

# **Impressions on aspects of the process – and outcomes – of curriculum transformation in History for schools after 1994 in South Africa<sup>1</sup>**

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## ***Samevatting***

Die aanbreek van die 21e eeu het ook wêreldwye veranderinge in geskiedenisonderrig getoon. Dit was sigbaar in vele gewysigde of nuwe kurrikula binne veral die verdere onderwys- en opleidingsfase (hoërskole) asook binne die strukture van handboekontwikkeling vir skole. In Suid-Afrika het hierdie tendense saamgeval met 'n tydperk van transformasie in die onderwys sedert veral die oornome van die African National Congress as regerende party vanaf 1994. In die algemeen was die verandering in Suid-Afrika binne alle vlakke van die samelewing op die een of ander wyse geraak deur die woord “internasionaal” of “globaal”<sup>2</sup>. Na sowat 15 jaar van transformasie in Suid-Afrika dus reeds verloop het, is die resultaat ook sigbaar in die veranderinge wat ten opsigte van die geskiedenis kurrikulum deurgesien is, asook die benadering wat gevolg is in skoolhandboeke as die praktiese resultaat hiervan.

Die artikel is gestruktureer om aspekte te debatteer wat aanleidend was tot die omvorming van veral die Geskiedenis kurrikulum. Onder meer is politieke belaaide gevoelens en persepsies van die dag, die status van empiriese navorsing binne geskiedenisonderrigpraktyke deur akademici sowel as die rol van die intellektuele lui binne die raamwerk van sogenaamde onderwysvoortgang ook ter sprake. Om meer te fokus op 'n bepaalde aspek binne 'n breë tema soos hierdie rakende “onderwysvoortgang”, is die Graad 12-vlak se hersiene kurrikulum en skoolhandboeke wat onlangs publiseer is as die mikrosnit uitgesonder vir hierdie bespreking. Van die kern gevolgtrekkings oor “onderwysvoortgang” in Geskiedenis as skoolvak is dat die hersiene Graad 12 kurrikulum van Suid-

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1 Revised paper as presented at the International Didactics History Conference, Tutzing, Germany, 7-9 September, 2008.

2 H Klug, *Constituting democracy. Law, globalism and South Africa's political reconstruction* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 2000), p. 137.

Afrika ook nie daarin kon slaag om vlekkeloos te wees van i) die politieke sentimente van die dag nie en nog minder van die dominante leierskap en mag van die Regering binne die kurrikulumveranderinge. ii) Voorts ook is onderwysvoortgang (metodologie en globale/internasionale tendense) wel heel sigbaar in die kurrikuluminhoud verdiskonteer maar nie noodwendig effektief of korrek benader nie. iii) Verder nog blyk dit dat empiriese navorsing en in-diepte-waarnemings deur tersiêre navorsingsinstansies rakende die mees sinvolle hersiening van inhoude om die klaskamerpraktyk in geskiedenis te verbeter sowel as die inhoude van handboeke tot 'n hoer kwaliteit te laat ontwikkel, ietwat skipbreuk gelei het as gevolg van etlike redes. Ten opsigte van die Suid-Afrikaanse konteks, sal hierdie probleme en/of leemtes in die nabye toekoms meer sigbaar moet verbeter, anders is die meeste navorsing met die oog op voortgang gedoem tot 'n waardeloosheid.

## **Introduction**

The early 21st century evidenced a worldwide change in History teaching through the means of several revised History curricula in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase (high schools) and the development of textbooks as a result thereof. In South Africa, these trends have been coinciding with a period of educational transformation since the African National Congress took over as the leading political party in 1994. South Africa's transition in all spheres of life was also affected by the valence and meaning of the word "international".<sup>3</sup> After about 15 years, the transformational outcome also marked a change in the approach to History in the school curriculum and textbooks. This article is structured to debate aspects that have influenced the History curriculum transformation process in South Africa, such as the politics of the day, empirical research by academics and the influence of intellectuals as part of educational progress. Aspects of the implementation of the Revised South African History Curriculum in the Further Education and Training phase for specifically the Grade 12 level regarding textbook writing is discussed only briefly to accentuate and critically analyse traces of influences of political trends and/or educational progress. Some key conclusions are that South Africa's revised History curriculum regarding i) the unavoidability of political sentiments of the day as well as the leadership and power of the government ii) the fact that educational progress (methodology and global trends as endorsed by intellectuals) is visible in the Further Education and Training History curriculum but not necessarily efficient or correctly utilized

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<sup>3</sup> H Klug, *Constituting democracy...*, p. 137.

and iii) empirical research or in-depth observation by research and training institutions regarding an assessment of the efficiency of the curriculum revision as practised in the classroom and as it is reflected in History textbooks, are more or less absent with regard to the South African scenario and should receive attention in the near future.

### **Conceptualization**

Concepts in education, as in other disciplines, are a necessity in understanding the thinking of the writer of an article and/or the thinking of experts in a specific discipline. The intention with discussing the following concepts is not to open a new debate of what exactly the meaning of each of the concepts, as mentioned in the title of this article, should be according to philosophers or theoretical experts. It simply reflects the writer's thinking concerning its use in the title theme and in the content.

### ***Curriculum transformations***

A curriculum in education in general is a set of courses and their content offered at a school or university to obtain experiences through which learners grow and mature in becoming adults. In my view, Triche<sup>4</sup> is right in holding the following opinion:

*Curriculum is more than the knowledge taught in school. Curriculum, as a theorist conceives it, is concerned with the broader intellectual and ideological ways a society thinks about education. Hence, the current school curriculums focus on specific learning outcomes offers a limited view of the knowledge fashioned by a society, thereby offering an intellectual and social history that is highly selective...*

The core curriculum of each subject in the Further Education and Training phase in South Africa is instituted by the Department of Education. After 1994, the changing of core curricula in each subject was referred to as Curriculum 2005, in which outcomes, and not content, was the key focus,

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<sup>4</sup> Triche, "abstract", as in J Jansen, Curriculum reconstruction in post-Colonial Africa: A Review of the literature, *International Journal of Educational Development*, 2002 pp. 1-2.

with the emphasis on a break away from so-called “apartheid education”.<sup>5</sup> Transformation implies a turn in the focus or content one deals with. The ideal of a transformation is always to improve; thus, a move forward and not backward. However, with more than one voice to consider, it will most often imply that not all will share the focus that a transformation has indeed been accomplished.

### ***Empirical outcomes***

Empirical research is any research that bases its findings on direct and indirect observation as its test of reality. In this process, the researcher attempts to describe accurately the interaction between the instrument (or the human senses) and the entity being observed. It normally involves statistical data and/or in-depth observation using qualitative data. In South Africa, as will be seen from the empirically research analyses later in the discussion, empirical research is being done from time to time, especially by post-graduate students. When it comes to its application with regard to the educational level it was intended for, this voice is more or less absent.

### ***Educational progress***

Education includes both the teaching and learning processes of knowledge, proper conduct and technical competency through a focus on the cultivation of skills, trades or professions as well as mental, moral and aesthetic development. Ironically, but also understandably, educators do not always have the last say in their own field of expertise, especially when it is all about History teaching. In most countries, government and its educational empowered structures always have influenced the road intended for History in schools at some stage. The South African Department of Education is indeed in a sensitive stage of trying to promote in History teaching notions of tolerance, wisdom through its diversity and a balanced historical consciousness. This, however, cannot be done efficiently if educational knowledge is selectively applied in History research.

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5 L Chisholm, “The state of *curriculum* reform in South Africa: the issue of *Curriculum 2005*. In *State of the nation: South Africa 2003-2004*”, 2003 as in [www.hsrc.ac.za/Research\\_Publication-4459.phtml](http://www.hsrc.ac.za/Research_Publication-4459.phtml), p. 6; ES van Eeden & JL van der Walt, “Creating a future for History within South Africa’s ‘Curriculum 2005’”, *Journal for Theory and Research in Social Education*, Birmingham, USA, 28(1), Winter, 2000, pp. 85-95.

Progress in education implies moving forward generally as a benefit and not to the detriment of .... To determine if there is progress, I can imagine that experts in a discipline such as History should define criteria that reflect progress and then measure current developments and products according to the criteria. If this activity is neglected, one tends to invent the existing wheel all the time instead of refining its movement or use.

