be communicated to within a language that they all understand. At the same time, all students must be given the same rubric to any assessment task outlining the requirement and measure for all responses. They must all be given the same time to handle the assessment tasks and the same reading materials. To emphasise this, Vygotsky claims that, „language is a correlative of consciousness but not a correlative of thought" (Kozulin, 2003). This may be based on the assumption that the work of consciousness with meaning may lead to the generation of sense, and eventually consciousness will acquire a sensible and meaningful structure.

A critically important feature of Vygotsky"s theory is the notion that one"s potential in knowledge construction is dependent upon the transition across what he calls the Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) (Pitchard & Woollard, 2010). ZPD is considered to be a principal feature regarding student-centred and constructive learning and assessment. For this reason, I chose to focus on it as a conceptual model for this study. It would therefore be essential to have a detailed understanding of the ZPD and this is to be discussed in the following sub-section.

2.7.1.2.1 The Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD)

The ZPD refers to that gap between the knowledge that the student already possesses (actual level of development) and the knowledge she/he is likely to acquire when offered academic support and assistance (potential development) (Coffey, 2009). In other words, Pitchard and Woollard (2010) look at it as a notional area of understanding which is close to but slightly beyond the student"s current understanding level. Similarly, Bruner (1983), who is an also American psychologist, described the ZPD as the student"s capability to identify the significance of the hinges and props before even they internalise their full significance. All these understandings complement each other. However, what is evident is that the ZPD describes those functions that have not matured yet but are still in their embryonic state of the maturation process. It can be observed that all these descriptions of the ZPD relate to the fact that students should be assisted to move into this new zone if their progress is to be attained. Eventually they can be helped to move into a higher ZPD.

For the student to grow in their ZPD there must be a correspondence with other people who are more knowledgeable. This implies interaction between the student, the instructor, peers and/or other adults (Katherine & Kalina, 2010). In the process, the responsibility rests upon the instructor to set the interaction mode and organise instruction into small steps centred on tasks that a student is at the moment capable of accomplishing individually. This instructional approach in which the instructor is as well responsible for supporting until such a level where the student can independently

accomplish the tasks is referred to as scaffolding (Coffey, 2009). Students need careful guidance from a more knowledgeable other if such an instructional strategy is to effectively help them to socially construct knowledge. On this issue, Coffey (2009) suggested that in order for an instructor to give proper guidance to students through tasks related to learning a particular concept, they need to first recognise how mental activities and tasks suit the cultural activities of a student. Coffey adds that instruction should also emphasise connections between such activities and what the student is already conversant with in other familiar everyday contexts. It should be borne in mind that it may not be easy to recognise where the student is within their ZPD. This is why interaction or dialogue with students should always be encouraged. Berger (2009) states that dialogue can be through asking questions, assigning assessment tasks and, from their responses, recognising the individual learning styles.

From Vygotsky"s (1978) social constructivist theory, the ZPD equips psychologists and instructors with a tool through which they can understand students" internal courses of development. It therefore becomes possible not to just identify processes and cycles of maturation that students have already completed, but also those that are currently in the state of formation, development and maturity. In this way, the ZPD enables us to define not only the immediate future of the student, but also his/her dynamic developmental state. Such cycles of maturation are what Vygotsky referred to as maturing functions (Seth, 2003). The maturing functions are those foundations of change in the internal structure of a given age period. Therefore assessment actions should aim at identifying the student"s current status of such maturing functions (Seth, 2003). In addition, due to the inadequacies in these functions for independent performance, it is essential to identify them through dynamic interactive procedures which provide signals for estimating the extent of the development. Therefore, in this study, the different assessment techniques administered at the university can be seen as one of the identified procedures for estimating the students" extent of development.

Thus ZPD is of great significance in social constructivism as it makes it possible for instructors, parents and the community to define the students" needs as well as the shifting developmental status. This greatly allows for what is previously achieved

developmentally and for what the student is likely to master in the coming future. This model is relevant for this study because the students experience assessment which is meant to make them progress within their ZPD or progress to the next ZPD.

2.8 Conclusion

In this chapter, I have reviewed scholarly work across all disciplines based on the assumption that most students" experiences of assessment in other disciplines also apply to History Education. The literature has acknowledged the power of assessment especially the formative approach in enhancing higher education students" academic achievement. Students have been found to be at a core position in the teaching, learning and assessment processes, but their voice is greatly ignored. Most of the arguments are based on researchers, scholars and instructors" interpretations and observations. It has been found significant to put students" experiences of all these issues into consideration thus demonstrating the need for this study.

The chapter has also revealed the necessity for having a theory on which any study should be based. As a qualitative research within an interpretivist paradigm, the study largely relates to construction of knowledge and therefore adopted a social constructivist theory as presented by Vygotsky. The theory was adopted because it views students as active participants in constructing their historical understanding while participating in a variety of assessment practices and at the same time interacting with others. Within social constructivism, Vygotsky emphasises paying attention to the students" ZPD, making this model crucial in this study. The following chapter presents the research design and methodology of this study.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

3.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I have reviewed relevant literature and presented the theoretical framework of the study. In this chapter, I will explain the research design and methodology that steered the study. According to Clark and Creswell (2010), research can be defined as a procedure followed in the collection and analysis of information with the intention of obtaining knowledge. The researcher obtains such knowledge by making use of scientifically acceptable methods to investigate issues in order to make trustworthy conclusions. To show how systematic my research was, I will elaborate on aspects such as the research approach, research paradigm, the study sample, data gathering, and data analysis methods. I will also address issues of trustworthiness and research ethics.

3.2 Qualitative research approach

This study adopted the qualitative research approach that concerns itself with developing explanations of social phenomenon as they occur naturally (Lweis, et, al., 2013). The qualitative research approach aims at deeply understanding the social and human behaviour and the justifications for such behaviour (Hoy, 2010). Data gathered in qualitative research is rich, descriptive and focuses on individuals" or group"s views, and constructs meaning from their lived experiences (Nieuwenhuis, 2007). Qualitative research concerns itself with questions of „what", „why", and „how" rather than „how many" (Lewis et al. 2013). This implies that any qualitative research should not produce findings are arrived at through means of quantification as the case would be with quantitative research, but by understanding through exploring the patterns of behaviour. The approach is associated with specific kinds of data usually involving words and images rather than numbers (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). They are essentially human activities and attributes such as ideas, customs and beliefs that are investigated and

interpreted, but not be dispassionately measured in a standard way (Walliman, 2011). Therefore, considering the theory adopted for this study and the research question, this qualitative approach is certainly the most suitable, because it allows an in-depth understanding of how History Education students experience History Education assessment. I collected qualitative and descriptive data through organised conversations in form of interviews that enabled me understand and explain the phenomenon as it occurs in its real context. In this study, context is a very specific higher education institution.

3.3 Interpretivist paradigm

This research was conducted within the interpretivist paradigm. According to TerreBlanche and Kelly (2002) this paradigm allows me to interact closely with respondents, and this is how I managed to gain insight and form a clear understanding of respondents" experiences of assessment techniques. In addition, the interpretivist paradigm suits this particular study because it lends itself to the qualitative approach. It seeks meaning by exploring and analysing (Schwandt, 2001). The link between the qualitative approach and the interpretivist paradigm is also highlighted by Nieuwenhuis (2007), who suggested that analysing qualitative data is commonly based on interpretive philosophy whose is aim is to examine meaningful and symbolic content of qualitative type of data. In fact, Evert (2003) argues that while the interpretivist paradigm is the most suitable for qualitative research, quantitative researchers need it as well. This position is based on his argument that all research is interpretive because the approach is not tied to an objective or inter-subjectively accepted procedure, and also rests inside each researcher as an individual professional scholar. Therefore, whether data is presented numerically or not, it is eventually analysed and interpreted. However, Evert"s argument goes contrary to Terre Blanche and Kelly (2002) who do not establish any association of the interpretive paradigm beyond the qualitative approach. They submit that interpretivist researchers do not describe or interpret people"s feelings and experiences through quantification and measurement, but rather in human terms. Such an argument associates the interpretivist paradigm with a humanistic approach where the essence of the term interpretation denotes an emphasis on the importance of

interpretations of human meaning (Bakker, 2010). In the case of this study, interpretivism as a paradigm corresponds with the qualitative and not the quantitative research approach.

The interpretivist paradigm focuses on meanings that are attributed to people or groups of people, selected events, artefacts, places, behaviours and interactions (Schensul & Given, 2008). Nieuwenhius (2007) is of the view that the paradigm works on an assumption that people"s subjective experiences are real should therefore be taken seriously. In addition, interacting with, as well as listening to, such people would be the best way to understand such experiences. The paradigm tries to establish the meaning selected respondents make of a particular phenomenon by analysing their knowledge, feelings, attitudes, experiences, understanding, and values while attempting to estimate their construction of the phenomenon (Nieuwenhius, 2007). Therefore there is sufficient literature to support my positioning in this research as an interpretivist.

This choice of paradigm and approach was further informed by the ontological and epistemological assumptions that I made. Researchers are concerned about how we come to acquire the knowledge we have and the way reality is known. It can be deduced, therefore, that any research is based on philosophical assumptions. According to Andrews (2009), it is necessary for each researcher to not only make a clear reflection upon their own ontological and epistemological perspectives, but also to make reflections upon the ways in which the two perspectives may inform the development of suitable research paradigms. This research, being in an interpretive paradigm, was also characterised by a particular ontology and epistemology (TerreBlanche & Kelly, 2002).

The question of ontology deals with assumptions about the nature of reality (Henning, 2004). Ontology is understood as a science of being, particularly dealing with issues such as the nature of both existence and reality and with the kind of world we are investigating (Crotty, 2003). Epistemology deals with the assumptions about the way in which knowledge can be known. It is an approach to understanding and explaining how we acquire the knowledge we have by laying philosophical grounds for determining the

possible forms of knowledge and how we guarantee their legitimacy and suitability (Crotty, 2003).

In line with the above, this study assumed that knowledge and reality are socially constructed. In an attempt to establish a relationship between interpretivist and positivist approaches, Weber (1864-1920) concluded that interpretivism and constructionism are integral to the qualitative tradition (Lewis, et al., 2013). Social constructionism, therefore, works well with Vygotsky‟s theory of social constructivism as explained in the previous chapter. The assumption into this study is that History Education students construct knowledge and reality from their experiences of a variety of assessment tasks administered in History Education.

3.4 The case study design

Each and every type of research has its unique features and at the bottom of every research lays an either implicit or explicit design. A research design can be understood as any planned action for moving from here to there, where „here‟ may be described as the initial set of question/s to be investigated and answered, and „there‟ is referring to a set of conclusions (answers) about such questions (Yin, 2013). It can therefore be seen from the above that a research design refers to the process undertaken in the research process involving data gathering, data interpretation and analysis and the paradigms adopted to answer the set research questions. Therefore, I intend to adhere to such a research practice by adopting a case study as the design for my study.

Any case study comprises of studying an instance in action in a confined system and it focuses on actors or group of actors and it seeking to understand the way they perceive events as shaped by organisational or institutional arrangement (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2013). It is a design used when the researcher seeks to describe or explain events, processes and perspectives as they unfold in their real life context (Rallis & Rossman, 2003; Yin, 2013). This implies that case studies are context-dependent and not generalisable because no two cases are exactly alike (Rallis & Rossman, 2003). In

this research, I focused on students form one higher education institution of with no intentions to generalise the findings. There is, however, an allowance for a case study to generalise, but this should be within the related units of analysis. According to Nieuwenhius (2007), the unit of analysis is a key element in case study research. In this study, the unit of analysis are the History Education students and the focus is on their experiences of the assessment strategies.

However, there is a caution that case studies should not only be described by their boundedness to the unit of analysis of the selected topic. Henning (2004) and Nieuwenhuis (2007) show that case studies can also be defined by methodology. Furthermore, Cohen, et al. (2000) indicate that interpretivism is a traditional associate of case study research while Nieuwenhuis (2007) and Yin (2013) confirm that data gathered in case studies is largely qualitative. Therefore, the case study research design is suitable for this study because of these three features: it is qualitative, it is in the interpretivist paradigm and is framed within the theory of social constructivism. In addition to that, the nature of the research question behind this research is enough to grant it the status of a case study.

Another justification for applying a case study research design has to do with the audience of this research. Such an argument is based on the notion that a case study would also serve multiple audiences (Cohen et al., 2013). In this case therefore, it involves anyone interested in the fields of History Education assessment and generally all stakeholders in higher education assessment. The case study research design was also influenced by many other choices that I made such as the approach, paradigm, ontology and epistemology.

3.5 Research methodology

It is important to present an understanding of what research methodology refers to in this study. Crotty (2003) defines a methodology as a strategy set for any action behind the choice and use of specific research methods and their link to desired outcomes. It is

a systematic way to solving a research problem (Hoy, 2010). In the same vein, Henning (2004)"s describes methodology as a logical group of methods complementing one another with the ability to generate and deliver the findings that will suit the researcher"s purpose of a given study and provide suitable responses to the research question. This is an implication that the research methodology informs the methods to be used in carrying out the study. Methods are techniques or various procedures used in research (Chinnathambi, Philominathan & Rajasekar, 2006). These include the research sample, and the data gathering and analysis techniques. The following sub-sections will describe in detail the methods and the tools of data gathering as well as the rationale for such choices.

3.5.1 Research sample

Sampling is described as the selection of a smaller set of cases from a larger pool by the researcher (Neuman, 2006). It involves taking a proportion of a population and considering it representative of the population (De Vos, Strydom, Fouche, & Delport, 2002). Selection of a sample can either be random or non-random i.e. probability or non-probability sampling respectively (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). De Vos, et al. (2002) assert that in probability sampling, all individuals in the target population have the same known probability of being selected, while with non-probability sampling, chances of selecting a person are unknown since the researcher is not certain about the size of the popuation. But when the research aims at generalising from a specific sample to a bigger population, then preference goes to random sampling methods (Christensen, Johnson & Turner, 2011). The reason behind such a preference is because random samples produce only representative samples. However, when the aim is to study the phenomenon and interprete results in their specific context, then non random sampling is adopted. This implies that the researcher"s concern is to provide a detailed and a thickly descriptive analysis within the confines of the selected unit of analysis.

 Regarding sampling, De Vos et. al (2002) suggest that interpretive and qualitative research typically does not use random sampling methods, but uses various types of

non-random sampling such as purposive sampling, quota sampling, dimesnional sampling, target sampling. As a researcher in a qualitative and intepretive paradigm, I focused this study on generating rich qualitative data which would present thick descriptions of the students" experiences of History Education assessment. This made non-random sampling an appropriate choice because it did not require generalisation beyond the sample in question (Newman, 2000).

The selection was deliberate in that the institution that I targeted for this study was where I, as the researcher, was pursuing my Masters degree in History Education and at the same time serving as a contract staff member – lecturing in one of the History Education modules. Therefore, I found it convenient to carry out a study from an institution whose assessment system I was familiar with. Being exposed to assessment strategies used at postgraduate level, I found it imperative to seek an understanding of how assessment is experienced at an undergraduate level. This necessitated a selection of undergraduate students from History Education. However, although it was convenient for me to deal with the respondents as a member of staff, I still used purposive sampling because the selected samples served a certain purpose.

3.5.1.1 Purposive sampling

Purposive sampling is a method adopted in selecting respondents for a particular purpose. The method can only be used in exceptional circumstances where the sampling progresses with a particular purpose at the back of the mind (Maree & Pietersen, 2007). Cohen, et al. (2000, p.103) describe purposive sampling as a highly recognised characteristic of qualitative research where the researcher handpicks the cases he/she intends to involve in the sample basing on the ‚judgement of their typicality." The logic of purposive sampling in this study lies in selecting cases that are information-rich from which I could develop an understanding about History Education students" experiences of History Education assessment.

Merriam (2009) advises that in any qualitative case study (like this one), two levels of sampling are usually necessary. First, the case study to be studied should be selected, and for this study, I selected a higher education institution. The second level is a sample within the case, that is 3rd year History Education students. 10 respondents in total were selected to take part based on the assumption that their three years of experience in History Education assessment put them in a position to provide rich and trustworthy data. However, only eight out of ten turned up and I considered not looking for more respondents since out of the entire sample group (3rd year History) the 10 were the only ones who had shown interest in participating when I contacted them to seek their consent prior to the data gathering process. Although the sample ended up being smaller than expected, my data gathering method and tools (to be discussed later) allowed an in-depth questioning and extension of the research through interpretation.

