

**AN INVESTIGATION INTO HOW HISTORY LEARNERS VIEW  
HISTORY AS A SUBJECT IN THE SECONDARY PHASE OF  
SCHOOLING**

*by*

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## DECLARATION

I, Charmaine Subbiah, hereby declare that this thesis is my original work and that it has not previously been submitted for a degree at any other institution of higher learning.

Furthermore, all sources used in this study have been acknowledged accordingly by means of complete references.

**Signature:**

**Date:** 31 August 2016

As the student's supervisor, I Johan Wassermann, hereby approve the submission of the thesis for examination.

**Signature:**

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Johan Wassermann', with a large, stylized initial 'J'.

**Date:** 31 August 2016

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## **DEDICATION**

I dedicate this thesis to my grandsons David Lesandro, Levi Armaan, Aaron Antonio and Kirhaan Noah in the sincere hope that they may be inspired to read it one day.

## ABSTRACT

This study investigates how history learners view history as a subject in the secondary phase of schooling in a South African context. The study was guided by two research questions namely: how do history learners in the secondary phase of schooling view history as a subject and; why do history learners in the secondary phase of schooling view the subject the way they do? Although history is perceived as a subject with great value in a democratic South Africa, twenty-one years after the apartheid system was dismantled; South Africans seem to be faced with a scenario where the number of learners taking history at secondary school level is declining. Understanding how school history is viewed in the secondary phase by history learners can lead to an investigation into the declining history learner population in a democratic South Africa.

The research methodology that was adopted to explore this topic was qualitative. To guide this qualitative inquiry I decided the most suitable paradigm for the investigation was ‘interpretivism’ from the epistemological stance of constructionism. This linked well with the theoretical framework for the study which was ‘symbolic interactionism’ which guided me as the researcher as I moved from theory to data and from data to theory. The sample for the study consisted of four chosen schools and seventeen learners within the schools. Learners involved in the study fell between the ages of 16 to 18 years old and were grade 11 learners who chose to do history as a subject at secondary school level.

The methods used to collect data were creative arts-based research in the form of collages. Other related methods revolving around the collages included presentations of the collages in the form of a gallery walk, group discussions and field-notes. The research data for the study was analysed on two levels. The first level of analysis was based on analysing individual collages using an ‘open coding’ method. The second level of analysis was conducted using an instrument based on six benchmarks which I devised to further analyse the collages and the related methods used in the research study.

The major findings that emerged in an inter-textual manner from the study included broad ideas about the content such as school history is viewed as being about South African political

history; school history is more than a South African story; school history is about people and school history is about war and violence. Additional findings that emerged were related to school history being about the conceptual and pedagogical idea of the subject and school history is viewed as having an affective/emotive side.

Findings revealed that the learners' participating in this study, as per the theory of symbolic interactionism seem to be very idealistic by dint of their age and way of thinking. Thus, grand ideas of love, and critical views of school history were demonstrated. These participating learners related school history assertively to 'big truths'. This kind of thinking can be attributed to the fact that as 16 -18 year old learners of grade 11 are so-called philosophical thinkers, according to Egan (1997).

Overall, the study has contributed to the literature on how history learners view history as a subject in the secondary phase of their schooling as well as why history learners view the subject the way they do, therefore contributing to filling the gap in the literature for the particular context in which it was conducted.

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# CHAPTER 1

## OVERVIEW AND INTRODUCTION OF THE STUDY

### 1.1 Introduction

More than two decades ago, the apartheid system was dismantled. Under the 1993 Interim Constitution, nine non-racial provincial departments replaced the former ethnically based structures. An example of a former ethnically based structure was the different education departments created by the apartheid government to ensure division and maintain a race focused society. Similarly, there were many other structures created to keep races separated at the time. The Interim Constitution was reinforced by the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the South African Schools Act of 1996, which are geared towards providing non-racially based education in the country (Parker-Jenkins, 1999). Furthermore, the government of national unity, who came into power in 1994, promoted the principles of redress and equality in education and training. Democratisation and the advancement of human rights culture was premised upon the belief that society will be transformed and all inequalities will be addressed through a democratic and representative form of education. It is against this backdrop of political change and support of human rights and a dismantling of the apartheid past that the learners' views of history as a school subject in the secondary phase of schooling will be investigated in my study.

It is necessary and important at the outset to explain that the learners involved in this study are known as the 'born free' generation. This means that they were born around the time our democracy was born in 1994, hence they are known as the 'born free' generation. In other words, South Africa's 1996 constitution ushered in a democratic regime that brought new freedoms and rights and non-racialism to this generation. Technically they are now participants in a real democracy and are the ones able to make choices that will determine how they are educated (Redelinghuys, 2013). However, according to the *BBC News* (October 2015) this 'born free' generation do not seem to be happy and a new 'black consciousness movement' is emerging in South Africa twenty-one years after its first fully democratic election. This

discontent among the majority Black 'born frees' has been demonstrated most recently by nationwide student protests against the statue of the colonist Cecil John Rhodes and a mocking of the idea of a rainbow nation. These 'born frees' know the story of the past struggles but they do not see what history has given them. Hence, the mind-set of this generation most definitely has had an impact on school history. It is against this backdrop that I deemed it necessary to investigate how current learners view history as a school subject in the secondary phase of schooling. The learners involved in the study fall between the ages of 16 to 18 years old and are grade 11 history learners.

In order to provide an introduction to my study and this chapter, I began with an outline of the background to the study. The background includes a contextualization of the research, with a focus on the post-apartheid South African education system, with emphasis on how history is viewed as a school subject in the secondary phase of schooling. In order to fully understand this era of schooling it is crucial and necessary to briefly discuss school history and history education under the apartheid system with specific reference to learners' experiences and views. This discussion will shed some light on the current state of school history and history education in a post-apartheid South Africa. Based on the preceding arguments, I will explain my rationale and motivation to conduct this study. Thereafter, I will identify the focus and purpose of the study and list the research questions. Subsequently, I will briefly explain the theoretical framework, the research design and methodology, showing how it was useful in answering the research questions. Finally, I will outline the structure of this study before concluding this introductory chapter.

## **1.2 Background and context to the study**

It is crucial, from the outset to ensure that the study is sufficiently contextualized. As indicated in the introduction it is necessary to have some insight into the working of apartheid in South Africa in order to understand school history and history education then. The reason for this is to comprehend the post-apartheid issue of school history and learners' views and experiences regarding the subject, for the shadows of the past still fall over South Africa as a whole. However, it is impossible and not necessary to provide a comprehensive overview of the apartheid era education and its relation with school history. Hence, I have attempted to at least

give a snapshot view of this era of education that will help set the stage for what came in the post-apartheid era which is the focus of my study.

Apartheid influenced the lives of all South Africans including adults and children alike and is currently notably one of the most sensitive topics in school history. The underlying philosophy of apartheid was that White people in South Africa were regarded as ‘superior beings’ and therefore entitled to the best facilities ahead of non-Whites which included the Coloureds, Indians and Africans. Public facilities were separated along racial lines. Schools and education in general was greatly impacted and divided during this era of apartheid. Due to this scenario learners who were not White were faced with an education which was of an inferior quality when compared to their White counterparts.

The intensity of this was that each race group had their own Department of Education with separate schools for Whites, Indians, Coloureds and Africans. Many schools for non-White learners were impoverished and experienced frequent shortages of resources and teachers, while White schools flourished and were well resourced and financed by the state. Booyse, Le Roux, Seroto, and Wolhuter (2011) succinctly add that the overall aim of education for Black people was regarded as directed at preserving and propagating the beliefs and values of a dominant class of employers and preparing Black learners to be manageable, controllable and exploitable, and to accept unequal power relationships and hierarchies. In contrast, education for White learners was a medium for indoctrination in that they were taught to analyse, take decisions, manage and dominate (Booyse et al., 2011). Thus, elitist expectations were created for White learners, such as contempt for manual labour and ambition to enter good professions.

Furthermore, the apartheid system created the mind-set that there was no place for Blacks outside the homelands or Bantustans and they should only be trained to perform certain forms of labour. Hence, the idea that the Bantu did not for example need to study mathematics at school because they did not need it for future endeavours. Moreover, Black schools did not study the same syllabi as White schools but followed a Bantu Education with major limitations in terms of curricula content and infrastructural support. Booyse et al. (2011) confirms this by suggesting that by means of this system the National Party government tried to channel Black

political aspirations towards the racially segregated homelands. Therefore, education provision to Black learners had served a political purpose from its very beginning. Similar laws were also passed to curb Indian and Coloured education.

At this stage many Black learners did not go beyond primary school, while it was compulsory for White learners to attend school until the age of fifteen. Also Black teachers' salaries were extremely low and this resulted in a dramatic drop of trainee teachers which seriously impacted the quality of education at non-White schools. Overall, schooling during the apartheid era was carefully orchestrated to ensure White control and prosperity and ironically implemented in the name of 'God' to justify its stance in society. Furthermore, the sense of nationalist White supremacy as outlined above permeated South African society during the apartheid era and shaped the identity and imagined history of all its inhabitants.

Against this backdrop school history which was devised to support the apartheid myths was blended with historical knowledge. The curriculum and educational media used for the teaching and learning of school history were underpinned by a teacher-centered and rote learning approach. All of this was aimed to justify the narrow nationalistic ideals of the minority White population. On the other hand, the majority Black learners at school learnt a history in which they were not citizens and only appeared on the outskirts of society in a negative way. Historical figures and organisations such as Mandela and the African National Congress (ANC) never featured in school history because it was illegal to mention them. Weldon (2003) best articulated history education/school history under apartheid by suggesting that it was used as propaganda to further the cause of Afrikaner Nationalist history which included a number of foundational myths such as, 'empty land and God's chosen people' which were presented in history textbooks at school level as facts. Thus, school history under apartheid contributed to the creation of two very distinct racialised identities for White and Black learners.

The Soweto uprising of June 1976 orchestrated by learners was a turning point for the apartheid education system. On the 16 June 1976 widespread violence erupted in Soweto as school learners protested against, amongst others, the imposition of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction. The battles between learners and police marked the end of the 'silent years' and

the beginning of a violent struggle against apartheid education. During this period many school learners were killed thus drawing both national and international attention to the situation in South Africa. This forced the apartheid government to reform the education system and this led to leniency towards Coloureds and Indians but the government continued to exclude Blacks and ensured continued White supremacy. Hence, the government's attempts to reform apartheid did not impress and a more intense culture of resistance developed in the 1980's, with many school learners taking on an active role.

This resistance, including a range of other factors such as international pressure led to the unbanning of the ANC, the release of Nelson Mandela, negotiations, adoption of the Interim Constitution and the subsequent 1994 breakthrough of the first fully-fledged democratic elections. The negotiations for the new South Africa schooling proved key and it was agreed that some types of schools remain the same with minor adjustments. Typical examples of these are the 'ex-model C' type of schooling which had good resources and facilities, as well as some rural schools which were very impoverished and had poor infrastructures. These schools are still functioning in more or less the same way as they did during the apartheid era. Therefore, some current characteristics of our school system, were inherited from the past. Some schools still have large numbers in their classrooms while others have lower numbers. Furthermore, some schools have great resources while others are still very impoverished and have very little resources in order to exist. Moreover, for the purposes of this study it is significant to understand that apartheid was officially enshrined in school history which conscientised Blacks about their own rights and ways of fighting apartheid. Hence, the apartheid education system had a bearing on future teaching of history in schools and made Blacks skeptical about school history because of its past abuse and the way Blacks were portrayed, which affected the future position of history education in South Africa.

Against this background, the first post-apartheid government was confronted with a scenario where teachers and learners were steeped in a school history which foregrounded White supremacy in terms of content and fundamental pedagogics regarding teaching and learning. This means that the curriculum and educational media used for teaching and learning were still underpinned by a pedagogy of teacher-centeredness and rote learning. It is in this context that the apartheid past had to be faced in the history classes after May 1994. The initial attempts



and ideals to reform education and curriculum processes in general in the early post-apartheid era were a huge challenge for the government of national unity. This resulted in several structural and policy tensions within the system. The intensity of this was demonstrated by Taylor (2000, as cited in Kallaway, 2012) who described the curriculum processes as “the most radical constructivist curriculum ever attempted anywhere in the world”.

Kallaway (1995), strongly argued at the time that the need for fundamental change in the area of history education in South Africa was uncontested. He goes on to assert that the production of a school history that was in keeping with the political climate of the time was an essential element of a transformative education. For most teachers and learners this meant an innovative approach to school history which, as Kallaway (1995, p. 12) expressed: “will provide for nation-building in the broadest sense...to recognize the ideological nature of the subject and use it to develop critical capabilities and analytical skills, to enable children to make sense of history and of complex political, social and economic changes through which they will live in the ‘new’ South Africa”. In line with this trend Lowry (1995) opined that the negotiations concerning the curriculum needed to attend to the preservation of history at secondary level as well as the status of history in the curriculum. History as a school subject can have an important social use, especially in a society as divided as South Africa. Changes taking place in society at the time made it clear that the history curriculum will need to reflect more accurately the new South African realities (Lowry, 1995).

As far as school history was concerned during this period, academics were confident of a new history emerging. In fact, there was a sense of great hope and expectation amongst history teachers and historians for the subject to be reformed and the apartheid curriculum was finally ‘dumped’ and history could claim its rightful position in the construction of a new democracy. This was confirmed by a prominent South African history educationist (Siebörger, 2000) who anticipated the three ‘r’s of reconstruction, redress and reconciliation for the post-apartheid reform for school history. This did happen but unfortunately not to the extent expected. In fact, at this point history teachers and the subject were side-lined because of the implementation of Outcomes-Based Education (OBE). Thus, criticism kept flooding in from various quarters against OBE and C2005. The most common critique being that of Jansen (1997) in his paper on ‘Why OBE will fail’. The result was a ministerial committee which recommended an

overhaul of how OBE was practiced. Significantly, for school history it recommended that the teaching of history should ensure that learners develop a narrative and a conceptual understanding of the history of South Africa and Africa and their place in the world. This culminated in the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) which signaled a departure from the original ideas of OBE to the advantage of the teaching and learning of history.

In reaction, the History and Archaeology Panel of the Values in Education Initiative (2000), which was established and launched by the then Minister of Education and former history teacher, Professor Kader Asmal, undertook a critical analysis of the quality of the teaching of history and evolution in schools as one of its main aims. In its critical analysis of the quality of the teaching of history as a school subject in South African public schools, the History and Archaeology Panel continued to express a sense of dissatisfaction at the direction which history had taken in the new educational dispensation. Having, among others, been inserted into a general Social Sciences learning area, history has been de-emphasized and diluted in schools; in consequence, many experienced teachers have been made redundant. Some schools have even come to regard history as a subject for less able learners or those with a low IQ; in consequence, history enrolments at schools have taken a huge drop, and in many secondary schools steps have been taken to remove it from the curriculum altogether (Department of Education (DOE), 2000a).

In line with this thinking, the History and Archaeology Panel cautioned against the manner in which history was then being given scant attention as an independent school subject, and where, as a result, learners seemed to be prevented from gaining a critical historical awareness of themselves and their society: “Should the formal study of history be ignored in the present, one may well run the risk of ‘robbing’ future generations of the essential knowledge and skills to contribute to sustaining an open, equable and tolerant society” (DOE, 2000a, p. 8). In addition, Nuttal and Wright (2000) opined that in a new political dispensation history is perceived as an irrelevant subject in relation to providing jobs in a tight labour market and does not assist with changing learners’ perceptions of where jobs are found. He further implied that the negative attitude of many learners towards history, as for other people in South Africa, both Black and White, is that they feel it is a source of discomfort and embarrassment because they

claim that it points directly to apartheid bullying, oppression, degradation and the humiliation to Blacks. As a result some people, he claims, feel history is now irrelevant to their needs.

Therefore, at the core of curriculum reform in a post-apartheid South Africa was the desire to transform both education and society. In the introduction to the Revised National Curriculum Statement adopted in 2002, the stated aim was to ensure that “a national South African identity is built on values very different from those that underpinned apartheid education” (Weldon, 2003, p. 1). In fact, the curricula was a radical departure from the apartheid past of school history and showed a genuine pursuit of the creation of a new transformed prototype citizen in tune with the aspirations of a rainbow nation (Wassermann, 2005). This new thinking expressed that, as part of the government’s continuation of the process of reconciliation and nation building, school history was to be used in a powerful manner to introduce reconciliation. Learners will be inspired by these values and will act in the interests of a society based on respect for democracy, equality, human dignity and social justice. The overall aim was for schools to be transformed into sites where learners live out the negotiated values of the South African Constitution and the Bill of Rights. In line with this thinking Weldon (2003, p. 1) opined that “History has been identified as an appropriate subject to attempt to fulfil these aims”, but unfortunately this expectation was not met and debates continued in this regard.

Against this background, Schoeman (2003) argues that one of the main purposes of the study of history is to foster an understanding of identity as a social construct, preparing future citizens for local, regional, national, continental and global citizenship. She further stated that a critical approach to the study of history in a democratic society, apart from promoting the democratic values of the Constitution and encouraging civic responsibility, “should enable people to examine with greater insight and understanding the prejudices such as race, class, gender, ethnicity and xenophobia still existing in our society and which must be confronted and addressed” (Schoeman, 2003, p. 3). This sentiment was later echoed by Bertram (2008) who maintained that history as a school subject could be a perfect vehicle for citizenship, whether it may be a citizen of apartheid or as a citizen of a new South Africa.

This suggests that school history has been a useful tool which helps the state to condition learners (by learning through past example) into mature, independent adults and responsible, loyal, obedient citizens. It helps to teach learners the difference between acceptable and unacceptable behaviour as prescribed by the dominant view in their societies. Through the study of history in schools, learners can be taught about how their societies prefer to remember their past and how these societies came to be in the present (Mackie, 2004). Thus school history is and always will be a political project not only in South Africa but in a global context.

In light of history being, as elsewhere in the world a political project, the Department of Education (2005), suggested that the values of the South African Constitution form the basis of the values that are found in history education. These values are important for understanding and addressing human rights in South Africa. History as a school subject could make a crucial contribution to transforming society by helping learners to apply the values that are in the Constitution to their lives and to those around them (DOE, 2005). In fact, Siebörger (2008), suggests that history is best placed within the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) to foster the development of these values. More specifically, the teaching of history has the potential to shape the consciousness of a whole generation of South Africans by providing them with a set of shared concepts and understandings about the past that may then form the basis for explaining the present and building a collective future (Patel, 1998). Hence, this confirms that the starting point of school history in a post-apartheid South Africa was to awaken the ‘historical consciousness’ of the learners at schools and it is a vehicle with potential for this project.

According to the Department of Education (2005), history as a vehicle of personal empowerment, can engender in learners an understanding of human agency, which brings with it the knowledge that, as human beings, they have choices, and that they can make the choice to change the world for the better. Therefore, history as a subject is not just a collection of facts about the past. It is the story of how the world of today came into existence. Furthermore it is the record of lives, experiences, and struggles of those who have gone before – and of how their lives, experiences and struggles have shaped ours. According to the Department of Education (2005) society values people who are independent thinkers, open-minded, good at problem solving and able to pick out the essential from the trivial. In line with this trend, school

history could be a beneficial subject to help learners empower themselves with the above characteristics.

Finally, in 2009 a new phase of history education was considered through the introduction of Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) which was implemented in 2012 and ended in 2014. This was the amendment of the RNCS which replaced some of the RNCS documents. CAPS, it is claimed will be responsible for social transformation to ensure that the educational imbalances of the past are redressed and above all it will offer equal education opportunities for all sectors of the population. Furthermore, according to the Department of Basic Education (2011) CAPS is said to equip learners with skills, irrespective of their socio-economic background, race, gender, physical or intellectual ability. However, CAPS is still in its early stages and it will take some time to analyse whether it going to achieve its desired aim.

Amidst the implementation of CAPS, a new and interesting scenario seems to have taken root where government officials and organisations are now, twenty-one years after the apartheid system has been dismantled, calling for school history to become a compulsory subject at secondary school level. Wassermann (2015) confirmed this by stating: “Almost out of the blue ‘volving’ around School History and teaching and learning about apartheid came to the fore in mid – 2014”. His findings indicate that school history becoming a compulsory subject had the highest possible support. Ultimately these negotiations have recently surfaced to cure the ills of society including re-educating the ‘born frees’ on where they come from but no confirmed decisions have been made at this stage regarding this matter. In fact, this study has overtaken this scenario but hopefully I could engage in further research relating to this idea of history becoming a compulsory subject. This idea may change views of learners towards school history even more.

Against this background, it is evident that history is now well recognized by the Department of Basic Education according to CAPS (2011) and other official documents. Evidence as noted from the above discussions demonstrates that historians, politicians, academics and authors see history as a valuable subject at secondary school level in a post-apartheid South Africa. In fact, school history as a political project post-1994 has laudable ideals. However, as stated above

the subject seems to be under threat due to various historical factors. Hence, against this backdrop as well as the fact that we are now celebrating twenty-one years after apartheid ended, my study aimed at investigating what are learners', (who selected it) views on history, at secondary school level?

### **1.3 Rationale and motivation for the study**

Based on the background and contextualization in the previous section, I was motivated to conduct this study for a range of personal and professional reasons. At a personal level, I am a South African citizen by birth and grew up and was educated in South Africa. As a middle-aged Indian female I was a victim of the apartheid era but was really, in hindsight, oblivious at the time of the workings of the apartheid system. This stance obviously stemmed from the fact that my parents chose not to politically educate my siblings and myself on the system because they felt it would corrupt us. Hence, priority was given to me being school educated which was key to my future endeavours. Furthermore, my family and I lived a fairly secure and comfortable life at the time and we did not have reason to question our life-style or up-bringing and how it resonated with the apartheid politics of the day. Additionally, the Indian school that I attended was well resourced with good teachers who also never questioned nor spoke to us about the political climate at the time. Consequently, I never questioned the idea of having to socialise with the same race group as I thought it was a normal occurrence. Moreover, I was passionate about the subject history at school level to such an extent that I selected it as one of my subjects at secondary level and excelled at it. In fact, I was so naïve of the inequalities in the education system that I obediently enjoyed studying the distorted syllabi, especially about all the Prime Ministers at the time thinking they were absolute 'heroes'.

My naivety about the apartheid system was rudely awakened by the intense resistance of the apartheid education system in the early 1980's, just as I was finishing secondary school, when learners continued to fiercely protest against the apartheid educational laws. Being a participant of these protests for a short while I gained some insight into the apartheid system and its workings. However, this was short-lived as I quickly jolted back to my studies as this would help me secure my future career and not the political playing field.

Subsequently, after completing my schooling career, I married an amazing man, had two awesome sons and then pursued a career in teaching. My passion for history was once again awakened when I chose to major in the subject and become a history teacher. At this point the history content which was still apartheid orientated did not really concern me as I was focused on my academic career and the skills that I was developing from the subject. On completion of my undergraduate studies I became a teacher where I initially taught different subjects at different levels for a short while because I could not secure a history position. Once again I was content at teaching at an all 'Indian' school and still did not fully grasp the political climate of the time.

However, when the apartheid system crumbled and South Africa became a democracy in 1994, I immediately made a decision to embrace this democracy and to experience it fully. Hence, I took the plunge and took up a teaching post at a school that catered for 'Coloured' learners during the apartheid system and this is where my real historical journey and education, to a certain extent began. Initially, I faced many challenges at the school since I was one of the first Indian persons to join the team and at times I was blatantly teased and mocked both by staff and learners. This mocking and teasing was mainly around stereotypical ideas of what my learners believed and thought about the race group to which I belonged. I remember clearly one incident when I tried to discipline a difficult learner and he openly vented his feelings by stating: "I hate Indian people..." In addition to this scenario some teachers at the school saw me as a threat and accused me of coming into 'their' school to take 'their' jobs. These are just two examples amongst many other accusations and racist comments that I had to endure.

However, at this point my spiritual journey was growing at a rapid pace and I was able to sustain myself during this season because I knew God had called me to make a difference. It truly was a dark place and a huge culture shock but I persevered and grew both emotionally and spiritually. In fact, when I left that school I felt victorious in the sense that I was able to overcome the many battles I faced and through the process built wonderful friendships and relationships. This situation finally brought me to the full realisation of the impact of the apartheid system and the extensive damage it had caused to people in South Africa.

At this point, I was fully engaged in teaching history at senior level and absolutely embracing the subject even though there were inconsistencies in the Revised National Curriculum and learners were really not interested in the subject. My initial concern for school history was birthed out of learner dis-interest for the subject and complete disregard for the past. This hugely impacted the numbers taking history in grade 10. In this atmosphere of disappointment and disillusionment with school history and poor learner attitudes I began tutoring a history PGCE course and later an ACE programme at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in order to keep myself stimulated and not to let my passion for the subject be destroyed. In the meantime, I had not given up on school history and joined a history club made up of history teachers in the area. The main aim was to strategise and network on how to market the subject through creative and innovative ways and help draw learners in because we realised that history was an important subject in a post-apartheid era. In some ways this did work but not to the extent of our expectations.

A short while later I was once again saddled with another difficult situation regarding my career. My family and I decided we had to move to another town due to the circumstances surrounding our lives. This situation brought me to the full realisation of the extent to which the subject history was under serious threat and numbers were dwindling. This realisation struck me head on as I could not secure a history position in a huge place like 'Durban'. After much confusion and uncertainty I had no choice but to quit teaching history and take up teaching English. Feeling shackled and distraught by this situation I embarked on my journey as a PhD student with the primary focus being on investigating how history learners view school history and why they view the subject the way they do in the secondary phase of schooling. Considering my experiences as a learner I felt that by investigating this problem I would better understand and contribute to the subject in a more positive manner.

The journey of my study has along the way been disrupted by various important family commitments and has in a sense taken much longer than expected. In fact, I had decided at one point not to pursue the study because I was not coping with the many roles that I have to fulfil at this stage in my life. Once again I sought the advice of my God who clearly directed my paths to bring this study to a completion and it is only through 'His grace' that I am able to accomplish this daunting task. Interestingly, in the interim after a five year gap from not



teaching history a scenario arose where I was unexpectedly given a senior history class to teach. Initially, I was reluctant but once I engaged with the subject again I realised my passion for teaching history was still alive. I also realised that the challenges with which I am faced, teaching my history learners, has not really changed over the past five years. I must admit this scenario of being given the opportunity to teach history at this point has also played a huge role in motivating me to complete this study because I realised that the similar problems regarding the subject still exist. Hence, the need for this study is significant to try and understand how learners view and experience the subject at secondary school level.

Besides the personal motivation, there is also a professional rationale behind concluding this study. When I started my teaching career as an academic, I realised the need to investigate the subject history was because of the circumstances surrounding the subject as discussed above. This motivated me to conduct this study which could probably help to determine why the subject is faced with these tensions and dilemmas. Hopefully, the study will contribute to the history education field by giving hope to the subject at school level. One of the tenets of academic, professional development is to link practice with theory and research. Hence, conducting this study was also aimed at informing my practice. In addition to this my completion of two previous post-graduate degrees, a Bachelor of Education (Honours) and a Master of Education, exerted a further influence upon me, to pursue my professional development. Therefore, embarking on this study was also to enhance my professional development while consolidating a niche of research for myself as an academic.

In light of the above discussion I felt that a need exists to research how history is viewed by history learners as a subject in the secondary phase of schooling. Although history is perceived as a subject with great value in a democratic South Africa, we as South Africans seem to be faced with a scenario where numbers of learners taking history at secondary level seem to be declining (G. Pillay, personal communication, February 2010). Dr Gengs Pillay is a history subject-advisor of a long standing in KwaZulu-Natal. He has been a national examiner for Grade 12 for many years and is also involved in planning for history teaching at national level. Therefore, the warrant for the claim that numbers of learners taking history at secondary level is declining was justified during personal communication with Dr Pillay. Given this situation it is important to investigate why this is happening and to try and understand how this subject

is viewed in the secondary phase by history learners in the real world of teaching and learning and especially since it is now twenty-one years after the apartheid system has been dismantled.

Therefore, the purpose of this study is, to investigate how history learners view history as a subject in the secondary phase of their schooling. The proposed study, I feel, is different because it aims to target learners who have chosen history as a subject at secondary level. Most studies (Meyer, 2008; Mackie, 2004, Patel, 1998; Van der Leeuw-Roord, 1997) which I have come across focus their attention solely on the attitudes that history learners have towards this subject. The views which history learners have towards school history and the reasons why they have these views, is the focus of this study. This focus remained unexplored, and therefore offers a promising field for research. In the proposed study an attempt will be made to focus on learners' subjective views and experiences arising out of their engagement with history as a subject in the secondary phase of schooling.

The following key questions were formulated to demarcate the problem more clearly:

- How do history learners in the secondary phase view history as a school subject?
- Why do history learners in the secondary phase view the subject the way they do?

#### **1.4 Theoretical framework of the study**

I have chosen to adopt symbolic interactionism as the main component of the theoretical framework for this study. Symbolic interactionist theory, views the socialised individual as capable of thought, intervention and self-determination. Furthermore, symbolic interactionist researchers investigate how people create meaning during social interaction, how they present and construct the self and how they define situations of co-presence with others. One of the central ideas is that people act as they do because of how they define situations.

Symbolic Interactionism is a theoretical perspective that offers a particular view of the meaning of self, the nature of reality, the emergence and importance of society, the nature of symbols, the importance of human communication and the future of humanity (Charon, 2000). In this view, meaningful reality is dependent upon human practices, being construed in and out of

interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted through symbolic communication within social contexts. Through symbolic communication we define our present according to a perspective or mental construction developed and altered in on-going social interactions. It is through definition and action that, given the right knowledge and tools, people can take control of themselves and their environment – defining, thinking and controlling their choices into the future. We can only know what is going on if we understand what the actors themselves believe about their world. For this reason research should focus on collecting, analysing and interpreting the various perspectives of people in social situations.

Against this background, symbolic interactionism rests on three root assumptions: human beings act towards things on the basis of the meanings that these things have for them; the meaning of such things is derived from, and arises out of, the social interaction that one has; these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretive process used by the person in dealing with the things he/she encounters (Denzin, 1992 and Blumer, 1969). Thus, for the purposes of this study learners' views of school history are derived from their interaction with the subject at school level. Furthermore, their views are influenced and developed through their personal experiences as well as with encounters they have in the school situation.

Embedded in this theoretical framework is an epistemology of 'constructionism' that assumes a pluralist and relativist view of the reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In this view, realities such as history as a school subject can be viewed in terms of multiple, mental constructions held by individuals in groups. These mental constructions are socially and experientially based and although local and specific in nature may often be shared across communities and cultures. Such mental constructions are not more or less 'true' in an absolute sense but simply more or less informed and/or sophisticated. As the researcher, I was cast as an orchestrator and facilitator of the inquiry process. This is not an authoritative role as I was actively engaged in facilitating a multi-voice dialogue that leads to the construction of my own constructions as well as those of the participants.

Denzin (1992) lists four implications of symbolic interactionism for the researcher to which I adhered. The first implication was the need for me to take a closer look at the symbols used in

interactions, and the settings in which interactions take place. The second implication was studying phenomena from the point of view of those being studied; thus, in order to understand things from the research subjects' perspectives, I had to obtain information in the form of descriptive accounts from the subjects. The third implication was the need for me to link the participants' perceptions with those of his/her society. The fourth implication identified by Denzin is that I needed to record the dynamics of the situations that I observed, and in which practices are situated. The above implications of symbolic interactionism on methodology will be revealed in the study.

Hence, my theoretical framework for this study which is symbolic interactionism is important to guide me as the researcher as I moved from theory to data and from data to theory. It relates to the philosophical basis on which the research takes place and forms the link between the theoretical aspect and practical components of the investigation undertaken. The main purpose of my theoretical framework is to help me test theories used and to make my research findings meaningful. The theoretical framework is discussed in detail in Chapter 3 of this study.

## **1.5 Research methodology**

In an attempt to determine how learners view history as a school subject in the secondary phase of schooling, a qualitative approach was the research methodology that was adopted to explore this topic. Qualitative research is an umbrella term used to refer to several strategies that share certain characteristics. This approach will be used because as Hoberg (1999) suggests, qualitative research is mainly concerned with understanding the subject from the participants' perspective as they (the participants) experience the subject as it is related to their reality. Moreover, qualitative research views reality as multi-layered and interactive. Qualitative researchers become 'immersed' in the situation, present or past, and the phenomenon being studied (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993, p. 15).

To guide this qualitative inquiry I decided that the most suitable paradigm for the investigation will be 'interpretivism' from the epistemological stance of constructionism. According to this paradigm as stated by Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 110) "...realities are apprehendable in the

form of multiple, intangible mental constructions, socially and experientially based, local and specific in nature and dependent for their form and content on individual persons or groups holding the constructions”. According to Guba and Lincoln (1994, p. 111), “the variable and personal nature of social constructions suggests that individual constructions can be elicited and refined only through interaction between and among investigator and respondents”. These varying constructions are interpreted using conventional hermeneutical techniques, and are compared and contrasted through a dialectical interchange. The final aim is to distil a consensus construction that is more informed and sophisticated than any of the previous constructions.

The research site for this study focused on four specific schools in the greater EThekweni district of KwaZulu-Natal. A range of differing environments was chosen from an urban area. However, it is important to note that even though the study was conducted in an urban area some of the schools are very similar to the infrastructure of the rural type schools found in South Africa. This was done in an attempt to ensure that the schooling contexts in the EThekweni area are adequately (though not necessarily proportionally) represented. Hence, participants for the study were drawn from different environments and backgrounds. For the purpose of this research convenience was taken into account when the selection of schools were done.

The methods that I used to collect my data were creative arts-based research in the form of collages as well as presentations of the collages as the main methods. I also used discussions which were carried out after the collage presentations and field-notes that were derived from the observations of the collage-making process as secondary methods. Collage-making was conducted with a group of grade eleven learners who had selected history as a subject in the secondary phase of their schooling at each of the sampled schools under study. These groups comprised of between four and five history learners at each of the schools. The groups constructed their collages separately at each of the schools under study. Hence, collage making, presentations, discussions and observations in the form of field-notes were conducted to determine the views history learners have towards history as a school subject. The collage making process as well as the presentations and discussions were all video recorded at each of the four schools so that I could examine them closely later. All recordings were also transcribed. This process helped to try as much as possible to eliminate researcher bias.

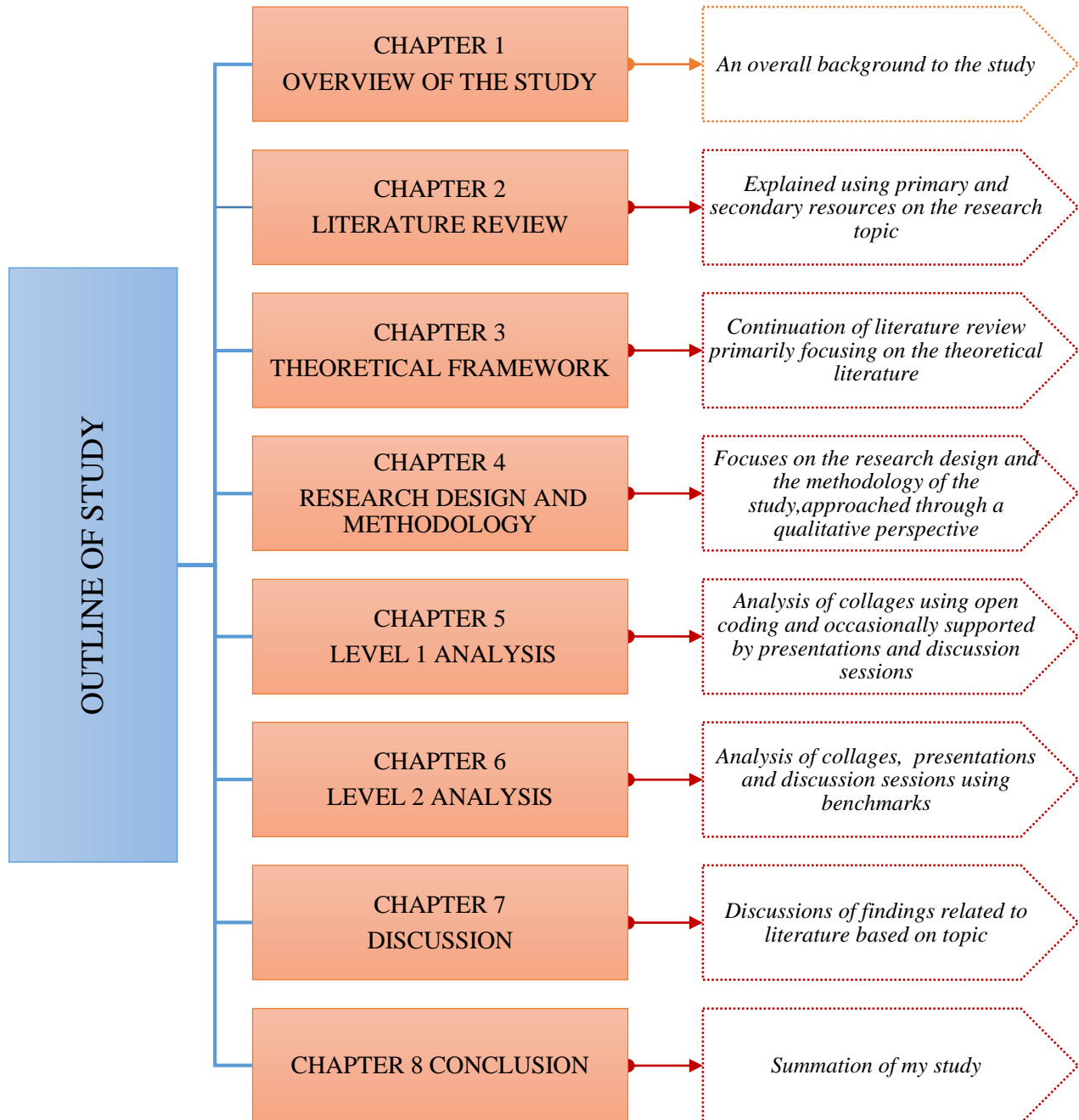
In this study the research data consisted of an analysis of individual collages, transcripts of presentation and discussion sessions and observation in the form of field-notes taken during the collage-making process. In analysing the data - the collages, the analysis of the collages and the transcripts were read repeatedly in order to gain familiarity with the content. All video recordings were listened to, at the same time checking the accuracy of the transcriptions. Once I thought I was familiar with my research data in an intimate way I began my data analysis. I decided that the most appropriate way to analyse the data would be on two levels. 'Level 1' analysis of the collages was done according to an 'open coding' method. 'Level 2' analysis of the collages was done using the instrument I devised. The instrument was made up of six benchmarks which come from various historical sources.

This research is designed to be exploratory and descriptive. The primary aim of the study is to determine how history is viewed as a school subject by history learners in the secondary phase of their schooling, from their own frame of reference. In terms of ethical clearance, special permission was obtained from the principals of each of the schools involved in the research. Permission was granted and all learners were given consent forms to sign and were assured of their rights to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality. Participants were given detailed explanations regarding the nature and purpose of the research, so that they are aware of the intended aims of the study. A detailed explanation is given in Chapter 4 with regard to how participants were selected and informed consent obtained. This is in keeping with the ethical policy of the University of KwaZulu -Natal. Chapter 4 of this study will provide a detailed discussion of the research design and methodology of the study.

## 1.6 Outline of chapters

Apart from the orientation in chapter one, the research programme will be structured as follows:

**Figure 1.1 – Diagram illustrating outline of the study**



## **Chapter 2: Literature review**

Chapter two deals with the literature review. The literature review was explained using a selection of available literature both published and unpublished on the topic of research. This literature contains information, ideas, data and evidence written from a particular standpoint to fulfil certain aims or to express certain views on the nature of the research topic. This chapter firstly discussed what a literature review is, the purpose of a literature review in the study and how my literature review was done. For the purposes of this study the literature review was presented according to themes. The main themes that were discussed are: the nature of school history, the purposes and uses of school history and learner's views of history as a school subject. These themes were further broken down into sub-themes. The nature of school history focused on the procedural concepts of school history which comprised of six historical thinking concepts while the purposes and uses of school history focused on the substantive concepts. Learners' views of history as a school subject were also explained and discussed from a positive and negative standpoint. Also the outlined themes were explored from a global perspective with special reference to South Africa.

## **Chapter 3: Theoretical framework**

This chapter is a continuation of the literature review that was initiated in Chapter 2. However, unlike in the previous chapter where I reviewed research literature, this chapter focuses on the theoretical literature. I began this chapter by discussing some thoughts on theory and how it is used, thereafter I briefly explained what a theoretical framework is and why it is needed. Furthermore, I explained the chosen theoretical framework which is symbolic interactionism for this study and the nature of it, as well as how I assimilate this theory into my research project.

## **Chapter 4: Research design and methodology**

This chapter discusses in detail the research design which was essentially a plan of how the researcher intended to answer the key research questions. In other words, the research design is a blueprint of how the study was to be conducted in order for the research questions to be answered. This means that in developing the research design I explained the purpose of the



research, the paradigm informing the research, the context or situation within which the research is carried out, and the research techniques employed to collect the data. The research design describes procedures on how to conduct research and involves when, from whom and under what conditions data is collected. This chapter also included a discussion about the methodology of the study which had been approached through a qualitative perspective. The methodology explained the choice of methods of data collection and analysis procedures used to investigate and answer the specific research questions. The ways in which the data was analysed was explored. The chapter concludes with a discussion of trustworthiness of the research, ethical considerations and limitations of the study.

### **Chapter 5: Data presentation – Level 1 – analysis**

This chapter presented a discussion of the findings derived from the data generated from the collages. The collages done by history learners from the schools under study were analysed at two levels. The first level of analysis was done according to an ‘open coding’ method. Open coding refers to the initial phase of the coding process meaning that this was my initial stage of data analysis because the process was to ‘open up’ the collages in order to uncover views and perceptions they hold for the collage-makers regarding school history. This chapter therefore discussed only the first level of analysis.

### **Chapter 6: Data presentation – Level 2 - analysis**

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings derived from the data generated from the actual collages as well as the presentations and discussion sessions done by collage-makers from the schools under study. The first level of analysis was an ‘open coding’ method which was discussed in chapter five. This chapter, therefore discusses the second level of analysis. At this level the collages were analysed using an instrument which I devised and consists of six benchmarks which came from various historical sources. The benchmarks that form part of my instrument are historical significance; historical time; nature of historical knowledge and understanding; historical empathy; cause and consequence and change and continuity.

## **Chapter 7: Discussion and findings**

This chapter contains the discussion of the findings from Chapter 5 and 6. Since I had two levels of analysis for this study I collated the two sets of findings and discussed them. I discussed the two sets of findings together in order to provide firm answers to the research questions underpinning the study and how it related to the literature.

## **Chapter 8: Conclusion**

This chapter draws the study to a close by a summation of the study.

### **1.7 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I set out to give an overview of my study. I began by introducing the chapter before giving the background and contextualization of the study which helped root the study within a post-apartheid context. The background and contextualization helped to identify the research problem, thereafter I continued to explain the rationale and motivation behind it. The rationale and motivation therefore set the scene for the purpose and focus of the study. Once the focus was clear, I presented the key research questions which were helpful in further clarifying the research problem. I subsequently explained my chosen theoretical framework, research design and methodology after which I presented an outline for my study. The next chapter will focus on the literature related to my topic which is an investigation into how history learners view history as a subject in the secondary phase of schooling.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

The background to the study as provided in Chapter 1 revealed the main focus of the study which is how history is viewed as a school subject in the secondary phase of schooling by history learners. Chapter 2 deals with the literature review based on my topic as stated above. In this chapter I firstly discussed what a literature review is, the purpose of a literature review in the study and how the literature review was carried out. This is done under the heading ‘Conducting and presenting a literature review’. Thereafter, my literature review was presented according to themes. The main themes that were discussed are: the nature of school history, the purposes and uses of school history, and learners’ views of history as a school subject. The reason why I chose these themes is also discussed in the next section. Finally, the chapter ends with the niche or gap for my study and a conclusion.

#### **2.2 Conducting and presenting a literature review**

A literature review is a selection of available documents both published and unpublished on the topic of research which contains information, ideas, data and evidence written from a particular standpoint to fulfil certain aims or to express certain views on the nature of the research topic (Hart, 1998). As such a literature review provides one with a guide to a particular topic. In fact, it aims at contributing towards a clearer understanding of the nature and meaning of the research problem that has been identified. Thus, in order to conduct a meaningful topic of research, a researcher has to have a thorough background knowledge of the phenomenon under review. Furthermore, a review of the literature is important because without it you will not have an understanding of your topic, of what has already been done on it, how it has been researched and what the key issues are (Hart, 1998). Andresen (1997) appropriately sums up the purpose of a literature review by stating, that it is to become familiar with the ‘conversation’ in the subject area, identify an appropriate research question, ascertain the nature of previous research and issues surrounding the research question, finding evidence in the academic discourse and keeping abreast of ongoing work in the area of interest.

A literature review can never be just a simple summary of the sources. This is confirmed by Jesson, Matheson and Lacey (2011) who argue that the main aim of a literature review is to provide a critical review, not a description, a catalogue or a shopping list. These authors further suggest that a literature review can be seen as a new picture or story you are presenting, with your judgments made from a sound basis of evidence, reflection and sometimes experience. Hence, for the purposes of this study I have chosen to do a ‘traditional’ review which usually adopts a critical approach. Therefore, in my literature review I critically analysed other scholars’ works because I believed that they had important contributions to make to my topic. I wove these contributions together in a logical, systematic way, to develop an argument. Furthermore, through this process I also searched for a niche or gap for my study.

The concept of taking a critical approach, means making judgments about how an argument is presented in the text. In this approach the researcher needs to step back from the literature and have confidence in his/her ability to be critical. This can be achieved when one has a working knowledge and understanding of the issues and theories in a given topic (Jesson et al., 2011). In this way the researcher is able to move from surface reading to in-depth reading. It is also important to note that criticism involves analysis of positive as well as negative features. Furthermore, it means recognizing the strengths and weaknesses of research that others have undertaken and being able to articulate why and how you think their ideas or theories might be improved. Critical thinking therefore requires a wide range of skills and can be very challenging.

Conducting a critical literature review may sound easy but in practice it can prove to be anything but easy (Bell, 2010). Doing a literature review thus requires discipline in order to produce a review which shows that the researcher has studied the work in his/her field with insight. In other words, the literature review is a part of your academic development – of becoming an expert in the field. De Vos, Strydom, Fouche and Delport (2005) encapsulate this by stating that only once a researcher really comprehends the very important purpose of the literature review is it given its rightful place in the project.

For the purposes of this study I did a literature review to consider the critical points of the current knowledge including substantive findings, as well as theoretical and methodological contributions to my chosen topic. The literature review is a secondary source, and as such, will not report any new or original work. The main goals are to situate the current study which is, to investigate how history learners view history as a school subject at the secondary phase of schooling, within the body of literature and to provide a context for the reader. Moreover, in reading about my specific topic I was able to further shape the research questions through the identification of alternative conceptions of the problem that had not previously occurred to me. Also the literature review will demonstrate the underlying assumptions of the general research questions.

Furthermore, a review of literature has different purposes and strategies, depending on whether a researcher conducts a quantitative or qualitative research project. For the purposes of this study I chose to adopt a qualitative method to investigate my research topic. Hence, my literature review is aimed at contributing towards a clearer understanding of the nature and meaning of my research topic, which is, an investigation into how history is viewed as a school subject by history learners in the secondary phase of schooling. In order for me to carry out a successful literature review I had to engage in a dialogue with writing and arguments in my field which helped me set the pattern of critical thinking and good writing (Whistler, 2005). In other words, it was the vehicle for identifying reading and beginning to make use of other's arguments and the work of key scholars whose theories and interpretations guided the focus and analysis of my own research and arguments.

Whatever form of research is being done it is important to bear in mind that the researcher has to begin with a research question/s. The research question/s provide the structure for the whole of the literature review (Jesson et al., 2011). Therefore, composing my research questions was a crucial step that pointed the way for my research investigation. Without research questions I would not have had direction and there was a risk that my research would not be focused. Thus, I explored and read widely before I settled on two research questions which guided my literature review. For the purposes of this study my questions are: how do history learners in the secondary phase of schooling view history as a school subject and why do they view the subject the way they do in this phase? My literature review helped me to inform my research

project and then my questions were crucial for my research design. These research questions informed me what data I need to generate, how and from where, and finally, how I analysed my data.

Since a literature review encapsulates much more than a summary of the literature I had to consult a wide range of scholars to explore a comprehensive review of the literature related to my topic. However, after consulting the overwhelming amount of literature available in this field I had to narrow the focus and then read selectively in these focus areas and utilise the most relevant information. Although I tried using the most current sources to tap into my field, I realised that some of the older scholars' works added value to my field.

For the purposes of this study I decided to present my literature review according to themes. This thinking is supported by the *Learning Guide Reader* (2005) which states that a literature review may be presented thematically in a way that traces the issues involved and connections between issues and the gaps in the literature that have not been covered by previous research. This method of presentation is further supported by Terre Blanche, Durkheim and Painter (2009) who suggest that a literature review can be arranged thematically with the review being structured around different themes in the literature. Luneburg and Irby (2008) also concur with this thought and state that literature reviews identify themes in a group of studies. Consequently, my literature review will be divided into the themes mentioned in the introduction, namely: the nature of school history, the purposes and uses of school history and learners' views of history as a school subject. These themes were further broken down into smaller themes within each section. These themes were selected after much reading and discussion around the topic being investigated and I deemed them as being important and most appropriate to deal with my topic which focuses on how history is viewed as a school subject in the secondary phase of schooling.

### **2.3 Literature on the nature and purpose of school history**

For the purposes of this study it is important to review the literature on the nature and purpose of history as a school subject. The nature of school history in this sense refers to what is history

about and what it consists of. While the purposes refer to the functions of school history, in other words what are its uses? Generally the nature and purpose of school history is explained and discussed together as one theme, but for the purposes of this study I have decided to discuss the nature of school history first and then deal with the purposes and uses separately. This was done so that my literature will be better organized and will help readers understand my topic better. Furthermore, these themes will shed more light on how learners view history as a school subject in the secondary phase of schooling, which is the focus of my study. Hence, I will firstly discuss the nature of school history. This discussion will initially give a brief outline of the nature of history in general and then move more specifically onto the nature of school history which is explained using a thematic approach. Thereafter, I will move onto a discussion of the purposes of school history. This section will also be done in a thematic way as explained earlier in the chapter. I will explain and discuss these themes by making use of other scholars' theories and interpretations with regard to school history to guide my own arguments.

### **2.3.1 The nature of school history**

History is generally the study of the past, specifically how it relates to humans. It is an umbrella term that relates to past events as well as the memory, discovery, collection, organization, presentation and interpretation of information about these events (Brian & Richard, 2008). History can also refer to the academic discipline which uses a narrative to examine and analyse a sequence of past events, and objectively determine the patterns of cause and effect that determine them. Furthermore, the academic discipline of history provides both the means and end for teaching the subject. Scholarship on history cannot contribute to public debate by setting up a rarified ideal of 'real' history and dismissing the many popular uses of the past (Barton & Levstik, 2008). People use history in a variety of ways and for a variety of purposes, and these will continue to be reflected in schools and other public contexts. Also because learners at school are active agents of historical learning, their participation in multiple historical settings ensures that they will be influenced by the range of purposes and tools found there.

Historians debate the nature of history and its usefulness by discussing the study of the discipline as an end in itself and as a way of providing 'perspective' on the problems of the

present (Evans, 2001). However, Brown (2007) sums up by stating that history will have three separate but always interrelated meanings which are: history is the past, history is the active process of studying and writing about the past and history is what men and women write following a systematic study of the past. Therefore, history is an effort to reconstruct the past to discover what people thought and did and how their beliefs and actions continue to influence human life. Accordingly Haydn, Arthur, Hunt and Stephen (2008) opine that even though history in school can be a seemingly pointless experience for learners, it can also be taught to learners in a way which gives them knowledge and understanding of the past and insight into some of the most important and difficult questions of human existence. In addition, it gives learners other educational skills and an enthusiasm to pursue the subject into the secondary phase of schooling.

Furthermore, history is what it is, but it is also what we make of it (Slotkin, 2005). In fact, what we call history is not a thing, an object of study, but a story we choose to tell about things, in other words a human construction based on evidence. Events undoubtedly happen, but for it to be construed as history, such facts must be selected and arranged on some sort of plan, made to resolve some sort of question which can only be asked subjectively and from a position of hindsight. In this regard, Levesque (2008) argues that significant events of the late-twentieth and early twenty-first century force citizens to rethink their traditional relationships with the past. However, this does not mean that memory-history has suddenly disappeared from human affairs. In fact, no society can ever exist and survive without such ‘imagined’ references to the past. Thus, all history writing requires a fictive or imaginary representation of the past.

At schools, learners’ are not introduced to academic history but school history. This according to Deng (2012) means that schools are mandated to teach academic disciplines such as history to learners, however, teachers are supposed to work with and transform the content of the academic discipline for classroom teaching. Thus, a school subject is an area of learning within the school curriculum that constitutes an institutionally defined field of knowledge and practice for teaching and learning. While an academic discipline refers to a field of learning affiliated with an academic department within a university, formulated for the advancement of research and scholarship and professional training for researchers, academics and specialists. Therefore,



school subjects like history can be traditional academic subjects that could have direct affiliations with their parent academic disciplines (Deng, 2012).

In light of the above, school history, is history which is constructed, transmitted and informed by needs and conditions specific to schools. The history which is learned in schools is not a reduction or simplification of academic history but is characterised by shared knowledge, specific exercises and procedures of motivation and evaluation. Research indicates that academic history is integrated into the teaching and learning of history as a school subject which provides evidence of learners' spontaneous knowledge of history. This spontaneous knowledge can be seen as a starting point for learning history. But ultimately school history should provide learners with the ability to approach historical narratives critically (Seixas & Peck, 2004).

When learners encounter history in schools, they are generally only exposed to the end product of the historian's work, which is, a particular narrative. Within this traditional approach to school history, historical facts and knowledge are presented as an authoritative, authorless, and seemingly objective account of events as they happened (Seixas & Morton, 2013). As such, school history almost inevitably leads to cognitively unchallenging forms of pedagogy that promote memorization and regurgitation of pre-given historical 'facts' in the form of a long list of historical names, dates and developments. This is confirmed by Levesque (2008) who argues that school history has typically failed to promote historical thinking because of its persisting focus on the transmission of memory-history, largely in the form of narratives.

However, school history does not need to be this way. History can become meaningful to learners when they see it as a mystery to be solved, an interpretation to be challenged, and a way to see themselves in the larger fabric of human experience (Seixas & Morton, 2013). These authors are of the opinion that 'historical thinking' is the creative process historians experience to interpret the events of the past and the general stories of history. In this regard they explore the concepts of historical thinking and suggest pathways for learners at school to achieve a greater understanding of what happened in the past, rather than rely on rote memorization.

Thus, history as a school subject should focus on ‘disciplinary historical thinking’, which constitutes the most advanced way of approaching and investigating issues within the various domains of knowledge (Levesque, 2008). Disciplines such as history have their own modes of inquiry, networks of concepts and principles, theoretical frameworks, symbolic systems, vocabularies and modes of self-regulation. As such history as a discipline is inherently dynamic because of the ways it has been devised and challenged by scholars over time. Furthermore, their objects of study, findings, methods and theories, “stimulate controversy and evolve in time” (Levesque, 2008, p.7). As a result, the objects of study and boundaries of disciplines such as history are complex. Historical thinking is complex because it requires learners to negotiate between the familiar and unfamiliar and to become uneasy with the stories they tell about the past (Wineburg, 2001). In fact, Wineburg (2001) believes that historical thinking is not a natural cognitive process as it goes against how we ordinarily think. Yet, the challenge is for school history to be of such a nature that it initiates and ultimately engages learners in disciplinary thinking.

This has become a challenge for history educators in the sense that they are so busy covering content for examinations and controlling learners’ behaviour, that they do not necessarily engage learners in disciplinary historical thinking. Clearly, there is much at stake in history education and as Levesque (2008) observes, it is increasingly of concern to shed some light on how it could be taught more successfully. Therefore, he suggests some clarification on the nature of disciplinary-history and thus presents a set of five interrelated procedural concepts to help foster ‘historical thinking’ at school level. In this way learners can master and ultimately make appropriate the concepts and knowledge of school history and critically apply such concepts and knowledge to resolve historical issues. Without procedural thinking, learners are left passively absorbing the narratives and viewpoints of authorities, too puzzled to use the tools and mechanisms for making sense of the past. Thus, learners cannot practice history or even think critically about its content if they have no understanding of how one constructs and shares historical knowledge. Although these procedural concepts are highly theoretical, they give disciplinary structure and are foundational to historical thinking and reasoning (Martin, 2012).

In light of the above, historical thinking is indeed far more sophisticated and demanding than mastering substantive (content) knowledge, in that it requires the acquisition of such knowledge to understand the procedures employed to investigate its aspects and meanings (Levesque, 2008 and Martin, 2012). In other words, the difference between substantive and procedural knowledge can be seen as one between the substance (content) of the past (what history is about: wars, revolutions etc.) and procedural concepts for giving sense and coherence to events in history (concepts giving shape to historical practice and thinking about the past). These concepts (eg. historical significance, historical empathy etc.) are not what history is about (substance), but they implicitly arise in the act of doing history. In fact, Martin (2012) suggests that the procedural concepts are relational to the substantive as they explain ideas and active conceptual tools that provide understanding required in the ‘doing’ of historical inquiry that enables historical construction. Thus, to think historically is to understand how knowledge has been constructed and what it means. Without such sophisticated insight into ideas, peoples, and actions, it becomes impossible to adjudicate between competing versions (and visions) of the past. In other words, the nature of school history is more than a memory discipline but a disciplinary discipline (Levesque, 2008). Thus, my focus for this study is not only on the substantive (first order) but also on the procedural (second order) thinking concepts. This means that although the context is important the procedural is what makes school history, meaning that the procedural concepts enable learners to move beyond lower order thinking of identifying and describing knowledge and engaging in higher order thinking skills such as analysing, synthesising, creating and evaluating knowledge.

Just as there are innumerable definitions of history as an academic discipline and as a school subject there are many different explanations of historical thinking by different authors. Along with the similar thinking of Levesque (2008), Seixas and Morton (2013) further identified six specific elements in the structure of the discipline of history that provide a coherent and thorough framework for an analysis of historical thinking. These elements provide a framework for a review of current research into learner’s historical thinking and learning at school. Thus, school history is conceptually more than this. It is what history educationists such as Andrews and Burke (2007); Davies (2011); Haydn (2011); Levesque, (2008); Peck, (2013); Stearns et al. (2000); Seixas and Morton (2013); Timmins, Vernon and Kinealy (2005) and Wineburg (2001) argue what it is, which is based on certain conceptual aspects. These include historical significance, evidence, change and continuity, cause and consequence, historical perspective/

empathy and ethical dimension. However, it is important to note that some of the above authors do not agree on all the above second order concepts, for example, ethical dimension is not mentioned by some of the above cited authors.

Seixas and Morton (2013) together with the other history educationists as mentioned above thus created a conceptual framework of historical thinking that provides learners with the opportunity to gain an increasingly deeper understanding into the ways historians transform the past into historical accounts and how learners can begin to construct histories for themselves. Thus, historical thinking provides learners with insight into what happened in the past as well as how what happened was constructed. In order to achieve this, the conceptual frameworks of Andrews and Burke (2007); Davies (2011); Haydn (2011); Levesque, (2008); Peck, (2013); Stearns et al. (2000); Seixas and Morton (2013); Timmins, Vernon and Kinealy (2005) and Wineburg (2001) can be used to help learners take part in the subject history at school level. Through engaging in these historical thinking concepts learners are apprenticed into how to: establish historical significance, use evidence, identify continuity and change, analyse cause and consequence, take historical perspectives and understand the ethical dimension.

These historical thinking concepts mentioned above will be explained in the context of school history in the next section. It is pertinent at this stage to mention that these historical thinking concepts played a crucial role in my study as I used them as a guide to design an instrument to analyse my research data. In other words, the instrument which was made up of six historical thinking benchmarks helped me to understand how learners view history as school subject through analysing their collages and related research methods using the instrument. The instrument is discussed and explained in the methodology chapter and again in Chapter 6 which is my second level of analysis chapter.

### ***2.3.1.1 Historical significance***

Historical thinking is a challenging task and can be dealt with by the use of second-order concepts of history such as ‘significance’. As discussed in section 2.3.1 above, second-order

concepts are not the ‘content’ of history per se but are necessary to engage in investigations and to anchor historical interpretations of the past. Without these concepts it would be impractical to seriously engage in the study of the past (Levesque, 2005). Thus, according to Lomas (1990) one cannot escape from the idea of significance when trying to make sense of the past. Furthermore, Ford (2015) is of the opinion that events, people and developments are seen as significant because they result in change. Significance is ascribed if they reveal something about history or contemporary life. Historical significance varies over time, and by the interpretations of those ascribing that significance.

Historical significance is thus how something is important or significant in terms of history. As such it is the process used to evaluate what is significant about selected events, people and developments in the past. The past is everything that ever happened to anyone anywhere. In other words, the past shapes everything we are and everything we do. This is confirmed by Seixas and Peck (2004) who point to the fact that the past suffuses every part of our lives in the sense that: it is embodied in our streets, buildings, schools, personalities, government and our ideas. Furthermore, significant events/people include those that resulted in great change over long periods of time. There is too much history to remember all of it therefore historians use different sets of criteria to help them make judgments about significance. This idea is justified by Levesque (2008, p. 43) who states, to claim a historical phenomenon is significant for historical investigation is a “claim that implies an evaluative judgment on particular aspects of the past”. Thus, significance depends upon one’s perspective and purpose.

The nature of school history is such that learners need to be able to distinguish between what is trivial and what is important. Levesque (2005) argues that for history to be meaningful, it depends on selection and this, in turn, depends on establishing criteria of significance to select the more relevant and to dismiss the less relevant. Historians necessarily use certain criteria to decide between the significant and the trivial. In some cases historical significance is determined by an event or person’s long term impact. However, this alone is not sufficient to determine historical significance. Historical significance is also determined by current interests and values: the priorities of the present determine the questions we ask about the past and the nature of the evidence we use (Seixas & Morton 2013). Previously, historians used to focus largely on political or economic matters as being historically significant, as for example: the

forms of government and World War 1. This meant that the everyday lives of people – particularly women, children and people of ethnic minorities – were not considered significant.

However, now historians have broadened their scope to include aspects of social history, so increasingly there is adequate content in which to ground learners' historical studies of the past. Hence, learners can engage in investigations of the history of their local communities or of everyday life in the past, topics which are of relevance to them. Learners learning about their communities could address the element of historical significance by considering for whom their school or other places in the community are named and why these people are important. Have they learnt about people in their community? They could consider what will be significant about their own lives. These aspects prepare learners at school well for later studies that further illustrate that historical significance depends largely on your point of view. A historical person or event can acquire significance if we can link it to larger trends and stories that reveal something important for learners, today.

