


Exploring the Potential of Oral History Project (OHP) in enhancing Meta-cognitive Abilities in a History Classroom



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ABSTRACT

The Oral History Project (OHP) is prescribed in the South African History curriculum of Grades 10 and 11 for Term two. Understanding the concept of metacognition through the OHP of the Grade 11 class carries the potential of illuminating the nuanced experiences of both History teachers explaining and learners in doing the project. There is a limited understanding of the concept of metacognition within history education. The purpose of this paper was to explore the potential of OHP's ability to enhance metacognition. This was approached in two phases, viz. (i) understanding how History teachers hand out and guide learners in the process of doing the project, and (ii) understanding how learners grasp the instruction of doing the project. Methodologically, the case study was employed as a research design wherein 29 Grade 11 learners from a rural school were sampled in Mankweng Circuit, Capricorn District, Limpopo Province, South Africa. The participating school was purposefully sampled as it offers History in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase. Jean Piaget's cognitive development theory was adopted as a lens to guide this paper. Firstly, the paper recommends that the use of codeswitching should be encouraged in order to enhance the learners' linguistic proficiency when receiving instruction. Secondly, teachers need continuous training to prepare and train learners to perform the OHP. Lastly, there is a need for learners to be in intense moderation or supervision while doing the project. This paper adds value to the advancement or the growing scholarship of metacognition in history education and decolonising knowledge.

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INTRODUCTION

Teaching History should not only aim at producing conveyor belts of knowledge, learners who can just master content without engaging it critically. It should contribute towards creating citizens who are more conversant with their histories, people who understand the importance of preserving historical knowledge, and, most importantly, people who would be able to become knowledge constructors in their own right. To achieve all desired goals, skills must be thoroughly taught, which will be burgeoning for metacognition. Knowledge gained through History is controversial and subjective in its own right; thus, it requires learners to critique and engage it for a better understanding of social constructs to achieve objectivity.

History as a subject intends to develop critical thinking, and a clear understanding of the period under study, to capacitate learners with the ability to analyse the question at hand. Ntombiyoxolo Mqadi,

in her Master's dissertation, defined the importance of History as a tool that “ushers learners to their heritage through monuments, historical buildings, and museums that represent and keep the records of the past”.¹ Therefore, learners in Grade 11 have to complete an OHP, which will help them to construct knowledge. These body of knowledge that they will construct will add value towards what Mqadi argues in her dissertation. OHP is part of their assessment in Term two, and they utilise Oral History as a technique to collect data. Oral history, therefore, means engaging those with past experiences and understanding their memory lane regarding their lived experiences. Paul Thompson, the Oral History scholar, said that through Oral History, “a village or town seeks meaning for its changing character and newcomers can gain a sense of roots in a personal historical knowledge”.² Thompson echoes that Oral History is the voice of the voiceless; it shifts from the known to the unknown and helps unleash local heroes and heroines within the particular society.³ Thus, when learners are conducting the OHP, they unearth unknown histories from the classroom.

It can, therefore, be asserted that Oral History allows learners to understand the importance of History, analyse and work on primary sources, understand time in historical enquiry, further understand the cause and the consequences, and also adhere to ethical considerations in the protection of their participants. CAPS of 2011, through various forms of assessments from Grades 10 to 12, acknowledged that there are different modes of learning and meanings that learners should be exposed to both content “through conventional teaching”, and also a room for “knowledge construction” through skills and how they are applied during the process of knowledge construction, hence learners are exposed to OHP throughout the FET band.⁴ These skills should be developed in a way that inspires critical thinking among learners.

The CAPS document for history provides guidelines on how learners should approach the research project. These steps instruct the teacher when handling the project, and should be explained to the learners in detail. This also helps learners develop an understanding of what they should do. The failure of teachers to explain what is expected from learners when conducting the OHP will deter them from achieving the desired cognition. When learners understand the nitty gritty details of the project, they can perform the expected task. The CAPS marking rubric for this project outlines seven interlocking categories that learners must adhere to. These include (i) planning, (ii) ability to identify and access a variety of sources, (iii) evidence whilst collecting data, (iv) ability to historicise, interpret and communicate properly, (v) presentation, (vi) evaluation and reflection on the project, and (viii) acknowledgement of sources used while conducting the research.⁵ The ability to master all these sets of skills will enable critical thinking in learners and high levels of metacognition will be achieved.