### Curriculum transformations in History in South Africa

Transcontinental trends, as highlighted by La Spina<sup>6</sup> fit the South African shoe very well. The multicultural, global model of representation in History signals its visibility in the History curriculum statement of South Africa approved in 2003. In many ways, educational trends were also fed by ideological trends of the day and started having an impact on debates regarding the representation of the history of South Africa.<sup>7</sup>

### *Politics and curriculum transformation? The period 1994-2008*

Curriculum making in South Africa after 1994 (like before 1994) was part of the national political process. In 2003, Professor Linda Chisholm,<sup>8</sup> a leading role player in curriculum transformations in South Africa, remarked the following to an international academic community:

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- 6 JA Laspina, "Designing diversity globalization, textbooks, and the story of nations", *Journal for Curriculum Studies*, (35)6, 2003, pp. 667-696.
  - 7 Compare L Chisholm & R Leyendecker, "Curriculum reform in post 1990s sub-Saharan Africa", *International Journal of Educational Development*, 28(2), 2008, pp. 195-205; *Yesterday&Today*, 2, May 2008 (covers articles on the current History debate, OBE utilizing and curriculum changes in South Africa). Also available on <http://www.sashrw.org.za>; *Yesterday&Today*, 1, May, 2007 (covers articles on the current History debate, OBE utilizing and curriculum changes in South Africa). Also available on <http://www.sashrw.org.za>; S Dryden-Peterson & R Siebörger, "Teachers as memory makers: Testimony in the making of a new history in South Africa", *International Journal of Educational Development*, 26(4), July 2006, pp. 394-403; *Yesterday&Today*, Special edition, March 2006 (covers articles on the current History debate, OBE utilizing and curriculum changes in South Africa). Also available on <http://www.sashrw.org.za>; L Chisholm, "The state of curriculum reform in South Africa: the issue of Curriculum 2005. In State of the nation: South Africa 2003-2004", 2003 as in [www.hsrc.ac.za/Research\\_Publication-4459.phtml](http://www.hsrc.ac.za/Research_Publication-4459.phtml), pp. 1-20; ES van Eeden. & JL van der Walt, "Creating a future for History within South Africa's 'Curriculum 2005'", *Journal for Theory and Research in Social Education*, Birmingham, USA, 28(1), Winter, 2000, pp. 85-95; P. Christie, "Globalisation and the curriculum: Proposals for the integration of education and training in South Africa", *International Journal of Educational Development*, 16(4), 1996, pp. 407-416.
  - 8 L Chisholm, "The state of curriculum reform in South Africa: the issue of Curriculum 2005. In state of the nation: South Africa 2003-2004", 2003 as in [www.hsrc.ac.za/Research\\_Publication-4459.phtml](http://www.hsrc.ac.za/Research_Publication-4459.phtml), p. 2.

*Curriculum revision was undertaken in three main stages of waves: the first involved the 'cleansing' of the curriculum of its racist and sexist elements in the immediate aftermath of the election. The second involved the implementation of outcomes-based education through Curriculum 2005. And the third involved the review and revision of Curriculum 2005 in the light of recommendations made by a Ministerial Review Committee appointed in 2000.*

The Review Committee suggested a major revision to the curriculum with the major function to make the curriculum more digestible with an all-inclusive, user-friendly approach. In the process, ordinary interest groups within a Babel of role player or stakeholder voices were able to make proposals, but not all were able to eventually affect the Revised National Curriculum Statement, featuring an orientation to rights and outcomes.<sup>9</sup> In Chisholm's words, mainly those few voices with social power "constructed the overall score".<sup>10</sup> In this regard, the African National Congress (ANC), several bodies or associations in education and individual intellectuals<sup>11</sup> are typified by Chisholm as the dominant powers behind the eventual changes.

In fact, being an intellectual role player for some time after 1994, I also recall that certain intellectual role players from traditional higher education English institutions were noticeably more valued than those from historically Afrikaans (Dutch) institutions whose perceptions and thinking probably were labelled as the bastions of the apartheid oppression period.<sup>12</sup> So, a "natural selection" of who should form part of the few dominant voices Chisholm refers to, certainly has influenced at least the process of History curriculum transformation.

In the transformation progress approach to History, for example, the emphases were on historical skills and the diversity of voices in the making of the South African history was underscored, probably not to follow the path of the past, namely a dominant narrative of white progress.<sup>13</sup>

In South Africa, education was made universal and compulsory in 1994,

9 L Chisholm, "The state of curriculum reform in South Africa: the issue of Curriculum 2005. In state of the nation: South Africa 2003-2004", 2003 as in [www.hsrc.ac.za/Research\\_Publication-4459.phtml](http://www.hsrc.ac.za/Research_Publication-4459.phtml), pp. 1-5.

10 L Chisholm, "The state of curriculum reform in South Africa: the issue of Curriculum 2005. In state of the nation: South Africa 2003-2004", 2003 as in [www.hsrc.ac.za/Research\\_Publication-4459.phtml](http://www.hsrc.ac.za/Research_Publication-4459.phtml), p. 4.

11 See for example J Jansen, School curriculum since apartheid: intersections of politics and policy in the South African transition, 1999, as accessed on June 2008 in <https://www.up.ac.za/dspace/items-by-author?author=jonathan.jansen%40up.ac.za>, pp.1-17.

12 Compare ES van Eeden. & JL van der Walt, "Creating a future for History within South Africa's 'Curriculum 2005'", *Journal for Theory and Research in Social Education*, Birmingham, USA, 28(1), Winter, 2000, p. 89.

13 Compare L Chisholm, "The state of curriculum reform in South Africa: the issue of Curriculum 2005. In State of the nation: South Africa 2003-2004", 2003 as in [www.hsrc.ac.za/Research\\_Publication-4459.phtml](http://www.hsrc.ac.za/Research_Publication-4459.phtml), pp. 1-5.

followed by a new program (called Outcome-based Education, Curriculum 2005) in 1998.<sup>14</sup> Since then, educational experts have been tasked with transforming, amongst others, the pre-1994 History curriculum of South Africa into a more inclusive history. This includes alternative interpretations to the so-called Afrikaner-nationalist perspective of South Africa's past,<sup>15</sup> as well as an inclusion of a dimension of social history. Concerns were then raised that developments in History teaching methodology internationally might pass the South African educational scene for many years to come<sup>16</sup> because of the key emphasis on establishing a non-racial approach and content. The value of world history and the influence of global trends on the history of South Africa were given some serious attention at national history conferences and in publications.<sup>17</sup> Though this trend appears to have received some consideration in the most recent History textbooks of South Africa, it is out of balance regarding its association with the national (South African) history.<sup>18</sup>

According to Gail Weldon,<sup>19</sup> a leading role player in the revision of the History curriculum in South Africa, the revision was driven by top-down, politically motivated and human rights forces, and was not discussed and debated at the levels of curriculum construction. Lawson,<sup>20</sup> on the other hand, argues that black educators at least had such an opportunity. So serious was the focus for a change of the History curriculum to the satisfaction of the Government and Ministry of Education, that any offers of assistance from History educators, who were – as a result of perceptions – labelled as Afrikaner nationalists, were ignored or “politely” turned down after 1994.<sup>21</sup> By the late nineties, historians

14 Compare L. Chisholm & R. Leyendecker, “Curriculum reform in post 1990s sub-Saharan Africa”, *International Journal of Educational Development*, 28(2), 2008, pp. 1-14; J. Jansen, Curriculum reconstruction in post-Colonial Africa: A Review of the literature, *International Journal of Educational Development*, 2002, pp. 1-2; K. Asmal and J. Wilmot, *Education and democracy in South Africa today*, 2001, pp.189-190.

15 Compare ES van Eeden & T. Vermeulen, “Christian National Education and Peoples Education: Historical perspectives on some common grounds”, *New Contree*, 50, (March), 2005.

16 Compare ES van Eeden, “An approach to the teaching of universal global history concepts in world history practice in South Africa”, *International World History Bulletin*, XIV(1), Spring, 1998; ES van Eeden. & J.L. van der Walt, “Creating a future for History within South Africa's ‘Curriculum 2005’”, *Journal for Theory and Research in Social Education*, Birmingham, USA, 28(1), Winter, 2000, pp. 85-95.

17 Compare, ES van Eeden, *Didactical guidelines for teaching History in a changing South Africa* (Potchefstroom, Keurkopie, 1999), pp. 1-450.

