



Essay Structure!

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Abstract

Many humanities students give feedback that they find writing essays a challenge. Students claim that they do not know how to deliver their ideas to effectively answer essay questions. They also get confused by the different terminology used to describe essay structure in the different Humanities subjects (ie: GP, Economics, History and Literature).

Our group, consisting of Geography and Economics teachers, wanted to investigate whether using a standardized structured approach in essay writing across two subjects would lead to improved essay performances in both subjects. We were looking for quantitative evidence in the form of improved essay scores in both Geography and Economics as well as qualitative evidence in the form of survey results and qualitative assessment of students essay work.

We did not observe any statistically significant differences in the Geography and Economics essay scores of students who were taught the standardized approach versus the students who were not taught this approach. However, students who were taught this approach felt that using a structured, standardized essay teaching approach was useful in helping them to organize their ideas and to write clear introductions and conclusions. Also, a closer examination of these students' essay work show that they have improved the way they organize their ideas to tackle the essay questions.

We believe that teachers should try to look for skills which are used across subjects – such as essay writing skills, and adopt a standardized approach to teach these skills. This will allow students to transfer the skills learnt in one subject to other subjects.