To achieve the goals of this paper, the researchers below engaged the existing literature and how other people understand metacognition. Secondly, researchers explored the theoretical framework, which helped them to have a particular lens in understanding how metacognition can be achieved in a history classroom. On top of that, the researchers unpacked the conceptual framework that underpins this paper. Moreover, the paper employed qualitative research methodology, realising that interviews had to be conducted to make sense of how learners viewed and understood the OHP. At the end of the paper, the researchers presented the findings in a table form, in which they showed various emerging themes. Ultimately, recommendations were made and lastly a conclusion of the paper and its contribution to the body of knowledge.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Scholars like Jaleel and Premachandran explain Metacognition as a process that allows learners to develop their cognitive thinking through actions and other means. They add that metacognition caters for two types of learners: those who are more conversant with conventional learning and those who are more

¹ Ntombiyoxolo Mqadi, “Experiences of the Teaching and Learning of History in a Context of Rurality: A Case Study of a South African Rural High School” (University of KwaZulu-Natal, 2020), 3.

² Paul Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History* (Oxford university press, 2017).

³ Thompson, *The Voice of the Past: Oral History*.

⁴ Department of Basic Education, *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement for History* (Pretoria: South Africa, 2011).

⁵ Department of Basic Education, *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement for History*.

into practical or knowledge constructors.⁶ On the other hand, Feryal Cubukcu defined metacognition as “one’s knowledge concerning one’s own cognitive process and products or anything related to them”. Continues to say “it includes active monitoring and consequent regulation and orchestration”.⁷ Metacognition is a process that allows learners to internalise their thought process before making any conclusions, be it in class or outside of class. Cubukcu also explains that metacognition refers to the knowledge, awareness and control of one’s own learning. Also, it goes to the development of different abilities, namely the move to greater knowledge, awareness, transfer of the knowledge and control of one’s own learning.⁸ Even though Cubukcu’s leans to the psychological lenses of metacognition, it becomes crucial in this study to understand the meaning and intricacies involved in unpacking metacognition as a process of learning and how it can enhance skills of thinking about thinking. Metacognition encourages critical thinking amongst learners by allowing them to internalise issues. Jaleel and Premachandran claimed that metacognition involves awareness of how learners learn and, in the process, how they evaluate their learning needs, develop strategies, and implement them to achieve the intended goal.⁹ Jaleel and Premachandran phrases on unpacking metacognition from the ‘metacognitive awareness’, meaning, their work, focused on understanding this concept from the perspective of engaging whether these learners are aware of their cognitive abilities when they are taught and so forth. Therefore, through the OHP, learners will be able to develop metacognition.

According to Ming Ming Chiu and Sze Wing Kuo, what makes it difficult to achieve metacognition, among others, is the lack of preparation by teachers. Furthermore, the unclear application of conditions also reduces the use of metacognition resources.¹⁰ Therefore, teachers need to be aware of the intricacies involved in teaching metacognition and Oral History projects which will help develop high levels of thinking among learners. Suzanne van Aswegen, Estelle Swart and Marietjie Oswald did a study on metacognition but with the primary focus on how a story-based intervention on the development of metacognition among Intermediate Phase learners engages in content area learning.¹¹ Much work has been done in South Africa on metacognition and its development thereof. However, there is little work that has been studied on the intricacies of metacognition in History and history classrooms. Thus, it is the purpose of this paper to contribute towards the growing scholarship of metacognition in history education.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

Jean Piaget is one of the pioneers in educational psychology, whose contributions have been used across decades of educational research. Piaget argued that human beings can only think and reason once they pass a certain stage of life, which cannot be skipped. When he explained thinking, he referred to it as the ability to think of things even when they are no longer in sight. Piaget provides four stages: (I) sensorimotor from birth to two years, (ii) preoperational from two years to seven, (iii) concrete operational from seven to eleven years, and (iv) formal operational from eleven years upwards to elaborate his ideas and findings.¹² However, this paper only used the last stage, which is known as the operational stage.

The theory then brackets the potential participants for this paper in that those who would be in the FET band would range from this age bracket. According to Piaget, the operational stage is the stage where the child develops the ability “to reason not only about tangible objects and events.” The expectation at this stage further provided a conceptual understanding of what it means when researchers refer to History teaching and learning, which is teaching what is no longer tangible or visible while trying to make meaning of what is intangible and invisible. Simultaneously, it involves thinking about that that

⁶ Sajna Jaleel, “A Study on the Metacognitive Awareness of Secondary School Students.,” *Universal Journal of Educational Research* 4, no. 1 (2016): 165–172.