This idea of historical significance depends on your point of view is confirmed by Bradshaw (2006). He takes a different slant on the idea of historical significance and suggests that the popular emphasis on significant events is wrong. Instead he suggests we should enable our learners to make their own judgements about which events and people are and are not historically significant. He suggests that in fact the best way for learners to have real ideas about which events might have been significant is to have derived the criteria on which they base their judgements themselves. Bradshaw (2006) argues that individual activities and enquiries can be weaved into teaching in order to ensure progression in historical significance.

However, Ford (2015) is of the opinion that significance is seen as something that is constructed therefore criteria are needed to judge the significance of events, people or developments within a particular historical narrative. Therefore, Levesque (2008), prescribed a set of five criteria related to historical significance as mentioned above. These criteria are based on the works by Geoffrey Partington (1980) and Philips (2002) and is largely employed by professional historians. The criteria of historical significance are: importance, profundity, quantity, durability and relevance. Importance refers to one way to appreciate the significance

of a historical event is to contextualise the past and consider what was perceived as important to those who lived then, irrespective of whether their judgments about the importance of the event were subsequently shown to be justified. Key importance questions include: Who were/have been affected by the event? Why was it important to them? How were people's lives affected? The second criterion 'profundity' refers to how deeply people were/have been affected by the event. Key profundity questions include: Was the event superficial or deeply affecting? How were people's lives affected. Thirdly, 'quantity' as a criterion relates to how many lives have been affected by an event. 'Durability' as a criterion of significance refers to how long were people affected by the event. Key durability questions include; how durable was the event in time? Was the event lasting or only ephemeral. 'Relevance' relates to what is significant in history and must be relevant to current interests and increased understanding of present life.

In addition, Phillips (2002) argues that historical significance has been wrongly neglected as a key aspect of the conceptual structure that informs the discipline. Exemplifying the principles through practical activities he offers models for teaching learners to explore the idea of significance and argues for its connection with citizenship education. Hence, Phillip's (2002) work on the under-representation of historical significance provides history departments with fresh criteria to help with the experimentation. Similarly, Counsell (2005) argues that she developed her own set of criteria for structuring learners' thinking about historical significance. She focuses chiefly upon one possible criterion that might inform judgements about historical significance - the extent to which an event, person or development is historically 'revealing'. Counsell (2005) thus encourages history teachers to do likewise in order to help learners to think historically. In accordance Conway (2006) also put forward some ways for helping learners' thinking about historical significance. However, Conway (2006) suggests that learners' concepts of the significance of different aspects of historical periods was affected by preconceptions that they brought to lessons. These preconceptions were leading learners into making unhistorical judgements, without any real understanding on their part of what had affected their thinking. Thus, Conway (2006) suggested some tentative ways in which these learner preconceptions might be challenged, and lead them into making increasingly historical judgements.

The above criteria/models based on the works by Levesque (2008); Philips (2002); Counsell (2005) and Conway (2006) on historical significance depends on a variety of related history factors. According to Levesque (2008), the criteria do not in themselves, tell whether one event is significant, nor are these criteria universally shared and employed by historians. Because inquiries and research are essentially a matter of judgment, there is no set rule or procedure for investigating the past, thus designing a set of criteria depends on the historian, the past in question and the sources available. Nonetheless, the criteria mentioned are useful that provide disciplinary guidance in understanding historical investigations. They can be seen as disciplinary because they offer learners formal and defensible concepts to apprehend the past. In other words, they are clearly defined and useful concepts for advancing sophisticated forms of knowledge in school history (Levesque, 2008). Thus, learners need to think and reflect on historical significance or else they may simply take what is presented to them by others to be significant. In fact, learner evaluation of historical significance enhances learner understanding of historical procedural concepts.

### ***2.3.1.2 Evidence and interpretation***

The concept evidence is central to school history because it is only through the use of evidence that history becomes possible. Indeed, evidence is vital in history education and has multiple uses. In relating this to learners - the presentation of pictures, well researched manuscripts, video and carbon dating can help learners generalise an idea based on evidence (Rebadio, 2012). When we write history we need to create interpretations of the past based on evidence. Inferences are drawn from a variety of primary sources to create interpretations of the past. According to Ford (2015) historical evidence must be cross-referenced so that claims are not based on single pieces of evidence. In fact, working with evidence begins before a source is read by thinking about what the author's intention and purpose of a historical source might be. Historical evidence must be understood on its own terms.

Therefore, history is not the past itself, but is the interpretation and explanation of information from various sources. Evidence is created when sources are used to answer questions about the past. Thus, the process of writing history relies on primary sources and explains understanding history as interpretation, how sources become evidence, and how we analyse and take the



context into account in order to help learners create and understand history on multiple levels. In other words, learners need to be taught that there are many ways of looking at the same thing. These perspectives may be the result of different points of view of people in the past according to their position in society, the different ways in which historians have written about them, and the different ways in which people today see the actions and behaviour of people in the past (Seixas, 2011).

A central ingredient of the teaching of history is trying to discover what really happened. Thus, Calleja (2004) suggests that by presenting a number of sides to a question and weighing differing evidence should be part and parcel of the practical activities done in a history lesson. In this way learners may be equipped to question issues and free themselves of any prejudices. After all it is collaborated evidence that should really enable learners to move from the present into the past. Learners should evaluate the information they are given and acquire the necessary skills to analyse the facts and communicate their findings. Thus, the right balance should be struck between developing the learners' historical knowledge, developing their ability to critically analyse, interpret and evaluate historical evidence and understanding how historical knowledge is created (Calleja, 2015).

Letters, documents, records, diaries, drawings, newspaper accounts and other bits and pieces left behind by those who have passed on can be seen as valuable to a historian. These are known as primary sources that can give information of life in the past. Historians learn to read these sources. However, reading these sources for evidence demands a different approach than reading a source for information. The example set up by Seixas (2011) in this regard clearly explains this difference. They suggest the contrast may be seen in an extreme way in the difference between reading a phone book – for information – and examining a boot-print in the snow outside a murder scene – for evidence. When we look up a number we do not ask ourselves, ‘who wrote this phonebook? Or what impact it had on its readers - we read it at face value. The boot on the other hand is a trace of the past that does not allow a comparable reading. Once we establish what it is, we examine it to see if it offers clues about the person wearing the boot, when the print was made and anything else that was happening at the time. Therefore, according to Seixas (2011) a history textbook for example is like a phone book as it is a place to look up information. Primary sources must read differently. Learners need to understand to

use them well and they must set them in their historical contexts and make inferences from them to help them understand more about what was happening when they were created.

Levesque (2008), argues that historical knowledge depends on the use of critical evidence and is key to historical thinking. However, the historical thinking concept evidence and interpretation is a complex one for learners to engage with. Hence, a set of pedagogico-disciplinary steps was introduced to encourage the critical evaluation of evidence and thereby initiate learners into historical investigation (Levesque, 2008). These steps include: developing research questions, collecting and selecting evidence, analyzing evidence and developing interpretative answers. These four steps can assist teachers in the classroom to effectively help learners to develop this historical thinking concept. However, these steps are only a guideline and may not work for every lesson.

### ***2.3.1.3 Continuity and change***

Continuity and Change according to Calleja (2004) are very important historical concepts which should be examined in various spheres of history be it political, economic, social, cultural, religious and intellectual. When looking for evidence of continuity, learners should look for signs of uninterrupted or incremental evolutionary development. On the other hand, change implies a clear break with the past as has been the case with some revolutions which have really been milestones (Calleja, 2004). In addition, Rebadio (2012) argues that change in history is generally to be understood in terms of changes in state of affairs, it is not equivalent to occurrence of events. Change is clearly central to history along with time. In other words, only those significant historical events shall be counted as historical change.

Thus, central to historical thinking is the idea of understanding change over time. Such understanding also relies on certain assumptions of continuity (Seixas & Peck, 2004). Over a period of time, it is possible to contrast what has changed and what has remained the same. For example, learners readily acknowledge that we employ and struggle with technologies unavailable to our forebears, that we live by different laws and enjoy different cultural pursuits, hence changes were made. Moreover, learners are aware that some aspects of life remain the

same across time. For example many Europeans celebrate many of the same holidays today as they did hundreds of years ago (Andrews & Burke, 2007). Thus, continuity comprises an integral part of the idea of change over time.

Learners sometimes misunderstand history and see it as a list of events. Once they start to understand history as a complex mix of continuity and change, they reach a fundamentally different sense of the past. There were many things happening at any one time in the past with some rapid changes while others remained relatively continuous. This is confirmed by Giliomee (2010) who suggests a good grasp of history, particularly South African history, will help to develop a sense that the present order of things is transient: societies do change, sometimes unexpectedly fast, and sometimes painfully slow. A typical example of this could be during the 1990s in South Africa where a profound change in the type of government was seen. If learners say nothing happened during this time, they are thinking of the past as a list of events. Hence, one of the keys to continuity and change is looking for change where common sense suggests that there was change. Judgments of continuity and change can be made on the comparisons between some point in the past and the present, or between two points in the past, such as before and after ‘apartheid’ in South Africa. We evaluate change over time using ideas of progress and decline.

Closely related contrasts that are used to teach history at school level are ‘similarity and difference’ related to then and now, which help to make sense of the past and present (Seixas, 2011). This concept can encourage learners to acknowledge the vast and multiple continuities that underlie change, and which contribute to the human experience. However, it should be noted that the interaction between the concepts of change and continuity raises a host of problems for learners’ historical thinking. Even when they consider profound change in one aspect of social, political or economic life, learners may assume much more continuity in other aspects of life than is warranted (Seixas & Peck, 2004). In addition, learners see change in comparison with nothing at all happening, rather than the more valid comparison of continuity with what has gone before. Learners need to develop a sense of what counts as change, and the fact that it is probably more likely to occur almost over a long period of time rather than quickly (Donovan & Brandsford, 2005). They need to gain an understanding of the causes of change

and also that change can have different effects on different areas of life and that not all of these will be beneficial.

Thus, the concepts ‘change and continuity’ are crucial to historical thinking. This is because history is by definition concerned with the study of historical change over time that influences a multifaceted and multi-layered inquiry of our human structures. For example, according to Ford (2015) past societies are not fixed, there are changes which have occurred spanning centuries. Also changes in the past can be identified by looking at the developments between two periods. Given the limited attention and focus on these procedural concepts at school level, Levesque (2008) suggested two objectives for better integration and use of the concepts of change and continuity in the classroom. These are: to foster chronological thinking and to promote judgment. In other words, to make sense, school history cannot be presented as disconnected “bits and pieces that can validly and usefully inform the present” (Levesque, 2008, p. 86). This idea is confirmed by Ford (2015) who argues that change and continuity are interwoven and both can be present together in history. Chronologies can be used to show change and continuity working together over time. Change is a process which varies over time and can be described as a flow in terms of its pace and extent (Ford, 2015). Change and continuity is thus not a single process. Therefore, teachers and learners should be more aware and critical of the various accounts of the past that they read, absorb, create or take for granted.

#### ***2.3.1.4 Cause and consequence***

Changes happen because of multiple causes and leads to many different results or consequences. These create a web of related causes and consequences. Different causes have different levels of influence and some causes are more important than others. Ford (2015) opines that historical changes happen because of two main factors: The actions of historical actors and the conditions (social, economic etc.) which have influenced those actors. Historical actors cannot always predict the effects of their own actions leading to unintended consequences which can lead to changes (Ford, 2015). According to Calleja (2004) in order to understand what is happening now, learners need to be able not only to examine the recent contributing and causal factors but also trace the roots back in history. The learners should be able to differentiate between causes and consequences that are long-term, short-term or triggers

and give them the relevant importance. Thus, they would be critically analysing and evaluating the historical knowledge they are assimilating.

Thus, in the study of school history the procedural concepts of causes and consequences are pertinent. This is the reason for events and results of them. The consequences of something drive future events and help explain human behaviour (Seixas, 2011). These concepts suggest not just looking at the immediate factors of history or causes of history, but the interplay of causal factors ranging from the focused influence of prevailing social, political and economic conditions. Furthermore, causation is used in historical inquiry to identify long and short term chains of events and developments over time that lead to historical change. The concept of causation is a complex concept in engaging students, thus, it is paramount that it is clearly communicated in the curriculum so that learners maintain ownership of historical inquiry (Martin, 2012).

In examining both tragedies and accomplishments in the past, learners should be encouraged to consider the questions of how and why. These questions start the search for causes: what were the actions, beliefs and circumstances that led to these consequences? In history we need to consider human agency. People as individuals and as groups play a part in promoting, shaping and resisting change (Seixas, 2011). People have motivations and reasons for taking action but causes go beyond these. For example, if we looked at the causes of World War II, we can conclude that Hitler was responsible, but was that the only cause? To a certain extent he was, but the causes must be set in a larger context. Causes are thus multiple and layered, involving both long term and short term actions and events.

However, according to Rebadio (2012) not all explanations in history are concerned with understanding people's reasons for acting or thinking as they did. Often we want to explain why something happened that no one intended. Actions have unintended consequences, or simply fail to achieve their purposes. Consequently, learners often treat causes as special events that make new events happen in much the same way as individual people do things: causes act the way human agents act. Cause is one of the concerns of the history education teacher. To

boost the interest of learners to stimulate higher order thinking skills of learners is through creative discussion (Rebadio, 2012).

Therefore, cause and consequence is one of the six historically thinking concepts that is significant for school history. As such causes are multiple and layered, involving both long-term ideologies, institutions and conditions, and short term motivations, actions and events. Causes that are offered for any particular event may differ, based on the scale of the history and the approaches of the historian. Learners should be encouraged to be like detectives and try to understand why and what happened in the past. Hence, the concepts of cause and consequence will help learners address who or what influenced events to occur and what were the repercussions of those events. Moreover, history classrooms are at their most dynamic when teachers encourage learners to evaluate the contributions of multiple factors in shaping past events as well as to formulate arguments asserting the primacy of some causes over others (Andrews & Burke, 2007).

#### ***2.3.1.5 Historical perspective-taking (empathy)***

Historical perspective-taking or empathy is the ability to enter into some informed appreciation of the predicaments or points of view of other people in the past. According to Calleja (2004) this entails an imaginative interpretation of evidence and the ability to be aware of anachronism. This reconstruction exercise should be based on sources which are not far from the individual child's own level of perceptual development. To empathise, the learners need to lose the prejudices and expectations of their own time and take on the attitudes and understanding of a past age (Calleja, 2004).

Thus, in a historical context, the concept empathy or historical perspective-taking is much more than just seeing a person, idea or situation through the eyes of another, but rather is a much deeper understanding of the circumstances and concepts surrounding the event. In other words historical empathy is a process of understanding people in the past by contextualising their actions. Hence, this leads to an understanding and explanation of why people in the past acted as they did. People in the past not only lived in different circumstances but also experienced

and interpreted the world through different belief systems. When learners confront the differences of the past, they may mistakenly assume that people living in different circumstances nevertheless thought in ways essentially similar to themselves. In this regard, Seixas and Peck (2004) suggest that the error of ‘presentism’ is a failure to realise how much learners do not know about the past. Empathy or historical perspective-taking, is not, in this context, an affective achievement. Rather, it is the ability to see and understand the world from a perspective that is not our own. In that sense, it requires ‘imagining’ ourselves into the position of another. However, this imagining must be based firmly on historical evidence if it is to be meaningful (Seixas & Peck, 2004).

Ford (2015) further suggests that there are major differences between modern world-views and those of people of the past. Differences are seen in their beliefs, values and motivations. The perspectives of historical actors are best understood by thinking about the context in which they lived and the world-views that influenced them. Looking at the perspective of an historical actor means drawing inferences about how people thought and felt in the past. It does not mean using world-views to imagine the past. A variety of historical actors have very different (diverse) experiences of the events in which they are involved. Understanding diversity is key to understanding history (Ford, 2015).

In addition, Donovan and Brandsford (2005) suggest that the second-order concept historical empathy, is not well understood by learners. In fact, learners have a tendency to believe that things in the past were different because people in the past were stupid or morally defective, rather than entertaining the idea that people in the past thought differently or lived under different circumstances. In other words, learners often ascribe modern behaviour and viewpoints to people in the past. They often fail to see the past on its own terms and therefore fail to understand key reasons for people’s actions or even the structure of institutions. Thus, in order to develop children’s sense of historical empathy it may be better to replace activities where children are asked to put themselves in the place of historical personage and describe their life, actions or thoughts (Donovan & Brandsford, 2005). In this regard, learners can be asked to explain connections between attitudes and background circumstances, and analyse alternatives available to people in the past.

The past is unfamiliar to learners and therefore they find it difficult and a challenge to understand at school level. In this regard, Wineburg (2001) believes that trying to establish an understanding of historical perspective is challenging and unnatural in learner cognition. As such, understanding the past requires learners to struggle with multiple perspectives of historical actors, recognize and avoid imposing presentism on evidence and place perspectives within a historical context. However, learners need to rise to the challenge as it will help the range of human behaviour, belief and social organisation. It opens a wider perspective from which to evaluate our present pre-occupations. Historical empathy means understanding the social, cultural, intellectual and emotional settings that shaped people's lives and actions in the past. At any one point, different historical actors may have acted on the basis of conflicting beliefs and ideologies, so understanding diverse perspectives is also a key to historical perspective-taking. Though it is sometimes called 'historical empathy', historical perspective is very different from the common sense notion of identification with another person. Indeed, taking historical perspective demands comprehension of the vast differences between us in the present and those in the past.

Thus, it is imperative for learners to be introduced to this procedural concept at school level. People in the past not only had different experiences of life but also experienced, interpreted and acted according to different norms, values and belief systems. In trying to make sense of the ways these people felt, thought and acted, teachers must help learners recreate and imagine the situation through empathetic understanding. More importantly teachers must engage learners in more activities that can help them to contextualise the past. Thus, historical empathy is necessary to understand history and to appreciate current events.

#### ***2.3.1.6 Ethical dimensions***

Through engaging in these historical thinking concepts learners are apprenticed into how to understand the ethical dimension of school history. Ethical in a broad sense pertains to the principles of morality or pertaining to right and wrong conduct. However, the idea of ethical is considered here from a historical perspective and not just from a general point of view.



Are we obligated to remember events and people of the past, as for example the injustices of the ‘apartheid era’ or the injustices of the ‘holocaust’? These are one part of the ethical dimension of history. Another part has to do with the ethical judgments we make about historical actions which creates a difficult paradox. Taking historical perspective demands that we understand the differences between our ethical universe and those bygone societies, (Seixas, 2011). We do not want to impose our own obsolete standards on the past. Simultaneously, meaningful history does not treat people who committed huge injustices in a neutral manner. Historians attempt to hold back on explicit ethical judgments about actors in the midst of their accounts, but, when all is said and done, if the story is meaningful, then there is an ethical judgment involved. We should expect to learn something from the past that helps us to face the ethical issues of today.

To conclude this section it can be suggested that the historical thinking concepts outlined above play a significant role in the nature of school history in that they help teachers to prepare learners at school to think historically. These concepts are known as the procedural concepts which are unique methods and procedures that give disciplinary structure as mentioned above. They are relational to the substantive as they explain ideas and active conceptual tools that provide understanding needed in the ‘doing’ of historical inquiry that enables historical construction (Levesque, 2008). As six distinct but closely interrelated historical thinking concepts, they can provide a remarkably useful tool for helping learners at school to establish historical significance, use evidence, identify continuity and change, analyse cause and consequence, take historical perspectives and understand the ethical dimension. However, it needs to be mentioned here that debates about the identity of school history and about the nature and purpose of the learning that does, can and should take place in history classrooms continue in many countries around the world.

Historians who have tried to define the nature of history or discuss the nature of historical thinking have reached diverse conclusions. Thus, even though I considered these historical concepts as the most appropriate way to explain the nature of school history for the purposes of my study, it is a fluid tool and may not always be regarded as the most appropriate way to explain the nature of school history. In other words, other researchers may choose to disagree with my ideas and thoughts. The next section goes beyond the conceptual understanding of the

nature of school history and explains and discusses the purposes and uses of school history using a thematic approach.

### **2.3.2 The purposes and uses of school history**

As discussed in section 2.3.1, historical thinking is the substantive and procedural underpinnings that guide and shape the structure of school history. The procedural concepts were discussed above in section 2.3.1 and fit in well with the discussion on the nature of school history for this study. However, for this section, based on the purposes and uses of school history, I will focus on the substantive knowledge of school history. Substantive concepts are terms that help describe subject matter and content knowledge of school history that allow learners to access the past to make sense of it. These concepts help identify, locate and organize historical substantive content, thus making the historical phenomena meaningful and intelligible. As such historical substantive knowledge can create certain uses that are beneficial and in some cases not so beneficial.

Hence, it can be concluded that school history focuses on the substantive knowledge of history. As such I will discuss the purposes and uses of school history using selected sub-headings in the next section 2.3.2.1 to 2.3.2.9. The reason why I chose to use the selected sub-headings is that they fit in well with the thematic approach of the chapter as discussed in the introduction. The sub-headings were selected based on what I deemed to be relevant for my study. In other words, they speak to my procedural concepts discussed in the above section. Furthermore, the sub-headings help to organize my literature so that it can be better understood and to keep in line with the focus of my study.

#### ***2.3.2.1 The potential of school history to assist learners to understand the past to assess and judge the present***

History can be defined as a disciplined approach to the study of human events with particular reference to the whole dimension of time. According to Aldrich (1997) the task of the historian is two-fold which firstly is to provide as accurately as possible a representation and analysis of the past and secondly to provide an explanation between the past, present and future. Thus,

the nature of history as a school subject is such that it has the capacity to help learners to understand something of the past so that they can assess and judge the present. In this regard, Southgate (2000) states that it is the future, not the past which is the point of schooling. In other words, school history is meant to assist both learners and society to function effectively in the future. Therefore, history can no longer legitimately be viewed as simple or merely a matter of the discovery of the story of the past (Munslow, 2006). In fact, uncertainty in the present about the future ordering of a society tends to destabilize its view of the past (Smith, 1993). Hence, we study the past in school not because learners need to know a collection of old facts, but because school history ideally helps learners understand how the world works and how and why human beings behave the way they do. Southgate (2000) sums up by claiming that learners familiar with history know their unique place in the stream of time and a democracy needs citizens with such judgment and wisdom. Therefore, the past is the only place to find it, which can happen through a study of history.

In light of the above discussion it can be suggested that it is important to understand that even before learners start school, they have a strong sense of the past (National Centre for History, 2001). They learn the language of time and change through nursery rhymes, stories, family anecdotes and other sources. Learners bring to the history learning process their own social and emotional worlds, together with images and ideas of the past. The learner also brings assumptions about human experience, motivation and behaviour which refer to the ideas learners use to make sense of everyday life. These ideas are the building blocks of history learning and help young people to decide what counts as significant and useable knowledge about the past. Researchers have recently begun to investigate what learners think about the history they encounter at school and elsewhere, and how they construct a 'useable past' that helps them to create their identity and place in the world. Studies indicate that some students reject school history, preferring family and community stories because they perceive that the latter is more useful (National Centre for History, 2001). This rejection of school history perhaps stems from the notion that the some of the topics learners study at school are perceived as insignificant to them and only relate to the past. Hence, Slater (1995, p.146) suggests: "there is no evidence that school pupils translate their knowledge of the past into an understanding of the present unless the past is explicitly related to current circumstances".

Moreover, although school history can be seen as the main way learners learn about the past, many acquire their knowledge from a variety of alternative sources such as the media, museums, family experiences and memories, historical fiction, film and public celebrations. Learners often encounter a tension between these ‘vernacular’ versions of the past (lived experiences of specific communities and groups) and ‘official’ histories pressed between the covers of official curriculum documents (Phillips, 1998). Frequently, learners’ own histories relate stories that run counter to official or standard treatments of the past, and offer powerful and alternative insights into the social realities of people’s lives. ‘Unofficial’ histories also may have the immediacy and power to exert a crucial influence on learners’ perceptions of the past. Consequently, when learners enter the classroom, they enter with a complex swag of images and ideas about both history and the past imported from the outside world, and modified by their own dispositions and beliefs about the purposes and uses of history. These ideas and modifications that learners develop then affects their views of school history in a negative way. Yet, according to (Phillips, 1998) these ‘unofficial histories’ may be crucial in the creation of individual and collective identities.

### ***2.3.2.2 The ability of school history to create national identities***

The advent of democracy in South Africa necessitated a radical transformation in school history education. It was recognised from the outset that the revision of school history was an activity that had to be accorded special consideration if the renaissance of education in South African schools was to become a reality (Mazabow, 2003). Siebörger (2000) argues that history teachers and historians looked forward with impatient anticipation to the time when the apartheid curriculum would be cast aside and history could claim its place as an important instrument in the construction of a new national identity. He further suggests that, history as a subject would fulfil three roles: “keeping the triumph over evil fresh, memorializing the struggles of the past, and helping to break down all remaining racism; giving back a history to those who had been denied or robbed of one before; and helping to strengthen democratic and constitutional values” (Siebörger, 2000, p.1). Hence, it can be concluded that school history as the most political subject in the curriculum can be used to create national identities.

In line with the above trend, the *National Educational Policy Investigation* (NEPI) had, already in 1992, argued for the retention of history as a subject in the national curriculum on the basis that an alternative history curriculum could allow for the redress of past wrongs in the interpretation of history; restore the history of the oppressed people as part of the common heritage and assist in the construction of a new set of common values, identities and nation building. School history, it was maintained, also teaches learners valuable political skills and assists in the development of “historical insights into the way things are and the way they have been in both South Africa and the rest of the world” – an important dimension of general education (NEPI, 1992, p. 63).

Moreover, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, which was introduced into South African schools in 2012, is internationally benchmarked and will require the knowledge and political skills to actively participate in and contribute to a democratic South African society. In the process a new framework for education, with a curriculum designed to prepare all learners for the twenty-first century in a democratic, just and caring society based on the values of our constitution was supposedly created. Equally, the previous National Curriculum Statements it was argued were designed to ensure that young South Africans acquire the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes they need to realize their potential, to contribute to the political, social and economic development, to participate fully in the life of the country, to compete internationally and to build successful communities. Hence, it was suggested that these aims can be achieved through a study of school history.

Another recent, political event also highlighted reasons why history should be taught at school level for reasons of identity. Many politicians are of the opinion that for South Africans to respect the rights of foreigners and refugees in the country they need to remember that it was to neighbouring countries that South Africans fled and were accommodated and assisted in the struggle against apartheid. Without a sense of this history being ingrained in school, it is more than likely the young adults caught up in xenophobic violence are completely unaware of how South Africans were received by countries around us in the past (Siebörger, 2008). In this regard, Carrier (2002) maintains, to know who we are, we have to know who we were: what we used to be, how we got here, and the progress we have made, even the progress we have not made. We need to know what has and has not worked, what has and has not been tried, if

we are to avoid past mistakes, benefit from past successes, and maintain a state of realistic models from which to draw and inspire innovations and solutions to new problems. This can happen through the study of school history (Carrier, 2002).

However, despite the fact that history serves an important political function in society, Rees and Lowry (1990) believe that history can and has been used for narrow political ends. Societies present their history in a manner that glorifies their past achievements and hides their mistakes. In this regard, reference could be made to Japan who during World War II made mistakes that were fatal and yet they tend to hide these mistakes and foreground their achievements. In South Africa we are painfully aware of this fact. In both content and methodology, history in the secondary school has been shackled under apartheid by this ideological control. Furthermore, the methodology used in history fosters the notion of a passive learner, whose only involvement is to digest many facts and regurgitate them when required. In addition, the content of the secondary school history also raised learners who were uncritical of the narrow culturally-based material that he/she is required to study (Rees & Lowry, 1990).

Furthermore, school history satisfies a need for identity and it is for this reason why modern nations encourage its teaching in some form (Stearns, 2001 and Southgate, 2000). Identity is closely associated with the idea of shared cultural understanding. Southgate (2000) argues that history is of supreme importance in maintaining a sense of identity and without identity there is little meaning and purpose to life. Furthermore, the need for identity applies to nations as well as to individuals, this implying that cultural identity contributes to meaning, purpose and cohesion in society. School history it is argued can assist in the development of tolerance and open-mindedness and perhaps rids us of some of our inherent cultural provincialism (Furay and Salevouris, 2000) and thus creates a positive identity.

Additionally, the nature of school history is such that it assists learners in understanding not only who they are and where they came from, but also offers them a platform on which to make informed decisions about present issues and future developments. It is believed that learners can make intelligent estimates of the probable broad trends of the future by carefully plotting the trends of the past (Laushey, 1988). Without such knowledge of the past we can become

victims of collective amnesia, groping in the dark for our identity (Daniels, 1981). Marwick (2001) adds that a society can have knowledge of itself only through knowledge and understanding of its history. He further asserts that a society without memory and self-knowledge is a society adrift. Therefore, history fulfils our desire to know and understand ourselves as well as our ancestors (Joseph, 2011). Giliomee (2010) sums up this idea well by stating that the studying of school history does not teach us how to behave or how to succeed, but to know who we are and where we came from.

### ***2.3.2.3 The contribution of school history to critical citizenship***

A study of school history it is argued is fundamental for good citizenship. This is generally the most common justification for the place of history as a subject in the school curriculum. History that lays the foundation for genuine citizenship returns in a sense to the essential uses of the past. In other words, a study of the past can help the present generation to deal with problems their society faces and consequently become good citizens (Giliomee, 2010). In fact, history is purportedly the only place where we can turn to, to find information about the emergence of national institutions and problems and much more. Furthermore, history as a subject also offers evidence about how nations have interacted with other societies, providing international and comparative perspectives that can be essential for responsible citizenship. Moreover, studying history helps learners understand how recent, current and prospective changes that affect the lives of citizens are emerging and the causes of these. Most important, studying school history encourages habits of mind that are vital for responsible public behaviour, whether as a national or community leader, an informed voter, or a simple observer (Stearns, 2001).

### ***2.3.2.4 School history and the creation of historical consciousness***

The South African *Report of the History/Archaeology Panel* of (2000), attributed key importance to the value of teaching history and the creative nurturing of historical consciousness. The authors of this report state: “When taught by imaginative teachers, the richness of history has a larger capacity than any other discipline to promote reconciliation and reciprocal respect of a meaningful kind, because it encourages a knowledge of the other, the unknown and the different”.(Department of Education, 2000a, p. 6). In their report the *History/Archaeology Panel* further added that it is necessary to recognise that everyone has a

form of historical consciousness which is not crafted on a blank slate by teachers in schools, or by professional historians in universities. It was pointed out that, it is created in and by family, the community, churches, the media and other areas of communication, interacting with individual experience. In this, the value of the formal study of history is that it aims to develop this latent consciousness into a conscious consciousness (Department of Education, 2000a). Therefore, it can be suggested that the nature of school history is such that it has the capacity to help young South Africans to heal the divisions of the past and promote reconciliation among learners by the creative nurturing of their historical consciousness.

#### ***2.3.2.5 The capacity of school history to promote values and moral understanding***

According to, *The Report of the Working Group on Values in Education* (2000b), the nature and the teaching of school history is central to the promotion of all human values. The report argued that, “History is one of the many memory systems that shape our values and morality” (Department of Education, 2000b, p. 12). In fact, it is almost impossible to teach history and to avoid talking about values. School history should aim, it is proposed, to develop social, moral, spiritual and cultural understanding. However, the most important values in the teaching of school history according to Van der Leeuw-Roord (1997, p. 179) should be the development of an understanding of ‘otherness’, for others in the past and in contemporary history as well as the developments of an understanding of, and an ability to deal with, conflicts. It is important to recognise the conflicts that exist in history. Learners must be conscious and aware of the fact that they can face conflicts in a positive way and this is one of the skills that can be taught and developed through school history so as to enhance values and moral understanding.

School history also provides opportunity for moral contemplation. By studying the stories of individuals and situations in the past can help history learners to test their own moral sense. In fact, people in the past who have experienced real difficulties and challenges under historical circumstances, can provide inspiration to history learners of today (Southgate, 2000).



### ***2.3.2.6 The potential of school history to help learners become socially literate***

The importance and value of history as a school subject is that learners can become socially literate by studying it. School history is above all else about people and and consequently has a unique contribution to make to social education. School history also has the ability to develop attitudes which social beings need such as: tolerance of various viewpoints, a critical approach to evidence and respect for the value of reasoned arguments (Meyer, 2008). Husbands, Kitson and Pendry (2003), describe history's part in laying the foundations for non-vocational lifelong learning: for satisfying curiosity, developing leisure interests and for offering pure enjoyment. Slater (1989) further argues that: "If history does not guarantee attitudes and aspirations it is a necessary if not a sufficient condition which might enable the making of informed choices. It cannot guarantee tolerance though it may give it some intellectual weapons. It cannot keep open closed minds though it may, sometimes leave a nagging grain of doubt in them. Historical thinking is primarily mind-opening, not socializing" (p. 16). Hence, school history has the potential to help learners develop certain social skills so as to become socially literate.

In all communities, learners are educated and socialised into the values, traditions, rules and norms that characterise and govern their particular societies (Mackie, 2004). They are socialised, in effect, into conventions, skills and laws, which have, for the most part, been founded on previous developments, in other words, learners are socialised into the traces of the past. In the modern, western world, since the late nineteenth century, much of this activity has been concentrated around the system of state education, and more particularly, around the subject of school history. Furedi (1992, p. 12) argues that:

the very emergence of history as an academic discipline [during the nineteenth century] and a central feature of the school syllabus in advanced capitalist societies reflected the conviction of the ruling classes that history could act as a cohesive force against the destabilizing consequences of industrialization. Authorities concerned with the maintenance of the established order have long placed great emphasis on history education. They regard it as providing vital moral inspiration and as helping to forge a sense of national identity in the face of disintegrative trends or subversive influences.

However, understanding how people and societies operate is difficult. In this regard, Stearns (2001) poses the following questions: how can we evaluate war if the nation is at peace – unless we use historical materials? How can we understand genius, the influence of technological innovation, or the role that beliefs play in shaping family life, if we do not use what we know about experiences in the past? In addition, to this, major aspects of how a society operates, as for example mass elections, missionary activities or military alliances cannot be based on experiments as such but depend on information from the past. Hence, it is only through historical information that learners can understand people and societies. Therefore, we cannot stay away from the subject school history as it offers the only extensive evidential base for how societies function, and people need to have some sense of how societies function simply to run their own lives (Stearns, 2001).

#### ***2.3.2.7 School history develops important skills***

A study of school history helps us to develop valuable skills that can prepare us for everyday life. The study of school history helps learners build experience in dealing with and assessing various kinds of evidence. Learning how to combine different kinds of evidence develops the ability to make coherent arguments based on a variety of information. Furthermore, learning history means gaining some skills in sorting through diverse, often conflicting interpretations. The study of history thus does teach the need for assessing arguments and provides opportunities to engage in debate and achieve perspective. Moreover, school history helps us to assess past examples of change in order to understand the changes in society today.

In light of the above, the very nature of the learning of school history can sometimes be viewed as a complex undertaking for history learners. This is confirmed by Van Sledright (2011) who suggests that history is a thoroughly interpretative discipline. To understand the past, learners cannot conduct controlled experiments to recreate it and then study its effects, nor can they travel back in time to witness events first-hand. Hence, learners are required to interpret the complex events that happened in the past. In other words, access to the past is indirect, largely governed by artefacts and residue left behind by those who lived it. These could be in the form of diaries, letters, journals, public records, newspapers, archaeological artefacts, pictures, paintings and historians' interpretations of past events, and the like. Thus, school history

requires learners to engage in thinking critically about stories people tell us about the past, as well as the stories that we tell ourselves.

Moreover, the process of thinking historically that enables deep historical understanding requires certain strategic knowledge dispositions (Van Sledright, 2011). These dispositions include the capacity to: read, make sense, judge the status of various sources of evidence from the past; corroborate that evidence by carefully comparing and contrasting it; construct context-specific, evidenced-based interpretations; assess an author's perspective or position in an account being studied; and make decisions about what is historically significant. Thus, learning to think using these cognitive strategies is no small or easy task. This makes the nature of the study of history at school level complex and difficult for learners and leads to a scenario where learners at times, tend to lose interest in the subject because it is beyond their capabilities. This idea is confirmed by Husbands et al. (2003) who suggest that learners perceive school history as being 'harder' than other subjects. There was a general consensus among some teachers that history is a demanding and challenging subject. This was summed up well by one of the teachers:

I think the very nature of history is very difficult. That isn't to say that kids can't do it. And it's partly the value of history, isn't it, if you think of those skills, transferable skills, the humanity core, evaluating evidence, understanding very difficult history concepts, you know, what you're doing is giving them all of life skills. It is hard (Husbands et al., 2003, p. 113).

#### ***2.3.2.8 School history is useful in the world of work***

History is useful for work and career opportunities. This is confirmed by Sylvester (1972) who suggests that history provides qualities of the mind which can be successfully applied to a range of administrative and social tasks. Thus, a study of history helps create good business people, professionals and political leaders. Learners who study history find their experience directly relevant to jobs in a variety of careers as well as to further studies in fields such as law and public administration. In fact, employers often deliberately seek students with the kinds of capacities historical study promotes. This is because students of history acquire a broad perspective that gives them the range and flexibility required in many work situations. They

develop research skills, the ability to find and evaluate sources of information and the means to identify and evaluate diverse interpretations (Stearns, 2001).

School history also improves basic writing and speaking skills and is directly relevant to many of the analytical requirements in the public and private sectors. Historical study is unquestionably an asset for a variety of work and professional situations, even though it does not, for most students, lead as directly to a particular job, as do some technical fields. There is no denying that in our society many people who are drawn to historical study worry about relevance. In fact, studies carried out by Van Den Berg and Buckland (1983); Patel (1998) and Siebörger (2008) reveal that history is not of any use in getting a job and it is better to do sciences and accountancy to secure future careers. However, it must be noted in our changing economy there is concern about job futures in most fields.

In addition, school history makes us better *thinkers*. Hirsch (1996) supports the view that a broad grounding in specific facts and information such as that supplied by history promotes the development of general thinking skills which are needed for any type of work or career. He adds that there is a great deal of evidence that people who are able to think independently about unfamiliar problems, and who are problem solvers, critical thinkers and lifelong learners, are well-informed people. In fact, a careful historical study teaches analytical and communications skills that are highly usable in other academic pursuits and in almost any career.

#### ***2.3.2.9 School history as leisure and entertainment***

School history has the capacity to give us pleasure and entertainment. It is for this reason that history is popular with the public as mentioned earlier in the chapter and why many historians continue to toil in the fields of history education. According to Southgate (2000) part of this pleasure comes from visiting mental landscapes, from discovering new things about ourselves and simply the love of a good story. For those who are historically inclined history supplies an endless source of fascination. Unfortunately, this fascination does not appeal to learners at school but only manifests later in life, probably after school when they are exposed to greater experiences and interest in the larger world.

Stearns (2001) sums up by stating that historians do not perform heart transplants, improve highway designs or arrest criminals. In a society that quite correctly expects education to serve useful purposes, the functions of history can seem more difficult to define than those of other professions. History is in fact very valuable, useful and indispensable, but the products of historical study are less tangible, sometimes less immediate, than those that stem from some other subjects or disciplines (Fru, 2015).

Research indicates that although many learners find history interesting and enjoyable many of them have a limited understanding of why they study history. If teachers are able to develop learners' understanding of the purposes and uses of school history, it is possible that learners' motivation and engagement with the subject may be enhanced. Even though curriculum time is precious, perhaps history teachers could be more explicit about the purposes of studying the past and the discipline of history. This is confirmed by Haydn (2011) who suggest that every person who has studied history as a school subject will be aware of the difference the teacher can make to the experience of learning about the past. The experience of school history can change learners' lives not just in terms of which direction they take but in terms of how they will be as adults.

To conclude this section on the purposes and uses of school history it is necessary to point out that there are many other purposes and uses of school history. However, according to Biddulph and Adey (2001) there is a paucity of evidence about learners' perceptions of the usefulness of historical study. In addition, there are differing views on the purposes of school history. But for the purposes of my study I focused on the above themes as I felt that they relate well with the focus of my study which is how learners view history as a subject in the secondary phase of schooling. In addition, since my discussion was guided by the historical substantive concepts of school history in this section, I felt that the themes related well with the historical procedural concepts discussed in the section under the nature of school history. Hence, I admit this is not everything that speaks of the purposes and uses of school history, but was deemed sufficient and relevant for my study.

## **2.4 Learners' views of history as a school subject**

History as a school subject means different things to different learners. Some learners view history as being an important and meaningful subject while others merely see it as being unnecessary and meaningless. This means that learners view history either in a positive or a negative light. In fact, the manner in which learners view history is often based on their experiences of the subject. However, factors outside the classroom may also play a role in influencing and shaping learners' views of school history. Therefore, I deemed it appropriate to separate this section of the literature review into the positive and negative views that learners have of history as a school subject. In this way I will be able to organise my literature such that it gives a clearer understanding of how learners view history as a school subject in the secondary phase of schooling which is the focus of my study.

Although there have been many high profile public debates about the form and purposes of school history, less attention has been devoted to the views of learners about what they feel constitutes a relevant and useful historical education for life in the 21<sup>st</sup> century (Grever, Pelzer & Haydn, 2011). In addition, much of the public debate about school history previously has been dominated by adults, whether they be politicians, journalists, historians or educationalists. This idea has been confirmed by a study carried out by Haydn and Harris (2010) which revealed that to a certain extent there has been extensive debate between 'the grown-ups' about the purpose and nature of a historical education for young people. It would appear that the rationale for school history has not percolated meaningfully into the consciousness of many of those for whom the curriculum was designed, or been explained effectively to all learners of history (Haydn & Harris, 2010). Regarding this issue in most cases these adults have very limited knowledge of schools, learners and learning (Haydn, 2011).

Hence, the importance of learners' voices in this regard had almost been side-lined. Nonetheless, the past few years have seen a few studies which provide insights into learners' perspectives and attitudes of school history, but literature is still limited in this area. In light of my topic, I felt that it is necessary that the voices of learners regarding their views of school history were heard for this study and proved to add to the existing literature. Most of the literature reviewed for this section is based on learners and university students' real voices and

views on school history. However, in some instances learners' views of school history may be foregrounded by researchers.

#### **2.4.1 Learners' positive views of school history**

For the purposes of this study a thematic approach was adopted. In other words, a reviewing of the literature suggests that there are some key themes that centre on school history being viewed in a positive light by history learners. Some of these key themes that are discussed in this section relate to: learning from history as a study of the past; history is interesting and we can learn all kinds of knowledge; history helps us shape our identity; curiosity to study history; to develop skills/abilities; to enjoy and understand when taught in a practical way; school history is more than what is taught in the classroom and the enthusiasm of parents/teachers.

Literature reviewed reveals that school history is viewed in a positive light by some learners because they regard school history as a study that enables them to understand how the past affects the present and influences their future. According to Sorrel (2012), history is our future. He goes on to suggest that mankind is very predictable and if we forget the past, it will only be repeated. In other words, school history is about learning how to think about the past, which affects the present in a disciplined way. Some learners suggest that history helps in comparing past experiences with the present to avoid repetition in the future. Therefore, learners' views indicate that their main aim for wanting to study history is to understand the past in detail so they can engage with the present. These views are supported by Kuphaldt (2011) who suggests that history is tremendously important because so many present-day happenings are really just repeats of past events with new faces.

In line with the above trend, secondary school learners involved in a study carried out by Van Sledright, (2011) opined that, history is the study of things that have already happened and we can be sure to learn from our mistakes as well as how these mistakes can be corrected. For example learners' views highlight that they do feel that an understanding of history regarding what happened during the apartheid period might be instrumental to guide the new generation from repeating those mistakes in the post-apartheid era. Hence, history is an important subject

at school and if it is not studied at school level learners will never learn from their mistakes (Fogelberg, 2011). Thus, school history can positively impact learners regarding this idea.

Another positive characteristic of school history is that learners view it as an interesting subject in which they learn all kinds of knowledge. This is confirmed by a study carried out by Mackie (2004) which reveals that some learners who do not study history, viewed the subject as interesting and having a positive impact on them to some extent. These learners thought school history to be interesting in the sense that they understood how things were in the past and how they have changed. One learner even stated that they got to know how many things were invented and who invented them, as well as the different events that took place around the world. These learners mentioned that they found history an intriguing subject which really inspired them. Furthermore, Fogelberg (2011) adds that history can give answers to some very basic questions such as: Why did some cultures become much more advanced several years before others? Why are some countries much wealthier than others today? However, these learners' views of history are based on a limited scope, because they only studied history up to grade 9 and one might perhaps surmise that these learners had not yet had much exposure to intense historical skills that are usually taught at secondary level.

Another positive characteristic of school history is that it helps learners to shape their identity, this meaning that it helps them to determine who they are in a personal capacity as well as in society. McCann (2011) openly states that she became frustrated when she met young people in college who did not have a basic understanding of history because she felt she cannot help them learn how the inter-relatedness of different countries leads us to where we are today. She further adds that we cannot learn how to get along with our neighbours until we understand why we do not already. Therefore, the past carries weight and this can happen through a study of history as a school subject. Eroles (2012) sums up stating that history is a very 'great thing.' He also believes that if we neglect history, it is as if you have nothing to tell about your childhood or your high school memories. Hence, school history is positive in the sense that it helps us to decide who we are as people and as a society and where we want the future to take us (Brogan, 2012).



Curiosity was another idea or theme that impacted history in a positive way. Curiosity is generally a strong desire to know or learn something. This idea of curiosity was confirmed by some learners involved in the study under (Mhlongo, 2013) who were of the opinion that they were curious to study history because they wanted to have a deep conceptual understanding of apartheid, their fore-fathers, heroes or respected men, citizenship knowledge involving national events, world history, current affairs, social history and how people lived in the past. In fact, these learners were curious to know how events of the past, such as apartheid, unfolded and they viewed history as having the ability to keep them well informed about what happened in their country.

Some learners indicated that by studying school history it impacted them in a positive way in that it helped them to develop different skills and abilities. School history places particular emphasis on the development of independent thought and analytical skills and requires excellent communication skills, such as high levels of literacy and oral presentation. Consequently, learners studying school history will be expected to do a great deal of independent thinking, as well as much reading and writing. This is confirmed by learners involved in a study carried out by Mhlongo (2013) who indicated that by studying school history it helped them to improve their English skills which was important for their futures. These learners felt that history empowers them to be able to narrate events better as well as with debating and extended writing all of which they can develop through the study of history. In line with this argument, some learners involved in the study by Biddulph and Adey (2004) were of the opinion that a study of school history was important in helping to develop an informed understanding of current world events, to develop research skills and the ability to frame and support an argument.

Literature reviewed revealed that some learners tend to view school history in a positive way as well as enjoy and understand it when it is done through more practical ways. This was confirmed by an investigation conducted by Haydn (2011) where learners felt that lesson activities which involved 'doing things' other than listening or writing were more effective in the history class and helped them to understand and enjoy the subject. In line with this thinking the findings of the research carried out by Biddulph and Addey (2004) also reveal that learners enjoyed history when they were engaged in group work, active approaches and investigative

approaches. These learners were also of the opinion that watching videos and going on trips out of school could be enjoyable experiences. One learner even stated: “If you’re watching a video you can make notes and think about what you have written...”(Biddulph & Adey, 2004, p.4). Hence, learners seemingly prefer ‘active’ approaches to describe lessons which they had particularly enjoyed. These learners clearly believed that they learned and remembered things better when they actually ‘did things’ for their history lessons. Similarly learners involved in the study carried out by Joseph (2011) revealed that they prefer interactive class sessions where they were given the opportunity to share information and engage in critical thinking activities. Most of these learners felt that excessive note taking and long lectures served to lessen their enjoyment of the subject. All learners suggested that field trips, visual aids and other graphic representations stimulated a greater interest in school history, resulting in them having positive views of the subject. Overall, the study carried out by Harris and Haydn (2006) sums this idea up well where learners indicated what they are taught, how they are taught and by whom they are taught are very important in determining their level of interest. Active and participatory teaching approaches are rated very highly by these learners.

School history is more than what is taught in the classroom. This positively impacts learners in the sense that they can justify and complement what they learn in the classroom regarding school history. This is confirmed by learners who were involved in a study carried out by Joseph (2011). These learners revealed that they viewed school history as being positive because they were able to obtain a great deal of valuable information from sources outside the classroom, to help them better understand historical information. Thus, historical information obtained from family members, television programmes and historical websites provided a good source of history instruction as well as heightened learners’ appreciation of the subject. This thought is supported by Epstein (1997) who agrees that many learners learn a great deal of history outside the classroom from their families and friends.

Another aspect that positively influenced learners’ views of school history was the fact that they were motivated by the enthusiasm of their parents and teachers to take and enjoy history as a subject. In fact, some learners involved in the study carried out by Mackie (2004) were divided by parental influence on taking history as a subject. One learner in particular explained that she had picked up the subject only in her matric year because her father believed that it

was more beneficial for her to take computers as it would equip her for her career. However, her history teacher kept encouraging her and she really wanted to take history, so she managed to convince her father who eventually allowed her to study history in her final year of schooling provided that she also did computer studies. This also indicates the relationship that exists between the parent and the school and how these can influence learners' views of school history.

Overall, based on the above discussion school history is viewed in a positive manner by some learners. These learners indicated that they find school history interesting and relevant and tend to suggest that it has huge benefits to study at secondary school level. Learners were also of the opinion that school history helped them to understand themselves as individuals and to understand their societies as well as happenings around the world. Furthermore, learners clearly like history as a body of knowledge.

#### **2.4.2 Learners negative views on school history**

According to the literature and research discussed earlier in the chapter there is a general agreement that there are many values and virtues to be gained from studying history as a subject. However, not all students buy into the notion that history is essential to their understanding of who they are. This is because, amongst other reasons, learners enter into the secondary phase of schooling with little or no background in the subject. This is due to the fact that history has not been given a slot in the prescribed primary school curriculum as well in the early secondary school years. History has been subsumed into the social studies learning area and only basic aspects in history are studied in this area. Hence, students who select history as a subject in the secondary phase often have only two to three years to understand key historical concepts as well as to develop an appreciation of the subject (Joseph, 2011).

Additionally, according to a study carried out by Haydn and Harris (2010) many learners have very vague ideas about the purposes of school history. This suggests that there are things that teachers can do to better explain the purposes and benefits of school history. It is suggested that if teachers were to devote more time and thought to help learners understand the purposes

and benefits of studying their subject in secondary school, it would help improve the motivation and engagement of their learners. Haydn and Harris' (2010) study also revealed that many history classrooms may be faced with a situation where there is very limited shared understanding between teacher and learners about why they are studying the past. Consequently, learners develop a negative attitude to the subject history.

The above scenarios are important in the sense that it helps us to understand why many learners view history as a school subject in a negative light. However, this is but some of the reasons learners view school history in a negative light. As per a thematic approach the following themes have been identified and discussed by learners: school history is boring and irrelevant; it is difficult; lack of understanding of historical concepts; not beneficial like other subjects; does not provide employment opportunities; impact of external influences, instils revenge and emotional pain/hurt; it is difficult to study the past; being biased in nature and teacher approach/attitude.

Literature based on learners' views of school history indicates that many learners view school history as a subject that is boring and irrelevant (Bycina, 2012; Hannon, 2012; Joseph, 2011; Mackie, 2004 and Steen, 2012). In other words, they felt that the subject was useless and therefore not important. Some learners involved in the above studies argued that they did not enjoy history because it felt like the important thing to pass the subject was to memorise names and dates meaning that these learners felt that school history does not challenge the mind to think quickly. In a study carried out by Joseph (2011) one learner strongly suggested that history was a waste of time to study at school because it had no effect on her life and further indicated that it was no use dwelling on it as it was better to forget the past as it will get us nowhere. In fact, some learners involved in the study by Biddulph and Adey (2004) dismissed the subject history as being irrelevant. One learner even stated "Why do you need to learn about dead people? They're dead. They're gone... You don't need to know about it in everyday life". (Biddulph & Adey, 2004, p. 5). Learners involved in a study conducted by Harris and Haydn (2006) reiterated these sentiments by demonstrating that history is an overwhelmingly negative experience for them. One learner even responded when asked why history is on the time-table in a very sarcastic manner by stating: "Because the pupils need sleep so they made history up" (Harris & Haydn, 2006, p. 324). Some learners added that there seems to be no inter-

connectedness or understanding about how history evolved and there did not seem to be any effort to make those connections (Steen, 2012).

Furthermore, some learners clearly indicated that the nature of school history makes it a difficult subject to study and enjoy. This is confirmed by a few learners involved in a study carried out by Joseph (2011) who expressed reluctance to take school history because they seemed to be influenced by the perception that school history becomes increasingly cumbersome and details-laden as one advances in the study. Furthermore, some learners found the subject difficult because they felt that it had too many facts and essays causing them to always fail the tests and exams (Mackie, 2004). Similarly, some learners involved in the study by Biddulph and Adey (2004) also indicated that they found the source work in school history challenging because they had to justify their interpretations of the sources. Hence, the idea of school history being difficult ultimately led to some learners viewing the subject in a negative manner.

In addition to this, it was revealed from the literature reviewed that there is a general weakness in learners' understanding of historical concepts which often impacts learners' views of school history in a negative way (Joseph, 2011; Haydn, 2011 and Mhlongo, 2013). In fact, some students naively regarded history concepts as events of the past rather than ideas formulated about past events. In addition to this, learners continued to state that an event is caused by one single factor rather than by a range of factors. Hence, learners failed to consider other factors such as social and political events, or even technology as other possible explanations for events of the past. This suggests a lack of understanding by learners of what constitutes an historical explanation. In regard to this idea a study carried by Harris and Haydn (2012) in the UK revealed that in some schools under study evidence existed where lower attaining learners were prevented from taking the subject and being directed to take other subjects which were less challenging or more appropriate.

Another negative view that learners portray is that other subjects are more beneficial to study at school, than history. This view that learners have can sometimes develop through the schooling system. This is confirmed by a study carried out by Harris and Hayn (2012) in the

UK which reveals that there is evidence that history is playing a marginal role in the wider curriculum as schools give greater emphasis to literacy, numeracy and vocational subjects. Compared to these subjects history is seen as less important and relevant to many learners. In some schools in the UK the time-table is structured such that history is made unavailable to many learners. In addition, at some schools learners are told that they cannot study history by head teachers because of school's exam profile rather than the interests of the learners concerned. This meaning that learner interests were not put first but priority was given to school's examination profile. These aspects can negatively influence learners' views on school history.

Additionally, a study carried out by Mackie (2004), also reveals that some learners who did not take history at secondary level suggested that they did not see how history as a school subject would benefit them or impact their lives in any way. They felt that the subjects they chose to study at secondary level will be more worthwhile than history. In many cases, the subject choice for learners seems to have been between history, geography and accountancy and since geography and accountancy are subjects that are seen to have quite stable career prospects, it is not surprising that they were preferred choices. Furthermore, some learners argue that they did not want to study history because they wanted to take other subjects which they felt would be more useful for their careers, but also because there were other subjects they found more interesting. Some learners were faced with a scenario where they were forced into the choice by the combinations of their subject packages, and history was discarded in favour of subjects more suitable to a particular vocation. This idea is confirmed by Biddulph and Adey (2004) who argue that the increased interest in vocational studies suggest that school history no longer captures many learners' interest or imagination. Hence, this seemingly confirms that history was side-lined by some learners who believed it did not give them good career prospects and therefore was viewed in a negative light.

In support of the above trend some rural learners involved in the study carried out by Mhlongo (2013) openly stated that studying history might not provide lucrative employment for them in the city. This is confirmed by one learner involved in the study who claimed: 'I did not choose history because it cannot provide me with a suitable job' (Mhlongo, 2013, p. 67). Also some learners were of the mindset that by studying history they could only get ordinary jobs in the

rural areas such as: gardening, working on a sugar plantation, baby-sitting and being clerks. Furthermore, some learners felt that due to the poor financial status of their families they felt that history would not be the subject that would secure a bursary for their study but rather science and commerce would give them more opportunities. School history was thus not seen as a subject for the poor as it did not seem to provide learners with a bright future.

Some learners' negative perceptions of history are not only based on their personal experiences of the subject but on external influences they receive from various people. These people could include their parents, teachers and peers. This is confirmed by some learners who were involved in the study carried out by Mhlongo (2013) who stated that they chose science and commerce because their parents did not want them to do history. Furthermore, according to the study carried out by Harris and Haydn (2012) a few respondents indicated that some parents viewed school history as not being useful for vocational purposes. They think that by studying school history learners can only become a history teacher or an archaeologist. This negatively impacted some learners' views of school history.

Apart from their parents, learners also tend to be influenced by their peers. This is confirmed by the study carried out by (Mhlongo, 2013, p. 65) where one student stated "I wanted to study history but my friends advised me not to choose it then I chose science". In some cases even previous matriculants discouraged learners from taking history as they suggested that it will destroy their bright futures. Moreover, even teachers in some cases influence learners not to take history. Some learners openly declared that they would be opposing their teachers if they studied history in the secondary phase (Mhlongo, 2013). On the other hand some learners are channeled into taking history by teachers because they are poor performers and would not be able to cope with other subjects which leaves the feeling that failures or learners who do not perform well, choose history.

Studying school history can sometimes be seen as a source of revenge and emotional pain for some learners, hence they view it in a negative light. This was confirmed by Sarah Dryden in 1998 when she spent some time in four Cape Town schools to investigate the status of history as a school subject. A learner at one of the schools under investigation openly expressed her

thoughts by stating that the history they were exposed to, made them think revenge on White people, but they did not want to think that way. The learner went on to say “I think history is a wrong subject, just because I’ve told myself that we must make peace in our land, I think we must forget history and think of the future”. Another learner from another school under investigation added: “I don’t think we can talk about things because it makes pain for other people and their families. And then the pain comes again. They must put it in the past and plan for the future” (Dryden, 1999, p. 122).

This idea of school history sometimes causing emotional pain is supported by learners involved in a study carried out by Mhlongo (2013) when some learners highlighted that they are not happy to study history at secondary level because of the nature of the historical content they have to study. They felt that they were unhappy to learn about apartheid especially because it brought bad memories which they feel will not help them in any way. According to most learners in the study, hearing about the painful acts of apartheid could disturb the unity between Whites and Blacks. One learner felt strongly about the matter and stated, ‘I hate history because it tells about the killings of black heroes by apartheid government’ and another echoed this sentiment by saying, ‘If you learn history you learn about painful acts of apartheid government’ (Mhlongo, 2013, p. 57). In line with this trend learners involved in the study carried out by Mackie (2004) also expressed that history as a subject was too painful and should not be discussed at all. Some learners found history emotional and difficult in the sense that it reminds them of how their grandparents were treated so unfairly and had no rights. These learners believed that school history is far too political and brought back too many ugly memories and therefore they needed to move on and forget the past as it is too painful.

Some learners argue that school history tends to be biased in nature, hence they view it in a negative light. Learners expressed this perspective in that they felt that school history was biased against Whites for they are collectively labelled as if they all hated Blacks. Therefore, learners felt that they were confronted with an undisputed history which did not differentiate between whites who discriminated against Blacks during the apartheid era and those who did not, but instead collectively referred to Whites as if they all discriminated against Blacks. Hence, some learners stated that history is biased in the sense that it portrays that all Afrikaners discriminated against Blacks but this was not the case. Consequently, learners claimed that they



were puzzled to learn that some Whites struggled for the liberation of Blacks, which lead them to believe, that history as a subject cannot tell them the real truth and has as its aims ‘to separate blacks from whites’ (Mhlongo, 2013).

Another theme that was identified by learners as bringing on negative views of school history was, the teachers’ approach to teaching and attitude towards learners in general. This thought was expressed by some history learners who were involved in an investigation under Haydn (2011) who suggested that the personality and temperament of the teacher, and his/her general interaction with learners was felt to be important. Furthermore, a few learners from another study opined that teachers should give more personal attention to learners and demonstrate greater passion for the subject. Generally, learners expressed that they disliked having to adjust their thinking to suit that of their teachers. In fact, one learner stated that not enough opportunity was given to engage in analysis and he often felt pressured to express only the views of the class teacher (Haydn, 2011). In addition, some learners complained that teachers did not explain things clearly. However, more common resentment was teachers who talked for too long. A few comments made by some learners with regard to this matter in a study included:

The teacher talks loads and is really slow so I haven’t liked history so I basically liked nothing in history this year.’ ‘He just talks and talks and talks. It’s as if he’s never really thought about whether any of this is of interest to us ... that it might be boring. The lessons seem much longer than 45 minutes when he talks a lot.’ ‘You listen for 5 minutes and then sort of drift off and start looking at the sky.’ ‘Once he talked for a whole lesson. I didn’t understand and I think a lot of people didn’t understand any of it.’ ‘He’s like a Duracell battery, he just goes on and on’ (Haydn, 2011, p. 7).

Hence, these comments made by history learners suggest that, the history teacher, plays a major role in impacting how history learners view school history. In fact, the study carried out by Harris and Haydn (2006) reveals how learners are taught appears to matter more than what they are taught. This implies that ‘teacher effect’ generally has a stronger influence than ‘subject effect’ in terms of learners’ engagement and commitment to history learning. (Harris & Haydn, 2012). Consequently, learners’ views of school history is greatly shaped by the teacher’s

personality, caring nature, friendliness, good classroom control and confidence in subject. Thus, evidence suggests that teachers can have a significant influence on how learners view and experience school history.

Overall, from the above discussion it can be concluded that history is one of those subjects in the school curriculum that has consistently suffered from negative perceptions. Learners with little or no exposure to the subject often make comments to suggest that history is boring and irrelevant to contemporary life. In addition, even though many learners found enjoyment in studying school history most found it difficult to articulate the relative usefulness of the subject to their lives. Also some learners involved in the study by Biddulph and Adey (2004) enjoyed the subject history at Key Stage 3, others who had enjoyed the subject thus far rejected further study because history was perceived to be of no relevance to their future life or career. Often, even outstanding international figures such as Henry Ford and Alexander Pope have also perpetuated the myth that history serves little purpose (Joseph, 2011). In line with this argument, the study carried out by Harris and Haydn (2012) revealed that some policy developers, senior managers, parents and learners do not perceive history as either relevant or important in comparison with other subjects. They argued that school history is aimed more for the academic learner and is not helpful in developing learners' understanding of today's world.

From the literature discussed earlier in this chapter it can be suggested that history as a school subject can be a positive and useful tool which helps learners to develop into mature, independent adults and responsible, loyal, obedient citizens. This is confirmed by Haydn (2011) who suggests that it is important for young people to have a historical education as it is an essential part of their preparation for adult life. However, according to the literature reviewed many non-history and even some history learners do not think that school history is important because they prefer other subjects and in some cases learners do not really understand the nature of school history. In fact, learners are reluctant to pursue history as a school subject because they do not understand the subject well (Joseph, 2011 and Haydn, 2011). This suggests that maybe if students were introduced to the subject differently at an earlier period, their views of the subject would be different to their current views. It can be concluded that learners' views of history are shaped and influenced by voices and factors

outside the classroom. Such factors include a general perception that history is dull and boring and has little or no relevance to present day existence.