18 See the discussion on Grade 12 textbooks further on.

19 G. Weldon, “A comparative study on the construction of memory and identity in the curriculum of post-conflict societies: Rwanda and South Africa”, <http://www.centres.ex.ac.uk/historyresource/journal11/>..., 2006, pp. 1-16.

20 R. Lawson, “Black teachers (re) negotiation and (re) construction of their pedagogical practice within South Africa's post-apartheid curriculum”, (Ph.D., Ohio State University, 2003), pp. 1-170.

21 Compare P.G. Warnich, “Uitkomstgebaseerde assessering van Geskiedenis in Graad 10”, (Potchefstroom NWU, Ph.D., 2008), pp. 187; 212-221.

and historical associations also raised their concerns regarding the content and status of History as subject within the History curriculum transformation approach.<sup>22</sup>

For a selected group of experts, the process of transforming History curricula undoubtedly was a great challenge. One requirement was to compile content for all grades that would reflect historical moments of positively and negatively perceived national events in a so-called post-conflict society<sup>23</sup> in order to support the development of an acceptable human identity. With this approach, the ideal eventually is to reflect a multi-diverse understanding and higher levels of tolerance amongst users, learners and the public, as well as to envisage a collective healthiness among learners.<sup>24</sup> This move towards a multi-diverse approach and an inclusion of expanding voices (also related to genres) from a variety of sources and views is not new and well debated, for example in historical literature.<sup>25</sup>

Roughly four to six years after education in South Africa had been made compulsory for all, it was recorded (by the Minister of Education, as an expert in law, and his co-writer as an expert in diversity studies, in Asmal and Wilmot),<sup>26</sup> that learners should receive more education in global challenges and ethical values in order to rebuild social cohesion in a democratic South Africa. The strengthening of History teaching and the training of teachers in History were also mentioned as key factors in establishing change.<sup>27</sup>

South Africa is regarded as one of several countries that had to change its History curriculum to be more multi-perspective and multi-diverse.<sup>28</sup> The views and contributions of academics from a variety of disciplines including History – a selection of historians labelled or known as revisionists – were utilized because their approach to and/or additional views of the South African past were welcomed as a refreshing “other” compared to the History curriculum

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22 PG Warnich, “Uitkomsgebaseerde assessering van Geskiedenis in Graad 10”, pp.107-108.

23 G Weldon, “A comparative study on the construction of memory and identity in the curriculum of post-conflict societies: Rwanda and South Africa”, 2006, As accessed on July 2008 from <http://www.centres.ex.ac.uk/historyresource/journal11/...>, p. 2.

24 K Asmal & J Wilmot, *Education and democracy in South Africa today*, p. 186.

25 Compare C Coffin, *Historical discourse* (British Library, London, 2006), pp. 3, 44, 47, 66, 72, 130, 158-159, 169-170; Compare, ES van Eeden, *Didactical guidelines for teaching History in a changing South Africa* (Potchefstroom, Keurkopie, 1999), Ch. 9-10.

26 K Asmal & J Wilmot, *Education and democracy in South Africa today*, pp. 194-195, 200.

27 Compare ES van Eeden, “An approach to the teaching of universal global history concepts in world history practice in South Africa”, *International World History Bulletin*, XIV(1), Spring, 1998; K Asmal & J Wilmot, *Education and democracy in South Africa today*, p. 200.

28 Compare C Coffin, *Historical discourse*, pp. 139-140.

content before 1994 (known as the Apartheid era). The focus on a far more “inclusive and nuanced view of the world” was also another aspect to consider in developing the History curriculum. Eventually it affected the National History Curriculum but with (as mentioned earlier) some concern.<sup>29</sup>

In 2003, the development of the History curriculum framework reached its final stage of implementation when the National Curriculum Statement was adopted.<sup>30</sup> Textbooks for Grades 8 to 11 followed. Mr Jimmy Verner, Chairperson of the South African Society for History Teaching, recently raised the following point of critique regarding the Grades 8 to 10 syllabi in the History curriculum (28 Aug 2008):

*Internal South African politics definitely played a part here in that the FET syllabus has tried to create a more Afro-centred approach and minimise the old Euro-centred one. Unfortunately for the Africanists, the actual fact is that European thought and inventions did dominate the world for some 500 years so you cannot ignore their role. The trend has then been to try to create a world view with a strong African element which has perhaps succeeded. The problem with the syllabus is simply that it tries to cover too much in too little time and so the really important parts of history tend to get overlooked - e.g. the World Wars are almost totally ignored except perhaps as regards the human rights abuses of Nazism. The Senior Phase Human and social Sciences is now so focused on issues around rights that it is boring and repetitive (just like the old repeated study of the great trek was)... if you look particularly at the Grade 8 & 9 schemes of work and syllabus there is a definite feeling that the people who developed this were so tied up with the struggle against apartheid that it dominated their thinking entirely. Human rights and the abuse of human rights takes up far more than is actually justifiable especially when there is little attempt to counteract this by examining citizen's responsibilities. Emancipation - the struggle for freedom, is also in a sense a contrive part of the Grade 10 syllabus linking as it does the American War of Independence, the French Revolution and the emancipation of slavery. These three events are certainly not of equal impact on the history of the world but are treated as if they are (despite the fact that there are almost certainly more slaves in the world today than at the height of the notorious Atlantic slave trade).*

In December 2007, the last of a textbook series by four publishers operating in South Africa was introduced for Grade 12 learners. In many ways, these products reflect the curriculum content of what developers and the Department of Education (DoE) would like to present – content-wise and within broader Curriculum 2005 parameters – to Further Education and

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29 See the textbook discussion further on.

30 K Asmal, “Keynote address: Interrogating the History Curriculum after ten years of OBE”. (SASHT Conference, KwaZulu-Natal, 21-22 September 2007), pp. 7-14.

Training learners. To historians and experts of History didactics, textbook efficiency is not only reflected in covering the curriculum content but also in utilizing accepted History teaching methods in such a way that learners always are exposed to diverse voices within balanced themes of content; an efficient teaching approach and a balanced, meaningful assessment.

In the approach to the utilizing of a uniform assessment approach, e.g. in the Further Education and Training phase, mutual agreements on the “how to” are also absent. In this regard, it can be argued, amongst others, that the research results of the voices of tertiary History experts and History didactics educators are not efficiently utilized in the History methodology of the educational phases in schools. Because educational developments are always dynamic, the DoE in South Africa should act more democratically in its ways and allow diverse inputs by history experts in the in-service training of teachers regarding new methodologies and content. As far as assessment is concerned, Mr Jimmy Verner, Chairperson of the SASHT, gives the following impression (28 Aug 2008):

*In many ways we are way behind and are taking on bits that other countries have tried and either modified and abandoned. Methodology will always be controversial especially in a subject like History where the content is also likely to be controversial. In the 1970s there were great debates on whether assessment should be criterion referenced or norm referenced. The predominance of thinking moved to criterion referencing which led to the idea that teaching must be directed to this and so we had to start by having an aim to our teaching. The aim became an outcome and so OBE was born. Now we find we are increasingly unsure of ourselves and so we try to refer constantly to others and so bench-marking was developed but this is simply to see where we are in terms of some vague idea of a national (or an international) norm and so we are back at norm referenced assessment.*

The voices of historians and History didactic experts are to be found in empirically related studies and in qualitative observations, linked to the experience obtained by experts. Trends regarding the impact of academic research (qualitative and quantitative empirical research) on South African educators’ thinking in developing the revised History curriculum since 1994 have been concisely recorded for discussion in the next section.

## ***Empirical research and academic observations***

### **General pre- and post-1994 observations**

Though the discussion in this article mainly focuses on impacts in the process of creating a revised curriculum for History, and the possible influences of empirical research regarding the methodology of History in History teaching in schools after 1994, it is necessary to briefly present the history voices opting for curriculum and other changes by the early nineties:

In 1990, RE Chernis did a post-graduate doctoral study “The past in service of the present: A study of South African school History syllabuses and textbooks, 1839-1990” (1990) at the University of Pretoria (in Gauteng) in which he certainly pointed out trends of ideological and nationalistic influences over a span of 150 years. More experienced historians<sup>31</sup> also voiced their concerns regarding the restructuring of History as subject in schools two years before South Africa became a democratic republic under the African National Congress (ANC). The empirical status and future of History and history in a new History curriculum was also debated in research and on other relevant podiums then.<sup>32</sup>

Not only the one-sidedly perceived choice of History content, but also the ancient methodology of teaching content that frequently appears to reflect little innovation and passion, contributed to dissatisfaction among historians and History educators. The contributions of Luli Callinicos<sup>33</sup> and her colleagues of the University of the Witwatersrand (Wits) History Workshop since the mid eighties certainly did much to fill aspects of gaps in both the socio-politically one-sided curriculum approach and as far as the teaching methodology is concerned.

