

# THE YOUTH AND SCHOOL HISTORY<sup>1</sup> – LEARNING FROM SOME OF THE THINKING OF YESTERDAY IN SOUTH AFRICA

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## *Abstract*<sup>2</sup>

In this article the broad emphasis is on the significance of revisiting past thinking, especially from academia and in research reports of 20th century History teaching at the Further Education and Training level (FET), so as to invest in present-day youth who take History as a subject. The study is mainly qualitative, but also relies heavily on quantitative reports and the interpretation of their value regarding selective issues such as curriculum content, textbooks and teaching methodologies. In no other study so far in South Africa, has the status of the youth and History up to the present, been pinned down historically or been reviewed critically in such a way. Therefore the objective of this article is to i) record and ii) review some past thinking on teaching History to the youth with the intention of iii) learning from yesterday's thinking and accounts. Although an effort has been made to add to the existing historiographical repertoire on the youth and History, particularly in a teaching environment, a complete historiographical review of past research contributions is beyond the scope of this article. As far as it is achievable, key moments and contributors are recalled with the intention of bringing to the reader's attention this past historiographical repertoire as anchor for current thinking on ways of teaching History to the youth.

**Keywords:** History as subject; Reports on History teaching; Significance of History; Youth and History; Teaching History; Decline of learners taking History; History and careers.

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- 1 When referring to the subject of History, the word is capitalised, but when referring to historical accounts, it is written in lower case. This is an updated, revised and shortened version of the 40<sup>th</sup> Hertzog Memorial Lecture delivered by the author in September 2011 at invitation by the Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns.
  - 2 The author would like to thank the following academics who peer-reviewed the article and contributed substantially to its improvement: Proff. Peter Kallaway; Sonja Schoeman; Dr. Carol Betram; Helen Ludlow; Pieter Warnich & Wessel Visser.

## Introduction

A discussion on the significance of examining the thinking regarding History teaching in the 20th century is long overdue. The focus of this article is on the youth and History teaching, particularly at the Further Education and Training (FET) level. The study is mainly a qualitative contribution, although it does also rely heavily on published quantitative reports on the prior status of History teaching in schools. The value of reports on selected issues regarding History teaching and the present status of the subject of History in schools is interpreted to determine its current position in a more informed way. No other study so far in South Africa has critically reviewed current thinking on the status of teaching History to the youth. Therefore the objective of this article is to initiate such a contribution by: i) recording and ii) reviewing some past thinking on teaching History to the youth with the intention of iii) learning from past thinking.

Although an effort has been made to contribute to the existing historiographical repertoire of the youth and History teaching, a review of the complete body of literature of past research contributions is outside the scope of this article. Instead, key moments and contributions are discussed with the intention of bringing the reader's attention to existing thinking on the subject.

## Curriculum development and textbooks: A record of some past thinking on teaching History to the youth

For most of the decades of the 20th century, the visibility and handling of History teaching at FET level in South Africa differed from province to province. The training of History teachers was also still in its formative period.<sup>3</sup> On this past and what followed, Prof. Floors A van Jaarsveld elucidated:<sup>4</sup>

*... There has never been satisfaction with History teaching at school. During the 19th century, the nationalist-minded Afrikaners complained about the bias of British and Cape History that England as the mother country commanded, and demanded a South African fatherland-centred history. [Author's translation]*

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3 Compare discussions in FA van Jaarsveld, "Skoolgeskiedenis in die nuwe Suid-Afrika", *Gister & Vandag/Yesterday & Today*, 20 September 1990, pp. 1-2; 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*, 28(1), Winter 2000, pp. 86-87.

4 FA van Jaarsveld, "Skoolgeskiedenis in die nuwe Suid-Afrika", *Gister & Vandag/Yesterday & Today*, 20 September 1990, pp. 1-2.

During any transitional or crisis period, the meaningfulness of History is always a point of contention.<sup>5</sup> Cases do exist where teaching History at school level has been abolished in an attempt at pacification. For example, after the Boer defeat in 1902, Lord Milner provisionally prohibited fatherland History in white schools and apparently only allowed British Imperialist History.<sup>6</sup> However, the opposite is seen in the memoirs of the academic HES Fremantle of Oxford, who found himself at the southern tip of Africa from 1899 – he became involved with the former South African College (currently the University of Cape Town). In his ardent attempts to establish a Chair of History at the South African College, his views on the teaching of History to the youth filtered through from time to time. It can therefore be said that a confrontation with unbiased historical content has had a long history and enjoyed substantial support in the past:<sup>7</sup>

*Indeed, the planners of new school syllabi for post-war South Africa argued that the 'political attitude' of the next generation will be determined by History teaching.*

In 1902, Fremantle shared his views on History teaching and academic research in South Africa at that time, with a distinguished British audience:<sup>8</sup>

*The subject [History] had been neglected with fatal results, and it was an Imperial necessity that this neglect should be corrected. The absence of accurate and unbiased historical knowledge ... had allowed political myths to flourish among all the inhabitants of South Africa, and these had to be removed if a new country was to be built on a sound basis. Its bureaucrats too would need such knowledge, while a 'scientific' study of the past would be vital for any serious study of 'native questions' ... as 'a work of incomparable importance' for the future ...*

Fremantle's insightful (and timeless) observations still enjoy support by most researchers and educators teaching History in 2012.<sup>9</sup>

Returning to other post-war<sup>10</sup> circumstances, educators are reminded of the History of 1948, a year associated with South Africa entering a phase of

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5 G Weldon, "A comparative study on the construction of memory and identity in the curriculum of post-conflict societies: Rwanda and South Africa (2003)" (available at <http://www.centres.ex.ac.uk/historyresource/journal11/>, as accessed on 6 June 2011, pp. 1-16.