## **2.5 Niche/Gap for my study**

As I worked through the literature on my topic I realised that there is a paucity in research on learners' views of history as a school subject. In other words, there is a fair amount of research that has been done on history as a school subject which tends to focus more on views of learners as well as the nature and purpose of the subject. However, most of these studies that I have reviewed seem to be dominated by adult voices and not learners' voices. Hence, I believe that because my study deals more specifically with the voices of history learners who have chosen the subject at school level, it will add value to the existing literature. Furthermore, methodologically by means of collages learners are given the opportunity to deal with views of school history in a symbolic manner. This arts-based method, which will be explained fully in Chapter 4, was used to allow learners to express their views in a method that has not been used much and this could serve to enhance the current literature on learners' views of school history and create a gap for my study.

## **2.6 Conclusion**

Chapter 2 began by explaining what a literature review is, followed by a clarification of the purpose of a literature review. Thereafter, followed an explanation of how this literature was presented. As indicated earlier in the chapter my literature was divided into different themes which are: the nature of school history, the purposes and uses of school history and learners' views of history as a school subject. These themes were then further divided into sub-themes. The nature of school history focused on the procedural concepts of school history which comprised of six historical thinking concepts while the purposes and uses of school history focused on the substantive concepts. Various themes that I deemed important for my study were discussed. Learners' views of history as a school subject were also explained and discussed from a positive and negative standpoint by means of a thematic approach. All themes and sub-themes were explored using other literature to guide my own arguments. Also the outlined themes were explored from a global view with special reference to South Africa. Hence, both local and international literature had been reviewed. It is evident that learners'

views of history as a school subject, the main focus of this study, are not only influenced by their experiences of the subject but also by other factors. The next chapter deals with the theoretical framework of the study.

## **CHAPTER 3**

### **FRAMING THE STUDY THEORETICALLY**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter is a continuation of the literature review that I initiated in Chapter 2. However, unlike in the previous chapter where I reviewed research literature, in this chapter I focus on the theoretical literature.

The research questions for this study were posed in Chapter 1 but before starting to generate data to answer them I first needed to state my theoretical standpoint and my epistemological and ontological considerations. According to Wellington, Bathmaker, McCulloch and Sikes (2005) the researcher investigates his or her philosophical position and basic assumptions concerning ontology, epistemology and human nature in order to choose the appropriate methodology and methods for the study. This enabled me to clarify my standpoint, which is relevant for the credibility of the findings, in this study. As the purpose of my study is to explore learners' views of history as a school subject in the secondary phase of schooling, 'Symbolic Interactionism' was deemed the most relevant theory to provide the theoretical framework for the study. The rationale behind this will be elaborated upon in detail in section 3.8 lower down.

I will begin this chapter by discussing some views on theory and how it is used, thereafter I will briefly explain what a theoretical framework is and why it is needed. I will then explain the chosen theoretical framework which is 'Symbolic Interactionism' for this study and the nature of it, as well as how I assimilate this theory into my research project on learners' views of history as a subject.

#### **3.2 Some views on theory**

Theories are purposely created and formulated, never discovered and they can be tested but never proven (Nalzar, 2012). In fact, theory provides a point of focus for dealing with the

unknown in a specific area. The function of theory in research is to identify the starting point of research problems and to establish the vision to which the problem is directed. Furthermore, it determines and defines the focus and goal of the research problem. Mehta (2013) suggests that theories are constructed in order to explain, predict and master phenomena (e.g. views, relationships, events, or behaviour). In many instances we are constructing models of reality. Thus, a theory makes generalizations about observations and consists of an interrelated coherent set of ideas or models.

According to Dillow (2009) the word theory has various meanings, depending on its context. For the purposes of this study it is associated with the paradigms and perspectives that organize the research. These paradigms are human constructs (views of history) which assist in defining the stance taken toward the main principles of ontology, ethics, epistemology and methodology. In contrast Denzin and Lincoln (2005) maintain that a perspective is less unified but can share elements of a paradigm. In this context, both signify an approach that I have used and continue to use, to plan, carry out and discuss my research. Therefore, the theory that underpins my study is already and unavoidably in place. It affected early choices and decisions made regarding this study and grew with the study.

It was a relief to discover that my initial inclination towards a qualitative approach and an interpretivist paradigm was theoretically driven, since I have been concerned about theory and how to fit it into my study. In fact, I was overwhelmed by the vast amount of literature and my innate resistance to use theory which obviously stemmed from my initial lack of understanding of the concept of theory. However, I found Becker's (1986) assurances extremely helpful when he states: "none of us invent it all from scratch, scholarship is a cumulative enterprise, and we depend on our predecessors" (p. 140). He suggests that the element of choice is less free than some scholars would believe and that a whole host of small, practical choices made early on, commit us to a paradigm. This suggests an approach that is organically developed rather than choosing a structure to fit ourselves into, we fit it into place by developing a relationship between our 'predecessors' work and our own.

Hence, theory is a contemplative and rational type of generalising thinking, or the results of such thinking. In other words, theory provides an explanatory framework for some observation, which in this case is to try and understand how learners view history as a school subject. A theory can thus be a body of knowledge which may or may not be associated with particular explanatory models. To theorise is thus to develop this body of knowledge. Hence, the idea to move from theory to data and back to theory.

### **3.3 Using theory**

From the above discussion it can be concluded that the idea of applying and even engaging with theory can seem difficult, even intimidating to many doctoral students, including myself. However, Sikes (2006, p. 43) states that “theory is essential and inescapable” and we need some to live by. In fact, Wellington et al. (2005) strongly argues that theory does and must always play a part in one’s thinking or writing, whether overtly or covertly, consciously or unconsciously. Hence, it must be made explicit for a thesis, otherwise, every piece of work will stand in isolation, unconnected to all the other contributions to that field. Bearing this in mind I realised that I had no choice but to overcome my fear and reluctance of theory and start embracing it and allow it to cradle my thinking and lean on it for my study.

Using theory in a traditional investigation enables analysis. In other words theories, are discussed and then findings are presented and analysed in this light. However, I am reluctant to theorise in this way because it leans more to a positivist and structured stance and produces generalisations and abstract knowledge, whereas the kind of knowledge that I want to produce is experiential. Since my study relates to human views, behaviour, experience and interaction, there needs to be interpretation, self-awareness, cultural and linguistic mediation and recognition of agency and contingency. In fact, I attempted to bring to life the particular contexts and circumstances that impact learners’ views of history and to evoke my participants, actions, spaces and senses to build subjective, situated knowledge. Furthermore, I want to “transform collected materials into vivid, detailed accounts of lived experience that aims to show how lives are lived, understood and experienced” (Kiesinger, 1998, p. 129). Thus, I am not aiming for objectivity, or a neutral observer’s voice.

Hence, my ontological approach for this study is interactionist and interpretative. An interactionist and interpretative framework has led me to the consideration of collage-making and presentations as well as discussion and observations in the form of field-notes as methods of enquiry and representation. This will be explained in detail in the next chapter. This ontological positioning allowed me to investigate the views of my participants. Prus (1996) confirms this for a study such as mine, by stating, that at the centre of the research enterprise is the idea that human behaviour is the product of community life and that social science has to respect the lived experiences of people. This is an approach that values people and the stories of their lives; it seeks to examine how they view, perceive, experience, and understand their world and the society in which they live and operate. Furthermore, it values the meanings that they make and understands that the meaning making is situated, contextualised and organic and that it focuses on subjective rather than objective aspects of social life and interpretation of meaning rather than analysis of structures. This confirms that this study focused on an analysis of learners' subjective views of school history as opposed to the objective views.

### **3.4 What is a theoretical framework?**

A theoretical framework is the structure that can support a theory of a research study. It generally introduces and describes the theory which explains why the research problem under investigation exists. In other words, it provides a particular lens through which to examine a topic. All frameworks are based on the identification of key concepts and the relationships among these concepts. According to Nazaro (2012) the theoretical framework is more formal and used for studies based on existing theories. They usually come from other disciplines such as economics, social sciences and anthropology and are used by historians and educationists to bring new dimensions of their topic to light. In fact, there are a large number and wide variety of theoretical frameworks available for qualitative researchers to consider when selecting a framework.

It is important to note that there is no right or wrong theoretical framework to use when examining a topic since every topic can be viewed from a number of different perspectives. In fact, Anfara and Mertz (2006) are of the opinion that experienced researchers, as well as students who employ qualitative methods often have trouble identifying and using theoretical



frameworks in their research. This trouble is typically centred on finding a theoretical framework and understanding its pervasive effects on the process of conducting qualitative research.

Therefore, developing a theoretical framework that guides the logic of what you are doing in a thesis can be challenging. Bearing this in mind I personally found it extremely difficult to identify a suitable theoretical framework to underpin my study. Some of these struggles that I experienced will be shared and explained throughout the chapter. Initially, I struggled to understand that there are two domains in research – theory and observation. Theory can be referred to as what I as a researcher was actually thinking, while observation is what goes on in the real world where my data was generated. When I fully understood this and after much reading and discussion I realised that by having a good theory or set of theories is necessary. In other words, by having a good theory it will guide every aspect of my study from formulation of the research questions and problem statement, through discussing the findings of my data analyses and writing the conclusions. Hence, my theoretical framework provides a well-supported rationale to conduct my study and will help the reader to understand my perspective. Furthermore, my theoretical framework will assure the reader that the type of investigation I propose is not based solely on my personal instinct but rather informed by an established theory, which is ‘Symbolic Interactionism’. Hence, the research questions to which I am seeking answers contain important underlying assumptions related to my study. These assumptions are based on theory and logic. My task is to explicitly state the theory and attach this to most components of my study. Thus, a theoretical framework is foremost a theory that serves as a basis for conducting research.

In line with the above, my theoretical framework is a group of related ideas that provides guidance to the entire process of my research project. The appropriateness of my theoretical framework is to investigate how learners view history as a subject in the secondary phase of their schooling. Furthermore, my theoretical framework will strengthen my study.

### **3.5 Why is a theoretical framework needed?**

Gilbert (2008) asserts that theoretical frameworks, when properly handled, can enrich and enhance the research. Furthermore, the framework has implications for every decision made in the research process. Therefore, they are needed and serve an important purpose in a study. In fact, no matter how little one thinks they know about a topic, and how unbiased one may think they are, it is impossible for a human not to have preconceived notions, even if they are of a very general nature (Borgatti, 1999). These preconceived notions about human nature affect the way we look at things when doing research. In this sense the researcher is always being guided by a theoretical framework even without noticing it at times. Hence, not knowing what your real framework is, can be a problem and lead to much confusion and uncertainty.

Gilbert (2008) further argues that theoretical frameworks can be crucial in shaping the ways in which we investigate the world. They highlight particular features of the world as significant; they direct our attention towards certain forms of behaviour and they suggest certain kinds of research questions. In fact, some theoretical frameworks will have a relatively direct influence on the kinds of research methods we use, for example symbolic interactionism's interest in the ways in which people interact and construct meaning within particular settings, determines that qualitative methods which focus on behaviour in its natural context will be most appropriate. However, some frameworks may have a less direct link to method. Therefore, Gilbert (2008), states that the strength of the links between particular frameworks and particular methods, varies considerably. Nevertheless, each framework will, at a deeper level, exert a profound influence on the design, orientation and character of the study. This was also true in the case of this study where symbolic interactionism exerted a major influence on the character of the study.

In line with Herek's (2010) thinking my theoretical framework will strengthen my study in the sense that an explicit statement of theoretical assumptions will allow the reader to evaluate them critically. Also the framework will connect me to existing knowledge. Furthermore, articulating the theoretical assumptions of my research study, forced me to address questions of how and why. Moreover, having a theory helped me to identify the limits of generalisations. A theoretical framework for this study specifies which variables influence learners' views of

school history and alerts me to examine how those key variables might differ and under what circumstances. Hence, a theoretical framework is needed as it serves an important role in guiding my study.

The theoretical framework selected for this study as mentioned above is ‘Symbolic Interactionism’ which is appropriate and is needed to guide me as the researcher. It relates to the philosophical basis (my reasoning) on which the research takes place, and forms the link between the theoretical aspects and practical components of the investigation undertaken. The main purpose of my theoretical framework is to help me make my research findings meaningful. Furthermore, it will help me to establish orderly connections between observations and facts and to predict and control situations. Finally, it will assist in stimulating my research.

### **3.6 Setting the stage for the theoretical framework**

As a starting point, it can be suggested that in developing a research project, we need to put considerable effort into answering two questions in particular. Firstly, what methodologies and methods will be employed in the research and secondly how do we justify this choice and use of methodologies and methods? The answer to the second question lies with the purposes of my research – in other words my research questions that I am seeking to answer, which are: how do history learners in the secondary phase view history as a school subject and why do they view the subject the way they do? However, there is more than this, in that, justification of my choice and particular use of methodologies and methods is something that reaches into the assumptions about reality that I bring to my study. Therefore, to ask about these assumptions is to ask about my theoretical framework (Crotty, 1998).

Furthermore, my theoretical framework also reaches into the understanding that I have, of what human knowledge is, what it entails, and what status can be ascribed to it. In other words, what kind of knowledge do I believe will be attained by my research and what characteristics do I believe that knowledge to have? This can be seen as an important issue because it leads to how readers of my research, regard the objectives I lay out before them and whether they take these objectives seriously. These are known as the epistemological questions. Hence, epistemology

is the theory of knowledge embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby in the methodology (Crotty, 1998).

Also important to consider is that in the latter half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century there was a growing uneasiness with the assumption that social and educational research was to be governed by the dominant empirical analytical methodologies. With this growing uneasiness there was a shift in understanding which called for the recognition of alternative paradigms, alternative epistemologies and the application of a variety of methodologies and methods (Wiersma, 1991). From this, new epistemologies, theoretical perspectives, methodologies and methods emerged as theoretical constructs on which to base research, along-side the dominant objectivist's perspective of the nature and limits of human knowledge. These epistemologies are referred to by Crotty (1998) as objectivism, constructionism and subjectivism. However, others such as Mertens (1998) have placed different labels and interpretations on the theoretical constructs that have developed. In identifying the theoretical framework for this study the schema of epistemologies and theoretical perspectives outlined by (Crotty, 1998) will be used.

While the epistemologies outlined here may, for the purpose of explanation, be categorised and particular aspects of each identified, it is important to note that it is difficult for the study to be an example of any one paradigm. However, one can derive a dominant perspective which is appropriate for the purpose of the research and relevant to the specific research questions posed in a study and the investigation undertaken. In essence, when researchers conduct research projects to investigate identified problems or issues, they devise a research process that is appropriate for their purpose and which appears most suitable to answer their research questions.

The focus of this study is an investigation into how history is viewed as a subject by history learners in the secondary phase of schooling. The research emanated from educational change that occurred in South Africa with the adoption of a new education system more than a decade ago. Democratisation and the advancement of a human rights culture was premised upon the belief that society will be transformed and all inequalities will be addressed through a democratic and representative form of education. Hence, the overall aim was for schools to be

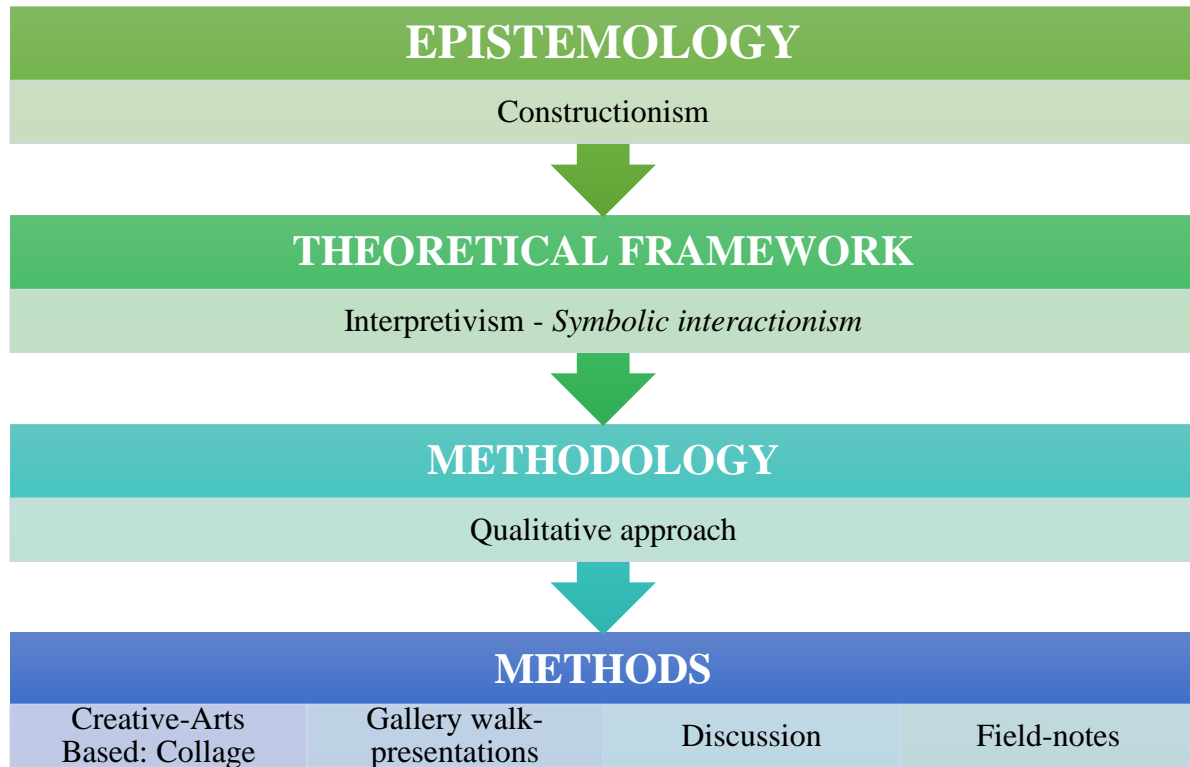
transformed into sites where learners live out the negotiated values of the South African Constitution and the Bill of Rights. According to Weldon (2003, p. 1) “History has been identified as an appropriate subject to attempt to fulfill these aims”. However, despite the perception that history as a school subject is of great value, Lowry (1995) states that it is a subject under threat. In fact, Meyer (2008) voices her concern over the declining numbers of learners taking history as a subject in the secondary phase of school. In addition, to this the researcher herself was faced with a scenario where she could not teach history as a subject any longer due to the declining numbers, hence, history being downsized in many urban schools. Thus, in line with these thoughts I felt that it is necessary to investigate how history is viewed as a subject in the secondary phase of schooling by history learners.

This study was focused by two specific research questions, which are:

- How do history learners in the secondary phase view history as a school subject? and
- Why do history learners in the secondary phase view the subject the way they do?

Bearing in mind the purpose of this research and the questions posed, it was considered appropriate to encapsulate this study within the epistemology of constructionism and from the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism. Figure 3.1 clearly indicates the schema outlining the theoretical framework for this study.

**Figure 3.1 - Schema outlining the theoretical framework of the study based on Crotty (1998)**



**Note:** The last two aspects of the diagram are methodology and methods that will be covered in the next chapter.

### 3.7 Epistemology of constructionism

As already discussed above I need to describe the epistemology inherent in the theoretical perspective and therefore in the methodology I have chosen. According to Crotty (1998) epistemology deals with the nature of knowledge, its possibility, scope and general basis. Hence, epistemology, in simple terms, is about, how we know what we know. In fact, Guba and Lincoln (1998, p. 201) confirmed this by stating “epistemology is the nature of the relationship between the knower or would-be knower and what can be known”, which means that the theory of my study will provide an explanatory framework for me to investigate how learners view history as a subject.

Furthermore, epistemology is concerned with providing a philosophical grounding for deciding what kinds of knowledge are possible and how we ensure it is adequate and legitimate. Moreover, Crotty (1998) suggests that epistemology is related to ontology, the study of being. He goes on to state that an ontological stance implies a particular epistemological stance and vice versa. Crotty (1998) also highlights the complementary nature of these terms when he cites the ontological notion of realism, which postulates that realities exist outside of the mind, and its complement, objectivism, an epistemological notion asserting that meaning exists in objects independent of any consciousness; if one stance is adopted, so is its complement.

Hence, I need to identify, explain and justify the epistemological stance I have adopted for this study. As indicated above, the three epistemological constructs outlined in Crotty's conceptual framework were objectivism, subjectivism and constructionism. Objectivist epistemology as mentioned above holds that meaningful reality exists outside the mind while subjectivist epistemology views that meanings are imposed upon reality and does not emerge from an interplay between subject and object. Hence, both the objective and subjective epistemological stances have a tendency to limit human views, knowledge, understanding and experiences. As such both these stances could not work for my study which is based on learners' subjective views of school history. In providing an outline and justification for the preference of constructionism for this study the following discussion is necessary.

In contrast to objectivism and subjectivism, constructionism can be applied comfortably to the social cultural world, as the cornerstone of constructionism is that "reality is socially constructed" (Mertens, 1998, p. 11). Thus, constructionism asserts that we cannot discover meanings objectively, but rather that we construct them as we interact with the world. This is confirmed by Crotty (1998) who states that constructionism claims that meanings are constructed by human beings as they engage with the world they are interpreting. Therefore, from the constructionist viewpoint meaning cannot be described simply as 'objective' or 'subjective'. In fact, from the epistemological stance of constructionism, humans do not create meaning but rather construct meaning. In other words, we have something to work with, which is the world and objects in the world.

One of the assumptions underlying constructionism is that the social world is without meaning prior to a person's experience of it. Meaning is not created, but constructed in an interconnectedness of objectivity and subjectivity. There is a certain imaginativeness and creativity exercised in relation to the objects one encounters. The mind is actively involved in this process and individual perspectives, perceptions and experiences play a vital role in constructing a person's reality (Blumer, 1969). Therefore, the epistemology of constructionism is appropriate for this study as the learners will be able to share their views of history as a subject because of their experiences and interaction with the subject.

According to Schwandt (2000) constructionist epistemologies aim to overcome 'representationalist' epistemologies in a variety of ways. In other words, we are all constructivists if we believe that the mind is active in the construction of knowledge. Furthermore, Schwandt (2000) suggests that knowing is not passive but active, that is, the mind does something with these impressions, at the very least forming abstractions or concepts. We invent concepts, models and schemes to make sense of experience and continually test and modify these constructions in the light of new experiences. Furthermore, there is an inevitable historical and socio-cultural dimension to this construction. In other words, we do not construct our interpretations in isolation but against the backdrop of shared understandings, practices, language, and so forth (Schwandt, 2000). This is relevant for this study since my participants for this study who are the learners construct meaning from their interaction with history as a subject and thus they have their own views of history. Moreover, these learners' views of history are not constructed in isolation but may be influenced by other factors and experiences.

Crotty (1998, pp. 45-51) emphasises some key principles of constructionism: firstly we construct meanings by the interpretative strategies we use; secondly there is no true interpretation, only interpretations that are more or less useful, more or less liberating, fulfilling or rewarding and thirdly meanings are not conjured out of nothing and imposed on an object, but have essential relation to the object. However, advocates for social constructionism might agree on the claim that we are self-interpreting beings and that language constitutes this being. Furthermore, Gadamer and Taylor's study (as cited in Schwandt, 2000) suggest that there is truth in the matter of interpretation, but it is conceived in terms of disclosure that transpires in actual interpretative practices, rather than as a relation of correspondence between an object



and some external means of representation. Hence, some constructionist's accounts hold that there is no truth in the matter of interpretation while others believe that there is truth in the matter.

Therefore, as the researcher working from a constructionist epistemological positioning, I focused on gaining an understanding of my research participants' interpretations of reality derived from their social interaction and interpersonal relationships. Such research is characterised by a purpose to discover the interpretations of reality within particular social or cultural contexts, in this case the school environment, parents and possibly educators. In this respect, I will provide details relating to the "backgrounds of the participants and the contexts in which they are being studied" (Mertens, 1998, p. 14). In this scenario I have to be very aware of my participants' involvement with how they view history as a subject because this is what I am hoping to investigate and explore in this study. In fact, my participants are a vital part of the events and situations under investigation, and integral to the outcomes emerging from the research undertaken. In many instances there is interaction between myself as the researcher and the participants involved in the investigation.

There is a variety of methodologies and methods that can be used in constructionist-based research, although there tends to be a bias towards qualitative research. However, this does not necessarily exclude the use of qualitative methods to generate data relating to a study, and in particular gathering data relevant to the context in which the research takes place (Wiersma, 1991). The researcher using a constructionist epistemology to approach a problem usually applies the notion of triangulation, which "involves the use of multiple methods and multiple data sources to support the strength of interpretations and conclusions" (Mertens, 1998, p. 354). Thus, data is usually gathered from multiple samples and through a variety of methods. In this way consistency in the data gathered from various sources can be evaluated, and the possible differences that might be attributed to particular settings and contexts in which the research takes place, can be identified. Hence, the methods used for this study include various types such as collage-making, presentations, discussions and observational field-notes of the collage-making process. According to Wiersma (1991) when presenting the findings of studies undertaken from a constructionist epistemology, it is also common for the researcher to provide

direct quotes from participants who take part in the research to support the inferences drawn from the data which was also done for the purposes of this study.

### **3.8 Theoretical perspective for this study – symbolic interactionism**

In moving down Figure 3.1 from the top, the second component on the schema of the theoretical framework is the theoretical perspective. The theoretical perspective relates to the underlying philosophical assumption about the researcher's view of the human world and the social life within that world (Crotty, 1998). Coming from a constructionist epistemology, the purpose of this research and questions posed, the theoretical perspective underlying this study aligns itself to interpretivism under the particular banner of symbolic interactionism.

The interpretivist approach to explaining human social cultural reality has its roots in the sociology of Weber who placed “the study of society in the context of human beings acting and interacting” (Crotty, 1998, p. 68). From this perspective, human beings are viewed as social beings who interact socially with each other, and the outcomes of this interaction develop the fabric of society, the cultural world in which individuals live out their lives and an identification for individuals within that society. In this sense, society is “central to forming what the human being is” (Charon, 2000, p. 200).

In many educational circles educators and learners are seen as merely implementing policy as advocated by educational bureaucrats. However, learners have their own perspectives, feelings, views and experiences, thus are likely to attach different meanings to different curriculum practices, subjects and changes. This does not necessarily mean that different interpretations would be distinct or without common qualities – it means that the interpretations will result from each person's own processes of sense making (Lubisi, 2000). In light of this view, I have chosen to adopt ‘Symbolic Interactionism’ which is a theory, as the main component of the theoretical framework for this study and recognized the epistemology of constructionism embedded in symbolic interactionism. On the other hand my ontological consideration will help inform my methodologies as to the nature of reality or as to what social research is supposed to study and the main question here should be – what is the nature of reality? This

ontological position will allow me to investigate the views of my participants through a creative-arts based research method (collages), presentations, discussions and observations.

Symbolic interactionism also known as the symbolic interaction perspective, is a major framework of sociological theory (Crossman, 2014). It is one of the prominent interpretive theoretical perspectives from which to examine society and individuals' actions and behaviour within their social cultural world. In fact, symbolic interactionism is considered a part of social psychology, and its prominence grew out of the desire to understand society, particularly the influence culture plays in human behaviour, and the place of the individual in society. The key concepts of symbolic interactionism are mind, self and society. The mind refers to individual's ability to use symbols to create meanings for the world around them, individuals use language and thought to accomplish this goal and self refers to an individual's ability to reflect on the way they are perceived by others. Therefore, this perspective relies on the symbolic meaning that people develop and rely upon, in the process of social interaction. Considering the purpose of my study which is to understand the views of participants involved in the study, symbolic interactionism was deemed a relevant theory because of its potential and power to explain the symbolic meaning (views) that the participants have of history as a subject, through the process of social interaction.

As noted above, the term 'symbolic interactionism' has come into use as a label for a relatively distinctive approach to the study of human life and human conduct. The scholars who have used the approach or contributed to its intellectual foundations are many and include notable figures such as: Mark Baldwin; Charles Horton Cooley; John Dewey; William James; George Herbert Mead; Robert E. Park; Robert Redfield; W.I. Thomas; Louis Wirth; Max Weber and Florian Znaniecki (Blumer, 1986). Despite significant differences in the thoughts of these scholars, there is a great similarity in the general way in which they viewed and studied human group life. Hence, the concept of symbolic interactionism is built around this strand of general similarity as a theory. However, according to (Crossman, 2014) the American philosopher, George Herbert Mead, above all others, laid the foundations of the symbolic interactionist perspective in the 1920s. Thereafter, his student Herbert Blumer, was the first one to use the term symbolic interaction, after his death. For this reason, "Blumer is also named as the founder of symbolic interaction" (Aksan, Kisac, Aydin & Demirbukan 2009, p. 902).

According to Denzin (1992) Weber's work was particularly influential among early social scientists who wanted to break away from using the physical science model. Weber argued that it is meaningless to attempt to reduce empirical findings to social laws. According to Weber, laws are only conceptual aids for understanding reality – knowledge of social laws cannot constitute an understanding of reality. Weber went on to argue that knowledge of cultural processes is possible only by understanding the meanings that the specific and shared reality holds for those involved. He used the term '*verstehen*' (understanding) to characterize the deep level of thought that is necessary in order to interpretatively re-create cultural processes. These two aspects of Weber's work were particularly influential among the early efforts of social researchers to examine social interaction.

Mead belonged to an early tradition of scholars who viewed themselves both as philosophers and scientists. As a philosopher, Mead was a pragmatist, and as a scientist, he was a social behaviourist (Blumer, 2004). Both these fields mark his contributions to symbolic interaction. Mead argued that in order to effectively understand social interaction, researchers need to examine how 'lines of interaction' are linked together in what he called flexible, ongoing and spontaneous ways (Blumer, 2004). He added that interactions are an ever-evolving series of gestures that can spontaneously change directions. In interaction people more often respond to a considered interpretation of gestures which can be referred to as significant gestures or significant symbols. Significant gestures entail the use of symbols for specific meaning and hence become 'language'. For example, one must interpret whether the person shaking her or his fists is expressing anger or playfulness. Any gesture will become a signified symbol if it is interpreted as indicating forthcoming lines of action (Blumer, 2004). Thus, for the purposes of this study learners' views of history will be shaped by their interaction with the subject, interaction with significant others (family, school, peers etc.) as well as their experiences of the subject. In other words symbolic interaction theory will help me to analyse my participants' views of history by addressing the subjective meanings that they impose on history as a subject through their collages, presentations, discussions and observation during the collage-making process.

Therefore, symbolic interactionism as one of many theories in the social sciences suggests that facts are based on and directed by symbols. Thus, the foundations of this theory are meanings.

Symbolic interactionism examines the meanings emerging from the interaction of individuals in the social environment (school, home) with other individuals (teachers, family, peers) and focuses on the question of which symbols and meanings emerge from the interaction between people (Aksan et al., 2009). According to this theory people live both in the natural and the symbolic environments. Symbolic interaction is a process that has enlivened the meaning and values through the symbols in the mind. Meanings constitute of interaction between persons. Objects, like history textbooks, do not have meaning on their own, but derive their meanings from the social actors, such as learners. Consequently, symbolic interaction is a process of ‘interpretation of the action’. (Aksan et al., 2009). For the purposes of this study my participants as social actors will interact with history as a school subject and through this interaction with the subject they will develop their views of history. However, their views of history will also be shaped by their interactions with society as a whole. Participants will encounter this society through various cultural units such as schools within the segmented portion of the world in which they live out their lives. This means that participants’ views of history will largely be influenced by perhaps the family, the school, teachers, friends and their experiences with the subject.

The term ‘symbolic interactionism’ has come into use as a label for a relatively distinctive approach to the study of human life and human conduct (Blumer, 1986). Reality is seen as a social, developed interaction with others, within the framework of symbolic interactionism. Most symbolic interactionists believe that a physical reality does indeed exist by an individual’s social definitions, and these definitions do develop in relation to something real. Thus, people do not respond to this reality directly, but rather to the social understanding of reality. This means that humans exist not in the physical space composed of realities but in the world composed only of objects. These objects can be divided into three types which are: physical objects, social objects and abstract objects (Blumer, 1986). These objects may include everything that a human being may encounter in his world such as trees or chairs; other human beings such parents and teachers and institutions such as schools. Hence, my participants for this study will act towards the subject history on the basis of the meanings that the subject has for them. This meaning is derived from or arises out of the social interaction that they have with the school, teachers, parents, family, peers and media. Thereafter, these meanings are handled in, and modified through, an interpretative process used by my participants in dealing with the experiences they encounter with the subject.

Mead's theorization of self and of lines of action influenced Blumer (1986) who drew from Mead to develop a distinction between a personal 'I' (how one sees oneself) and a social 'me' (how one imagines that one is seen by others). Blumer (1986) referred to the ongoing process of conversation between the 'I' and the 'Me' as 'self-indication' which entails internal conversations. Blumer (1986) adds that the foundation of all social interaction rests in the process of representing ourselves to ourselves – of thinking about ourselves as we think about other objects of consciousness. Individuals fit lines of action together by first imagining how those with whom we are interacting might be perceived and then adjusting behaviour accordingly. Therefore, people communicate symbolically and imaginatively with others, and also with ourselves, as we experiment with potential lines of action in our minds (Blumer, 1986). This is particularly relevant to this study as will be noted in Chapter 4 that participants will be involved in 'collage-making' which is one of the methods used for participants to creatively and imaginatively share their views of history through a collage in a symbolic manner.

From these philosophical roots, symbolic interaction worked with the premise that the individual and society are interdependent and inseparable – both are constituted through shared meanings. Symbolic interaction emerged as an effort to understand social life through something other than laboratory research and behaviourist conceptions of stimulus-response. Consequently, it shifted the goal of social research from an objective study of an empirical reality to a deep understanding of the symbolic practices that make a shared reality possible (Reynolds & Herman-Kinney, 2003). Schenk and Holman (1980) are of the opinion that symbolic interaction is a dynamic theory because objects feature meanings within themselves and individuals formulate their activities in the direction of their evaluation of themselves and also people and objects around them. Thus, it is the social actors that attribute meaning to objects according to this perspective.

Furthermore, Crossman (2014) argues that symbolic interactionism analyses society by addressing the subjective meanings that people impose on objects, events and behaviours. Subjective meanings are given primacy because it is believed that people behave according to what they believe and not just on what is objectively true. Hence, society is thought to be socially constructed through human interpretation in the sense that people interpret one

another's behavior and it is these interpretations that form the social bond. According to Crossman (2014) these interpretations are called 'definition of the situation'. Crossman (2014) gives a good example of this scenario: why do young people smoke cigarettes even when all objective medical evidence points to the dangers of doing so? The answer is in the definition of the situation that people create. Studies find that teenagers are well informed about the risks of tobacco, but they also think that smoking is 'cool', that they themselves will be safe from harm and that smoking projects a positive image to their peers. So the symbolic meaning of smoking overrides the actual facts regarding smoking and risk factors (Crossman, 2014). Hence, some fundamental aspects of our social experience and identities, can be understood through the symbolic interactionist lens.

Charon (2004, p. 31) sums up the theory of symbolic interactionism as being based on five central points which are significant for this study:

- The human being (participants of this study) must be understood as a social person. Social interaction is central to what we do. Therefore, symbolic interactionism focuses on the activities that take place between actors (learners, school teachers, peers, parents and family).
- The human being must be understood as a thinking being. Human action is not only interaction among individuals but also interaction within the individual (participants).
- Human beings do not sense their environment directly, instead, humans define the situation they are in.
- The cause of human action is the result of what is occurring in our present situation.
- Human beings are described as active beings in relation to their environment.

Hence, for the symbolic interactionist then, individuals build up an understanding of how the world operates through interactions with others, and particularly significant others (parents, teachers and peers) within the subcultural units such as schools in which they live out their lives within a segmented portion of the whole of society. However, individuals are not immune to the influences of the wider society, for this wider cultural environment is itself influencing the subcultures and those within them, particularly in carrying with it a set of norms, rules and conventions which have been developed over a period of time, and which help define situations

and the roles of those in them from the perspective of what is usually, socially and culturally acceptable. In encountering objects, events and situations in this social cultural environment, individuals define the situation within themselves - a definition which is itself influenced by the perspectives they have built up through their own biographical journey to date, and their actions and behaviour are the result of this interactive process. This process is one of continual engagement and development, and through it individuals continue to construct, reconstruct and renew their generalized other of society and their identity of self within that society.

Moreover, Ellis (2004, p. 15) asserts “the main emphasis in symbolic interaction has been on face-to-face social interaction”. It follows that an interactionist, informed study will seek to ascertain meanings by immersion in a setting, often by observation and through discussion. This is what I will be engaging in for this study where I will spend time with participants in their settings to construct data. It is only by spending time with my participants, walking in their shoes, interacting face to face that I can capture their views and record them.

According to West and Turner (2007) symbolic interaction theory has been a powerful theoretical framework for over sixty years. It provides striking insights about human communication behaviour in a variety of contexts. The theory is logical in its development, beginning with the role of self and progressing to an examination of the self in society. Although symbolic interaction theory is heuristic (experience-based techniques), identifying its application to a variety of contexts, including media, organizational and interpersonal, it is not without its critics. The major objections raised in regard to symbolic interaction theory tend to focus on: it is too broad, it places too much emphasis on personal behaviour and views, it neglects other important variables and it is not falsifiable (West & Turner, 2007). In line with this thinking some critics of this theory claim that symbolic interactionism neglects the macro level of social interpretation – the ‘big picture’ - meaning that symbolic interactionists may miss the larger issues of society by focusing too closely on minor issues (Crossman, 2014). This was dealt with in my study since it was small scale and I was able to analyse and interpret most of the views of my participants through the symbolic interaction theory. In fact, this theory assisted me in looking at the big picture of my participants’ world of interaction with history as a subject in the secondary phase of their schooling.



However, West and Turner (2007) opined that although symbolic interaction has its critics, it still remains an enduring theory. In fact, it supports research in multiple contexts, and it is constantly being refined and extended. Ultimately, symbolic interactionism is a theoretical approach to understanding the relationship between humans and society and in the case of this study, learners and school history. The basic notion of symbolic interactionism is that human action and interaction are understandable only through the exchange of meaningful communication or symbols. In this approach, humans are portrayed as acting, as opposed to being acted upon.

### **3.9 Aligning the study with constructionism and symbolic interactionism**

Considering the outline in this chapter, the purpose of the thesis and the research questions posed, this study is comfortably placed within an epistemology of constructionism and the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism. The focus of this study is to understand the views human beings have of an important aspect of their social and cultural worlds which are the views of history as a subject in the secondary phase of schooling by history learners. It was indicated above that the corner stone of constructionism was the social construction of meaning, and therefore the focus of this study is congruent with a constructionist epistemology.

From the symbolic interactionist perspective, human beings have symbolically, socially and culturally constructed their understandings and meanings through their interactions with others, as they live out their lives within society and as they carry out roles, sometimes designated roles which have specific characteristics associated with certain circumstances, situations and environments. This is confirmed by Charon (2000) who states that ‘symbolic interactionism’ is a theoretical perspective that offers a particular view of the meaning of self, the nature of reality, the emergence and importance of society, the nature of symbols, the importance of human communication and the future of humanity. In this view, meaningful reality is dependent upon human practices, being construed in and out of interaction between human beings and their world, and developed and transmitted through symbolic communication within social contexts. Hence, from the view point of symbolic interactionism this constructed meaning is the lived reality which will guide actions and behaviour. This study sets out to explore this lived reality in the natural setting of the social cultural environment of the schools

of participants as they carry out their particular roles as learners of history. In fact, as the researcher I can only know what is happening if I understand what the participants themselves believe about their world through the subject history. As such there is “no manipulation of variables, simulation or externally imposed structure on the situation” (Wiersma, 1991, p. 219).

Positioning a research project within constructionism and symbolic interaction also places a particular focus on the context in which the research takes place. The purpose of this study is to explore the reality of a particular social and cultural context. As indicated above the context of this study is the chosen schools in contemporary South Africa each with its own ethos and characteristics, and the particular role the participants carry out as learners of schools within the particular school setting. From a symbolic interactionist perspective there are a number of influences coming to bear on learners when having to define situations they are confronted with, and when expressing their views of history as a school subject.

These influences could be based on the historical context of the schools under investigation and could involve the type of school, the size of the school, learner population, facilities, discipline, and subjects offered amongst others. Furthermore, outside factors such as parental influence, peer influence, communities and the media could also play a role in influencing and shaping learners’ views of school history. In fact, Goodson and Marsh (1996) pronounced that by studying school subjects we rapidly come to understand them as the most essential of social constructions. By this view, school subjects, such as history, are seen as social constructions that intersect with patterns of social relations and social structure and are intimately implicated in the reproduction thereof and in processes of cultural transmission. The notions of constructionism and the theoretical perspectives of symbolic interactionism therefore, fit perfectly into the purpose and context of this study.

Embedded in this theoretical framework is an epistemology of ‘Constructionism’ that assumes a pluralist and relativist view of the reality (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). In this view, realities such as history as a school subject will be viewed in terms of multiple, mental constructions held by individuals in a group setting. These mental constructions are socially and experientially based and although local and specific in nature may often be shared across communities and cultures.

Such mental constructions are not more or less 'true' in an absolute sense but simply more or less informed and/or sophisticated. Here, research is framed as an intentional process of knowledge construction, leading to knowledge accumulation, with mental constructions becoming more informed and sophisticated which leads to consensus construction across the group. A strong consensus demands that the researcher has heard a wide variety of voices with the constructions of the powerless deserving equal consideration with those of the powerful. Moreover, this consensus must have links to the data and it must be credible and relevant in the situation. Here, I as the researcher was cast as an orchestrator and facilitator of the inquiry process. This was not an authoritative role as I actively engaged in facilitating a multi-voice dialogue that lead to the construction of my own constructions as well as those of the participants.

Consistent with this philosophical stance, as the researcher, I had decided to use concrete research methods to generate, analyse and interpret the data related to the research question. It is now understood that the study required approaches to data generation, analysis and interpretation that are hermeneutical and dialectical in nature (Guba & Lincoln, 1994). Here, data collection involved me as the researcher eliciting and refining the constructions of the research participants through interactions between and among myself and the research participants.

In the proposed study an attempt was made to focus on learners' subjective meanings, motivations and interpretations arising out of their engagement with history as a school subject at their respective schools. Symbolic interactionist theory views the socialized individual as capable of thought, intervention and self-determination. The peculiarity consists in the fact that human beings interpret each other's actions instead of merely reacting to them.

Denzin (1992) lists four implications of symbolic interactionism. The first implication is needed for me as the researcher to take a closer look at the symbols used in interactions, and the settings in which interactions take place. The second implication is studying phenomena from the point of view of those being studied. Thus, in order to understand things from my research subjects' perspectives as the researcher, I had to obtain information data in the form

of descriptive accounts from the research subjects. The third implication is the need for me as the researcher to link the participants' views with those of his/her society. The fourth implication identified by Denzin is that I needed to record the dynamics of the situations that I observed, and in which practices are situated. The above implications of symbolic interactionism on methodology are important and will be revealed later in the study.

### **3.10 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I discussed symbolic interactionism as a theory which informed my study. Based on the literature above, the choice of symbolic interactionism seemed an appropriate theoretical framework to underpin my study. This theory helped me examine, analyse and explain how history learners view history as a subject in the secondary phase of schooling, since this is the focus of my investigation. Furthermore, accepting the epistemology of constructionism and the theoretical perspectives of symbolic interactionism, it was considered appropriate to use an interpretive approach to generate data in order to respond to the purpose of the study and provide information relevant to answering the research questions presented. It was felt that this approach would provide an interactive element to gathering information, allow a wide range of data to be generated from a number of participants and settings, provide data through a variety of means and allow data of a qualitative nature to be generated. The design of the study set out to minimize the limitations of the methods chosen while simultaneously provide strategies that would generate data focused on responding to the questions posed in the study. It is this design of the study as well as the methodology which is the focus of the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY**

#### **4.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter explained the theoretical framework which guided this study. In this Chapter I will discuss in detail the research design which is essentially a plan of how the researcher intends to answer the key research questions posed. In other words, a research design is a blueprint of how the study is to be conducted in order for the research questions to be answered. This chapter also includes an unpacking of the methodology employed in the study which has been conducted by means of a qualitative approach.

Researchers generally agree on the need for a research design and a methodology section in any research endeavor. However, the scope of what should constitute a design and methodology seems to be an issue of contention in the academic sphere and some researchers (including myself initially) often confuse research design and research methodology (Mouton, 2001). Mouton (2001) submits further that the two (research design and research methodology) are different aspects of a research project. Some of the different ideas advanced with regard to the above concepts will be reviewed in this chapter in order to help distinguish and clarify them in terms of their usage for the purpose of this study.

Mouton (2001) describes a research design as a plan of how the researcher intends conducting research. In developing a research design the researcher must decide on the purpose of the research, the paradigm informing the research, the context or situation within which the research is carried out, and the research methods employed to generate the data (Bailey, 2007). The research design therefore describes procedures on how to conduct research and involves when, from whom and under what conditions data is generated.

Methodology in turn refers to the coherent group of methods that complement one another to deliver data and findings that will reflect the attempts to answer the research questions and suit

the research purpose (Henning, 2004). McMillan and Schumacher (2001) refer to methodology as a design whereby the researcher selects data collection and analysis procedures to investigate or answer specific research problems or questions respectively. The methodology is thus concerned with the relationships between various parts of the study and the production of findings.

Aspects of methodology and research design covered briefly in Chapter 1 will be explained in detail in this chapter in order to substantiate the choice of a qualitative approach and an interpretivist paradigm. Thereafter, this chapter describes the participants involved in the study and the instruments I used to generate data. The ways in which the data was analysed will also be explored. The chapter concludes with the discussion of ethical considerations and trustworthiness of the study.

## **4.2 The research design**

A research design is a detailed outline of how an investigation will take place. In other words, it is a plan of how I conducted my study. It is this blueprint that Babbie, Mouton, Vorster, Bayze and Prozesky (2006) refer to as a research design. These authors further explain by means of an analogy whereby the architect's plan can be equated to the design, in that, while it is detailed and systematically thought out, it is a mere representation of what should be done in the actual process of constructing a building. Similarly, the research design encapsulates the ideas and thoughts that I put into the research procedure in order for it to be systematic.

Furthermore, a research design helps the researcher to ensure the presence of coherence which means that as the researcher of this study, I strove to ensure coherence between the approach, paradigm and the research methods. This is confirmed by Cohen, Manion and Morrison (2007) who suggests that coherence in every study is important because it enables the researcher to remain focused on the research questions. Moreover, a research design refers to the overall plan and structure of the investigation used to obtain evidence to answer research questions (McMillan & Schumacher, 1993).

The research design also describes the procedures for conducting the study which includes: when, from whom, and under what conditions the research data will be generated. Since there are many types of research questions and many types of designs, it is important to match the design with the questions. Research design is a very important part of an investigation, since certain limitations in interpreting the results are related to each design, and also because the research design determines how the data should be analysed (McMillan & Schumacher 1993). Furthermore, Patton (1990) warns that qualitative inquiry designs, such as this study cannot be completely specified in advance of data generation. He maintains that the design will specify an initial focus, but he suggests that, “A qualitative design unfolds as fieldwork unfolds” (Patton 1990, p. 6).

In other words, the research design for this study should be understood as per the nature of the qualitative research approach. In this approach, the process of creating a research design is neither straightforward nor fixed. Hence, a qualitative research design “is not self-consciously designed” (Schmitter, 2008, p. 263). Therefore, qualitative researchers almost always tend to develop their designs as they progress. This held true for me as the design that I made at the beginning of my research process did not neatly unfold as I undertook the practical research and neither was it rigid. However, this should not be seen as a weakness as “the research process is rarely neat, linear, coherent or straightforward” (Wellington et al., 2005, p. 95). Yet, I still had to have an initial basic research design on which to build as I progressed.

Thus, the research design for this study guided me on how I chose my sample; how my participants were selected; where the data generation took place and the procedures that were put in place to generate it.

#### **4.2.1 Qualitative research approach**

A research approach is a way of dealing with an investigation. There are different types of research approaches to help researchers to deal with the topic under investigation. For the purposes of this study I have chosen to adopt a qualitative approach. The aim in this section is therefore to elaborate on the nature of the approach, the reasons for choosing the qualitative approach, and how it was applied.

In a general context qualitative research is the approach usually associated with the social constructivist paradigm which emphasises the socially constructed nature of reality. It is about recording, analysing and attempting to uncover the deeper meaning and significance of human behaviour and experience, including contradictory beliefs, behaviours and emotions. Researchers are interested in gaining a rich and complex understanding of people's experience and not in obtaining information which can be generalised to other larger groups. Furthermore, qualitative researchers do not base their research on pre-determined hypotheses. Nevertheless, they clearly identify a problem or topic that they want to explore and may be guided by a theoretical lens – an overarching theory which provides a framework for their study. For example this study was guided by a symbolic interactionist theoretical framework as explained in Chapter 3.

According to Bogdan and Biklen (1992) researchers use a qualitative research approach as an umbrella term to refer to several research strategies that share certain characteristics that will be discussed below. The data generated has been termed soft, that is, rich in description of people, places, and conversations, and not easily handled by statistical procedures. I adopted the qualitative approach for my study because it provides an in-depth and detailed understanding of the phenomenon being studied (Ary, Jacobs and Razavich 2002; Cohen et al. 2011). Therefore, it is through the use of a qualitative approach to research that I gained a better understanding of how learners view history as a school subject in the secondary phase of schooling. This is possible because qualitative research uses multiple methods of data generation and analysis which enhanced my understanding of my topic.

I also found the qualitative research approach useful for my study because of its potential to understand human views from the 'insiders' perspective, that is, as it is lived by participants in a particular social setting. It is an intensely personal kind of research, one that freely acknowledges and admits "the subjective perception and bias of both participants and researcher into the research frame" (Ary et al., 1990, p. 445). This implied that I needed to interact with the participants as closely as possible in order to acquire such understanding. Furthermore, qualitative research is concerned with life as it is lived, things as they happen, and situations as they are constructed in the day-to-day, moment-to-moment course of events (Hoberg, 1999; Henning, 2004; Merriam, 2009). In consideration of my intention to explore



learners' views of history as a school subject from various perspectives, this approach was considered to be the most appropriate as it is mainly concerned with understanding the learners' lived experiences and meaning they make of school history which ultimately shapes their views.

This study took as its point of departure the belief that multiple ways exist to make sense of the world. The aim in a qualitative approach is to understand the phenomenon from the participants' views as they make meaning of their world. Based on this belief, I placed the study within the qualitative research approach. Through a qualitative approach it was possible to understand how and why learners viewed the subject, history, the way they do, from their point of view. The qualitative approach gave me an opportunity to gain access into the subjective views of history learners, with a focus on the contexts in which they interact with the subject in their school environment through the constructing of collages, presentations and discussions based on collages and observations made during the collage-making process.

Furthermore, the purpose of qualitative research is to interpret data with the aim of gaining an understanding of the phenomenon. The objective is to determine the what, how and why of a particular phenomenon and thus the focus is on the "qualities of the phenomenon rather than the quantities" (Henning, 2004, p. 3). Thus, the research questions that guide this study articulate well with this objective with the use of how and why in the questions themselves.

In view of Merriam's (2009) idea that qualitative methods focus on process and are ways of discovering what people do, know, think and feel, the qualitative approach gave me an opportunity to acquire data and observe learners' views of history as a school subject. I therefore, concur with Henning (2004), who states that qualitative research is based on the belief that knowledge is not only constructed by observation, but also by explanations of peoples' views, intentions, beliefs, values and reasons, meaning-making and self-understanding. Taking the purpose of the study into consideration, and attempting to understand qualitative research, particularly as it impacts on this study, from the work of a number of researchers (Mouton, 2006; Bailey, 2007; Henning, 2004), learners were observed

during collage-making, and listened to, through presentations and discussions of collages within the school context with events occurring naturally but within clearly defined boundaries. The importance of context is emphasised in qualitative research as the study should be conducted in the social and real-life setting where data can be collected on multiple versions of reality. This approach resonated well with this study as my intention was to find meaning within social interactions, and where context is foregrounded as a significant factor that influences human views. Hence, data is generated by interacting with research participants in their natural setting while gathering detailed information through multiple methods. A qualitative study approach was chosen because it enabled me to explore and gain insight from the perspective of learners constructing and making sense of history as a subject in their school environment.

#### **4.2.2 Research paradigm**

The qualitative approach lends itself to the interpretivist paradigm, hence this study was guided by an interpretive paradigm. A paradigm is a set of beliefs or worldview that tells the researcher the nature of reality (ontology), nature of knowledge (epistemology) and how the inquirer understands what she wants to know (methodology) (Creswell, 1998; Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Lincoln & Guba, 1995). These characteristics create a holistic view of how researchers view knowledge: how we see ourselves in relation to this knowledge and the methodological strategies we use to discover it. Paradigms thus guide how researchers make decisions and carry out research. This section will elaborate on the nature of my chosen research paradigm, the reasons why I chose this paradigm and how it was applied in my study.

An interpretive approach can be seen as: “the systematic analysis of socially meaningful action through the direct detailed observation of people in natural settings in order to arrive at understandings and interpretations of how people create and maintain their social worlds” (Neuman, 2011, p. 102). Therefore, I chose this paradigm because I subscribe to the beliefs of this worldview as it will assist me to observe, interpret and understand how my participants view history as a school subject in their school environments.

Based on the focus of my study which is to understand learners' views of history as a subject, this study is best guided by the interpretivist paradigm. The paradigm helped me to understand the learners' views of school history in the secondary phase of their schooling. Cohen et al. (2007) opines that the interpretative paradigm helps the researcher to examine and make sense of the situation from the view of participants in the research. The use of the interpretative paradigm is furthermore, supported by Maree (2008) who states that researchers in the social sciences use this paradigm to research participants' behaviours, attitudes, beliefs, perceptions and views which cannot be measured. As such this paradigm is useful in explaining and describing learners' views of history as a school subject at the sampled schools. This also speaks to my ontological and epistemological positioning as explained in Chapter 3.

This paradigm is concerned with meaning making and it seeks to understand the subjective world of human experiences (Bailey, 2007; Cohen et al., 2007; Henning, 2004). It is concerned with peoples' definitions, meaning making and understanding of the situation or phenomenon. The interpretative paradigm is based on the premise that human beings create meaning in their worlds and this meaning is constructed as a result of interaction with others. This premise ties in with the premise of the theoretical framework of the study which attempts to understand learners' views of history as a subject symbolically in the school context. Furthermore, during my field-work this has helped me search for in-depth views of learners who study history at the schools under investigation.

De Vos et al. (2005) are of the opinion that the interpretative paradigm might help the researcher to experience how people make sense of the contexts in which they are making a living. Furthermore, the interpretative paradigm is likely to allow the researcher to understand that sometimes participants' behaviours might be a response to external stimuli, which might be determined by their previous experiences and by the context in which they live. As a result this might be applicable in my study to find how certain external factors might influence learners' views of history as a subject.

Ontologically the interpretative paradigm defines the existence of a subjective reality and its focus is on discovering the multiple perspectives of all the participants in a setting (Henning,

2004). Bailey (2007) and Henning (2004) add that the ontological belief in an interpretative paradigm holds that those who are involved in the research process construct knowledge socially and individually, hence there are multiple realities. Thus, the aim of the interpretative paradigm is to capture peoples' perspectives on their lived experiences, not some objective notion of that experience. Research in the interpretive paradigm is therefore able to produce rich descriptive analysis that emphasizes a deep, interpretative understanding of the social phenomenon. Therefore, the task of the researcher is to understand the construction of meaning in the context being studied, because social realities are constituted in these constructions (Neuman, 2011). This thinking aligned itself well with my study in the sense that as the researcher, I had to read and understand the collages and other data that were constructed by history learners to express their views of school history.

Epistemologically, knowledge is subjective and it is built from experiences and expectations and can only be understood from the point of view of the individuals who are directly involved. This study is fundamentally concerned with symbolic meaning and sought to understand learners' views of history as a school subject in their contexts and backgrounds. The interpretivist paradigm was instrumental in guiding my study as it provided an insight into the type of research I conducted as well as the methodology and methods used. Furthermore, the paradigm helped me select the theories which informed my study and also to know my position as a researcher and what kind of knowledge my research produced. Hence, against this backdrop it can be concluded that my epistemological and ontological positioning related well to this paradigm.

#### **4.2.3 Research sample**

In this section, I discuss and justify the research sample that I used for my study. A research sample is a small portion of the population that a researcher selects to study (Cohen et al., 2011; Nieuwenhuis, 2007; Sarantakos, 2005). Researchers use samples when doing research because it is often impractical to generate data from every member in a particular community (all history learners in the case of this study) due to the number of people being too large. Furthermore, when researching aspects of human beings such as views, perceptions or behaviour, researchers simply cannot generate data from every single individual. Instead they choose a smaller sample of individuals that represent the larger group.

There are different sampling methods from which researchers can choose. This selection obviously depends on the study's research objectives and the characteristics of the study population, such as size and diversity, to determine which types of sampling methods to select. Since my selection consisted of two different sets of samples which were, the four chosen schools and learners within the schools, I felt that the use of purposive and convenience sampling techniques were most suitable. Both these sampling techniques are types of non-probability sampling in which I intentionally selected or simply hand-picked participants based on her/his judgment and that those participants contained specific characteristics being sought and regarded relevant to the study (Cohen et al., 2011). The reasons behind choosing these sampling techniques will be explained in the next paragraphs.

The use of purposive sampling for this study, is in line with Rubin and Babbie's (2010) thinking which indicates that a sample is based on the researchers' own judgment about which schools are most representative or useful. Based on these thoughts I selected the four schools for this study. These schools were purposively chosen to satisfy the demands of my study. In other words, I selected these schools because I wanted a range of differing environments to be represented. Hence, although all four schools are located in urban areas I chose different types of schools which can be placed in different categories and cater for different social groupings as can be gleaned from the information lower down.

Furthermore, convenience sampling was used to select the learners involved in this study. Convenience sampling is one of the main types of non-probability sampling methods and involves using participants in a study because they are convenient and available. In fact, learners chosen for my study were actually selected by the history educator at each of the schools under study as a form of convenience. In other words, I explained the study in detail to the history educators as discussed lower down and entrusted them with the task of selecting the learners for my study. According to the history educators after carefully explaining the study to their history learners they asked for volunteers to be a part of the study and if they were available after school hours in some cases. Furthermore, before I began field-work at each of the schools I also reiterated to my participants that their participation was completely on a voluntary basis, which they also justified. Hence, convenience sampling proved to be most appropriate for this study because of the ease of participants volunteering and their availability.

Thus, purposive and convenience sampling of my participants was done as supported by Rule and John (2011) who state that participants are deliberately chosen because of their suitability in advancing the purpose of the study. Though the size of my sample was small, which could be perceived as a weakness, it was still appropriate for my study as a qualitative research study. My purpose in this study was, to gain an understanding of how history learners view history as a school subject and why they view it the way they do, and therefore the size of the sample was deemed appropriate.

However, the disadvantages of convenience sampling is the risk that it might not represent the population as a whole, and might be biased by the selection of volunteers. I think this issue was addressed in this study through using different types of schooling environments as discussed above and in more detail below. Furthermore, a disadvantage of purposive sampling is the high probability of researcher bias, as each sample is based on the judgment of the researcher in question, who generally is trying to prove a specific point. However, for the purposes of this study I was able to overcome this issue because I used a variety of methods to build and increase my research data and also had the history teachers collaborating with me in selecting research participants. The next section describes the chosen research sites which are the four schools and the choice of the participants for the study in more detail.

#### ***4.2.3.1 Choice of schools***

The school is a social institution entrusted with the responsibility of continuing and supplementing the process of socialisation begun at home. As an institution, the school has to have rules and regulations which facilitate socialisation and effective learning (Mwamwenda, 1995). Therefore, schools do not operate in isolation as they form part of the social structures that are found within communities and are thus, influenced by both communities and the context of their environment.

As such, schools are educational institutions where learners are educated by teachers. Schools serve a number of functions in our society which include transmitting academic knowledge, socialisation and the transmission of cultural norms and values. The South African education system consists of three types of schools which are: independent schools, government schools

and governing body-funded public schools (Ex-Model C). In addition, all South African public schools are categorised into five groups, called quintiles, largely for purposes of the allocation of financial resources. Quintile one is the 'poorest' while quintile five is the 'least poor.' These poverty rankings are determined nationally according to the poverty of the community around the school, as well, as certain infrastructural factors. Furthermore, schools in quintile 1, 2 and 3 have been declared no-fee schools, while schools in quintiles 4 and 5 are fee-paying schools.

For the purposes of this research I used government schools and Ex-model C schools only. This was justified lower down. In South Africa we have two levels of schooling, the primary and the secondary levels. For the purposes of this study I focused on grade 11 learners, hence the secondary level of schooling is pertinent to my study. The secondary level of schooling includes grade 10, 11 and 12. At this stage of schooling learners generally choose the subjects that they will pursue for this level. It is in this context of schooling that this study is situated. Chapter 2 dealt with literature based on schools and subjects.

The research site for this study focused upon four specific secondary schools in KwaZulu-Natal province. The reasoning behind the specified research sites is to produce a variable spectrum of results dealt with on a regular basis rather than a confined set of results that ignore more complex or diverse environments. Two of the four schools that were selected are coeducational schools while the other two are all girls' schools. All four schools are racially mixed and economically diverse schools. All-in-all a range of differing school environments were chosen as can be gleaned from the institutional biographies in the next section.

Hence, although all four schools are located in urban areas I chose different types of schools. This means that all four schools can be placed in different categories and cater for different social groupings. Atlantic Ocean High School falls within the boundaries of a very affluent society and caters for a very different kind of learner who pays a high rate of school fees. Pacific Ocean College which is in some ways similar to Atlantic Ocean High has a lower rate of school fees and caters for a more diverse group of learners who come from the outlying townships (segregated suburban areas created under Apartheid for Africans) as well as areas surrounding the school. Arctic Ocean High School on the other hand is very centrally situated

in an urban area and the rate of school fees is lower than the other two schools and has learners coming from very disadvantaged backgrounds. Indian Ocean Secondary School is one whose school fees are much lower than the other three. Hence, they cater for the very poor-socio-economic community. Many learners at this school come from the surrounding squatter camps or informal settlements which makes this school very different and complex in comparison to the first two schools and is in some ways similar to Arctic Ocean High School.

Glesne and Peshkin (1992) maintain that the researcher should select a site where he/she would be accepted and where he/she would feel comfortable working. Thus, I selected schools with which I am familiar and are within easy reach. Hence, communication with the participants involved in the research was not difficult. However, the principals of Atlantic Ocean High and Pacific Ocean College made it clear that the research project should not interfere with the teaching-learning activities. I had to adhere to this, and therefore all research at these schools was carried out after school hours. However, Arctic Ocean High and Indian Ocean Secondary were more flexible and allowed me to carry out my research during school hours. This was because of transport problems hence, learners could not stay after school hours. Although the schools were amongst other reasons chosen because of their proximity and accessibility, they can also be said to be similar to other schools in KwaZulu-Natal.