3.5.1.2 Gaining access to respondents

I considered the gaining of access to respondents as one of the crucial aspects of purposive sampling. I based my selection of respondents on their availability and willingness (Cohen, et al., 2000). To access respondents, I was assisted by one of the senior instructors (who happened to be, at the same time, my supervisor) to access the population from which samples were to be selected. This was done in one of the lectures in which I was introduced to my target group. I introduced the study, its purpose and significance to the respondents and the institution at large.

I informed the students that participation was voluntary and called for interested respondents to register their names and provide their contact details. Ten respondents showed interest and I considered all of them to participate. I then contacted the ten and made arrangements for interview sessions. Thereafter, I selected the respondents who were in possession of any of the assessment tasks in History Education since their first year to be part of the face-to-face interviews. I chose to focus on assessment tasks administered in the form of examinations, classroom tests, reading reports, seminar presentations, take-home tests and long essay assignments. These were to be used as

artefacts to enhance the interview process by acting as stimulus to trigger memories of the respondents" assessment experiences. Making respondents come with their own artefacts was adopted with a view that students would feel free to interact and share about their performance more through face-to-face than focus groups especially when referring to their own artefacts while exploring their experiences. In cases where respondents had one of the mentioned artefacts missing, I provided copies of such tasks obtained from instructors that had taught the History Education modules and had administered the above mentioned assessment tasks. Five respondents met this criterion and only four turned up for the interview.

The rest of the students who either did not possess such artefacts or were not willing to share their performance experiences in reference to their past papers, participated through focus group interviews. I selected five respondents for the focus group interviews and only four turned up. In all, a total of eight respondents formed the sample size of the study, four of which participated through focus group interviews (Respondents A, B, C and D) while four through face-to-face interviews (Respondents E, F, G and H).

3.5.2 Ethical considerations

Ethics simply refers to what is or not legitimate to be done, or what is involved in any moral research procedure (Mbokodi, 2008). In this respect, Neuman (2003) claims that every researcher should possess a moral and professional obligation to be ethical even in cases when the research subjects are unaware of or unconcerned about ethics. Ethics concerns doing good and avoiding harm both of which can be attained through observing the appropriate ethical principles (Orb, Eisenhauer & Wynaden, 2000). In the view of Cohen et al. (2000), numerous ethical issues entail striking a balance between two distinct values: the pursuing of scientific knowledge and observing respondents" rights. The authors add that the researcher must weigh the potential benefits like improving decision making, helping research respondents or understanding of social

life, against potential costs like loss of privacy, democratic freedom, dignity and self-esteem. I put these issues into consideration.

As per requirements, I made an application for ethical clearance which I had to obtain from the university ethics committee before the study commenced. In respect to my application, I obtained an ethical clearance confirmation with protocol reference number HSS/1005/013M (see appendix viii attached). Walliman (2011) advises social researchers to be sensitive about issues of ethical behaviour when conducting their respective studies. According to Walliman, researchers must be aware of the necessary ethical standards to be observed to avoid doing harm which might be caused by publishing or carrying out a research project. In other words, Walliman emphasises that respondents" rights have to be respected. Such rights include, among others, the right to be briefed about the research study, the right for respondent to decide whether or not to take part in a study and the right to withdrawal from the study at any time without conditions (Cohen et al., 2013). In this particular study, a written consent which described the study and its purpose was presented to and signed by the respondents before data gathering (See appendix x attached). As for the focus group interview, I gave the respondents a chance to agree and let them know of the day and time they would be freely available to conduct an interview. The same procedure applied to the respondents for the face-to-face interviews, only that in this case, each respondent made individual arrangement with me at his/her convenience.

Prior to each interview, I reminded each respondent that participation was absolutely voluntary and they were under no obligation to complete the interview should they feel uncomfortable or just wish to withdraw at any stage of the research. I also made them aware that they were not going to be compensated for their participation in the study. At the same time, I assured the respondents that the study was not in any way intending to create harm, degrade or be of any disadvantage to them. Permission was sought and granted by respondents to have their voices digitally recorded.

Another essential ethical aspect is the issue of the confidentiality. This involves protection of the identities of respondents and confidentiality of the findings (Maree &

Van der Westhuizen, 2007). In fact, Orb et al. (2000) advise that controlling the probable consequences of revealing respondents‟ identities is an ethical obligation that researchers should observe if they are to maintain the principle of beneficence. I therefore assured the respondents of confidentiality and anonymity by assuring them that their names would not be used in the transcriptions and in the report, thus protecting their privacy. While analysing, presenting and publishing the findings, codes and not names of respondents and the institution were used (Cohen et al., 2013). So instead of calling my respondents by their names I referred to them by letter that is A, B, C, D E, F, G and H. I also assured the respondents that once the research is completed, all the recorded voices and transcriptions would be safely kept in the supervisor‟s office for at least five years after which they would be destroyed (Maree & Van der Westhuizen, 2007).

3.5.3 Data gathering

In order to understand the case under investigation with intensive, holistic description and analysis, there is need to gather data in-depth and breadth (Merriam, 2009). For that reason, focus group and face-to-face interviews formed part of the data gathering for this study.

3.5.3.1 Interviews

Nieuwenhuis (2007) describes interviewing as a two-way conversation in which the interviewer asks respondents questions to collect data and learn about the ideas, beliefs, views, opinions and behaviours of the participants. Interviewing is centred on human interaction for knowledge production and social situatedness of the research data. I adopted interviewing to gather data because it is the most useful source of qualitative case study information especially when the researcher‟s intention is to gain respondents‟ perspectives and   interpretation of the phenomenon under study (Yin, 2013). Interviewing is a flexible and adaptable data gathering method because it

involves a direct interaction between the researcher and respondents (Nieuwenhuis ,
2007). Another commonly identified merit of the interview as highlighted by Cohen, et,
al. (2009) is that it enables, not only the respondents, but also the
researcher/interviewer to discuss the meaning they make out of their experienced world
and therefore express their perspectives on given situations. According to Walliman
(2011), researchers must be good listeners in order for them to do effective interpretive
research. I heeded this advice and made a conscious effort to listen without
unnecessarily interrupting the respondents. The above characteristics make interview
methods suit this study"s theory, approach and paradigm as it intends to provide thick
descriptions of students" experiences of History Education assessment through an
open-ended interaction with respondents.

Considering the nature of this study and data required for answering the research
question, I found it necessary to obtain diverse responses to open-ended questions and
therefore I administered semi-structured interviews for both face-to-face and focus
group interviews. Robyn (2003) identifies semi-structured interviews as the most
commonly embraced method in qualitative inquiries. As already mentioned, I gathered
data through focus group and face-to-face interviews. According to Robyn (2003), both
face-to-face and focus group interviews can be used as stand-alone methods or as
supplementary to one another to acquire different perspectives on the topic under study.
In the case of this research, I used both methods so that they would supplement one
another. Both focus group and face-to-face interviews were carried out in the same
venue – a seminar room that is always reserved for staff seminars and postgraduate
lectures. This venue was easily accessible for both the participants and I as it is located
near the History Education discipline administrative.

I gathered data starting with focus group interviews before conducting face-to-face
interviews. Focus group interviews are prearranged discussions planned to attain varied
opinions on an identified area of interest in an accommodating, non-threatening and
conducive environment (Casey & Krueger, 2009). According to Clarke (2000), focus
group interviews do not seek to acquire specific information from individuals but
primarily seek to obtain an insight into the perspective, experiences and views of the

groups in focus. In addition, interactive nature of focus group interviews brings and allows members to express their perspectives because it provides the security of being among others who share many of the same feelings and experiences (Steyn, 2002). According to Kitzinger (2005), focus group interviews also enable researchers to develop an extended discussion also well as permitting respondents to develop their own questions and frame works. Respondents are also able to seek their own needs and concerns in their own words and on their own terms. I therefore chose the focus group interview method after a careful consideration of its advantages identified above.

The respondents in the focus group were 3rd year History Education students who had gone through the same assessment experience since their admission at the university. I therefore expected that all respondents would be familiar with the artefacts and how they were administered. This provided a common ground for discussion and varied responses were generated on each particular issue as the interaction stimulated more ideas, leading to deeper details and consequently greater insights.

In relation to size, a focus group of not less than four and not more than twelve respondents are usually suggested purposely to give chance to everyone involved to participate, while provoking a range of responses (DeVos, 2002). For this study, one focus group of four respondents was arranged and lasted for 1 hour and 18 minutes. Throughout the interview, I fulfilled an active role as the coordinator of the entire interview session. This implied that I had to be an empathetic listener and that I had to keep the respondents focused on the topic. With a feeling that some respondents may compromise their true feelings due to the presence of others since there is not the same cloak of confidentiality as applies to face-to-face interviews, I made sure that the respondents were made to feel confident by ensuring a relaxed atmosphere during interviews as well as assurances of confidentiality. In the process, individual perspectives and experiences emerged, and as they emerged, certain individuals from focus groups presented more insightful experiences which elicited further probing when I did the face-to-face interviews.

Face-to-face interviewing is the social relationship between an individual respondent and the researcher aiming at exchanging information (Naidoo, 2002). I chose to use face-to-face interviewing because it is the predominant means of gathering qualitative data, especially in case study research (Naidoo, 2012). Through face-to-face interviews, students shared their experiences on aspects of past assessment tasks such as the instructors‟ comments, marks scored, nature of questions, processes and approaches to these tasks.

I used semi-structured interviews that involved four respondents whose selection criterion is explained in sections 4.3.1.1 and 4.3.1.2 above. DiCiggo-Bloom and Crabtree (2006) maintain that the whole interview process is controlled by the interviewer and it can only progress with the interviewee‟s co-operation. Face-to-face interviews are recommended to be a personal and friendly encounter in which direct, verbal and open questions are asked to provoke detailed narratives (DiCiggo-Bloom & Crabtree, 2006). To achieve this, I used probes and follow-up questions much more intensively than in the focus group in order to explore deeper aspects of the individual‟s experience. While probing, I adopted Naidoo‟s (2002) technique where I sometimes requested respondents to give examples of what they were explaining. This often clarified respondents‟ comments. I encouraged them to be more elaborative whenever I observed that they were uncertain as to whether their responses were well related to the questions asked or when they were struggling with articulating what they meant. In addition, I at times repeated their responses to them to confirm that I comprehended what they had exactly said. Each face-to-face interview session took between 45-50 minutes.

Respondents were made aware of the issues to be discussed during the interview in advance. On this issue, Cohen, et al. (2000) recommend a necessity to speak about the cognitive aspect of the face-to-face interview by ensuring that both the interviewer and interviewee are adequately knowledgeable about the phenomenon under discussion and that the interview is conducted in a relatively well informed manner. The authors add that the interviewee‟s lack of knowledge should not pose a threat to the extent of having nothing to say. They suggest that, an enabling environment should be set to

have him/her saying anything rather than nothing at all. The use of artefacts enabled me to address the cognitive aspect as responses were sought with reference to respondents" own artefacts. At the same time, having taught and assessed all the respondents in at least one of the modules, I had a comprehensive idea about the assessment tasks referred to in the study. This in a way was important in ensuring truth value of the study as will be discussed in details in section 4.4.1 ahead.

While conducting both face-to-face and focus group interviews, I used an interview schedule consisting of semi-structured questions (See appendix ix attached). In preparation for the interview, I managed to pay maximum attention to the framing of questions, the use of prompts and probes and the flow of the interview. As an introduction to the interviews, I clarified the purpose of this study to respondents, the issue of voluntary withdrawal as well as how their anonymity and confidentiality would be ensured (Orb et al., 2000). Although I had a set of questions in the interview schedule, I gave myself the leeway to revise the sequence of interview questions, paraphrased the questions, explain them or add something to them as long as I did not deviate from the purpose of the study and the research question (Cohen et al., 2000).

While acknowledging that the focus group interview was challenging to me, I aimed to direct rather than control the interview, taking note of differences in participation and non-verbal communication while probing responses and redirecting answers for comments from other respondents. With permission from the interviewees, interviews were digitally recorded using a voice recorder to allow an accurate capture of the responses from the interviews (Mpungose, 2010).

The assessment artefacts that I used to enhance the interview process were of two categories. One category was a set of past examination papers and copies of assessment tasks that I obtained from different instructors of History Education modules throughout for the past three years. There were no criteria for selecting such artefacts and whichever ones I managed to obtain formed the basis of the study. The artefacts that I provided were used in the focus group interviews. I made a number of copies of the artefacts for each respondent expected to take part and before the focus group

interview commenced, a few minutes were spared for each respondent to familiarise with the artefacts. By the time the interview commenced, especially after an informal interaction amongst themselves, the participants all had recalled the tasks including those administered in the first and second years. The artefacts included assessment tasks from selected assessment strategies such as classroom tests, presentations, reading reports, examinations and long essay assignments. Details of how each assessment strategy is administered at the higher education institution are presented in the following sub-sections.

3.5.3.1.1 Presentations

This is one of the most commonly administered assessment strategies in History Education in the selected institution of higher education. According to the respondents, preparations involve organising students into groups, getting assigned a topic or task on which they do research and present before the class in the presence of the instructor who is in this case the assessor. The presentation task that was used in this study is attached as Appendix (i).

3.5.3.1.2 Reading reports

With this assessment strategy, students are required to engage with an article by reading carefully, understanding it and then making a report based on the questions on a given template (see Appendix (ii) attached). This is usually done before a module unit is taught in order to make students read and have a background idea of what is to be taught in the lecture.

3.5.3.1.3 Tests

Tests are among the continuous assessment strategies given to students to measure their knowledge and abilities on some issues that have been taught or are to be taught

in the lectures. The History Education discipline does not have a specific testing schedule, but it depends on individual instructor of a given module to decide when to give it out to students whenever he/she feels it due. Since their first year, students have been writing classroom tests and one of them was used as an artefact for this study (see Appendix iii). However, in their third year they had a take-home test – the first of its kind. The take home test was about the Mau-Mau movement in Kenya and the respondents explained that they were given a brief account on the theme and then left to discover the rest of the information on their own as they took the test to be done at home. It involved different assessment techniques that included source-based questions (such as cartoon interpretation) and essay writing (See Appendix iv).

3.5.3.1.4 Examinations

This is a summative assessment strategy given to test students" knowledge and ability to apply what has been taught in a particular semester. The examination is a fully packed assessment strategy that a student needs to be competent enough if he/she is to perform well. In the exam there are various question styles that call for varied approaches all to be done within the three hour timeframe. Examinations involve recall questions, source-based questions, multiple choice, short and long essay questions. All these are to be attempted in a single 3 hour session. Before the exam is written, a student has to score an average Duly Performed (DP)[1] requirement of 40% from all the formative assessment tasks done in the course of the semester. Those who do not qualify are ineligible to write the examinations and therefore are considered to have failed the module. Examinations were not administered in all History Education modules. There are nine History modules, five of which are content modules while the other three are method modules. For the former, students write examinations, but for the latter they do not. The examination artefact used for this research is attached (see Appendix v).

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[1]Duly Performed requirement refers to those college-approved requirements for a module which must be met to permit a student to be eligible for final assessment in that module.

3.5.3.1.5 Long essay assignments

This is a formative assessment strategy that is most commonly administered in History Education at the university. Through such assignments students are trained to develop skills of research and good essay writing. Students are given a theme or question to write about and it is considered as the major assignment of the semester. It is usually the last of all assessment tasks to be submitted before examinations, but is communicated way in advance. It also normally contributes a bigger percentage to the students" DP and general academic performance of the semester. Students are given one to three months to do their research and write extensively. The artefact used in the cause of this research is attached (See Appendix vi).

3.5.4 Issues of trustworthiness

Issues in quantitative research are fundamentally applied differently from those in qualitative research. For instance, these different approaches employ different terminologies to describe different concepts because the nature and purpose of the two approaches are different (Morrow, 2005). While the quantitative researcher approach recognises the worth of any project by evaluating its validity and reliability, a related consideration to the worth of a research project is, however, not that common in qualitative approaches although qualitative researchers embraces the core principles of such concepts (Naidoo, 2012). Therefore the concept of validity cannot be addressed in the same way in a qualitative research that investigates naturalistic settings. Scholars such as Winter (2000) and (Cohen et al., 2013) assert that the concept „validity" does not apply to qualitative inquiries and thus terms such as trustworthiness have to be used. This is especially so if the research responds to the standards against which any project"s trustworthiness may be evaluated (DeVos, 2002). It is for this reason that in this section, I refer to trustworthiness. For this particular research, I adopted Lincoln and Guba (2000)"s model to ensure trustworthiness because of the four criteria that it

recommends for qualitative researchers: truth value, applicability, consistency and neutrality.