⁷ F. Chubukcu, “Metacognition in the Classroom,” *Procedia Social and Behavioral Sciences* 1, no. 1 (2009): 559–563.

⁸ Chubukcu, “Metacognition in the Classroom,” 560.

⁹ Jaleel, “A Study on the Metacognitive Awareness of Secondary School Students.”

¹⁰ Ming Ming Chiu and Sze Wing Kuo, “From Metacognition to Social Metacognition: Similarities, Differences, and Learning,” *Journal of Education Research* 3, no. 4 (2010): 321–338. pp. 1-19

¹¹ Suzanne Van Aswegen, Estelle Swart, and Marietjie M Oswald, “Developing Metacognition among Young Learners by Using Stories,” *South African Journal of Education* 39, no. 2 (2019): 1–12.

¹² Jean Piaget, “Piaget’s Theory of Cognitive Development,” *Childhood Cognitive Development: The Essential Readings* 2, no. 7 (2000): 33–47.

is not in the immediate reality of what metacognition conceptualises. During the interaction with learners, researchers saw how they thought about their conceptualised ideas until they wrote them down (Research Project). Furthermore, researchers observed and understood how the teachers themselves think about what the learners are expected to think as they provide support during the “doing” of History in this project.

Therefore, as guided by cognitive theory, teachers' thinking and reasoning have a direct impact on the learners' understanding of what they are to do. However, the teacher's thinking has no impact on the learners' route or path of thinking as they do the project. Through the frame provided by Piaget, researchers untangled metacognition and had a theorised standing of what metacognition is through the science of cognitive development.

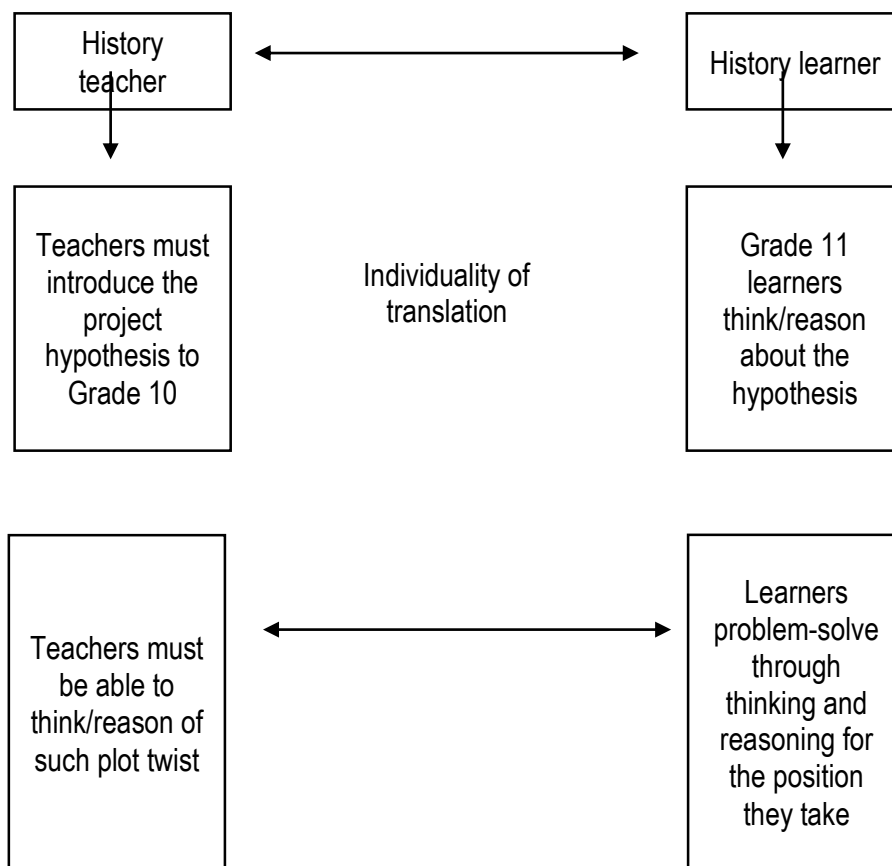


Fig. 1: Formal operational thinking for a History classroom

Example question: Democracy in South Africa did not come on a silver platter. “Do Oral History research” on any activist within your locality or nearby who played a pivotal role in the struggle to attain democracy in South Africa.