The next section deals with the institutional biographies of the four chosen schools under study. These biographies are necessary as they can help to understand how learners view history as a school subject and why they view the subject the way they do. In other words, some of the characteristics of the schools may influence how learners view school history.

#### ***4.2.3.2 The four chosen schools***

##### **a) Institutional biography – Indian Ocean Secondary School**

‘Indian Ocean Secondary School’ is situated in Hammarsdale in KwaZulu- Natal. This school falls into a ‘quintile 5’ category. As mentioned above ‘quintile 5’ is the least poor and are fee-paying schools. Ironically, Indian Ocean Secondary falls into ‘quintile 5’ even though they cater mainly for learners who come from poor socio-economic backgrounds. Many learners



come from the disadvantaged communities surrounding the school and some even come from the so called 'townships.' Hence, even though they fall into a higher category because of their location and being a fee-paying school, they technically can be classified as a disadvantaged school.

The learner population is approximately 1200 and caters for grade 8 to grade 12 learners. The school which historically catered for Indian learners, now has the following learner population ratios: 80% Black learners, 5% Coloured learners and 10% Indian learners and 5% White learners (these categories were carried over from the apartheid era and are now used ostensibly for redress). It is a coeducational school and is an English medium school. Coeducational means that it has a mixture of boys and girls. The school is fairly large with a teacher population of about 45. The school buildings are not in very good condition and the school has an untidy appearance. Facilities at the school are very limited and not many resources are available at this school. In addition, class sizes are fairly large and educators find it difficult to cope under these conditions.

The school is not properly fenced but does have some security. Most of the learners attending this school also live in 'squatter camps' or informal settlements in the vicinity. However, 30% of learners travel by taxi to get to school. The school does have a fully-fledged Governing Body in place as well as a Representative Council of Learners. Due to the fact that this school is situated in a poor socio-economic environment, it is described by staff as having poor discipline, little parent involvement and little collaborative management.

Interestingly, this school has a large number of history learners in grade 11. At the time of the study there was 40 learners studying history at this level. The matric (grade 12) pass rate at this school is fairly good and is approximately 82%. However, the quality of the passes is not great.

## **b) Institutional biography – Arctic Ocean High School**

‘Arctic Ocean High’ is a secondary school situated in Pinetown in KwaZulu-Natal. This school has recently been categorised as a disadvantaged school by a senior education official. According to the district director - of the region - the school caters mainly for disadvantaged students from the surrounding townships which means that learners travel quite far by public transport to get to and from school. Interestingly, this school is situated near the Central Business District and hence, falls within the ‘quintile 5’ category of schools. In other words even though they fall within the higher category they technically should fall into a ‘quintile 1’ as they are very under-resourced and financially not strong and cater for learners from disadvantaged backgrounds. However, the school still has a culture of being referred to as an ‘ex-Model C’ (governing body-funded public) school as learners still pay fees, but the reality is that they are a disadvantaged school even though they are situated near the Central Business District.

This school is a fairly small school and has a learner population of 554 learners ranging from grade 8 to grade 12. Teaching staff at this school comprises of 16 members. The historically ‘white’ school has the following learner population ratios: 80% Black learners, 10% Coloured learners and 5% Indian learners and 5% White learners. It is a coeducational school and the medium of instruction is English. The learner population at this particular school has dropped tremendously recently due to its poor socio-economic status and the negative societal view of the school. Many learners dropped out of school for reasons amongst others such as poverty, lack of parental involvement and financial constraints. In fact, parents, according to the principal, are apathetic and do not attend meetings.

Also, this historically ‘White’ school was one of the first schools in the area to open its doors to Black learners, hence there was an influx of Black learners during this period. However, after a while it was observed that these learners left due to experiencing major problems with transport, traveling long distances, lack of finances and so on. Another contributory factor was that due to the high rate of delinquent behaviour at the school, the more disciplined learners moved into more disciplined schooling environments.

Furthermore, the school is not in good condition, buildings are fairly old and dilapidated and the school has a very untidy appearance. The school has limited resources and facilities. According to the principal, the school has no laboratories or library and was using buildings and former houses around the school as makeshift classrooms. One house was being used as a book room and not a class, as the building had deteriorated badly and was not safe for human occupation.

The class sizes are generally large and teachers are overburdened with heavy workloads. The school does have some proper management structures such as a School Governing Body and a Representative Council of Learners in place. However, these bodies are small and not fully functional at all levels of management. The grade 11 history class is a fairly small number of 25. The matric pass rate is approximately 72% but the quality of the passes is generally not good.

### **c) Institutional biography – Atlantic Ocean High School**

Atlantic Ocean High School is an 'ex-model C' (governing body-funded public) school and is situated in the heart of an up-market suburban area, on the South Coast of KwaZulu-Natal. It also overlooks the Indian Ocean. It falls within the 'quintile 5' group which is an appropriate category as it is well resourced and financially strong. Also it is a 'fee-paying' school and the fees are much higher in comparison to other schools in the vicinity.

Atlantic Ocean High school is an all girls' school with very traditional core values. The school is fairly large with a learner population of approximately 850 learners ranging from grade 8 to grade 12. The school has 60 educators on its staff. The historically ex-white only school currently has the following learner population ratios: 40% White learners, 40% Indian learners, 15% Black learners and 5% Coloured learners. The school has adapted successfully to the challenges of a changing society and continues to meet the needs of the growing Durban community.

The school's excellent facilities, well-established infrastructure and dedicated and caring staff combine to create an environment that enables learners to achieve consistently in all areas. The buildings are well kept and the entire school is well cared for. The school has the most modern and up to date resources. Parents are actively involved in their children's education and therefore the teaching and learning environment is very conducive for education to take place. The School Governing Body and Representative Council of Learners are selected along very democratic lines. Moreover, these bodies are fully functional at all levels of management and play a major role in decision-making at the school. Learners are actively involved in the management of discipline at this school and have had a major influence in creating a disciplined learning environment at the school.

The school has a fairly small population of 28 girls studying history in grade 11. This school boasts an excellent academic record with an unbroken 100% matric pass rate since its creation.

#### **d) Institutional biography – Pacific Ocean College**

'Pacific Ocean College, is an 'ex-model C' secondary school and is situated on the North Coast in KwaZulu-Natal. It is an all girls' secondary school with learners coming from both advantaged and disadvantaged areas. Many learners come from the townships. This school also falls within the 'quintile 5' category. This category is befitting as the school is well resourced and is a fee-paying school as well as being centrally situated. The school has a wealth of experience and has achieved success over the years.

Pacific Ocean is a fairly large school with a learner population of approximately 1100 learners ranging from grade 8 to grade 12. The school has 60 educators on its staff. The historically ex-white only school currently has the following learner population ratios: 40% Black learners, 30% Indian learners, 20% Coloured learners and 10% White learners. The dynamics of the learner population has changed drastically over the past few years. Many White learners over the years have moved to a more disciplined schooling environment due to behavioural problems that were experienced by the school which impacted on its reputation.

The school is in excellent condition. The buildings are well kept and the entire school is well cared for. The school has good facilities and modern and up to date resources. Some parents are actively involved in their children's education while some show little interest. The school has a fully-fledged Governing body and Representative Council of learners. These bodies are functional at all levels of management and play a major role in decision-making at the school. Learners are to a certain extent involved in the management of discipline at this school and have had a key influence in creating a disciplined learning environment at the school. However, the school still experiences some major discipline and management issues.

The school tries to adopt a holistic approach that involves the whole person – mentally, physically, emotionally, spiritually and socially. No matter what the standard of the learner on admission, with the correct motivation and quality teaching and learning, learners have excelled. Hence, the school boasts excellent matric pass rate which fluctuates between, 98% to 100%, over the past few years. At the time of this study there were a small number of 29 grade 11 learners studying the subject history in the secondary phase.

#### ***4.2.3.3 Choice of research participants***

The participants of this study are learners at the four schools as described in the above section. The learners are at secondary level of schooling and range from between 16 and 18 years of age. Learners at school level play a very significant role in the teaching and learning that happens at schools. Their roles as learners at school are to engage actively in the learning process. Learners at this stage of schooling are given the choice of the subjects they wish to select. However, their choices are sometimes stifled by the school system and external factors which were discussed in Chapter 2. For the purposes of this study I focused on learners who selected history as a subject at secondary level as this was deemed to be a niche in the literature as discussed in Chapter 2.

Nieuwenhuis (2007) states that purposive and convenience sampling is usually used in qualitative research since participants are selected because of some defining characteristics (history learners in grade 11 in this case) that make them suitable for the study. In fact, according to (Measor 1985) one of the most important tasks for a researcher is the selection of

educational settings and negotiation of access to participants. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) further add that the first problem to face in research is getting permission to conduct your study as well as the choice of the participants. Negotiating for the choice of the participants and gaining access was relatively easy for me. This was so because the history teachers at the respective schools were very keen and helpful in the sense that they helped me with the selection of my participants for the study. This selection process was explained in the research sample section above. The history teachers at the respective schools realised that the study could add value to their departments and thus were willing to assist. I obtained permission for conducting research at the schools from principals with the help of the history educators. This meaning that the history teachers played an instrumental role in convincing the principals that my study was valuable and relevant to the subject history.

At this stage it is important to mention the reason why grade 11 history learners were selected as participants for the study. As explained above learners make their subject choices in the secondary phase of their schooling. Hence, I felt that the grade 11 learners would be in their second year of studying school history at this stage and therefore would be in a better position to fully understand the nature of the subject. In other words, they were in a position to fully express their views of school history from a place of having experienced the subject first-hand.

Thus, the primary participants of this study were grade 11 history learners from the sampled schools. The purpose of the study was discussed and terms of access were negotiated with both the principals and the KwaZulu-Natal Education Department. As the researcher, I oriented all the participants to the purpose of the study and what was required of them before they actually participated in the research. In addition to this, the participants were all given letters asking for their assistance and explaining the value of the study. Ethical issues will be discussed in section 4.3 under ethical considerations.

Participation of all participants was voluntary, and no coercion was used. Participants could withdraw from the study at any time. Initially, I had planned to select six participants from each school. However, on the day I carried out my field-work at the respective schools only four arrived at Indian Ocean Secondary, Arctic Ocean High and Atlantic Ocean High schools while

five participants arrived at Pacific Ocean College. The chosen grade 11 history learners at the respective schools were asked to participate in 'collage-making', to express their views, of history as a school subject. Thereafter, they were involved in presenting their collages in the form of a gallery walk which generated into a discussion session among the participant. All information was kept strictly confidential. No names were used in data reporting. Each participant was provided with a copy of the results. After the data was transcribed, video recordings were deleted.

Thus in total 17 participants were included in this research.

### **4.3 Ethical considerations**

Within educational research, ethics is concerned with ensuring that the interests and well-being of participants are not harmed as a result of the research conducted (Cohen et al., 2007). Other important ethical considerations according to Maree (2007), are the issues of confidentiality of the findings of the study and the protection of the participants' identities. The main aim of research ethics is, however, protecting the participants from any harm.

Three types of harm that can be experienced by research participants are identified by Sarantakos (2005). These include physical, mental and legal harm. During the process of conducting research it is the obligation of the researcher to protect participants, within all possible reasonable limits, from any form of harm that may emerge from the research study (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). Bearing this in mind, every effort was taken by me to ensure that participants were not subjected to any physical or mental harm. This was done by explaining the research study to the principals, teachers and participants in detail. Also parents were informed about their children's involvement in the research study and permission was granted through a consent form. Permission was also sought and granted by the Department of Education and the University of KwaZulu-Natal.

Furthermore, researchers have a responsibility to protect the participants' identity from the general public reading (McMillan & Schumacher, 2010). To adhere to this, the participants were informed of their right to confidentiality and were assured that data provided was to be

kept safe and confidential. In order to ensure anonymity pseudonyms were used when referring to both the participants and the participating schools. Participants' identity remained anonymous and the data they provided is confidential and has been used for the purposes of the study only. Every effort was taken to make sure that the participants' rights to privacy, anonymity and confidentiality were not violated. Participants were assured that participation in the study was voluntary and they were free to withdraw at any time.

Before starting with the data collection, I had to firstly apply and get ethical clearance from the University of KwaZulu-Natal, as a student, to carry out the research study. This permission was granted (Appendix B). Thereafter, I had requested and received permission to conduct research in government schools from the Regional Chief Director of the Department of Education (KwaZulu-Natal), in which I specified the research site (Appendix C). I also sent letters to the principals of the four identified schools for the research to request permission to do the research at their schools. After having explained the purpose of the study, and the type of assistance I needed from them, I was given permission to conduct the research at the secondary schools identified.

Gay, Mills, and Airasian (2009) mention that the researcher should obtain informed consent by making sure that the participants enter the research with understanding of the nature of the research. Research participants should be informed of any possible dangers that may arise during the research process. Informed consent was obtained from the participants after explaining the nature and purpose of the research as well as assuring them confidentiality and anonymity. Participants were also informed that participation in the research was voluntary. They were then asked to sign the letter of informed consent as a declaration of their willingness to participate voluntarily in the study. To safeguard the interests of the research participants, field-work was done during suitable times, as explained above, that still allowed the participants to pursue their daily activities.

Thus, I had to request permission from the principal of each school to work with the participants because educational research data gathering involves some invasion of privacy. Informed consent was obtained by providing the history educators with an explanation of the study. The



researcher had to explain the purpose, objectives and ethics of the study to the principal. The names of the schools and participants were not recorded as confidentiality and anonymity are central to the ethical aspects of research. The ethics of the research were explained to the history educators and learners prior to the commencement of each session to the groups involved in the collage-making; I promised full confidentiality of all participants involved in the research and the institution.

#### **4.4 Research methodology**

The previous section dealt with the research design of the study. In this section I will deal with the research methodology. Firstly, I will give a general overview of what a research methodology entails, thereafter I will discuss my research methodology that I have chosen for this study which is a creative arts-based methodology.

Research methodology is an explanation of how research should proceed. It also involves the analyses of the principles and procedures in a particular field of enquiry and in turn it governs the use of particular methods (Bassett, 2004). Furthermore, research methodology plays a central role in any research because it is concerned with the questions of how the researcher conducted his/her research so as to generate data, as well as how the researcher might ensure that what he/she has researched and obtained, can aid in the attempts to answer the research questions posed. Moreover, Mouton (2006) suggests that research methodology involves the application of a variety of standardized research methods in pursuit of knowledge. Hence, a good research methodology refers to the process and procedures of the research.

According to Van Maanen (1979, p. 10), qualitative methodology represents “a mixture of the rational, serendipitous, and intuitive in which the personal experiences of the organisational researcher are often key events to be understood and analysed as data”. He goes on to argue that qualitative researchers tend to describe the unfolding of social processes rather than the social structures. They also seek to derive ‘contextual understanding’ which cannot be achieved without direct, first-hand and intimate knowledge of a research setting (Van Maanen, 1979). In addition, qualitative data is “rich, full, earthly, holistic, real; their face value seems unimpeachable; they preserve chronological flow where that is important; they tend to reduce

a researcher's trained incapacity, bias, narrowness and arrogance" (Miles, 1979, p. 117). My study aligned itself well with these characteristics as will be shown in the next sections.

For the purposes of this study, a qualitative research methodology, specifically creative arts-based methodology as a form thereof was used. This methodology was chosen because it involves working with verbal, visual and written data which was pertinent to my study as it spoke to the symbolic interactionist theory adopted. Furthermore, I realised that the written or spoken word alone restricts what can be known and shared about my topic. Qualitative research aims mainly to understand social life meanings that participants attach to everyday life and as such it produces descriptive data in the participants' own written, visual or spoken words (De Vos et al., 2005). Working with descriptive data is also propounded by Cohen et al. (2008) who suggest that, qualitative methodology can involve participants who are providing evidence of their views through a creative arts-based methodology. Thus, a creative arts-based methodology assisted me to uncover views of learners regarding school history in the secondary phase of schooling.

Initially, I was very hesitant and uncertain to include a creative arts-based methodology as my main data generation strategy. The reason behind this thinking was mainly based on the idea that there is relatively little guidance on how to undertake arts-related research (Savi-Baden & Wimpenny, 2014). However, after realising that interviews seem to be one of the most popular and commonly used qualitative methods, I decided to engage with something more creative and different to the way I generated data previously. Furthermore, in line with Greenwood's (2012) thinking the use of arts-based approaches to conduct research has grown from the desire of researchers to elicit, process and share understandings that are not readily or fully accessed through more traditional field-work approaches. Hence, an arts-based inquiry centering on collages was selected as one of my main methods.

Arts-based inquiry is only one methodological and theoretical genre among many new forms of qualitative inquiry (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008; Greenwood, 2012; Savi-Baden & Wimpenny, 2014). It can be described as an emerging tradition of participatory critical action research in

the social sciences. Arts-based inquiry fits historically within a postmodern framework that features a developing activist dynamic among both artists and social researchers. In fact, Barone and Eisner (2012) suggest that arts-based research methodology is meant to enhance perspectives pertaining to certain human activities and is defined by the presence of certain aesthetic qualities or design elements that infuse the inquiry process and the research ‘text’. Hence, arts-based is not aimed toward a quest for certainty but its purpose may instead be described as the ‘enhancement of perspectives’ which is in line with the paradigm and approach I have adopted for this study. Moreover, arts-based inquiry is capable of persuading the participant to see educational phenomena in new ways, and to entertain questions about them that might have been left unasked.

There are multiple socially constructed ways of knowing the world, and diversity is achieved in and through the voices of diverse people brought forward in the act of doing research as well as in representing it (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Making art is in fact a passionate activity that creates opportunities for communion among participants, researchers and the various audiences who encounter the research text. Arts-based research crosses the boundaries of art and research as defined by conventions formed in historically, culturally bounded contexts of the international art market and in the knowledge market dominated by higher education. It is important to note here that both art with political purpose and social inquiry with artistic qualities have long and rich histories. However, what is profoundly different and starkly political is the effort to claim that art is equal to – indeed, sometimes even profoundly more appropriate than – science as a way of understanding (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008).

Social researchers began to realize that traditional techniques of research were not adequate to handle the many questions that needed to be asked. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) are of the opinion that two primary issues arose to create a space for arts-based social inquiry. Firstly, the issues of dialogue turned to ethical issues that occur in the relationship between researchers and the communities in which they work. Consequently, qualitative researchers had embraced new practices that redefined the roles of researchers and research participants – who no longer were subjects but instead were collaborators or even co-researchers or co-constructors as the learners who participated in this study to a certain extent were. Secondly, the issue of how research should be reported became an issue. Denzin and Lincoln (2008) sum this issue up

appropriately by questioning whether traditional approaches to dissemination are adequate for an expanding audience that includes a local community.

Arts-based research can be done in a variety of ways. Barone and Eisner (2012) identify three kinds of arts-based educational research: genres of narrative construction and storytelling, educational connoisseurship and criticism and non-linguistic forms. For the purposes of this research, I chose to do a non-linguistic form of arts-based inquiry as my main data generation method. Non-linguistic art forms may include, among others, painting, photography, collage, music, video sculpture, film, and even dance. I used the form of a 'collage' to help me investigate how learners view history as a school subject in the secondary phase of schooling.

According to (Butler-Kisber, 2010a) collage-making is a useful visual, interpretative tool that can inform experiential research approaches. Visual modes of inquiry are predicated on a constructivist epistemology that posits that there are multiple realities and ways of doing and understanding (Creswell, 2003). In addition, Rose (2001) suggests that visual inquiry is used to yield insights and reconstruct data to understand phenomena. Hence, collage-making was deemed as an appropriate method to help me to understand learners' views of school history, which will be discussed in the next section in more detail.

Butler-Kisber (2010b) is of the opinion that 'collages' as a form of inquiry have been attracting interest in the qualitative circles because they allow the researcher to work in a non-linear and intuitive way by arranging image fragments that reveal unconscious connections and new understandings. In fact, a collage reflects the very way we symbolically experience the world with objects given meaning not from something within themselves, but rather through the way we perceive their stand in relationship to one another. This perspective relies on the symbolic meaning that participants develop and rely on which aligns itself well with the theoretical framework of this study being symbolic interactionism. Furthermore, the basic skills of cutting and sticking are developed early in life and become part of everyone's repertoire. Hence, collage can be done by novices while enquiring more sophisticated aesthetic and compositional expertise.

Collage work is always an engaging process and participants become totally involved and inspired by the work. Often it is found that new insights emerge about the research questions posed. As mentioned earlier making a collage is not difficult because everyone can cut and paste and ultimately gets a sense of satisfaction with the end product. In fact, Promislow (2005) states that it is always delightful to see how researchers/participants who never consider they had artistic talent are able to gain confidence using this visual medium, and how some have gone on to produce wonderful instances of collage inquiry. However, it is important that researchers develop the necessary skills to produce sound work and develop aesthetic sensitivities so that the quality of work produced is research appropriate. But this does not suggest that the messy thinking that often results from collaging that provides interesting insights should be eliminated.

In light of the above it can be concluded that an arts-based methodology nested in a qualitative inquiry can be very useful in research. However, according to Barone and Eisner (2012) the legitimacy of arts-based research has been questioned by those who have misunderstood this unique approach to educational inquiry. Thus, as a researcher using this methodology I had to ensure that I fully understood this approach before I engaged in this study.

The next section deals with the arts-based method in the form of collages which was the main method that I used for this study. However, there are other related methods that I used to generate data but these all orbited the central pivot which was collage-making. These included a gallery walk and presentations, group discussion based on the gallery walk and presentation sessions and field-notes which were derived from the collage-making sessions as my role of listener-observer.

#### **4.4.1 Research methods used as part of creative arts-based methodology to generate data**

Research methods are used to generate data in a research study. Data includes materials that the person doing a study, records. There are many different types of research methods that can be used to generate data in a qualitative study. McMillan and Schumacher (1993) maintain that qualitative research methods generate data in the form of words, visuals and direct observation

rather than pursuing numbers. It was important for me as the researcher to determine which research methods would be best suited to obtain the data I required to attempt to answer the research questions posed. Hence, a creative arts-based research method centering on collages, was selected as the main research method. The other related methods adopted are a gallery walk and presentations by the learners of their collages, group discussions based on the gallery walk and presentations and field-notes which were derived from the collage-making sessions by means of my role of listener-observer. These methods will be explained and discussed in detail below.

The reason why I chose an arts-based research method was because I thought that it would be most suitable to generate the required data needed and be best aligned with the purpose of the research and the research questions to be addressed. Patton (2002, p, 40) states that “qualitative methods are ways of finding out what people do, think and feel by observing, interviewing and analysing documents”. Accordingly, as mentioned above I used more than one data generation method to obtain an in-depth understanding of learners’ views of history as a school subject in the secondary phase of schooling.

#### ***4.4.1.1 Collage-making***

A creative arts-based approach, in the form of a collage, was used as the main method to understand how history is viewed as a school subject in the secondary phase, by history learners at each of the schools under study. Collage-making is an arts-based research approach to meaning-making through the juxtaposition of a variety of pictures, artefacts, natural objects, words, phrases and textiles. It is not meant to provide one-to-one transfer of information, rather, it strives to create metaphoric evocative texts that are symbolic in nature, through which readers, audiences and patrons create their own meanings on a given research topic. Material was taken from a range of sources and used to create an assemblage from the bricolage collected. What underpins the creation of the research collages is the attempt to construct meanings about the research questions and process, the collage-makers and emerging themes. Although collages traditionally are thought of as an artistic product it was analysed with the belief that meaning can be mediated through images and symbols.

An arts-based method in the form of a collage was selected because I felt that the learners could express their views in a more creative, symbolic and artistic way. This is confirmed by Butler-Kisber (2010a) who believes that collages represent ideas by creating links between fragments that represent emergent feelings first and then ideas. These fragments are reconstructed to represent feelings that when viewed can suggest new meanings because of the artistic way the pieces are put together and portrayed. Furthermore, I felt that through the collages I could generate more data and therefore add new layers of meaning to my study. In addition, Denzin and Lincoln (2008) suggest that art, in any of its various forms, provides for self-reflection, self-expression and communication between and among creators – in this case learners and their audiences of peers – and learners and myself. Performing social change begins with artistic ways of seeing and knowing ourselves and the world in which we live. Learners involved in the collage-making at the respective schools have thus become researchers and artists of their own lives as well as having gained some historical skills.

Since ‘collages’ as a form of arts-based inquiry can be time-consuming, I had to make the necessary arrangements to carry out my research at a suitable time. Hence, together with the history educators at each of the schools under study, a suitable time was negotiated with the learners concerned. In fact, the selection of the learners who participated in the research project was also recommended by the history educators at each school after I explained what the project entailed. This process of selection was dealt with in the section on sampling in the research design section above. As the researcher, I obviously had to meet with the history educators and discuss the research project in detail as the educators had very little understanding of this type of research. I had to inform the history educators on what a collage is and why I chose to use it as a research method for my study. I also informed them how it can be used for learners to express their views of school history which was the focus of my study. Furthermore, I informed them of how the collage-making would unfold with their history learners. The information that I shared with history educators was then explained to the learners so that they fully understood the reason for the project and what it entailed. All the prior information that was shared with the history educators and learners was to ensure that rich thick data would emerge from the collage-making and that they were comfortable to participate. This process is fully explained below.

The collage-making process was carried out after school hours at Atlantic Ocean High School and Pacific Ocean College due to the fact that principals of these schools did not want to impinge on the teaching-learning time. However, at Indian Ocean Secondary and Arctic Ocean High schools the scenario was different in that collage-making was conducted during school time, due to learners having transport issues after school. The principals of these two schools were obviously more flexible and allowed me to work with learners during school time. The field-work was conducted in classrooms at Atlantic Ocean High, Pacific Ocean College and Arctic Ocean High schools while at Indian Ocean Secondary school we were able to use the school library. In fact, at Pacific Ocean College we used the art classroom which was very conducive for the learners to work in. The venues provided were suitable and the idea was to make participants feel comfortable and at ease in a familiar environment meaning that the classrooms and library used were set up such that learners had their own work stations, hence enough space in which to work. Also, I ensured that the lighting in the various rooms was good and the venues were not stuffy but cool. Being in an environment conducive to creativity as well as being comfortable I thought was important because the idea was not to let anything affect the collage-making process. I explained, before the collage-making started, in detail how the process would unfold before learners started making up their collages. This is explained in the next paragraphs.

Learners were provided with a range of different resources to construct their collages as depicted in table 4.1 below. The reason why I provided a wide range of resources was so that learners could construct their collages using a variety of fragments to express their views of school history in a more meaningful and symbolic manner. However, even though a variety of resources were provided, learners still searched for fragments that I did not provide. For example at Pacific Ocean College a learner searched for the word 'History' while at Arctic Ocean Secondary one participant searched for the colour 'purple'. In some cases I observed that participants took it upon themselves to hand write and draw their own images and use their own colours when the ones provided were deemed unsuitable. This made me realise that the resources I provided did limit my participants to a certain extent, however I did not expect this to happen as I had taken careful note of the resources and provided a wide range of resources for my participants from which to choose. In addition, I ensured that I was consistent in the sense that the resources provided for the collage-makers at all schools generally remained the same.



Overall, collage-making was carried out with a group of four learners from Indian Ocean Secondary, Arctic Ocean High, Atlantic Ocean High schools and a group of five learners from Pacific Ocean College. In other words, I conducted collage work with four separate groups at each of the above mentioned secondary schools. Thus, in total seventeen participants were involved in collage-making to express their views of history as a subject at their respective schools.

**Figure 4.1** Types of resources provided for collage making

TYPE OF RESOURCE	RELEVANCE OF RESOURCE	REASON
<p><b>Cardboard:</b> Different colours: red, green, yellow, blue, black and orange</p>	<p>Learners could choose colours. The cardboard was used by learners in numerous ways they saw fit.</p>	<p>Learners can express their thoughts and feelings powerfully through the use of colour and shapes and sizes. Could also be used as a base to mount their collages on</p>
<p><b>Newspaper:</b> <i>Mercury</i> (January – February 2015)</p>	<p>Filled with a variety of current historical information, images and cartoons and everything else that newspapers contain. Newspapers are often the first kind of source historians generally use to gather information/develop a feel.</p>	<p>Learners can express their views of history by selecting fragments from the newspapers.</p>
<p><b>Magazine:</b> <i>Time</i> (July-December 2014)</p>	<p>Is a political magazine that contains a lot of historical/political information</p>	<p>Learners could use images, words and symbols and whatever else they wanted to express their view of school history.</p>
<p><i>YOU</i> (January-December 2014)</p>		
<p><i>Today</i> (January-December 2014)</p>	<p>These magazines were useful as they contained various colourful images and words</p>	

<p><b>Textbook:</b> <b>History textbooks:</b> Grade 10/11 – New Generations and Shutters</p>	<p>Extracts from images of great historical leaders selected because the learners were currently studying these leaders and these leaders were familiar to them</p>	<p>Learners could select images of great historical leaders that they viewed as significant.</p>
<p><b>Fabric:</b> Dotted fabric in various colours</p>	<p>The fabric could be used by learners in numerous ways they saw fit.</p>	<p>Learners could select a variety of fabrics to express their views of school history creatively</p>
<p><b>Colours:</b> Oil pastels and paint</p>	<p>They could be used by learners in numerous ways they saw fit.</p>	<p>Learners could select colours to express their views of history creatively</p>
<p><b>Stationery:</b> Scissors and glue</p>	<p>Enough so that learners could work individually at their own pace without distractions  These could be used by learners in numerous ways they saw fit.</p>	<p>Learners could use the stationery provided to cut and paste their fragments</p>

The above Figure 4.1 depicts the various resources I selected to allow the collage-makers to effectively convey their views of school history. The reason why I decided to depict my resources for the collage-making in a table like figure was that I felt that it was more accessible to identify the resources, the relevance of them and the reason why they were selected. The resources were carefully thought out and selected before I engaged in the collage-making process. In fact, I did research on collage fragments in detail before I made my selection. However, as stated above collage-makers did request for fragments that I did not provide but this was unexpected.

Before the collage-makers started out making their collages at each of the schools under study, I once again explained in detail what needed to be done. Firstly, I explained to them that I am a PhD student at University of KwaZulu-Natal and as part of my field-work for my study I needed them to do collages for me to explain how they viewed history as a school subject in the secondary phase of their schooling. I also explained that they as my participants were

helping me to contribute to the existing body of knowledge, hence their contributions were important and valuable. At this point I also reiterated the ethical clearance procedures that they could withdraw at any time. Thereafter, I explained to them what a collage is and how to construct a collage. I also informed them that they could construct the collages in their own creative way regardless of what it looked like. In addition, I explained that their collages were their own views and no right or wrong answers existed. I also put up a big poster in the front of the room which read: “What are your views of history as a school subject in the secondary phase”. The idea behind this was so that they could keep referring to the poster in order to keep the focus during the collage-making.

I also politely told them to avoid talking unnecessarily and ask other participants for help or ideas related to their collages. The reason for this I explained to them was so that they should try to capture their own views in their collages and not somebody else’s view. Also by talking too much they will lose the focus in what they are doing as well as disturb others who are trying to focus. In addition, I mentioned to them if they were confused or needed to get clarity about anything during the collage-making process they could ask me for my help. I made it quite clear to my participants that they should not be intimidated if they see me making notes as this was merely field-notes and not me assessing them. I also assured the participants that all information divulged will be kept confidential and therefore they must be free and not hold back their true views of school history in their collages.

Thereafter, I explained to them that on completion of their collages they will present them in the form of a gallery walk. I explained to them that the gallery walk – a pin board - that I had set up is where their collages will be displayed. I then went on to explain that after observing all the collages put up, each collage-maker will present their collages to the other participants, including me. I also informed them that they could make written notes if they wished during presentations so that they could use these notes to clarify and ask questions in the next part of the process. Thereafter, an informal discussion will be conducted where they will be given an opportunity to ask each other questions about aspects of their collages and this generated some discussion amongst participants, hence a group discussion. The presentations in the form of a gallery walk and group discussion session are explained in more detail in the next two sections.

After my explaining what was required I sensed that participants at Indian Ocean Secondary and Arctic Ocean High schools were not very relaxed and seemed to be confused. Hence, I offered to explain briefly once again and motivated them to start selecting their resources which were carefully laid out in a section in the room. However, once they started with their collage-making they seemed to relax and enjoy the making process. The participants of Atlantic Ocean High and Pacific Ocean College got started immediately and seemed to understand what needed to be done. Although, I must admit at Atlantic Ocean High participants admitted that they were exhausted from a hot, busy day and they seemed quite keen to get done as soon as possible. I thought it was important not to allow my participants to be anxious or not at ease and tense as this could influence their collages in a negative way. This is confirmed by, Butler-Kisber and Davis (1999) who states that if a participant is experiencing anxiety and tension it will influence the imagery of the collage-making. I also provided a few snacks and drinks for my participants so that they would not allow hunger or thirst to impact their collage-making.

While participants were busy with collage-making, I played the role of a listener-observer as well as trying to help with any queries on which they needed clarification. One distinct observation that I made during my role as observer was that at first collage-makers seemed to analyse the resources available before they made their selections. In fact, participants from Indian Ocean Secondary, Arctic Ocean High and Pacific Ocean schools took a while to choose their resources. The participants from Atlantic Ocean High school seemed to want to get done quickly (as mentioned above) hence they did their selections quite quickly and generally seemed to be in a hurry due to exhaustion and bad weather as noted above. Another observation was that some participants selected their resources as the collage-making process was in progress, which resulted in movement around the room. However, they were mindful not to cause too much disturbance. In fact, some participants even took magazines and newspapers to their work stations to search for fragments rather than to do so at the central point.

Also through observation I noticed there was some communication amongst the participants during the collage-making session. This was based on sharing of resources and probably ideas. Another incident was when one participant asked the others for an image of Nelson Mandela that she wanted for her collage, meaning that she had a very specific conceptualisation in mind. The others willingly assisted her which indicated that there was a good team spirit amongst

them. In addition, to this one learner wanted to borrow a pencil while another asked to borrow a dictionary which indicated that some participants wanted to be meticulous with their collage-making. Another observation I made was that some participants seem to copy ideas from others in a very discreet way. However, this was beyond my control. Overall, despite these minor forms of communication participants generally maintained focus. Similarly, in the capacity of a listener-observer I was careful not to say too much to my participants when they asked questions or when they needed clarification on certain matters. In fact, some participants asked questions based on clarification of spelling of words while another asked me for a specific image for which she was looking. Another participant also asked if she could use her own colours in her collage which indicated that she obviously wanted to be very specific in her views of school history through the use of colour. The participant looking for the particular image actually came up with her own creative idea of drawing the image to which I agreed. I also allowed the other participant to use her own colours.

Hence, I attempted to merely be a listener-observer during the collage-making process and trust that I did not contribute my thoughts and feelings to them. I did not give them any advice or help regarding the making of their collages as I would have imposed my thoughts and views of history on them and their collages would not be a true reflection of their own views and experiences. However, despite my constant awareness of not imposing my views onto learners I might have erred unknowingly. The role of listener and observer in this context is very similar. During this session I recorded my observations in the form of field-notes which I later transcribed in more detail.

The collage-making generally went well and participants were very happy to be involved in the research project at the end, even though there were minor issues as explained above. The presentations of the collages were video-recorded by the video operator and transcribed verbatim – the use of the video will be explained in the next section. As the researcher, I was also able to document and record ideas, concepts and meanings gleaned during the making process itself as well as during the presentations and discussion sessions. However, I tried to ensure that this did not interfere with the participants and their presentations and discussions.

#### ***4.4.1.2 Gallery walk (presentations of collages)***

After the collage-making process was completed the participants presented their collages to me and their peers. Since it was small groups of collage-makers at each of the schools under study I decided to be creative and allow them to do their presentations in the form of a gallery walk. This is supported by Gray (2012) who states that a gallery walk can be more effective when the research groups are smaller, probably three or four learners. Furthermore, a gallery walk also aligned itself well with my arts-based inquiry.

A gallery walk is the fundamental process which involves hanging up various graphic or textual displays and then having participants interact around them in a purposeful way, often leaving behind written comments as they go. It is a technique that gets participants out of their chairs and into a mode of active engagement. Francek (2013) adds that a gallery walk gets participants actively involved in synthesizing important concepts in this way. He adds that a gallery walk is flexible and has many benefits for both the participants and the researcher meaning that a gallery walk can be used in any subject area and for any topic. Also it can be beneficial in the sense that it creates an interest in the participants because of its creative nature and researchers can prompt the participants to share their views on the collages displayed by asking relevant questions.

A gallery walk is most successful when participants are properly prepared to use it, hence as the researcher, I had to ensure that I familiarised myself well with the method before I engaged my participants in the process. However, there are countless variations of gallery walks. For the purposes of my study I used the gallery walk method as a creative tool for my presentation and discussion sessions. In other words, I included the gallery walk more as an observation and internalising method for the presentations of the collages and discussion sessions. The process will be explained in detail below.

After my participants completed their collages I asked them to remain at their work stations. I then gave them instructions as to how to conduct the gallery walk and presentation sessions. This was merely refreshing their memory of what I had already explained to them, as discussed earlier in the chapter. Prior to the collage-making the gallery walk was set up in the

classroom/library in which my participants constructed their collages. At Arctic Ocean High and Atlantic Ocean High schools I used the chalkboard for learners to put up their collages, while at Indian Ocean Secondary school I used a notice board since we used the library at this particular school. At Pacific Ocean College we were able to use an art board (easel) which was very conducive for a gallery walk. The reason behind this was that at this school we used the art classroom to construct collages, hence the availability of an easel.

After giving my participants instructions they moved out of their work stations and pasted their collages in the designated areas. I indicated to them that they could paste their collages anywhere they saw fit on the pin board provided. From observation I noticed that collage-makers did not paste their collages next to each other but in strategic positions. In other words, some participants placed their collages higher up while others chose to place theirs lower down. Also it seemed that they did not want their collages to be close to another's. This I assumed was because they wanted their collages to stand out and there will be no confusion during the presentations of the collages. After the participants pasted their collages in the respective places they had chosen they observed and internalised each other's collages in the form of a gallery walk. Following my instructions they were not allowed to make any comments or talk at this stage as they were told that the idea behind this was to leave all comments and questions for the discussion session which was to follow and they could make notes if they wished as explained earlier in the chapter. However, I did notice that participants from Pacific Ocean College found it difficult to contain themselves and one participant had to be reminded that they could not comment or ask questions at this point. Thus, the gallery walk session lasted approximately 10-20 minutes and was an observation and internalising session of the collages by the research participants.

After the observing and internalising of the collages, participants moved away from the gallery walk but sat close to and in full view of the gallery walk station in an informal way, while presentations of collages happened. The nature of a presentation for the purposes of this study was such that each participant had to present his/her collage orally to the other participants. A presentation at this point was important in the sense that participants presented and explained their views of school history through the symbolism of their collages, which was the purpose of the collage-making. In other words, the collage was a visual tool used to communicate

learners' views of school history, hence it was necessary for them to present and explain their collages or else other participants and myself may not make sense of their collage or may even misinterpret the meaning of the collage.

During the presentation session 'observing participants' further explored and experienced collages done by their respective peers. This meaning that the other participants were obviously a part of these presentations and were notified before the presentations that a group discussion will follow the presentation session, in which, they had the opportunity to ask questions and comment on other participants' presentations and collages and observations made during the gallery walk session. Observing participants were also given permission to jot down ideas and questions while presentations were in progress so that they would not forget their queries or comments for the discussion session which will be explained in the next section. Hence, participants were advised beforehand to be mentally alert when presentations are done so that they can participate in the group discussion that followed the presentation session by asking specific questions which generated discussion. This was a way of having learners share their work with their peers and learning or gaining historical knowledge of others' views regarding school history. In fact, in this way they are studying and responding to other people's thinking and views. Above all, I was able to generate rich data during these gallery walks and presentations.

The gallery walk was an efficient method and engendered a sense of team cohesion as each participant displayed and presented their product in the form of a collage. The value of the end products emphasised the value of critical/creative thinking, analysing and organizing skills. Also participants were reassured that their voices and views are valued because they shared their ideas and views among a non-threatening group of peers. The presentation of each participant's collage was not of the same duration. Generally, each presentation by each participant lasted approximately between 10-15 minutes. However, I was faced with a scenario at Pacific Ocean College where learners took much longer to present than other schools. The reason for this was that participants at the above mentioned school seemed to be very passionate about the subject and therefore wanted to explain all their views of school history depicted in their collages, in detail.



A gallery walk can be challenging and is most successful when students are properly prepared to use it, thus I had to thoroughly explain the procedure to the learners beforehand. As mentioned earlier this technique worked for my study because of the small number of participants I had at each school under study. Furthermore, I used the gallery walk as a presentation tool for my study and therefore it was used mainly as an observation and internalising method. In fact, a gallery walk is an effective method to promote discussion which was my intention. In other words, a discussion was one of the methods that followed after the gallery walk. All collages put up during the gallery walk as well as participants observing collages were video-taped. All presentations were also video-taped and transcribed in detail thereafter. More details regarding the video recording will be given in the section on 'listenener-observer field-notes' below. In fact, notes were also taken during the presentations but I was careful not to let them hamper the presentation process.

#### ***4.4.1.3 Group discussion***

Once the presentations of the collages by the participants were completed, I engaged them in a group discussion. In other words, I had four separate discussion sessions at each of the schools under study. The participants were well aware that this was going to take place as I explained to them once again the procedure we will follow after the collage-making was completed. Thus, participants and I remained around the gallery walk area as per the presentations. The idea for this was so that the collages were clearly visible as well as easily accessible if participants felt that they needed to continue with observing or needing to point out specific details on the collages or when asking questions.

A group discussion is generally a group of individuals with similar interests who gather formally or informally to bring up ideas, ask questions or give comments. According to Ewens (2014) the term discussion usually refers to a diverse body of teaching techniques, which emphasise participation, dialogue, and two-way communication. The discussion method is one in which the researcher and a group of participants consider a topic, issue, or problem and exchange information, experiences, ideas, opinions, reactions and conclusions with one another.

In light of this, I chose to use the discussion method after the gallery walk and presentation sessions because I thought it was an appropriate way to allow my participants to get more clarity regarding the presentations that had just taken place. In other words, if they did not fully grasp or understand any of the views presented by any participant while he/she was doing his/her presentation they could now ask questions regarding those specific details. Thus, the discussion session served a two-fold purpose in that the presenters could give more detail about certain aspects related to their collages while the other participants could learn from them. Furthermore, during the gallery walk session participants merely observed and internalised their thoughts and started to mentally prepare their comments and questions. Hence, I felt the group discussion would give them the opportunity to speak out about some of their observations that they internalised during the gallery walk session. Moreover, I felt that this discussion session was needed and beneficial to add value to my study because it helped me generate additional rich data and the research participants could engage with their collages in an additional manner.

For the purposes of this study the group discussion session took place around the gallery walk area in a very informal way. I once again informed my participants that the session had to be done in an orderly manner and asked them to raise their hands if they wanted to speak and to pose their questions or comments directly to the ‘presenter’ involved. I also informed them that they should keep the focus on the specific collage in question.

Thereafter, as the researcher, I initiated this session by asking my participants if there were any questions and comments that they wanted to pose about the presentations that they have just observed. I also reminded them that they could at this stage ask questions regarding the gallery walk session where they merely observed and internalised the collages. The participants asked some questions related to the actual collages and aspects shared during the presentations. Some of the questions posed regarding the actual collages were related to why a specific colour was used, the layout of a collage and certain words used. This obviously led to a discussion which was my intention in order to generate rich data to support the presentations. One such discussion was based around the word ‘literature’ which appeared in one of the collages where a participant asked how this particular word related to history. This led to a discussion where the presenter concerned explained how she thought that in history there is much reading and

hence, it has influenced literature, as with the novel '*The Tale of Two Cities*.' In fact, she went into a whole discussion about this one word she used in her collage and how she linked the idea to history.

Participants were very enthusiastic to be involved in this session and it ended up being very successful. In fact, the questions and comments from the discussion session will be highlighted in Chapter 5 and 6 which are my analysis chapters for this study. The duration of the discussion session was approximately half an hour at each school. However, at Pacific Ocean College I had to intervene and tell participants that we needed to round off, as we had exceeded our allocated time, as they were keen to continue.

Discussions can be rewarding and can stimulate critical thinking among participants in a group setting. As I established a rapport with my participants, I demonstrated that I appreciated their contributions by simply acknowledging their contributions as well as just saying 'well done' or 'good' at times. Simultaneously, I challenged them to think more deeply and articulate their ideas more clearly. In other words, when questions were sometimes not phrased properly I intervened and guided what was being asked. For example, when a participant queried a particular symbol that the presenter had depicted in her collage and the presenter could not understand what was being asked, I helped clarify this. Frequent questions asked provided a means of exploring in-depth the concepts of the participants' collages. In other words, some of the questions asked and concepts used in the collages demonstrated the knowledge and understanding participants had and were able to share with the other participants as for example the discussion of the word 'literature' which was explained above.

As the researcher I had to play a role in managing the discussion. This meaning that I had to take the necessary precautions not to let one person dominate the discussion. As such it was important that I learnt the names of all my participants so that I could refer to them by name if I made any comments. This convinced them that I saw them as individuals with something valuable to add to the study, thus creating an environment of mutual trust and interest. This strategy also encouraged the participants to refer to one another by name.

Overall, this discussion session proved to be useful as the data generated from them was used to confirm and clarify aspects about the actual collages as well as the presentation sessions which were analysed in Chapters 5 and 6. These informal discussions were video-taped and then transcribed verbatim. The discussion sessions helped to generate data that was used to prompt and probe participants during the session. This in turn, broadened the study which focused on how history is viewed as a subject by learners in the secondary phase of their schooling.

#### ***4.4.1.4 Listener-observer field notes***

Field-notes refer to notes created by the researcher during the act of qualitative field-work to remember and record the behaviours, activities, events, and other features of an observation setting (Thorpe, 2008). Field-notes are intended to be read by the researcher to produce meaning and an understanding of the culture, social situation, or phenomenon being studied. The notes may constitute the whole data collected for the research study or contribute to it, as when field notes supplement conventional interview data. The ways in which you take notes during an observational study is very much a personal decision developed over time as one becomes more experienced in observing.

Gay et al. (2009, p. 110) define field-notes “as a method which describes as accurate and as comprehensive as possible all situations and events as they are occurring and they have to describe when, where, and under what conditions the observation was made”. My field-notes were observational and procedural to help to focus on direct description of events experienced through direct listening and watching. This was also done to give meaning to what was observed and to describe procedures and methods used in the observation process.

Field-notes are contemporaneous notes of observations taken during the conduct of qualitative research (Thorpe, 2008). Depending on the circumstances, the notes taken can be in full (e.g. verbatim transcripts of conversations taken by hand or recorded by a video-recorder) or brief notations that can be elaborated on later. For the purposes of this study I made notes during the sessions which I reviewed and elaborated on immediately after the sessions. Keeping good systematic field-notes is an essential part of undertaking qualitative research as observations

are only useful to the extent that they can be remembered and recorded. Researchers should not make the mistake and believe that notes only relate to when the researcher is in direct contact with their respondents. The main purpose of my field-notes was to allow me to authenticate what participants said and to confirm and verify observations.

Thus, in addition, to the above research methods I also utilised the field-notes I made as my role as a listener-observer during the collage-making, gallery walk -presentations and discussion sessions. Because my intention was to capture as much as I could while learners were busy with their collages, during their presentations and group discussions, I took field-notes to record and focus on particular aspects which could have been missed out. This was especially the case for the collage-makings as I chose to closely observe my participants' reactions and actions while they were busy and obviously this could not be recorded by the video-operator which is explained in the next paragraph. Thus, I focused mainly on the actions, reactions and expressions of my participants which can sometimes only be observed first-hand at the research site.

At this stage I think it is important to mention that all my data generation methods were video-taped. A video recorder is a device which records programmes both visually and audibly and these recordings can be replayed almost immediately after recording. I chose to video record my data generation methods because I felt it helped me to transcribe my data effectively and not omit anything important for data analysis. For the purposes of this study I had a video operator at each school, which was recommended by the history teacher concerned. The purpose of the video recordings were used mainly for doing my transcriptions. In other words, the field-notes I made were used to supplement and justify in some instances the video-taped transcriptions. I used a word processor to transcribe the sets of video-taped data. The transcriptions were then checked against the video-tapes to ensure that all the data was accounted for. The data sets were then printed for analysis.

#### **4.4.2 Data analysis**

Data analysis is: "The process of systematically searching and arranging the interview transcripts, field-notes and other materials which were accumulated by the researcher to

increase his or her understanding of the mind which enables the researcher to present that, which was discovered by others” (Bogdan & Biklen, 1992, p, 153). There are various ways of handling and analysing data.

Qualitative data analysis, as with this study, is the non-numerical assessment of observations made through participant observation, content analysis, in-depth interviews, and other qualitative research techniques (Babbie, 2001). In other words, data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. It is a messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative and fascinating process. McMillan and Schumacher (1993) further add that qualitative analysis is a systematic process of selecting, categorising, comparing, synthesising and interpreting to provide explanations of the single phenomenon of interest. Qualitative data analyses vary widely because of different research foci, purposes, and data generation strategies.

Thus, data analysis “is data reducing whereby data is selected, focused, simplified, abstracted and transformed to enable the researcher to manage it” (Fetterman 1988, p, 229). In this research study the data consists of field-notes and a video recording of observations taken during the collage making/presentations/discussions, studying individual collages, the collage presentations and discussions. In analysing the data I initially watched the video recording and then transcribed the following verbatim: collage-making process, gallery walk and presentations and discussions. This, I then blended with my listener-observer field notes into a single document. All of this was done for each of the collages separately, meaning I had 17 data sets. Marshall and Rossman (1995) maintain that reading, reading and reading once more through the data forces the researcher to become familiar with the data in intimate ways which was my intention.

I must admit initially I was really confused and had to keep returning to my data to try and decide which would be the most appropriate way to do the analysis. Eventually with the help of my supervisor we decided that the most appropriate way to analyse the data would be on two levels. Hence I, refer to ‘level 1’ and ‘level 2’ analysis which is discussed in Chapter 5 and Chapter 6 and will be explained next.

The first level of analysis of the collages was done according to an ‘open coding’ method. In other words, I did the open-coding for each of the 17 collages constructed. Open coding refers to the coding process and was my first step towards gradually making sense of the collages. Coding is an analytical process in which data is categorised to facilitate analysis. This means that open coding includes labelling concepts, defining and developing categories based on their dimensions (Khandar, 2016). In other words, researchers need to give names to their ideas and concepts to define, analyse and share with others. Once it is defined, researchers can begin to examine them and ask questions related to them. It is also important that researchers name their concepts appropriately because people act toward things based on the meaning those things have for them and thus these meanings are derived from social interaction and modified through interpretation. This thinking aligns itself well with symbolic interactionism which is the chosen theoretical framework of this study and is fully explained in Chapter 3.

In light of this, I chose to use open coding as a method to analyse my collages. I felt that it was a systematic way to condense my extensive data sets into smaller analysable units and therefore make sense of them, as discussed below. Open coding can be done in different ways, in other words there is no single ‘right way’ to do it. This was my initial stage of data analysis because the process was to ‘open up’ the collages and expose the views they hold for the collage-makers regarding school history. The intent of open coding here was to analyse the collages into categories in order to interpret them. Hence, collages were analysed by looking at the images and words used; the layout; the people depicted; the resources used; shapes; own insertions; colours used; placement and layering. This meaning that all the collages in this study were analysed using the same categories. The reason why these categories were used to open up the collages is because collages rely heavily on visual data since it is an arts-based research approach. Hence, the categories mentioned above deemed to be most appropriate and suitable to analyse the collages.

Also as an artistic product the collage was analysed with the belief that learners can express their views of school history meaningfully through using images. Hence, the selected categories helped me to further analyse the collages and get a better understanding of the data in order to interpret learners’ views of school history. Collages were analysed in great detail and analysis of each collage ended only when I had reached saturation point. However, the

problem with open coding is it is very time consuming and tedious work. Sometimes it is difficult to decide when you have reached saturation point. I was able to overcome this by constantly returning and referring to the collages in order to ensure that I had captured and analysed every detail in them.

On completion of the 'open-ended' analysis of each of the 17 collages separately, I then compared and contrasted these 'open-ended' analysis with the document created for each collage which was explained earlier in the section. This comparing and contrasting was done to justify certain views of learners regarding their collages.

It is important to note that the collages at this point were analysed individually because each collage-maker seemed to have a unique view of history. However, at this stage it is important to mention that prior to analysing the collages individually I had attempted to analyse the collages according to schools. This meant that I examined the collages per school and started looking for common patterns and themes across the collages. This effort did not work so well, hence with the assistance of my supervisor, I decided that the most suitable way was to analyse the collages individually and then to look at the common patterns and themes that emerged per school.

The process of open coding as my first level of analysis was very beneficial to my study. It helped me to open up the collages and make meaning of the views of school history which were depicted by the participants in their collages. Furthermore, data analysis for this study did not stop at this first level. I engaged in a second level of analysis which will be explained in detail below.

A second level of analysis was needed for my study because of the nature of my topic which is related to how history learners view school history. Thus, the second level of analysis of the collages was done using an instrument that I devised using a set of historical concepts. An instrument in general terms refers to a tool or device used for a particular purpose. In other words, for the purposes of my study I designed a specific instrument to help me further analyse



the collages and related methods. This means that the first level of analysis which was explained and discussed in detail above was not sufficient, since it was based on opening up the collages by mainly interpreting the fragments placed in the collages with a few justifications from the presentation and discussion sessions. Hence, I needed a second level of analysis, which was the reason why I designed an instrument to further analyse my data. Due to the nature and uniqueness of my study I had to specifically design an instrument that would suit my study to help answer my research questions. Furthermore, I was able to analyse my data in a more structured way and get a better understanding of how learners view history as a school subject.

The instrument was made up of six benchmarks as well as criteria linked to each benchmark (Appendix A). The benchmarks that form part of my instrument are: historical significance; historical time; nature of historical knowledge and understanding; historical empathy; cause and consequence and change and continuity. These benchmarks were derived from the works by (Davies, 2011; Department of Education, 2011; Haydn, Arthur, Hunt & Stephen, 2008; Stearns et al, 2000; Timmins et al, 2005; Wineburg, 2001;) and were gleaned from my literature review section on the nature of school history. The reason why I chose to use these specific benchmarks is that they are pertinent in the teaching and learning of the subject history at school level. Furthermore, the analysis of the collages would not focus primarily on substantive historical content as discussed in Chapter 2. Hence, since my research topic is based on learners' views of school history I felt that these benchmarks would assist me to further analyse my data and therefore understand how learners view the subject history at school level. More detail on my instrument and how it was used to analyse data is provided in the next section.

Historical Significance as my 1<sup>st</sup> benchmark is the process used to evaluate what is significant about selected events, people and developments in the past. As such this benchmark and the criteria attached to it assisted me to analyse who and what learners depicted as being historically significant in their collages. The 2<sup>nd</sup> benchmark and its criteria was related to 'historical time'. Historical time is the distinctive marker of history and is central in the development of learners' historical thinking. Therefore, this benchmark helped me to analyse how learners identify and understand the concept of time through their collages.

The 3<sup>rd</sup> benchmark in my instrument was the ‘Nature of historical knowledge and understanding’ which was linked to different criteria. This benchmark relates to the nature of history as a school subject being such that it has the capacity to help learners understand something of the past so that they can assess and judge the present. Furthermore, it assists learners to understand not only who they are and where they come from but also helps them to make informed decisions about present issues and further developments. Therefore, this benchmark was important in the sense that it guided me to analyse whether learners demonstrated evidence of thinking critically about past events, how history has affected people’s opinions and human behaviour as well as the idea of identity. I also used the presentations and discussion session transcriptions to justify certain aspects depicted in the collages to assist me with the analysis of my data.

‘Historical empathy’ as my 4<sup>th</sup> benchmark entailed a process of understanding people in the past by contextualising their actions. In fact, historical empathy is necessary to understand school history and appreciate current events. Thus, this benchmark and criteria proved to be important and assisted me in analysing how learners understood circumstances and concepts surrounding an event. Furthermore, I was able to analyse whether there was evidence of learners understanding why people from the past behave in a particular manner and if they had an awareness/respect/appreciation/sensitivity to complex human actions/achievements.

The 5<sup>th</sup> benchmark in my instrument was ‘Cause and Consequence’. These concepts address who or what influenced events to occur and what the repercussions of those events were. Through this benchmark and its criteria I was able to analyse whether learners were able to recognise reasons for events and results of them as well as if there was an indication of how consequences can drive future events. The 6<sup>th</sup> benchmark was ‘Change and Continuity’. This benchmark is based on the idea that history is a complex mix of change and continuity. As such there were many things happening in the past simultaneously, some changed quickly while others remain relatively continuous. Therefore, this benchmark helped me to analyse whether learners identified what changed and what has remained the same over a period of time as well as if there was representation of change and continuity in certain political/social/economic spheres.

This second level of analysis was done differently to the first level of analysis in the sense that my instrument was not applied to individual collages but across all collages so as to seek understanding for each of the benchmarks. At the same time I blended with my listener-observer notes all 17 previous data sets into a single document to which I also applied the benchmark instrument. Hence, the instrument was applied to the collages as well as the data sets made up of other methods as it related to the collages. In light of this, level 1 and level 2 analysis had to be described separately.

Marshall and Rossman (1995) regard qualitative data analysis as the search for general statements about relationships among categories of data. Thus, the process embodied in the research programme was one of moving between data already gathered, relevant existing theory and further data generation and analysis (Van Wyk, 1996).

#### **4.4.3 Trustworthiness of the research**

Trustworthiness in a general sense describes something one can believe in. In other words, for the purpose of research it is important that the research conducted can be viewed as trustworthy. There are various ways to enhance the trustworthiness of a research study. Qualitative research, such as this study, is by nature subjective and thus needs to be trustworthy for it to be considered to have academic rigour. Mouton (2001) argues that subjectivity opens doors for interpretative bias consequently I had to consider ways of making my research study trustworthy.

Lincoln and Guba (1995) suggest trustworthiness, credibility and transferability as criteria of qualitative research. Since I approached my study from a qualitative approach and an interpretivist paradigm, the above mentioned criteria were met for the purposes of my research study through various ways. Firstly, I strove for trustworthiness by declaring my positionality in 'Chapter 1' which was meant to accept that my role in the study was not neutral. I further declared the theory and paradigm that I worked within so that there was transparency. Hence, some arguments I make from a symbolic interactionist point of view might not be accepted by other theoretical perspectives or by other researchers analysing the same data.

Another way I strove to ensure that my study was trustworthy was by sharing with other people besides my supervisor. I consequently attended some of the PhD cohort sessions where we would present our work to the group of postgraduate peers for open critique. At these sessions for example, I did a 'mock' session of my arts-based method in the form of the collage with my colleagues. In other words, I got the group to actually engage in the actual making process as well as the presentation of their collages. This session were very beneficial to me as I got constructive feedback and was able to refine my research methods accordingly. This avenue of sharing specific sections of my work and receiving constructive feedback helped to enhance the trustworthiness of my study to a large extent.

Qualitative research has its own way of judging or measuring the trustworthiness of the research. The interpretive researcher encourages varieties of data analysis and different sources and analysis methods in order to strive for trustworthiness. Thus, this study relied on four research methods. Although collages and presentations were the main data generation tools, other related research methods namely, discussions and listener-observer field-notes also played a pivotal role in giving credibility to the views, perceptions, opinions and experiences generated, thus enhancing the trustworthiness of the study.

Babbie (2001) maintains that trustworthiness is a matter of whether a particular technique applied repeatedly to the same object, yields the same result each time. Qualitative researchers commonly use a combination of research methods to enhance validity in data generation. Thus, I used the following strategies to ensure that data generation was trustworthy: verbatim accounts of presentations and discussions; transcripts and direct quotations were used as data; mechanically recorded data (a video camera was used during all collage making, presentations and discussions); low-inference description: concrete, precise descriptions from field-notes and observations were used and member checking.

In fact, member checking played a significant role in enhancing trustworthiness of my study. Member checking is a technique used by researchers to help improve the trustworthiness and credibility of a study. There are different types of member checking in research. For the purposes of this study member checking was done by providing each participant with a copy

of the collage presentations and discussions as well as the field-notes made during the collage making, in which they participated. The research participants were allowed to make changes to clarify their opinions or thoughts. In the end there was only one change that needed to be made which was where one participant indicated that she stated during the discussion session that “history deals with issues of war”- while the transcription read that “history is about the study of wars”- I then made this change to the transcripts prior to analysis. Thus, member checking provided me with an opportunity to correct errors and wrong interpretations made by me and through this, trustworthiness of the study was further enhanced.

All data generation methods have strengths and weaknesses (Best & Kahn, 1993). Thus, understanding my data helped me to emphasise the strengths and minimise the weaknesses of the chosen data generation methods thus, enhancing trustworthiness of the study. Against this background Best and Kahn (1993) argue that good qualitative research will often include multiple methods of data generation. By selecting complementary methods, a researcher can cover the weaknesses of one method with the strengths of another. Hence, for the purposes of this study, I selected collages and presentations as the main methods and discussion and field notes from observations as complementary methods to ensure trustworthiness of my study. Also the literature on how history is viewed by learners was used to validate statements made by the participants which further enhanced trustworthiness of the study.

#### **4.5 Conclusion**

In this chapter I described and justified the choice of the research design and methodology applied in this study because I wanted to indicate the route I followed to answer the research questions posed. This study is a qualitative study which was informed by an interpretivist paradigm because its aim was to have a deeper understanding of how history is viewed as a school subject in the secondary phase of schooling. My sample consisted of four schools and seventeen learners from the respective schools. The sample was purposively selected for convenience and because of the nature of the study. The research methods used to generate data were collages, gallery walk and presentations, discussions and listener-observer field-notes. Thereafter, I explained how my data was analysed which was on two separate levels. The first level was based on an open-coding method while the second level was based on using an instrument I devised. Finally, the issue of ethical considerations and trustworthiness,

of the study have been argued and justified. In the Chapters, that follow, 5 and 6, I present my analysis and the subsequent findings.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **PRESENTATIONS OF FINDINGS – LEVEL 1 ANALYSIS OF COLLAGES**

#### **5.1 Introduction**

This study was designed with an overarching purpose of analysing the data generated from the collages and related research methods used, to understand how learners view history as a school subject in the secondary phase of schooling. After much uncertainty and confusion as to how to analyse my research data I decided the most appropriate way to do the analysis was on two levels. The reason for analysing the research data on two levels was based on the nature of my study as stated Chapter 4. In addition, it related well to my literature review which focuses on the nature and purpose of school history. The unfolding of these two levels of analysis was also discussed and explained in Chapter 4.