Truth value according Lincoln and Guba (2000) is credibility and it is considered to be the most significant criterion for of qualitative research assessment (De Vos, 2002). Qualitative researchers usually obtain truth from discovering individual experiences as they are perceived and lived by selected respondents. Lincoln and Guba, (2000) therefore advised researchers to use „prolonged engagement" with respondents to enhance the development of an adequate understanding of an organisation and create an element of trust between the parties. In order to establish credibility, an informal discussion was held before each and every interview to establish familiarity with each other. Even during interviews, sufficient time was allowed to permit the in-depth interviews during which respondents could answer the researcher"s questions and ask questions themselves (which I then answered). Shenton (2004) endorses an idea that researchers should engage with their superiors to promote confidence that will ensure credibility. Based on Shenton"s view, I used such collaborative sessions with my supervisor to discuss alternative approaches and provide a platform for testing my developing ideas and interpretations in order to recognise my own biases and preferences.

Reference to transferability was suggested by Shenton (2004) as a measure against which applicability in qualitative research can be assessed. Such a criterion can only be met when the research findings suit the contexts outside the study environment which are defined by the degree of similarity between the two different contexts (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Noble and Smith (2015) argue that it is upon the researcher to provide sufficient contextual information about field work site to enhance the readers" proper understanding of it. This simplifies the readers" ability to compare instances of the phenomenon defined in the research report with those that they observed or experienced in their situations thus making transferability implications. Transferability was also addressed in the sample selection (Shenton, 2004). Using purposive sampling allowed me to select persons who had lived in a common assessment experience for three years and were willing to describe it (Fain, 2003). In addition, the findings from the

representative samples can be transferable to a whole group. Therefore, the study allowed the samples to be reflective of other History Education students in the institution and other higher education institutions who may undergo the same assessment strategies.

Trustworthiness was also addressed by ensuring data consistency. This means that an attempt to ensure the consistency of the findings if the investigation was replicated within a similar context (Guba & Lincoln, 2000). Consistency is the equivalent of reliability in quantitative research and implies stability of data over time and conditions (Noble & Smith, 2015). Shenton (2004, p. 71) was of the view that the use of „overlapping methods‟ like focus group and face-to-face interviews taken to be the major data gathering methods for qualitative research would be appropriate in ensuring consistency. Despite having common methodological shortcomings as they are both data gathering methods of a kind, both focus groups and face-to-face interviews have distinct characteristics that also result into individual strengths (Shenton, 2004). In this study therefore, a triangulation of the focus group interview was carried out and a compensation for any unforeseen limitations was covered up in face-to-face interviews. Such a triangulation helped to ensure consistency as the same interview questions were used in both methods to the same cohort in the same institution.

Neutrality is concerned with the degree to which an inquiry is free from bias in the selected research procedures and as well as results of the study (Given, 2008). It is the degree to which the findings are entirely a function of respondents and research conditions but not of other biases, perspectives and motivations (Lincoln & Guba, 2000). Shenton (2004) recommends adopting neutrality to reduce the effect of investigator bias as well as a presentation of a comprehensive methodological description so that the reader can be able to determine the degree to which constructs emerging form the data and the data itself may be accepted. Regarding this process, the „audit trail‟ is the most critical aspect, according to Shenton (2004), because it enables an observer to trace research procedure step-by-step through the process described, the decisions made and their justifications. In this research, an audit of the study involved the raw data and the recordings. In the report, I indicated clearly how the data was analysed, the coding

system and the emergence of themes, categories and codes. The actual process of the study was clearly delineated, reflecting the intentions of the research proposal. An adequate trail ensured that the conclusions and interpretations could be traced to the sources and were a true reflection of them. Lincoln and Guba (2000) confirm that confirmability can be the criterion to neutrality and can be attained only when applicability and truth value are established.

3.5.5 Data Analysis

Data analysis is a process of resolving data into its constituent components, to reveal its characteristic elements and structure (Dey, 2003). Cohen, et al. (2007) and Nieuwenhuis (2007) indicate that analysing qualitative data involves organisation, accounting for collected data and explaining it. The authors add that the whole process entails interpreting data in terms of the respondents" description of the situation under investigation. This is all done by analysing their views, feelings, reflections, perceptions, understanding, attitudes, experiences, knowledge and values; noting patterns, themes, categories and regularities in order to determine the meanings they make of phenomenon (Nieuwenhius, 2007). Regarding qualitative inquiries like this particular research, Nieuwenhuis (2007) suggested application of an inductive analysis method which allows research findings to arise from the recurrent, overriding or major themes inherent in the raw data gathered.

I therefore adopted an inductive data analysis method which refers to a method that is characterised by utilising comprehensive reading of raw data to develop models, concepts and themes via the researcher"s interpretations of the raw data at hand (Jebreen, 2012). Within the inductive analysis method, categories that emerge from raw data are developed into a context that captures processes and key themes identified as important by the researcher (David, 2003). Therefore themes that were developed were used to describe the actual effect of data on the phenomenon of History Education students" experiences of assessment (Jebreen, 2012). According to David (2003), description of such an effect can be more effective if the findings are

assessed by a range of techniques. Among other techniques is the comparison with findings from previous research and theories. In this study, I discussed the findings in comparison with the reviewed literature and theory discussed in Chapter 2.

I started my analysis by transcribing focus group and face-to-face interviews from a voice recorder. I took time to carefully arrange data from each focus group respondent separately to ease my analysis process. Since all respondents interviewed referred to the same artefacts of the selected assessment strategies, I analysed all the data at once regardless of whether it was gathered from face-to-face or focus group interviews. I followed principles suggested by Henning (2004), meaning that after organising the interview transcripts, I thoroughly read through all of them to develop an overview of relevant contextual data in order to be able to select codes according to my interpretation of the data. To carefully identify the units of meaning in the sentences, I had to re-read through the transcripts and found out that I at times had to repeatedly read the sentences as many times as possible before identifying the units of meaning (Henning, 2004).

I later selected codes according to the meaning I made out of the data and kept a master list of all the codes that I had come up with. The related codes were inductively put into categories guided by data. 6 categories were generated and I therefore had to determine how the identified categories addressed my research question, how all the emerged categories interrelated and how all this related to my prior knowledge about the phenomenon under investigation (Henning, 2004). I further looked critically into these emerged categories to check if there would still be common patterns. Common patterns were merged together to form four broad themes and these will be presented and discussed as the findings in Chapter 4.

3.6 Conclusion

In this chapter, I explained how, for the purpose of this study, I have chosen qualitative case study design which corresponds with social constructivist theoretical framework as

well as the interpretivist paradigm. I also explained how a case study focuses on a specifically chosen context which in this study is the selected higher education institution. The research methods employed were focus group and face-to-face interviews and the data gathering tools were interview schedule, assessment artefacts and an audio recorder. Attempts were made to ensure trustworthiness which included a triangulation of focus and face-to-face interviews. In the chapter, I also engaged with a discussion of ethical considerations within a qualitative research study. I have also indicated that inductive analysis was adopted to allow research findings to emerge from the dominant, frequent and significant themes inherent in raw data. Chapter 4 presents the findings from the analysis.

CHAPTER 4

PRESENTATION OF THE FINDINGS OF THE STUDY

4.1 Introduction

This study investigated History Education students‟ experiences of assessment guided by one research question that is "How do History Education students experience assessment at a higher education institution?" In the previous chapter, I have presented the research design and methodology while in this chapter, I present the results from the analysis; giving a narrative-qualitative presentation of the findings from each assessment strategy. As already explained in the methodology chapter, after gathering all the data, I listened carefully to the interviews which I later transcribed. I then carefully read through the transcripts and identified the patterns which I open coded and developed themes. Four major broad themes emerged from my analysis that described students‟ assessment experiences in History Education as a process. The themes that emerged were preparation, engagement, feedback as well as reflection on growth. These themes are explained below.

4.1.1 Preparation

This theme involves students setting themselves to deal with a given assessment task. At the preparation stage, the student has not engaged with the task yet, but is putting together whatever will help in the engagement process. It entails organising material to work with, identifying sources to work with and how/where to access them, consultation on how to go over the task, groupings and scheduling discussions, among other things. However, the margin between preparation and engagement varies from one assessment strategy to another. For example, for strategies like presentations, classroom tests and examinations, preparation entails all activities related to a given task that are done before entering the assessment venue to start engaging with the task itself. However, for long essays, take-home tests and the reading reports, preparation entails all activities done before starting to write the final draft to be submitted. These

include accessing the material and sources to be used, engaging with guidelines and the rubric and doing the necessary consultations.

4.1.2 Engagement

After going through the preparation process, a student starts engaging with the task at hand. This involves dealing with the final piece of work that will be assessed. It includes writing the real examination paper and classroom test, writing the final long essay assignment and take-home test, the class presentation session, responding to the reading report template and answering the classroom quiz questions. The margin between preparation and engagement seems thin for some assessment strategies such the reading report, long essay assignment and take home tests. However, despite the thinness of the margin, the two processes are different. Such an explanation may not apply to strategies like the classroom quiz which was administered abruptly and therefore there was virtually no preparation process to talk about. This means that the entire strategy (classroom quiz) starts with engagement followed by feedback.

4.1.3 Feedback

This has to do with students getting to know the results of their assessed task/s. In all the above assessment strategies and their respective techniques, students either received their scripts back or received a detailed report of their work done indicating the breakdown of marks (for example in classroom presentations). This theme therefore presents respondents" experiences of how they receive feedback, how they responded to feedback, how they made use of feedback and how feedback benefitted them.

4.1.4 Reflections on growth

The ZPD, which is a social constructivist model that this study focused on, tells us about growth from one point to another. Growth from the assessment strategies, or lack of it for that matter, is therefore an experience. So the abovementioned aspects of the process of assessment enable students to reflect and see whether they are experiencing growth or not. Growth happens throughout and therefore, students are able to tell whether the given assessment strategies help them grow academically or professionally. This theme therefore presents how students reflect on the entire assessment experience to tell how they have grown or developed.

The findings from the data analysis will be presented in this chapter according to these themes. Each of the following sections will present a theme under which students" experiences of the different assessment strategies are also presented.

4.2 Preparation

4.2.1 Presentations

In reference to presentations, respondents said that they were sometimes organised in groups by the instructor according to their sitting arrangements or told to form their own groups consisting of a specific number of members. The respondents, however, preferred the latter to the former because they found it easy to group up with friends or members known to cooperatively work well. The interviews revealed that in the former, students were grouped with members they were not familiar with and ended up not meeting often in addition to not cooperating with members they did not know. Respondent A for example said,

> In terms of these activities we are to work in groups a lot and often like we have people we don"t know working with us and they take it for granted that these people know each other, they are going to work on it and they are going to present. But I find that very unfair because in many cases, our friends we sit and work together and ready to present but other friends just sit and look on and do nothing but everyone wants the same mark.

When told to choose their own groups, respondents said that they preferred forming groups with classmates that they knew to be active in doing research, preparing and doing the presentations. Thereafter, they got set for handling the task.

From the interviews, respondents also expressed that they were given enough time to prepare and organise themselves as groups in order to produce the best of what they are expected. Although she did not show how much time could be considered enough, Respondent H on this said,

> Let"s talk about time, yes we are given time, I think the time is fair…..

Respondents indicated that the length of the period given varies from assessment task to task, but it was always enough to do the expected task.

The respondents also said that it was quite difficult to get the active participation of all group members, especially in big groups. Some respondents said they could not attend the group discussions while others attended, but did not engage with others in preparing for the task as they were carried away by other things. In this regard, Respondent H confessed,

> …I remember we were a large group of 15, I for one confess I didn"t do anything, they did the work, may be only two people did the work, they just called us in the group. We came there some of us chatting on our phones, some doing other things and then the group leader would come up with information and we all agreed, then put it together and its finished…

Respondent F confirmed,

> I have heard other people complain that they are not meeting on time, some other group members don"t want to come, they just sit back and watch others instead of doing group work.

However, there are some respondents who showed that they had a different experience and had all members actively participating according to their allocated responsibilities. Such respondents claimed that different members of their groups were assigned

different topics and subtopics and then the findings were collated and presented by whoever was given the responsibility. The data revealed that one group had worked together with such an arrangement since their first year.

Respondents admitted that they did not consult their instructors while carrying out research for their presentations, but preferred to work as a group where possible. The majority of the respondents confessed to using the internet to get the information about the topic to be presented and to a small extent their fellow students. Respondent D, for example, said he used Google most of the times to access online articles. Respondent H said that even when she tried consulting her instructor, the explanation she got was not different from what she had in mind. Therefore, respondents did not view consultation as important while undertaking a group presentation assessment. They found it convenient to refer to internet sources and fellow students.

4.2.2 Reading reports

While setting themselves for engagement with reading reports, respondents accepted that the time given to them to prepare, read, write and submit the report is always enough and sometimes more than enough. Still they admitted that they did not utilise it effectively. Some of the tasks in this assessment strategy include summarising the article, identifying points of agreement and disagreement, identifying any new knowledge, amongst others. So respondents felt that it was a simple task that could be done anytime; therefore did not rush to do it. Regarding time given, Respondent G said:

> It is always enough, sometimes it is more than enough because…he would give us articles on Monday and they would be due next week Tuesday. So it is just one article and have about 6 days to finish it which is a long time, in fact not even six, seven to eight days to finish it. So that is more than enough time for a reading report.

Respondents said that they usually work on their own with limited or no consultation with the instructors because the reading report as an assessment strategy has been administered in History Education department since their first year in almost all modules they have done. Respondents indicated that they have always done tasks that ask for

either same or related things over and over. Respondents like Respondent G indicated that by her third year, students did not need much preparation and consultation to do a reading report because she could better manage her workload since she knows what is expected out of any reading report assessment task.

However, not all respondents had positive experiences of preparing for the reading report task. Some respondents indicated that they had a reading phobia and a mere look at an article demoralised them. They added that some articles are too big for them to read and understand. A reasonable number of respondents confessed that reading was not their hobby and they did not like it despite the fact that they had to. Respondent H, for example, said that she was not much of a reader unless she had had to. In fact she confessed that she hated reading.

The interviews therefore revealed that such students find themselves attempting the exercise that involves reading just for the sake of going through it but may not have the urge of doing it.

4.2.3 Tests

Respondents agreed that they were given enough time to research and revise as they prepared themselves for tests. They showed that the due dates were indicated in the course outlines given to students at the beginning of the semester. Respondent F explained that in cases where such communication was not provided in the course outline for any test, it was done verbally during lecture times or electronically through emails a few weeks before the writing date. All respondents confessed that the time they were given to revise for classroom tests and to research as well as attempt take-home tests was enough for them to prepare and get ready by the due date. However, the respondents confessed that many left it up to the last minute and would panic, which affected their performance as they would have many things to do at once. Respondent G said:

> …sometimes if we are told about the test weeks in advance, we only remember maybe a week before the test and you already have a lot of work to do that is due in that week; so you think ok I will study for this week for hours, I will study for these two days before the test comes and then I end up thinking ok this is too much work for me to cover in two days.

Respondents showed that they always felt they would have performed better than they did if they had fully utilised the time given to revise and research in preparation for the tests.

Respondents also indicated that they prepared themselves for the tests without consulting their respective instructors. If there was any consultation to be made, they said that they preferred consulting their classmates and fellow students in streams ahead before going to the instructors. According to the respondents, History Education instructors give priority to consultations and have specific consultation times provided for students in case they need guidance. The interviews revealed that because students do not start preparing for tests early, they panic at the last minute but are scared of approaching their instructors so late. They also said that some instructors, and actually fellow students, may be too committed to other responsibilities to be consulted and therefore the students felt that they may not get the best of the attention needed for detailed explanations. Therefore respondents did not all feel that the instructors are always there to help them. Respondent F, for example, indicated that he does not consult and his reasons are below:

> Consultations do not work in some instances because the people you would like to consult are busy doing their own research may be he will tell you come next week even though the assignment is due this week. He will tell you that he is busy come next week and you will not insist.

Respondents such as Respondent H showed that they were conscious of the importance of consultation, but they just did not because they did not utilise the time given in preparation for the entire assessment task appropriately, and they ended up panicking to have all things done at once and within a short time..

According to the respondents, classroom tests are easier to prepare for because they deal with things that have already been discussed or taught in class during lectures. Respondents therefore did not see much need for intensive studying; instead they just revised. According to Respondent G,

> …when I go through my work I revise to such an extent that ok, I know this stuff so I don‟t get much into it just use what you know. So I sort of think I limit myself in that sense because I am not studying, I am revising….