Contrary to Mathematics where problem-solving is trial and error of equations, History requires learners to mentally reason a way of solving the problem. The diagram can be explained through the dual nature exhibited by errors. Observing the same example used in the diagram, the learners use information and knowledge stored to solve the scenario given to them. This in itself is an aim that CAPS seeks to achieve, where learners are oriented to the past, present, and future.¹³

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

In order to understand the overarching concept of this paper, which is metacognition, the researchers borrowed from the conception of Mathematics as a school subject. Researchers in Mathematics explored

¹³ South Africa. Department of Basic Education (DoE), *The National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) for Foundation Phase Grade R-3* (Pretoria: Government Printer, 2011).

three stages that ultimately lead to metacognition: metacognitive knowledge, metacognitive experience, and metacognitive skills.¹⁴ According to Wolfgang Schneider and Cordula Artelt, metacognitive knowledge refers to world knowledge and how the human mind works and interprets things. Additionally, they promulgated that metacognitive experience can be viewed as feelings aroused by a problem-solving situation, and lastly, they argued that metacognitive skills speak to the oratory skills, reading comprehension, attention, and memory.¹⁵ This paper adopted all three tenets because they tacitly explain how the potential of OHP to enhance metacognition. Through this project, learners are expected to use their prior knowledge and identify potential participants before beginning the project. In order to stimulate feelings of belonging, learners, while doing this project, unearth local heroes who enact feelings of belonging. Lastly, one cannot interview anyone without learning new skills. Hence, one participant said, “Oral History teaches us to talk; we are like journalists”.¹⁶ These tenets will be suitable for understanding the potential of oral history to realise metacognition.

On the other hand, other scholars from Education Psychology broke metacognition into two parts. Papaleontiou-Louca, an education psychologist, identified them as self-appraisal and self-management of cognition. By self-appraisal, she meant people's personal reflections about their own knowledge, abilities, motivation, and characteristics as learners. When she reflects on self-management, she argues that it refers to metacognition in action, providing solutions to problems that have been identified, plans on how to execute, willingness to adjust when the primary plan fails, and lastly, revisions post the work.¹⁷ In addition, Ming Ming Chiu and Sze Wing Kuo, pundits of Special “needs” Education, stated that there are basic skills that metacognition intends to achieve, among others, including writing.¹⁸ In addition to his assertion, the OHP intends to unleash learners’ tacit knowledge, help them construct knowledge, and write their research reports. Moreover, Ilke Dere, an Assistant Professor in Education Studies, argued that Oral History gives students a sense of responsibility for their own learning experience. Such experiences would be long-lasting.¹⁹ Since there is no clear explanation related to metacognition in History, researchers have concluded that internal thinking about historical projects, execution and also new sets of skills learnt show some elements of metacognition being realised.

Metacognition helps learners realise independent thinking and develop skills such as planning, executing, and writing a report or research output, hence thinking about thinking. The participation of learners in knowledge construction plays a critical role in developing their metacognitive thinking skills. Therefore, a correctly executed OHP can develop the cognitive levels of learners. In History, therefore, metacognition can be defined as a process of creating knowledge, which involves (i) research topic to be unpacked, (ii) planning, doing background research, (iii) execution, data collection, i.e., oral interviews, and (iv) writing research report and presenting findings. Additionally, it would mean, the expected skills in a history class, when mastered or understood would lead towards what is known as “expert learners”. These types of learners can develop their different levels of metacognitive thinking, by demonstrating their ability to undertake tasks, execute the instructions given to them, report back and show gained knowledges.

METHODOLOGY

To answer the research questions, this study forms the foundation of this study in the qualitative approach using the interpretivist paradigm. The assumption among interpretivist is that reality is subjective, multiple, and socially constructed.²⁰ Similar to how learners receive and interpret an instruction given during their OHP. In practice, this translates into the individual’s understanding and experiences of a phenomenon, which you must include as your individual realities. Charles Kivunja further alluded that the interpretivist paradigm aims to understand the viewpoints of participants rather than the interpretation

¹⁴ Wolfgang Schneider and Cordula Artelt, “Metacognition and Mathematics Education,” *ZDM* 42 (2010): 149–161.

¹⁵ Schneider and Artelt, “Metacognition and Mathematics Education.”

¹⁶ Soldaat, and Gxwayibeni, personal collection, participant 10 interview with learners from a rural school in Mankweng, Limpopo.

¹⁷ Eleonora Papeleontiou-Louca, “The Concept and Instruction of Metacognition,” *Teacher Development* 7, no.1 (2003): 9–30.

¹⁸ Chiu and Kuo, “From Metacognition to Social Metacognition: Similarities, Differences, and Learning.”