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31 WP Visser, “People’s history en Geskiedenisonderrig op skool: ‘n Alternatiewe geskiedenis vir die nuwe Suid-Afrika”, *Gister en Vandag*, 25, Mei, 1993, pp. 322-339; G Cuthbertson & A Grundlingh, “Some problematical issues in the restructuring of history education in South African schools”, *South African Historical Journal*, 26, 1992, pp.154-171; PH Kapp, “The place and role of History in the New Syllabus”, US [Draft Report], 1992.

32 Compare A van der Merwe; A. Vermaak & S Lombard, “An empirical investigation into the teaching of History in the RSA” (Pretoria, Human Sciences Research Council, HSRC Education Research Programme No.19, 1991, p. 232; The History Education Group, *History Matters: Debates about a new history curriculum for South Africa* (University of Cape Town, Heinemann-Centaur, 1993); J Bam, “Considerations for a new history curriculum for secondary schools in. South Africa” (Cape Town, M.Ed., UCT, 1993) as in [www.info.gov.za/otherdocs/2000/hapanelr.pdf](http://www.info.gov.za/otherdocs/2000/hapanelr.pdf).

33 BG Yuill, “The History workshop’s teacher conferences, past and present assessment of its educational value” (M.A.-University of the Witwatersrand, 2002); L Callinicos, “Popularising history in a changing South Africa”, *South African Historical Journal*, 25, 1991, 22-37.

Roughly 125 unpublished and published research documents regarding teaching in History for specifically the South African environment were developed between 1994 and 2008 (at the time of writing). Though more is published (if all newspaper comments and reports as well as research done in South Africa with regard to teaching History in other countries in Africa are taken into account),<sup>34</sup> it was decided to randomly reduce the list to only publications that reflect a topic on the teaching of History in South Africa. By doing so, approximately 29 of the 125 research documents were identified as unpublished research master dissertations and doctoral theses that have emanated from research at higher education institutions. The remaining 96 published documents (mainly in article form) were produced by History educators and intellectuals from especially higher education institutions. The content in the research of post-graduate students and more experienced educators varies from empirical (quantitative or qualitative) to research based on observation, knowledge and years of experience in the field of teaching History. The following two sub-sections outline more detail as far as both groups of research results are concerned.

#### **Post-graduate research after 1994: An impression**

In scrutinizing the 29 unpublished post-graduate research reports, the key impression is that South Africa probably is in a “lucky” position that so many research reports could have been conducted in the field of history. In comparison with the empirical research feedback of some other countries, the complaints are mainly that not much is produced. Perhaps the political phase in which South Africa has found itself since 1994 and the controversial status or label attached to History also served as a platform to enhance more research per annum. Two of the 29 reports were done abroad.<sup>35</sup> The themes of these reports were randomly divided into the following themes to provide the reader with some idea of their foci, which can also be interpreted as key needs or concerns of the time:

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34 Post-graduate research studies done in South Africa, but related to history teaching in the rest of Africa during the period 1994 to 2008 counted seven. Amongst others, there were studies on Kenya, Zimbabwe and even one on Christian schools in Germany done by T Mayer in 2003 and titled: “Christian schools in Germany: History and Educational approaches: Christliche Schule in Deutschland: Geschichte und pädagogische Ansätze (M.Th), Unisa.

35 The two reports referred to are: R. Lawson, “Black teachers (re) negotiation and (re) construction of their pedagogical practice within South Africa’s post-apartheid curriculum” (Ph.D., Ohio State University, 2003), pp. 1-170; R. Nichino, “A Comparative Historical Study of Japanese and South African School History Textbooks ca. 1945-1995” (Ph.D., University of Western Australia, 2006).

**Key themes in MA dissertations and doctoral theses (Compare Appendix A)**

- History curriculum/syllabus evaluation: 1 report;
- An exploring of the using/activating of instructional media/resources/databases: 2 reports;
- The utilizing of local history: 2 reports;
- Aspects of methodology: Teaching History in schools (including outcome-based assessment): 9 reports;
- History textbooks: 3 reports;
- Ways of utilizing history for external purposes such as human rights, tolerance, peace and gender issues: 3 reports;
- Dealing with anti-racism and cultural specifics in History content: 3 reports;
- Ways of utilizing history for historical purposes: Development of historical consciousness: 1 report;
- Teacher training in a post-apartheid curriculum and ways to accommodate the historically disadvantaged teacher: 5 reports.

Based on the outcome of the research report topics as divided above, the methodology of History teaching and methods to utilize instructional sources and local sources are still rightly regarded as the pillars of the existence of History Didactics. Adapting to additional training methods to accommodate disadvantaged teachers and to measure the historical consciousness of learners from time to time is also part of the aims of any didactics programme. With new History textbooks on the market after the acceptance of the Revised History Curriculum in 2003, more higher education institutions should invest in research with a history didactics focus to explore the approach to curriculum content in textbooks, sources, the language approach and ways of assessing. All these are part of the aims of empirical research in history didactics.

An ironical part, however, is that it appears as if textbook development and the results of empirical research on textbooks of the past (as well as a guidance of how it should be approached and pitfalls to be avoided) are not being utilized efficiently in the marketplace. Publishers do have their focus. In South Africa, that focus at the moment (as in the pre-1994 period) appears to keep the Government's Ministry of Education happy by not stepping too much on political toes and by ensuring that textbook activities reflect the political majority of the day, regardless of whether it presents the History curriculum

which appears to want to reflect multiple voices etc. Because History will probably always have some controversial attachment to content selection when it involves different cultures and racial sensitivity in cosmopolitan environments, it is a necessity for researchers of history didactics to address issues of this nature. In this way, History educators are supported in the best possible way to deal with controversial concerns. However, I am not convinced that it should be the assignment of History Didactics and its educators of History to be forced to utilize topics in History teaching for external purposes beyond its methodological scope. The actual methodological scope of teaching History, amongst others, is to present a balanced multiple-voice approach to teaching history content as scrupulously and objectively as possible and to focus on a reasonably fair analytical response). In this way, dealing with human issues such as having tolerance with differences, understanding human rights and avoiding racism could and should be exposed spontaneously and not enforced in a compulsory way as if it should be an assignment of History. To teach History in a diverse, non-prejudiced, balanced and methodologically passionate way already requires that the educator implement scientific and professional morals to the discipline/subject that should always be respected.

#### Qualitative research and observations by historians and History didactics practitioners after 1994: An impression

Between 1994 and 1999, no less than 30 of the 96 articles/report publications regarding History teaching issues for the period up to 2008 were published. During the nineties, the key topics of concern were the future curriculum content and the future of History in schools. From 2000, the content focus in History textbooks of the past, as well as those to be for future, was debated hand in hand with the process of developing a revised History curriculum for schools (the General Education and Training phase as well as the Further Education and Training phase). Issues regarding History assessment within the outcome-based educational structure equally received ample attention. It can perhaps be argued that matters related to moral issues were addressed in some way in some contributions, but empirically certainly not sufficiently enough to obtain a broader diverse impression of, for example, the historically conscious status of learners in South Africa currently. The fact that some research results reflect discussions on topics such as historical consciousness, racism and tolerance, accentuates a need to understand the status and position of History and History teaching in these human issues.

**Key themes in scientific articles/reports (Compare Appendix B) 96 publications**

- Revised History curriculum/syllabus trends/needs/evaluation/debates: 16 contributions;
- Teacher training for History in the 21st century: 4 contributions;
- History and outcome-based education: 5 contributions;
- The future of History: 12 contributions;
- The value of History: 4 contributions;
- Oral History: 2 contributions;
- An exploring of the using/activating of instructional media/resources/databases/ other technology (including museums): 6 contributions;
- The utilizing of interdisciplinary & local history: 2 contributions;
- Aspects of methodology: Teaching History in schools (including assessment): 15 contributions;
- History textbooks (trends, concerns & critique): 14 contributions;
- Ways of utilizing History for external purposes such as human rights, tolerance, peace and gender issues: 4 contributions;
- Dealing with anti-racism and cultural specifics in History content: 3 contributions;
- Ways of utilizing History for historical purposes: Development of historical consciousness. 6 contributions;
- Historiographical trends in the teaching of History: 3 contributions.