The interviewees claimed that tests can best be prepared for by reading what was taught in class with no need for consultation or intensive research.

4.2.4 Examinations

Regarding examinations, respondents appreciated the fact that they are given a chance to prepare quite early because the timetable is always released nearly two months before the commencement date. This gives them time to identify where to strengthen and maintain as they get set. According to the interviewees, the examination is considered as the major assessment task of the semester in History Education modules because one‟s examination results have a strong bearing on his/her general performance of the module.

While preparing for History Education examinations, respondents confessed that they did little consultation with their instructors for guidance, but instead relied much on the examination scope given to them in which the instructors identify the areas that they need to concentrate on for the examination[2]. With the scope, respondents such as Respondents H and I showed that they felt equipped enough to write the exam even without the instructor‟s further guidance. The interviews revealed that consultation was common during this time, but only by students who had issues with their DPs and needed to be cleared to sit for examinations. However Respondent G said that she

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[2] A Scope is a set of guidelines given to students identifying areas or topics to be examined and what is required from students while answering examination questions.

consulted to seek clarity on minor issues within the specified scope by the instructor. The interviews further revealed that during and towards the examination period, some students do not often come to campus because they are certain of the issues to concentrate on as they prepare for examinations. A few who find it necessary to consult their instructors, communicate through emails to which they find immediate response from their instructors. Respondent A on this issue said:

> We have not had to make use of consultation hours just because everything is explicit and if there is a problem you know with this email response is immediate.

While preparing for examinations, some students said that they mainly use lecture PowerPoint slides and notes given in the course pack on the specified examinable areas. Respondent G said:

> …when I prepare, I use slides and I use this in conjunction with the articles that we did, I like things down and then talking…..generally I prefer studying by myself.

The interviews further revealed that some students" experiences of preparing for examinations are relatively easy. Respondent B, for example, claimed that a History examination does not require her thorough preparation; instead, she only needed a background idea about an event to answer the questions. She added that some questions like those that require source interpretation, short and long essay writing as well as book review only require one to apply the knowledge acquired in the classroom. Therefore, just having a sense of what happened is enough for some students to answer questions on such topics.

4.2.5 Long essay assignments

The respondents said that this task was communicated early and was included in the course pack given to the students at the beginning of the semester. This implies that students had nearly three months to engage with the assignment. However, the majority of the respondents confessed that they did not utilise the time given appropriately and

only panicked in the last week prior to submission. When asked about why the performance in this assignment was not above average Respondent H said that it would have been the most passable assessment strategy since they are given sufficient time and there is no pressure and no invigilation, but laziness made many to score less than expected.

While preparing for long essay assignments, some respondents claimed that background knowledge about a theme or topic simplified the entire research and writing process as it guarantees a good starting point. The interviews revealed that respondents found it important to first of all understand what the assignment was all about and details of the phenomenon under discussion because without such knowledge, all would be challenging. On this, Respondent F said:

> The big difficulty is if you have no knowledge of what is required of you, but if you have a bit knowledge then it is easy to contract certain aspects of it rather than if you don"t know anything about it because sometimes it happens that you will be given an assignment but they have not touched it or maybe they just want to see how much you know about it, then this kind of assignment will be challenging….

Respondents showed that they consulted fellow students most especially classmates and students ahead of them (4thyears) as well as elders (parents, grandparents and members in the community) on topics that require general historical knowledge and narratives.

4.3 Engagement

4.3.1 Presentations

Some respondents indicated that they did not actively participate despite choosing to work in groups with members they could cooperatively work well with. Other respondents stressed that they wished to be grouped with friends because they would be easily helped even if their input is limited or not there at all. This was so common in groups that consisted of long term friends. Respondent B, for example, said that they

gave the task to one person who did it. Other members of the same group such as Respondent C confirmed that she did not even know what happened in some lectures during the presentations.

Respondents" experiences of engaging with presentations revealed that some presenters had a low self-esteem and confidence while presenting. Talking about her engagement with group presentations, Respondent H had this to say,

> …we had some few shy people and we did not choose that only one person is going to present, we presented like the whole group. One presented like two slides another two slides and some of them did not do voice projections, they let us down and they were shy to presenting class, they were afraid of what they researched….

On the same issue, Respondent H added that she could sometimes present without knowing exactly what the task required of them. When asked what is most challenging while engaging with presentation assessment, Respondent F added:

> …being shy is another difficulty in presenting and lack of self-confidence will be a very big challenge during presentation so you have to tell yourself that now I am doing this...

The interviews revealed that weak presentations led to listeners losing confidence in the presenter and eventually losing focus. Respondents showed that attention was sometimes only from those seating in front because they were close to the presenter and instructor who happened to be the assessor of the presentations, but the rest would be busy chatting on their phones without taking class activities seriously. Respondent H said,

> ….you see them in the corner chatting, they are not focusing on what you are saying, on BBM and all stuff. It"s like now you are talking to one group like in the front and sometimes those groups are forced to listen may be because even the instructor is close by so maybe they are there for the sake of being there.

This, according to some respondents, was enough to demoralise the presenter which aggravated the low self-esteem.

4.3.2 Reading report

The interviews further revealed that as much as the respondents were supposed to engage with the readings and then write a report, the majority of the students barely engaged, but still wrote a report. Many said that they wrote their reports without intensively reading through the given article. They showed that they realised a possibility of passing even without reading as long the submitted report showed familiarity with the article. This was one of the reasons they gave for not consulting and not to engaging with task immediately after it was given. Some said they only read through a few lines to get an idea of what the article was about, and then wrote the rest of their reports according to their understanding. In this respect, Respondent H said,

> …I would read then find a word I find suitable then am going to read the whole sentence and put the whole sentence there. You don"t read the whole thing…and then instructor gives us 10 out of 10…

Other respondents even admitted that they just did not bother reading, but did a compilation of their friends" work to produce something to submit. For instance, Respondent H said,

> I always copy a lot of people, I don"t read…

Some respondents indicated that they used to thoroughly engage with the readings during their first year of History Education, but later realised the possibility of passing without intensive reading and therefore their work ethic declined. Respondent B on this said,

> The first time we did the reading, we were so specific and when we saw that everyone is getting 10 and we know people don"t do the readings, obviously we followed suit…and we were like, if it"s being marked in that way, then we don"t need to do the readings…..

However, there are some students who showed that they did engage with the readings by reading them thoroughly before writing a report. For example, when asked whether reading is done intensively, Respondent F said:

Yes I normally read it two times and when it comes to my third time I start making notes because some of the articles that we have been given are very long so if you don"t take notes, it"s going to be very difficult for you to analyse it…

The interviews indicated that students" experiences of engaging with reading report assessment was associated with some challenges which shape their attitude towards the assessment strategy. Some of the challenges identified include understanding the language in which the article is presented, the length of some articles and the task of summarising a lengthy article.

Regarding language, Respondent F said:

As you know English is not my mother tongue so sometimes I find some other text difficult to understand then I won"t come up with something tangible there when I don"t really understand the article itself.

When it came to the summary as a challenge, Respondent G said:

The only challenge that I found so far is the summary, it"s an article for like 10-15 or 20-25 pages and you have to summarise it in less than 100 words that is the challenge I usually face because I usually do more than 100...so I have to choose words carefully.

The interviews also revealed that engaging with the reading reports was a strange and challenging experience for international (non-South African) students because it was an assessment strategy that they had not been exposed to before. Respondent D who is an international student said:

As you know I had a different experience so it was difficult for me to understand…actually most times the readings, but the questions on the reading report is…I don"t know, so strict…..

Despite all the challenges experienced, students indicated that they managed to attempt the reading report and still expected positive feedback.

4.3.3 Tests

A reasonable number of respondents indicated that background knowledge is very instrumental in determining the engagement process and this has a bearing on the nature of feedback one gets from tests assessment tasks. Regarding the take-home test for example, respondents who had a reasonable amount of information on Kenya found it easier to attempt the test than those who did not. Respondent F said in this regard:

> I got 71%.....maybe some of them did not have background information, background knowledge with regard to these tests, because someone who had background information with regard to Kenya and Mau Mau would not have landed to 20%, luckily I had background information with regards to this test and some things were general to me.

Background information was found to be important not only for the take-home test, but also for classroom tests. In respect of this, Respondent H showed that she passed the classroom test because she wrote answers to some of the questions based on the background knowledge on a certain topic that was asked. She showed that she acquired this knowledge in high school which gave her a good score.

The interviews revealed that the respondents engaging with the take-home tests did not refer much to the rubric they had been given to get proper guidance on how to go through the task. The test was to be attempted from home and therefore respondents looked at it like the long essay assignments they were accustomed to. The usual assignments over the years have more or less had the same rubrics. Respondents therefore claimed that applying ideas of the earlier on attempted assignments" rubric was enough for students to engage with the assignment at hand. According to the respondents, this affected many students" performance because the take-home test had a completely different rubric.

Respondents confessed that they were conscious of the significance of the rubric but only referred to it when they felt they had to. Asked if the rubric clearly identified the demands of the task Respondent G said:

> The rubric was ok....to be honest am not sure because I didn"t go through the rubric, I just answered the questions.

While others just did not find the relevance of the rubric when it came to answering certain types of questions. Respondent G for example added:

> …you will get certain instructions that say, answer the questions based on maybe your knowledge or answer the question based on your understanding and the rubric doesn"t really cater for your understanding.

There are some respondents who indicated that they only noticed that there was a rubric after getting the feedback when they realised that they did not respond to the questions according to the provisions of the rubric.

Respondents said that the take home test was the most challenging experience of their History Education assessment. The test required interpretation of cartoons and reviewing historical sources – tasks which required higher order thinking. Some respondents claimed that they did not even understand the questions. As already mentioned, some respondents said they did not even notice that there was a rubric and therefore had no guidelines while others felt the material was not enough for answering the question that they could not even understand. Respondent C said:

> I read the question several times, but still I did not get to the heart of the project.

According to the respondents, the take-home test was challenging because the test was first test of its kind for the respondents to attempt and it comprised a variety of testing strategies that required higher order historical thinking, about a strange topic on which they had two lectures with only three slides. Respondents added that they did not bother to consult the instructor in the process which made it a challenging experience. The interviews showed that respondents had all the necessary materials and those who claimed not to have, may have failed to apply the information in the material to answer the questions. Regarding the availability of materials, Respondent C said:

> We had the readings in the course pack, we had a PowerPoint presentation, we had so much information and he like explained the

events further and we took down our notes…it is only that we had a single lecture and there were no readings to specifically answer this test.

Respondents also indicated that they did not like assessment strategies that they were not familiar with because of the associated challenges. The take-home test was the first of its kind and students argued that they would have preferred being assessed with strategies they were exposed to otherwise there was need for detailed explanations of the requirements of the new ones. Respondent B said:

Like we said this was the most difficult History module, they should try to keep us on the same level because we can"t just go from doing what we always do to doing something that is completely different.

However, despite such challenges, some students said that they found it easy to deal with questions that had to do with issues they were familiar with. For example; Respondent H said:

I love working with sources be it pictures or not and this was an easy part, it was an easy section and I could understand it very easily….

Therefore different students had different experiences of the tests that were administered and each one"s experience determined one"s feedback. Assessment techniques that respondents preferred simplified their engagement with the task while those who did not prefer them found take-home tests challenging.

4.3.4 Examinations

Despite having enough time to prepare for examinations with the scope provided, some respondents said that they still panicked as they got into the examination room. The pressure they felt is because they would not be certain if they would remember everything they studied. Respondent G said:

…there is a lot of pressure because of the word exam and its 3 hours of nonstop writing, you have to remember at the same time plan for your essay and the fact that it is an exam, it is very heavy for me so I panic, I panic a lot…

Such panic is incited more by the environment around the examination room as Respondent G added:

> …there are no pictures of people smiling everywhere, it"s a wide room with a whole bunch of rows, it is such a new place, don"t turn around otherwise you are copying, stick to your work and answer the questions….

However, despite such panic and pressure, Respondent G showed that she appreciated that the examinations hall was the most conducive environment for examinations. Therefore, the students had differing experiences of engaging with the examinations.

Respondent D (the international student) showed that he had a challenging experience of examination assessment. He showed that the nature of examination in the higher education institution under study is not what he was used to. He said:

> You know in Turkey they teach us and we write may be 4 – 5 questions mostly multiple choice questions and most of them ask for dates and importance of those dates and roles and other things...but here there"s, you know you have to write your opinion and in order to write your opinion you have to read, you have to know those things and if you don"t read there is a problem.

Some respondents showed that they were concerned about the mark allocation to some examination questions which they found challenging to attempt. For example, some respondents complained that some questions required listing two points, but would be allocated 8 marks leaving students confused on how they should present their answers. Respondent C, for example, said that sometimes the question was asking for a specific answer, but the mark allocation did not correspond. However, although the respondents raised the above concern on mark allocation, the artefact at hand did not support this claim. Respondent A suggested a more detailed mark allocation system when she said,

> I do not understand why everyone (examiner) doesn"t write like, if they want two things and it is for two marks then they must write 2×2 so we know how many things to expect, because if you just put there four then we think four points, now sometimes the question is way too basic to suck out four points.

However, despite such confusion and challenges, none of the respondents showed that mark allocation in one way or another had an impact on the feedback.

4.3.5 Long essay assignment

The interviews revealed that respondents" experiences of engaging with long essay assignments involved sourcing information from readings in the course pack and online publications. The course pack contains a number of published readings about different topics that are covered in a particular History Education module of a given semester. So these readings are at times relevant and some respondents found them having enough information needed to deal with the assignment without looking further. Some respondents showed that the internet is the most commonly used while engaging with such an assessment strategy. Respondent D, for example, showed that he used the Google search engine most of the times because of its reliability in providing a direct response to what one would be looking for unlike other sources like books and course pack articles where one may only have to make meaning and relate to what is required in the task.

Respondent B concurred:

> For essay and things, journal articles, and then we generally do basic Google search because before typing, some of the readings are very challenging especially in the course pack so it is always easier to Wikipedia it or yahoo answers to get the general idea before we get onto that….

Respondents further indicated that they do not use books from the library unless they had to. They said that they refer to books in the library when the instructor prescribed it. Some respondents even confessed that they had never borrowed books since their first year. Respondent C showed that the only time she went to the library was to look for a reference book which she eventually never used. Respondent D also claimed that he had not used the library for the past two years.

However, an explanation from Respondent A showed that the main reason for not using the library is because of inadequate resources. She said:

> …this library has limited resources, it has the old books even when I tried going there what I got doesn‟t relate to what I want…and the pages are actually yellow and with History you have to keep comparing and contrasting now and then….

Other respondents (C and B) claimed that the books in the library were out-dated and therefore students did not find them useful. However, Respondent F had a quite contradictory view when he indicated that up-to-date books are available and prescribed by instructors, only that they are inadequate. He explained:

> Sometimes when you are given an assignment the instructor will prescribe a particular book that we may have to use to get the information and we are plenty, you find that there are just ten books in the library the moment you get there, you realize someone got there and took the books and it is difficult to find who has borrowed the book.

As they engage with long essay assignments, some respondents claimed that they preferred presenting their personal views to referencing or quoting other scholars. Respondent H showed that she was concerned that her essay was dominated by other scholars‟ views. In the assignment, one had to submit 4-5 pages, but only one page covered her personal opinions. The rest were references and quotations from other scholars. She said:

> I hate quoting other people…..I summed up the whole thing in one page, I felt like I have finished the whole essay because this is my own essay and I have said everything here and it becomes difficult to continue, all you have to do is quote other people as well….

While engaging with long essay assignments, respondents said that they experience some challenges with reading widely. This was seen earlier on as a challenge to both local and international students. Respondents showed that they also struggle with making meaning of some articles because of the complex language in which they are constructed. Other challenges include writing academically and satisfying all the technical requirements of a good History essay like referencing, organising and relating

the different bodies of an essay as well as relating the body to the question. Respondents who stay off campus said that they do not access facilities such as the internet, relevant library books and classrooms where they can sit and comfortably do their work without distractions. On this issue, Respondent F said:

> …there are students who are staying off campus and don"t have access to the Internet or some other sources where they can get information. So those students are usually performing very badly when it comes to assignments and tests compared to students who are on-campus, they have resources….

This implies that the respondents link student residence to academic performance.