¹⁹ İlker Dere, “Viewpoints of Social Studies Teachers about Oral History Method,” *Review of International Geographical Education Online* 9, no. 1 (2019): 171–192.

²⁰ Charles Kivunja and Ahmed Bawa Kuyini, “Understanding and Applying Research Paradigms in Educational Contexts.,” *International Journal of Higher Education* 6, no. 5 (2017): 26–41.

of the observer.²¹ The researchers were of the belief that understanding the learners' experiences in their "thinking about thinking" greatly contributes to the teaching and learning of the history classroom.

Phenomenological Case-study

The selection of the case-study design to understand the phenomenon under focus was informed by the nature of the inquiry. A case-study design is said to "investigate a real-life phenomenon in depth and within its environmental context."²² To understand the phenomenon in depth, the researchers use a single case-study design by purposefully selecting the case and participants. Believing that better epistemic insights can be understood by selecting one school in the province of Limpopo, specifically a class of grade 11 who have already completed the OHP in the previous grade. In nature, case studies strive in complementary to aiming for an in-depth understanding of the phenomenon through the derive of textual data that is rich and non-numerical. Moreover, using different data generation sources allows the nuances of the phenomenon to be illuminated when studying a case.²³ Thus, allowing learners to communicate their experiences through text will reveal the abstract process of thinking as they give responses.

Working with a grade 11 history classroom in a selected school in the Capricorn District allowed for an in-depth and focused exploration. The selected case was therefore convenient and purposeful since the school was one of the few that was closer to the researchers for access.

Researchers then employed the phenomenological methodology with photo-elicitation. Using phenomenology further reinforces the need for, the participants could share their experiences as they lived them when doing the oral history project. The case had 29 history learners who individually engaged in mini photo albums of five photos that best captured their experiences when they did the oral history project in grade 10. Projection to Complementary to the research design, the natural environment is not controlled or tempered as would be the case in an experimental design.²⁴ Instead, the history learners used their mini-photo albums during the semi-structured interviews, as they explained the reason for each photo. Photo-elicitation allows participants to share experiences latent to the mind without being probed or led in how they respond. Suffice it to say, that the reflections during semi-structured interviews become authentic since this paper intended to understand how metacognition can be improved through the oral History project in the Grade 11 History classroom.²⁵

While a research design provides a framework of how the enquiry was framed, the methodology used a case study. In line with the design, this methodology allowed the phenomenon to be explored. Hans-Gerd Ridder defined a case study approach as research that scientifically investigates a real-life phenomenon. He added that such cases could be individuals, groups, events or organisations.²⁶ This approach was therefore deemed appropriate since the researchers sought to explore what the History teacher and learners used to manoeuvre through the OHP in revealing metacognition. The researchers adopted a focus group approach when collecting data because 29 participants were sampled by being screened through their performance in the Oral History project.²⁷ Using textual data with case studies encapsulates the experiences of those who "do" the OHP. By combining the assessment tool, the History teacher, and History learners' reflections whilst conducting the project, their reflections on the teacher and learners allowed for triangulating opportunities and challenges the project has and may have achieved in developing metacognition. It is through reflection that one thinks about one's strategies, execution, and way of presenting one's work.²⁸ Thus, if all the overarching themes above had been executed, it would have helped the learners realise metacognition.

²¹ Kivunja and Kuyini, "Understanding and Applying Research Paradigms in Educational Contexts."

²² Hans-Gerd Ridder, "The Theory Contribution of Case Study Research Designs," *Business Research* 10 (2017): 281–305.

²³ Robert K Yin, "Case Study Research Design and Methods Third Edition," *Applied Social Research Methods Series* 5 (2003).

²⁴ Robert K Yin, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, vol. 5 (sage, 2009).

²⁵ Veronica M Richard and Maria K E Lahman, "Photo-Elicitation: Reflexivity on Method, Analysis, and Graphic Portraits," *International Journal of Research & Method in Education* 38, no. 1 (2015): 3–22.

²⁶ Ridder, "The Theory Contribution of Case Study Research Designs."

²⁷ Natasha Mack, "Qualitative Research Methods: A Data Collector's Field Guide," 2005.

²⁸ Andrew Pollard et al., *Reflective Teaching in Primary Schools* (Bloomsbury Publishing, 2023).