Therefore, in this chapter I engage with the first level of analysis which was to analyse the individual collages. At this level collages were analysed according to an ‘open coding’ method. I did open coding for each of the 17 collages constructed at the sampled schools. Open coding refers to the initial phase of the coding process. This was my initial stage of data analysis because the process was to ‘open up’ the collages in order to uncover the views they hold for the collage-makers regarding school history so as to attempt to answer the research questions. It was through coding that the conceptual abstraction of my research data and its reintegration as theory took place (Holten, 2010). In open coding I worked with my research data directly, fracturing and analysing it, initially through open coding for the emergence of core categories/segments and related concepts. This idea related well with my symbolic interactionism theoretical framework which was adopted for this study as discussed in Chapter 3.

In analysing the collages individually I initially studied my collages in detail. While studying my collages, I continually asked myself what was happening in each collage and how learners

tried to convey their views of school history. In addition, I asked the following key questions during the analysing process: what is this data a study of, what categories/segments are emerging from a close analysis of the collages and what views are learners trying to convey through their fragments depicted in their collages? These questions helped me to sustain my symbolic interactionist theoretical perspective that I adopted for my study. This in turn assisted me in interpreting and understanding my participants' views of school history symbolically, as per my interpretive paradigm which was explained in Chapter 4.

The intent of open coding here as mentioned above was to break down the data in the collages into categories/segments in order to interpret the collages at face value. In other words, at this stage I had to be careful that I did not let the presentation and discussion sessions influence my analysis of the collages at this stage. Hence, the collages were analysed by looking at the images and words used; the layout; the people depicted; the media used; shapes used; own insertions; colours used and placement. All the collages in this study were analysed using the same categories/segments. The reason why the above categories/segments were used to open up the collages is because collages rely heavily on the symbolism of visual data since it is an arts-based research approach. Hence, the categories mentioned above deemed to be most appropriate to analyse the collages. Furthermore, by designing different categories/segments for analysing the collages I was able to ensure that I saturate all aspects and minimise omitting important aspects in the collages. I also depended on the critical eye of my supervisor in this regard to help clarify and check if all aspects were well covered. This resulted in a feeling that nothing had been left out, however I could have unintentionally omitted some aspects depicted in the collages. Nevertheless, these aspects that could have been ignored would be covered in the second level of analyses in Chapter 6.

Thus, in this chapter I analysed individual collages through the open coding method to help conceptualise my research topic. At this stage it is necessary to mention that I worked with history learners in groups at the four schools under investigation but the participants all created their own collages, hence I analysed each collage individually. This was done as stated above by fleshing out different categories/segments in order to get a better understanding of how learners view history as a school subject in the secondary phase of schooling. At this level of analysis I did not consider my other research data transcriptions as in presentations and

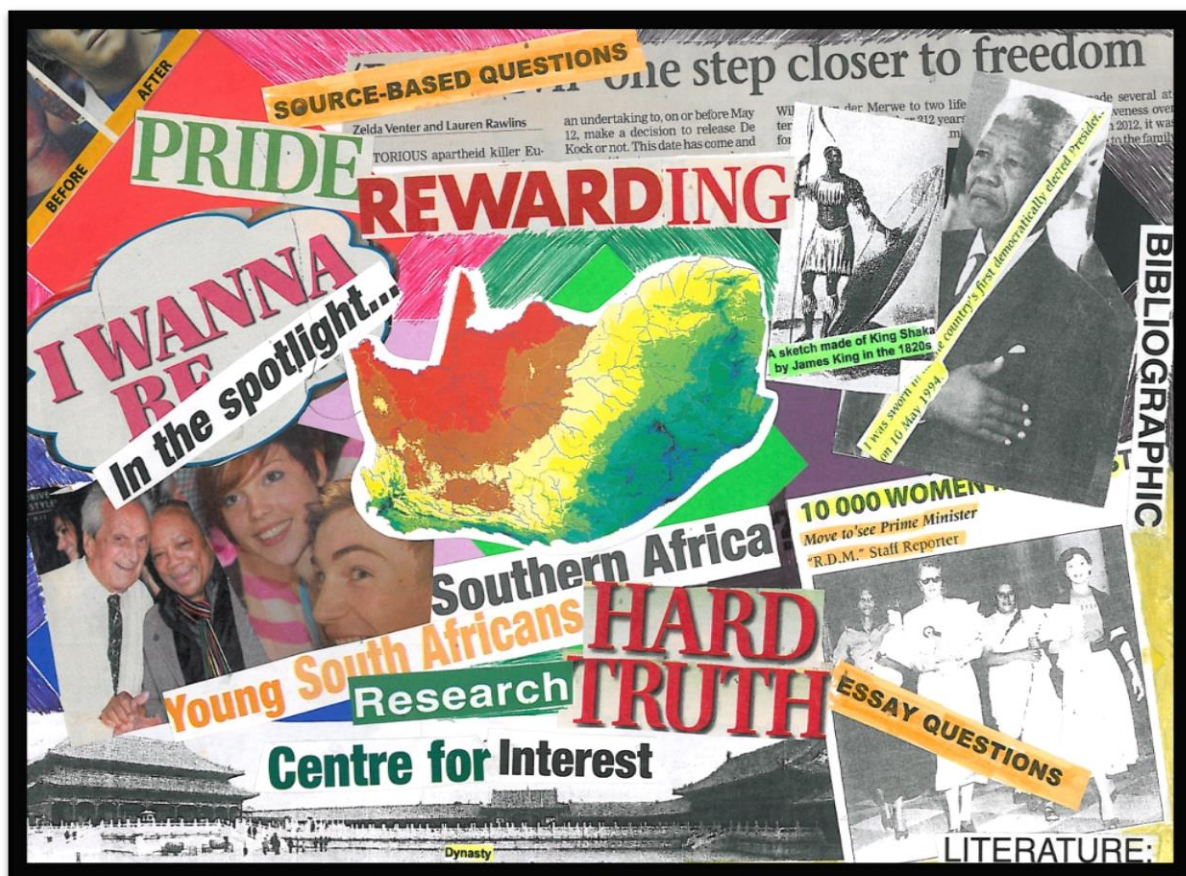


discussion sessions. These transcriptions will be used in the second level of analysis which is done in Chapter 6. The reason for this was to ‘open up’ the collages as explained earlier. Thereafter, common patterns and themes that emerged across the four schools after analysing the collages individually, were discussed. As mentioned above pseudonyms were used for the schools and participants for confidentiality and anonymity.

## 5.2 Analysis of individual collages from each school

### 5.2.1 Indian Ocean Secondary School

Figure 5.2.1A: Collage Maker – Zen



At the top left corner of the collage Zen has the words ‘**BEFORE AND AFTER**’ which could mean that for him school history is about the past and the future. The word ‘Before’ for this participant possibly refers to past events and happenings which he finds are important in the study of school history. Similarly, the word ‘After’ which is making reference to the present and the future helps him to understand how the past is linked to the present and the future. Also

at the top, towards the centre of the collage the words '**PRIDE AND REWARDING**' suggest that history as a school subject is related to pride and possibly a rewarding subject to study. Pride for him seems to be important in the sense that as a South African he thinks that people need to be proud of who they are and where they come from. The word 'Rewarding' on the other hand for Zen is that he probably regards history as a subject that he feels could be rewarding and beneficial to him. The placement of these words at the top of the collage is quite eye-catching and could mean that he possibly views these words as being significant in the way he views history as a school subject.

At the centre of the collage Zen placed an outline of the map of South Africa which gives a sense that this participant seems to focus on school history being mainly associated with local history as in the geopolitical South African situation. This could mean that this is his country which he regards as important and therefore is interested in knowing the history of it. Furthermore, by placing the map of natural features at the centre of the collage reveals that for him all the other aspects he depicted in his collage are linked to South Africa. This is also evident in the phrase '**Young South Africans**' and just beneath that the word '**Research**' which suggests that the participant probably thinks that the youth in South Africa should find out about their history through the study of school history. Furthermore, this could suggest that history does involve doing research and in this way we could find out the '**HARD TRUTH**' (related to the facts that have happened during the course of history) which seems to be linked with the above words. Also related to this idea of hard truth is that school history has the potential of demonstrating fixed, agreed upon truths. In addition to this, Zen being a young South African seems to think that young people can contribute to making a difference by studying school history which can help them to understand why things are the way they are presently in South Africa.

Linked to the above is the profound phrase '**One step closer to freedom**' depicted in the collage. This could relate to the South African situation which is specific to the past history as viewed by Zen. However, as a born free it could mean that he is referring to experiencing freedom but hinting that it is not attained yet – 'closer'. These ideas could be justified by the participant placing in his collage, important Black South African leaders such as Mandela and Shaka who played significant roles in South Africa's past which has had a major influence on

what is happening in South Africa currently and in shaping the future as a nation. In addition to this, Zen seemed to think that the women also played a key role during South Africa's fight for freedom as he captures the image with the title **'10 000 women'** who were involved in the struggle for democracy. However, they are back-grounded as a group whereby he regards men as individuals with faces – but four important women in the image stand out – Rahima Moosa, Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph and Sophie Williams who were the leaders of the women's march. This depiction is probably relevant and meaningful to Zen, due to his study of school history at secondary level which covers topics such as these. CAPS, as stated in Chapter 2, is the current curriculum at schools in South Africa, has been portrayed by Zen as well as other collage-makers in their collages to convey their views of school history.

The words **'BIBLIOGRAPHIC', LITERATURE 'SOURCE-BASED QUESTIONS' and 'ESSAY QUESTIONS'** could all mean that history teaches Zen many valuable skills that could prepare him for later life and also that school history is a scholarly endeavour comprising a certain evidence and knowledge base – in other words he views the subject as dealing with a distinct body of knowledge. These words could also be meaningful to him in the sense that this is what he is exposed to in the study of history at secondary school level. Also the phrase **'I WANNA BE IN THE SPOTLIGHT'** suggests that he possibly views history in a positive light and by studying history he could develop skills and end up in the right place or position. It seems that Zen views himself as being part of making history or becoming a history maker and that school history is as much about him as it is about the meta-narrative. Linked to the above phrase is an image of the older generation and younger people in a social setting. Evidence exists in the image that the people depicted are of different races and gender. This gives the impression that they are carefree and experiencing the freedom to be together. Furthermore, it creates a sense that school history is a shared narrative. However, this tends to be underscored by the words young South Africans are making it about the youth – the future – in other words past and future in one image.

In addition, at the bottom of the collage in very small print Zen depicted the word **'Dynasty'**. This word for him depicts a foreign form of government which was the period of the **'Dynasties.'** He also depicted an emperor's dwelling and placed the words **'Centre for Interest'** at the top of this. This could indicate that Zen does acknowledge that school history is a global

study. However, because he portrays this idea at the bottom of the collage creates the impression that he chose to focus more on national history for the purposes of his collage.

Overall, Zen symbolically conveys his view of school history through the fragments he placed in his collage. Also this collage-maker made good use of most of the resources/media provided to convey his views of school history. He did not need to add any of his own insertion of words and symbols as some other collage-makers. Words, phrases and images are the main symbols he used to show that history as a school subject is a meaningful and beneficial subject for him. Furthermore, words and phrases are used more dominantly in Zen's collage to convey his views of school history. It is evident from his collage that he mostly focused on South African history which is probably for him important in a personal nationalistic manner. Another important observation is that most of his fragments tend to overlap which could be indicative that most of the events, people and aspects in his collage could be linked or overlapping could simply be for creative purposes.

The layout of Zen's collage seems to be carefully thought out in the sense that he places past events to one side while more current events/happenings are to the other side. This could mean a clear distinction in the sense that all revolves around the personal and national for him. In terms of colours, green and orange/red seem to be dominantly reflected in this participant's collage but the overall colours used in the background are more or less the colours depicted in the South African flag. This once again justified his focus on 'South Africa' in his collage. It can be concluded that Zen's collage is well laid out and sophisticated and he used the space available well.

Figure 5.2.1B: Collage Maker – Thabo



Thabo as with the previous collage-maker seemingly viewed school history mainly from a South African perspective because most of the images depicted in his collage relate to South Africa's past. Therefore, this participant tended to focus on national history which for him seems important, as a South African. Also some of the images used in Thabo's collage are similar to those Zen used in his collage such as the images of Mandela, Shaka, women and the flag. These images come from textbooks and were provided to them hence they appear in both collages. Interestingly, Thabo placed a map of the old South Africa of pre 1994 centrally in his collage and drew a heart on it. This could suggest his love for the country even though there was so much conflict and little freedom in the past. This can be confirmed by him placing the word 'WAR' and the image of Shaka depicted as a warrior above the map, showing that many battles had to be fought in South Africa in the past to get to where the country is at presently. Another striking feature depicted in the collage is the South African flag which he created and placed just below the map which is probably another indication that school history for him is mainly a study notational narrative about South Africa. Furthermore, the map and flag are national symbols and school history in this sense is probably important and needs to be upheld.



The map for Thabo could also symbolise the struggles that people experienced in the past and hence the design and colours of the flag helps remind people of where they have come from.

It is evident that Thabo learnt about South Africans' struggle for freedom in the past through school history because he placed a picture of Mandela and the leading women who protested against the apartheid laws. The picture of Mandela is also symbolic of the nation becoming free at last because the image depicts when he was finally being sworn in as the first black president of South Africa, after his long fight for freedom. Although, Thabo's collage mainly focused on South Africa, at the very bottom of the collage he pasted the word '**Holocaust**' which refers to the Nazi persecution of the Jews in Germany and other parts of Europe. This could indicate that he possibly linked the holocaust to the South African apartheid system in the past or he tried to demonstrate that a violent event that happened outside South Africa forms part of a study of school history. Thus, this could suggest that school history involves an international nature of struggles and not just a national study. Also at the very bottom of the collage he placed the word '**DOOMSDAY**' in big bold writing which could refer both to the horrific past of both Germany and South Africa and possible through the study of school history he got to understand these happenings. Thabo also placed the year 1949 under the word '**DOOMSDAY**' which could make reference to the dark days ahead because the National Party came into power around this period and legalised the policy of apartheid in South Africa.

Finally, at the bottom of his collage Thabo hand wrote '**I LOVE SA**'. What is striking about this depiction is that he did not actually write the word love but used the heart shape symbol to declare his emotions. Thus, all together Thabo has three hearts which he drew in his collage. In general terms the heart shape is an ideograph used to express the idea of the 'heart' in its symbolic sense as the centre of emotion, including affection and love. This could portray that Thabo clearly has a great love for South Africa and this love stems from the study of history as a school subject because this is where he learnt about the history of his country and possibly who he is as a South African.

Overall, Thabo conveyed his views of school history through the symbols he placed in his collage. The collage was dominated more by images as opposed to words and phrases. Thabo's

collage seemingly reflects that because he is South African his collage focuses mainly on South Africa's events and happenings. However, there is a hint that history is a global study because of the word 'Holocaust' which was placed at the bottom of the collage. Also the selection and placement of his fragments in his collage is unique to his views of school history and he tended to keep his collage simple. Another observation is that this collage-maker mainly used the textbook as a form of media to gather his fragments for his collage or hand written ones – this suggests that textbooks are closely associated with school history for Thabo.

**Figure 5.2.1C:** Collage Maker – Smanga



Smanga placed the word 'WORLD' and an image of the globe at the very top left of his collage and on the opposite side he placed the word Africa while towards the bottom centre he has the phrase 'It's our city'. This could suggest that he views school history as a study of understanding what is happening globally. This could be confirmed by some of the images such as the former Palestinian leader, 'Yasser Arafat' and one of a war situation from outside South Africa where people have been badly injured, being depicted in his collage. Also the

words **'attacks'** and **'protesters'** and a picture of an oriental looking child could justify this. Thus, Smanga seemed to view school history as being a study of global events and happenings because he does not give specific names of places and people. It can be suggested that he depicted both peaceful and violent protests in his collage to convey his views of school history. Hence, it can be concluded that Smanga tended to foreground the idea of people in his collage.

Another interesting observation in Smanga's collage was that the African continent on the globe is facing forward which could suggest that the study of Africa is important to him since he is an African. He also seemed to foreground the idea of race and apartheid in South Africa in his collage. This idea was depicted through his choice of images, in particular the image of three young males with a Black person in the middle. This creates the impression that he understood that the apartheid policy was one dealing with the separation of races. Through his depictions it seems that Smanga has learnt much about South Africa's past through school history. This is evident by the words and phrases he placed in his collage.

Another link to apartheid is the image of Mandela with the year 1994, and the phrase **'20 Years of Freedom'** which could refer to the fact that Mandela was instrumental in bringing about freedom to the nation. Hence, the above phrase could confirm that Smanga linked the idea of freedom and democracy to Mandela. In addition to this, the words **'APARTHEID'** and **'RACE'** with an image of young people of different race groups being together is very symbolic in contrasting the past to the present in South Africa. Furthermore, the words **'HOLIDAYS'** and **'Heritage'** seem to be meaningful for Smanga. The reason for this could be because South Africans get to understand the celebration of certain holidays today and how these are linked to what happened in the past and therefore learn to appreciate the idea of heritage. Finally, at the end of the collage Smanga placed the phrase **'It's Our City, It starts with us.'** This suggests that this collage-maker believes that school history teaches him to take democratic/participatory responsibility and make a difference in his nation as a citizen. Furthermore, he seems to be personalising what school history means to him.

Overall Smanga's collage was very well laid out and sophisticatedly done and he tried to convey his views of school history in a unique manner through the use of words, phrases and



images. Also he chose different types of resources/media to construct his collage. These resources included cardboard, fabric, magazines and newspapers. He did not need to inscribe any of his own writings or images as he was able to convey his view of history by using the resources provided and used the space available well. Interestingly, he seemed to place his fragments such that the right side seemingly focused on South Africa and the left on international affairs.

**Figure 5.2.1D: Collage Maker – Carmen**



Significantly, at the centre of her collage Carmen makes reference to two major political parties in South Africa. The two parties she depicts are the African National Congress (ANC) and the Democratic Alliance (DA) which are parties that have been in existence over a long period of time. Also there has been competition and conflict between these two major political parties for power in South Africa. Thus, this could suggest that this participant seems to view history at school as being related to party political struggles. Furthermore, the participant could be referring to the idea that history also deals with the politics of the country.

This idea of political struggles can be justified by the image placed above the parties showing the ‘Rivonia Treason Trial of 1956’ which was a major political event during the apartheid era. In addition, through the image of the ‘treason trial’ she depicted her understanding of the apartheid era of the past. Also significant is the central position in which Carmen placed these two parties in her collage which creates the impression that all other aspects are linked to them. Even the phrase ‘**20 Years of freedom**’ is linked to the whole idea of the fight for freedom which eventually led to a democracy in South Africa. Hence, the overlapping of her fragments in her collage also seems to reinforce this idea of linking of events/happenings in which political parties were involved in some way.

In addition, linked to the idea of politics is that Carmen also depicted the word ‘**LEADERS**’ which suggests that leaders are also affiliated to political parties. Also ‘**LEADERS**’ are significantly close to the treason trialists of which many of these men became leaders in the political arena after South Africa became a democracy. Moreover, Carmen’s intention of placing this word ‘leaders’ could be to indicate that school history teaches one about leaders and how they rule and the impact they make in the political arena. Carmen could possibly be highlighting the crucial role leader’s play in nations, even today. Also the word ‘language’ seems to be linked to the treason trialists and the political parties which almost creates the impression that even though people literally spoke a different language yet they spoke the same language when it came to fighting for freedom during the apartheid era.

Another distinct feature in Carmen’s collage is the many references to the concept war and violence. This is depicted through the image of war and soldiers firing artillery pieces. These images are supported by the words ‘**WAR, MARCH, SOLDIERS, HECTIC**’ that Carmen depicted in her collage. She probably associates the study of history as being related to a study of conflict situations. Another word that is high-lighted in her collage is the word ‘**HERITAGE**’ which she also seems to link to school history, since most of her depictions relate to our heritage.

However, even though Carmen focused to a great extent on local history as in South African politics she clearly viewed school history as a study of events and happenings around the world.

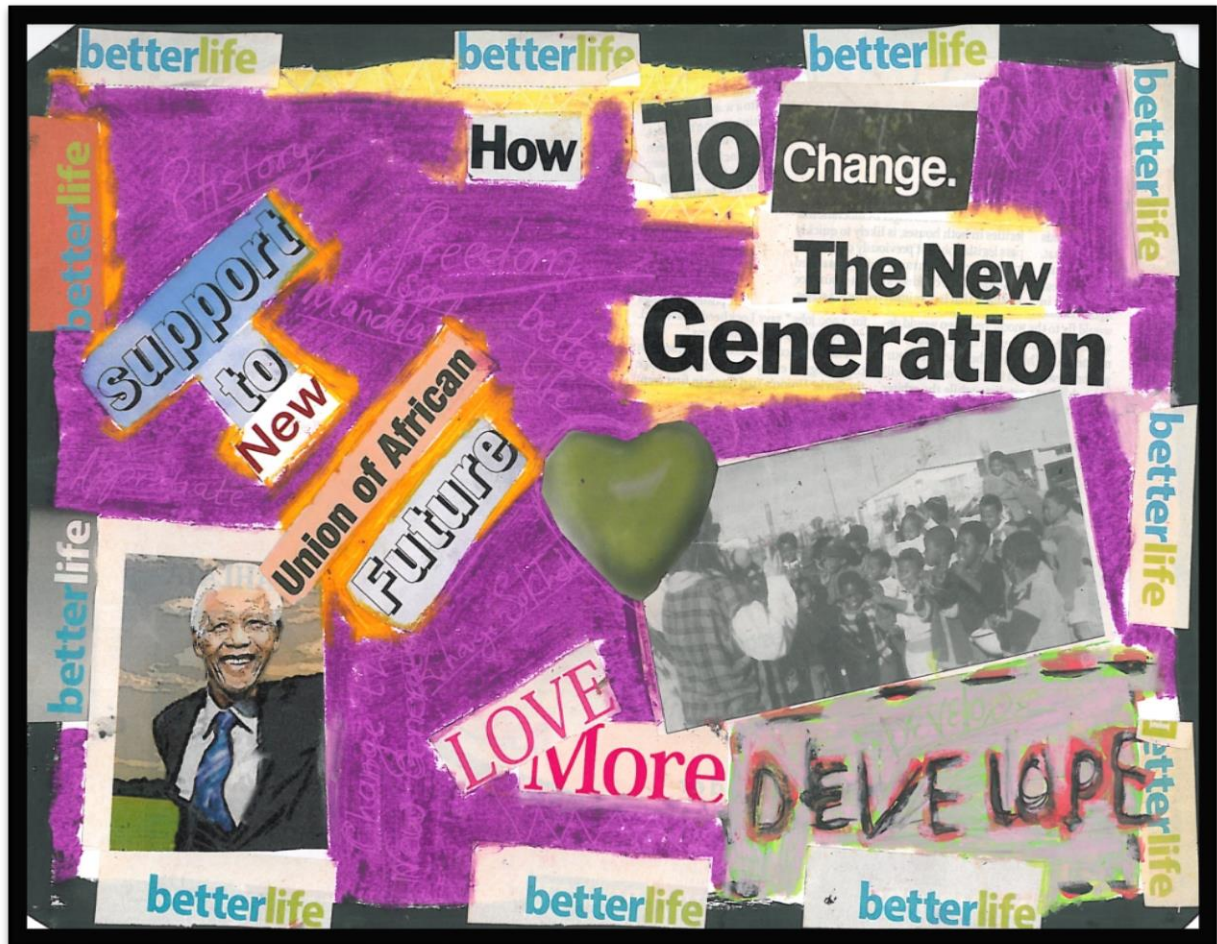
This is evident from the images of the flags of different countries depicted to the left in her collage. Also the word ‘UNIVERSAL’ at the far right of her collage could justify this thought, in the sense that universal implies relating to or done by all people in the world or in a particular group.

Overall, Carmen laid out her fragments in her collage to emphasise the importance of certain aspects that define her view of school history. For example, the fact that she placed the flags of different nations in a strategic position in her collage could mean that she wanted to convey the idea that school history is not just a study of South Africa but a global study. Carmen’s collage is sophisticated and well-constructed and she used the available space provided, well. Carmen used very bright distinct colours in her collage which seems representative of the South African flag colours. Carmen used the resources/media provided to convey her views of school history. The resources she selected were textbooks, magazines, newspapers and fabric. She did not insert any of her own writings and images which indicate she only used the resources provided. This creates the impression that it is not really about her views as such, but maybe school history did not make her brave enough to express herself.

From the above it can be concluded that most of the collage-makers from ‘Indian Ocean Secondary School’ tended to lean on national history. This, I thought was mainly because all participants were South African, hence they chose to focus on local history. However, there was some indication in the collages that history involves a global study. Collages for this chapter were analysed individually as the collage-makers had their own unique idea of how they view history as a subject at secondary school level. ‘Indian Ocean Secondary School’ collages reveal that there were some common themes and patterns that emerged from the individual analysis of the collages. These include the idea that in school history we study many wars and conflict, the idea of history being a study of the past, present and future as well as historical concepts related to apartheid was clearly evident as important topics in the study of school history. Other common depictions in the collages included the idea of powerful Black men of the past, the younger generation, and school history being about politics. Most of the collage-makers used the colours representative of South Africa and depicted their love for South Africa through appropriate symbols.

## 5.2.2 Arctic Ocean High School

Figure 5.2.2A: Collage Maker – Zama



The first and most striking thing about Zama's collage is that all along the sides are the words 'betterlife' which forms a border for her collage. This kind of border could be powerful in the sense that it implies keeping something in and other features out. Also it can be interpreted that this collage-maker tends to view a study of school history as leading to a better life or at least holds the promise for it. In other words, better life in the sense that certain ideas and concepts need to be developed to achieve this better life and history as a field of study can offer that. This is confirmed with what she places within the borders of the 'better life' in her collage. Within the borders she obviously links the subject history to her country South Africa and an understanding of its past. This is evident in the words 'change, freedom, future, past, Mandela' which she hand wrote on her collage. Also these words are very faint which could imply that for her school history does not teach these aspects fully. In addition, it could mean that this is the background of school history, hence it being written faintly and almost hidden.

Furthermore, Zama seems to imply that she understood the difficulties that were experienced in the past, in South Africa and now we have a better life compared to the past.

Also quite profound and it tends to stand out is the phrase situated towards the top right of Zama's collage '**How to change, The New Generation.**' This suggests for her that history as a school subject has the potential to change the youth and make South Africa a better place. This phrase is also supported by an image of African children in a school setting and probably learning about school history. Underpinned to the image is the word 'develope' which seems to be purposefully mis-spelt which could be deeply symbolic in meaning. This wrong spelling could probably imply something of what school history should teach, but is not doing.

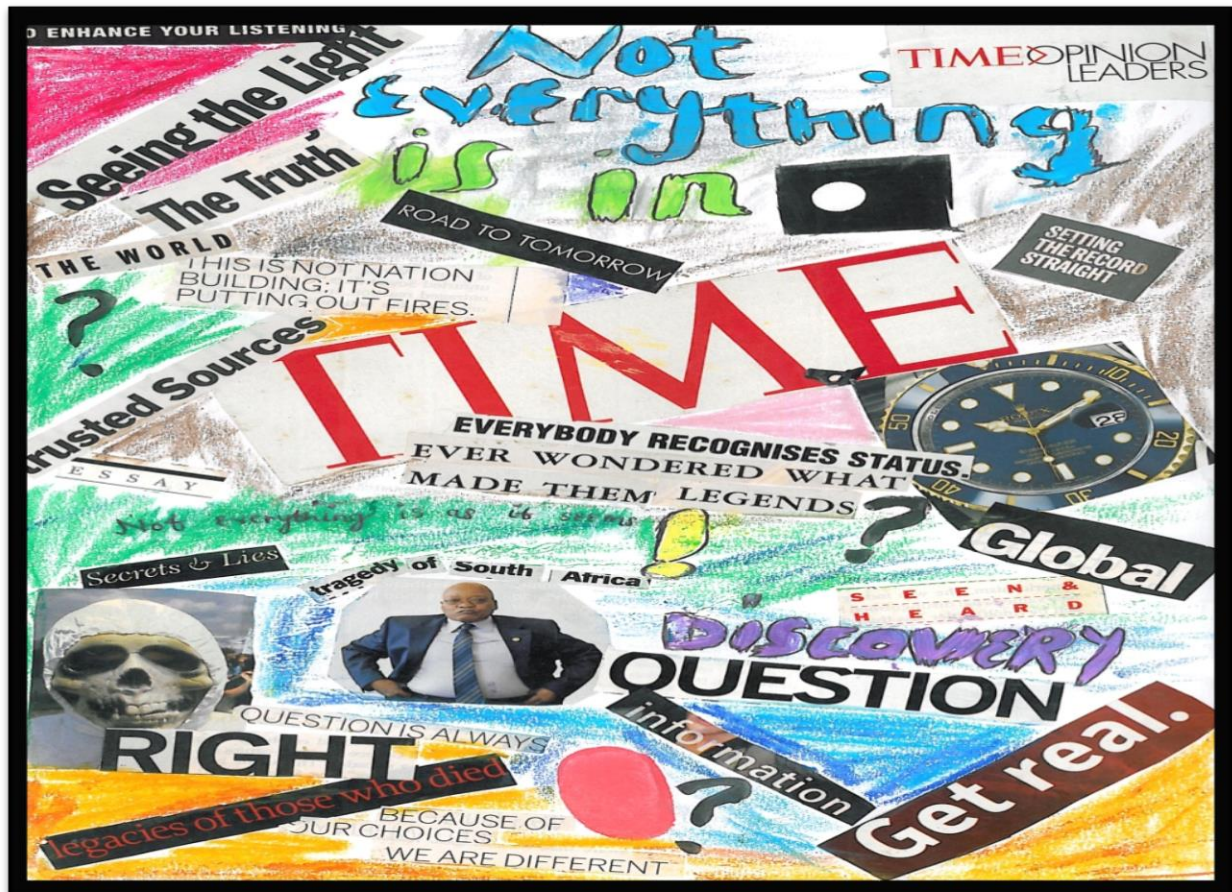
The image of Mandela with a smile on his face in the collage could mean that he is finally relieved that the long struggle for freedom in South Africa is over. This could be supported by the phrase "support to new Union of African Future" and the word 'better life' linked to the image of Mandela. The heart at the centre of the collage could symbolically mean that Zama loves history and understands the value it has for young people. The position of the heart also indicates that all other ideas in the collage can be linked and relate to the symbolism of the heart. For example, in order to change South Africans' need to develop a love for their country and experience the new without making judgments through a study of school history. This could be supported by the phrases, '**how to change and support to new**'. The idea of love creates the impression that people need to love history more and love each other more through school history. These ideas could be justified by the words '**LOVE MORE**' which is placed just beneath the heart.

Another distinct observation is the colour purple which dominates Zama's collage. This colour obviously symbolises something significant for her regarding the subject history. In other words, Zama personalised the use of this colour in her collage and some of reasons for her using the colour will be disclosed in the second level of analysis in Chapter 6. Furthermore, she also created a sort of black border around her collage. This black border suggests in a sense that it represented Black power and authority as a political statement which is associated with some of her ideas and Mandela, within its borders. Overall, Zama's collage was very simply



laid out with more words than images and very few people were depicted but it conveyed a powerful view of history as a school subject. Zama's collage was uniquely constructed to demonstrate that for her school history is a powerful tool.

Figure 5.2.2 B: Collage Maker– Zinhle



The concept time seems to stand out in Zinhle's collage. The word 'TIME' is depicted centrally in bold as well as in smaller font at the top right of the collage. Also the idea of time is depicted in the form of an image of a watch situated on the right middle area of the collage. Thus, the idea of time has been depicted in three different places in the collage which gives the impression that Zinhle views the concept of time as important in the study of school history. This participant seems to suggest that school history takes her back in time to understand the past so that she can understand the present and move into the future.

Also depicted in Zinhle's collage is the phrase '**Not Everything is in (she creatively put a black and white piece of material to stand for) black and white**' suggests that maybe school history helps one to search for the truth. In this regard, she could be referring to the whole idea of school history as not just relying on one source to determine the truth but to study various sources to understand events/happenings. This is in line with the requirements for school history, according to CAPS. Furthermore, this idea of truth can be justified by the phrases she uses '**setting the record straight**' and '**Not Everything is as it seems**' and '**Secrets & Lies**' in her collage. Also these phrases could be referring to how school history sometimes does not reveal the whole truth about certain events/happenings. In this regard, maybe the idea of the hidden curriculum in school history could be depicted through these phrases.

In addition, the depiction of the words '**DISCOVERY**' and '**QUESTION**' in Zinhle's collage could suggest that school history means trying to discover the truth through research, asking questions and debates. Hence, she confirms these thoughts by placing question marks in strategic places in her collage which could mean that she views history as a subject with many questions and strong views. She also relates school history to the words '**information,**' '**trusted Sources**', and '**ESSAY**' which are probably valuable ways of assessing in school history and helps her to understand the topics studied in school history. This ties in with CAPS as sources and essays are the recommended methods of assessing school history. Overall, Zinhle seems to convey a range of pedagogical and skills-based history related aspects, through her depictions.

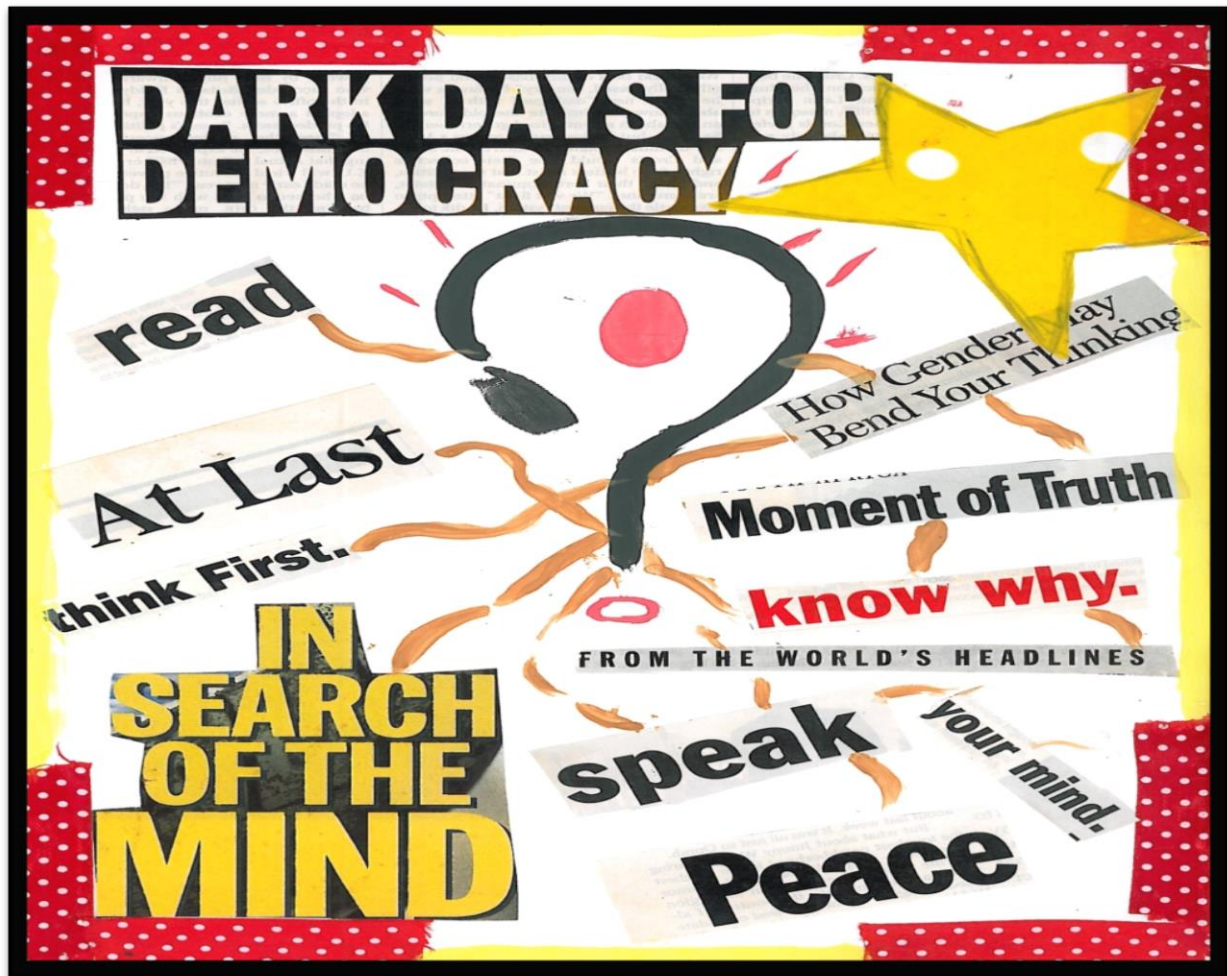
The phrases '**Get real**', '**Legacies of those who died**' and '**Ever wondered what made them legends**' also have deep symbolic meaning in Zinhle's collage. Legacy in a general sense refers to life and learning from the past, living in the present, and building for the future. Thus, these phrases could be depicted by Zinhle to indicate the many struggles that people in the past experienced to create a better future. This idea could also be justified by the phrases '**BECAUSE OF OUR CHOICES WE ARE DIFFERENT**' and '**Road to Democracy**'. This implies that she thinks that school history can help us to make better choices and decisions as citizens for the future.

Another strong depiction in Zinhle's collage was the president of South Africa, Jacob Zuma. The image depicts Zuma in a very aggressive stance (hands on hips) with the phrase '**tragedy of South Africa**' above him. This creates the impression that Zinhle also seems to understand leaders of the country and why they behave in certain ways. This could imply that she seems familiar with the politics of the country. This depiction will be explained again in Chapter 6 at the second level of analysis.

Overall, Zinhle's collage has many different views of her idea of what history means to her. In other words, this is an extremely rich original collage. Original in the sense that she took the time to hand write certain words when the collage making resources provided were viewed as not sufficient. Hence, this creates the impression that she wanted to be specific about her views of school history. Also some of Zinhle's fragments in her collage tend to overlap creating the impression that her thoughts and ideas regarding school history tend to be linked but this overlapping may just be done for creative purposes. Another observation was that she used specific colours in certain places in her collage. The idea behind using these colours will probably be explained in Chapter 6 during level two analysis. Zinhle's views of school history are unique and tend to suggest that she has benefited from doing the subject but has many questions about it.



Figure 5.2.2C: Collage Maker - Bonga



The most striking thing about Bonga's collage is a big question mark at the centre which could suggest that history as a subject is all about questions for this participant. This can be justified by some of the words that he seemed to link to this question mark. Firstly, he has the word 'read' which could mean that he views the study of history as involving much reading in order to understand historical concepts. The phrase 'IN SEARCH OF THE MIND' could be linked to this because through reading and studying school history, it can open your mind to many new things. Other words and phrases linked to the question mark are also significant aspects linked to Bonga's view of school history. The depiction of these words and phrases, as with the previous participant, seems to convey a range of pedagogical and skills-based history related aspects.

However, the idea of depicting the question mark could also be linked to other aspects as for example, some of the topics that are studied could be questionable. The red dot at the centre of the question mark could in fact depict the shadow of the question mark which could imply that some topics in school history are foregrounded whilst other aspects are hidden and not taught. In addition to this, the brown roots/branches that are linked to the question mark could possibly speak of our roots as South Africans.

Also the phrase '**GENDER MAY BEND YOUR THINKING**' makes a powerful suggestion about what school history should provide, which is a gender sensitive perspective or the reality of gender. Furthermore, it can imply that males and females think differently and this could be understood through a study of school history for this collage-maker which is brought about by the structural nature of the subject. The words '**think first**' may be linked to '**Moment of Truth**' in the sense that in school history you have to study and think before you understand the happenings of the past and the present. History is not just local but about what is happening around the world. This is evident by Bonga placing the phrase '**from the world's headlines**' in his collage. However, the above phrase could also imply the role of media and school history in that headline issues are what are studied.

A very distinct feature of Bonga's collage is at the top he has the phrase '**DARK DAYS FOR DEMOCRACY**' which could probably make reference to how through the study of school history he learnt that there is very little peace even in democratic nations, due to conflict and strife. He could also be referring to the South African situation where for some people little has changed even though we are now in a democracy. Bonga seems to relate school history to the contemporary political scene and affords him the opportunity to think critically about historical aspects.

Bonga's collage also seems to convey the idea that school history for him helps him to verbally communicate aspects. This idea is justified by the phrase '**In search of the mind**', '**speaking your mind**', '**think first**' and '**know why**' depicted in Bonga's collage. Furthermore, Bonga could be implying that school history is probably about being able to ask questions and debate issues to understand how events/happenings really took place. Thus, through the words and phrases

he depicts in his collage he could be suggesting that by doing school history you get to learn and understand so much more than just studying the content knowledge.

Another striking feature of Bonga's collage is the 'colourful red corner holders' and the yellow frame. In fact, the colours red, gold and black seemed to dominate Bonga's collage and probably had some sort of symbolic meaning for him. It could be suggested that these colours are generally seen as rich colours and maybe Bonga was implying that South Africa has a rich history. However, these colours and design could have been depicted for a specific reason but it could also be done for creative purposes. Another meaningful symbol which stands out in this collage is the 'gold star' at the top right of the collage could. This could probably be interpreted as a brighter future for the nation.

A unique aspect of Bonga's collage is that there is a total absence of human figures which was depicted in almost all the other collages. Thus, it seems that Bonga focused mainly on the conceptual and symbolic nature of school history in his collage because he probably felt that in this way other aspects in school history could be understood better. Bonga focused on using basic resources such as magazines, colours and coloured fabric to convey his views of school history.

Overall, Bonga's collage was unique in that he did not use many images to define how he views history as a school subject. Instead he chose to use words and symbols to convey his views of the subject. Also his collage has an original touch to it in that he drew the question mark and the so-called brown roots that he referred to in his collage. Also he used fabric and creatively shaped it into a star which he placed at the top right of his collage. This implied that he created some of his own symbols to effectively convey his personal views of school history.

Figure 5.2.2D: Collage Maker - Natasha



The most striking thing about Natasha's collage is the 'red border' and the 'red bow' at the top left hand corner. Also the collage has a very neat structured and organised appearance. It almost looks like a parcel/gift that needs to be opened. This could suggest that the border helps to explain that most of the aspects depicted within the borders are linked together and are important in conveying this collage-maker's view of school history. It gives the impression that all the events/happenings should be kept inside or stay wrapped up. This thought could be related to the idea that school history needs to open up certain topics and not restrict certain aspects. Furthermore, the borders could further justify this thought of school history being restrictive in the sense you only learn about certain topics/aspects. Also symbolic is the 'red bow' in the left hand corner which implies that if the bow is untied everything inside the borders will be opened-up, and there will probably be a better understanding of the aspects taught in school history. However, the borders and bow could just be depicted for creative purposes.

Natasha seems to view school history as related to what is happening around the world and not just local affairs. This can be justified by the phrase '**GAZA, It's not about Religion, It's about Humanity**' and an image of Hitler and conflict in other nations. The fact that she hand wrote the above phrase indicates that she was determined to make her view heard even though

she could not find the words she needed from the resources provided. Also a map of Israel has been placed in the collage. The word 'Gaza' is very pronounced and situated in a very eye-catching spot which tends to grab the attention of the reader suggesting that she possible views school history as valuable in understanding what is happening internationally. She probably depicted this topic in particular because she studied it at school level and has a good understanding of it.

At the very top of the collage Natasha has the words '**MAKING HISTORY**' and a picture of Mandela, which could suggest that Natasha demonstrates that Mandela played a major role in history by his great doings. The image of the 'Treason Trial' also confirms Mandela's and other political leaders' struggles and sacrifices as they were directly involved in this major event during the apartheid struggle. Also the phrase '**LEAVE A LEGACY OF HOPE**' that is placed next to the image of Mandela could be an indication that South Africans need to be inspired and motivated by this great historical figure and follow in his footsteps. This is closely linked to the idea that the young people can make a difference because the old generation are set in their ways. Therefore, the young people must start '**speaking out**' and '**Make yourself heard**' as stated in the collage. An analysis of all these depictions in Natasha's collage indicate that she implies that all the above words and phrases are linked and connected and conveys her view of school history. Also it seems that she views school history as having the ability to allow her voice to be heard for social justice issues and political activism for what is fair. Natasha also views the nature of history as being related to a study of great men as depicted through the images of Mandela, Hitler and the fact that she mentions Ghandi. Another powerful phrase related to the young is the one by Mahatma Ghandi, '**Be the change you want to see in the world**'. Natasha suggests that this can happen through a study of school history. Natasha's depictions in her collage creates the impression that she has a very idealistic view which is what school history can give.

This collage-maker also seems to link school history with the study of conflict, struggles and wars fought in the past. In fact, some are still continuing in the present (Gaza) which could indicate that she is trying to say that history helps us to understand the past and the present and why certain happenings have taken place and are taking place. Through the study of history we can understand and strive for '**Justice for All**' as suggested in the collage.

Overall, Natasha has presented her views of history in her own unique manner through the use of certain words and images she placed in her collage. She used mainly newspapers and magazines to select her fragments. A revelation by means of analysis is that she inserted her own writing to depict certain ideas. This meant that the resources provided tended to be insufficient to convey her views of school history, thus she creatively hand wrote some of the ideas she thought would help convey her views on school history. Natasha also deliberately placed some of her fragments at different angles which indicates she seemed to fill up the spaces neatly which could imply that school history is about struggles. This could be justified by the word '**STRUGGLE**' she depicted at the bottom end of her collage which creates the sense that this is her final view about school history. In addition, she used a red ribbon as a border which is an intense colour and can be associated with her strong, idealistic view of school history. Hence, the colour red is symbolic in conveying her views of school history. In other words the red could stand for her love and passion for history as a school subject or it could have been used purely for decorative purposes.

It can be concluded that collage makers from 'Arctic Ocean High School' constructed powerful collages to convey their views of school history. These participants selected symbols in the form of images, words and phrases to express how they view and experience history as a subject at secondary school level. Another observation about these collages was that they did not depict many human beings in their collages. In fact, what seemed to be a common trend among these collage-makers was that they used more words and phrases instead of images. Also three out of the four participants inserted their own hand written words in their collages to convey their views of school history. This implied that the resources provided were not sufficient for some collage-makers as they had to resort to hand writing specific words/phrases that they felt were necessary to convey their views. The colours selected by the collage makers for their collages were very symbolic and meaningful to them to express their views of school history. 'Arctic Ocean High School' collages were analysed individually because participants had their own unique way of what history means to them, however some common patterns and themes did arise. These include the idea of focusing on national history but they also indicated to a certain extent in their collages that the study of history at secondary school level is a global one. Another common depiction in the collages was the idea of school history being a study of the past struggles of South Africa. Also the idea of the future, better life, change and development seemed to be reflective in most collages. In addition, the pedagogical and conceptual nature of



school history emerged strongly from most collages. Other common depictions included big political leaders, younger generation and a love for the subject. Most participants seemingly personalised their views of school history. Hence, collage-makers were able to symbolically convey their views of school history through the construction of their collages.

### 5.2.3 Atlantic Ocean High School

Figure 5.2.3A: Collage Maker – Kimone



At the top of her collage Kimone placed a key question, which reads: ‘What is History? Thereafter, she placed a sub-key question which reads: “What does it mean?” This is as according to the history CAPS curriculum for the secondary phase of schooling. During this phase learners are expected to work with a key question for every topic studied, hence Kimone seems to view key questions as important in the study of school history. Directly under the key and sub-key question she placed the word ‘power’ which could suggest that school history for

her is a powerful tool to understand events/happenings of the past or maybe she was implying that history in itself is partly about power.

Also, Kimone seemed to regard school history as a study of the world. This is justified by the depiction of some of her words in her collage which make reference to different countries such as Europe, South Africa, International and Ancient history. In addition, she depicts an image of a world event as in 'World War II' and appropriately associates this event with an international political leader, Hitler and some historical concepts. Thus, Kimone focuses on both local and international history as being important in the study of school history.

As with many other collages the depiction of 'Big men' is evident in this collage meaning that Kimone focused on historical leaders such as Mandela, Shaka and Hitler. To add to this, she also depicted a male soldier at the top right of her collage who is seemingly ready for battle. Lower down at the bottom right she also depicts a male who seems to be harvesting/working the fields. Thus, the fact that she depicts all male figures creates the impression that probably gender plays a role in school history to a certain extent.

In addition, Kimone seems to relate school history to a study of conflict and struggles which links to war-like situations. This is evident in the choice of military/violence related words that she depicts in her collage in different places, such as '**Weapons, peace agreement, Killed, Torture, Dark**' and an image of a soldier. Also other words that can be linked to war and conflict are '**rebellion and Genocide**'. Genocide is a strong word that implies deliberate or mass killings which creates the image that Kimone views school history as focusing largely on violence and war. Linked to the idea of war was the depiction of the Zulu King, Shaka, who she seemingly associated with violence and wars as he is depicted as a warrior ready for battle.

The phrase '**THE END**' depicted centrally could be making reference to the end of apartheid in South Africa, because just under this she placed the words, '**NEW SOUTH AFRICAN**' and an image of Mandela. Also '**National Women's Day Celebration**' suggests that we are now celebrating and remembering those who have fought for freedom in South Africa. Another



distinct observation is that she probably thinks that school history also deals with the ‘**economy**’. This can be justified with the image she places just beneath the word economy of a seemingly poverty stricken area. This idea of school history being linked to economics is different and quite refreshing in a sense because school history and politics are seen as synonymous.

In addition, on close analysis of Kimone’s collage it can be observed that certain phrases depicted at the bottom left seem to have a religious connotation attached to them. These phrases **“Days of judgement/ final days/the end/A step closer to Jesus”** link up to the crucifixion of Jesus. In other words, in biblical terms Jesus was brutally killed, hence the linking of violence. Also specifically the phrase ‘A step closer to Jesus’ could imply through violence and conflict many innocent people’s lives end in death.

Two confusing words depicted in this collage are **‘Moon’** and **‘Mars’**. However, the word **‘Mars’** is generally associated with the fourth planet, its red colour is reminiscent of blood. Furthermore, the word ‘Mars’ is also associated with the Greek and Roman God of war. Hence, maybe Kimone depicted these words to justify her idea of school history being a study of war and violence. However, Kimone could have had some other idea for placing these words in her collage. Kimone’s collage also depicts the idea of **‘Source-based questions and Essay questions’** which is in line with the CAPS form of testing secondary school history. Thus, this collage-maker seems to be of the opinion that school history is strongly linked to the pedagogical idea.

Overall, Kimone’s collage was a unique way of demonstrating how she views school history at secondary level. The layout of her collage is also unique in that she tended to link events together by placing her fragments close together. In addition, the layout of Kimone’s collage is neat and well aligned but on the odd occasion not neat and symmetric. In terms of colour, Kimone chose yellow as a background to her collage which could symbolise to attract the attention of the person studying her collage since the colour yellow is very bright and striking. In addition to this colour, red was another dominant colour used. This colour for Kimone could have been representative of her love and passion for the subject or it could represent the idea



At the top of the collage Mandisa placed the phrase **‘Dig that history!’** The word dig is generally used as a slang for the word ‘like’. Often the word is used by younger people to really emphasise how they like or enjoy something or a person. Hence, this word was probably depicted by Mandisa to demonstrate her strong feelings of liking school history. This idea of liking school history could also be justified by the word **‘JOY’** depicted towards the middle left. This word strengthens the idea of liking the subject by indicating that she possibly also enjoys studying school history. A further symbolic depiction in her collage related to the idea of like and enjoy was the depiction of the number 1 on the left middle side of the collage. Generally, when people speak of a number 1 it refers to something or someone being good or outstanding, similarly Mandisa seems to view school history as her number 1 subject.

Another depiction at the top of Mandisa’s collage which stands out is an image of a smiling Mandela, F.W. De Klerk and Thabo Mbeki. The expressions on their faces seem to convey their emotions about some major political event. These three men played key roles in South Africa’s negotiation process and were the first leaders of a democratic South Africa in 1994. This depiction of the three leaders is symbolic in that it highlights the role of big men and political history. Mandisa depicts many people in different places in her collage, which gives the impression that she views school history as a study of people. However, the people in her collage all seem to be ordinary people in groups which could speak of history being about people in a collective manner and working together. A further distinct depiction of an image of a black hand and a white hand clasped could suggest that South Africa is now a united nation but the sharp finger tips on the hand could be representative of conflict before people got to this stage. Also a small image of different race groups together which is attached to the clasped hands seems to justify democracy in our nation.

Mandisa’s depiction of an image of a watch centrally in her collage symbolises the concept that school history can be related to a study of time. Maybe she was referring to history being a study of the past, present and future. Her depictions in her collage seem to convey the idea of history being related to the past, present and future. This could be justified by the word **‘TIME’** which is depicted twice at the bottom left of her collage. The image of a ‘winding road’ could suggest that the struggles of the past were a long, tiring journey. A journey refers to going somewhere but Mandisa used the word journey in her collage to probably symbolically

associate it with the journey of life instead. Probably her idea of journey related to the how many people experienced many struggles in the past to achieve freedom for the nation. Hence, she depicted this in the form of a ‘winding road’ which was quite appropriate and significant in conveying her views of school history.

The phrase ‘**The New Agenda**’ and a microphone under it could refer to people who now have a voice and can speak out and therefore the words ‘**New Generation History**’ under the microphone could mean that the younger generation must speak out and act. At the end of the collage is a symbolic picture of the sunrise and the words ‘**The Moment**’ which suggest for Mandisa South Africans are now in a good place and have a better future ahead. Also the idea of the sun shining bright could be reflective of a brighter future.

Overall, Mandisa has uniquely and creatively depicted her view of school history in her collage through words and images and her layout. The colour green that she chose for her background symbolises nature and seems to reflect for her a relaxing feeling now that South Africa is a democracy. This can be confirmed by the words ‘bigger & better’ which she places at the end of her collage. Furthermore, the above phrase could be linked to how Mandisa feels about the future. Another distinct observation is that Mandisa tends to focus mainly on national history in the sense that her depictions centre on South African aspects in her collage. This could imply that because she is South African she felt its history is most important to her.

Figure 5.2.3C: Collage Maker– Laila



First and foremost Laila’s collage interestingly has a background made up of all kinds of natural landscapes which gives a very abstract impression. Laila probably depicted this background with the intention of demonstrating something of South Africa’s rich history symbolically. This for her could be a way to visually depict that South Africa’s background is important in the study of school history. This idea is further justified by the word ‘Background’ with the South African map below the word, depicted in her collage. The word ‘**BACKGROUND**’ as well as the map also makes reference to our ‘heritage’ as South Africans. Linked to this, is the idea of ‘**Remembrance**’ which is also depicted in her collage. Furthermore, the word ‘Remembrance’ could be related to all the happenings of the past and how they have impacted on the present and probably on the future. Hence, the word ‘**Future**’ could be further related to this trend. Another distinct observation is that Laila’s collage is totally devoid of people which gives the sense that she does not seem to believe that history involves a study of people.

Thus, this collage-maker seemed to focus on South African history. This is further evident from the map she placed of Africa at the centre of her collage. Linked to this thinking is the South African flag that is situated close to the map. Laila’s central positioning of these important symbols of South Africa creates the impression that her focus in her collage was on her own

country's history. Thus, for her school history is about a nationalist narrative, which she probably thought was more pertinent to her to convey her views of school history symbolically.

The phrase '**The plain truth**' could suggest that school history for Laila is based on the truth and she probably does not believe that history is about asking questions and investigating things to find out the truth. If this is the case then Laila seems to have a narrow view of school history and does not think that school history is a study about many perspectives. This could suggest that her take of the subject history comes from a different slant. She seems to imply that history is one dimensional and not made up of different perspectives. This idea can also be linked to other words in her collage such as 'remembrance and set free,' which creates the impression that school history is a study of fixed-truths. This thinking is very different in comparison to the other collage-makers who mostly indicated that history comprises of different perspectives.

It seems that the word '**Artist**' for the participant is related to school history in some way. Laila probably tried to convey her personal view that through art a historical message can be conveyed with a strong symbolic meaning. This idea of art being related to history is also evident from her depiction of the background of her collage as mentioned above.

Laila placed the phrases '**SET FREE**' and '**to be free**' in her collage which suggests that she could be implying that previously South Africa was not a free nation because of apartheid but now people are free and united. This can be confirmed by her putting '**NEW South African**' in her collage. Therefore, for Laila it seems that conceptually school history is about freedom and possibly political liberty and a fixed truth. Also reference to '**YOUNG PEOPLE**' could mean that young people in South Africa are playing a role in the politics of the country. The phrase '**Vocal Witness**' could relate to people speaking out to make a difference. Again it can be implied that conceptually school history is about the younger generation. Hence, it can be suggested at this point that even though Laila's collage does not have any direct representation of people she does hint that people play a role in school history through the words she depicts in her collage, but they are obviously faceless.



Laila’s selection of the words and images for her collage speaks of a very powerful message of her views of school history. The layout of her collage is simple yet creative. This collage-maker used different angles to place some of her words depicted in her collage. However, this was probably done mainly for creative purposes and not for any specific reason. Laila used mainly magazines and cardboard as resources to construct her collage. She placed yellow borders in two strategic points in her collage which could symbolize a certain view of the subject history as well as it being an attractive or maybe a colourful subject to study. Also the yellow borders seem to hold and link all her ideas of school history within the borders.

Figure 5.2.3D: Collage Maker – Nicole



Nicole’s collage is dominated by the idea of war and violence. This is evident from the words she depicts in her collage which are: ‘**Tales of War**’, **Death**, **Deadly Connections**, **War Wounds**’. These words are all related to war and violence in some way. It seems that this collage-maker relates school history to the wars that were fought in the world in general because she does not make reference to any particular war fought. This could be justified by the unknown man she depicts at the top right of her collage with writings on his face and hands.

Although the writings are not clear, the places Haiti and Iran are clearly visible hence supporting the idea above of wars fought in different parts of the world. This idea is further supported by the depictions of the words '**Global**' and '**World**'. Therefore, Nicole seemingly focuses on school history being a study of the world and not just a national study.

Interestingly, Nicole places all these words related to war on red cardboard which could suggest that during war situations there was much blood-shed and anger expressed, hence the colour red. In addition to this, thinking the image of dead bodies lying along what seems like the side of a road is symbolic of the wars and conflict that Nicole suggests through her collage. The phrase 'The Lessons' at the top right of the collage stands out because of the position it is facing, that is downwards which creates the impression that war and violence pull a country down and it takes a long time for the nation to heal and recover the losses suffered, hence the phrase '**The Lesson**'. In addition, the phrase 'The Lesson' could make reference to the mistakes made during war situations and the lessons one can learn from it for the future.

Another distinct feature of the collage is the phrase '**Suffer the children**' with a picture of a person which shows pain and suffering in his eyes. This could mean that Nicole views school history as teaching us about people's hurt, pain and suffering. In fact, there is a small image of a weapon next to the person depicted with pain and suffering which could demonstrate the idea of how long people take to heal from these painful situations. It also implies how some people do not heal and eventually destroy themselves completely as in taking their own lives. Another observation related to this was the man at the top of the collage with a variety of writings on him once again depicts how sometimes the ordinary people of a country have to suffer because of unstable political situations.

Another distinct depiction in Nicole's collage is a hand which she coloured in on her own with different colours. The hand could be symbolic of the different races that have united in South Africa after apartheid. This can be confirmed by the phrase '**It Always Takes Longer Than You Think**' because it took a long time for South Africans to unite. Furthermore, this phrase could be strongly related to the idea of time in school history. Nicole also placed the word '**TIME**' in her collage which suggests that she perceives history to be a study over time as in



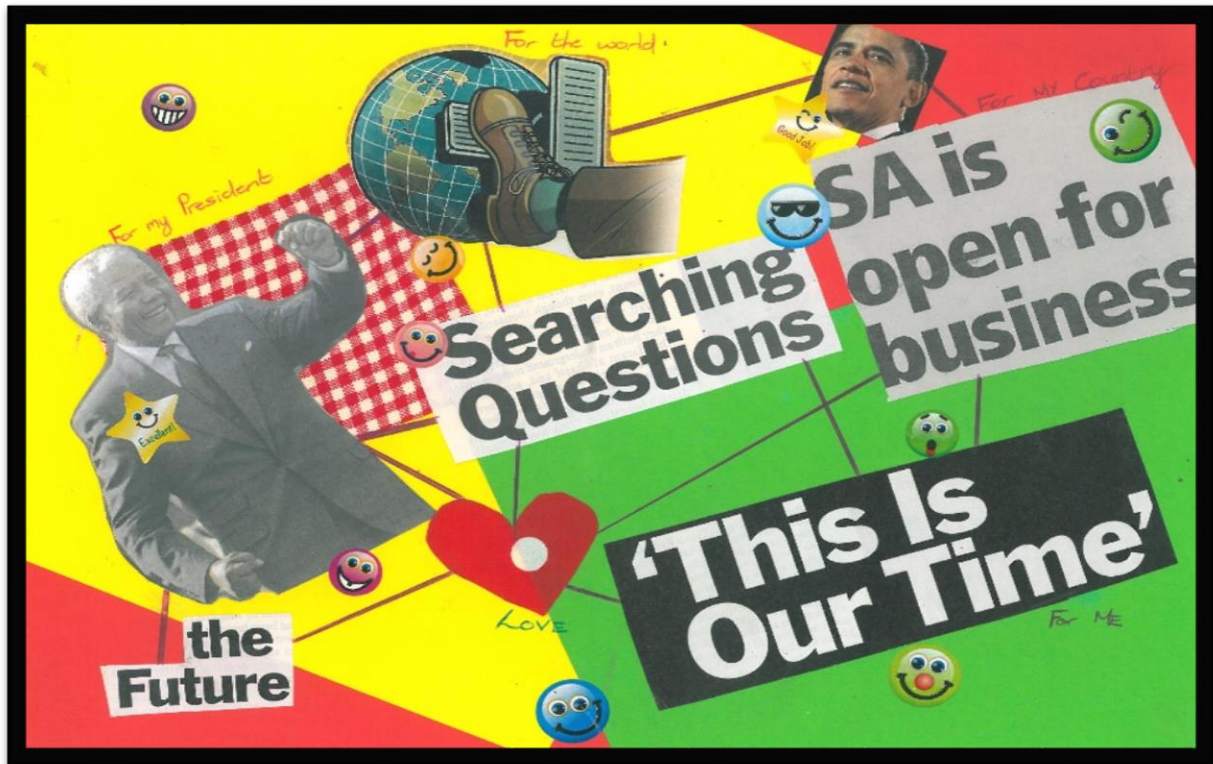
helping to understand the past to understand the present. Also the words 'Learning Curve' could be linked and implies that over time people learn from the mistakes that were made in the past. She used unknown/ordinary people to try and convey some of her views symbolically. Nicole seems to convey the idea that historical time plays an important role in school history.

Overall, Nicole depicted her views of school history in a unique manner. She mainly used magazines, cardboard and colours as resources for her collage. Also by Nicole colouring in the hand with her own colours is an indication that the resources provided were insufficient for some collage-makers who wanted to be specific in the colours they chose. The layout of her collage is also done quite creatively. The colours red and white dominate her collage and could have been used to convey a specific idea or view. For Nicole the 'red' could have probably represented anger that happened amongst people and countries as well as the blood that was shed during the various wars fought, while the 'white' could represent the idea of peace. However, the colours could have been used for purely decorative purposes.