4.4 Feedback

4.4.1 Presentations

Respondents" experiences of presentations revealed that presenters who had high self-esteem and confidence received positive feedback and vice versa. The respondents associated positive feedback with passing an assignment and they indicated that this (positive feedback) was attained when the presenter had full control and attention of the class. An example is drawn from Respondent A"s experience whose group scored an "A" in the presentation. When asked about what she thought earned her an "A" she said,

> …the class response, yeah more than anything else, their attentiveness, they agreed with me a lot and I think that boost it up…

Respondent B, who was also a member of the same group, added,

> …and I also think the way she presented because our format was…we would take bullet points from our readings and then we could explain the bullet unlike other groups they just came with one point.

The interviews also revealed that feedback was constructive as respondents were able identify where they had gone wrong and their performance as their scores were justified which determined the attitude they develop towards presentations.

4.4.2 Reading report

The interviews revealed that despite having less interest in reading, the feedback students got in reading report assessment was always satisfactory in terms of the marks given. This implies that students value the mark more than anything else when it comes to assessment. Respondents such as Respondents H and I showed that they always scored full marks regardless of the efforts put in, which made them to have a feeling that reading reports were not assessed; and if they were, then they felt that students were cheating the instructors. They were surprised that they were awarded marks that were not worth their efforts and therefore they felt they did not deserve.

Some respondents however had a contrary perspective as they were confident that their reading report assignments undergo the due assessment process based on the evidence from their varying scores in the feedback. Respondent F for example said,

> The last one I got 9 out of 10, now I got 8….if it is not critically examined, I wouldn"t get 8 or 9 then that alone shows that it is critically examined.

Respondents based their feedback experience of reading reports only on the marks scored and did not mention anything like instructors" comments, the time it took to get their work back, explanations on areas that require improvement or any other feedback related issue.

4.4.3 Tests

Respondents said that the general performance was poor for the take home-test and satisfactory for the classroom test. The respondents also said that a big number of

students obtained good marks from the classroom test because they had covered the topic that was tested (The Industrial Revolution) in detail. In addition, respondents showed that the testing techniques used like source interpretation which some students were familiar with made it easier to handle the classroom test. Respondents generally indicated that there were no complaints on the feedback and all students moved away with what they considered as satisfactory scores. However, respondents said that majority of them did not perform well in the take-home test despite the time and materials provided to complete the task. Asked about what may have led to poor performance Respondent B said:

> I don"t know if our instructor (Name withheld) is a strict marker, we have had him before and we used to answer in the same way and we have been getting marks but when it came to this module our marks are dropping, I don"t know why.

Respondents said that the general performance was poor and the majority scored very low marks such that they were given a chance to re-write which improved their scores. Respondent A said:

> …we thought that was straight forward reviewing a historical source we did but about 95% of the class failed and we got an opportunity to redo it….

The interviews showed that many students approached the questions wrongly while other did not know what to exactly do. Respondents like Respondent H said that she only understood things better after failing the first submission then consulted before making a second submission where she had an improved performance. Respondent C also complained:

> They made it get harder from History 410, they gradually gave us things that we need or tell us what we need to do…..we realised when it is too late that we were on a wrong track.

Respondents showed that it was after getting feedback when they realised they had not met the requirements of the assessment task.

4.4.4 Examinations

The majority of the respondents showed that examination feedback was not satisfactory because the marks scored were lower than what they expected. Respondents B and C expressed that through all the continuous assessment tasks done in the course of the semester, they were given their scripts back with comments identifying where they went wrong which enabled one to understand how one came to a certain score. This, according to the respondents, helped students to be aware of their weaknesses so as to improve in the following assessment tasks including, examinations. So with such preparations, and considering that they were given the scope and had enough time to prepare, the respondents expected a relatively good performance and anything less than one"s expectation left the student unsatisfied. This is instigated by the fact that examination feedback takes long to come back and students do not get their exam scripts back and which leaves some of them such as Respondent C dissatisfied.

4.4.5 Long essay assignments

All respondents acknowledged that long essay assignment feedback is the most constructive that many learn a lot from. Respondents said that feedback for this particular assessment strategy comes in time with comments indicating what went wrong and where the student needs to improve. The interviews showed that respondents did a lot of consultation with their instructors after getting the feedback from long essay assignments basically for two reasons. Respondents said that some go to the lectures to try their luck in improving their scores by either claiming that they were under marked, misunderstood and marked wrongly since this is the last assignment which also happens to carry the highest weighting contribution to one"s DP. Students may also raise any other issue that may lead to mark increment. Another reason for consultation had to do with seeking knowledge and clarification on where one went wrong because it is usually at this time when students prepare for examinations. In fact, Respondent G appreciated the fact that her experience with long essay assignment and its feedback is a good preparation for examinations.

4.5 Reflections on growth

4.5.1 Presentations

The interviews revealed that respondents experienced varying changes in relation to group presentations as an assessment strategy in History Education. The majority of the respondents, however, showed that they did not like this kind of assessment because they did not see its relevance and benefit. They based their argument on the fact that some did not participate in preparation and actually did not pay attention during presentations of the fellow students, but got the mark given to the group to which they belong. This made respondents such as Respondent B to consider presentation an irrelevant assessment strategy.

However, there are respondents who had a different experience as they found presentations very helpful by acknowledging the new knowledge acquired from the research they did in the process, combined with what their colleagues had come up with that they shared. Some respondents said that benefitting from presentations depends on one"s efforts and commitment. Respondent C on this said,

> Presentations are usually up to those who are motivated to take part and contribute. This kind of assessment forces you to do research, so once you do research may be it will be more productive.

Respondents appreciated the presentations assessment strategy as a good learning experience because the feedback would come along with guiding comments identifying points of strength to maintain and weakness to improve on. Respondent F said,

> …the instructor comments on where you lacked and where you did well after the script is returned, he will also tell us where you were wrong or right.

Respondents also acknowledged the view that, despite some group members offering limited participation, presentations were a productive strategy that could enhance

academic growth if taken seriously. In other words, students acknowledged growth through presentations, but they did not really specify how much growth had taken place.

4.5.2 Reading report

A reasonable number of respondents expressed a negative attitude towards reading reports mainly because they involved a lot of reading which many found as a challenge. Other challenges included the language barrier, synthesis skills and the length of the articles. It is such an experience that made Respondent B to refer to reading reports as painful even though one had no choice but to read.

Some respondents showed that, based on the above mentioned challenges, they were sometimes reluctant to commit themselves to reading reports and only attend to them on the last minute simply because they had to fulfil the requirement and the submission date was due. Some respondents showed that they do not benefit from reading reports because it is an assessment approach they do not pay attention to, but are sure of a satisfactory feedback every time. Reading reports, according to Respondent D, were a too demanding for the international student who was not exposed to such an assessment strategy. Being students from non-English speaking countries, engaging with readings and attempting tasks that, for example, require summarising and also responding to questions that call for presenting points of agreement and disagreement became challenging and therefore such a student developed a negative attitude towards this assessment strategy. However, he appreciated that by his third year he was able to do the readings, understanding what was always required of him.

Despite such a negative attitude, all respondents acknowledged that the idea behind setting up such reading reports is good and they remain a constructive experience if students give them the attention they deserve. Respondent F, for example, submitted to the fact that reading reports equipped her with summarising and reading skills which signify her academic growth and development. Similarly, Respondent G looked at them

as a good preparation for examinations. Asked whether they should get more reading reports she said:

> Yes I think we should because when it comes to examinations at the end of the semester, because you have done all the reading reports, you have done the article, no matter what question you get in the exam, it"s easy to answer….

Despite the attitudes and challenging experiences of reading report assessment, respondents agreed to the fact that the entire assessment process through this strategy enhanced their growth academically and, according to Respondent B, it would be more beneficial if they (respondents) had put in more efforts and full dedication.

4.5.3 Tests

Despite the challenges involved, respondents said that they found tests to be an appropriate strategy for enhancing historical understanding. Respondent F, for example, appreciated the fact that he acquired a variety of skills from a series of testing exercises because tests involve things like recall, essay writing, and source interpretation. He said that this enabled him to test his ability in a variety of activities which would enhance his academic career. However, some respondents such as Respondent B felt that questions that ask for one"s opinion would be more constructive, arguing that recall and reproduction did not give them the chance to think and analyse issues historically.

Even though some respondents acknowledged the growth and development attained from tests, others did not and preferred examinations instead. Such respondents based their argument on the fact that there is no scope provided for tests unlike what is done for examinations. They added that the test experience is tensional especially if one does not know what to concentrate on in preparation for writing. Respondent H showed that there is no specific area to concentrate yet there is a lot to read, so one cannot read to learn but just reads to prepare for a test.

It was interestingly found out that although the take-home test was challenging, students had History 420 (the module in which the take-home test fell under) as their favourite module. Respondent B said:

> Only 420 as challenging as it is, it is still my favourite module because in comparison to everything else, it was challenging, I feel it was challenging in the right way….

Respondent C added:

> We see different types of assessment like we have a book review, we have a presentation, it is a wide range.

According to Respondents B and C as seen above, there is some confusion between the module and the assessment task given in the take-home test. The take-home test as seen (Appendix iv) did not have a book review as a task but it was one of the strategies administered in the same module earlier.

4.5.4 Examinations

The majority of the respondents claimed that they experienced challenges in preparing for and writing examinations, but saw it as an appropriate assessment strategy to learn from to which they have had no problem adapting. Some respondents indicated that they have written examinations since their first year and are used to the fact that they will always be there despite the challenges.

All respondents showed that an examination is the most preferred assessment strategy because it involved techniques that put the students‟ cognitive abilities to test. The techniques that the respondents were referring to included questions that asked for recall, analysis, source interpretation, long and short essays among others. Respondents said that there is a lot of application and their examination experience enables a student to develop his/her historical thinking capacity as one feels like a natural student while in an examination. Respondent B on that said:

> …so it"s nice, it"s well-rounded, they ask you to may be justify things, there is a lot of application and it just makes you look very proved academically you know…..it"s not like English where you are just writing or re-writing story out, you feel like a natural student in the exam.

However, the interviews indicated that such an experience was challenging to international students who were used to different examination assessment techniques. This created a negative attitude towards examination for that student. One international student (Respondent D) indicated that he was used to multiple choice questions, short answer questions and questions which require memorisation and reproduction with limited call for personal opinion. However, the respondent showed that it was a good learning experience that he was adapting to and appreciated that he had learnt a lot through this challenging experience since his first year.

4.5.5 Long essay assignment

Respondents indicated that the long essay assignment was the most passible compared to others. However they confessed that they sometimes become too lazy to utilise all the time and material given to them. They said that despite the challenges involved, they appreciate this kind of assignment as part and parcel of History Education and, as such, they must learn to deal with positively. Respondents such as B said that they like the long essay assignment because they almost always do not fail it and it contributes much to DP mark. Respondent F said that he discovered new knowledge while doing research and learnt a lot from the feedback comments and consultations done thereafter. All in all, it is an assessment strategy that all respondents showed they were comfortable with.

The interviews revealed the classroom quiz as another assessment strategy which I had left out during planning for data gathering. Data from this assessment strategy was gathered from only one respondent (G) who provided the artefact in one of the face-to-face interview sessions. The study had initially targeted only the above discussed assessment strategies because they were the only artefacts that I had accessed, but

because the respondent provided the quiz artefact during the interview, I found it important to consider it as well because it presented quite a unique experience that was worthy understanding.

The quiz was a classroom exercise carried out at the end of one of the lectures. The lecture was about the Khoi Khoi and the San based on one of the articles in the course pack and this quiz was administered towards the end of the lecture. A number of questions as earlier on prepared by the instructor were asked to students as they wrote down the answers. Then immediately scripts were collected for assessment and redistributed for peer assessment. Scripts were then recollected and marked by the lecturer who later gave the feedback as he did revision with the entire class. Respondent G said that a good number of students did not attend the lecture because it was towards the end of the semester when students were preparing for examinations; while the majority of those who attended and attempted the quiz exercise failed. The respondents said that many students who attended the lecture were either not attentive in class or they never expected it since it had never happened before. So the first time experience was challenging.

However, Respondent G"s artefact showed that she passed the quiz with 50 out of 50 marks and she attributed all this to her dedication and the attention she paid while in class. Respondent G showed that she enjoyed the exercise because it was a success to her which influenced her positive attitude towards classroom exercises. Regarding this assessment strategy, the respondent showed that there was no need for preparation because it was abrupt and therefore its nature was quite different from other strategies seen above. Students" experience did not follow a specific process although the respondent showed that it was a good learning experience of those who effectively made use of it. Responses from other students were not acquired as they did not possess such an artefact and therefore data in this regard was only gathered from one respondent.

4.6 Conclusion

It can therefore be seen from the above presentation of findings that History Education students have varied experiences of assessment depending on the assessment strategy that is administered. Based on how each assessment strategy benefits a student and enhances one"s academic growth, such experiences are shaped by and simultaneously shape students attitudes towards particular assessment strategies, modules, instructors and even the discipline of History as a whole which eventually determine their preferences. The most important finding from the analysis is that students" experiences of assessment follow a process that is comprises challenges and moments to feel proud of. Such a process flows from preparation, engagement, feedback, to reflection on growth as presented above on each assessment strategy.

In terms of preparation, some respondents claimed to have effective and enough time (if not more than enough) to prepare for all the assessment tasks given in the course of the semester with an exception of the classroom quiz. Respondents said that details about some assessment tasks were given right at the beginning of the semester indicating the rubrics and all the necessary information regarding a particular assessment strategy. The majority of respondents confessed that their preparation does not start straight from the time they are given the assessment tasks; they wait up to the last week or few days to start organising the necessary materials and doing consultations where necessary. The majority of the respondents also showed that they do not often consult their instructors unless there is a quite complicated issue that they cannot deal with as a group. While preparing for a given assessment task, respondents indicated that they often refer to their lecture slides, articles in the course pack or online source but preferences of these sources vary from one assessment task to another. Respondents linked background knowledge on a certain theme to be discussed or presented in a given assessment task to good performance and positive feedback. They claimed that prior knowledge acquired from previous lectures, unofficial interaction with members of the community or knowledge acquired from primary or high school experience provided a healthy platform for engaging with a given assessment task.

Regarding engagement, some respondents confessed that there was no full commitment to certain assessment tasks because they did not give it their all despite having enough time given with instructors available for consultation and material to work with. Some respondents showed that their commitment was only effective in the last week to submission and this affected their performance. The majority of the respondents claimed to have low passion for reading despite being aware that it is part and parcel of History Education assessment. They said that they do the readings only if they must. Respondents expressed that they had varied challenging experiences of History Education assessment. One of the major challenges respondents expressed was the complex language in which articles are written and in which they have to express themselves while writing essays and doing presentations. Some of the respondents had English as their second language and they showed that this was a great challenge to them. Respondents said they did not use the rubric especially for tasks that require research or essay writing because they felt they were aware of requirements of the assessment tasks of the same kind they had done since their first year. Many confessed that they only looked at the rubric after getting the feedback to see what fell short.

In terms of feedback, respondents showed that they found History Education feedback to be satisfactory because the scripts come with comments and explanations areas of weaknesses and strengths. They said that from the feedback, they can identify where to improve and where to maintain. Nevertheless, a reasonable number of respondents showed that they valued the marks they scored before anything else is considered. Some respondents said that they were aware of the benefits of committing themselves to all the assessment strategies discussed above but mainly minded about how it ended for them in terms of scores.

As regards reflection on growth, the majority of the respondents showed that they benefited from History Education assessment because the entire process is a viable learning experience. They showed that preparation and engagement expose them to new knowledge as they deal with and actually process information to be submitted. The respondents appreciated the fact that they learn from the feedback comments and more

knowledge acquired from consultations made after feedback and while preparing to engage with a given assessment task. Students showed that they recognised History Education assessment for administering a variety of assessment strategies which equip students with the necessary skills such as reading skills, research skills, skills on interpretation of sources and essay writing skills among others.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSION OF THE FINDINGS, CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

5.1 Introduction

In the previous chapter, I presented the findings from an inductive analysis of the data that I gathered; and in this chapter I will discuss the key findings from the data analysis. This discussion will be conducted through making a connection between the findings of the study with the literature on assessment and the theory of social constructivism, with a focus on ZPD, as reviewed in Chapter 2.