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Table 1: Emerging themes

Codes	Emerging Themes	Findings
Focus Group Interviews: Debate Test Talking Presentation Journalist Research Interview Topic Oral Information	Ambiguity understanding of the meaning of Oral History - <i>Confusion</i>	<p><u>How learners understand the instruction of doing the Oral History Project</u></p> <p>-Participants exhibit an unclear or intangible understanding of what oral History is, rather, each participant used terms synonymous with the process of completing the task. For example, <i>participant 22</i> explained that she thought “<i>it was something more like debate...</i>”</p> <p>Data illuminates confusion on the base of understanding the key concept in Oral History. Learners show no concrete understanding of the concept of Oral History.</p>
Thinking Echo of thinking mind	Application of the mind for depth thinking - <i>Metacognition theory</i>	-Both <i>participants 24 and 16</i> elaborated on how oral History was about being assessed in how each learner thinks with Participant 29 they were being tested on how “ <i>our minds think differently</i> ”.
Research plan Confused Focus Understanding Week-by-week target End product	Execution of the Oral History Project - <i>Internal engagement of thinking through stages</i> - <i>Resentment</i> - <i>Confusion</i> - “ <i>Stages of thinking about thinking</i> ”	Engagement with the project for the participant revealed an innate challenge in History education. That is language, particularly when teaching bilingual learners. To think about thinking requires language, but if that language requires to be decoded through the structures of the native language, the thinking is far more complex as “translation is first engaged with (subjective) before engaging with what the learner is required to do”

<p>More knowledge Testing confidence Journalist present</p>	<p>Learners' expectation of the Oral History Project</p>	<p>Participant 11 expressed that he expected the project to “<i>refa knowledge entail [give us more knowledge]</i>”. While Participant 10 said “<i>It is about being checked if we can be journalists or something.</i>” On the other hand, Participant 3 lamented that he thought this whole process was about “<i>to do a presentation in front of all the people, some sort of a competition.</i>”</p> <p>Based on the learners' expectations, data reveals a greater misunderstanding of what Oral History is about. Participant 3 reflects his prior knowledge of what he understands as “oral,” which is related to languages and not History.</p> <p>It is, therefore, evident that Oral History as a project should come forth in the themes and topics of History for learners to be familiar with the topic prior to the project.</p>
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Interpretivist analysis was used to establish the emerging themes about Oral History's potential to enhance metacognition. The researchers adopted a relativist approach to interrogate the data generated from the interview.²⁹ Data collected at the school from 29 learners and their teachers were interpreted and analysed, and furthermore, processed or compared against the existing limited literature on oral history and its potential to measure metacognition. Several themes emerged from the interview conducted, namely:

Theme one: Ambiguity on the meaning of Oral History.

Theme two: Metacognition: thinking about thinking

Theme three: The execution of the Oral History Project

Theme four: Learners' Expectations about the Oral History Project.

These are discussed subsequently.

Theme One, researchers discovered that learners were unsure of the meaning of Oral History. A participant when asked about the meaning of Oral History said, “I thought maybe it was something that was more like debate.”³⁰ In the same vein, a participant shared, “I was thinking it was about History, *e nyaka gore re bolele ka History* [it expects us to talk about History]. Discussing History, like what happened back then and more about History.”³¹ The third participant remarked, “Okay, so *nna be ke nagana gore ke research eleng gore re tsamaya re interview batho gore bona ba tsebang* about a certain, like, *ra research about topic eo bare fileng yona*, like he said *gore a re nagana go tshwana ka information eo renang le yona* [I was thinking that it was a research project that fosters us to interview people about a given topic. In doing so, we will be interviewing people about something that we do not know,

²⁹ Charles Kivunja, “Distinguishing between Theory, Theoretical Framework, and Conceptual Framework: A Systematic Review of Lessons from the Field,” *International Journal of Higher Education* 7, no. 6 (2018): 44–53.

³⁰ Soldaat, and Gxwayibeni, personal collection, participant 22 interview with learners from a rural school in Mankweng, Limpopo.