Though oral history is recognized as an upcoming and thriving branch of practicing and teaching History in South Africa, some empirical research on how to accommodate this branch and its methodology in teaching History in schools is clearly lacking. Debates on developing indigenous knowledge systems within the African context of living in the focus of History teaching are valuable, but should be approached with more seriousness in theory and in practice. Therefore, with regard to both these foci of teaching, it is not at all strange currently to find that – though much is made of heritage as a compulsory section of the revised History curriculum – educators most often battle in putting theory into practice. With such an overemphasis on assessment that especially should, as some might say, “for heaven’s sake not require too much learning from the learners”, other equally important methodological aspects of teaching History have been overlooked in many ways, and even efficient assessment thus far has been utterly distorted in many ways.

Amongst others, there are silences and ignorant trends in dealing with global

content in an efficient way to accentuate the role of local history in it. As far as the effective utilizing of instructional media and sources is concerned, there appears to be an improvement in methodology, but not necessarily an improvement in depth, variety and diversity. In all this, it can be stated that empirical and/or observational research in higher education institutions has provided some solid methodological guidelines since 1994, but not enough of these suggestions have been absorbed as outcomes into the revised History curriculum and textbooks that have followed since 2003. A simple solution to this unfortunate situation is that closer cooperation is required between all who regard themselves as role players and custodians of teaching History in the school phases. The South African History Project Group and the Department of Education simply cannot decide who should be on board and who should be avoided or ignored. In doing so, the pre-1994 scenario not only repeats itself but, more importantly, valuable methodological developments from empirical research and scientific observations are lost for implementation into the teaching of History in schools. If History teaching custodians in South Africa so dearly want to be certain they present the revised History curriculum of South Africa in a global context (an approach I have fully supported since the early nineties when my academic career started) they should listen to educators of History didactics in how it could be done best. They also should get a wake-up call of teaching trends regarding History from a transcontinental perspective, though other countries equally can learn from trends in South Africa and the ways in which teaching and training History educators are done.

Lastly, as far as the academic contribution analysis is concerned, the training of History educators in South Africa for the 21st century definitely requires some brainstorming shifts to accommodate valuable and reasonable shifts in methodological teaching trends (as developed from outside local needs and borrowed from transcontinental spheres). An efficient selection of the content of History teaching courses in higher education, practical aspects of training History teachers and regular efficient training workshops to address needs, most certainly will be most important investments to ensure wisdom among educational forces in effectively utilizing the revised History curriculum.

Transcontinental trends regarding History teaching visible in the South African academic debate

What we as History educators can observe from the current transcontinental trends<sup>36</sup> in History teaching that one will also find in the South African debate (but not necessarily in an efficient way yet), are the following:

- Visions of a national identity that will be appreciated and recognized by a pluralistic society.
- The accurate interpretation of the curriculum by publishers of textbooks.
- The urgent requirement for basic facts to move from surface to depth in historical presentations.
- Globalisation and its liaison with national history.

The following transcontinental issues in History teaching are indirectly urged in South Africa, but have not been fiercely/efficiently given some sufficient thought yet:

- The imposing of a dominant myth of modernity named “progress”<sup>37</sup> that conforms to a national framework that is designed for diversity, in a symbolic, logical story line.<sup>38</sup>
- The ongoing vision of nation building by focusing on collective contributions and heritages of groups.
- A question such as: How does a nation accommodate the minority to let them speak and relate their own story?

If educational “progress” implies a: “forward moving” (to the benefit and not to the detriment of...) “of both the teaching and learning process of knowledge, proper conduct and technical competency through a focus on the cultivation of skills, trades or professions as well as mental, moral & aesthetic development”, we still have a long way to go to ensure that these traits of “progress” reflect in the curriculum, teacher training and textbooks as the ultimate outlet for what History teaching principles present.

Aspects of uniqueness in the research and discussions of trends in History teaching in South Africa, of which the transcontinental academic world can

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36 JA Laspina, “Designing diversity globalization, textbooks, and the story of nations”, *Journal for Curriculum Studies*, (35)6, 2003.

37 CA Lockard, *Global history, modernization, and the world-system approach; a critique*; R Lawson, “Black teachers (re) negotiation and (re) construction of their pedagogical practice within South Africa’s post-apartheid curriculum” (Ph.D., Ohio State University, 2003), pp. 230-241.

38 JA Laspina, “Designing diversity globalization, textbooks, and the story of nations”, *Journal for Curriculum Studies*, (35)6, 2003, p. 683.

take cognisance as far as teaching methodology and educator training is concerned, are the following:

- Teacher's identities, training and training for the disadvantaged educator;
- Outcome-based education in History and teacher training;
- The indigenous knowledge system basis in assessment in History teaching and in general;
- Globalising as method in teaching History;
- Textbook research and textbook developments.

### **History textbooks as an outlet for political woes or as an outcome of empirical results from research in History didactics?**

Recently, Beukes et al.<sup>39</sup> remarked that “History, and history textbooks, always have been, and still are, captured between the poles of romanticised views of nations and distorted images of ‘the other’”.<sup>40</sup> Furthermore, Beukes et al.<sup>41</sup> said that “Chase<sup>42</sup> for example claims ‘history is basically a contested discourse on embattled terrain wherein people(s), classes and groups autobiographically construct interpretations of the past literally to please themselves.’” A South African historian, Charles van Onselen, considers the History textbook debate as “a playground for ideologues and politicians”.<sup>43</sup>

In the apparent absence of any recognised “theory of the textbook”,<sup>44</sup> critical theorists regard textbooks as socio-cultural agents of formal and hidden curricula.<sup>45</sup> Since history follows political trends, History textbooks are vital in the rebuilding of formerly authoritarian societies, e.g. the South African

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39 LD Beukes; LJ de Jager; A Engelbrecht, A Niemann, R Swart & CN van der Westhuizen, “Changes and continuities in history textbooks after apartheid”. (Draft article copy presented for peer reviewing to the *South African Journal of Education*, 2008), pp. 1-32.

40 As quoted by RE Chernis, “The past in service of the present: A study of South African school history syllabuses (PhD., University of Pretoria, 1990).

41 LD Beukes et al., “Changes and continuities in history textbooks...”, *South African Journal of Education*, 2008, pp. 1-32.

42 M Chase, “Stories we tell them? Teaching adults history in a post modern world”, (Paper, Annual Conference, SCUTREA, University of Leeds, 2-4 July 1996), p. 3.

43 As quoted by A Engelbrecht, “The impact of role reversal in representational practices in history textbooks after Apartheid”, *South African Journal of Education*, 28, 2008, pp. 519-541 from SS Polakow-Suransky, “Historical Amnesia? The politics of textbooks in post-South Africa”, (Paper, American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA, 2002), p.3.

44 H Bourdillon (Ed), “History and social studies – methodologies of textbook analysis”, 1992. Based on Report, Educational Research Workshop, Braunschweig, Germany, 11-14 September 1990.

45 MW Apple and LK Christian-Smith (Eds), *The politics of the textbook* (New York, Routledge Roland, 1991); HA Giroux, *Ideology, culture and the process of schooling* (London, Falmer, 1981).

society.<sup>46</sup> Rewriting history, however, always carries the risk of spreading ideology and thus becoming negative history that is misused for exclusive identity.<sup>47</sup> Some generic methods have been developed recently to assess research regarding textbook content. What is lacking, however, are digestible, practical guidelines as to how not only the higher education expert, but also the teacher of History, can distinguish between quality and a reasonable historical focus.<sup>48</sup>

To generally discuss the possibility of history textbooks in South Africa being used as political agents, as well as to debate the level of incorporation of empirical research results regarding efficient textbook development, the Grade 12 level has been selected. Textbooks for this grade were made available from January 2008 after being published in December 2007.<sup>49</sup>

### ***The Grade 12 History textbook – general features and developments***

The following nine Grade 12 History textbooks were approved and made available in December 2007:

- *Focus on History: Looking into the Past* (Maskew Miller Longman) (also available in Afrikaans as *Verken die Verlede*)
- *History for all* (Macmillan SA);
- *Making History* (Heinemann Publishers);
- *Moments in History* (Juta Gariep)
- *New Africa History* (New Africa Books)  
(also available in Afrikaans as *New Africa Geskiedenis*)
- *New Generation History* (New Generation Publishers)  
(also available in Afrikaans as *Geskiedenis vir 'n Nuwe Geslag*)
- *Oxford in Search of History* (Oxford University Press Southern Africa)
- *Shuters History* (Shuter & Shooter)

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46 SS Polakow-Suransky, "Historical Amnesia? The politics of textbooks in post-South Africa". (Paper, American Educational Research Association Annual Meeting, New Orleans, LA), 2002.