This study sought to investigate History Education students‟ experiences of History Education assessment in an institution of higher education. To this end, I was guided by one research question: How do History Education students experience History Education assessment in a higher education institution? The research focused on students‟ experiences of identified assessment strategies based on the available artefacts that enhanced the data gathering process. The data gathered from both face-to-face and focus group interviews were coded and then grouped together into categories that, in turn, reflected emerging themes. The main finding was that the students at the institution under focus experience History Education assessment as a four-stage process. The four major themes that emerged to represent this process were:

- Preparation
- Engagement
- Feedback
- Reflections on Growth

What follows is a discussion of the data within these themes in relation to the literature and theory of the study.

5.2 Preparation

From the findings, one of the most impressive features of History Education assessment at the university was effective and timely communication about assessment tasks, their requirements, expected nature of input, engagement and submission dates. Details about any assessment task and their rubric were always communicated early enough which gave students enough time to do their research and consultation if they had to as they prepared for a given task. With an exception of the classroom quiz, the tasks from all other assessment strategies were communicated early in a space of not less than one week before the due date and all respondents agreed to the fact that the time given for preparation was sometimes even more than enough. Therefore students experienced assessment preparation as dully expected considering Doyle *et al.*"s (2015) alignment strategy which besides timely communication emphasises defining to the students the assessment objectives and intended outcome.

However, some students did not utilise the time for preparation effectively. Students had a tendency of waiting up to the last week if not day or hour to engage with an assessment task. This limited their potential to perform to their best or even to benefit from the entire assessment task as would be expected. It was found out that most of the assessment tasks in all modules are to be submitted within almost the same period, so students go through tough times during this period as they may not satisfy all the requirements of each task given across all modules that are running at the institution including those in History Education. So the time given to students is sufficient, but the time students allocate to their assessment tasks is insufficient. This partly explains why there was less commitment to assessment-related activities like reading and research. The implication of such a finding is that some students were found to be the surface learners whose aim, according to Yorke (2006), is to avoid failure by investing in minimum efforts. It is for the same reason that students insist on getting an examination scope while preparing for examinations in order to concentrate on only the suggested topic of examination so that they can avoid failure. The major aim of such students is to absorb information without the intention of processing them mentally and, as suggested by Troskie-de Bruis and Otto (2004), their major goal is achievement not long-term

benefit. This implies that despite the potential History Education assessment has in enhancing growth of the student, some of the ways in which students choose to experience it may not yield all the necessary benefits.

In preparation for the different assessment tasks, the majority of the students did little consultation with their instructors and find it more convenient to refer to their fellow students, especially those ahead of them (4th years) and elders in the community. Students felt that they were always equipped with the necessary materials and guidelines before starting on a particular assessment task. This makes them feel that they have all it takes to engage with a given assessment task even without consulting the instructor. Another reason why students choose to do little consultation was because they always leave their work up the last day or hours to submission. So in the process of panicking as they attempt to submit within the limited time available, many end up either not having enough time to look for the instructor or feel guilty to consult in the last days before submission. However, the fact that they consulted with peers and elders still falls within the framework of social constructivism (Vygotsky, 1950) which encourages students to interact with a more knowledgeable other in order to move into the next ZPD.

Social constructivism, which is the theoretical framework of this study, suggests that there must also be correspondence between the instructor and the student in order for a constructive interaction to take place (Kozulin, 2003). This, in a way, was proven to be the experience of the History Education students in the higher education institution. The only difference is that the instructors" role was downplayed by students who resorted to interaction with a different group of more knowledgeable others. However, the downplaying of the instructor"s guidance may have contributed to some students finding some of their work difficult. As suggested in the literature by Coffey (2009), a student should not start by working on his/her own, but should be scaffolded by a more knowledgeable other first in small steps until when he/she is ready to perform independently. Therefore, since the instructor is trained to instruct and guide students towards construction of knowledge, he/she has an important role to play. Nevertheless, instructors are not the only knowledgeable others as shown in the experiences of the

students under focus. Indeed, according to Vygotsky‟s ZPD model (Katherine & Kalina, 2010), classmates, 4th year students and elders in the community also can play a part in the scaffolding.

The students‟ experiences of preparation with little consultation with the instructors can also be explained in other terms. As discussed in the literature review, the „we do things differently‟ notion, as suggested by Harrington and Timothy (2004), confirms the uniqueness of assessment in higher education. It is only in the class where the students meet the instructor for instructional purposes and assessment guidance. The problem is that such an experience makes it quite difficult for the instructor to identify students who need more help in order to do proper scaffolding. Therefore, in higher education assessment, it is upon the student to look for the instructor to get guidance in constructing knowledge. The instructors‟ role in this is limited to being available for consultation.

Most students admitted to the fact that History Education instructors in the university were always available and approachable in their consultation times; only that students did not utilise them as duly expected. A reasonable number of students consulted their instructors after getting the feedback to query their scores, seek clarity on where they went wrong, and ask for makeup tests if the performance was not satisfactory, among other reasons. Such History Education students reveal features of surface achieving learners who learn by rote with minimum efforts put in, but looking towards getting good grades.

The findings also show that there was more consultation with instructors towards examinations than other times during the course of the semester. The literature in Chapter 2 showed that the examination experience is tensional and it is what many students fear (Pharr & Buscemi, 2005). So it was during the examination preparation period when students experience panic and rush to get clarity on some of the anticipated examinable areas or to raise their claims regarding their continuous assessment tasks done in the semester.

Besides contact sessions, one of the most effective means of communication in History Education regarding consultation was through email. Students showed that they get immediate response and also receive important information from the instructors concerning any upcoming assessment activity, guidelines, reminders of due dates and any other assessment related communication. Such an experience resonated with what was discussed in Chapter 2 where Kozulin (2003) emphasises that there must be interaction between the student and the instructor through any essential medium of communication. So communication through email was appropriate to foster such an interaction.

Before starting to engage with a given or upcoming assessment strategy, students have to organise material and sources to work with. This study revealed that some students preferred simplified experiences of assessment and therefore as part of their preparation, they refer to material that is less tasking and less time-consuming, easy to access, or easy to understand. Such findings apply to the arguments advanced in the literature by Aerts (2014) and Yorke (2006) that students filter out what is important for them to go through a particular course. Therefore students forego materials or sources that require a lot of reading, too much concentration and dedication as well as time. The sources student choose to use vary from one assessment task to another for example online sources are largely used when preparing for classroom presentations and long essay assignments. Some students actually complained that modules were getting tougher, regardless of the fact that modules should progressively get more difficult from year to year in order for them to learn new things. Such students evidently were not willing to grow from one ZPD to another

Some students did not commit themselves to much reading which is why many of them did not make use of the library. The same attitude explains why some students did not see the relevance of a reading report assessment strategy which must only be attempted after reading a given article. Such type of students are what Aerts (2014) earlier on described as cue learners who filter out what is important in the course and what to safely ignore. According to Aerts (2014), cue learners make choices over issues such as what to study, which materials to use and where to access them and whom to

consult. While it cannot be totally refuted that there were inadequate reading materials in the library, availability is guaranteed if students show interest in accessing a particular reading material. The institution‟s library can borrow or buy new books if students show an urgent need for them and if students do not raise it, the same books will be kept in the shelves over time. Another argument relating to this finding is from Gibbs (2006) whose study showed that students apportion their focus and time on areas they assume will be assessed from which they will get good grades. Therefore students who adopt a surface learning approach allocated limited preparation time for a particular assessment task that was just enough to earn them a pass mark. Such students consulted less with any knowledgeable other and did not use the library because they did not find it of much significance.

Access to facilities like the internet, library, computer labs and printers is more guaranteed to students who reside on-campus and hence have more time to dedicate to any given assessment task, unlike non-resident students who after lecture times are likely to be occupied with household responsibilities and may not have facilities like the internet at home. Although the study established a relationship between students‟ academic performance and area of residence, there is no evidence that all on-campus residents performed well in the long essay assignment and that all non-residents performed poorly. If anything, on-campus residents may have higher chances of completing assessments tasks given in time compared to the non-residents, but still there was no proof of that as the majority of students, regardless of their area of residence, showed that they were always ready with something to submit on or before the due date. Still, students who stay on-campus are more surrounded by an academic environment and have more chances of interacting with fellow students on pedagogical issues than those who stay off campus (Katherine & Kalina, 2009; Pitchard & Woollard, 2010). This explains that students who stay on-campus experience assessment preparation differently and have higher chances of constructing more new knowledge.

Background knowledge was found to be an important element in preparing for History Education assessment. Such an importance was recognised by Pace (2011) who establishes a connection between students‟ prior exposure, experience and knowledge

with construction of new knowledge. Students used their prior knowledge on a certain theme as a healthy platform for successfully engaging with a given assessment task. Background knowledge is important because it determines a good foundation for scaffolding. Students had acquired such background knowledge from previous instructors, high school or primary education or unofficial interaction with members of the community. This applied more to tests and examinations, which is also an indication that in-class assessments are associated with recall. This may also explain why students resorted to doing more revision as part of preparation. In terms of ZPD, background knowledge in this case is the students" actual level of development which Bruner earlier refers to as the students" current level of understanding (Pritchard & Woollard, 2010). Therefore, through their interaction with peers and guidance by either the instructors or the rubric students were most likely to reach their potential level of development , as a result of the given assessment activities (Coffey, 2009).

From this subsection, it can be concluded that students" experiences in terms of preparation involve receiving effective and early communication giving them sufficient time to consult. The experiences are also characterised by looking for study material and organising discussions with group members before engaging with any assessment task. Students refer to more knowledgeable others before they consider coming to their instructors for consultation and guidance as they prepare to engage with assessment. Students also consider approachability rather than only knowledge when they decide whom to consult. They find the preparation experience easier when they are being assessed on issues that they have prior knowledge about. When getting materials to use before engaging with any assessment task, students prefer online sources. Others refer to classroom notes, lecture slides and demand the exam scope. Very few students, if any, use books from the library.

5.3 Engagement

One of the findings under this theme was that History Education students" assessment experiences were characterised by limited commitment to certain tasks. Students did not put maximum effort despite having sufficient time and material, with lecturers

available for consultation. As already noted, some students" efforts were effective only during the last days before the due dates. Because of such ill-preparation as seen in the above sub-section, some students experienced engagement with certain assessment tasks with low self-esteem and confidence. Therefore ill-preparation explains low levels of self-esteem and confidence. This was common during seminar presentations, tests and examinations. From this experience, students were therefore most likely to have constructed limited knowledge.

The findings also revealed that such limited engagement was more evident in relation to assessment tasks that were given for a preparation period of more than a week to submission where students only put efforts up when the assignment is almost due. Students largely experience this when engaging with reading reports, group presentations, take-home tests and long essay assignments. It is most likely to happen that students thought they had all the time to engage with the assignment and therefore did not see a need for a rush. Some students who confessed to this attributed it to their own laziness and a heavy workload that they usually hold at once since all modules have their respective demands and assignment are usually due within the same time frames. Students" engagement was limited which implies limited interaction and resulting in limited knowledge construction.

History Education students" experiences of engagement with some of the given assessment tasks did not tally with the instructors" expectations. For example, an instructor who gives out a reading report assignment expects students to read the article in question thoroughly and construct knowledge from that experience. However, some students were not committed to reading and only did when they felt that they had no choice. Therefore, students" approach in this case rendered the reading report assessment as an unessential learning tool contrary to how it is seen by Louis and Harada (2012). Such students proved to be those who learn by rote, but still intend to get high grades (Yorke, 2006). Such students confessed that they did not fully engage with the assignment despite being aware of the benefits of thorough engagement. In this case, it becomes difficult for instructors to get feedback about whether or not students understand the material they present.

Reading is more or less a pre-requisite for preparation and successful engagement with almost all History Education assessment tasks, but some History Education students had a low passion for it. With the exception of the classroom quiz, engagement with the rest of the assessment strategies involves reading. The low reading passion was expressed by both local and international students who showed that they do the readings only if they must. This partly explains why students find it better to refer to classroom slides which are summarised and simplified by the instructors as their first priority when preparing for certain tasks in assessment strategies like tests and examinations. This is in relation to findings from Dochy and Gijbel"s (2006) study which claims that it is only students who adopt a deep approach who prefer assessment procedures which allowed them to demonstrate their understanding.

Such results showed that students who struggled with understanding the text concentrated on details, memorising some parts of the text and study layout. Understanding was not their purpose. According to Seth (2003) such students stay within the same ZPD because their maturing functions are inadequate. Such students therefore need scaffolding to acquire appropriate reading skills so that they can make their own meaning from the given texts. This will eventually raise their passion and confidence. It should be noted that written work dominates the History Education discipline (Maxwell, 2010). Therefore, almost all assessment tasks in History Education at the higher education institution involve reading and writing.

While engaging with History Education assessment, students experienced challenges which demoralise them and limit their level of performance. One of the major challenges is the complex language in which the readings are presented. English is the official medium of instruction yet the majority of the students have it as their second language. Many students therefore find it challenging to engage with the readings, sometimes to understand/interpret the questions of the given tasks while others find it challenging to express their perspectives in classroom presentations, tests, examinations and essays assignments. Kozulin (2003) suggests establishing a common ground to cater for students of different backgrounds, competences and abilities. The authors further suggested establishing an effective communication and efficient learning and

assessment environment so that each and every student can achieve his/her learning goals. A common ground in this case would mean, among other things, adopting a language that the students understand best.

History Education students had different experiences of engagement with assessment. Just as observed by Maxwell (2010), higher education students have different learning styles and approaches (for example deep learning, surface learning and surface achieving styles) reflecting different backgrounds and cultures. In this study, students also had different learning styles. For example, while some did a lot of revision in preparation for the test and examinations, others just participated in discussion with classmates. In order to accommodate them all to construct knowledge form History Education assessment, the institution adopted methodological diversity suggested by Pace (2011). Methodological diversity involved administering different assessment strategies. Therefore, students who, for example, find it challenging to construct knowledge through engaging with a reading report assessment may cover up through group work presentation or any other assessment strategy that administered.

Another challenge that students experienced was in relation to the mark allocation in the examinations. Some students experienced difficulties in to determining how much to write given the marks allocated to some questions in the examinations. For example, according to the students, a lower order recall question would be heavily weighted leaving them confused about the requirements. However, although this was presented as a challenge, none of the students indicated that it was a reason for underperformance. Besides, there was a contrasting view from other students who maintained that the mark allocation was fair and, above all, the examination artefact at hand did not reflect such a weird mark allocation. This implies that maybe the challenge experienced in determining how much to write for a particular question was at a personal level and not to every student.

Other challenges experienced included thick course packs, long readings, the grouping system for seminar presentations and first-time experiences of certain assessment strategies. Referring to formative and alternative assessment, Frost et al. (2012)

indicates that constant pressure can damage students" learning. Results from this study revealed that at a certain point in the course of the semester, students have heavy workloads because they experience assessment of all modules with in the same time frame. The pressure they experience at this time causes the above mentioned challenges and it is part of what Frost *et al.* (2012) refer to.

The study revealed that some students experienced strange assessment strategies that they found challenging to adapt to. This was common among international students some of whom even had challenges with understanding English because they came from non-English speaking backgrounds. It was found out that the nature of History Education assessment at the South African higher education institution was different from what the international students are used to in their respective countries" institutions. The international students were for example, used to short answer and multiple questions as well as short essays that did not require intensive reading to prepare for and engage with. Such differences in backgrounds, exposure and experiences among History Education students were highlighted in Chapter 2 by Frost et al., (2012) and it was because of such differences that the adoption of a common learning ground is suggested by Kozulin (2003).

Gilmore and Smith, (2008) clearly indicate in the literature that students reach higher education levels with a prior exposure to a variety of assessment strategies right from primary schools to universities. It was most likely to happen that students would come across assessment strategies that they were already familiar with. Despite the different experiences that students came across, one common feature that cut across assessment systems was the written nature of History Education assessment. Such a feature as earlier on identified by in Chapter 2 by Pharr and Buscemi (2005) which partly explains why international students managed to adapt to the local assessment systems.

Students did not always use the rubric despite being aware of its significance in assessment. Some students confessed that they, in most cases, only look at the rubric after getting the feedback when they have to check how their work fell short of the

assessment requirements. This is in spite of the role of the rubric in aligning students with the assessment objectives and outcomes (Yorke, 2003). One of the students‟ reasons for not using the rubric was that their experiences of writing similar assessment tasks from their first year equipped them with an idea of the technical issues that were always emphasised, number of pages to be submitted and approaches to specific types of questions. However, there were a reasonable number of students who used the rubric for every given assignment. Such students believed that using the rubric was a crucial determinant of their positive feedback. This therefore implies that there exists a solid relationship between rubric usage and the nature of feedback. This finding again speaks to the relationship between alignment, feedback and the meaning students construct from the assessment experience (Bransford, Brown & Cocking, 2000).