³¹ Soldaat, and Gxwayibeni, personal collection, participant 14 interview with learners from a rural school in Mankweng, Limpopo.

acknowledging that we do not think in the same way].³² These participants seemed unsure about the meaning of Oral History. Their inability to explain the concept hindered their success in the project. However, when researchers broke down the question of Oral History and its meaning, learners began to understand and follow what we asked them to explain. For example, Gxwayibeni followed up asking, “So you thought it was you who was supposed to *bolela* [talk] to the other person?.” Many of the participants nodded their heads in agreement and explained. Participant 25 admitted, “I thought this Oral History is about to test our confidence if we are confident enough to stand in front of people.”³³ On the other hand, Participant 10 thought that the project wanted to test their ability to be journalists.³⁴ Therefore, this type of confusion can be overcome by clarifying this historical concept using the home language. The democratisation of participatory action research allows learners to be constructors of knowledge, which means that learners should understand what is expected of them to conduct proper research.³⁵

Theme Two disclosed how participants thought about their thoughts when they were doing the Oral History project. Tachie and Ramathe posited that metacognition is the highest order of thinking about how to create a better learning experience.³⁶ Two participants, in their explanation of Oral History, referred to the process that fostered thinking about historical events.³⁷ This assertion, then, showed that the learners were aware that they needed to think about everything and, at the same time, internalise their thoughts.

Additionally, **Theme Three** juxtaposed the execution of the Oral History project. Participants 22, 19, and 14 said that to have a good research project, they needed to have a “research plan”. Participant 14 explained, “I made out a research plan, which is made by some weeks, week one to week three. To know that, the first week you decide *gore* [that] what are the first things to focus on and we should make *gore* [that] in this certain week I should be done. That first week you do this, the second week you do that, the third week you make up *gore* [that] you are done with your research.”³⁸ The project stimulates the ability of learners to plan and, importantly, to execute, to think about the next step of their desired project; thus Oral History indeed has the potential to enhance Metacognition. On the other hand, the teacher said, “We do a research plan to know where to focus on specific activities [sic?], First, you must know the question that you must answer, and the people that you are going to research, and then you draft the questions.”³⁹ Then, you send some appointment [sic] letter to those people so that when you go there, they will know that we are expecting the particular person *akere* [right]. And then after that, you go [sic] these people on that specific date, time, to ask for more information based on what you know, and after that, you come back and do rough sketch [draft] of your collected data or information that you have collected from different people. And then after you just summarise your essay, or your research then submit”.⁴⁰ These themes show that the oral history project can help in advancing Metacognition as it allows learners to be creative in conducting the project.

The Fourth Theme exposed how the learners felt about the project, which Taole refers to as reflection post-teaching.⁴¹ The language issue appeared to be the biggest challenge in doing the project and participating when we were collecting the data. When metacognition is realised, the thinking and cognitive levels of learners will be above board. However, if the language used to provide the instruction and reach the outcomes of the assessment has to be decoded through structures of ‘native’ language, the thinking is far more complex, as “translation if first engaged with (subjective) before engaging with what the learner is required to do”. Hence, Piaget argued that human beings can think critically when they

³² Soldaat, and Gxwayibeni, personal collection, participant 16 interview with learners from a rural school in Mankweng, Limpopo.

³³ Soldaat, and Gxwayibeni, personal collection, participant 25 interview with learners from a rural school in Mankweng, Limpopo.

³⁴ Soldaat, and Gxwayibeni, personal collection, participant 10 interview with learners from a rural school in Mankweng, Limpopo.

³⁵ Simon Adjei Tachie and Johnson Motingoe Ramathe, “Metacognition Application: The Use of Chess as a Strategy to Improve the Teaching and Learning of Mathematics,” *Education Research International* 2022, no. 1 (2022): 6257414.

³⁶ Tachie and Ramathe, “Metacognition Application: The Use of Chess as a Strategy to Improve the Teaching and Learning of Mathematics.”

³⁷ Soldaat, and Gxwayibeni, personal collection, participant 24 and 16 interview with learners from a rural school in Mankweng, Limpopo.

³⁸ Soldaat, and Gxwayibeni, personal collection, participant 22, 19 and 14 interview with learners from a rural school in Mankweng, Limpopo.

³⁹ Jean Piaget, “The First Year of Life of the Child,” *The Essential Piaget*, 1977, 198–214.

⁴⁰ Soldaat, and Gxwayibeni, personal collection, History teacher interview with learners from a rural school in Mankweng, Limpopo.

⁴¹ Pollard et al., *Reflective Teaching in Primary Schools*.

reach a certain stage, and such can be accompanied by mastering the language of teaching and learning.⁴² On the other hand, Barbara Wahlberg argued that the fact that English is still used as a medium of instruction suggests the second form of oppression for the Black-African majority in South Africa.⁴³ Thus, the language of instruction is posing a challenge for History learners to execute their project because the Department of Basic Education (DBE) argues that schools should have one medium of instruction for content subjects.⁴⁴ Based on the learners' expectations, some understood Oral History as a separate term. For example, Participant 3 reflects on his prior knowledge of what he understood as "Oral" which is related to languages like making presentations in front of people.⁴⁵ Therefore, Oral History can be done using different vernaculars depending on the location to ensure that there is maximum understanding from learners and participants (interviewees).⁴⁶ Having to comply without understanding would be a futile exercise because this project has the potential to unearth local histories, contributing to the historical body of knowledge.