The collages constructed by participants from 'Atlantic Ocean High' conveyed a powerful story of their views of school history. The collages depicted images, words and phrases from various resources that were provided. It can be concluded that even though the collages were analysed individually, there were some common themes and patterns that emerged from 'Atlantic Ocean High School.' These included the idea of certain ideas such as apartheid, war, people, school history being a national and international study and it having a pedagogical nature. All participants in some way depicted the idea of apartheid and the struggles that were experienced in South Africa in the past, through words and images. In addition, the idea of war was another concept that was strongly reflected through words, phrases and images in almost all collages.

## 5.2.4 Pacific Ocean College

Figure 5.2.4A: Collage Maker - Kutlwano



The idea of ‘world history’ being an important aspect in school history is clearly embedded in Kutlwano’s collage. This idea is depicted by the image of the globe together with the phrase ‘**For the world**’ at the top of the collage. However, Kutlwano also depicted the nationalistic idea as being important. This is supported by the image of Mandela on the left with the phrase ‘For my president.’ In fact, this collage-maker hand wrote the phrase ‘**For the world**’ and ‘**For my president**’ meaning she wanted to convey her personal view of school history as being a study of both world and national events/happenings. Furthermore, it seemed she wanted to express her love and respect maybe for Mandela by depicting the word ‘my’. Also the heavy boot placed on the globe which is linked to Mandela and Obama through lines could indicate these are powerful men who have taken control of their country’s needs. This idea of these men being powerful and impacting their country is justified by Kutlwano placing little stars on them with positive comments. A star is generally awarded to someone for doing something good, hence, the depiction of the star on the two leaders is relevant and justified. Once again the idea of big Black men playing an important role in politics is highlighted as being significant in the study of school history by Kutlwano.

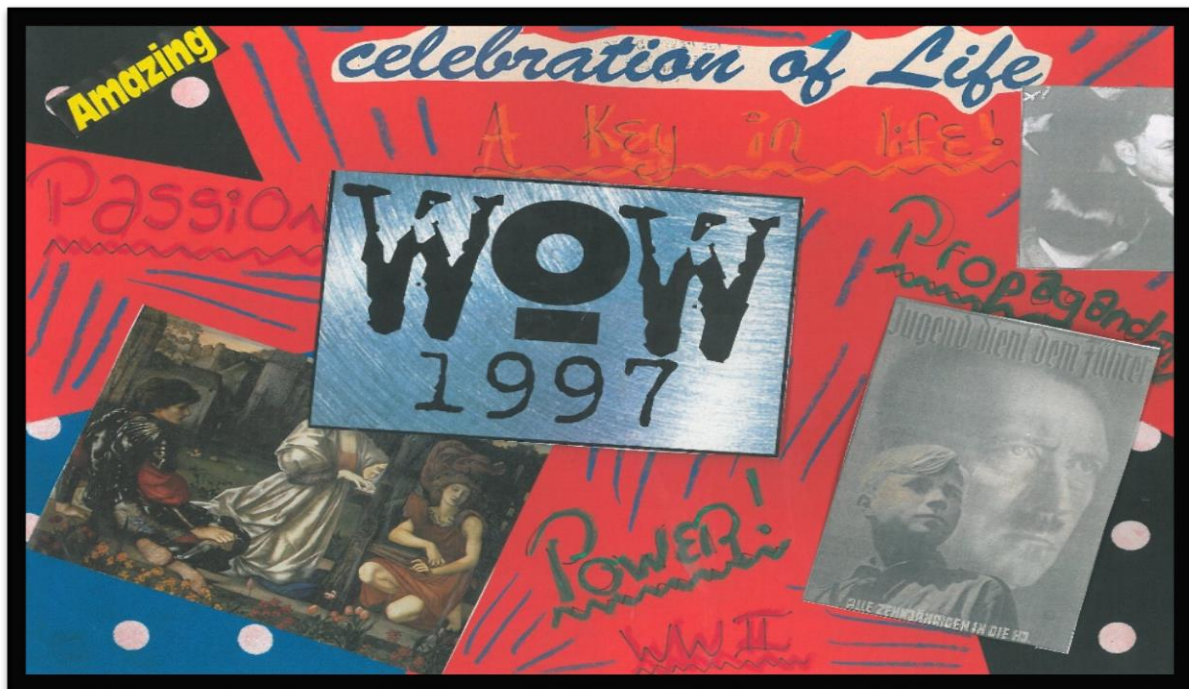
Another distinct feature of Kutlwano's collage is the phrase '**SEARCHING QUESTIONS.**' This phrase is placed towards the centre of her collage and stands out because of its strategic position. Furthermore, all other depictions in her collage seem to be linked to this centrally placed phrase. This idea of linking seems to be supported by Kutlwano using black lines to join all the fragments to each other. Hence, for Kutlwano school history could be about searching and investigating certain historical matters and maybe to understand some matters better. Thus, Kutlwano possibly views school history as about asking questions to find out what really happened. Therefore, she seemed to focus on the pedagogical aspect of the subject.

Another distinct phrase Kutlwano depicted in her collage was '**This Is Our Time.**' This creates the impression that since this collage maker forms part of the younger generation she believes that this is their time to understand the past, so that they can take the country into a better place in the future. Therefore, she could be implying that school history helps the youth to understand their roles in society. In fact, the words 'the future' are at the bottom of the collage and linked to Mandela which could mean that he created an opportunity and opened the way for the younger generation to follow in his footsteps. Also linked to these ideas is the concept of historical time could be associated with school history. Kutlwano seemed to have personalised this idea because at the bottom of the phrase '**This Is Our Time**' she placed the words '**For me.**' Hence, this collage can be said to be a very personal one as Kutlwano took the time to hand write certain words which she thought were important in conveying her views of school history.

Kutlwano also depicted another interesting phrase in her collage which is: '**SA is open for business.**' By placing this phrase in her collage she could be implying that the apartheid era is over and as South Africans we have the freedom and equality to work towards a better future and we need to take responsibility and focus on serious business. She could also be implying that previously South Africa was not free and therefore people were very restricted but now they are free. Lastly, she has a little red heart and the word love underneath it. This image is placed towards the middle and links all her images and words to it, which could mean that Kutlwano portrays her view of loving school history and enjoying what she is learning from the subject.

Overall, Kutlwano conveyed her views of school history mainly through phrases and a few images. Her collage had a very powerful message but it was also easy to read. Her layout is somewhat unique in that she placed her fragments at different angles. This could symbolise that history is fluid or it could have been depicted in this way simply for decorative purposes. The colours yellow, red and green dominated Kutlwano’s collage and seem to be symbolic of her views of school history. These colours were probably used to convey a specific view or emotion related to school history. Linked to the idea of emotions is that Kutlwano interestingly included ‘emoji’s’ depicting various moods but for the most part very happy ones, scattered all over her collage. This happiness could signify her contentment with school history.

**Figure 5.2.4B:** Collage Maker – Jane



At the top of her collage Jane placed the phrase '*celebration of life*' which could mean that she views school history as something to be celebrated and as being good. Linked to this idea, just beneath this phrase she has another hand written phrase: '**A Key in life**' which could suggest that she views history as an important subject and that every person should study it at school to be able to understand life in general. Also it seems that she could not find the words from the resources provided so she hand wrote them because she probably wanted to be specific about her views of school history.

Also other handwritten words '**Passion, Power and Propaganda**' depicted in different areas in Jane's collage are powerful views on the conceptual nature of school history. The words '**WOW**' and '**Amazing**' which Jane portrayed in her collage could also reflect her love for the subject. Interestingly the participant also put the word '**WOW**' at the centre of her collage and even elevated the word using cardboard. This could mean that history for her is a 'wow' experience because generally the word is used to express something good or powerful and maybe even positive. Also the fact that it is elevated could mean that she gives it top priority as a school subject. In other words, this could mean she finds school history pleasurable and enjoyable.

The participant also included images of leaders such as Hitler and the Nuremberg trials, which could suggest that she probably enjoyed studying these leaders and how they used propaganda to achieve their goals. In fact, the word propaganda is placed above Hitler's picture as well as the word power and WW II which could mean that she associates school history with learning what some White powerful leaders did to get such power and control people's lives negatively. This idea can be justified by certain topics dealt with in school history according to CAPS which Jane studied. At the bottom of her collage she has a picture of a beautiful artwork which she possibly associates with school history. The image does look like a 'renaissance' scene with women in the centre but symbolically her head is covered which could relate to a gender sensitive perspective of school history.

Overall, Jane's collage conveyed her views of school history in a very personal manner. In other words she added a personal touch by handwriting some of the words she wanted to depict in her collage. This also speaks to the resources provided as being insufficient hence, she decided to be creative and write out the specific word in her collage. Another distinct observation was that she placed the image of Hitler on black fabric which is pertinent in the sense that black is associated with power and darker negative forces. Hence, it can be concluded that she probably tried to depict Hitler in this way. The colour red is very conspicuous in her collage. Red being an intense colour was probably used by her to demonstrate her passion and love for school history or could have just been for creative purposes. Jane conveyed her views of school history in a very simplistic and meaningful manner.



Figure 5.2.4C: Collage Maker– Sino



The most striking aspect of Sino’s collage is the hand with the Black power salute in the centre of the collage. Interestingly, the hand is of a person wearing a suit. This depiction is very powerful and speaks of school history being viewed as central and possibly at odds with an old White man in a suit. Also the large size and space used to depict the hand in the collage reinforces her intention to highlight this idea of Black power. Furthermore, the hand could also represent different things such as victory, peace or unity. These concepts could be supported by the phrase ‘It’s been 20- some years of trying to get’ which is situated close to the hand and could be referring to South Africa becoming free and united after a long time. This phrase could have a deep symbolic meaning for this study in that my research was conducted 20 some years after the fall of apartheid. Also other words depicted in the collage that are closely linked to this idea are ‘The Moment’, ‘Time’ and ‘Milestones.’ These words could also imply that Sino is looking at the current situations of nations and how they have changed over time because of the happenings, over time. In other words, she seems to associate the concept of time as being closely linked to school history.

Another strong depiction in Sino's collage which she seems to highlight is the concept of war. This idea is justified by portraying the U.S. Defense Secretary Robert Gates with the phrase '**MAN OF WAR**' on the left side of her collage. Also the fact that the depiction is large and takes up much space on her collage further justifies her wanting to emphasise the concept of war being important in school history. She also has words such as '**battle Scars**', '**The fatigue of war**' all of which could mean that she associates school history with the past wars and conflicts that have taken place and maybe how it has impacted certain nations. Sino also depicted the word '**Time**' under the 'Man of War' which could possibly suggest that war takes time and can cause hurt and suffering to many people.

The participant makes reference to '**Wings of Desire**' which could mean that she sees history as something good and she probably enjoys the subject and has a great desire to learn from the subject. She could also be suggesting that others need to study the subject. In other words, this idea gives wings to her desire for knowing. The word '**phenomenal**' written in pen could also be linked to her view of school history being an amazing subject to study. However, the word 'phenomenal' could also be relational to the black-hand which could imply that for Sino the concept of Black power is amazing to study and understand in school history. Once again Sino could not find this particular word in the resources provided and she chose to write it, to convey her view of school history, which is very significant because she wanted to specifically express her views about school history effectively. All the words used in Sino's collage are interesting which sends out a powerful politic message of her views of school history.

Overall, Sino used phrases, words and images in a powerful political manner to convey her views of school history. The phrase '**A brief history of:**' depicted at the end of her collage signals an incomplete history. This idea could also be justified by the idea of the phrase '**It's been 20 some years of trying to get**' that was analysed above. In fact, both the above phrases seem as if more is to come and therefore supports the idea of history being an incomplete story for Sino. Another distinct observation regarding her collage is that she chose certain colours to demonstrate how she views history as a school subject. She used only four colours (yellow, red, green and black) which seem to have some meaning for her. In fact, the yellow, red and green are typical African colours which could have deep symbolic meaning for Sino regarding school history or it could have been used simply for creative purposes.

**Figure 5.2.4D: Collage Maker – Attiyah**



Attiyah depicted the words ‘**WORLD WAR TWO**’ at the very top of her collage which could mean that she views the subject history as being associated with important wars which impacted many nations. This can also be confirmed by the image of Hitler alongside the words ‘**World War Two**’ who played a major role in the history of Germany and was responsible for starting WW2. Further, depictions which support Hitler’s role in war and violence were portrayed through the image of Nazism at the bottom of the collage. Attiyah therefore seems to focus on certain important big men, as in Hitler, who were instrumental in war and violence, as important topics in school history.

Another point to consider is that Attiyah depicted the word ‘Learn’ which was handwritten and thereafter the phrase ‘**Lessons from the past revivals**’ in her collage which could be interpreted as leaders learning from past mistakes to make better decisions for the present and the future. It seemingly implies that she thinks that school history can help undo the damage done in the past. A good example regarding this is that many leaders could learn from all the mistakes that Hitler made and ensure that they do not repeat these mistakes. The illustration showing the Nazi Party measuring a man’s nose just because they believed he was Jew, highlights just one of the many ruthless deeds performed by Hitler. Attiyah also portrayed a small map next to the Nazi party image which is pertinent to the time the Nazi party was in



control in Germany. Also the idea of depicting the map highlights that place/region plays a role in school history.

This collage-maker depicted an image of Mandela with a raised fist smiling which demonstrates a more positive side to political leaders. The image shows Mandela being victorious over some major political event. She also placed an image of a White and Black person embracing each other with the title '**THE DAMAGE DONE**' probably showing how after a long time people are now able to mix freely in South Africa. These women are old so they have lost many years of being free and living together as one. The phrase '**Peace, Or Else...**' which is centrally situated could also mean that nations need to strive for peace or else there will be chaos and unhappiness among people and nations globally. In fact, this phrase could be quite a strong statement in the sense that if no peace it could be war. Also the central positioning of the phrase indicates that Attiyah viewed the concept peace as being important in the study of school history.

At the end of her collage Attiyah has an image of something from the African tradition which could be an indication that history as a subject can teach us to embrace our heritage and our culture. In addition, the position of the image at the bottom of the collage symbolises a bedrock of support for Africanism as opposed to the other aspects of war and violence depicted at the top of the collage. Thus, the African story once again seems to be highlighted as an important theme in school history for Attiyah. Hence, considering these aspects depicted in Attiyah's collage it can be concluded that she views school history as undoing the damage of the past by celebrating and enjoying the South African tradition.

Overall, Attiyah's collage conveyed her views of history through images and phrases. She mostly used magazines and textbooks to find suitable fragments to convey her views of school history. A few of her fragments are placed at different angles which could indicate that for her history is not a rigid subject. In addition, she filled the whole page which speaks of school history being a complete story for Attiyah. The fragments placed in Attiyah's collage all tend to overlap which could speak of events/happenings depicted being possibly linked. It seems for her a study of school history can help people understand historical events/happenings.

Figure 5.2.4E: Collage Maker – Nonhla



This participant put the word ‘**history**’ at the top of her collage and the number ‘**1**’ directly underneath. The number ‘**1**’ is a symbolic depiction in the sense that generally the number ‘**1**’ is associated with something being good. This is a possible indication that Nonhla views the subject history as one of top priority in her schooling career. She could also be implying that history is her best subject.

After the number ‘**1**’ Nonhla interestingly depicts the words ‘**GUIDE TO**’ and various arrows (mind-map) leading to words such as ‘**PEACE, THINKING, INNOVATION, INTELLIGENCE, IDEAS CHANGING THE WORLD RIGHT NOW**’. All these concepts are probably those that she relates to history as a school subject, which could demonstrate that she views the subject history as having the capacity to do great things and to be a powerful subject to study. In addition, she thinks that history is very informative and you learn much from history. In fact, this is a very clear and strong idea of how school history flows outwards and what it entails. Thus, the pedagogical and conceptual nature of school history is clearly portrayed through the depiction of the above words in Nonhla’s collage. School history for this participant is not only about content but also has a conceptual and educational depth.

Nonhla depicts an image of Mandela smiling with his hand raised in her collage which could demonstrate that he has achieved much and overcame many milestones in his fight for freedom for South Africa. The fact that she put the word **‘PEACE’** close to Mandela could mean that he was responsible for bringing about peace to our nation which was oppressed for so long. The globe which is not in full could represent that history as a subject teaches us what happens throughout the world. However, because the globe is not depicted in full may mean that the subject history focuses on certain countries which have had significant happenings taking place and therefore we can learn some real life lessons from these countries and how they dealt with certain problems and challenges. This is also reflected in the picture where a member of the Nazi Party is measuring the nose of a person they thought was a Jew, indicating the many mistakes made by the Nazi Party under Hitler’s reign. Once again the idea of school history being a study of leaders is highlighted in this collage through Mandela and Hitler.

The phrases **‘SOURCE-BASED QUESTIONS’** and **‘ESSAY QUESTIONS’** could refer to the types of questions that are used in school history for testing purposes. These types of questioning is prescribed in CAPS for the secondary phase of schooling, therefore Nonhla possibly depicted it in her collage and sees it as significant. Thus, essay and source-based questions cement a pedagogical link of what school history is viewed as.

Overall, Nonhla’s collage depicted a powerful view of school history in the secondary phase. She chose to use a few images and some powerful words and phrases to convey her thoughts effectively. The yellow background in Nonhla’s collage is striking and could represent something specific for her or it could be used to attract attention to certain aspects in the collage. In fact, the choice of all her colours are well co-ordinated and seem to tell a South African story of her view of school history because she used colours representative of South Africa. Nonhla used mainly textbooks, magazines and cardboard as resources to construct her collage

It can be concluded that ‘Pacific Ocean College’ collage-makers conveyed their views of school history in a unique manner. Collages depicted a powerful story through images, words phrases and colours. The collages were analysed individually but there were some common themes and patterns. These included the idea that school history is a national/world study, it is

about big political leaders, it is about youth, time, wars/violence, love/enjoyment and pedagogical/conceptual aspects related to CAPS. In addition, the idea of colours that they selected for their collages were common and were associated with South African colours.

### **5.3 Conclusion**

This study was designed with an overarching purpose, as stated in the introduction, of analysing the views of history learners towards history as a school subject. Hence, this chapter provided a discussion of an in depth analysis of individual collages which was the first level of analysis as explained earlier. It was decided to analyse the collages individually because each participant's collage was unique and seemed to speak a different view. Furthermore, while analysing the individual collages I realised that school history generally has the tendency to lean towards the transmission of memory history rather than a critical thinking about the knowledge studied by learners at school. This aspect was dealt with in Chapter 2 where it was mentioned that the procedural concepts help foster historical thinking in school history and this helps learners master and make appropriate the substantive (content) knowledge that they study at school. Therefore, while analysing the collages it was evident that learners' views of school history is largely shaped by both the substantive and procedural concepts that they are exposed to in school. This gave the impression that the manner in which history is taught at school level played a crucial role in learners' views of school history for this study.

After all the individual collages were analysed and discussed some common patterns and themes did emerge across all four schools. These themes include the idea that school history is viewed as being about people, war/violence, South African political struggles, conceptual/pedagogical nature, local/international history, CAPS related, better life/future and related to love. Also the idea of history being an incomplete story, a complex subject and related to textbooks are regarded as common aspects. A discussion of these common patterns and themes will be undertaken in Chapter 7.

However, this first level of analysis was insufficient to understand learners' views of school history, thus I engaged in a second level of analysis which I believe strengthened my study.

The next chapter will deal with this second level of analysis which is based on the instrument of the six benchmarks that I designed to further analyse my participants' collages.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS – LEVEL 2 ANALYSIS OF COLLAGES**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

The previous chapter dealt with the first level of analysis which was done according to an open coding method. The aim was to open up the collages to understand how learners view history as a school subject, which is the focus of this study. However, after I had analysed all collages I realised that analysis could not stop at this first level because of the nature of my topic as stated in Chapter 2. Furthermore, the first level of analysis was not sufficient, since it was based on opening up the collages by interpreting the fragments placed in the collages in an open-ended manner. Thus, I delved into a second level of analysis which will be discussed and explained in this chapter as explained in the Chapter 4.

To engage in this second level of analysis I designed a research instrument to assist me analyse the collages as well as the presentation and discussion sessions. The instrument comprised of six benchmarks as well as criteria linked to each benchmark (Appendix A). These benchmarks were derived from the works by (Davies, 2011; Haydn et al., 2008; Levesque, 2008; Seixas and Morton, 2013; Stearns et al 2000; Timmins et al., 2005 and Wineburg 2001) and were gleaned from my literature review section on the nature of school history in Chapter 2. The benchmarks that form part of my instrument are historical significance; historical time; nature of historical knowledge and understanding; historical empathy; cause and consequence and change and continuity.

The reason why I chose to use these specific benchmarks is that they are pertinent concepts in history at school level and form part of the preamble of CAPS. Hence, I wanted to see how collage-makers symbolically interacted with these historical thinking concepts. In addition, since my topic is based on learners' views of school history these benchmarks were deemed appropriate to assist me to further analyse my data and therefore understand how learners view

school history. Additionally, I was able to analyse my research data in a more structured way and get a better understanding of how learners view history as a school subject. More detail on my instrument and how it was used to analyse my research data was provided in Chapter 4.

This second level of analysis which is explained next was done differently to the first level of analysis, in the sense that my instrument was not applied to individual collages but across all collages so as to seek understanding for each of the benchmarks and its criteria. Simultaneously, I used my transcriptions from my presentation and discussion sessions to justify certain aspects that my participants depicted in the collages. Hence, the instrument was applied to the collages as well as the data sets made up of other methods as it related to the collages.

## **6.2 Learners' views on historical significance**

Historical significance is how something is important or significant in terms of history. Historical significance is therefore the process used to evaluate what was significant about selected events, people and developments in the past. There is too much history to remember or study all of it therefore, historians use different sets of criteria to help them make judgments about significance. Thus, significance depends upon perspective and purpose. For the purposes of this study learners' views of who and what is historically significant is largely based on their study of history at secondary school level. They could also be influenced by outside factors such as that of the media, family, communities, friends and current events taking place in the world. Hence, this section will present the analysis of the first benchmark namely Historical significance under the different criteria identified in my instrument (Appendix A).

### **6.2.1 Who did history learners regard as historically significant?**

Most history learners from the sampled schools are of the opinion that the study of people and their behaviour is historically significant. Fifteen out of seventeen participants included, people, either as individuals or as a collective in some way or another in their collages. This idea of people being significant is appropriately confirmed by Thabo from 'Indian Ocean Secondary School' who during his presentation stated that "history teaches us about human

beings and how they behave...” This learner went on to say “I also enjoy doing research on humans which history offers.” This is an indication that the study of certain people of the past and their actions play an important role in the study of school history and are therefore deemed as being historically significant.

Against this back drop most history learners from all schools under study viewed certain individual political figures as being historically significant. During the discussion sessions learners suggested that history has given us a plethora of political leaders in school history, both good and bad, who have dedicated their lives to the betterment or in some cases to the detriment of their countries and the people living in the country. The idea of political leaders working towards the betterment of their countries was most appropriately conveyed by Zama from ‘Arctic Ocean High School’ during the presentation session, who stated: “...in our past we had difficulties but we had good political leaders to make a better future for us...” Natasha from the same school echoed a similar sentiment by stating: “People look at leaders and wonder what they really did but do not know how they really fought to be where they are because of the great sacrifices...” In contrast to this a few history learners during the discussion sessions indicated that certain political leaders had detrimental effects on some countries. The most appropriate example regarding this idea was the political figure ‘Hitler’. Hence, evidence exists through the collages, presentations and discussion sessions that learners in this study seem to focus on famous South African but also world political leaders who have had an impact on political affairs which had widespread and lasting consequences both in a negative and positive light, thus affecting people’s lives deeply.

What emerged from the analysis of the collages regarding political leaders was that some history learners viewed Nelson Mandela as one such historically significant political leader. Mandela was the most commonly depicted figure in the collages. In fact, ten out of seventeen collage-makers depicted Mandela in their collages. These depictions in the collages of Mandela were supported by statements made during the presentations and discussion sessions with ideas such as good leader, a hero, an icon, legacy of hope and great sacrifices. These views on why Mandela was regarded as so historically significant was appropriately articulated by Natasha from ‘Arctic Ocean High School’ during the presentation session when she stated: “Just by studying South Africa’s past and its great leaders you can have hope. For me Nelson Mandela



actually left a legacy of hope for us to follow and we can only know this if we study history at school”. This sentiment was further echoed by many history learners during the discussion sessions when they indicated that they were greatly inspired to study history at secondary level because of the nature and character of great men, like Mandela. Thus, he was viewed in a positive way and learners reflected him as having deeply affected the lives of many South Africans through his efforts and sacrifices of bringing freedom to the nation. Another leader who was also portrayed in a positive light by Kutlwano from ‘Pacific Ocean College’, was Obama. She placed a little star with the words ‘good job’ on it which indicated that as a leader Obama had affected many people’s lives in a good way. Hence, what emerged strongly from the analysis regarding this aspect is that history learners seem to view the decisions made by some political leaders as being historically significant and having a major impact on people’s lives. Hence, it is evident that history learners consider certain political leaders of the past as having played a very significant part in the study of school history.

Another famous black male political figure who four out of the seventeen participants under study portrayed in their collages was Shaka Zulu. Shaka was one of the most influential monarchs of the Zulu Kingdom during pre-colonial times. History learners during the discussion sessions referred to him as one of the most prominent Zulu kings of his time. They also indicated that this was because of his ability to draw people into the Zulu kingdom and because of his statesmanship and vigour. All the images of Shaka displayed in the learners’ collages were similar and depicts him as a warrior ready for battle with his traditional weapons. In fact, during the presentations Kimone from ‘Atlantic Ocean High School’ openly suggested why she placed him in her collage in that way. She stated: “We learn in history of ruthless leaders like Shaka Zulu who was associated with violence and wars. Many innocent people were killed under his rule because of his harsh methods of punishment.” She further went on to explain that even though he impacted his people in a positive manner and brought about changes during his era he was also strongly associated with military campaigns which had a negative impact on the different tribes at the time. However, certain history learners during the discussion sessions expressed the idea that there is much controversy surrounding Shaka’s character, methods and activities even today as we study the section at school. Some learners also during the discussion sessions argued that even though this controversy still exists many see him as an important political figure who is remembered through various historical sites which have been named after him. Overall, regarding Shaka collage-makers seemingly

portrayed him as having deeply affected people's lives in the past and they also seem to have an understanding and knowledge of him because of their study of him in school history. In other words, Shaka is taught as part of CAPS at secondary school level.

Adolf Hitler was another world historical figure which five out of seventeen history learners under study displayed in their collages. Hitler was the leader of the Nazi Party from 1934-1945. As an effective dictator of Nazi Germany, Hitler was at the centre of World War II and the Holocaust. It is clearly evident from the images and words placed in the learners' collages that they associated Hitler with the ideas of 'genocide, WWII, Holocaust, propaganda, Days of judgment and final days. Jane from 'Pacific Ocean College' during the presentations indicated that she depicted Hitler in her collage because when she studied the Holocaust and what Hitler had done in Germany during his time she became fascinated by what she could learn through the study of history. She confirmed this during the discussion session by adding: "Basically, the things that stood out for me when I learnt about the Holocaust was the way that Hitler had used propaganda and the power he had in his words. I was taken aback by the fact that a single person could do so much destruction and take over the minds of so many just by using words". Attiyah from the same school added that Hitler caused a lot of confusion as well in the sense that his Nazi Party used derogatory measures to identify the Jews, like measuring their facial proportions and often there were mistakes in this area. Another distinct observation was that a learner from the same school placed Hitler's image right above Nelson Mandela's image. During the discussion session this learner disclosed that she deliberately placed the images in this way to illustrate bad (Hitler) versus good (Mandela). This evidence reveals that learners were able to distinguish that political figures are not always associated with good but can also be related to bad. Hitler as a world political figure was represented and recognised by some of the participants under study as an individual political leader who was historically significant and is still studied by many people even in current times. During the discussion session some history learners concluded that Hitler's policies had disastrous effects on people during his time and deeply affected people's lives, therefore they viewed him in a negative way

In addition, to this some history learners also indicated other significant political leaders in their collages. Some of these leaders include Yasser Arafat who was a Palestinian leader and greatly impacted his nation and world international affairs. Past South African presidents such

as Thabo Mbeki and De Klerk were also considered as historically important and learners indicated during the discussion session that they played key roles during their times as presidents in the past. The current president of South Africa, Jacob Zuma was also represented in one of the collages by Zinhle from 'Arctic Ocean High School'. However, the learner did not depict him in a positive light as she placed the words 'tragedy of South Africa' above his image. She then went on to justify this in the discussion session by saying that he did not set a good example for his people and this was having a negative impact on people's value systems. Hence, it is evident that history learners are of the opinion that decisions made by political leaders can deeply impact people's lives both in a negative and positive light.

As a history educator I concluded that most of the individual political figures reflected in collages form part of the history curriculum which history learners study in the secondary phase of their schooling career. Hence, this indicates that they have some historical knowledge as to what roles these individual political figures played in the political arena and are aware of the impact of their actions globally and therefore they were given high priority by history learners.

In addition, to these individual political leaders, eight out of the seventeen learners involved in the study also felt that collective groups of people in the past are historically significant. A collective group of people recognised by some of the history learners under study as being historically significant were the members of the 'Treason Trial' of 1956. This group included 156 members, including Mandela who were accused of treason in South Africa in 1956 during the apartheid era. The Trial lasted until 1961 when all defendants were found not guilty. Participants had images of this group in their collages from the textbooks which indicates that they regarded them as playing a historically significant role during the past in South Africa. However, there was not much explained about this event in the presentation and discussion sessions. Some learners did however indicate during the discussion session that most of the main freedom fighters of South Africa in the past were involved in this trial and had to endure much hardship because of this, hence making this collective group of people historically significant.

Another collective group of people recognised by a few history learners under study as being historically significant was the women who were involved in the 'Women's March' of 1956. These women contributed to the struggle for freedom in South Africa and deeply impacted people's lives especially, the women. A few participants had the image of the Women's March represented in their collages. The 'Women's March' was organised and led by four well known women of the past namely: Raheema Moosa, Lilian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph and Sophie Williams. Thabo from 'Indian Ocean Secondary School' even captured the title '10 000 women' with the image showing the vast number of women, even though most were faceless except for the leaders, who participated and played key roles in supporting the men during the struggle against apartheid in South Africa. In fact, another learner from the same school during the discussion session stated: "As a woman I wanted to learn more about the role of women in South Africa as it is a profound topic." She also indicated that this event that the women were involved in is still remembered and celebrated to the present-day. Hence, an analysis of the collages regarding the role of women in the past reveals that women participated in groups and are mostly nameless and in such circumstances are historically significant but not as individuals.

Political parties were another collective group that was depicted in collages both directly and in some instances through political leaders. The two parties that were directly represented were the ANC and the DA. These parties were seemingly regarded as playing major roles in South Africa in the past and the present and hence are seen as being historically significant. This idea was confirmed by Carmen from 'Indian Ocean Secondary School' who suggested: "History has a lot of politics and different parties and so on and so we get to understand the past which helps us to understand what is happening today amongst leaders and political parties." This same learner later in the discussion session stated that the ANC is now a 'hectic' party. However, she did not explain what she meant by this. Another history learner also indicated during the discussion session that political leaders are closely associated with political parties, consequently political parties as such can affect people's lives deeply through their actions and behaviour.

The new generation or the young people such as the collage-makers themselves were also considered to be historically significant in school history by some history learners under study. A few of the collages had the new generation or young people, represented in some form or the

other (words/images/phrases) indicating that they have key roles to play in a society. This is confirmed by a learner from Indian Ocean Secondary School during the discussion session who stated: “I put young South Africans, because I think [school] history affects us the most because we are now in the future and we are going to learn about history and when we learn about the mistakes it is up to us to make it right or do something different as opposed to what they did in the past.” It was worthy to note that during the group discussion this learner was challenged by another learner who felt that old people can also help make changes in society and she used Mandela as an example by saying, “He was old and yet he did lots of stuff for us.” However, the learner continued to argue that the younger generation have more time to make change and felt it is the time for the young to make a difference because they are outspoken and speak up about things that affect them. This sentiment was echoed by Kutlwano from Pacific Ocean College during her presentation session by stating: “As the youth this is our time and history helps us to realise the past, to make better decisions for the future.”

Collage-makers thus regard people from different categories as being historically significant in the study of school history. History learners under study viewed certain individual political leaders as having affected people’s lives deeply through their actions and behaviour. Other people portrayed in the collages were collective groups of people as in ‘Women’s March, Treason Trial, political parties and the younger generation. People were generally depicted in the collages in the form of images and through words. These images and words were later explained and justified in the history learner’s presentations and during the discussion sessions. History learners’ views of people were portrayed in a positive and negative light. Hence, some people especially the political leader’s decisions, actions and behaviour affected people’s lives in a positive light while others affected lives in a negative way.

### **6.2.2 What did history learners regard as historically significant?**

History learners involved in this study seemed to regard certain historical concepts and historically related aspects as historically significant. This is in line with historians who explain the events and developments of the past using specialised terms and concepts. Furthermore, it relates well with the literature discussed in Chapter 2. Some of the historical concepts that history learners in this study viewed as being significant are freedom, truth, unity and peace.

These concepts were not always depicted in words but was also indirectly portrayed through images and related phrases and were further justified during the presentation and discussion sessions. In addition, to these concepts history learners also viewed the following aspects as being historically significant: ideas of research, heritage, remembrance, symbols, war and violence and a study of the world.

#### ***6.2.2.1 Historical concepts***

What emerged from the analysis of the collages was that history learners viewed the historical concept ‘**freedom**’ as being historically significant. The concept ‘Freedom’ was reflected in some way or the other in many of the collages. Freedom can mean many different things but in the context of this study history learners used it in a historical and political sense. This is confirmed by Bonga from ‘Arctic Ocean High School’ who stated: “[School] history has also made me aware of my rights and freedom as a citizen.” Another observation that emerged from the analysis is that learners relate the concept freedom to the South African context in the sense that they are aware of the country’s past and the struggle for freedom. This view is best articulated by another history learner from the same school during the discussion session who stated: “Basically, it means that in our past we had difficulties...now that we finally reached freedom and breakthrough in the struggle of the past, we can now have a better life for everyone.” This sentiment was echoed by Mandisa from ‘Atlantic Ocean High School’ who stated: “...certain people like Mandela fought for us and our freedom, which we have now.” Hence, these views on why the concept freedom is regarded as historically significant is best articulated by a learner from ‘Arctic Ocean High’ during the discussion session when she posited: “Because in South Africa in the past we could not speak out freely but now we have freedom of speech and to speak out.” In this context, history learners during the presentations and discussion sessions suggested that freedom was a very significant concept in the history of South Africa because of our historical past.

Another concept that emerged from the analysis that history learners regarded as being historically significant was the idea of historical ‘truth.’ Although only four out of seventeen participants actually used the word ‘truth’ in their collages others used it indirectly through phrases and images. Furthermore, history learners during the presentations clearly understood

that history is not just what happened in the past, but a complex intersection of truths, bias and hopes. Some history learners were able to identify that it is difficult and sometimes impossible to piece together different people's versions of historical 'truth' and construct one coherent view on which everyone agrees. These views on why history learners regarded the concept of 'truth' as being historically significant were best articulated by Zinhle from 'Arctic Ocean High School' who claimed: "History helps me to question things and look at different views and in this way you can find out the truth. For me everything is not in black and white and you have to search for the truth." Also Bonga from the same school echoed this sentiment by stating: "History helps me to dig deep and search for the truth." However, an observation was that a few of the collage makers were not in agreement with this idea of the 'truth.' They tended to believe that everything they studied in school history was the truth. Laila from Atlantic Ocean High School clearly demonstrated this. She depicted the words 'The plain Truth' in her collage and during the presentation session she stated: "for me history is all about what happened in the past and it is true". This seemingly indicated that this learner had a different uncritical slant on the concept. However, overall what emerges from the analysis of the data is that history learners seem to view school history as a search for the 'truth' rather than 'the truth' and this was also justified during the discussion sessions.

The concept 'unity' was also regarded as being historically significant to a few collage-makers. This concept was represented in the collages in the form of images and phrases. In other words, the participants did not use the word unity as such but portrayed the idea of unity indirectly through images and phrases. A typical image of this idea of unity and socialising of different race, gender and generations was effectively depicted in Zen's collage from 'Indian Ocean Secondary'. The representation of the concept unity in the collages was also supported by statements made during the discussion sessions with ideas such as: "history shows how to work together in unity, people united after a long time, different races brought together and we are one now". These views on why history learners regarded the concept unity as being historically significant is clearly explained by Mandisa from 'Atlantic Ocean High School' who stated: "Back then in South Africa there was discrimination and now people of different races can meet together freely and are united." She further justified this idea of unity by placing images of different race groups socialising and doing life together in four different positions in her collage. It was evident that history learners under study were aware of the happenings of the

past in South Africa especially and hence view this political concept in a symbolic manner as being important in the study of school history.

Another concept that emerged from the analysis was the idea of 'peace.' Although only four out of seventeen participants directly used the word peace, most of the other participants implied the idea through images and phrases. A typical example of this was that some collage-makers depicted the idea of peace through the image of Mandela. This was confirmed by some history learners during the discussion session when they implied that "Mandela stands for peace". Furthermore, Sino from 'Pacific Ocean College' appropriately demonstrated the idea of peace through the image of a closed fist which she explained and justified during her presentation session. In other words, Sino explained that she depicted the closed fist as a symbol of peace but also related it to black power. Some learners seemed to believe that there was no peace in the world today and this came out quite strongly during the presentations when Bonga from 'Arctic Ocean High School' indicated: "History has helped me to understand the past so that I can speak out and promote peace because there is no peace in the world today." Hence, the concept 'peace' was viewed by history learners as being historically significant both locally and globally. Furthermore, some learners indicated during the discussion session that they included it in their collages because they felt peace was a vital ingredient for any nation to be prosperous. Moreover, some history learners viewed the concept 'peace' as an important concept that could be understood through the study of school history.

#### ***6.2.2.2 Historical pedagogical aspects***

In addition, to the historical concepts discussed above history learners also viewed certain aspects as being historically significant. One such aspect was the idea of 'Research.' However, the participants did not directly refer to the word research in their collages but they portrayed the idea through related words/phrases which they justified during the presentation and discussion sessions. Collage-makers evidently viewed research skills as an important skill that they got from the study of school history. This was confirmed by Bonga from 'Arctic Ocean High School' who stated: "I can see that history kind of prepares you well for university because of the research skills we learn..." The reflection of the word research in the collages was supported by phrases made during the presentations with ideas such as gathering



information, projects and assignments requires research, searching and asking questions of why and how. These views on why history learners regarded 'research' as historically significant was best articulated during discussion sessions by a history learner from 'Arctic Ocean High School' who stated: "People exaggerate stories and history can help you find the truth through research." Evidently, through an analysis of the collages what emerged was that history learners seem to view 'research' as a significant aspect that can be developed through a study of school history.

What also emerged from the analysis of the collages and related research methods was the idea of 'Heritage.' Although only two out of seventeen participants used the word 'heritage' in their collages almost all the others portrayed the idea through images/events/people of the past. These portrayals were further justified and explained during the presentation and discussion sessions. Thus, history learners seemingly regarded heritage as being historically significant. During the presentations history learners justified the idea of 'heritage' both nationally and personally. In other words, on a national level they were able to identify who they are as South Africans and this was clearly demonstrated by Zen from 'Indian Ocean Secondary School', who stated: "As a South African I am proud of my heritage and [school] history helps me to understand my heritage better." History learners were also able to identify their heritage on a personal level in the sense that another learner from same school shared her view by saying: "History teaches us about our heritage and who we are today, for example, about Indians and how they came into being." These views of history learners on the aspect of 'heritage' were supported during the discussion sessions through specific words and phrases such as "background, origin, identity, who we are, where we came from and proudly South African". History learners declared in the discussion sessions that the aspect of 'heritage' is historically significant to them because it is an important aspect that forms part of their curriculum in history in the secondary phase of their schooling. History learners indicated that they were required to do a heritage assignment in every year of their secondary phase of schooling for history, thus were well aware of the aspect and its importance. In other words, the heritage assignment is a compulsory requirement as per CAPS, hence history learners' idea regarding this was justified.

Linked to the idea of heritage is the aspect of 'Remembrance'. Collage-makers seemingly viewed remembering the past as having deeply affected people's lives. History learners depicted this idea in their collages symbolically in the form of images and in a few instances through the word 'Remembrance'. Many history learners during the presentation and discussion sessions hinted that remembrance of the past struggles of the freedom fighters in South Africa especially, was crucial even though it is very painful and brings back bad memories. Some history learners also indicated that through the study of past events in South Africa, especially the concept of apartheid, makes them feel negative and angry towards the Whites which they indicated is not the right thing to do today. Along these lines Smanga from 'Indian Ocean Secondary School' argued that remembering the past is closely linked to the holidays that we celebrate in South Africa. He confirmed this by stating: "We learn what holidays stand for and why it is celebrated and at the same time the meanings of these holidays." In addition to this, history learners from 'Indian Ocean Secondary School' as a collective indicated during the discussion session that by doing their history research/heritage assignments on public holidays they learnt so much of the meanings of what really happened on those holidays in the past, therefore the holidays which we celebrate became so much more meaningful to them as South Africans. In addition, a significant number of learners depicted 'National Women's Day' as being very significant and having a deep impact on the women of today. However, some learners did not agree because they felt that by remembering some of the bad things that happened on those days in the past put a dampener on the days we get off. Thus, a significant group of history learners opined that remembering the past on specific holidays brings back bad memories and deeply affects some people in the sense that they are reminded again of what transpired in the past and hence, they want to seek revenge or become angry at what really happened.

The idea of 'war and violence' were also foregrounded in many collages by the participants. In fact, ten out of the seventeen participants' depicted war related aspects in their collages. Thus, it seems that they believed that these aspects were historically significant in the study of school history. The aspect of war and violence was depicted in the form of images and through words in the collages by history learners. Thus, history learners under study seem to relate the study of school history as being closely associated with the study of wars, conflict and violence. This was clearly articulated during the presentation sessions by Nicole from 'Atlantic Ocean High School' who stated: "I think history is mainly about tales of war, lessons we have learnt and

suffering that countries went through because of war”. Added to this some history learners during the discussion sessions hinted that throughout history, wars have been a violent catalyst for political, economic and social change. This idea of wars was well demonstrated in the collages by images of “heavily armed soldiers, fighting between police and people, extensively injured civilians and dead bodies lying on the ground.” The idea of the consequences of war was supported by a collage-maker who argued “Well, war damages people, and it takes time for people and the nation to heal after a war”. These views of why history learners regarded war as a significant aspect in school history was articulated by a collage-maker who said: “I placed the words peace agreements, weapons used and torture because all related to war and we learn about these important aspects in history and it shows the many battles that were fought...which helps us to understand the past and the world better and the reality that took place in the nations.”

Linked to the idea of war and violence was the aspect of apartheid which was depicted in fourteen of the seventeen collages. In other words, collage-makers seemingly associated and linked the idea of apartheid to war, conflict and violence. The depiction in the collages regarding apartheid were supported by statements made during the presentations and the discussion sessions with ideas such as “pain, suffering, difficulties, death, struggles, fighting, bloodshed and violence”. During the presentations most learners justified these statements by stating that apartheid was a very sad time in South Africa because of all the conflict and violence people had to endure and this affected their lives deeply. These views on why apartheid was regarded as having affected people’s lives deeply was appropriately articulated by Nicole from ‘Atlantic Ocean High School’ during the discussion session, who stated: “Lots of people died. In our history textbooks we find lots of people died back then especially during the apartheid times.” This sentiment was echoed by Thabo from ‘Indian Ocean Secondary School’ who said: “Like all those days during apartheid stood out for me because it was like doomsdays, meaning all the battles and bombing and stuff like that.” During the discussion sessions what emerged strongly was that history learners indicated that as South Africans ‘apartheid’ was the most significant historical event that they got to learn about and understand better, through the study of school history.

In addition to these aspects, some history learners also regarded certain ‘symbols’ as historically significant. Symbols according to the history learners were an important means to communicate their views of history as a subject in the secondary phase of their schooling. History learners used different symbols to connote particular things in their collages. Bonga from ‘Arctic Ocean High School’ placed a symbol of a ‘gold star’ in her collage and during the discussion session she explained what it stood for: “It means or stands for a brighter future. It is put high up because it is like the sky, the stars looking down on us, and the colour also stands out, as gold is a rich colour.” This learner confirmed her idea of South Africans having a brighter future through the use of an appropriate symbol. Other significant symbols depicted in the collages by some learners was the South African flag and map. During discussion the sessions these history learners explained that they depicted the flag/map in their collages because it is a representation of all South Africans and its design and colours are a synopsis of principal elements of the country’s history. In line with the idea of colour, many collage-makers also depicted African colours in their collages which was highly symbolic. A significant minority of history learners also used the symbol of a ‘heart’ in their collages. These learners supported the use of this symbol during their presentations by stating that they used it as a symbol of love for their country or nation as well as for school history. These views on why history learners used symbols in their collages were voiced by Thabo from ‘Indian Ocean Secondary School’ who placed a heart on a map of Africa in his collage. He explained: “This is our continent/country and I put a heart there because I practically love my country even though there were different stages, like difficulties in South Africa during the apartheid time and wars fought, but I still love my country.” Thus, it can be concluded that history learners under study used symbols to express abstract thoughts and denote a nation who share the same goals.

A further aspect that emerged from the analysis was that history learners viewed a ‘study of world history’ as being historically significant in school history. This aspect was depicted in thirteen of the seventeen collages, in the form of words, phrases and images. Some of the words depicted in the collages regarding this idea were ‘World, Global, Universal and International’. Images of international political leaders and events were also portrayed. These included Obama, Hitler, Yasser Arafat, Nazi Party and holocaust. The depiction in the collages was supported by declarations made during the discussion sessions. A learner from ‘Indian Ocean Secondary School’ openly declared that: “It is very interesting to learn about other countries

and where they come from and how they ended up where they are today.” Another learner from ‘Arctic Ocean High School’ was a little more specific and justified this by stating: “History really helps me to understand what is happening around the world, like Gaza – the Arab-Israeli conflict.” In addition, a learner from ‘Pacific Ocean College’ echoed this statement by stating: “I’m really into ancient Egypt, Maya, Aztec and that kind of stuff and I wish we could learn more about these aspects.” It was also claimed during the discussion session by some learners that “... history is very informative and helpful and you get to learn a lot about other countries” Hence, it is clearly evident that history learners view the study of different places in the world in school history as important and beneficial to them. This seemingly implied that history learners viewed school history as more than a South African story.

Thus, history learners viewed certain historical concepts and historically related aspects/events as being historically significant. In line with the above discussion on what is historically significant to history learners there is an indication that the historical concepts, aspects and events discussed are linked and related to each other in some way or another.

Overall, the benchmark, historical significance was applied to the collages as well as the data sets made up of other methods as it related to the collages. The set criteria of historical significance being, who and what did history learners regard as historically significant, was discussed in this section and was seemingly well understood by the participating history learners. The major findings that emerged from ‘who’ learners regarded as being historically significant were people both as individuals and as a collective group. Regarding ‘what’ history learners associated with being historically significant related to historical concepts and historical pedagogical aspects. Most history learners under study viewed the people, concepts and events that they placed in their collages, in terms of scale, consequences and impact, as big and important. These ideas of who and what history learners regarded as historically significant portrays their views of school history symbolically. This benchmark was seemingly well understood by the participating history learners.

### **6.3 Historical Time**

History is the systematic study of the past and as such ‘time’ is an important aspect of the study of history. In fact, anything studied by a historian has to do with the passage of time. Therefore, time is the distinctive marker of history and is a concept central in the development of young people’s historical thinking. Historical time can be measured in many different ways. For the purposes of this study historical time will be analysed from two main criteria. The first being how did history learners identify the idea of historical time in their collages? This idea is measured by the use of dates, words/phrases, images and periods of time but also by more abstract symbolic portrayals. The second idea is how are history learners understanding of historical time depicted in their collages? This criterion is done from a social and conceptual point of view. These aspects that will be discussed in this section emerged from a close analysis of the collages done by history learners as well as the data sets made up of other methods as it related to the collages.

#### **6.3.1 Identification of historical time by history learners**

##### **6.3.1.1 Dates**

Dates provide a yardstick by which conditions and events of former ages can be given a place and context in time, and by which they can be arranged in the order in which they belong and their duration measured. In history, we use dates to help us find cause-and-effect relationships between human actions. In brief, later actions cannot influence earlier actions, so if we know which thing came first, we can rule out the later one as a cause of the earlier one (Jones, 2013).

A few history learners under study used dates to demonstrate the aspect of historical time in their collages. One learner depicted the year ‘1820’ under an image of Shaka. This date was justified by the learner during the presentations as being an important time as Shaka was the Zulu king in control at the time. They also indicated that the 1820’s were important as Shaka impacted the Zulu culture in a profound way and some tribes still continue with some of his ideas even today.

Another date depicted by a learner was '1949.' During the presentations this learner indicated that this date was significant in that the National Party gained power around this time and they immediately started implementing their policy of segregation. Hence, the concept of apartheid was fully implemented by 1949 in all aspects of society. In addition, to this another date and event that appeared in a few collages was the 'Treason Trial' of 1956, which was directly linked to the apartheid policy as explained above. History learners indicated during their presentations that this event has a special place in South African history because it lasted so long and it showed the determination of the freedom fighters to continue with the struggle.

In line with this, the year 1994 was depicted in two of the seventeen collages and learners indicated that it was a symbolic year in the sense that the first democratic elections were held in South Africa and the first Black president was elected which ended the apartheid era. Zen from 'Indian Ocean Secondary School' was a little more specific as he depicted the date and image of Mandela with what happened on that date: "10 May 1994 – Mandela sworn in as 1<sup>st</sup> democratic president in South Africa.

Interestingly, Jane from 'Pacific Ocean College' depicted the year '1997' in her collage and she also elevated it to show that it was important to her. However, during the discussion session she stated that the year did not really have a specific historical meaning but the idea was to symbolically show the importance of time in history. She articulated this idea of time by stating: "I have not put the word time, I've put a time. So '1997' is a year and basically history is about years and dates and what happened in those times. It was sort of just my way of putting the word time in a different manner." Hence, overall a few collage-makers viewed dates as in historical time as playing an important role in the study of school history. However, some history learners did not depict any exact dates in their collages which could mean that they did not necessarily associate dates with the study of school history.

### **6.3.1.2 Words/Phrases**

The participating history learners also used words and phrases to identify historical time in their collages. The actual word 'time' was used in four of the seventeen collages. During the

presentations history learners indicated that the reason why they placed the word 'time' in their collages was because of the whole idea of history being a study of the past in order to understand the present. This idea was captivatingly articulated by Mandisa from 'Arctic Ocean High School' during the discussion session when she stated: "You know how in history in order to understand life's journey, in order to look forward you have to deal with your past. So 'time' means in order for us as a country to move forward we have to let go of what happened in the past." This sentiment was echoed by Kutlwano from 'Pacific Ocean College' who indicated that she placed the word 'time' in her collage because she felt as if school history is teaching us about different times in our lives and we get to learn what happened in the past in other places.

Hence, what clearly emerged from the above idea of historical time is that collage-makers related historical time to the idea of school history being a study of the 'past.' This aspect was represented in almost all the collages in the form words and phrases. Many history learners under study commonly acknowledged during their presentations, that an understanding of the past is fundamental to an understanding of the present. This idea was confirmed by Zinhle from 'Arctic Ocean High School' who put this succinctly, "For me history makes me go back in time and helps me understand our past. It is only when you understand your past that you can understand the present and can move into the future." This sentiment was echoed by a learner during the discussion session who added: "...and we're learning about the past which can apply to the future." Hence, what emerged strongly from an analysis of the collages is that history learners seem to believe that a central ingredient in the study of school history, is a study of the past which is strongly related to the idea of time.

Historical time was also reflected through words and phrases in the history learners' collages. The words 'before and after' were depicted in a few collages. Zen, from 'Indian Ocean Secondary School' clarified these words by placing a picture of how a person looked before an event and then one how they looked after the event. He explained this during the discussion session by stating some events of the past have a major impact on people's lives and it really hurts them and you can actually see the pain and suffering on people's facial expressions. Another learner from 'Arctic Ocean High School' related these words conceptually to the South African situation in the sense that 'before' we had an apartheid system and 'after' that we had



a new system which we are experiencing now which is democracy. Further comments were made by some learners regarding these words. In addition, a few history learners during the discussion sessions commented that events that happened ‘before’ can help people to learn from their mistakes and hence ‘after’ they do not make the same mistakes.

Another temporal phrase used in the collages by a few learners was: ‘20 Years of freedom.’ History learners during the discussions indicated that they used this phrase to demonstrate the number of years that we have been freed from the apartheid system. Some learners also indicated that it has not been easy to work together through the changes over the past twenty years. This idea was confirmed by a learner from ‘Pacific Ocean College’ who stated: “There are lot of changes and we’ve had the fatigue of battles and after that we have tried to make everything nice and basically it’s just a brief history and it’s been 20 some years of trying to get there.” In this regard a learner from ‘Arctic Ocean High School’ stated that she placed the phrase ‘Dark days for Democracy’ in her collage because the past twenty years have not been easy due to the many conflicts and battles that the ‘nation building process’ has brought about. Therefore, through this phrase history learners were able to identify the aspect of historical time.

In addition, to these words and phrases, other words and phrases that emerged from the analysis of the collages are also linked to historical time. Some of these words and phrases include: “Heritage, holidays, Moment of truth, New South African, The Moment and New agenda.” History learners all linked these words to the South African context with regard to the apartheid system – the predominant temporal era depicted. The idea of depicting the words ‘heritage and holidays’ was explained by some learners during the discussion sessions as us having to celebrate past events and people through the holidays that have been set aside for us today. This also helps us to understand our heritage as South Africans according to some history learners. The phrases ‘Moment of truth and The moment’ strongly reflect the idea of historical time in the sense that history learners who depicted this in their collages indicated that these phrases stand out because we have overcome past struggles and are experiencing freedom and equality of all people in South Africa. The phrases ‘New South African’ depicted in Kimone’s collage and ‘The New Agenda’ depicted in Mandisa’s collage from ‘Atlantic Ocean High School’ were explained according to these history learners as representing the people of South

Africa who can see themselves as being new and the old has passed away with time. Mandisa also mentioned that we have a 'new agenda' which celebrates all peoples and not just one race group. Thus, the aspect of historical time can easily be depicted through these words and phrases.

### ***6.3.1.3 Images of time related objects***

Historical time was further identified in the history learners' collages through images depicted. The most common being those of political figures of the past. Fourteen of the seventeen collage-makers portrayed political figures in their collages. During the presentation and discussion sessions history learners explained that most of the political leaders depicted in their collages played major roles in the past and their actions have impacted present-day society in some way. Another common image portrayed by some history learners was 'maps' in particular the South African map. This according to the learners during the discussion sessions was representative of time in that over time there have been changes in names, geopolitical spaces and the way places are governed.

Moreover, a few history learners depicted the image of an actual 'watch' in their collages. This was explained by Zinhle from 'Arctic Ocean High School' who stated: "The watch is an indication that if we turn back the clock we will understand how things were in the past. Therefore, the image is symbolic for showing the importance of time in history." Also reflective of time was the images of 'hands' in different positions. Four of the seventeen history learners depicted the hand as a closed fist which they saw as being representative of victory and unity over time. Another image depicted were two hands a black hand and white hand clasped. This idea was explained during the presentation session as in the past we did not have unity but presently we do. The image of a hand coloured in different colours by Nadia from 'Atlantic Ocean High School' was also representative of time according to the history learner. She explained this by stating that: "it has taken a long time for people to become one and united."

#### ***6.3.1.4 Periods of Time***

Many history learners identified historical time in their collages through ‘periods of time.’ This idea was depicted through images and words. The most commonly depicted period was the apartheid era. This era was depicted in many collages in some form or another. History learners clearly regarded the apartheid era as a significant period of South Africa’s past. Zen from ‘Indian Ocean Secondary School’ confirmed this during the presentation session by stating: “I am proud of my history, it’s not that pretty, especially the apartheid period, but it is very interesting...” Similar thinking was exhibited by another learner from the same school who argued: “...I practically love my country even though there were different stages, like difficulties in South Africa during the apartheid time...”

Another common period of time that emerged from the analysis of the collages was the democratic system of government that came into being after the apartheid era. This period was depicted in many of the history learners’ collages through images and concepts. The most commonly depicted image associated with this period was Mandela and the most commonly depicted word was freedom. The history learners thinking in this regard was most appropriately encapsulated by Mandisa from ‘Atlantic Ocean High School’ during the presentation session: “Like in South Africa there was apartheid and then Democracy and so on ... Nelson Mandela fought for us, he had a new agenda for South Africa as a nation.” A similar view was echoed by Kimone from the same school: “The end refers to the end of apartheid in South Africa and a new South Africa was born and democracy came about. Also it refers to how certain people like Mandela fought for us and our freedom.”

Nazi Germany was another historical period of time that was depicted in six of the seventeen history learners’ collages. History learners indicated during the presentation and discussion sessions that this period of time during the past in Germany was traumatic for the Jews as Hitler did some derogatory things to this community. This idea was appropriately portrayed by Attiyah from ‘Pacific Ocean Collage’ by placing an image of the Nazi Party measuring the nose of a person to determine if he were a Jew. In fact, learners clearly demonstrated that Hitler was responsible for the extermination of thousands of Jews during this period through his institution of the ‘Holocaust.’

A few collage makers also depicted the idea of the ‘Dynasties’ as a period of time in their collages. History learners who depicted this period in their collages indicated during their presentations that they were fascinated by how the emperors of this era ruled their subjects. These participants also indicated that they studied the different dynasties in their grade 10 year and found this period of time very different to current times. This whole idea of emperors ruling during that period was confirmed by Kimone from ‘Atlantic Ocean High School’ who stated: “We learn about the ancient letters that were written by the emperors who ruled in the past in some nations like China.” This learner even placed an image of the ancient letters in her collage.

### **6.3.2 History learners’ understanding of historical time**

#### ***6.3.2.1 Social Time***

First and foremost history learners understood historical time from a social perspective. In other words, social time results from the fact that people are living in a community consisting of different generations. It marks births, marriages and deaths and other important events in a human life.

As such a few history learners depicted different generations in their collages. These participants explained the idea behind this depiction in their collages during the presentations and discussion sessions by stating that the different generations are working together to bring about success to a nation. This idea was depicted in the collages in the form of images and words. A few learners placed the words ‘young South Africans’ and ‘New Generation’ in their collages. This according to history learners refers to how the younger generation are now rising up to take their places in society. This is confirmed by Zen from ‘Indian Ocean Secondary School’ during the discussion session, who stated: “I put young South Africans, because I think history affects us the most because we are now in the future and we are going to learn about history and when we learn about the mistakes it is up to us to make it right or do something different as opposed to what they did in the past.” This clearly indicates that certain history learners under study believed that they can learn from the older generations. This idea was reinforced by an image placed in one of the history learners’ collages where the older generation are teaching the younger generation. However, another learner from ‘Indian Ocean Secondary School’ felt that the older generation are just old and cannot do much. This learner

also echoed the sentiment that we are living in times where we have a different kind of younger generation to the previous one. He justified this by stating: “I think young people nowadays are loud and outspoken and speak up about things that affect them and tend to speak up more about problems and issues and most young people do not respect the older people so they may be heard better and problems will be dealt with.” Evidently, history learners believe that the new generation can make a difference to a country over a period of time if they are given the opportunity.

Another trend related to social time that was depicted in four of the seventeen collages was the idea of different race groups socialising and doing life together. This idea was in the form of images but the participants explained this during the presentation session as people of colour now embracing each other whereas in the past they were not allowed to socialise because of the policies of the apartheid government but in the present time they can. Political leaders discussed earlier were also indicative of social time in the sense that leaders of different race groups were articulated in one of the history learners’ collages. In addition, social time was also portrayed in the collages by other events which were explained earlier. These included the ‘Women’s March, Treason Trial and Holocaust’.

### ***6.3.2.2 Conceptual Time***

The term conceptual is generally associated with the definitions of the concepts of some field of enquiry, which in this study is “An investigation into how history learners view history as a subject in the secondary phase of schooling.” Hence, certain history learners used concepts to depict the idea of historical time in their collages. Some of the concepts that were portrayed in history learners’ collages were: heritage, truth, the past, the future and develop. Some of these concepts have already been dealt with in the above sections.

The most common concept depicted in history learners collages was ‘the future.’ The future actually refers to the time yet to come. This idea was depicted in the collages both in words and through images. A few history learners related the idea of the future to an understanding of the past in order to help future generations. This was appropriately articulated during the

presentation session by Zama from 'Arctic Ocean High School' who stated: "It is only when you understand your past that you can move into the future." Kutlwano from Pacific Ocean College also put this idea succinctly by stating: "...history is basically a map to the future." In addition to this Mandisa from 'Atlantic Ocean High School' depicted the idea of the future by placing a 'long winding road' in her collage. She justified this during the presentation by explaining the concept 'future' as having to travel a long winding road with many mistakes before you get to the future. This idea was also linked to another learner from 'Arctic Ocean High School' who during the discussion session stated: "you know how in history in order to understand life's journey, in order to look forward you have to deal with your past. So 'time' means in order for us as a country to move forward we have to let go of what happened in the past and move on." Another learner from the same school even went on to say: "As a South African citizen I want to support and be in the future of the country."

Another concept depicted was the idea of 'develop.' History learners demonstrated this concept as being important in that they recognised that developing a nation takes time and effort. Some history learners looked at this concept in relation to the South African experience. This was confirmed during the discussion sessions where some history learners indicated that after South Africa became a democracy it was so difficult to develop and work together as a nation in all spheres of life. Some history learners indicated during the discussion session that as the younger generation they would like to take responsibility and contribute to the development of the country. This was confirmed by Zama from 'Arctic Ocean High School' who posited: "History, for me is a subject I chose to do because I thought it can help me to understand my country better so that I can contribute to its development." A learner from 'Pacific Ocean College' echoed these sentiments by stating; "This is our time, this is our time to change everything, this is our time to make everything better."

Overall, history learners participating in this study viewed the benchmark, historical time as playing an important role in school history because they seemingly explored it well in their collages. Collage-makers symbolically identified historical time through dates, words and phrases, images and periods of time in their collages as well as during the presentation and discussion sessions. In addition, history learners' understanding of historical time was depicted socially and conceptually through words and images in their collages. Thus, the benchmark

historical time was seemingly well portrayed by history learners in their collages to convey their views of school history.

#### **6.4 Nature of historical knowledge and understanding**

The nature of history as a school subject is such that it has the capacity to help one understand aspects of the past so that one can assess and judge the present and consider the future. These are the rudimentary building blocks of historical consciousness. Furthermore, it assists learners in understanding not only who they are and where they come from, but also offers them a platform on which to make informed decisions about present issues and further developments. For the purposes of this study the nature of historical knowledge and understanding depicted in the history learners collages will be analysed using the set criteria for this benchmark.