47 E Roberts-Schweitzer, *Promoting social cohesion through education* (Washington D.C., World Bank, 2006); S Sierens, "Us them ours: Points for attention in designing inter-culturally sound learning materials" (Universiteit Gent, Steunpunt Intercultureel Onderwijs, 2000).

48 J Nicholls, "Methods in school textbook research", *International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research*, 3 (2), 2003, pp. 1-17.

49 It is acknowledged that some historians between 1994 and 2007 contributed to books marketed as textbooks for FET learners (Compare T Nuttall; J Wright; J Hoffmann; N Sishi & S Khandlela, *From apartheid to democracy: South Africa, 1948-1994* (Pietermaritzburg, Shuter & Shooter, 1998), pp. 1-134; SAPA, *Give more time to History* (*Educ-History*, Pretoria, December, 2000), p. 14.

- *Viva History* (Vivlia Publishers)

These textbooks cover seven broad themes as prescribed in the History curriculum. Parts of the South African history are interwoven with international events and trends. For South African learners and educators, this approach is new. From 2008, examinations on the Grade 12 level will also not accommodate papers that distinguish between South African history and “general” history.

The concise curriculum themes for the Grade 12 level are the following: “The impact of the Cold War in forming the world as it was in the 1960’s”; “The realization of *Uhuru* in Africa, 1960’-1970’s”; “Forms of civil society, 1960-1990’s”; “The impact of the collapse of the USSR in 1989”; “The emerging of South Africa as a democracy from the crises of the 1990’s”; “Globalisation: Meaning and trends”; “Ideologies and debates around the constructed heritage icons from the period and today” (the use of “period” in this context probably implies the time frame covered by the other themes, meaning at least 1960-2004). In essence, the curriculum appears impressive, especially in theory, but it is open for criticism concerning everyday practicality and its textbook applications.

### ***Textbooks as “political or “social agents”?***

Simply by exploring History teaching trends in the 20th century in South Africa, academic publications tell a story of how external interferences (politics and ideology) have always played some part in how education and the teaching of History was navigated.<sup>50</sup> The philosopher Immanuel Kant<sup>51</sup> phrased these external influences so efficiently in his questions about the purpose of teaching Philosophy:

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50 Compare the publications of FE Auerbach, *The power of prejudice in South African Education: An enquiry into History textbooks and syllabuses in the Transvaal high schools of South Africa* (Cape Town, Balkema, 1965); L Chisholm, “Ideology, legitimation of the status quo, and History textbooks in South Africa”, 1978; JM du Preez; TJ Horne & SES Pienaar-(Red), *Meestersimbole in Suid-Afrikaanse skoolhandboeke* (Alberton, Librarius, 1984); RE Chernis, “The past in service of the present: A study of South African School history syllabuses and textbooks, 1939-1990” (D.Phil., UP, 1990); JJ Joubert, “Geskiedenis-handboeke: Belangrike oorsaak vir ‘n dilemma?”, *Die Unie*, April 1995, pp. 128-132; S Dryden-Peterson & R Siebörger, “Teachers as memory makers: Testimony in the making of a new history in South Africa”, *International Journal of Educational Development*, 26 (2006), pp. 394-403.

51 Obtained from a quotation in Auerbach, on Kant as probably obtained in *Critique of judgment* by Immanuel Kant (translation by WS Pluhar), (Indianapolis, Ind. Hackett, c 1987).

*Is it to carry the torch or to bear the train? Is it to give light to the pupils in search of the truth, to teach them, in fact how truth may be found, or is it to be used to support some doctrine, an economic dogma perhaps...?*

Because History involves the human, it can be so easy to enter pitfalls without even knowing it. In this regard, the empirical findings of Wertsch<sup>52</sup> in Estonia were significant. He uses the words “methodological individualism” that he picked up among Estonians and in his finding actually warns History educators against the historical consciousness of the people in Estonia on the eve of the Soviet Union undergoing its final stages of disintegration in 1991.

To efficiently determine the level of history being used as a political or social agent, a substantial number of indicators – perhaps we can call them criteria – can apply. For this discussion, only one such a criterion is selected to discuss its features in the recently published Grade 12 textbook.

### Inclusivity features<sup>53</sup>

Whatever historical thinking (in “my” and “we” histories), methodologies or personal ideas and reasoning for inclusivity may ultimately give rise to a curriculum, the textbook developers are eventually responsible for providing substance and direction to curriculum content in the form of a variety of historical enquiry genres and voices.<sup>54</sup> Although a genre and a voice in history are not tightly bound, a key distinction is that a genre is the style or way in which a historical text is written, whereas a voice can be either the group or person that was involved in making a piece of history in a specific history context. On the other hand, a voice can also be defined as the learner in the process of arguing a genre as adjudicator.<sup>55</sup> An application of this knowledge also should be put to use in the textbook interpretation of the Revised South African History Curriculum.

Cole and Barsalou<sup>56</sup> argue that it remains difficult to decide what history

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52 JV Wertsch, “Is it possible to teach beliefs, as well as knowledge about History?”, PN Stearns, P Seixas & S Wineburg (Ed.), *Knowing, teaching and learning history* (New York University Press, New York, 2000), p. 45.

53 Inclusivity in the discussion of this context implies the aim of ensuring that a multi-diverse range of genres, events and/or voices represents the outcome of a specific topic in history. If the discussion involves more than one group of people claiming to present different cultures, then it requires sensitive thinking and writing to involve all the “my” histories to achieve an ultimate “we” representation.

54 Compare C Coffin, *Historical discourse*, pp. 44-65.

55 Compare C Coffin, *Historical discourse*, p. 158.

56 EA Cole & J Barsalou, “Unite or divide? The challenges of teaching history in societies emerging from violent conflict”, *United States Institute of Peace*, Special Report 163, June, 2006, p. 6.

content should be taught in a post-conflict society. Questions such as who decides what version(s) should be taught and what impact choices may have on promoting stable, cohesive and tolerant societies are indeed key issues. The relationship between the (re)writing of history by academic historians and the development of secondary school History textbooks can also be debated.

At the South African Society for History Teaching (SASHT) Conference in 2007, the former Minister of Education of South Africa, Prof. K. Asmal,<sup>57</sup> remarked as follows about textbooks in the Further Education and Training phase:

*One of the pleasing aspects of the new FET curriculum is that we now have what we never had before: a generous selection of school History textbooks that have been carefully screened and approved nationally... Less pleasing ... is that there has been slow progress in transforming the writing of History books. While it is essential to use the best expertise available ... there is an urgent need to develop a new generation of black writers to ensure not only a balanced representation, but to ensure that the rich diversity of backgrounds and opinions that characterises our nation informs the History being studied at school ...*

As elsewhere,<sup>58</sup> newly developed History textbooks in South Africa were also submitted to state-appointed review panels to be evaluated. However, the South African approach differed in the sense that the public sector was not given an opportunity for any input, and no votes were cast for the one textbook or the other. In many ways, the publishers did not even know much about one another and the sensitive loopholes all of them should avoid. In this regard, a representative of one of the publishers<sup>59</sup> recalls:

*We do not know what comments other publishers receive - this is not common knowledge. The comments are often almost illiterate, the evaluators do not read the texts thoroughly and assume content is missing if it doesn't have a heading of its own, and the feedback is often contradictory - for example they tell us to delete a section but then [afterwards] complain that those very outcomes are [were] not sufficiently covered.*

A lack of sufficient time to carefully prepare Grade 12 textbooks and expose them to a broader academic community dealing with history was recorded. Evidently, it would have been the most feasible and long-term solution to

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57 K Asmal, Keynote address: Interrogating the History Curriculum after ten years of OBE, (SASHT Conference, KwaZulu-Natal, 21-22 September 2007), pp. 11-12.

58 Compare JA Laspina, "Designing diversity globalization, textbooks, and the story of nations", *Journal for Curriculum Studies*, (35)6, 2003.