On the contrary, some learners understood that their learning was their responsibility; thus, when experiencing difficulties with language and a lack of understanding of concepts they had to source assistance as Self Directed Learning (SDL) expects them to do.⁴⁷ Participant 14 said, "Firstly, I read the research with what is it about [sic] and I made sure that I understand the questions. For those that I did not understand, I asked; after I started my research, I began googling the questions. Then, I interviewed some people, and then I drafted my research plan after I made a table of contents and stuff like that."⁴⁸ In the same vein, the unidentified participant showed his resilience and understood that it was indeed his responsibility to ensure that they understood the task before doing it. The learners said, "At first is as freaking [slang] out, I did not understand anything. Nevertheless, due to consulting, it helped me a lot with the project and I started to understand more. As time passed, I began to be interested [sic?] in the project and I was excited."⁴⁹ Underscoring the need for a comprehensive and balanced view, one participant observed that Oral History could be useful and because, in Grade 11, it was their second time doing this project; therefore, the teacher could use them as foot soldiers to assist and unpack this project to the Grade 10s. And if this happens throughout the years, it will create interest from learners.⁵⁰ The OHP has the potential to enhance metacognition in a history class, as it allows learners to utilise their own thinking to conduct the research. The paper, therefore, affirms that the project, when done, code-switching should be allowed so that learners can be free to express themselves.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The OHP project should be open to multilingual practices and codeswitching in class. Additionally, teachers should ensure that they follow a strict monitoring programme to check the progress of their learners when doing the project. Furthermore, teachers must constantly improve their skills by attending training to perform OHP's for them to be suitable facilitators of the project. On top of that, learners who are taking History should be encouraged to do or give due diligence to the OHP project as it will help them to understand how to make history, how to conserve history and how to write History. In many ways, this project has the potential to uncover local history and local heroes and heroines. Thus, constant training should be provided to pedagogical practitioners, be they subject advisors, or even teachers themselves. Lastly, the institution of higher learning, particularly the school of education, and history, should make it compulsory for teachers to undergo training on how to do OHP and unpack its intricacies thereof.

⁴² Pollard et al., *Reflective Teaching in Primary Schools*.

⁴³ Barbara Wahlberg, "Language and the Learning of History—the Way Forward (An Exploratory Study)," 2006.

⁴⁴ Wahlberg, "Language and the Learning of History—the Way Forward (An Exploratory Study)."

⁴⁵ Soldaat, and Gxwayibeni, personal collection, participant 3 interview with learners from a rural school in Mankweng, Limpopo.

⁴⁶ Sifiso Mxolisi Ndlovu et al., "Report of the History Ministerial Task Team for the Department of Basic Education," *Department of Basic Education: Pretoria*, 2018.

⁴⁷ Bernadette Geduld, "A Snapshot of Teachers' Knowledge and Teaching Behaviour with Regard to Developing Self-Regulated Learning," *Journal of Education (University of KwaZulu-Natal)*, no. 77 (2019): 60–78.

⁴⁸ Soldaat, and Gxwayibeni, personal collection, participant 25 interview with learners from a rural school in Mankweng, Limpopo.

⁴⁹ Soldaat, and Gxwayibeni, personal collection, unidentified participant interview with learners from a rural school in Mankweng, Limpopo.

⁵⁰ Soldaat, and Gxwayibeni, personal collection, participant 2 interview with learners from a rural school in Mankweng, Limpopo.

CONCLUSION

OHP has the potential to help learners realise their cognitive levels. This type of assessment fosters critical thinking from learners and helps them to be creative in their execution. Because learners have their own convictions, they need to plan, execute and also be able to compile a research report. All these are elements of metacognition, and they result in a better society. The project should use a multilingual approach to ensure maximum participation of the participants and interviewees. Leaning on Piaget's theory, the paper discovered that, indeed, through this project, learners from the age of 11 and above can critically reason and analyse. The paper also revealed that the medium of instruction, which is English in the South African context, poses a challenge for learners in rural schools; thus learners should be allowed to code-switch when doing the OHP. That will help them to undertake the project with due diligence. This paper adds value in advancing or growing the scholarship of metacognition in history and decolonising bits of knowledge.

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