##### **6.4.1 Evidence of critical thinking about the past in terms of how and why events/developments happened**

History learners espoused critical thinking about the past symbolically in their collages in the form of words, phrases and images. Evidence of critical thinking about the past is demonstrated in history learners' collages in terms of how and why political leaders of different eras behaved in a certain way. A common example was that of Mandela. As explained above he was one of the most commonly depicted images that was portrayed in many collage. The idea of critical thinking is prevalent here in the sense that history learners linked these images of Mandela to key words and phrases and actions such as apartheid, freedom, democracy, legacy and icon. This is most appropriately articulated by Natasha from 'Arctic Ocean High School' during the presentations who stated: "Just by studying South Africa's past and about its great leaders you can have hope, for me Mandela actually left a legacy of hope for us to follow." Evidence exists here of critical thinking in that by understanding the role Mandela played in the past history learners are able to assess and judge the present and consider the future.

Evidence of critical thinking with regard to political leaders is also demonstrated in some of the collages through the depiction of Hitler's involvement with Nazi Germany in the past. Collage-makers were able to link Hitler to the 'Holocaust' and being responsible for starting

World War II, through words, phrases and images. During the presentation this was explained by one of the research participants: “Topics like the Holocaust interest me and I wanted to learn and analyse this more, I actually view Anne Frank as a role model because of what I learnt about her.” Another learner from ‘Pacific Ocean College’ echoed this sentiment “...ever since I learnt about the holocaust and what Hitler had done to the Jews, I started doing my own investigations on the topic because I found it so interesting.” This clearly indicates that history learners were critically thinking about how and why events happened in the past.

In addition, to the above, some history learners also depicted major global events and developments of the past in their collages. These events and developments were linked to words and phrases which indicated that history learners were critically thinking about these past events and how they had an impact on the present and related to the future. This is justified by a history learner from ‘Arctic Ocean High School’ during the presentations when arguing in a very personal manner that “For me history makes me go back in time and helps me understand our past. It’s only when you understand your past that you can understand the present and can move into the future.” An event depicted in a few collages was for example the ‘Women’s March’ which history learners indicated during the presentation and discussion sessions that this event made them aware of how women became involved in the struggle for freedom during the apartheid era. Furthermore, history learners were also able to analyse the impact that women had during the past and the legacy they left for the women of today.

Another aspect depicted in most collages that reflected critical thinking by history learners was the idea of past ‘wars and violence.’ History learners seem to deeply associate the study of history with ‘wars’ as mentioned in the section above. This is confirmed by a history learner from ‘Indian Ocean Secondary School’ who argued: “History teaches us about all the wars fought in the past and I really enjoy learning about the different wars.” This sentiment was echoed by another learner from ‘Atlantic Ocean High School’ who during the presentations explained that she put a red danger sign in her collage because it represented that there were many wars and conflict and no peace in the past. In addition, to this one research participant from ‘Indian Ocean Secondary School’ was a little more specific and claimed: “by studying history I got to understand the ‘Arab-Israeli’ conflict better, and this is important because this war is still going on.” The fact that history learners attached certain significant words such as:



armed soldier, killed, weapons, peace agreements, battles, torture and dead bodies, to the aspect of war and conflict is evident that history learners were engaged in critical thinking regarding this aspect.

Overall, evidence exists in the history learners' collages of critical thinking about the past in terms of how and why events and developments happened or are still happening. This thinking is justified by a learner from 'Indian Ocean Secondary School' who claimed that: "I am learning a lot of different skills in history like how to analyse and be a critical thinker." This line of thinking on an important pedagogical component of school history was supported by many of the history learners during the presentation and discussion sessions. Another point that history learners reiterated during these sessions was that through history they can discover new knowledge about the past. This idea of new discoveries tends to suggest that history learners are thinking critically about certain events/developments. This thought was appropriately articulated by a learner from 'Arctic Ocean High School' when she said: "It is only when you understand your past that you can understand the present and can move into the future."

#### **6.4.2 Evidence of how history has affected people's views, opinions and human behaviour**

History learners clearly thought that history has affected people's views, opinions and behaviour in many ways. This was depicted in the collages through images and words. The most common image depicted in the collages was where people of different race groups are mixing or socialising together. These depictions were demonstrated in only a few collages but the participants during the discussion sessions justified the selection of these images by stating that in the past people of South Africa were not allowed to do life together because of the policy of apartheid. Hence, people are now free to mix and we have a democracy where all people have a say in the running of the country and this aspect of our history has changed the way people view and behave towards people of different race groups. The most appropriate image depicted in Attiyah's collages was where an African woman and White woman are embracing and openly displaying loving gestures. This aspect was further discussed during the discussion session at Pacific Ocean College where participants gave powerful examples of their personal

situations where learners of all different races are freely learning and socialising with each other in their school environment.

Another depiction in the collages was related to different generations of people mixing and learning together. Even though only one of the seventeen collages portrayed an older person teaching a group of young children, there were other images and words that related to this aspect in an indirect manner. This intergenerational depictions were justified by history learners during the discussion sessions by arguing that the young people can learn from the older generation by not making the same mistakes that were made in the past. The most apt image in this regard was where an older person was teaching a young group of children who all seemed eager to learn from the person of the older generation. However, a few of the participating history learners felt that the younger generations can make a huge difference to our country because they have fresh ideas which are better than those harboured by the older generations. In this regard, one learner openly stated in a condescending manner: "...they are too old and cannot make any changes." Thus, participants seemed to have different views regarding this aspect.

Interestingly, history learners indicated during the discussion sessions that by studying history their views and opinions have been affected. Some learners indicated that after they studied South African history in the curriculum they felt that school history was biased against Whites for they are collectively labelled as if they all hated Blacks. Hence, many learners felt that they were confronted with an undisputed school history which did not differentiate between Whites who discriminated against Blacks and those who did not. But instead school history collectively referred to Whites as if they all discriminated against Blacks as being part and parcel of the apartheid system. In this regard, some history learners stated during the discussion sessions that they learnt that not all Whites discriminated against Blacks and also that some Whites struggled for liberation of Blacks. In addition to this, certain history learners also indicated that they understood many things about the apartheid era from doing their own research. One learner from 'Pacific Ocean College' appropriately confirmed all of these thoughts by stating: "My views of discrimination against different races have changed because of my interacting with different race groups at school." This clearly shows that outside history plays a significant role in shaping learners' views and opinions.

History learners also used many words and phrases in their collages to demonstrate how history has affected people's views, opinions and behaviour. In this regard, the word 'pride' depicted in Zen's collage best portrays this idea. History learners justified the use of this word which they placed in their collages during the discussion sessions. Zen from 'Indian Ocean Secondary School' best articulated this by stating: "I am proud of my history, it's not all that pretty, but it is very interesting and if I went somewhere else and someone said, Oh you from South Africa, I will say yeah I am from South Africa and I will say it with pride because that's how I feel about my history as a South African."

Some history learners also depicted how people's behaviour was affected by history. During the presentation and discussion sessions history learners indicated that certain people's behaviour changes when they are faced with situations that affect certain matters. One typical example they indicated was Hitler's negative behaviour towards the Jews. The participating history learners felt that he did what he did because he was power hungry and behaved in this manner because he was ruthless. Hence, the policies implemented by Hitler and his Nazi party severely affected people's views and behaviour. Some learners also made reference to Mandela's behaviour during the apartheid era where he stood firm and was prepared to do anything to fight for freedom. Certain history learners suggested that even after he was victorious in achieving freedom he did not discriminate against the Afrikaners who had done so much to hurt him, but wanted all races to live together as one. Thus, history learners felt that many present-day South Africans have changed their views and behaviour in order to try to live up to Mandela's legacy.

### **6.4.3 Reference to identity**

Most history learners depicted the idea of identity through the phrase 'South Africans' or by means of images in this regard such as the flag and map of South Africa. In fact, many learners justified this during the presentation and discussion sessions by stating that they are proudly South African and history has shaped their identity as South Africans. Some learners even depicted the phrase 'New South African' in their collages and explained it during the presentations as the old is gone and we are now starting afresh as one hence, the idea of 'new.' Linked to this idea was the aspect of 'heritage' which was also depicted in some collages

through words and images. History learners felt that as South Africans we have a rich history and should be proud of it and they justified this through some of the images placed in their collages. The dominant images depicted in the collage in this regard were related mainly to aspects of South African history, thus portraying the idea of identity as South Africans. Also during the presentation and discussion sessions the idea of the younger generation making a difference and playing a key role in the politics of South Africa was reinforced by collage-makers. Thus, history learners as the younger generation portrayed the idea of personal identity in a South African context.

In line with the above thinking, Smanga from ‘Indian Ocean Secondary School’ placed the phrase “It’s our city, It starts with us” in his collage. During the discussion session he succinctly explained this by saying as South Africans we need to take responsibility to enhance and embrace our identity as people of this nation. A learner from ‘Arctic Ocean High School’ concludes this idea of identity interestingly by stating: “Also I find through taking [school] history you get to know who you are, it helps with a person’s identity and people can get to know where and how they came into being.”

#### **6.4.4 Evidence of the use of relevant sources represented**

Another observation that emerged from the analysis of the collages was that history learners used a variety of sources to depict their views of history as a subject. In other words, they used different kinds of sources to provide a more complete picture of their views of school history. Some of the sources used were from the given collage material such as newspapers, magazines, fabric, photos, pictures/images from textbooks, coloured cardboard and pastels. The selection of their sources from those provided also created an opportunity for them to symbolically portray their views of school history in a non-traditional manner instead of relying on the traditional textbook sources.

Another significant observation was that some history learners actually sketched some of their images because they could not find suitable fragments to convey their views of school history. Some participating history learners also wrote out specific words and phrases that they felt

were specific to the ideas they wanted to convey about how they view school history. Some of these words included: freedom, war, apartheid, better life, discovery, Gaza, love, power, passion and propaganda. Also the manner in which collage-makers set out these different sources that they used in their collages was very meaningful and some expressed this during the presentation and discussion sessions. In addition, history learners also reflected the importance of using different sources to convey past events/developments. This was justified by them placing the phrase such as ‘source-based questions’ in their collages. This spoke directly to the pedagogical interaction with sources they experienced in school history as it is one of the recommended means of testing as per CAPS.

Overall, what emerged from the analyses of the collages as well as the presentation and discussion sessions is that history learners depicted the nature and historical knowledge and understanding symbolically in their collages through various images, words and phrases. This idea was depicted by collage-makers evidently portraying critical thinking about past events/developments in their collages as discussed above. In addition, the participating history learners also depicted how history affected people’s views, opinions and behaviour in their collages, the idea of identity and use of sources was also well presented. However, in some instances even though history learners seemingly understood this benchmark there may be instances where some depictions were incidental. Thus, the benchmark ‘nature of historical knowledge and understanding’ and the set criteria were generally well represented in history learners’ collages symbolically to convey their views of school history.

## **6.5 Historical Empathy**

In a historical context, the concept empathy is much more than just seeing a person, idea or situation through the eyes of another, but rather it is a much deeper understanding of the circumstances and contexts surrounding the event. In other words, historical empathy is a process of understanding people in the past by contextualising their actions. Hence, this can lead to an understanding and explanation of why people in the past acted as they did. Historical empathy is thus necessary to understand history and to appreciate current events. History learners demonstrated the idea of historical empathy in their collages through an understanding of circumstances and concepts surrounding an event/happening as well as depicting an

awareness, respect, appreciation and sensitivity to complex human actions and achievements. However, the idea of historical empathy was done in a very vague manner by the history learners.

The participating history learners portrayed an understanding to a certain degree of how circumstances and concepts surrounded an event and people. A few history learners depicted images of Mandela, Women's March and the Treason trial in their collages. During the presentations these learners explained why they placed these specific events and people in their collages. They were able, in a clear manner to link these events as well as Mandela to the apartheid era in South Africa. They also indicated that these people/events played a significant role in bringing the country to freedom through their efforts and sacrifices. This empathetic thinking was most suitably articulated by Zama from 'Arctic Ocean High School' who presented: "Basically, it means that in our past we had difficulties, we had leaders/people trying to make a better future for us, now that we finally reached freedom and breakthrough in the struggle of the past, we can now have a better life for everyone." Hence, what emerged from the analysis was that some history learners were able to understand the circumstances and context around an event and the decisions made by some political leaders. In other words, history learners were able to a certain extent engage in empathetic thinking regarding this idea.

A few history learners also illustrated the idea of historical empathy with reference to Hitler, to a certain extent. These history learners placed an image of Hitler in their collages and associated Hitler in their collages to "World War II, Days of Judgment, power hungry, propaganda and final days." Above all they linked him to being responsible for the 'Holocaust' which some learners thought was a horrific event during Hitler's era. The Nazi Party was also depicted measuring the facial proportions of the 'Jews' in a Social Darwinist manner to identify who they really were. History learners who depicted this idea indicated during their presentation sessions that this was a derogatory practice. In this regard Attiyah from 'Pacific Ocean College' declared: "How could they do that to people, I can just imagine what it felt like." Another learner from the same school additionally argued: "So when I am in the classroom studying about like Hitler and how he thought Jews were evil people and needed to be killed, I kind of put myself in their position and think of what would I have done." To this was added: "In grade 9 my teacher used to teach Hitler and the Holocaust so well that I used to

imagine myself being, Anne Frank, like sitting in her closet or hiding and being afraid of the Nazi's... I felt like I was there in a way..." These ideas clearly indicate that history learners empathetically thought about certain historical events and people.

Hence, what emerged from this is that there is evidence in history learners' collages of an empathetic understanding of why certain people in the past acted as they did or experienced what they did. Evidently, some history learners were able to put themselves into people of the past's shoes and imagine what they experienced. Furthermore, during the presentation and discussion sessions some history learners explained why these people acted or behaved the way they did. A typical example was that of Mandela where history learners implied that he behaved in a certain way because of the political climate at the time. One history learner aptly stated that "Mandela made many sacrifices to fight for freedom and equality for all people in South Africa, and left a legacy of hope for us the younger generation to follow."

History learners demonstrated an awareness, respect, appreciation and sensitivity to certain complex human actions and behavior to a certain extent. This was depicted in some of the collages through images, words and phrases. A few collage-makers depicted words and phrases such as rewarding, pride, South African, 20 years of freedom, democracy, unity and peace in their collages to show awareness, respect, and appreciation for the individuals who tirelessly fought for freedom in South Africa during the apartheid era. The most commonly depicted image was Mandela and history learners openly stated during their presentations that he was a hero and left a legacy which we need to honour. Hence, it is evident that they seemingly appreciated and respected what Mandela did for the people of South Africa. These ideas of Mandela were appropriately articulated by Zama from 'Arctic Ocean Secondary School' who explicitly presented: "I want to follow in Nelson Mandela's footsteps and take democracy to another level." The same learner also further justified her views by claiming: "I also learned to appreciate the leaders and the people who fought for freedom for us." Thus, history learners seemingly illustrated the idea of historical empathy through the idea of being aware of certain events/happenings as well as respecting and appreciating political leaders of the past.

Some history learners also depicted images of people of different races in South Africa doing life together and socialising with each other. These images were depicted in a few collages and history learners during the presentations explained that the idea behind this was to show their awareness and appreciation of the changes that have taken place in society and how people are now free to mix with anybody irrespective of their race. Other images which also clearly depicted the idea of appreciation and respect was the South African flag and map. Thabo from 'Indian Ocean Secondary' placed the words 'I love South Africa' alongside the image of the South African flag and drew a heart on the map which he confirmed during her presentation as loving his country and hence, a heart on the map. The learner mentioned above from 'Indian Ocean Secondary' further confirmed her love for South Africa during her presentation session by stating: "I love my country, I love it to bits." Based on the above history learners seemingly showed an appreciation and respect for South Africa thus reflecting that they were engaged in the idea of empathetic thinking through the above concepts.

In addition to the above a few history learners demonstrated an awareness of certain political leaders who were caught up in complex human actions and achievements. These include F.W. De Klerk, Mbeki, Zuma and Hitler. Mandisa seemed to portray F.W. De Klerk and Mbeki in a positive way because she mentioned during the presentations that they helped pave the way for peaceful negotiations in the past which achieved a democratic nation. In contrast, other international men depicted in the collages such as Hitler and the White 'Man of War' were portrayed in a seemingly negative light. In line with this thinking, Zinhle from 'Arctic Ocean High School' seemed to suggest that our current South African president, Zuma, did not set a good example for the nation. This was confirmed by the phrase 'Tragedy of South Africa' which was placed above his image in her collage. Thus, collage-makers seemingly portrayed the idea of empathetic understanding through the concept awareness.

History learners generally depicted some international events and leaders in their collages, hence, evidence exists that some history learners are aware of what is happening around the world. A common event depicted in the collages was the Arab-Israeli conflict. History learners stated during the discussion session that they only became aware and sensitive to this event because of their study of history. The most commonly depicted international leader depicted was Hitler. History learners explicitly stated during the discussion session that they were well



aware of all Hitler's doings and they felt very sensitive when they studied especially the 'Holocaust' which Hitler was responsible for initiating.

Overall, the idea of historical empathy, was not well represented in history learners' collages in comparison to the previous benchmarks. The most prominent aspect that was not dealt with well was the idea of political sensitivity, which could possibly be because of the silences and gaps in school history. What emerged from an analysis of the collages, presentation and discussion sessions is that collage-makers did depict the idea of empathetic thinking regarding certain aspects but it was not dealt with in depth. For example, there was an overt sense that collage-makers felt sorry for the victims of war but not for the soldiers. In other words, history learners' depictions in the collages were better related to sympathy and emotions as opposed to empathy. This creates the impression that collage-makers portrayed the idea of historical empathy more from an incidental point of view. Thus, history learners seemingly struggled to understand this benchmark hence, it was not well portrayed. In fact, historical empathy is a difficult and complex concept, and as such there is a possibility of it not being taught well at school level due to teachers not necessarily being equipped to deal with it. Furthermore, learners are not naturally equipped to deal with empathy and if they have not been taught or guided on how to empathise they will not be able to grasp this historical thinking concept. This reasoning justifies to some extent why collage-makers were not able to fully explore the concept historical empathy.

## **6.6 Cause and Consequence**

Cause and consequence is one of the six historically thinking concepts captured in my research instrument and plays an important role in understanding the nature of school history. Causes are multiple and layered, involving both long-term ideologies, institutions and conditions, and short term motivations, actions and events. Causes that are offered for any particular event may differ, based on the scale of the history and the approaches of the historian. Consequence on the other hand is an act or instance of following something as an effect, result or outcome and is related to cause. Historians are like detectives, they try to understand what happened in the past, and why it happened. Hence, the concepts of cause and consequence address who or what influenced events to occur and what the repercussions of those events were. The history

learners under study demonstrated to a certain extent the interrelated concepts of cause and consequence symbolically in their collages through images, words and phrases. An analysis of the collages regarding these concept was based on history learners' recognition of causes for events and consequences of them as well as if there is an indication of how these consequences can drive future events and help explain human behaviour.

With reference to causes and consequences learners focused on events and happenings of the past. Of these the most prominent ones will be foregrounded in this section. History learners' depiction of 'Women's March' in the form of images and words in their collages demonstrates that they recognised the reason for this event and the results thereof to a certain extent. During the discussion sessions history learners stated that the major cause of the 'Women's March' during the apartheid era was because of the government's policy of segregation. Thus, women took it upon themselves to fight for their freedom. Some learners also mentioned during their presentation sessions that this march had a profound effect and as a result this event is still celebrated today in the form of a public holiday as a consequence of the 'Women's March'. However, even though history learners indicated that they seemingly understood the causes of the 'Women's March' they did not actually go into depth of what really caused this event.

Another historical event that was depicted by a few learners was the 'Treason Trial.' This event according to history learners was also caused by the segregation policy during the apartheid era. The most prominent freedom fighters during the apartheid era, including Mandela, were arrested and accused of treason but were eventually found not guilty. This event according to some history learners has a special place in South African history because it showed the determination of the apartheid government to stifle all opposition to its policies. However, history learners indicated that the efforts of these men in the past who fought for freedom for the nation had many positive consequences in that South Africa eventually became a free country. Thus, history learners were able to identify that this event had positive consequences for South Africa for the future. Once again as mentioned above history learners did not go deeper into what caused this event to happen. In other words, they seemingly mentioned one cause and thought that was the only cause to the event which created the impression that history learners did not fully understand that historical events/happenings are made up of multiple causes.

A few history learners also depicted an image of Mandela with the phrase: “I was sworn in as the country’s first democratically elected President on the 10 May 1994.” The main cause of this event was largely because in their view a single person, Mandela, sacrificed and was committed in the fight for freedom for all peoples of South Africa during the apartheid era. History learners explicitly stated during the discussion sessions that he was a hero who left a legacy of hope for the nation. They also recognised that the consequences of his actions in the past led to the nation becoming free and him being elected as the first democratic president which was a historic moment for South Africans. Hence, Mandela’s efforts and sacrifices as mentioned above had positive consequences for South Africans. However, this aspect can be viewed as a narrow perspective from history learners in that there were many other reasons and people that led to South Africa becoming a democracy.

History learners also depicted the idea of war and violence prominently in their collages as part of their views of school history. Most learners associated school history with the study of ‘wars and violence.’ This thought was confirmed by a learner from ‘Indian Ocean Secondary School’ who stated: “I am very interested in the wars that have taken place and how it affected places and history helps me to understand this.” There is evidence in the collages that history learners recognise that the event of war does not just happen but is caused due to certain factors. In addition, a learner from ‘Atlantic Ocean High School’, during her presentation justified this concept by stating: “Peace agreements, weapons used and torture all related to war and we learn about these important war concepts in history and shows the many battles that were fought.” The above statement confirms that history learners do understand to a certain extent that there are consequences to war and violence.

What emerged strongly after a close analysis of the collages is that history learners recognise that wars take place because of conflict situations and sometimes because people believe that their policies are the best hence, war can be caused due to varying factors. Some of the concepts history learners depicted in their collages with regard to war are: conflict, power struggle, death, killings, peace agreements, negotiations, weapons, torture and fighting. In addition to this, the images that were represented with regard to war included: “dead bodies, armed soldiers, fighting between ordinary people and soldiers, injured people and faces of people showing expressions of hurt and pain.” During the discussion session some history learners

indicated that the many wars that were fought had serious consequences for nations and the healing process after a war takes very long. Confirmation of this idea was articulated by a learner from 'Atlantic Ocean High School' who stated: "History teaches us how people and countries suffered because of wars and also how innocent people died in the past wars." However, another learner from the same school looked at the consequences of war from a different slant when she stated during her presentation session: "I think history is mainly about tales of war, lessons we have learnt and suffering that countries were faced with but we also learn that past wars have taught countries to deal better with situations." Overall, collage-makers seemingly did not really identify the real causes of war as such but they looked at causes in a more abstract way through words and images.

The participating history learners indicated through their collages, presentation and discussion sessions how consequences of events can drive future events and help explain human behaviour. History learners first and foremost demonstrated this idea through the concept of apartheid. This concept was reflected in many collages through images of Mandela as well as the words such as protest, race, march, struggle, no freedom, change and conflict. History learners indicated through the images and words in their collages and during the presentation and discussion sessions that Mandela's past contribution to the fight for freedom during the apartheid era led to the future which was the birth of a democratic nation. Hence, history learners indicated during the discussion sessions that Mandela's actions in the past explains why on some occasions he behaved the way he did towards the apartheid government. A learner from 'Arctic Ocean High School' concluded this point by stating: "... it means that in our past we had difficulties like apartheid, but we had leaders like Mandela who tried to make a better future for us, now that we finally reached freedom and breakthrough in the struggle of the past, we can now just have a better life for everyone." Although the idea of idealism seems to be the focus here, evidence exists to a certain extent of history learners understanding that certain consequences of apartheid drove future events as in the idea of democracy and explained Mandela's behaviour.

Linked to the above idea, history learners demonstrated how human behaviour was affected by past events. In fact, some history learners indicated during their discussion sessions that history involves a study of human beings. This was confirmed by a learner from 'Indian Ocean

Secondary School’, who stated: “I enjoy research on human beings which history offers.” Another learner from ‘Pacific Ocean College’ echoes the similar sentiment when she stated: “So I kind of learn about different people and I kind of learn about how they think.” History learners depicted this idea in their collages symbolically through images and words. In regard to this aspect a few participants portrayed the idea of different race groups mixing and socialising together. This history learner explained during the discussion sessions that people now have different perceptions about each other and they can freely mix which could not happen in the past. Another aspect that was raised during the discussion session was that certain groups of people in the past saw themselves as inferior because that is what they were led to believe but now people are embracing other races and mind-sets have changed. This was justified by one learner who depicted woman of different race groups embracing each other. Some of the words such as unity, peace, set free, future and new South African placed in different collages further justified these thoughts. Hence, history learners were able to identify some of the causes of how certain races were discriminated against in the past and the consequences they had to face.

Overall, the concepts of cause and consequence were not well portrayed by history learners in their collages and during the presentation and discussion sessions. What seemed to emerge from the analysis regarding this benchmark is that history learners incidentally linked certain depictions in their collage to causes and consequences. Some of these ideas included for example the concepts of war as a cause and peace as a consequence or struggle as it relates to freedom. In other words, collage-makers seemingly depicted and understood the idea of consequences but did not fully understand the concept causes. Thus, what emerged strongly is that this benchmark lacked depth as history learners seemed to struggle with understanding these concepts. This could also be related to the fact that the concept causation is a complex concept in engaging learners and if it is not communicated well in the curriculum learners will struggle with the concepts. It almost seemed that history learners could not make the connection between cause and consequences hence, they provided insufficient evidence regarding causes. A typical example of this was the apartheid era which was depicted in many collages yet the history learners did not state the causes of apartheid but seemed to focus on the consequences as mentioned above. In fact, regarding this idea what came out strongly was that history learners seemingly implied that there was only one and not multiple causes of apartheid. Hence, it can be concluded that history learners looked at causes of events and happenings from a more

abstract manner. These thoughts thus speak of school history not covering the concepts of cause and consequences fully with learners.

## **6.7 Change and continuity**

Change and continuity is one of the benchmarks that is related to historical thinking and plays a key role in understanding the nature of school history. History is a complex mix of continuity and change. There were many things happening in the past at the same time, some of which changed quickly while others remain relatively continuous. Judgments of continuity and change can be made on the basis of compromise between some point in the past and the present or between two points in the past, such as before or after an event. Change over time is usually evaluated using the ideas of progress and decline. History learners represented the interrelated concepts of change and continuity in their collages mainly by showing how the past can affect the present and the future through images and words. An analysis of the collages regarding these concepts was based on history learners identifying what has changed and what has remained the same over a period of time and representation of change and continuity in certain political, social and economic spheres.

Collage-makers identified to a certain extent what has changed and what has remained the same over a period of time. In this regard, history learners seemingly focused on contemporary South Africa – apartheid and after. History learners depicted the theme of change and continuity in several ways. One was through South African political leaders. What emerged from a close analysis of the collages was that Mandela was a key figure who brought about radical change to South Africa and the people. This was also justified by some learners during the discussion sessions when they stated that Mandela fought for freedom during the apartheid era and brought about change to South Africa for the better. Some learners even stated that he not only brought about a change from the apartheid system to a democratic system but he left a legacy of hope for the people of South Africa. This thought was most appropriately articulated by Mandisa from ‘Atlantic Ocean High School’, who posited: “Mandela was the first black president and he brought about a lot of change during his time and things changed for the better and there was a bigger better picture for the country.” Some history learners during the discussion session even went further to say that even though he is dead his legacy lives on because of the changes

that he managed to bring about. This idea is closely linked to continuity in the sense that even though Mandela no longer lives his ideas will continue to be remembered for generations to come. Added to this idea of political leaders, history learners' collages and presentations portrayed the idea that political leaders also changed over time – De Klerk to Mandela to Mbeki to Zuma.

Linked to political leaders is the idea that even though leaders have changed over periods of time their ideas and methods remain for a long time thereafter. This was depicted in a few collages through leaders such as Shaka. Kimone from 'Atlantic Ocean High School', presented: "Shaka was ruthless and was associated with violence and wars." Later during the discussion session she added that even though Shaka is dead some of his ideas are still practiced by some groups of people in society. This idea about Shaka she seemingly got from her study of school history whereby Shaka forms part of what is prescribed in CAPS for grade 10. Another leader who was depicted in this light during the discussion session was Yasser Arafat who a few learners indicated also left some of his ideas with his people which they continue to practice today.

A few history learners' collages also represented the idea of change and continuity in certain political and social spheres. A common political aspect that history learners depicted in their collages was the types of governments that changed over periods of time in certain places. A few learners demonstrated some of the ancient forms of governments that were in place during the past. This was depicted in the form of images and words. Zen from 'Indian Ocean Secondary School' placed an image of an Emperor's palace in her collage with the words 'Dynasty' and 'Centre for Interest' attached to it. This idea was also justified during the discussion session by Kimone from 'Atlantic Ocean High School', "We learn about the ancient letters that were written by the emperors who ruled in the past in some nations." Some learners explicitly argued during the discussion sessions that it is good that these systems no longer exist and have been changed to better systems of government. A learner from 'Atlantic Ocean High School' justified this idea by stating: "Emperors in Europe in those days had all the power and people did not have a say." Another common depiction in the collages was the apartheid government which was in place in the past in South Africa. History learners clearly indicated that this system was changed and now we have a democratic form of government in place. This

idea of change in South Africa from apartheid to democracy as in itself a global and larger change in government was portrayed in many collages through words and images suggesting that history learners realised the importance of this change in the form of government which continues presently. Also depicted a few of the learners' collages was the era of Nazi Germany under Hitler. Once again learners during the discussion sessions indicated that this form of government was not good and had to be replaced with a better system. A learner from 'Pacific Ocean College', during her presentation session, summed up Hitler's regime as: "How could he think like that in the past and why were some leaders like Hitler so evil." These ideas illustrate that there were major changes that happened in the political arena during the past to bring about better systems of government which continue today.

In addition to these political changes some history learners depicted social changes that took place in certain societies. History learners indicated during the presentation and discussion sessions that the idea of change and continuity starts with people. This was justified by a learner from 'Indian Ocean Secondary School', who argued: "Because everything that happened in the past in history starts with people and what they thought was right and wrong ... and people stood up for their rights and fought for their country and so it all starts with us as the people to make a change." What emerged from a close analysis of the collages was that focus was placed on the younger generation by some learners. These images and words were justified during the discussion session by a learner from 'Indian Ocean Secondary School' who stated: "I placed young South Africans, because I think history affects us the most because we are now in the future and we are going to learn about history and when we learn about the mistakes it is up to us to make it right or do something different as opposed to what they did in the past." Some history learners also indicated during the discussion sessions that the younger generation presently are loud and outspoken and have the freedom to speak out about things that affect them so they are probably heard better than the past and problems will be dealt with. A learner from 'Arctic Ocean High School', during the discussion session summed up this idea of the younger generation by declaring: "...you see in history you learn certain things, it's up to you to be able to understand what is being said, it is all about your mind-set you understand,... but it is all up to you, how you feel about certain things you are told, whether you want to change the things that have been happening or you just want to continue, ..."



Overall, the concepts of change and continuity were not well represented in the collages, presentation and discussion sessions. However, some aspects regarding these concepts were dealt with to a certain extent as discussed above. In some instances what seemed to emerge is that collage-makers incidentally linked certain depictions in their collages to change and continuity. Much of what history learners dealt with was related to change and not continuity as such. This means for example that the participating history learners implied that we are now living the change but did not fully portray all aspects that remained the same in their collages. Some typical examples in this regard were the depictions of gender, war/violence and school history being incomplete. This implied that history learners struggled with understanding the concepts change and continuity and its interrelatedness. In fact, change and continuity are sophisticated and require a high level of understanding. This seemingly could be related to the notion that the concepts ‘change and continuity’ are given limited attention and focus at school level because of their complex nature. Added to this is the curriculum is in itself episodic and does not reinforce concepts of change and continuity.

## **6.8 Conclusion**

This chapter provided a discussion of an in depth analysis of the second level of analysis for this study, which is an investigation into how history is viewed as a school subject in the secondary phase of schooling. As mentioned in the introduction a second level of analysis was necessary as the first level deemed to be insufficient for a PhD study. Hence, using the developed instrument (Appendix A) I designed, I analysed my collages and the data constructed by means of the related methods. In other words, I analysed my research data against the six benchmarks as well as the related criteria set for each benchmark. At first I briefly explained the benchmark, thereafter using the set criteria for each benchmark I did my analysis. As mentioned in the introduction above the benchmarks and related criteria were not applied to individual collages as per the first level of analysis but across all collages so as to seek understanding for each of the benchmarks and its criteria. These benchmarks proved to be very significant for my study as they relate well with the literature based on this study which was discussed and explained in Chapter 2. Some significant findings were revealed after a close analysis of the collages. However, on completing the analysis at this second level a clear observation was that the participating history learners did not fully understand/portray all the benchmarks hence, not all were explored well in the collages, presentation and discussion

sessions. The benchmarks that were seemingly well understood were historical significance, historical time and nature of historical knowledge and understanding. In contrast historical empathy, cause and consequence and change and continuity were the benchmarks that history learners did not fully engage with in their collages and related data methods. The analysis done in Chapter 5 and 6 of this study was synthesised and pursued in Chapter 7 under findings and discussion.

## CHAPTER 7

### FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

#### 7.1 Introduction

Chapters 5 and 6 were based on the analysis of the data generated for this study which focused on an investigation into how history learners view school history at the secondary phase of schooling. Chapter 5 dealt specifically with the first level of analysis which was done by means of open coding. At this level collages constructed by the participants in the study were analysed due to the uniqueness of each collage at an individual level. The second level of analysis was done using an instrument consisting of six benchmarks related to the conceptual nature of school history (Appendix A). This second level of analysis was done differently to the first level of analysis in that my instrument was not applied to individual collages but across all collages so as to seek understanding for each of the benchmarks. At the same time I used my transcriptions from the presentation and discussion sessions to justify certain aspects depicted in the collages at both levels of analysis.

This chapter will therefore deal with a discussion of the findings from the previous two chapters. Since I had two levels of analysis, I will collate the two sets of findings and discuss them as one. In other words, I synthesised the two sets of findings into conversation with each other so as to obtain an authentic understanding. Thereafter, a theoretical proposition of why the participants viewed school history the way they did will be presented. The reason I collated the two sets of findings and discussed them was in line with LaSpina (1998) who argued that text consisted of both visual (collages) and verbal (presentations/discussions) and they are complementary rather than contradictory. Furthermore, collation of the two sets of findings strengthened my understanding of how history learners symbolically viewed history as a school subject in the secondary phase of their schooling. In addition, this collation also provided major findings that could be used to propose possible answers to the research questions posed. Furthermore, I discuss and theorise my findings by comparing them to the literature. In the process, I established the similarities and differences between my findings and the literature,

account for the disjunction between the two and propose theoretical and philosophical reasons for the divergence and adherence.

Any discussion should begin with a synoptic overview of the findings to help the reader to understand the major findings of the study. In light of this, I highlight the major findings of the study that emerged from my analysis as conducted in Chapters 5 and 6. In this regard, I organised the major findings that emerged in an inter-textual manner, meaning that the findings were organised such that they can speak to each other and show their interrelatedness. The first four findings that emerged will be discussed below and relate to the broad ideas of content. These include: School history is viewed as being about South African political history; School history is more than a South African story; School history is about people and School history is viewed as being about war and violence. The next two findings that emerged relate to school history is about the conceptual and pedagogical idea of the subject. Finally, to conclude the findings, school history is viewed as having an affective/emotive side.

In addition, to engage in these discussions on the above findings I decided to use a creative method where I extracted common fragments from the actual collages constructed by my participants and depicted them in the form of my own 'made-up collage'. I felt that this method fit in well with my creative arts-based methodology that I adopted for this study. Furthermore, my discussion was strengthened by making reference to the common fragments extracted from the participants' collages and depicted in the 'made-up collage'. This idea also related well with my symbolic interactionist theoretical framework that underpinned the study. Finally, the made-up collages will possibly help present answers to my research questions in a synoptic manner.

## 7.2 Discussion of findings

### 7.2.1 School history is viewed as being about South African political history

Figure 7.2.1: Made-up collage



One of the major findings that emerged from both levels of analysis of the collages is that school history is viewed as a study of South African political history. This was generally portrayed symbolically by means of words and images in all the collages by history learners. Figure 7.2.1 above gives a glimpse of the most common depictions regarding South African politics in history learners' collages. The made-up collage clearly portrays that history learners focused on different time periods in their collages. They focused on apartheid as well as the post-apartheid eras. This demonstrates the idea that the benchmark historical time was taken into consideration with regard to this finding at both levels of analysis.

Thus, different eras of South Africa's political past were symbolically depicted in the collages and viewed by some collage-makers as playing a historically significant role in school history. A few history learners went as far back as Shaka to convey their views and understanding of pre-colonial times. In fact, the portrayal of Shaka as a soldier ready for war was depicted in a few collages. Also the '1820s' was depicted under Shaka which confirmed his time of being involved in the politics of South Africa. During the discussion session history learners actually

engaged in a discussion based around Shaka and many participants at this stage indicated that Shaka was associated with violence and war during his era but had a powerful impact on the political situation at the time. In addition, the learners clearly viewed Shaka as another big historical character who brought about changes during his time both in a positive and negative manner. On the negative side history learners implied that he caused much heartache and pain to many different tribes through his strong military campaigns. On a more positive note one learner declared that Shaka must have contributed to the political situation to a great extent because his legacy still lives today through certain important buildings and monuments being named after him. Some history learners in this study portrayed Shaka as having deeply affected people's lives in the past and they seem to have an understanding and knowledge of him which is largely based on their study of school history. In other words, Shaka is taught as part of the CAPS curriculum at secondary school level. Most of the aspects that history learners revealed regarding Shaka were taught at secondary school level as can be gleaned from the content and background of the topics in CAPS (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p. 16) However, evidence does exist that history learners' portrayal of Shaka could have been influenced by outside factors such as the media and heritage sites.

Another aspect that emerged from the analysis of the collages was South Africa's political struggles both past and present. The history learners in this study seemingly regarded South Africa's recent political struggles as being historically significant. The most commonly depicted past struggle across all collages was that of the apartheid era in South Africa. This concept was symbolically portrayed through words/phrases and images in most collages as can be gleaned in Figure 7.2.1 above. History learners conveyed the apartheid struggles through related people, events and concepts. In fact, the apartheid era was often depicted as relational to the idea of war and violence. The most common political leader associated with the apartheid struggle was once again, Mandela. Other related apartheid events that were depicted in some of the collages were the 'Women's March' and 'Treason Trial'. In addition, apartheid related concepts clearly permeated the collages. Commonly depicted words in some of the collages included freedom, truth, race, change, unity and peace. History learners also viewed some present South African struggles, as if continuity exists with the past, in their collages as being significant. The most common idea portrayed in this regard was the idea of democracy. Evidence exists in the collages that democracy which was achieved came with many struggles but it is on-going. This was best depicted by the phrase 'Dark Days For Democracy' which

was portrayed in Bonga's collage. Also during the discussion session history learners indicated that even though there have been changes and we are now in a democracy there are still many struggles that are continuing as a consequence of the past. This idea concurs with the literature revealed in Chapter 2. The finding resonates with the work of Giliomee (2010) who suggests a good grasp of history, particularly South African history, will help develop a sense that the present order of things is transient: societies do change, sometimes unexpectedly fast, and sometimes painfully slow. Thus, history learners viewed school history as being about both past and present South African struggles and in so doing blended changes and continuity and cause and consequences with the time period of apartheid and post-apartheid eras.

Significantly, contemporary South African political history was overwhelmingly portrayed in many of the collages and viewed as of cardinal importance in school history by the history learners. This portrayal was symbolically depicted in the collages by means of words/phrases and images and regarded as being historically significant. Some collage makers conveyed their views of contemporary South African politics through political parties (ANC/DA), maps and flags. Also some South African political leaders such as Mandela, Mbeki, De Klerk and Zuma were portrayed which indicated that history learners viewed political leaders as discussed above as playing a significant role in school history. A further depiction was the concept of apartheid and democracy which commonly permeated the collages. Both apartheid and democracy were depicted by history learners through the use of concepts, events and people. The most commonly depicted person in this regard was Mandela who symbolised the struggle against apartheid and for democracy to the highest level. He was seemingly viewed as having caused the end of apartheid and as a consequence ushered in a democracy.

Another common finding that emerged from history learners' collages regarding South African politics was that of nationalism. Many history learners' collages were dominated by school history seemingly being a local study. This implied that because they are South African and were schooled in South Africa in a South African curriculum they focused strongly on their country's history. This idea was portrayed in the collages symbolically through words and images and appeared to be historically significant to history learners at times in an almost myopic manner. Collage-makers depicted this idea of nationalism in their collages and during the presentation sessions through words such as Proudly South African, New South African,

background, remembrance and heritage. In addition, some learners personalised the South African politics because of them being South African. A typical example of this was portrayed in Kutlwano's collage where she stated 'For my president' and 'For me'. Hence, it can be confirmed that history learners viewed the idea of nationalism as being a significant part of school history and helping them to understand their history. Literature reviewed in Chapter 2 reveals that school history has the ability to create the idea of nationalism. As such the advent of democracy in South Africa necessitated a radical transformation in school history education so that learners can be prepared to take their place in a democracy (Siebörger, 2000). Hence, history learners' focus on nationalism can be justified by the fact that local history is given preference in South African classrooms. Thus, it was maintained that school history teaches learners valuable political skills and assists in the development of "historical insights into the way things are and the way they have been in South Africa..." (NEPI, 1992, p. 63). However, my study differs with the literature in the sense that it foregrounds South African history while literature speaks of history being a global study of world history.

Overall, history learners viewed school history as being about South African political history. This idea dominated many collages through various people, events and concepts. Different eras of South Africa's political past were viewed as being historically significant. Collages articulated well with the benchmarks regarding this finding. Furthermore, the literature does to a certain extent agree that South African history is important and focus should be given to it because of the past political history of the country. Mazabow (2003) echoes this sentiment by recognising that the revision of school history was an activity that had to be accorded special consideration if the renaissance of education in South African schools was to become a reality. Overall, as in other parts of the world, school history in South Africa is also viewed as being a nationalistic political history.



## 7.2.2 School history is more than a South African story

Figure 7.2.2: Made-up collage



Although the South African story dominated the collages, there were glimpses of school history being more than this. One of the findings that emerged from the analysis of the collages is that some of the history learners viewed school history as being more than a South African story. This means that even though they overwhelmingly viewed school history as being a study about South Africa there were also hints of school history being more than this. In other words, some collage-makers symbolically viewed school history as being a study about people and events from elsewhere and not just from South Africa. Reference in this regard can be gleaned from the made up collage (Figure 7.2.2) above. This idea of history being more than a study of South Africa relates to CAPS in that it prescribes that school history should “prepare young people for local, regional, continental and global responsibility” (Department of Basic Education, 2011, p. 8).

Regarding this idea, some collage-makers depicted a discernible sense of ‘Africanness’ in their collages. This means that some of the history learners were able to identify themselves as not just South Africans but also as Africans. As inhabitants of Africa history learners were able to portray this idea in their collages symbolically through images of the map of Africa and flag, colours of African nations as well as the word Africa. The depictions of the map and “green,

yellow and red” of Africa are historically significant in that history learners seemingly understood that these symbols are a representation of what it means to be African. In other words, the map and colours are symbolic representations of what a nation’s history stands for and history learners viewed them as historically significant, hence the portrayal in the collages. As such history learners viewed the symbols of the map and colours as being highly symbolic and significant in their understanding of the study of Africa in school history. Furthermore, the central positioning of the maps in history learners’ collages conveyed the idea that they considered Africa as playing a historically significant role school history. History learners during the discussion session also confirmed that they portrayed Africa in their collages as they were proud to be African and not just South Africans which resonates with ideas on Africaness as purported by former Thabo Mbeki, a former president of South Africa (Mbeki, 1998).

Collage-makers further symbolically portrayed the idea that school history is also a study of world historical events/happenings. This was depicted through the Black power signs, the Holocaust and World War II as can be viewed in the made-up collage (Figure 7.2.2). History learners also portrayed the idea that school history involves a study of the world by representing international political leaders such as Hitler, Obama and Arafat in their collages. Some collage-makers symbolically depicted historical events/people through images and words in their collages to demonstrate the idea that school history is more than a local study. Some history learners also depicted the words ‘WORLD, GLOBAL and UNIVERSAL’ in their collages which indicated that school history is a worldwide study. Thus, history learners seemed to be aware that school history was more than an African and South African story. However, this idea of school history being viewed as a study of the world was not overwhelmingly portrayed in the collages such as the South African story. Furthermore, school history as per the CAPS curriculum is a global study and not just a local study (Department of Basic Education, 2011). This meaning that the prescribed topics studied in school history are more than just a South African story. This indicates that there is a portrayal of the nature of historical knowledge and understanding in history learners’ collages to a certain extent.

Overall, history learners viewed school history as an international and not just a local study. This idea was portrayed in the collages through words, symbols and images. Additionally, history learners depicted certain international events and political leaders to reinforce this idea

as per the portrayal in the collages, had an affinity for World History but not at the cost of South African history.

### 7.2.3 School history is about people

Figure 7.2.3: Made-up collage



Another major finding that emerged from the analysis of the collages was that school history was viewed as a study of people. At both levels of analysis history learners portrayed people as being historically significant in school history. Different categories of people were regarded as having played a key role in the study of school history. These categories included men, women, young people, and people of different races, South African and non-South African people, politicians and those occupying other occupations, leaders and ordinary people, historically famous and unknown people gleaned from the collage-making material. People were generally portrayed symbolically in the collages by means of images and sometimes through words both individually and collectively, as depicted in the made-up collage (Figure 7.2.3) above. This idea of school history being viewed as a study of people was not unique to my study and resonates with a range of other studies (Brian & Richard, 2008; Slotkin, 2005; Seixas & Morton, 2013). The literature reviewed in Chapter 2 also confirmed that school

history is a study of human beings. This idea of school history being a study of people is well positioned by Corfield (2008) who argued that all people are living histories. However, my study differs from the literature in that different categories of people were foregrounded as playing key roles in school history.

What was most striking was that the history learners involved in this study viewed school history as a study which involves mainly men. Many learners depicted individual historical political leaders of the past, with the exception of Jacob Zuma who is contemporary, in their collages. This means that history learners symbolically viewed individual political leaders as being historically significant in the study of school history. The men who were portrayed included Shaka, Mandela, Zuma, Hitler, Mbeki, De Klerk, Obama and Yasser Arafat. These men can be classified as 'Big Men' in a historical sense because of their contributions to political history. In other words, they were viewed as having contributed significantly to changes and caused things to happen in their respective countries. Evidence from the collages portray that these men brought about major changes such as freedom, implementing military strategies and making decisions which had consequences, thus they were viewed as highly influential individuals who contributed to the political arena in their specific country at the time. These big men seemingly had the capacity to shape history both in a positive and sometimes in a negative way through their actions and behaviour. This idea is in accordance with the literature in the sense that Fielding (2003) suggested that political history was to all intents and purposes, school history. In addition, literature reviewed in Chapter 2 revealed that history is an effort to reconstruct the past to discover what people thought and did and how their beliefs and actions continue to influence human life (Brown, 2007). Furthermore, one of the main reasons why history learners viewed male political leaders as playing a significant role in school history could be related to the CAPS curriculum which identifies almost all of the political leaders who history learners viewed as historically significant (Department of Basic Education, 2011, pp. 13-31). Thus, findings indicate that history learners' views are strongly shaped by what they study in school history. This seemingly demonstrates that school history still focuses to a large extent on political history by foregrounding male political leaders.

The learners in this study clearly viewed big Black men as historical characters as being most significant. This meaning came about because most of the political leaders depicted in the collages were Black, with the exceptions of Hitler in a few collages and De Klerk in one collage. Consequently, the most common historical character depicted in the collages was Mandela. In fact, he dwarfed all other big Black men. Much was attributed to him by the history learners in their view which indicated that he was the most significant historical political leader of the past. Hence, he can be viewed as the ‘Biggest of the big men’ in accordance to the collage- makers. This was confirmed by the transcriptions from the presentation and discussion sessions where history learners confirmed that he was historically significant because of the great changes he brought about in South Africa. These ideas of Mandela relate well with the benchmarks of historical significance and change and continuity. This finding was also justified by the literature which regards the portrayal of Mandela as a great political leader (Van Niekerk, 2013).

However, findings hint that history learners’ knowledge of some historical leaders such as Mandela was not only studied at school level but also from the outside, for example the media. History learners also clearly espoused critical thinking about Mandela in their collages in that they were able to link significant concepts, words, phrases and images to him. Findings also demonstrated that many history learners focused on the historical time period that Mandela’s life covered for example he was viewed as having caused the end of apartheid which as a consequence brought freedom. In addition, findings reveal that history learners portrayed Mandela with empathy in that they tried to imagine all the sacrifices he endured to create a democratic nation and how deeply people’s lives were affected by these sacrifices. Regarding empathy, history learners also demonstrated an awareness, respect and appreciation to certain complex actions carried out by Mandela. In fact, historical empathy was poorly understood by history learners therefore the idea of thinking empathetically about Mandela could be coincidental.

Another category of people that emerged from the analysis of the collages was collective groups of people which included both men and women. A collective group of people usually share or are motivated by at least one common issue or interest, or work together to achieve a common objective. Collective groups of people are sometimes characterised by attempts to

share and exercise political and social power and make decisions on a consensus driven and egalitarian basis. As such history learners involved in this study symbolically viewed collective groups of people as having played a significant role in school history. However, these collective groups that were depicted were mostly linked to the past political situation in South Africa. In other words some history learners depicted the ‘Women’s March’ in their collages as they saw this collective group of women as having played a significant role during the apartheid era. In addition, the ‘Treason Trial’ which included a group of people on trial during the apartheid era, was symbolically represented in a few of the collages. According to history learners the above two events were caused by the government’s policies during the apartheid era and both had major consequences for the country. Of significance is that both the ‘Women’s March’ and the ‘Treason Trial’ also happened in the same year, being 1956. Another symbolic depiction of collective groups of people represented was two South African political parties which were the African National Congress (ANC) and the Democratic Alliance (DA). These two parties are still in existence today and are the key players in the local elections taking place while I am writing this thesis. History learners seemingly knew of these parties more through the media than through school history. This is a typical demonstration that history learners’ views of school history are not only shaped by what they study at school but also by outside factors. In addition to this, some collage makers also depicted the ‘Nazi party through the Nuremberg trials’. Again this is a topic covered by CAPS. What is also telling is that certain collage-makers symbolically depicted ordinary groups of people in social settings to portray that school history also involves social history that transcends race and class. These groups of people can be regarded as faceless because they were cut from the collage-material and used to represent other things symbolically such as working together, unity and freely socialising.

A significant finding revealed was that women were portrayed in a limited capacity in the collages and with little empathy. However, some history learners viewed them as playing an important role in the study of school history – most notably women were portrayed symbolically through images and words related to the ‘Women’s March’ that took place during the apartheid era. However, women were only portrayed in a collective manner and not as individuals. They were seemingly not associated as individuals with acts that were significant or could bring about changes and consequences. Additionally, the images used portrayed only a few women’s faces which created the impression that the women were ‘hidden’ and were not as involved in school history as men. The exception being a single collective event the

‘Women’s March’ which had major consequences for woman, such that, this day is still celebrated today as ‘Women’s day’. Therefore, the youthful collage-makers symbolically implied that the issue of gender, played a significant role in school history. Regarding the issue of gender, findings imply that patriarchy and society’s views of male dominance were still prevalent in school history. Furthermore, CAPS related topics and the literature create the impression that school history is a study of male dominated political leaders, hence history learners’ portrayal of male political leaders. Reference in this regard is portrayed in CAPS, section 3 (pages 13-31) which prescribes the set topics for study in the secondary phase of schooling (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Findings also implied that history learners could have been influenced by their own society’s views of male dominance which is still a common occurrence in South Africa. In fact, the literature confirms that it is difficult for people to imagine a future minus patriarchy. However, patriarchy is often deeply embedded in the mental constructs of people in such a way that it largely remains invisible (Abbot & Wallace, 1997).

Another collective group of people that emerged from the analysis of the collages was the younger generation. Some history learners viewed the younger generation as being an important part of school history. The younger generation in a general sense refers to the next or rising generation. For the purposes of this study the ‘younger generation’ refers to the young members of society, especially those adhering to the politics of the country. This younger generation are referred to as the ‘born free’ generation that is they were born after apartheid had ended. All collage-makers involved in this study belonged to the born free generation and evidence exists in the collages that their views of school history were often personalised and idealistic. Some collage-makers viewed the younger generation as playing a significant role in the country and this can be understood by studying school history. Some history learners during the presentation and discussion sessions indicated that younger people can make a difference and bring about changes to the politics of a country because they are more vocal and have better ideas. Attiyah even went on to state in her presentation session that it is now the younger generation’s time to make a difference in the political field, implying that the older ones had failed. Overall, history learners during the discussion session gave the impression that the younger generation are better equipped to make a difference in the political arena of the country, especially South Africa. Furthermore, participants indicated that the younger generation have more time to make changes and better decisions for the future. This finding

reveals that the younger generation have very idealistic views of what school history offers them. Furthermore, their personal and idealistic views do not necessarily concur with the literature. But, according to CAPS the study of history should prepare young people to become responsible citizens in a global capacity (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

The idea of nationality was another finding that emerged from the analysis of the collages regarding people. Collage-makers mainly portrayed South African leaders in their collages with the exceptions of Hitler, Yasser Arafat and Obama. Also, there were some foreign looking individuals portrayed in the collages but there was no evidence of their nationality. Hence, findings reveal that history learners mainly focused on contemporary South Africans to convey their views of what a study of school history entails. The idea of portraying mainly South Africans could be linked to the fact that all participants of this study were South African, hence they felt it more appropriate to focus more on their history to express their views of school history. However, this does not fit in with the literature as history is recognised as a global study as per CAPS (Department of Basic Education, 2011)

History learners viewed history as being about a range of historical characters which include different categories of people as explained above. However, individual men seemed to be the dominant category, some of whom caused things to happen which had major consequences. They also made important decisions and took action regarding political matters that brought about changes in a significant manner. All benchmarks were revealed through this finding. Furthermore, literature reviewed in Chapter 2 reveals that school history is a study of human beings. The finding echoes the work by Meyer (2008) who observes that school history is above all else about people and has an important and consequently a unique contribution to make to social education. However, as mentioned above history learners viewed history as being more politically orientated.



#### 7.2.4 School history is viewed as being related to war and violence

Figure 7.2.4: Made-up collage



Another major finding that emerged from the analysis of the collages is that school history is viewed by history learners as a study of ‘war and violence’. War and violence is a state of armed conflict between societies and is generally characterised by extreme aggression, destruction and mortality using regular or irregular military forces. It is also associated with behaviour involving physical force intended to hurt, damage or kill someone. Most collage-makers foregrounded war and/or violence in their collages. The idea was overwhelmingly portrayed in the history learners’ collages implying that history learners regarded past incidences of ‘war and violence’ as being historically significant in the study of school history. This was portrayed symbolically by means of words and images as can be viewed from the made-up collage (Figure 7.2.4) above. In other words, the idea of war and violence was depicted through various kinds of weapons, through soldiers, political leaders, events and through war related concepts.

Some history learners symbolically depicted weapons in their collages to convey the idea of war, conflict and violence. Weapons are a device used to attack or defend in combat, fighting or war. Thus, in this sense history learners symbolically related weapons in their collages to

war and violence. These weapons included the traditional shield and spear, guns, artillery pieces and a sword. These weapons were not just portrayed in isolation in the collages but were actually portrayed with soldiers using them in battle situations. The word 'weapon' itself was also depicted in a few collages. Thus, with regard to war and violence history learners seemingly engaged in critical thinking because they were able to connect relevant related words/concepts and images to the idea of war and violence.

The depiction of soldiers in the history learners' collages was another symbolic representation of the significance history learners placed on 'war and violence' in school history. A soldier is generally a person who serves in an army and is strongly associated with war and violence situations. As such certain history learners used sources such as photos to depict fully armed soldiers to portray the idea of war while others actually depicted soldiers in action. A point in case is Carmen who symbolically depicted soldiers in heavy battle and she even had the word soldier above an image of heavy fighting. Natasha also depicted an image of civilians fighting. Other collage-makers also had the word soldiers depicted in their collages.

In addition, the idea of war, conflict and violence was linked strongly to the idea of the apartheid era in South Africa. The portrayal in the collages related to this idea was depicted through words such as "pain, suffering, difficulties, death, struggles, fighting, bloodshed and violence". Consequently, history learners seemed to suggest that war and violence does not just happen but is caused by certain factors. However, there were no direct references to the causes and consequences of war and violence by history learners. History learners used certain concepts, words and phrases to convey the idea of causes and consequences of war in a coincidental manner. This implies, as stated in Chapter 6, that the historical thinking concepts of cause and consequences were not well understood by history learners. This idea of war and violence being related to apartheid does concur with the literature. The finding echoes the work by Mhlongo (2013, p. 57) where a learner stated: "I hate school history because it tells about the killings of black heroes by the apartheid government, if you learn history you learn about painful acts of the apartheid government".

Some political leaders portrayed in the collages also symbolised the idea of war and violence, meaning that political leaders as people play a significant role in war and violence because of their decisions and actions at times. The two political characters depicted in some of the collages that were associated with war and violence were Shaka and Hitler. History learners actually symbolically depicted Shaka as a soldier in their collages and during the presentation and discussion sessions clearly implied that Shaka was associated with war and violence during his reign. Regarding Shaka history learners clearly implied during the discussion sessions that even though Shaka is dead and systems have changed his ideas are still practiced by some groups of people today. In other words, even though he was associated with war and violence he still left a legacy that continues into the present. In addition, Adolf Hitler was strongly linked to the concept of war and violence. History learners viewed Hitler as a major cause of World War II and the Holocaust which were historical events that had disastrous consequences for millions of people and many countries. Attiyah's collage clearly portrayed this by symbolically depicting an image of Hitler with the words 'World War Two' attached to it. Also in her collage she symbolically portrayed the 'Nuremberg trials' which was also associated with Hitler. In relation to this, learners depicted some powerful words that were linked to Hitler's violent deeds such as 'genocide, rebellion, power, torture and final days.' Thus, the portrayal of political leaders such as with Shaka and Hitler and their war and violence related tactics, depicted in the collages, demonstrates that history learners view school history as being associated with political leaders and their relation to war and violence.

The idea of war and violence also permeated the history learners' collages through war related concepts. The most commonly depicted concepts, words and phrases used by history learners to convey the idea of war and violence were: 'war, battle scars, fatigue of war, death, deadly connections, healing, war wounds, tales of war, torture, killed, man of war and peace agreements.' These powerful concepts, words and phrases all relate to the idea of war and violence in some way. In fact, almost all history learners involved in this study depicted concepts of war in their collages which created the impression that they all seem to think that school history is strongly linked to a study of war and violence. This meaning that history learners viewed war as an expression of politics and of policy, with the addition of violent means as being historically significant in the study of school history. This depiction of war and violence seemingly stems from the CAPS curriculum which they study at school level. In fact, certain topics prescribed by CAPS such as the French Revolution, Transformations in Southern

Africa after 1750, The South African War and Union and Communism in Russia are strongly related to war, conflict and violence (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

Hence, history learners related school history to a study of war and violence because they overwhelmingly portrayed this idea in their collages. The idea was portrayed through various concepts, words, phrases and images. They also symbolically associated political leaders to the idea of war and violence. War and violence forms a large part of their study at secondary school level hence, the idea was foregrounded in the collages and regarded as being historically significant in the study of school history. Collages did articulate the benchmarks to a certain extent. However, not all benchmarks were well understood because for example history learners did not really portray the causes of war as such but seemingly understood the consequences of war and violence. Literature does not necessarily speak of school history being a study of war and violence but topics covered in CAPS relate to a large extent to the idea of war and violence, hence history learners consequently linked school history to war and violence (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

### 7.2.5 School history is viewed as being conceptual in nature

Figure 7.2.5: Made-up collage



While certain content aspects were seen as being at the heart of school history what emerged from the analysis of the collages is that the learners in this study viewed school history as being conceptual in nature. Conceptual in a general sense refers to something having to do with the mind, or with mental concepts or philosophical ideas. As such the study of history as a subject in general terms as mentioned in Chapter 2 is conceptually grounded in that it gives shape to historical practice and thinking about the past. Concepts have always been an important part of school history teaching and learning and can help learners' master content and develop historical thinking skills. In this regard, history learners clearly portrayed these ideas of the conceptual nature of school history, hence viewing it as being historically significant. Similarly, the conceptual nature in my study concurs with the literature in that school history is viewed as being conceptually grounded. The finding concurs with the works by Andrews and Burke (2007); Haydn et al., (2008); Levesque (2008); Seixas & Morton (2013); Stearns et al. (2000) and Wineburg (2001) who confirm that school history is conceptually more than what it was made out to be.

The idea of history being conceptual in nature was generally portrayed symbolically by means of words and sometimes through images in the collages as can be gleaned from the made-up collage (Figure 7.2.5) above. Some of the concepts that history learners portrayed in their collages were: apartheid, freedom truth, peace, unity, time, democracy, power, war and violence. These concepts portrayed by history learners in their collages can be regarded as first order concepts meaning that these concepts have always been part and parcel of any historical teaching. Through these concepts history learners conveyed the idea that school history is a conceptual story and not necessarily about content topics. Evidence of this permeated the collages in that most history learners were able to symbolically depict historical events and people and relate these to other important concepts. A typical example of this was the concept of apartheid which history learners related to key concepts such as truth, race, freedom and peace. In other words, these concepts were political in nature. Other kinds of concepts were also portrayed in the collages. Evidence for this exists in Nonhla's collage where she portrayed concepts that relate to intellectual/thinking aspects by depicting the idea of history being a number '1' guide to intelligence, thinking, innovation and ideas about changing the world. Yet, another common example was that of war and violence related concepts. Thus, history learners clearly conveyed the idea that the conceptual nature of school history can be viewed as helping them to develop historical thinking skills and thus engage in critical thinking.

However, some collage-makers portrayed an idealistic view of school history in their collages in that they related school history as being a search of 'big truths.' This aspect was portrayed in the collages by history learners depicting the idea of the younger generation as having the power and being instrumental in dealing with the politics of the country. In fact, Kutlwano clearly depicted this idea in her collage where she depicted the phrase 'This Is Our Time'. She also justified this phrase in her presentation session by implying that the younger generation are better equipped to deal with the political issues of the country than the older generation. This idealism gives the impression that the younger generation view school history conceptually from a different mind-set to previous generations.