Students experienced some assessment strategies with tension and fear which limited their concentration to engage with them to the best of their abilities. The literature (Pharr & Buscemi, 2005; Maxwell, 2010) illustrates how many students fear tests and examination essays – they become nervous, write under pressure which limits their writing to full ability. Related results were found in this study. Students develop such fear because of their prior experience of engagement with examinations. There is tight invigilation, nowhere to look if a student has no answer to a particular question and no second chance in the case of poor results. Therefore that tension is likely to affect students‟ concentration both during the preparation and the engagement processes. The same sentiments are felt for the classroom tests.

Therefore, students‟ levels of engagement with assessment vary and these variations are determined by the nature of the students themselves. Students experience History Education assessment with a number of individual challenges and these have implications on how much they commit themselves to assessment-related activities and the way they value issues like feedback.

5.4 Feedback

Despite some students having a limited commitment, they were aware of the intended goals of administering particular assessment strategies which implies that feedback was effective in that sense. Students had a sense of the range of marks which they hope to score depending on their input during preparation and engagement with the assessment tasks. Some of the students who scored low marks admitted that they were aware of the possibility of attaining better results if they had dedicated more time on the respective tasks.

Students found History Education feedback satisfactory as there is always a chance to get explanations to justify their respective scores except for examinations for which they do not get their scripts back. Students were concerned that they did not get any chance to identify where they went wrong in examination assessment. The only chance available is the script viewing week spared by the institution for all students to come and look through their scripts after marking is done. This, however, did not seem to work in many students" favour because of issues like distance from the institution, financial implications and lack of awareness about the script viewing itself. Therefore unlike other assessment strategies" feedback, students did not experience examination feedback as effective. Such an observation can be related to Gilmore and Smith"s (2007) argument that feedback is effective only when it becomes basically beneficial to the students.

Students" reaction to feedback varies depending on its nature and the significance attached to it. The literature highlighted a number of aspects to consider in order for feedback to be effective. Hattie and Timperley (2007), for example, show that feedback can be effective when it focuses on a particular task and how to do it, when it addresses the students" intended goals or when it addresses the processes necessary for task completion. I determined the effectiveness of feedback on the fact that it focused on the particular given tasks and the comments given on feedback clearly identified the requirements and processes necessary for completion. Such comments were either written on the scripts or delivered verbally in class or on consultation of students with the instructor. Form this experience students socially construct knowledge through this

interaction as they learn from their mistakes and identify areas of weakness, where to maintain and where to strengthen. Therefore, just as recommended by Hattie and Timperley (2007), most of the times the feedback tallied with students‟ expectations and, in addition to the comments on the scripts, instructors were available for explanations when consulted. This implies that students experienced effective feedback on the on the assessment strategies under focus.

However, it was revealed that there is a lot of consultation done by students who got poor marks. This is the time when they go to the instructors to query the scores and get clarification on where they went wrong. This was so common when it came to take-home test – an assessment task that majority of the interviewed students scored below the pass mark. In this assessment, students were given a chance to re-write the take-home test and before the second engagement with it, the majority consulted the instructor for guidance. According to Bruner, social constructivism encourages such guidance where students are given the chance to transform any information they have learnt into an appropriate format (Pritchard & Woollard, 2010). Students attained such guidance through dialogue with the instructor as suggested by Berger (2009) and this enabled students to socially construct knowledge through their second engagement with the take-home test. Such an interaction helped many to have an improved performance on the second submission. It can be seen that consultation would have helped a lot in making students understand the content and requirements of the take-home test before making the first submission.

History Education students received feedback from the assessment strategies administered in time. Literature identifies timing, and other elements like appropriateness to the assessment activity, how it benefits students and addressing the process necessary for task completion, as crucial elements in determining effective feedback (Hattie & Timperley, 2007; Gilmore & Smith, 2007). Therefore, if students received feedback in time then they will have experienced effective feedback. If students receive feedback in time, they would still have the memory of what they wrote on which they can easily reflect and tell where they went wrong. Such a reflection may be difficult if feedback delays. Timing for feedback varies from one assessment strategy

to another and therefore, what is immediate for one may be delayed for another. Therefore, time taken in marking and providing feedback must be long enough for thorough marking, but appropriate enough to enable students to benefit from such an assessment experience. In this sense therefore, the time taken to get feedback is a very important aspect and great determinant in student construction of knowledge.

The History Education students" views of feedback were not necessarily as is conceptualised in literature. For some students, feedback was effective only if they got a good mark. This is contrary to Cowe"s (2005) argument that students are very much interested in knowing whether ideas are right or wrong, getting instructors" explanation as to why their work may not be excellent or just good, as well as being provided with suggestions about where and how to go next. The respondents in this study were found to be more result-oriented as they seemed to value marks more than anything else. The students" understanding was reflected in their view of the take-home test experience, whereby feedback from the second submission was viewed as effective because of the improved marks. One of the major objectives of History Education assessment, according to Frederick (1997), is to develop students" abilities to think and reason historically as they construct new knowledge. Students confirmed that they were aware of the motive behind the variety of tasks such as group presentations, reading reports, classroom quiz and tests, but some of them sometimes cared more about how it ended for them in terms of scores.

The majority if not all of the respondents for example showed that they always got a positive feedback (positive feedback in this case would involve getting at least a pass mark of 50%) from the reading report assessment. None of the respondents showed that he/she had ever scored below the average mark. The power of good results in determining effective feedback was also recognised by Lipnevich and Smith (2009), but on condition that such feedback must also comprise a detailed description specific to individual work. This implies that considering a good mark as effective feedback is viable, but it is just one item amongst several others. Emphasising the mark only would imply viewing assessment from the perspective of the students and ignoring the

instructors". Gilmore and Smith (2007) emphasised that effective feedback must be measured from both the perspective of the instructor and the student.

Students" experiences of feedback shaped their attitude towards a particular assessment strategy and this has a huge bearing on how they use feedback to construct knowledge. This was as well raised in the literature by Moni et al. (2002) who emphasise that students" participation in assessment shaped their attitudes towards assessment and the value they placed on its feedback. Such an attitude is more likely to affect their engagement with further assessment. A related situation was reflected by some of the students in this study. For example students" experiences of reading report assessment was different from the one they had for the take-home assessment. They considered the take-home test to be the most difficult assessment task ever in their History Education experience. However, after re-writing and getting higher scores, their attitude changed positively. Although the engagement with the reading report was a tough experience as some students had a reading phobia, the feedback revealed that each student had the capacity to score a good mark because the instructor"s concern was to check any evidence of student engaging with the reading. Such a strategy is appropriate in terms of fostering student-centeredness in creation of knowledge.

We can conclude therefore that students experience feedback as effective in different ways. While some students consider getting only the pass mark, to others it is only effective if they get a chance to see where they went wrong in order to get guidance. Students" varied experiences of feedback also determine their varied attitudes towards assessment.

5.5 Reflection on Growth

History Education students experienced History Education assessment as constructive as they felt that it enables their academic growth when there is dedication. The findings showed that all the assessment strategies studied in this research at the higher education institution are intended to foster student-centeredness since they require

more of individual efforts with some guidance from the instructor. The students" role as active respondents is what Cowie (2005) and Timperly and Parr (2005) recommend. They were of the view that in order for students to succeed as active respondents in higher education assessment, they must be helped to understand the secret of what they are supposed to be learning and associated success criteria. Although the study did not reveal if students are briefed on how they are likely to benefit from a certain assessment task and the stage at which this is done, they showed that they were aware of it as well as the associated success criteria. This may have been through the rubric given, through interactions from the consultation with instructors or discussions with classmates or learning from the experiences of the past similar assessment tasks.

The assessment strategies under focus in this study were found to be expecting the students to develop such skills: reading, researching, interpreting, reasoning, summarising and then presenting their own perspective. This is manifested in all strategies like the long essay assignment, tests, reading report, examinations, seminar presentations and classroom quiz. The social constructivist theory as presented by Bruner in Chapter 2 is based on the principle that through activity, students discover their own truths and the instructor"s role is to facilitate that discovery (Chrenka, 2001). This process of discovery involves construction of new knowledge as they recognise the inherent meaning of what is experienced. So all the assessment activities given in History Education not only required student efforts, but also academic growth which was determined by one"s level of commitment. This study revealed that the higher the levels of commitment to the assessment activities assigned to the students, the higher the chances of constructing more knowledge and therefore growing academically. Such a situation was realised because of the History Education students that actively participated in the assessment activities. The findings here correspond with Cowie"s (2005) findings, discussed in Chapter 2, which showed that students saw themselves as intentional and active contributors to classroom assessment interactions and that their contribution had multiple, and often social and affective purposes and consequences. Such active participation would involve, among other things, intensive reading of related material, research, participation in group assessment related activities, consultation,

and effective use of the rubric. It was found out that some students under study experienced assessment as either deep learners or surface learners which implies that students have varying experiences of assessment and therefore attain varying levels of academic growth.

History Education students experiences of assessment made them appreciate the skills that they could acquire such as research, reading, interpretation of resources and essay writing, among others. This was so because there are various assessment techniques and strategies which provided a variety of avenues from which they acquired the historical skills. These strategies represent alternative assessment, which Murphy and Maree (2006) argue to be procedure-oriented with a focus on learning during assessment. As represented by the artefacts of the study, assessment at the institution was found to be alternative assessment of a formative approach. Such an experience involves students‟ interaction, discovery and therefore construction of knowledge.

The findings also show that students are exposed to multiple experiences from alternative assessment which enables them to have new/diverse constructed knowledge especially when guided. Similar results were revealed in the study by Struyven, Dochy and Jensen (2005) which demonstrated that alternative assessment is fairer because of its capacity to measure skills and qualities that are valuable in other contexts than those in the traditional assessment. It should be noted however, that despite the capacity that alternative assessment has in enhancing new knowledge construction, not all students fully benefitted from such an experience especially those who did not put their best effort. This implies that the instructors‟ aims in administering multiple assessments have to be complemented by students‟ efforts.

As noted earlier, students in History Education experience challenges in assessment and such challenging experiences can create negative attitudes towards certain assessment strategies, the module in which it is administered or the instructor using that assessment strategy. Such students develop a feeling that such an assessment strategy or module for that matter is irrelevant in History Education because they do not realise its potential in enhancing their academic growth. For example, there were some

students who had challenging experiences in working with groups and ended up having a negative attitude towards the Method 1 module in which they had a group assignment. Others developed a negative attitude towards the reading report assignment simply because they had challenges with reading and English language interpretation. Such students, however, confessed that their preparation and engagement experiences equipped them with some knowledge and skills.

Students" growth can be hampered if their attitude (as seen above) is negative and therefore needs the instructors" immediate intervention. Related results are shown by Struyven, Dochy and Jansens (2005) that once students feel that some assessment tasks are irrelevant, effective learning is hampered since they will not aim at constructing knowledge in the long term. However, such attitudes were only applied to particular students and cannot be generalised. There were those who faced no challenge with reading and acknowledged the new knowledge that they constructed from their reading report assessment experience. At the same time, there are those whose attitude was positive. They were dedicated to group work assessment as active respondents while some referred to sources other than the lecture slides and the scope while preparing for examination. Such students showed that they were proud of the benefit from such assessment experiences in terms of the new knowledge constructed. Therefore, a student"s attitude towards a certain assessment experience is not solely determined by its nature or capacity to benefit the student, but largely by the nature of feedback or challenges experienced therein. Despite the challenges and the negative attitude towards certain assessment strategies, there was evidence of growth attained by students.

Most of the History Education students also showed appreciation for the way their experiences of classroom tests and examinations enabled for the construction of knowledge. Despite the tensional moments while engaging with them, students under study were more committed to examination and classroom test preparation and engagement more than for any other assessment strategies. The findings in this study do not tally with Maxwell"s (2010) view or Pharr and Buscemi"s (2005) underestimation of the significance of tests and examinations in enhancing students" construction of new

knowledge. They based their arguments on the fact that there was fear by students and the experience only confined students" memory to small number of sources which limits their ability to construct new knowledge. Maxwell (2010) and Pharr & Buscemi (2005) present their arguments by only looking at the engagement experience. The findings from this research indicate that students do benefit from examinations and classroom tests. This is based on the preparation the students go through which involves more consultations, intensive reading and more discussion sessions with peers on topics expected to be examined or tested. During this period, there is a lot of interaction, scaffolding, exposure and discovery culminating in the construction of new knowledge. Besides, students acknowledged the significance of all assessment strategies that involve presentation of one"s opinion through essay writing as relevant and appropriate in History Education.

Students were aware of the challenges involved and showed that they had no choice other than dealing with each assessment strategy according to its demands. Therefore students" experiences of tests and examinations at the institution under research were different from those studied in the literature. This implies that the varying assessment experiences are not only on the basis of students" background, but also contexts. This also explains why students in Zeidner"s (1987) study found essay examinations as the most appropriate in construction of knowledge while Traub and McRury"s (1990) students preferred multiple choice tests.

To conclude this discussion of findings, it is important to note that History Education students experience History Education assessment as a process. This was a unique feature when compared to experiences revealed elsewhere in the literature. The social constructivist theory fit well in this study as assessment at the institution was found to be structured in a manner that stimulates student-centeredness in which students were given a platform on which they can construct meaningful interpretation of what is researched, observed, heard and experienced. The instructor"s role was felt in facilitating learning processes, assessing and providing feedback to the students, but not effectively felt when it came to scaffolding outside the classroom. Students" movement through their ZPD was facilitated more by fellow students and other elders

than students" own instructors despite the instructors" availability during consultation times. Students have different experiences of assessment determined by their backgrounds, attitudes towards particular assessment strategies or techniques and challenges experienced. Therefore, students construct meaning from the assessment experiences in different ways and at different levels.

The group under investigation comprised students with a variety of learning styles. These included surface learners, deep learners and surface-achieving learners. The majority of the learners were found to be surface achievers whose target was gaining high grades regardless of the intended assessment goals. This implies that such students preferred staying in the same ZPD and did not mind if they did not move to the next level. Feedback was found to be effective on the basis of being received in time and enabling students to construct knowledge by interacting with instructors through comments on scripts and clarifications in class and in contact sessions. The students went through challenging experiences such English language proficiency, thick course packs, long readings, group allocations for seminar presentations and first-time assessment experiences. Nevertheless, engagement with multiple assessment equipped students with the necessary skills for academic growth and development, such as research, reading, synthesis, interpretation of resources and essay writing among others.

Overall, History Education assessment at the higher education institution was constructive in nature, but benefitting from the entire experience depends on one"s efforts and level of commitment. It can therefore be observed that students appreciated the capacity History Education assessment had in fostering academic growth especially if one is committed and guided.

5.6 Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study, the following recommendations are made:

The students in this study were found to rely heavily on their fellow students, elders or study materials to move within their ZPD while constructing knowledge. According to the social constructivist theory that underlies this study, the instructor, who is in this case is the assessor, has the crucial responsibility of facilitating knowledge construction for students. However, student turn-up for this facilitation though consultation with their assessor was lower than expected. It is therefore recommended that a comprehensive study be carried out to investigate issues around students" low turn up for consultation and what can alternatively be done to help them through.

It was revealed that many students" attitude towards reading is negative and some students read History Education-related material only if they must. As a matter of fact, reading is part and parcel of History Education through which History-related knowledge is largely constructed. Therefore, any History Education student who does not commit him/herself to reading is likely to graduate as a half-baked History scholar. It is therefore recommended that means should be devised that encourage students to inevitably read or change their attitudes towards reading.

As noted earlier, construction of knowledge is more possible if students are given the chance to play their role as active respondents with instructors" guidance. The study also revealed that teaching, learning and assessment complement one another in the process. The data from this research showed that students" active participation was effective in learning, preparation and engagement with the given assessment tasks, but their active participation in assessment was missing. It is important to investigate if History Education students have experiences of their own assessment, its nature and how it all enhances their academic growth. In case this is missing, then peer and other related forms of assessment can be adopted.

The study was carried out in one selected higher education institution in South Africa. The research framework that has been used for this study can be easily exported to other institutions locally and internationally, where this study can be replicated and extended in order to widen our scope of understanding regarding History Education students" experiences of History Education assessment.