59 Compare P de Villiers (Publisher representative). E-mail interview, ES van Eeden (Researcher), 23 February, 2008.

ensure quality. Unfortunately, this did not happen in South Africa.

Nevertheless, Asmal<sup>60</sup> continued by saying the following:

*...More than any other discipline, good History put to good use taught by imaginative teachers can promote reconciliation and reciprocal respect of a meaningful kind, because it encourages a knowledge of the other, the unknown and the different. It has the role of raising the awareness of learners to the issues of their own identity and the way that they interact with the multiple identities of South Africans around them...*

What Asmal probably meant by referring in his explanation to “good” History is that History is supposed to be all-inclusive and focus on balance, variety and sensitivity to promote a healthy attitude towards nation building. Sensitivity and all-inclusiveness as means towards creating a platform, for example for nation building, are indeed explored in themes three and five in the Grade 12 curriculum, as both of them cover South African history content. However, it appears far from “healthy” and still requires extensive refinement in bringing together the “my” histories in a balanced “we” history.

In the heritage theme, which is the seventh and last theme of the curriculum discussed in textbooks, the problem of historical amnesia in balancing all South Africa’s diverse “my” histories in an informative and collective “we” theme on heritage is striking. Although the broader curriculum theme provides room for a broader historical perspective on heritage in its time frame allocation, the writers of all the textbooks have preferred to focus more on how the majority of black people in South Africa may perceive the ideologies and debates regarding the heritage theme. Although acts of denial regarding the rich heritage of all cultural groups by governing bodies before 1994 are a reality, an overindulged presentation of these events should not be the cause for a distorted diverse presentation or total lack of any multi-diverse presentation of people in South African heritage associations. This also concerns the interesting and valid archaeological findings that ought not to occupy all the content space.

### A “healthy” identity presented in textbooks?

A healthy identity in a historical context can imply a hearty, active or

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<sup>60</sup> K Asmal, “Interrogating the History Curriculum after ten years of OBE”, Keynote address, SASHT Conference, KwaZulu-Natal, 21-22 September 2007, pp. 12-13. (This address also appears in the *Yesterday&Today*, 2, 2008).

blooming passion for one's country, its broader groups of people and having a sober knowledge of the role and achievements of the specific group the individual represents as "my" history.

As broad as the revised national curriculum content structure may be, amongst others to evoke a healthy identity, so intellectually thin does the fundamental core of some Grade 12 curriculum themes in the new textbooks appear to be. When this is the scenario, it simply means that it becomes impossible to balance diversities, multiple perspectives, inclusivity and healthy identities all in one. Then Asmal's concerns are shared, though the process he has suggested to address it, referred to in the previous section, does not necessarily guarantee success (e.g. more black writers, a more balanced presentation etc., as Asmal puts it). The basic historical method of ensuring a multi-perspective and a diversity of genres and voices in any historical publication should apply.

Colour and culture diversity amongst academia and educators in the process of writing History textbooks does not guarantee a balanced perspective, but what is indeed required is ample knowledge regarding examples of a specific content theme and the simple but important application of History methodology in a professional way. It may be (as a bonus, I should say) that a representative group of writers with all these skills may benefit from each other's personal cultural, linguistic and racial experience in the process of content development and designing assessment tasks. On its own, it is not enough to ensure depth, balance, cohesion, tolerance and progress. In many ways, historians and skilled History educators should always be reminded of the way in which a magistrate as a law practitioner should manage, consider and interpret the voices of evidence he/she is working with, regardless of what typically human-like obstacles, such as colour and race, exist.

In the new Grade 12 textbooks, the trend in the nationally focused themes 3, 5 and 7 seems to present discussions that the majority of South Africans "will accept" instead of rather demonstrating multi-perspective modes in these themes and sub themes that will allow progress towards a balanced representation and multi-diverse understanding that will eventually build up towards a collective identity that may reflect healthy attitudes and a sound historical consciousness. The absence of a multi-diverse representation, as an inevitable requirement in the methodology of History and also accentuated in current transcontinental perspectives, leads to products that are sadly no different than all the curriculum interpretations in textbook productions in South Africa prior to 1994. In fact, they can hardly be called a transformational

approach towards creating a healthy, nation-building democracy.

***The level of incorporation of empirical research results regarding efficient text book development: A concise debate regarding the Grade 12 textbook***

The level of depth of efficiently analysing History textbooks in South Africa still awaits a proper future. As mentioned in the previous section, although one will find publications – of whom most resulted from post-graduate empirical research – that discuss the features of content in History textbooks, they mainly reflect the outcome of a past way of thinking and doing to the reader. They do not expose sufficient capacity to guide the future textbook publisher, writer, user and History educator to avoid external pitfalls in the preparation, writing and selection of historical content. So, then it remains, after extraordinary inputs by the developers of curricula, another “team” follows that does not necessarily have the methodological ability, the required skills or the knowledge with regard to the teaching of History to develop content and skills activities that balance in a healthy way with the assessment activities that are developed.

However, if one looks into the previous section where the empirical level and focus regarding History teaching publications are discussed, one will find articles on aspects of the History curriculum in South Africa in which valuable ideas are presented. The only topic I want to cover in this article is globalism as opposed to nationalism/localism.

**“Global” too dominant in the History curriculum and in textbooks?**

Recently, Rob Siebörger,<sup>61</sup> an expert on History teaching in South Africa, remarked the following in a local newspaper:

*Finally, the Grade 12 curriculum contains an innovative and extensive section on globalisation which is designed to give school leavers a critical understanding of the forces that shape today's world within an historical perspective.*

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61 R Siebörger, “Don't deprive pupils of chance to study history”, *Cape Times*, 12 June, 2008, p. 9; “Don't rob pupils of our rich history”, *The Star*, 19 June, 2008, p. 19.

In academic treatise, others supported this curriculum innovation before and after the final curriculum revision,<sup>62</sup> but also warned against an imbalance, stating that a decrease of European content in History textbooks will lead to the elimination of valuable cultural content<sup>63</sup> as the South African nation is as much the product of European intervention as of African tradition.<sup>64</sup> In ca. 2004, the University of Cape Town even hosted colloquium sessions on writing and teaching national history in Africa in an era of global history. Based on the feedback by Howard Phillips<sup>65</sup> then, they were picking up the vibes from historians abroad (with a specific reference to Prof. Toyin Falola of the University of Texas and Patrick Harries of the University of Basle, France) that the concept of “nation” and national history from the bottom up is meaningful and vital in a current era of globalisation.

Though it can probably not be ignored that global history is an important means to seriously understand modern processes and events, Falola accentuated that national history is a “means of survival against the dominant brand of global history in the contemporary world”, which Falola viewed as ‘a narrative of western power and expansion” that tends to turn national history into a metanarrative of global history. Then the experiences of the “so-called local identities” and the “dust of ethnic under the carpet of the national, and the national itself under the table of the universal” are erased easily. To specifically guard against this kind of imbalanced approach, sufficient articles were published and structures as guidelines proposed<sup>66</sup> also quotes Falola’s words, with which many historians who attended the colloquium, agreed:

*National history could and should not ignore global history, but it should not be superseded by it either...*

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62 Compare ES van Eeden, “An approach to the teaching of universal global history concepts in world history practice in South Africa”, *International World History Bulletin*, XIV(1), Spring, 1998; LD Beukes et. al., “Changes and continuities in history textbooks...”, *South African Journal of Education*, 2008, pp. 1-32.

63 C De Wet, “Die uitbeelding van swart mense in SA geskiedenis-handboeke”, *Acta Academica*, 33, 2001, pp. 99-129; LR Reuter & H Döbert, *After Communism. Transformation of education in Germany and South Africa* (Frankfurt/Main, Peter Lang, 2002).

64 C Bundy, “What makes a nation happy? Historiographical change and the implication for textbooks” (Paper, Sparkling Waters seminar on School History textbooks for a democratic South Africa, Rustenburg, 1993); F Pretorius, “Unfair ‘affirmative action’ in South African historiography”, *Yesterday&Today*, 1, May, 2007, pp. 1-8; LK van der Steinen, “Three decades of SA school history textbooks: Historiographical influence, change and continuity from the 1970s to the 1990s” (M.Ed, University of the Free State, 1997).

65 H Phillips, **History Department University of Cape Town, Colloquium sessions on “Writing and teaching national history in Africa in an era of global history”**, 2004, pp. 215-221.