What also emerged from the analysis of the collages regarding school history is that it is conceptually complex. This idea was portrayed in the collages through some of the different kinds of concepts depicted as mentioned above. In this regard, some history learners depicted the types of questions that are set in school history which are essay and source-based questions which are complex and difficult types of assessment. In fact, for history learners to be able to tackle essay and source-based questions they need to have a good grasp of the conceptual nature of school history. During the presentation and discussion sessions history learners justified that these symbolic depictions were to convey the difficult and complex nature of school history. Similar findings regarding school history being difficult and complex were established by (Wineburg, 2001) who observed that historical thinking is complex because it requires learners to negotiate between the familiar and unfamiliar and to become uneasy with the stories they tell about the past. He further argues that historical thinking is not a natural cognitive process and it goes against how we ordinarily think. In agreement, Van Sledright (2011) suggests school history can sometimes be viewed as a complex undertaking for history learners because it is a thoroughly interpretative discipline.

Another conceptual aspect represented in some of the collages was the idea that history is a multi-dimensional story, meaning that school history has multiple perspectives and was portrayed, as meaning, an enhancement in the level of difficulty. This meaning that in order to understand certain events/happenings one needs to firstly understand certain concepts. Hence, evidence exists in the collages that history learners viewed school history as a complex subject made up of both first and second order concepts. Second order concepts are more distinct

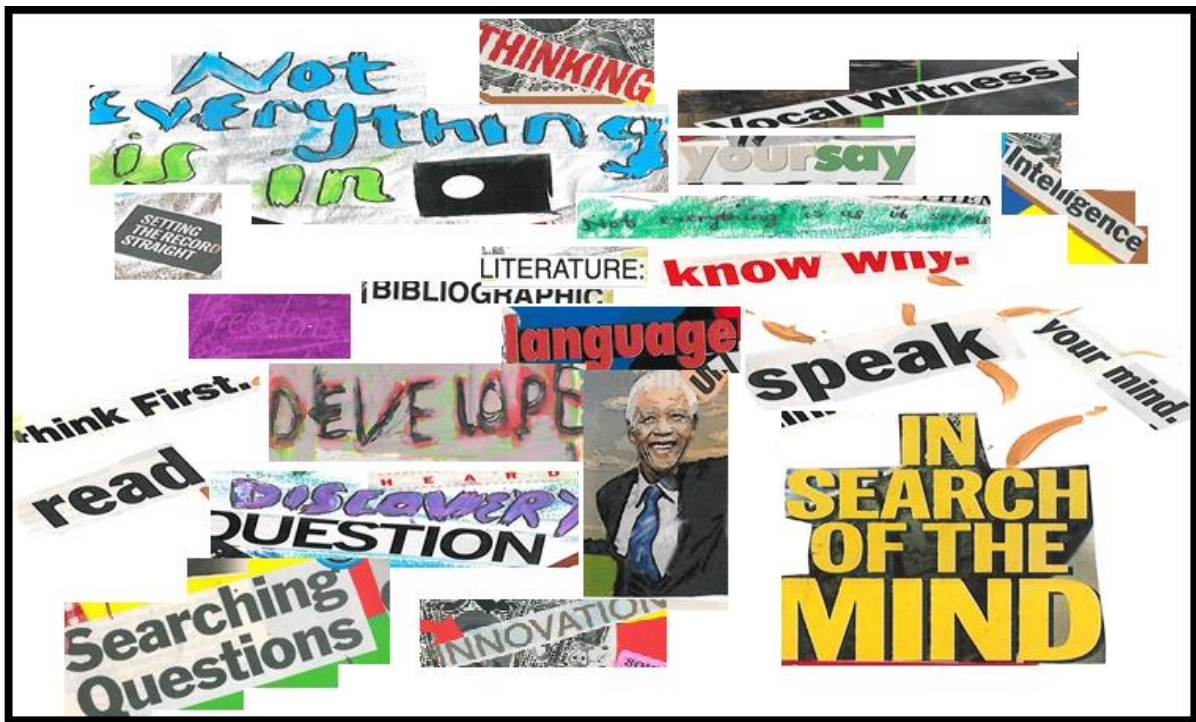
because of their generalising power and their relation to processes. When these more technical concepts are employed, learners can understand how historical knowledge and understanding are constructed and created. These second order concepts are in line with the historical thinking skills in the instrument that I designed to analyse history learners' collages for the second level of analysis. However, it must be noted that the participating history learners did not always portray a good understanding of all these second order concepts. This finding concurs with the literature in the sense that Martin (2012) and Levesque (2008), confirm that first order (substantive) and second order (procedural) concepts play an important role in understanding events/happenings in school history. In fact, Martin (2012) suggests that the procedural concepts are relational to the substantive as they explain ideas and active conceptual tools that provide understanding required in the 'doing' of historical inquiry that enables historical construction.

Overall, history learners view school history as being a conceptual story. This was portrayed in their collages through the depiction of different kinds of concepts like for example political, violence related and intellectual/thinking concepts. Through the depiction of history being conceptual in nature history learners articulated with the benchmarks in their collages to a certain extent.



## 7.2.6 School history is viewed as having a distinct pedagogical identity

Figure 7.2.6: Made-up collage



Additionally, what emerged from the analysis of the collages is that school history is viewed by the history learners as having a range of pedagogical values in that history learners demonstrated a capacity to engage in learning through the study of school history. In other words, history learners implied through their collages, as well as during the presentation and discussion sessions, that the study of school history helped them develop valuable educational skills.

Some of the concepts that history learners portrayed in their collages regarding the pedagogical value of school history included language, literature, bibliographic, thinking, speaking, intelligence, in search of the mind, think first, read, know why, vocal witness and searching questions. These skills can fall into different categories. Some of these concepts are clearly cognitive skills, while others fall within resource references and still others can refer to evidence of research. All these key words indicated that history learners viewed school history as helping them develop a range of crucial skills that are needed to function in society. The most common three skills that were portrayed through these words were speaking out, the ability to think and to ask questions. These common skills that were portrayed in the collages



demonstrate that history learners developed skills of how to speak out and express their opinions which are valuable skills to have to enable them to function as citizens in society. In addition, history learners' thoughts on the ability to think and ask questions is also significant in that the key to powerful thinking is powerful questioning. In other words, history learners implied that school history teaches and develops these skills. This was confirmed, as a case in point, by Bonga during the presentation and discussion session by suggesting that history is all about asking questions and the ability to think. Furthermore, some of these depictions can be viewed in the made-up collage (Figure 7.2.6) above. Thus, history learners viewed school history as being more than just about content knowledge but being a vehicle for learning certain fundamental skills. Literature reveals that a study of school history develops important skills to prepare us for everyday life. The finding is in line with the works of Van Sledright (2011) who suggests that historical thinking requires strategic knowledge dispositions, thus learning to think using these cognitive strategies is no easy task but develops important skills as mentioned above.

Linked to the above thoughts was the depiction in history learners' collages that spoke to the pedagogical nature of school history which gave the impression that history learners were engaged in critical thinking. Critical thinking in the sense that some history learners symbolically implied that they made reasoned judgements that are logical and well thought out. In other words, it is a way of thinking in which they did not simply accept all arguments and conclusions but rather had an attitude involving questioning such arguments and conclusions. This thinking was clearly portrayed in the collages by some history learners depicting phrases and words such as: 'not everything is in black and white, not everything is as it seems, setting the record straight, discovery, research, questioning and little has changed'. In addition, the idea of critical thinking was also evident from history learners being able to link key concepts to certain people/events. A typical example of this was portrayed by history learners linking Mandela to the political struggle, freedom and democracy. Also Hitler was associated with the Holocaust and World War II. Furthermore, the depiction of the word source-based in many collages also confirmed the idea that school history develops the idea that history learners need to critically engage with the source base of the subject (primary and secondary evidence), thus developing critical thinking skills in so doing. According to the literature school history involves thinking critically as explained in CAPS. Hirsch (1996) supports the view that a broad

grounding in specific facts and information such as that supplied by history promotes the development of critical thinking skills.

In addition, this idea of critically engaging with school history was reinforced by history learners personalising certain depictions in their collages. This meaning, when they could not find suitable resources to convey their views they took the time to handwrite or draw them. A typical example of this was in Zama's collage where she hand wrote certain concepts/words such as freedom and betterlife to convey her views of school history. These words that she hand wrote were also very faint and almost hidden which could imply that we have not fully achieved these ideas yet but are still working towards achieving them. This depiction is a clear indication that she views school history as having developed her creativity and to be able to make inferences based on evidence and reasoning.

Another finding related to the pedagogical nature that emerged from the analysis of the collages is that the schools that individual history learners attend have an influence on how they view school history. This was symbolically portrayed in the collages by certain overwhelming ideas as for example war and violence, the concept of apartheid and Mandela which stand out in the collages and was regarded as being historically significant by history learners. In other words, the manner in which certain aspects are taught and the emphasis placed influenced how learners viewed school history. Since learners focused mainly on national history indicates to a certain extent that preference is given to that at their particular schools. This was confirmed during the discussion session where learners implied that because they are South African they portrayed more of their own country's history and their schools gave priority to local history. Findings in this regard seemingly suggest that history learners preferred to express their views of school history from a nationalistic perspective. However, this scenario was not always the case because Jane explained during her presentation session that she selected history as a subject in the secondary phase because she was influenced by a world historical event being that of the 'Holocaust' and Hitler's tactics during his time in power. She stated when she studied the holocaust in grade 9 her teacher made it so interesting that it inspired her to study school history further. Also her symbolic depictions in her collage clearly portray this train of thought. Hence, learners' views of school history can be greatly influenced by internal factors such as how they are taught and learn at their respective schools. Literature reviewed in Chapter 2 reveals that if

teachers and schools are able to develop learners' understanding of the purposes and uses of school history, it is possible that learners' motivation and engagement with the subject may be enhanced. This finding resonates with the work of Haydn et al. (2001) who suggests that every person who has studied history as a school subject will be aware of the difference the teacher can make. Hence, "History properly taught can help men to become critical and humane, just as wrongly taught it can turn them into bigots and fanatics" (Hill 1953, p. 9).

A further aspect that was portrayed in the collages and is linked to the pedagogical nature of school history is the idea of textbooks. Most history learners viewed textbooks as being closely associated with school history. Evidence exists in the collages of history learners giving preference to textbooks as opposed to other resources that were provided for them to use during collage making. In other words, images from the textbooks permeated the collages. These images mainly included images of political leaders, events and some concepts. This gave the impression that history learners trust and depend largely on textbooks for the study of school history at their respective schools. In fact, most history learners implied during the presentation and discussion session that sometimes the prescribed textbook that they used at their school was not sufficient to understand certain topics well, hence they needed to do their own research to fully understand certain topics better. This idea therefore indicated that although history learners seemed to trust and depend on textbooks some did realise that school history entails more than prescribed textbooks. Also this thinking can be linked to the above aspect of schools influencing how learners view school history in that schools expose learners to one textbook only because of financial constraints among other reasons. This implies that history learners are sometimes exposed to only a narrow perspective of certain events/happenings of history that are taught at school level. Literature reviewed in this regard was revealed in Chapter 2. The finding echoes the work by Lowry (1995) who argues that history can and has been used for narrow political ends because societies present their history in a manner that glorifies their past achievements and hides their mistakes. In addition, the content of secondary school history also raises learners that are uncritical of the narrow culturally-based material that they are required to study (Rees & Lowry, 1990). Hence, the idea of history learners being exposed to one textbook leads to the above consequences.

Overall, school history is viewed by history learners as having valuable pedagogical value. This was portrayed mainly through different concepts/words. Speaking out and the ability to ask questions were viewed by history learners as the most common pedagogical skills that can be developed through a study of school history. However, in some cases history learners are only exposed to a narrow perspective of school history which is linked to the above ideas of the schools they attend and the idea of textbooks. The benchmarks used in level two analyses related well to the pedagogical nature of school history.

### 7.2.7 School history deals with the affective or emotive side

Figure 7.2.7: Made-up collage



A major finding that emanated from the analysis of the collages is that school history is not only viewed as being about the cognitive ability/skills and content knowledge but also deals with the affective or emotive side. History learners' collages clearly portrayed emotions related to their study of school history. In a general sense emotions are instinctual and common to us all, the meanings they take on and feelings they prompt are individually based on our programming past and present. Feelings are shaped by a person's temperament and experiences and vary greatly from person to person and situation to situation. As such emotions and feelings

play a powerful role in how history learners experience and symbolically interact with school history because they are a driving force behind history learners' views of school history.

Therefore, through the study of certain topics and aspects in school history, history learners developed binary feelings of love or anger. This meaning through the study of school history they became aware of certain events/happenings and about some people's actions and behaviour in the past. Hence, through these events/people they developed certain feelings. However, even though these feelings and emotions tend to relate to historical empathy, history learners struggled to understand this and exhibited more sympathy regarding their feelings. This idea of emotions as a symbolic view of school history was depicted in the collages symbolically through images, symbols and words and regarded as being historically significant.

The most common emotion that was depicted in most collages was the idea of love. There are different types of love but in this regard history learners' idea of love relates to a nationalistic love, meaning that, certain history learners through the study of South Africa at school level developed a love for their country. However, this love seemingly stems from the idea that all history learners involved in this study are South African. This nationalistic love was portrayed mainly through the image of a heart as well as the word 'love.' A history learner, Thabo, conveyed this idea of love aptly by drawing a heart at the centre of the South African map as well as writing the words 'I love South Africa' in his collage. He justified these depictions during his presentation session by stating that he loved his country and its history, therefore he felt that the heart was a symbolic depiction of his feelings. Furthermore, this nationalistic love was also extended to Mandela. Most history learners expressed feelings of appreciation and love towards Mandela for his heroic efforts during the apartheid era. As mentioned earlier in the chapter Mandela was strongly associated with the concepts of freedom and democracy, hence history learners' feelings of love and admiration for him. Thus, history learners symbolically portrayed love for a geopolitical nation state as well as love for an iconic individual.

A few collage-makers also found creative ways to depict their joyous feelings about school history symbolically in their collages. Some used powerful words such as WOW, passion, amazing, pride, Joy, love more, Dig that history and phenomenal to demonstrate their love for the subject. In other words, history learners portrayed their love for history as a body of knowledge – content and concepts. Kutlwano used many little emoji's of happy, smiley faces all around her collage to depict her feelings about studying school history. These symbolic emoji's can be viewed in the made-up collage (Figure 7.2.7) above. Also other collages depicted people smiling which was very symbolic of happiness and joy associated with the study of school history. A further idea of depicting their joyous feelings towards the subject was also demonstrated through the use of colour. Although most history learners chose South African colours others chose colours that related to how they feel about the subject school history. Two colours that expressed positive and happy feelings were the colours yellow and purple. Yellow was symbolically associated with brightness and richness while purple was associated with wealth and royalty according to history learners. This love that history learners portrayed for school history could stem from their personal interaction with the subject or could be influenced by other factors for example how the subject is taught, the teacher and content knowledge.

In contrast to the above idea of love, some collage-makers also expressed feelings of anger in their collages. This was not aimed at the subject but at certain historical events and what caused these events as well as the subsequent consequences. This was mainly portrayed through visual images of hurt, pain and suffering depicted on people's faces. As mentioned earlier in the chapter the dominance of war and violence portrayed in almost all collages was evident of this idea of expressing emotions of anger. In other words, history learners' study of topics such as war, violence and people associated with these ideas creates these feelings of anger. Also some words which justified this idea of anger included attacks, protest, hectic, get real, struggle, torture, death, Doomsdays and suffer the children. Some history learners also justified some feelings of anger during their presentation and discussion sessions when they spoke of certain historical events/happenings in history that they deemed unjust, as for example, the apartheid era, Hitler and the Holocaust. Hence, the above ideas clearly indicate that history learners did engage in empathetic thinking about certain historical events and people. However, the idea of empathy was expressed in a very limited capacity as stated above and leaned more on sympathy. Literature reviewed in Chapter 2 revealed feelings of anger when certain topics were

studied, for example, apartheid. The study carried out by Mhlongo (2013) revealed that some learners expressed feelings of anger when they studied certain topics, especially those related to apartheid.

Overall, history learners viewed school history as also dealing with feelings and emotions. The mention of emotions might be unexpected in school history but it is crucial because imagination is tied in complex ways with our emotional lives according to Egan (2005). Thus, emotions and feelings played a powerful role in how history learners experience and symbolically interact with topics studied in school history which consequently shapes their views of the subject. The most common emotion portrayed was that of a nationalistic love by history learners. History learners also portrayed feelings of anger regarding certain topics especially those related to war and violence. In this regard, the benchmarks were portrayed to a certain extent in history learners' collages.

The above themes that were discussed are the major findings that emerged from both levels of analysis. However, there were a few minor themes that also emerged which were symbolic to how school history was viewed by some history learners. These minor themes included those of religion, the economy and poverty. In fact, the idea of religion was quite profoundly linked to topics in school history in Kimone's and Zama's collage. Overall, even though these themes were minor they were relevant and relate to school history.

### **7.3 Theorising the findings of the study**

Having brought the findings from Chapters 5 and 6 as well as the literature into conversation I will now take it to the final phase. In this section I discuss and theorise my findings by comparing them to the literature both research and theoretical by proposing an answer as to why the learners who participated in this study viewed school history the way they did. Considering the purpose of the thesis and research questions posed, this study aligned itself with the theoretical perspective of symbolic interactionism to understand how history learners view history as a school subject in the secondary phase of their schooling. The above section of this chapter dealt with the first research question which is how history learners view school

history, while in this section I emphasise the theoretical explanation as to why history learners in this study view school history the way they do. A theorisation of the views of why these learners have the views of school history that they have cannot be generalised to a broader South African or global context simply because by dint of my research methodology I was aiming at a deep and nuanced understanding. ‘Symbolic interaction’ by means of the collages did however provide an authentic porthole into the views that history learners in a contemporary South African context hold of the subject which in itself is very useful. The views held were not unsurprisingly generally positive of school history as a body of knowledge. This discussion will bring to light an answer to the second research question in a specific way and lead to the thesis of the study.

A major finding in this study was that history learners obsessively viewed people of different categories as having played a historically significant role in school history. This idea of specific people being key to school history was overwhelming portrayed in the collages and mentioned during the presentation and discussion sessions thus confirming its importance to history learners. Consequently, the history learners almost exclusively focused on contemporary politicians, the exception being of Shaka, and they were viewed as playing key roles in school history. Invariably, most of the politicians regarded as being important were South African, Black and male. In this regard, Mandela was viewed as the biggest political leader – the archetypical political leader. In other words, preference was given to South African political leaders as opposed to international political leaders who were represented in a limited capacity by learners. The reason why learners viewed South African Black males as important revolves around the fact that CAPS foregrounds this idea of Black male political leaders especially Mandela (Department of Basic Education, 2011). In fact, school history in its totality by means of textbooks, classes and educational media used, further reinforces the above idea. The omnipresence of Mandela in public life by means of, for example, street names and statues must have also played a part in this. The participants’ national identity, being South African, was seemingly another reason for their preference to South African political leaders. In other words, learners probably had a better understanding of their own political history as opposed to a world history. Another contributory factor why learners viewed Black politicians as important is South Africa is a highly politicised and political country especially the party-political world they inhabit. Thus, both the official (school world) and the unofficial (outside



world) nature of school history contributed to learners viewing contemporary politicians, which are those since World War II, as important.

Equally the history learners demonstrated strong views on issues of race, politics and gender. These aspects are pertinent to history and have been ingrained in the subject in the past, continue in the present and probably will continue to be in the future. The issue of race, which was viewed in an assertive manner as being part of school history by learners, is crucial in that the participants in this study, are faced with the issue of race because of South Africa's apartheid and first hand experiences in the present.

Another view on school history that stood out was that of gender. Women were viewed as peripheral to the subject and consequently only appeared in groups. In other words, women, despite the fact that the vast majority of participants were girls, were viewed as having a limited historical capacity. Despite South Africa's liberal constitution which embodies gender equality, the country is still in the grips of a male dominated patriarchal society. This is the world in which the participating learners live and these are the views the learners impose of school history by dint of their experiences outside and inside the history classroom. The racist and patriarchal apartheid past cannot disappear overnight, and after twenty-one years of democracy still somehow finds itself in the official intended history curriculum as well as the hidden curriculum.

The view of history being a study of people does concur, to a certain extent, with the literature reviewed. This, for example, resonates with the work of Seixas (2011) who found that in history we need human agency and people as individuals and groups play a part in promoting, shaping and resisting change. However, the literature is challenged to a certain extent in this regard because history learners seemingly personalised the idea of people being an integral part of their views of school history. In addition, even though there are glimpses of school history being associated with people in a social context, it was overshadowed by people being aligned more to the political arena.

Consequently, in light of the above, school history is viewed as South African political history by learners. Political in the sense that learners focused almost exclusively on political issues thus presenting the subject as highly politicised. This is not necessarily surprising as the CAPS foreground political history and South Africa is an overtly political country with numerous ongoing political contestations, as for example apartheid (Department of Basic Education, 2011). In short, the history learners' study at school is highly political in nature. Thus, the history that learners study at school is not a social history but a political history, therefore their views of school history are above all else politically dominant. This thought concurs with the literature in that Seixas and Morton (2013) suggest that historians focus largely on political and economic history and that the lives of people –particularly women, children and people of ethnic minorities were not considered significant.

Furthermore, history learners' obsessive views that school history is a study of mainly politics stems from the deeply rooted past mind-sets of their communities and families which have also been filtered down to them. The apartheid and anti-apartheid struggles are after all but two decades in the past. This idea is in line with the works by Phillips (1998) who suggests although school history can be seen as the main way learners learn about the past, many acquire their knowledge from a variety of alternative sources such as the media, family experiences and memories and lived experiences of communities. Thus, South African political history, as per CAPS, that was foregrounding the apartheid past, democratic present and the imagined future, were constantly at play in the school history worlds of the participating learners (Department of Basic Education, 2011). Once again these views that history learners hold stem from both the official as well as unofficial sources.

Another, reflection of political activity that was viewed by history learners as being an important part of school history is the idea of war and violence. War and violence dominated the views of many of the participating history learners regarding school history. They viewed it as important mainly because these ideas are inherent in CAPS, hence forming part of the official history curriculum that they study at school. In fact, the idea of war and violence runs through many of the topics prescribed by CAPS as can be gleaned in section 3 (Department of Basic Education, 2011). This seemingly creates the impression that learners understood the substantive and procedural nature of school history as these concepts were clearly portrayed in

expressing their views of war and violence. Furthermore, South African society is generally, historically and contemporarily, violent in nature which could have further influenced learners' views of school history as largely being about war and violence. This idea of South Africa being a violent society was justified by a study carried out by (David, Turner, Omrod, Hamby & Kracke, 2009). A further outside factor that could have influenced learners' views regarding war and violence is the media which seemingly portrays violence as an omnipresent part of South African society. These exposures to violence from the outside could have influenced and shaped learners' views of school history regarding war and violence. In addition, South Africa's violent apartheid past apparently also influenced learners' views on the idea of war and violence being viewed as important. Learners in fact mostly linked the idea of war and violence to the apartheid era in South Africa. In other words, this is part of their lived and educational experiences. These official and unofficial sources allowed learners to view the idea of war and violence in this obsessive manner.

In light of the above, world history took a back seat in what is a seemingly self-obsessed South African world. Learners undoubtedly implied that school history includes world history but deliberately chose to lavish their ideas on South Africa. In a hierarchical order Africa was viewed as second to South Africa while the history of the rest of the world was viewed as of less significance. This can partly be blamed on the general disappearance of "general history" and a "South African history" section as taught in the past in favour of a thematic approach that serves to foreground South Africa. Once again this foregrounding of South Africa is strongly aligned to what learners study through CAPS (Department of Basic Education, 2011). In other words, due to South Africa's past discriminatory educational policies the history syllabus is geared to prepare and train learners for who they are as South Africans and to be responsible citizens which was previously absent. In the process a certain South African nationalism and at times Africanism was viewed as being inherently part of school history. This finding concurs with the works by Siebörger (2000) who suggests that school history as the most political subject in the curriculum can be used to create national identities. Thus, it can be implied that learners viewed and became aware of their national identity as well as their continental identity through the study of school history.

The learners who participated in this study were roughly 17 years of age who as per the theory of symbolic interactionism seem to be very idealistic by dint of their age and way of thinking in how they view school history. Hence, grand ideas of freedom, love and history being an incomplete story and critical views of school history were exhibited. In fact, they related school history assertively to the idea of ‘big truths’ in the sense that they believe that this is their time and they have the power to be instrumental in dealing with the politics of the country. These ideas resonate with the works by Egan (1997) who concurs that this age group are so called philosophical thinkers. Facts are less important for them as they especially focus on and are interested in the ‘real truth’ on a level of a coherent system that can explain the world and reality in its entirety. In other words, attractive systems are for learners at this age, therefore they need to be introduced to post-colonial mind-sets and ways of ironical thinking (Egan 1997). Furthermore, learners at this age can be nurtured toward theoretical thinking. At this age Egan (2005) suggests that learners have a sense of abstract reality, a sense of agency, a grasp of general ideas and their anomalies, a search for authority and truth and meta-narrative understanding.

This must also be understood against the backdrop that they all ‘liked’ school history very much because unlike some of the studies reviewed in the literature (Joseph, 2011; Steen, 2012; Mhlongo, 2013) all the participants in this study have chosen to major in the subject at secondary school level. This means that they start off with a very positive premise of finding the subject palatable in terms of context (in other words a homo-historia with an innate aptitude for the subject) not only in terms of content but also in terms of procedural and substantive knowledge. This is somewhat similar to Ebels-Hoving’s (2011) idea of ‘Homo Historia’. In Ebels-Hovings work she draws a picture of a successful student of history. One of her characteristics is an innate aptitude for the subject (Ebels-Hoving, 2011) which relates well to the participants of this study. Thus reference to substantive knowledge in the sense they related to the content while procedural views helped them to make sense of events in doing history. However, there are also distinct issues with procedural/substantive views, for example with historical thinking concepts, empathy and cause and consequences, were not well articulated which means that they were not necessarily fully understood by history learners. It must be pointed out that the views of the research participants on school history were also informed by the experiences that they had at their different schools. This implying they were influenced by

the methods used, the resources provided and above all by the teacher at their different schools. In short the school attended by learners played a role in how they viewed school history.

In all the views of the history learners who participated in this study, official and unofficial sources, as informed by the South African context, were at play. Hence, issues of race, gender, violence, politics and youth rebellion, viewed as very much part of the South African landscape, twenty-one years after the fall of apartheid, are still informing how learners, based on experiences view school history by dint of inside school and outside school. The bottom line is the broader societal context plays a significant role in how school history was viewed.

Finally, to a certain extent, these views are contrary to what the literature tended to review which were frequently negative or condescending towards the subject (Department of Basic Education, 2011). This is more in line with the studies in which learners tended to view the subject in a positive light and this serves to confirm that learners who chose the subject for their final years of schooling can have sophisticated views that straddle substantive and procedural views of the subject.

#### **7.4 Conclusion**

This chapter provided a discussion on the findings of the study. The two levels of analysis were blended and discussed as one. The idea behind blending the two sets of findings was to strengthen my understanding of how history learners symbolically viewed history as a school subject in the secondary phase of schooling. In addition, this idea of blending also provided firm findings that proposed possible answers to the research questions. Furthermore, I used a creative method where I extracted common fragments from the actual collages constructed by my participants and portrayed these in the form of my own 'made-up' collage. This idea related well with my symbolic interactionist theoretical framework and it further strengthened my discussion in the sense that readers could make reference to the 'made-up' collages and also have a visual sense of the findings. I further organised my findings on how learners view history as a school subject in an inter-textual manner. In other words, the first four findings related to the broad ideas of content, while the next two findings were aligned to the conceptual and

pedagogical idea of the subject and finally to conclude the findings school history was viewed as having an affective side. This means that the findings were organised such that they speak to each other and showed inter-relatedness which helped to answer my first research question on how history learners view history as a school subject in the secondary phase of schooling.

Thereafter, I presented a theoretical proposition of why my participants viewed school history the way they did which was my second research question for this study. I emphasised the theoretical explanation as to why history learners in this study viewed school history the way they did. Furthermore, I discussed and theorised my findings by comparing them to the literature. In the process I established the similarities and differences between my findings and the literature. I then accounted for the disjunction between the two and proposed theoretical and philosophical reasons for the divergence and adherence. This discussion brought to light an answer to the second research question in a specific way and lead to the thesis of this study. The next chapter will bring the study to a conclusion.

## **CHAPTER 8**

### **CONCLUDING THE STUDY**

#### **8.1 Introduction**

This study set out to investigate how history learners view history as a school subject in the secondary phase of their schooling. The study was guided by two research questions namely: How do history learners in the secondary phase view history as a school subject and; why do history learners in the secondary phase view the subject the way they do? In the previous chapter, I interpreted the findings from the analysis which was done in Chapters 5 and 6 and discussed them, in relation to both research and theoretical literature. In the process firm conclusions and a theorisation on how history learners view school history at the secondary phase were reached. In this final chapter, I conclude the study by reflecting on the main findings in order to advance my thesis and suggest recommendations.

Since this is the final chapter of my thesis, I will begin by reviewing all the chapters that I have covered thus far in order to give some perspective of how I arrived at this point. Thereafter, I summarise the findings of the study by relating them to the research questions posed. This is followed by a reflection on the suitability and effectiveness of the methodology and methods used. The next section will focus on my personal and professional reflections which include some recommendations. Finally, I will reflect on the contribution of the study to the gap identified in the literature after which the study is concluded.

#### **8.2 Review of the study**

This section provides an overall review of the study. I will briefly refer back to each of the previous chapters and explain what was covered and highlight the key message of each chapter.

## **Chapter 1**

Chapter one was an overview and introduction to the study. In this chapter I provided the background and context in which I gave some insight into the working of apartheid in South Africa in order to understand school history and history education at that time. The reason for this was to comprehend the post-apartheid issue of school history and learners' views and experiences regarding the subject, for the shadows of the past still fall over South Africa as a whole. Hence, I gave a snapshot view of the apartheid era of education that set the stage for what came in the post-apartheid era which is the focus of my study. Thereafter, I explained the rationale and motivation for the study. I was motivated to conduct this study for a range of personal and professional reasons and this was discussed under the heading rationale and motivation of the study in Chapter 1. It is also in this section where I highlighted the statement of the research problem, purpose and focus of the study and stated the research questions. Furthermore, I briefly explained the theoretical framework that underpins the study. Finally, I explained the research design and methodology of the study to give a glimpse of how it was planned and conducted to answer the key questions.

## **Chapter 2**

In Chapter 2, I reviewed the literature related to my research topic. In this chapter I first discussed what a literature review is, the purpose of a literature review in the study and how my literature review was carried out. My literature was carried out in a thematic manner. It was emphasised among other reasons that the review of literature was carried out in order to locate a niche for my study and a platform for discussing my findings. Consequently, I reviewed literature on the following themes: the nature of school history, the purposes and uses of school history and learners' views of history as a school subject. These themes were further broken down into sub-themes. The nature of school history focused on the procedural concepts of school history which comprised of six historical thinking concepts while the purposes and uses of school history focused on the substantive concepts. Learners' views of history as a school subject were also explained and discussed from a positive and negative standpoint by means of a thematic approach. Also the outlined themes were explored from a global perspective with special reference to South Africa. These observations provided the platform for the discussion of the findings in Chapter 7. As I worked through the literature on the above aspects of my



topic I realised that there is paucity in research on learners' views of history as a school subject, especially those who have chosen it, hence, this created a gap for my study.

### **Chapter 3**

This chapter is a continuation of the literature review that was initiated in Chapter 2. However, unlike in Chapter 2 where I reviewed research literature, in this chapter I focused on theoretical literature. I began this chapter by discussing some thoughts on theory and how it is used. Thereafter, I explained what a theoretical framework is and why it was needed. I further explained the chosen theoretical framework which is 'Symbolic Interactionism' for this study and the nature of it, as well as how I assimilated this theory into my research project on history learners' views of history as a school subject in the secondary phase of schooling.

### **Chapter 4**

In this chapter I described and justified the choice of the research design and methodology applied in this study because I wanted to indicate the route I followed to answer the research questions posed. This study is a qualitative study which was informed by an interpretivist paradigm because its aim was to have a deeper understanding of how history is viewed by history learners as a school subject in the secondary phase of schooling. My sample consisted of four chosen schools and seventeen learners from the respective schools. The sample was purposively selected for convenience and because of the nature of the study. The research methods used to generate data were collages, gallery walk and presentations, discussions and listener-observer field-notes. Thereafter, I explained how my data was analysed which was on two levels. The first level was based on open-coding while the second was based on using an instrument I devised. Finally, the issue of ethical considerations and trustworthiness, of the study have been argued and justified.

### **Chapter 5**

In this chapter I engaged with the first level of analysis which was to analyse the individual collages. At this level collages were analysed according to an 'open coding' method. In other

words, I did open coding for each of the seventeen collages constructed by history learners in their school context. Open coding refers to the initial phase of the coding process. This means that this was my initial stage of data analysis because the process was to 'open up' the collages in order to uncover the views they hold for the collage-makers regarding school history so as to attempt to answer the research questions. In open coding I worked with my research data directly, fracturing and analysing it, initially through open coding for the emergence of core categories/segments and related concepts. This idea related well to my symbolic interactionist theoretical perspective that I adopted for my study. This in turn assisted me in interpreting and understanding my participants' views of school history symbolically, as per my interpretive paradigm. At this level of analysis I did not use my transcriptions from the presentation and discussion sessions.

## **Chapter 6**

This chapter provided a discussion of an in depth analysis of the second level of analysis for this study. A second level of analysis was necessary as the first level deemed to be insufficient. Hence, using the developed instrument (Appendix A) I designed, I analysed my collages and the data generated by means of the related methods. In other words, I analysed my research data against six benchmarks as well as the related criteria set for each benchmark. At first I briefly explained the benchmark, thereafter I did my analysis. This second level of analysis was done differently to the first level of analysis in that my instrument was not applied to individual collages but across all collages so as to seek understanding for each of the benchmarks. At the same time I used my transcriptions from my presentation and discussion sessions to justify certain aspects that my participants depicted in their collages. Hence, the instrument was applied to the collages as well as the data sets made up of other methods as it related to the collages.

## **Chapter 7**

This chapter dealt with a discussion of the findings from the previous two chapters. Since I had two levels of analysis, I collated the two sets of findings and discussed them. Collation of the two sets of findings strengthened my understanding of how history learners symbolically view history as a school subject in the secondary phase of their schooling. In addition, this collation

also provided firm findings that could be used to propose possible answers to the research questions posed. Furthermore, I discussed and theorised my findings by comparing them to the literature. In the process, I established the similarities and differences between my findings and the literature, account for the disjunction between the two and propose theoretical and philosophical reasons for the divergence and adherence. In addition, to engage in these discussions I decided to use a creative method where I extracted common fragments from the actual collages constructed by my participants and depicted them in the form of my own ‘made-up collage’. I felt that this method suited my creative arts-based methodology that I adopted for this study.

Now in chapter 8, I conclude this study.

### **8.3 Relating the findings to the research questions**

This section shows to what extent I have achieved the purpose of the study. The research questions are mentioned and reviewed to demonstrate how adequately the study has addressed the research questions. Each question was taken separately and the findings were summarised and theorised in response to that question.

#### **Research question 1: How do history learners in the secondary phase view history as a school subject?**

The study revealed various ways how history learners view history as a school subject in the secondary phase of their schooling. School history was viewed as being about South African political history; it was viewed as being more than a South African story, it was viewed as being about people, and about war and violence. The next two findings that emerged related to school history being about the conceptual and pedagogical idea of the subject and finally to conclude the findings school history was viewed as having an affective/emotive side.

It was found at both levels of analysis that history learners viewed school history as being about South African political history. This idea dominated the collages through various people, events and concepts. Different eras of South Africa’s political past were viewed as being

historically significant. In relation to this history learners placed emphasis on South Africa's political struggles both past and present thus viewing it as important. In addition, contemporary South African political history was viewed as of cardinal importance in school history by history learners. School history was mostly viewed as being a local South African study thus reflecting the idea of nationalism. Collages articulated well with the benchmarks regarding this finding in that learners seemingly understood the benchmarks. Overall, as in other parts of the world, school history in South Africa is also viewed as being a nationalistic political history.

School history being more than a South African story was another finding that emerged in response to the first research question. It was found that although the South African story dominated history learners' views of school history through the collages, there were glimpses of school history being more than this. In this regard, history learners viewed a discernible sense of 'Africanness' in their collages and confirmed during the presentation and discussion sessions that they portrayed Africa because they were proud to be African and not just South African which resonated especially with the ideas by former Thabo Mbeki, a former president of South Africa. History learners further symbolically portrayed the idea that school history is also a study of world historical events/happenings. Thus, history learners had an affinity for world history but not at the cost of South African history. This idea of history being an international study does concur with the literature to a certain extent because according to the prescribed curriculum, history is a global study but history learners preferred to express their views of school history mainly through a local history.

Another major finding that emerged from the study is that school history is viewed as a study of people. History learners viewed school history as being about a range of historical characters. People were generally portrayed symbolically in the collages by means of images and sometimes by word both individually and collectively. Amongst the people portrayed, individual powerful Black men, mainly political characters, seemed to be the dominant category. Some of these individual characters caused things to happen which had major consequences. They also made important decisions and took action regarding political matters that brought about changes in a significant manner, hence they were viewed as important by history learners. A significant finding revealed was that women were viewed in a limited capacity. Therefore, history learners implied that the issue of gender played a significant role

in school history. The younger generation was another group that was viewed as playing an important role in school history. However, this group was portrayed as having rather idealistic views regarding school history. Literature reviewed in Chapter 2 reveals that school history is a study of human beings. This idea is further justified by Meyer (2008) who states that history is above all else about people and has an important and consequently a unique contribution to make to social education.

War and violence was another finding that emerged in response to the first research question. It was found that history learners viewed school history as being a study of war and violence. This idea of war and violence was overwhelmingly portrayed in the collages and foregrounded during the presentation and discussion sessions by history learners, hence implying that it was viewed as significant in the study of school history by history learners. The idea was portrayed through various concepts, words, phrases and images. War and violence was strongly linked to the apartheid era by most history learners, hence it was viewed as playing a major role in the study of school history. In addition, some political leaders were symbolically portrayed in the collages and associated with the idea of war and violence. Collages did articulate the benchmarks to a certain extent but not all were well understood. Literature does not necessarily speak of school history being a study of war and violence but topics covered in CAPS relates to a large extent to the idea of war and violence, consequently history learners linked school history to the idea of war and violence.

Another significant finding that emerged from this study is that school history was viewed as being conceptual in nature and not merely a single agreed upon narrative. The idea of history being conceptual in nature was generally portrayed symbolically by means of words and sometimes through images. What also emerged was that history learners regarded school history as being conceptually complex. This was mainly portrayed through the types of questions set at secondary school level which makes it complex and difficult. Another conceptual aspect represented by history learners is the idea that history is a multi-dimensional story, meaning school history was viewed as having multiple perspectives and was portrayed as meaning an enhancement in level of difficulty. In addition, history learners viewed school history as an incomplete story because there are gaps of knowledge in the school history they

studied. This idea of school history being a conceptual story does concur with the literature in Chapter 2 to a large extent where school history is depicted as being conceptually grounded.

School history having a range of pedagogical values was another finding that emerged from how history learners view school history. History learners implied through their collages as well as during the presentation and discussion sessions that the study of school history helped them develop valuable educational skills. These skills included cognitive skills, resource references and research skills. In addition, evidence exists that history learners were engaged in critical thinking skills. This was mainly portrayed through the idea of them personalising certain depictions in their collages. Another finding related to the pedagogical nature that emerged was that history learners' individual schools that they attend have an influence on how they view school history. A further finding that emerged was that history learners viewed textbooks as being closely associated with school history. In other words, preference was given to textbooks over other resources. This however lends itself to history learners being exposed only to a narrow perspective of school history which ties in with the schools they attend and the idea of textbooks. Certain of the benchmarks used in level two, more specifically, analyses related well to the pedagogical nature of school history yet others were more silent and not revealed. This could be blamed on the nature of collages as any method reveals some aspects and not others. Views were stronger on substantive aspects and only some of the procedural views were covered.

Another finding that emanated in response to the first research question was the idea that history learners viewed school history as also dealing with the affective or emotive side. This meaning that school history was not only viewed as being about cognitive ability/skills and content knowledge. This implied that through the study of certain topics and aspects in school history, history learners developed binary feelings of love or anger. However, love was the most common emotion that was portrayed in the collages. In this regard, history learners focused mainly on a nationalistic love. This meaning that history learners demonstrated an obsessive love for their country, South Africa. Some history learners also used creative ways to depict their joyous feelings about school history symbolically in their collages. In contrast to the idea of love some history learners expressed feelings of anger. These however were not aimed at the subject but at certain historical events and what caused these events as well as

consequences thereafter. Hence, emotions and feelings played a powerful role in how history learners experience and symbolically interact with topics studied in school history which consequently shapes their views of the subject. Literature reviewed in Chapter 2 does agree to a certain extent regarding this idea of emotions and feelings. The study carried out by Mhlongo (2013) revealed these feelings that some learners expressed with regard to feelings of anger when they studied the apartheid era.

The summary of the findings presented above shows that history learners view history as being about South African political history, as being more than a South African story, as being about people, as being about war and violence, as having a conceptual and pedagogical nature and having an affective/emotive side. These findings were symbolically portrayed at both levels of analysis. Thus, the above section dealt with the first research question which is how history learners view history in the secondary phase of their schooling. This conclusion raises a question as to why do history learners in the secondary phase view the subject the way they do? It is to this question I now turn in the next section.

### **Research question 2: Why do history learners in the secondary phase view the subject the way they do?**

The above section presented a summary of the findings for the first research question which was how history learners view school history in the secondary phase of schooling. In this section I provide a discussion of the theoretical and philosophical explanation as to why history learners in this study view school history the way they do.

I would argue that one of the major findings in this study was that history learners obsessively viewed people of different categories as having played a crucial role in school history. Consequently, the history learners almost exclusively focused on contemporary politicians who played key roles in school history. South African, Black, male politicians in particular were regarded as being important, with Mandela being rated as the biggest political leader of all. Theoretically, the major reason for this sort of portrayal revolves around the fact that CAPS foregrounds this idea of Black male political leaders especially Mandela. In fact, school history

in its totality by means of textbooks, classes and educational media used, further reinforces the above idea. Another reason for this preference for South African political leaders stems from the participants' national identity being South African. A further contributory factor as to why learners viewed Black politicians as important is due to South Africa being a highly politicised and political country especially the party-political world they inhabit.

Equally, history learners demonstrated strong views on issues of race, politics and gender. The issue of race was viewed in an assertive manner because participants in this study are faced with issues of race because of South Africa's apartheid and first hand experiences in their present situations. Another view that was pronounced was that of gender. The study reveals that women were viewed as peripheral and consequently only appeared in groups. This finding implied that the country is still in the grips of a male dominated patriarchal society, despite South Africa's liberal constitution. These views the learners impose as views of school history by dint of their experiences outside and inside the history classroom. I would argue that one of the major reasons why history learners have these views is that the racist and patriarchal apartheid past cannot disappear overnight, hence after twenty-one years of democracy it still somehow finds itself in the official intended history curriculum as well as the hidden curriculum. In the process the unofficial history constantly blended with the official as embodied by the curriculum and textbooks.

In addition, even though there are glimpses of school history being associated with people in a social context, it was overshadowed by people being aligned more to the political arena and the social context was in the process side-lined. Consequently, school history is viewed as a South African political history by learners. The reason why history learners view history in this way is largely related to CAPS which foregrounds political history and South Africa is an overtly political country with numerous ongoing political contestations. Thus, the history that learners are exposed to at school is not a social history but a more political history, hence, their views of school history were above all else politically dominant. Furthermore, history learners' obsessive views that school history is a study of mainly politics stems from the deeply rooted past mind-sets of their communities and families which have also been filtered down to them.



Another reflection of political activity that was viewed by history learners as being an important part of school history is the idea of war and violence. History learners viewed it as important mainly because these ideas are inherent in CAPS, thus forming part of the official history curriculum that they study at school. Furthermore, South African society is generally, historically and contemporarily, violent in nature which could have also influenced learners' views of school history with regard to war and violence. Media is another aspect that could have influenced history learners' views. In addition, South Africa's violent apartheid past apparently also largely influenced and shaped history learners' views on the idea of war and violence. Thus, official as well as unofficial sources allowed learners to view the idea of war and violence in an obsessive manner.

In all of this, world history was viewed as being secondary in an apparently self-obsessed South African world by history learners. History learners recognised that school history includes world history but deliberately chose to focus on South Africa. In a hierarchical order Africa was viewed as second to South Africa while the history of the rest of the world was viewed as less significant. This can be blamed on the disappearance of "A general history" and a "South African history" section as taught in the past in favour of a thematic approach that serves to foreground South Africa. Once again this foregrounding of South Africa is strongly aligned to CAPS. In addition to this, history learners participating in this study were all South African and they gave preference to their own history.

Finally, the learners participating in this study were roughly 17 years of age who, as per the theory of symbolic interactionism seem to be very idealistic by dint of their age and way of thinking in how they view school history. Thus, grand ideas of freedom, love and history being an incomplete story and critical views of school history were demonstrated. These participating learners related school history assertively to the idea of 'big truths'. This kind of thinking can be attributed to the fact that as 16-18 year old learners of grade 11 they are so called philosophical thinkers, according to Egan (1997). In other words, facts are less important for them as they focus on and are interested in the 'real truth' on a level of a coherent system that can explain the world and reality in its entirety.

From the above it can be argued that there are various theoretical reasons why history learners in the secondary phase view the subject the way they do. However, as stated earlier these views cannot be generalised to a broader South African or global context because by dint of my research methodology I was aiming at a deep and nuanced understanding. Symbolic interaction by means of the collages did however provide an authentic porthole into the views that history learners in a contemporary South African context have of the subject, and this in itself is useful. Hence, this discussion brought to light an answer to the second research question and led to the thesis of the study.

In my view this study has, as outlined above, added to the existing body of literature on how history learners view history as a school subject in the secondary phase of their schooling. However, I do not claim to have produced totally new knowledge about how history learners view the subject at secondary school level in general but new insights were promulgated. In other words, I enhanced knowledge on learners' views in a contextual sense on two levels – South African learners and learners who have chosen the subject. This meaning that the current literature does not necessarily speak about learners who have chosen history as they focus on all learners or even non-history learners. In fact, often studies focus on worrying about those that have not taken the subject and forget about those who have chosen it. Thus, my study differed because I used a new methodology and used learners who chose the subject history. Hence, new insights, as outlined above, have emerged based on authentic views on why learners chose history. At the same time the literature is also challenged because this reveals the positive views and nuanced understanding that learners have of the substantive and procedural nature of the subject on the inside meaning those who have chosen the subject. This provided a new perspective that spoke at the same time of the big idealistic ideas that 17-year-old learners have of school history. This is in all probability the biggest contribution my study has made.

#### **8.4 Methodological reflections on the study**

In this section I evaluate and critically reflect on the research methodology and methods used in this study to address the research questions. Firstly, I want to acknowledge the fact that initially I was very hesitant and uncertain to conduct a creative arts-based methodology as my

main data generation strategy. The reason behind this thinking was because it is fairly new and in my opinion there is relatively little guidance on how to undertake arts-based research, especially with regard to my field of study. Furthermore, this was my first encounter with this kind of methodology, hence it was a huge challenge for me. However, I wanted to use a more creative methodology and experience a different way to how I previously generated data, that is by interviews. I also realised at this point that traditional techniques of research were not adequate to handle my research topic based on how history learners view history as a school subject in the secondary phase of their schooling. In addition, creative arts-based was not aimed toward a quest for certainty but its purpose was the enhancement of perspectives which is in line with the paradigm and approach I adopted for this study. Furthermore, creative arts-based was used to get an authentic understanding of how my participants viewed school history in the secondary phase of schooling in a more creative manner.

Hence, an arts-based inquiry centred on collages was selected as my main method. The other research methods related to the collages included the presentations in the form of a gallery walk, group discussions and field-notes. The construction of the collages proved to be suitable and effective in that participants exhibited confidence in using a visual medium to produce instances of collage inquiry which in turn yielded rich data. Furthermore, collage-making created metaphoric evocative texts of a symbolic nature, through which collage-makers created their own meaning on the research topic. In other words, the history learners involved in the collage-making at the respective schools become researchers and artists of their own views of school history which they presented symbolically. History learners expressed their views in a creative, symbolic and artistic way. Therefore, I felt that through the collages I generated rich data and this added new layers of meaning to my study. However, even though the research method proved to be positive and yielded rich data some participants were hesitant at the onset of collage-making because they were not involved in collage-making in this manner previously. In other words, the process was foreign to them. An added problem was that participants produced collages that were similar to others in their school which was attributed to them copying ideas from each other, over which I had no control as stated in Chapter 4. Furthermore, collages as the main method had to be used in relation to other methods to bring clarity to certain depictions in the collages.

Therefore, I used presentations in the form of a gallery walk which led into group discussions. In other words, these related methods all revolved around the pivotal center which was the collages which assisted me to understand how history learners view history as a school subject in the secondary phase of schooling. The presentations in the form of the gallery walk added a creative slant to the presentations and aligned well with my creative arts-based methodology. Participants actually enjoyed having their collage work on display through the gallery walk session and were seemingly motivated to present their collages in this kind of setting. Furthermore, it gave my participants an opportunity to view the work of their peers' collages before the actual presentations and prepare for the discussions which were to follow. In other words, participants used the gallery walk sessions and presentations to generate a discussion based on observations and what was presented.

The presentation of the collages was important and necessary in that participants presented and explained their views of school history through the symbolism of their collages, which was the purpose of the collage-making. The collage as a visual tool was used to communicate learners' views of school history, hence it was necessary for participants to present and explain their collages or else other participants and myself would not have made sense of the collages or even misinterpreted the meaning of the collage. Above all the gallery walk and presentations sessions were an effective method to promote a discussion which was my intention. However, regarding the presentation the issue of time seemed to be a problem meaning that participants were only given a certain amount of time to present, therefore in some cases they could not talk at length about their collages. The reason for the time limits related to the rhythms of school and because of the nature of the methodology I used which was generally time consuming. In addition, all participants could not make equally good and coherent sense of their collages in the presentations. This meaning in some instances participants' thoughts were overshadowed by their feelings.

The discussion method was deliberately intended to be after the gallery walk and presentation sessions because it was appropriate and allowed my participants to gain clarity regarding anything that they did not understand during the presentations. Thus, the discussion session served a two-fold purpose in that the presenters gave more detail about certain aspects related to their collages while the other participants gained new knowledge from them. Moreover,

through this process as the researcher, I was able to generate additional rich data. Overall, the discussion session proved to be useful as the data generated from them was used to confirm and clarify aspects about the actual collages as well as the presentation sessions which were analysed in Chapters 5 and 6. In addition, I transcribed all the research methods I used in the form of field-notes. My field-notes were observational and procedural and allowed me to authenticate what participants said and to confirm and verify observations.

The data generated methods used proved to be suitable and effective for the study. I deliberately used more than one data generation method to obtain an in-depth understanding of learners' views of history as a school subject in the secondary phase of schooling. In addition, a combination of these methods effectively enabled me to address the research questions by proposing answers on how they viewed school history. However, despite the research methods' effectiveness I found collages challenging in that it was very time-consuming. I had to ensure that I allocated enough time to my participants to construct their collages which in some research schools was a problem as explained in Chapter 4. Furthermore, regarding collages I provided a range of resources to allow my participants to construct their collages to express their views. These resources as gleaned in table 4.1 above proved to be insufficient and of my own making, and learners at times had to resort to drawing their own images and words. In hindsight I could have asked learners to help select possible collage material which could have enhanced the study even more and speak to the insufficiency. Another problem I grappled with was analysing the individual collages and making reference to all the related methods to justify my analysis. In addition, the collages did not necessarily articulate well with the benchmarks used for level two analysis in Chapter 6. Thus, if I have to use collages as a method again I would ensure that I provide a wider variety of resources and allocate more time for the actual construction of the collages and try to handle the other problems experienced above before the making process.

Nevertheless, overall I found the research methods useful and enriching for my study as they supplemented findings in a symbolic manner and broadened my study which focused on how history is viewed as a subject by history learners in the secondary phase of their schooling. Furthermore, methodologically by means of collages learners were given the opportunity to deal with views of school history in a symbolic manner. This arts-based method was used to

allow learners to express their views in an authentic method that has not been used much and this could serve to enhance the current literature on learners' views of school history and create a gap for my study.

## **8.5 Personal and professional reflection**

Experiencing this study was by far the most challenging endeavour that I have been exposed to in a personal capacity. This meaning that I began the journey of embarking on a PhD in 2009 and there were many hurdles experienced along the way. Full of excitement and enthusiasm I started strong with every intention to fulfil my dream of holding a doctorate in history education, a field that I am passionate about and wanted to contribute to its academia as mentioned in Chapter 1. However, this dream was quickly stifled in 2010 when I was faced with a crisis in my family and had to contribute to nursing my father after a sudden heart condition. Shortly, thereafter I faced another scenario were my son had to undergo major eye surgery and I was once again faced head on with a situation of having to deal with nursing him which took much longer than anticipated. Therefore, I had no choice but to put my study on hold and decided I would continue at some later stage. In 2012, I was once again bombarded with another unexpected situation where my mother was diagnosed with cancer and I had to nurse her for a few difficult months before her death in April 2012. This brought me to a place of great sadness as my mother was intimately involved in my educational endeavours and always encouraged me to reach my pinnacle as she believed that education is the greatest gift I can give myself. In fact, my mother had always taken great pride in my educational achievements and this was the motivating factor to resume my study after a period of mourning. I once again made a firm decision in 2013 that I am going to continue my journey with this study.

However, this proved to be more difficult than I expected as the study seemed foreign to me after the long lay-off. The world had moved on in the meantime and I thus had to almost start the study up again. In the meantime, my supervisor felt that I needed to change direction in a few areas which made things even more challenging. In fact, my supervisor's suggestions were radical in the sense he convinced me to use a new creative methodology which I initially resisted. However, looking back I realised that was by far the best advice he had convinced me

to engage in for my study. At this point I felt that I was not coping with my teaching career as well as being a wife and mother to my children, thus I hit a serious road block and felt I could not continue this journey because there were more important things happening in my life. Hence, I took a short break and officially suspended my study but could not stop thinking about my initial dream of achieving a PhD and contributing to scholarship by especially understanding how the young people that I have worked with in the subject that I love, viewed the subject – always some or other story of history is on the decline – I felt I needed to press ahead to propose some answer – even if it was only for me personally. However, I got to a stage of extreme restlessness regarding the matter. At this point I turned to seek the advice of my God, Jesus Christ, in whom I greatly trust. Through much prayer and reading of biblical verses I distinctly felt that God wanted me to bring this study to completion. I then embarked with full determination into it again in 2014 and fell deeply in love with it despite the extreme challenges I experienced. In other words, I made major adjustments in my life to allow me to pursue my dream. This meant I spent long hours working especially during the evenings, weekends and school holidays sacrificing all leisure and family time. As I bring this study to a close I am extremely grateful to my God for sustaining me and giving me the strength to bring this study to a completion. It is only by His grace I was able to accomplish this daunting task. Furthermore, without the undivided support, encouragement and love of my husband Lennie I would not have reached this place in my study. In addition, my two sons, Ashley and Wesley, also motivated me along the way with their fine academic achievements which kept me focused and spurred me on. In fact, both my sons have married during the duration of this study and have blessed me with two amazing daughters, Selina and Natasha, and three awesome grandsons and as I conclude I await the arrival of my fourth grandson. My entire life is absorbed in the care of children, from my hours in the classroom to my time spent caring and cooking for my children and grandchildren to my numerous outreach programmes designed to positively influence children's spiritual and moral decisions to the careful consideration of the views of history learners to history as presented in this PhD. Therefore, even though as stated earlier this was by far the most challenging endeavour I have undertaken it has been well worth the effort and I have finally completed my long bumpy journey. Consequently, I have fulfilled my dream and am now submitting a PhD in History Education for examination.

On a professional level I have gained an immense wealth of knowledge regarding my field of study which focused on how history learners view history as a school subject in the secondary

phase of schooling. As a History and English teacher at secondary school level, the research study had a huge impact on my teaching. For example, I have become particularly aware of the relationship between the substantive and procedural nature of school history, and taken an active role to delve into it in a more serious manner to help my learners develop the necessary skills that they need to think historically. My study has also developed in me a sense of understanding of my learners as the South African “born free generation” better. In other words, I now understand that they are very idealistic, ambitious and view history in a different way to the older generation. Another aspect that has stood out for me is that as a woman I was unaware of the intensity of struggles that we as women faced in the past and are still facing in the present. Thus, this study has enlightened me to a large extent on what women of the past experienced to enable us to get to this place today. As a woman I feel more committed to instilling some of the historical happenings of the past to my history learners. Teaching at an all girls’ school gives me the opportunity to make them more aware of their roles as women and help encourage and motivate them to live up to the ideals of the past women who left a legacy for us to follow.

Finally, on a professional note the study has broadened my research knowledge because I engaged in a new methodology. Through the study, I have been exposed to an arts-based methodology in the form of collages. This has motivated me to implement more creative methods in my teaching. Above all, this study has inculcated in me a consciousness to critique and thus understand and enrich my professional practice as a history teacher.

## **8.6 Conclusion**

The aim of this chapter was to bring the study to a conclusion by reflecting on the process of the research project, drawing conclusions on the research findings, reflecting on the methodology and methods in addressing the research questions, personal and professional reflection on the study and finally the contribution and conclusion of the study. To bring the study to a closure the conclusion was presented in four sections.



In the first section I presented and reviewed the study through a brief synopsis of what is covered in each of the chapters of this thesis. This was carried out in order to show how the findings were arrived at. I then summarised the findings by relating them to each of the research questions to show how adequately the study achieved its purpose. In the next section, I reflected on the effectiveness of the methodology and its methods in addressing the research questions and the influence of the study on my personal-professional growth as an educator, academic and researcher.

Overall, the study has contributed to the literature on how history learners view history as a school subject in the secondary phase of their schooling, therefore contributing to filling the gap in the literature. What is significant is that we now have an understanding of learners' views of the subject that they have chosen the subject with the intention of studying. Finally, to a certain extent this study flies in the face of the doomsday-like ideas that school history is either in decline, not studied by learners, and has little value and so on. For the learners in this study, granted all were "Homo Historians", school history not only had great value on numerous levels but they also had a keen sense of what it entailed.

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## APPENDIX A

### INSTRUMENT FOR ANALYSING COLLAGES – LEVEL 2

<b>Benchmarks</b>	<b>Criteria</b>	<b>Analysis of Collages</b>
Historical Significance	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Who do learners regard as historically significant and why?</li><li>2. What do learners regard as historically significant and why?</li><li>3. What do history learners view as having affected people's lives deeply?</li><li>4. Do history learners view the events/people that they placed in their collages as big/small?</li><li>5. Do history learners view the aspects they depicted in their collages as having long or short term significance?</li><li>6. How is relevance to present day life demonstrated by history learners?</li></ol>	
Historical Time	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. How is historical time identified by learners?</li><li>2. How is history learners understanding of historical time depicted?</li></ol>	
Nature of historical Knowledge and Understanding	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Is there evidence of critical thinking about the past in terms of how and why events/developments happened?</li><li>2. Is there evidence of how history has affected people's views, opinions and human behaviour?</li><li>3. Reference to identity – who are we as people in the sense of how history has shaped us as individuals.</li><li>4. Is there evidence of the use of relevant sources represented?</li></ol>	
Historical Empathy	<ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. How is circumstances and concepts</li></ol>	

	<p>surrounding an event understood by learners?</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>2. Is there evidence of why individuals from the past behaved in a particular manner?</li> <li>3. Is there awareness, respect, appreciation and sensitivity in relation to complex human actions and achievements?</li> </ol>	
Cause and Consequence	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Recognise reasons for events and results of them.</li> <li>2. Is there an indication of how consequences of events can drive future events and help explain human behaviour?</li> </ol>	
Change and Continuity	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Is there an indication of what has changed and what has remained the same over a period of time?</li> <li>2. Is there representation of change and continuity in certain political/social/economic spheres</li> </ol>	



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27 JANUARY 2010

MRS. C SUBBIAH (208523845)  
EDUCATION AND DEVELOPMENT

Dear Mrs. Subbiah

PROTOCOL REFERENCE NUMBER: HSS/0921/09D  
PROJECT TITLE: "AN INVESTIGATION INTO HOW HISTORY IS VIEWED AS A SUBJECT IN THE FURTHER  
EDUCATION AND TRAINING (FET) PHASE"

**EXPEDITED APPROVAL**

This letter serves to notify you that your application in connection with the above has been granted full approval through an expedited review process.

Any alterations to the approved research protocol i.e. Questionnaire/Interview Schedule, Informed Consent Form, Title of the Project, Location of the Study must be reviewed and approved through the 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

Best wishes for the successful completion of your research protocol.

Yours faithfully

PROFESSOR STEVEN COLLINGS (CHAIR)  
SOCIAL SCIENCES & HUMANITIES RESEARCH ETHICS COMMITTEE

cc. Supervisor (Dr. J Wassermann)  
cc. Dr. M Combrinck  
cc. Ms. R Govendeer/Ms. T Khumalo



Mrs C Subbiah  
PO BOX 37408  
Overport  
4067

Dear Mrs Subbiah

### PERMISSION TO CONDUCT RESEARCH IN THE KZN DoE INSTITUTIONS

Your application to conduct research entitled: **“AN INVESTIGATION INTO HOW HISTORY IS VIEWED AS A SCHOOL SUBJECT IN THE SECONDARY PHASE”**, in the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education Institutions has been approved. The conditions of the approval are as follows:

1. The researcher will make all the arrangements concerning the research and interviews.
2. The researcher must ensure that Educator and learning programmes are not interrupted.
3. Interviews are not conducted during the time of writing examinations in schools.
4. Learners, Educators, Schools and Institutions are not identifiable in any way from the results of the research.
5. A copy of this letter is submitted to District Managers, Principals and Heads of Institutions where the Intended research and interviews are to be conducted.
6. The period of investigation is limited to the period from 07 March 2016 to 30 June 2017.
7. Your research and interviews will be limited to the schools you have proposed and approved by the Head of Department. Please note that Principals, Educators, Departmental Officials and Learners are under no obligation to participate or assist you in your investigation.
8. Should you wish to extend the period of your survey at the school(s), please contact Miss Connie Kehologile at the contact numbers below
9. Upon completion of the research, a brief summary of the findings, recommendations or a full report / dissertation / thesis must be submitted to the research office of the Department. Please address it to The Office of the HOD, Private Bag X9137, Pietermaritzburg, 3200.
10. Please note that your research and interviews will be limited to schools and institutions in KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education.

Umlazi District

**Nkosinathi S.P. Sishi, PhD**  
**Head of Department: Education**  
**Date: 07 March 2016**

#### KWAZULU-NATAL DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION

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