5.7 Conclusions and implications of the study

This study sought to investigate how History Education students experience History Education assessment by tracing the voice of the student. The research question for this study was „How do History Education students experience History Education assessment in a higher education institution?‟ The thematic literature review acknowledged the power of assessment in enhancing students‟ academic growth especially if students experience it as active respondents. The literature further demonstrated that students experience formative assessment as more constructive than summative approaches. It further showed that students experience alternative assessment, through multiple assessment experiences, as the most appropriate compliment to formative assessment in terms of socially constructed knowledge. The literature also recognised the power of feedback to individual construction of knowledge as long as it is effective and timely.

To conduct the study, a qualitative case study was adopted and data was gathered from 3rd year History Education students, through both face-to-face and focus group interviews. The gathered data was analysed inductively and the analysis revealed that History Education students under study experienced History Education assessment through a process that ranges from preparation to engagement, through feedback to reflections on growth. Such a process involved construction of new knowledge at every stage which enabled students to eventually reflect on how they grew academically and professionally. The majority of the students turned out to be surface learners who minded more about how the assessment ended in terms of scores than growth. Such students did less consultation, were reluctant to engage with the readings and did less preparation for engagement, amongst other things.

The findings of the study imply that most of the students‟ experiences of assessment do not tally with the objectives of the assessment that they are being given. The assessment strategies are both formative and summative and they progress from stage to stage and the assessment criteria differed from stage to stage in order to push the

students. But students seem to want to experience assessment the same way throughout. So this study in relation ZPD implies that the assessments are creating a huge ZPD, but many students seem not be interested in getting to where assessment is supposed to push them. Their experiences show that if they consulted more, used the rubric, read more and involved more in preparation and engagement assessment activities, they would push ahead in their ZPD.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix (i)

Appendix (i)

Class activity

- In groups, discuss how you can teach: (a) Gifted/Talented learners (b) Multiracial class and (c) a class comprising of all these three groups of learners
- You will be assigned a topic to discuss in your groups
- Present your discussion to the whole class in front of the classroom
- This activity will be assessed using the given rubric

-8-

Appendix (ii)

Appendix (ii)

READING REPORT TEMPLATE

NAME OF STUDENT:

AUTHOR AND TITLE OF READING:

1. What according to you is this reading about/central theme?

2. List 5 ideas that are central to the theme of this article

3. Summarise the theme or the argument of this reading in 100

4. List 3 points in this article that you definitely agree with and 3 you definitely disagree with that you would like to discuss in class

Agree

-
-
-

Disagree

-
-
-

Appendix (iii)

Appendix (iii)

50

Student Name: _____

Student Number: _____

SECTION A : SOURCE QUESTIONS

1. Name three changes that occurred in England as a result of the Industrial Revolution. **(6)**

Before the revolution	After the revolution

2. What was the name of the dynasty from which Tsar Nicholas II emerged? **(2)**

_____

3. Refer to **Source A, Source B,** and **Source C** below. What does this tell us about the kind of man the Tsar was? **(5)**

_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____
_____

SOURCE A
Statement made by Trotsky in 1932

"His [the Tsar] ancestors did not bequeath him one quality which could have made him capable of governing an empire."

SOURCE B
Diary extract of the Tsar – 1894

What is going to happen to me, to all Russia? I am not prepared to be the Tsar. I never wanted to become one. I know nothing of the business of ruling. I have no idea of even how to talk to ministers.
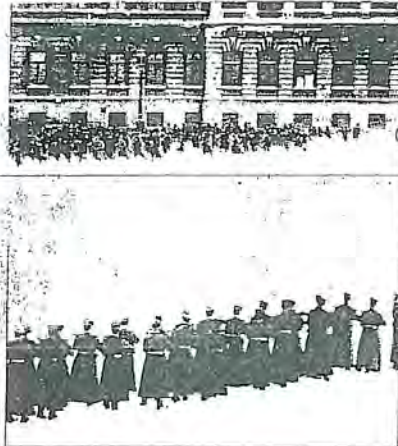
SOURCE C
A comment by an anonymous Cabinet Minister

"[The Tsar] was not fit to run a village post office"

4. Refer to **Source D** below. Name the major event that occurred and provide the actual date. (2)

SOURCE D

5. Who was this event lead by? (2)

6. Where did this event take place? (2)

7. Explain the proceedings that lead to this event? (Why did this happen?) (5)

8. What was the outcome of this event? (5)

_____
_____
_____
_____

SECTION B: EXTENDED WRITING (1 PAGE)
Answer one question from this section

1. "A necessary evil". Explain this assertion in line with the events of the Industrial Revolution in Britain. **(20)**

OR

2. **A)** Discuss your understanding of the triangular trade **(12)**

   B) How did this trade contribute to the outbreak of the Industrial Revolution in Britain? **(8)**

Appendix (iv)

Appendix (iv)

KENYA – SOURCE-BASED TEST

SOURCE A:
Extract from Maxon, Robert's article Kenya: Colonial Period: Administration, Christianity, Education, and Protest to 1940.

> Protest emerged first in central Kenya with regard to the land issue. It was articulated by the Kikuyu Association (KA), formed in 1919 by Kikuyu colonial chiefs, and by the Young Kikuyu Association, quickly renamed the East African Association (EAA), formed in 1921 by Harry Thuku and other young Western – educated Kikuyu working in Nairobi, to protest against high taxes, measures initiated by the colonial state to force Africans into wage labor, reduction in wages for those employed, as well as land grievances.

SOURCE B:
Part of a speech by Jomo Kenyatta, first president of Kenya, at a Kenya African Union (KAU) meeting at Nyeri, July 26, 1952, three months before his arrest.

> KAU is not a fighting union that uses fists and weapons. If any of you here think that force is good, I do not agree with you: remember the old saying that he who is hit with a rungu [club] returns, but he who is hit with justice never comes back. I do not want people to accuse us falsely - that we steal and that we are Mau Mau. I pray to you that we join hands for freedom and freedom means abolishing criminality. Beer harms us and those who drink it do us harm and they may be the so-called Mau Mau. Whatever grievances we have, let us air them here in the open. The criminal does not ,want freedom and land - he wants to line his own pocket. Let us therefore demand our rights justly. The British Government has discussed the land problem in Kenya and we hope to have a Royal Commission to this country to look into the land problem very shortly. When this Royal Commission comes, let us show it that we are a good peaceful people and not thieves and robbers.

PARESH..

OPPOSITION

PEACE TALKS KENYA

GOV'T

ETHNIC VIOLENCE

WE GET TO GRIPS WITH THE ISSUE...

QUESTIONS

1. From the **Source A**:
   a. Explain the rationale behind the colonial tax system? [2]
   b. Why do you think the KA was quickly renamed the EAA? [2]

2. Read **Source B** and identify three things that Jomo Kenyatta criticised the Mau Mau of. [3]

3. In your opinion, why would Kenyatta make the statement he made in **Source B**? [2]

4. Study **Source C** carefully and then answer the following questions:

   a. In what way is this cartoon historical evidence? [4]
   b. Comment on the attitude of the cartoonist. [2]
   c. Comment on the cartoon caption. [2]
   d. What is the cartoonist emphasising? [4]

SOURCE C:
A cartoon by Leslie Gilbert Illingworth, *Punch*, UK. 22 October 1952

SOURCE D:
Kenya Catholic Bishops, 1993. *An Open Letter to H.E. the President Daniel Arap Moi and to All the People of Goodwill in Kenya*

With due respect to your high position, it is extremely difficult to understand how you can claim to be governing the country, if you are not able to "restrain others." These words spoken with great emotion are not consistent with your powers or your promises. The greatest threat to security are the well-armed organised gangs of "warriors" who are transported to wreak destruction and cause mass exodus of defenceless citizens. It must be difficult to deny their existence when the Hon. MP for Narok, claims to be leading them in the defence of Maasai rights and when one of our Bishops has met and spoken to them in Turbo. This issue should have been followed up a long time ago if the Government was to clear off itself of the firmly held belief that it is behind all the clashes. It would seem that you do not see anything wrong as President to threaten voters with having to suffer "being left in the cold for the next five years" i.e. deprived of Government aid and services" if they did not vote KANU.

SOURCE E:
A cartoon by Paresh Nath, *The National Herald*, India. 2/7/2008

e. Name two individuals in the cartoon. [2]
f. In what way did the cartoonist use caricature and exaggeration? [4]
g. Identify and explain four symbols used by the cartoonist. [8]
h. What is significant about the date of publication – in other words the context of what was happening at the time? [4]
i. Explain the usefulness of this cartoon to students of History – in other words what Historical questions might it help to answer? [4]
j. What, according to you, is the meaning of the cartoon? [2]
k. Would you regard the cartoon as a reliable source? Explain. [4]
l. Would you regard the cartoon as overly biased? Explain. [4]

5. Examine the cartoon (**Source E**). Explain what the cartoonist thinks about the power of ethnicity in contemporary Kenya. [7]

6. Use the above sources and your own knowledge to write a 3 page essay on the following topic:

To what extent did the Kenyans owe their independence in 1963 to the activities of the Mau Mau? [40]

NOTE: Use some form of citation if and when you use the provided sources in your essay.

TOTAL: 100

Appendix (v)

Appendix (V)

UNIVERSITY OF
KWAZULU-NATAL

SCHOOL OF EDUCATION-Edgewood Campus

SOCIAL SCIENCE EDUCATION CLUSTER

HISTORY EDUCATION

EXAMINATION – NOVEMBER 2013

Module title	Africa in a Globalising World	Code	EDHS101
Duration	3 hours	Marks	150
Internal Examiners:	Mr. Omaar Bbira	External Examiner:	Mr. M. Maposa

- Read the question paper carefully
- It is in your own interest to write legibly
- Number your question clearly and EXACTLY as the question paper
- Answer all question from section A (Compulsory)
- Answer one question from section B
- Answer all questions from section C

1

SECTION A (COMPULSORY)
QUESTION 1

Explain the following concepts

1.1 Pan Africanism	(3)
1.2 Post-colonialism	(3)
1.3 Slavery	(3)
1.4 Voluntary Migration	(3)
1.5 Mixed economy	(3)
	[15]

QUESTION 2

2.1 Which five of the following countries are not in the Sub-Saharan African region?

i) South Africa	vi) Tanzania
ii) Tunisia	vii) Mauritania
iii) Malawi	viii) Nigeria
iv) Morocco	ix) Gambia
v) Libya	x) Algeria

(5)

2.1.2 Identify 5 characteristics of modern migration patterns in Africa (5)

2.1.3 In what ways has Africa benefitted from its engagement with the rest of the world? (15)

2.1.4 Explain five reasons behind Sub-Saharan Africa's poor economic performance as compared to North African economies? (10)

TOTAL (50 MARKS)

SECTION B (Answer only one question)

QUESTION 1

To what extent are African post-colonial problems a result of Colonialism? Discuss in detail.

(50)

QUESTION 2

Evaluate how far the African Union has managed to fulfil the objectives of its founders.

(50)

QUESTION 3

In your own view, what should Africa do to change her global image? (50)

TOTAL (50 MARKS)

SECTION C (Answer all questions)

a) Explain any five differences between past and present-day slavery patterns in Africa.

(10)

b) Evaluate the impact of pre-colonial Slavery on African communities.

(15)

c) To what extent has the African Union achieved the objectives of its founders since 2002?

(25)

TOTAL (50 MARKS)

Appendix (vi)

ASSESSMENT

1. Assessment consists of continuous/formative assessment only.
2. FORMATIVE ASSESSMENT INCLUDE ONE "BIG" ASSIGNMENT:

TOPIC OF ASSIGNMENT: Find five (5) different sources pertaining to any aspect of the FET History curriculum.

- Explain how you would use each of these sources to teach in a learner-centered, skills-based manner.
- Your explanation must reflect an understanding of the theory underpinning the use of sources in the teaching of History. The comprehensive notes handed to you, as well as the knowledge constructed in class and during teaching practice, will assist you in this. (100)

Due date: May 2013

NOTES ON ASSESSMENT

1. All work handed in for assessment must be typed and printed. You may not submit work electronically. Use Times New Roman font style and 12 point font size

Appendix (vii)

Permission from the gate keeper granted

21/01/2014

University of Kwazulu-Natal
Edgewood campus
P Bag X03
Ashwood
3605

14th October 2013

The Dean
School of Education
University of Kwazulu Natal
Edgewood campus
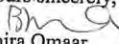P Bag X03
Ashwood
3605

Dear Prof. Kamwenda,

RE: REQUEST TO CONDUCT A RESEARCH IN THE UNIVERSITY

I am an M.ED (History Education) student, number 211550430 conducting a research titled: "History education students' experiences of history assessment at an institution of higher education". I am kindly requesting your permission to access my intended participants as well as using the necessary university facilities throughout my research process.

Using this university as a case study, the research intends to investigate and understand history education students' experiences of history education assessment. I intend to collect data through open ended interviews with 3rd year history education students. I also hope that the results will be beneficial to the history department to make informed responses as regards improving teaching and learning of the subject at the university.

If you agree to my request please sign the letter of consent form attached.

Your cooperation and positive response are highly appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Bbira Omaar
Student.

LETTER OF CONSENT

Appendix (viii)

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

INYUVESI YAKWAZULU-NATALI

13 May 2014

Mr Omar Bbira 211550430
School of Education
Edgewood Campus

Dear Mr Bbira

Protocol reference number: HSS/1005/013M
Project title: History students' experiences of history education assessment: A case study of an institution of higher education
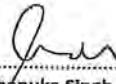
Full Approval – Expedited

This letter serves to notify you that your application in connection with the above has now been granted **Full Approval**

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project; Location of the Study, Research Approach/Methods must be reviewed and approved through an amendment /modification prior to its implementation.   Please quote the above reference number for all queries relating to this study. PLEASE NOTE: Research data should be securely stored in the school/department for a period of 5 years.

The ethical clearance certificate is only valid for a period of 3 years from the date of issue. Thereafter Recertification must be applied for on an annual basis.

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol

Yours faithfully

Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Humanities & Social Science Research Ethics Committee

/pm

cc Supervisor: Mr Mt Maposa
cc Academic Leader: Professor Pholoho Morojele
cc School Admin: Mr Thoba Mthembu

Humanities & Social Sciences Research Ethics Committee
Dr Shenuka Singh (Chair)
Westville Campus, Govan Mbeki Building
Postal Address: Private Bag X54001, Durban 4000
Telephone: +27 (0) 31 260 3587/8350/4557 Facsimile: +27 (0) 31 260 4609 Email: ximhep@ukzn.ac.za / snymanm@ukzn.ac.za / mohunp@ukzn.ac.za
Website: www.ukzn.ac.za

1910 · 2010
100 YEARS OF ACADEMIC EXCELLENCE

Founding Campuses   Edgewood   Howard College   Medical School   Pietermaritzburg   Westville

Appendix (ix)

Appendix (iX)

1. a) How do you feel about assessment in history education at the university?
    b) Why do you feel that way?

2. a) Do you know/remember this assessment task?
b) How did you find it?
c) What made it challenging/easy?
d) How did you go over the challenges (just in case?)

e) How did you go about preparing to attempt the assessment task?

3. Were you adequately prepared with the necessary knowledge/material to attempt the assessment task?
    b) Give details.

4. How did you feel about the feedback?

6. Did you find the rubric useful?
   b) Give details.

7. Do you have any comment regarding history education assessment at the university?

Appendix (x)

Appendix (x)

INFORMED CONSENT

Title of the project: **History education students' experiences of the history education assessment in a higher educational institution.**

Dear respondent,

You have been selected to participate in the case study research exploring history students' experiences on the history education assessment at the university.

The study aims at to learn how you experience assessment in history. I hope that the information you provide will assist in generating a more informed and sensitive response to the changes required in assessing history and thus facilitate the transition towards greater learning achievements.

The interview duration is approximately 30 minutes and will be digitally recorded using a voice recorder. Interview transcripts will be transcribed and coded for the study.

Your personal details will remain confidential at all times and your anonymity is guaranteed. This will be achieved through the use of codes for both yourself and the university.

Your transcribed interview will be kept in a safe space within the faculty of education as per research requirements and at the end of five years, the transcribed interview will be destroyed by shredding.

Please note that your participation is voluntary and a decision not to participate will not result in any form of disadvantage to you. You are free to withdraw from the study at any stage for any reason.

Thanking you

Bbira Omaar
211550430
University of Kwazulu Natal

Declaration

I, ………………………………………………….. (Full names of the participant) hereby confirm that I understand the contents of this document and the nature of the research project, and I consent to participating in the research project.

I understand that I am at liberty to withdraw from the project at any time should I so desire.

……………………………………………… ………………………………..
SIGNATURE OF PARTICIPANT DATE