66 Compare H Phillips, **History Department University of Cape Town, Colloquium sessions on “Writing and teaching national history in Africa in an era of global history”**, 2004, p. 216.

It is interesting to note that Dr June Bam, as the representative of the Department of Education and leader of the South African History Project, assured the concerned historians on the UCT colloquium that the “national curriculum for schools sought to avoid such narrow conceptions of the past by stressing South Africa’s position in wider regional, continental and global contexts”. With the revised History curriculum, this may have been the intention, but the product to be used in practice, namely the History textbooks, voice a different tone.

Against the empirical debate, the educational didactical guidance and the key features of the revised History curriculum, globalizing trends appear to be remarkably dominant in the Grade 12 textbooks, with the South African history clearly to partially visible in three of the seven themes and, not always efficiently linked to the “global” in world history, it was influenced by or even how South Africa perhaps has influenced continental and world histories.

In future, Grade 12 learners will know *how* the Cold War transformed the world of the sixties, and also *how* it affected the outcome of African history in a period of aspiring *uhuru* or freedom after an era of colonial transgression. After the first two themes, another two follow that also reflect world events that hold promises of gradually working their way towards South African history. They are “Forms of civil society protest that emerged from the 1960’s up to the 1990’s” and “The impact of the collapse of the USSR in 1989 and South Africa an emerging democracy from the crises of the 1990’s” (read more about this discussion later in the article).

The last two sections of the Grade 12 curriculum are new Further Education and Training themes aimed at providing an interesting scope on globalising on a wide community front and to exchange reflections on ideologies and debates regarding the heritage of the country. South Africa does not really feature in the globalisation theme. In only one subsection, some discussion is devoted to how South Africa has made a contribution in Africa after 1994. The *Shuter’s History* textbook has made a reasonable effort to accentuate Africa in the global context with themes on AIDS and environmental problems. Why the writers of the textbooks have shied away from themes like post-colonial theft in Africa’s bio-diverse heritage is debatable.

A remark Tully made in 1995,<sup>67</sup> which most historians will endorse, is that learners “must listen to voices past in order truly to engage the ‘strange multiplicity’ of incommensurable cultures. Therefore, the ideal of accentuating a ‘history of progress’ of a nation is not negative, but to act ‘stone-deaf to deep-seated conflict’”.<sup>68</sup> Underplaying the diversity of voices in the South African curriculum content to accentuate globalism in an imbalanced way may only set the table for another kind of conflict.

## **Conclusion**

In the discussion it was pointed out that South Africa’s revised curriculum transformations in History after 1994 are closely related to its political transformations and/or the inputs of politically acceptable academic individuals and/or the dominance of selections of academics.

A political dominance in the educational approach that should be followed in general and in History does not differ in any way from the enforced trends traceable in South Africa prior to 1994 (known as the apartheid period).

Curriculum transformations in History feature traces of academic discourses based on local/international research results, but the dominant impression is that educational “progress”, based on solid empirical research done with regard to History teaching is non-existent or is currently simply and too frequently ignored.

Though South African educators in History teaching can feel proud of what they have produced in their field, empirical research is still lacking in a variety of areas (such as how to utilize topics such as oral history, heritage in History and aspects of indigenous knowledge systems) efficiently in the teaching of national history. The topic of globalism and the reflection of South Africa in an environment of globalization still require more thought and balance based on empirical research and observations readily available.

Although textbooks are not produced every year, publishers and the DoE and the broader educator community should take cognisance of the key ideal

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<sup>67</sup> As quoted by JA Laspina, “Designing diversity globalization, textbooks, and the story of nations”, *Journal for Curriculum Studies*, (35)6, 2003, p. 685. Also see J Tully, *Strange Multiplicity: Constitutionalism in an age of diversity* (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1995).

<sup>68</sup> JA Laspina, Designing diversity..., *Journal for Curriculum Studies*, (35)6, 2003, p. 682; cf. C Coffin, *Historical discourse*, pp. 1-208.

in a presentation of History, namely to search for multiple narrative views and voices to present the broader nation's historical development in a balanced, healthy and nation-building way within the global environment. This is not a request from minority voices but a serious requirement in History as a discipline. The transcontinental perspectives highlighted earlier also boil down to these basics for efficient textbook writing and teaching History.

A drawback in writing one's national history within a global context to cover an inclusive diversity is that breadth tends to cancel out depth. Content then becomes fragmented and skimpy. LaSpina<sup>69</sup> refers to it as "self-contained as a graphic advertisement. Potentially, the 'story' becomes as thin as the page it is printed on." He<sup>70</sup> continues by reflecting other authors on this:

*...as long as textbooks tend to re-inscribe thematically the path of progress and its apogee... its 'mythmaking' apparatus remains obscure, and in doing so the large historical processes which structure the local history of nations will remain safely at the margins of an emerging global context...*

## APPENDIX A

### Post graduate research (MA & PhD studies) related to a teaching, and the teaching methodology, of History, 1994-2008

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- J.R.M. Paul (1994). The design and use of a database for the teaching of History at primary school level, Rhodes University
- S.I. Kruger (1996). A specialization of local history for the primary school child and teacher, UJ/RAU.
- E. Farista (1996). A case study of History teaching in two Lenasia secondary schools.
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- L.K van der Steinen (1997). Three decades of SA school history textbooks: Historiographical influence, change and continuity from the 1970's to the 1990's (M.Ed. thesis), University of the Free State.
- J.J. Vergotine (1997). The role of History as school subject in the promotion of education for peace, US.
- M.F. Molwantwa (1997). The selection and integration of instructional media for the teaching of History (M.Ed.), NWU/PUvCHO

69 JA Laspina, Designing diversity..., *Journal for Curriculum Studies*, (35)6, 2003, p. 685.

70 JA Laspina, Designing diversity..., *Journal for Curriculum Studies*, (35)6, 2003, p. 686.

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- S.B.P. Makhanya (1999). How did debates around Zuluness and the teaching of Zulu history shape the teaching of Zulu history in KwaZulu secondary schools, 1880-1994? (1999), UN (Durban).
- R.M. Manyane (2000). History teaching in South Africa within the context of the human and social sciences: an outcomes-based approach, with reference to anti-racism.
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- P.L. Monareng (2002). The pedagogical validity of the influence of the learning areas on the learners' understanding with specific reference to history among Grade 12 learners. (M.Ed.), Vista.
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- G. Mazabow (2002). The development of historical consciousness in the teaching of History in South African Schools. (D.Ed), UNISA.
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- A.M.A. Odhiambo (2004). Teaching history for national-building: Locally responsive pedagogy and preparation for global participation. (Ph.D.), WITS
- M.H. Molete (2004). History for Human Rights: Learning about Apartheid can teach tolerance. (M.A. History), WITS.
- A.B. Brand (2004). Preparation of the History teacher for result based education in the general education and training phase. (M.Phil.), US.
- S. Seetal (2005). Reconceptualising history teacher's identities within the context of the changing curriculum (D.Ed. Thesis), UKZN.
- A. van Velze (2005). The necessity of mentoring the historically disadvantaged History teacher, (M.Ed.), UJ.
- P. da Cruz (2005). From narrative to severed heads : the form and location of white supremacist history in textbooks of the apartheid era - a case study. (M.Phil.) UCT.
- R. Nichino (2006). A Comparative Historical Study of Japanese and South African

School History Textbooks ca. 1945-1995, unpublished doctoral thesis presented at the University of Western Australia.

- PG Warnich (2008) ,Outcomes Based Assessment of History in Grade 10. (Ph.D.), NWU.
- SC Kruger (2008). The use of rubrics in the assessment of Social Sciences (History) in the GET phase in transformational outcomes-based education. (M.Ed.), Cape Peninsula University of Technology.

## APPENDIX B

*Academic/Intellectual research: Articles in peer reviewed & non peer reviewed journals/books, as well as a selection of reports by historians/history educators in some newspapers and on internet, based on intellectual input (observation/opinion or research)*

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- J. Bam & P. Visser (1996). *A new history for a new South Africa*. Cape Town: Kagiso Publishers, p. 203.
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- B. Nzimande (1997). Foreword, P. Kallaway, G. Kruss, G. Donn, & A. Fataar (Eds.). Education after apartheid: South African education in transition. Cape Town: University of Cape Town Press, pp. i-viii.)
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