6 EA van Jaarsveld, "Weereens 'n skoongeveegde lei? – Afrekening met, en nuwe singewing aan die Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis?", *Historia*, 39(1), May 1994, pp. 95-96, 98.

7 See RB Mulholland, "The evolution of History teaching in South Africa" (MEd thesis, University of the Witwatersrand, 1981, p. 127) as cited by H Phillips in "The South African college and the emergence of History as a University discipline...", *Historia*, 49(1), May 2004, pp. 1-11.

8 H Phillips, "The South African College and the emergence of History as a University discipline...", *Historia*, 49(1), May 2004, p. 7.

9 Personal observations from the South African Society for History Teaching (SASHT) conferences personally attended by the author.

10 The First and Second World Wars are referred to here.

formalised apartheid legislation.<sup>11</sup> At this stage black, Coloured and Indian teachers gradually added their voices of discontent to those of English-speaking teachers, who criticised the dominant Afrikaner nationalist-centred approach to selecting the content for some History curricula, in particular of the provinces.<sup>12</sup> From this, the People's History<sup>13</sup> approach developed during the 1980s as a reaction to Christian National Education, as well as out of frustration with the segregation policy in the years following Unification and the Hertzog era.<sup>14</sup> The latter period greatly influenced the diversified but fast-growing education and educational content of the day.<sup>15</sup>

Curriculum debates, for example on what content best suits the youth at FET level, frequently result in arguments and suggestions for and against certain themes.<sup>16</sup> This tendency is not necessarily a negative drift as excellence is supposed to evolve from constructive critique. However, content selection and method were always contentious as so many voices and sectors wanted to be heard. Some academic expressions, which imitate their own distinctive paradoxical moments, were traced back to the 1960s as typical examples. Among others, there is Meyer's sober impression of curriculum developments. His criticism against the "general" curriculum type filtered through:<sup>17</sup>

*The wider our view becomes, the fewer events we notice ... and because history in our time is already written like this [e.g. a history of human guilt; "lesson history" with a view to predicting the future], history writers themselves are already busy bringing an end to history ... [Author's translation]*

Some of Meyer's concerns of the 1960s are still commended in 2012.<sup>18</sup> His concern about a notion of broadness in content, which possibly contributes to the declining status of History, is the complete opposite of Trümpelmann's

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11 H Giliomee & B Mbenga, *New history of South Africa* (Kapaastad, Tafelberg, 2007), pp. 314-319; F-J Pretorius (Ed.), *Geskiedenis van Suid-Afrika. Van voortye tot vandag* (Kapaastad, Tafelberg, 2012), pp. 325-327.

12 Compare RE Chernis, "The study of South African school history syllabuses and textbooks, 1839-1990", *Yesterday & Today*, 21 April 1991, pp. 12-23; EG Pells, *300 Years of education in South Africa* (New Haven, Greenwood Press, 1970).

13 WP Visser, "People's History en geskiedenisonderrig op skool: 'n Alternatiewe geskiedenis vir die nuwe Suid-Afrika", *Yesterday & Today/Gister & Vandag*, 25 May 1993, pp. 32-39.

14 ES van Eeden & T Vermeulen, "Christian National Education and People's Education: Historical perspectives on some common grounds", *New Contree*, 50, November 2005, pp. 177-206.

15 Compare K Hartshorne, *Crisis and challenge. Black Education, 1910-1990* (Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 1992), pp. 218-254; M Cross, *Imagery of identity in South African education, 1880-1990*, pp. 73-81; 213-216.

16 P Kallaway, "History in senior secondary school CAPS 2012 and beyond: A comment", *Yesterday & Today*, 7 July 2012, pp. 23-62.

17 P Meyer, "Ons geskiedenislose tyd", *Historia*, 12(7), Mei 1967, pp. 5-6.

18 See the recent critical engagement with 2011 curriculum developments in FET History in the CAPS document by Prof. Peter Kallaway in P Kallaway, "History in senior secondary school CAPS 2012...", *Yesterday & Today*, 7 July 2012, pp. 23-62; see also the quest for a more local focus by the 2012 keynote speaker at the SASHT conference, Dr Dan Sleight (in the *Yesterday & Today*, 8 December 2012).

reminder to the community of History educators. Trümpelmann supports the view of Schieder, which hints at the waning status of History because of imbalanced curriculum choices, which are actually lacking in general patterns. Schieder remarked that:<sup>19</sup>

*...History is running the risk of forfeiting its honorary position amongst the social sciences, because the pursuit of indicating general patterns is greatly neglected by historians... [Author's translation]*

Creating a balance between seeking general patterns and at the same time investing very specific themes in history, which mostly develop from local or regional events and trends, still appears to be neglected as a teaching combination in the early 21st century FET curriculum thinking. Neither is this arrangement of global-to-local (and vice versa) theme sufficiently developed in History teaching methodology nor in the training of History teachers.<sup>20</sup> Recent choices in curriculum development strongly direct towards creating balance and variety (in theme, phenomena and race),<sup>21</sup> but when educators approach History curricula, challenges and opportunities to ensure balance, they overlook multiperspectives and possibilities for departing from the local/regional known to the unknown via revitalised teaching methodologies (regardless of their possible weaknesses).<sup>22</sup> Therefore, the attempt to indicate general patterns – thus Schieder – is not only a matter to be rectified by a curriculum, which simply serves as a guideline, but also involves teaching methodology that requires the attention of skilled history educators.

The author was unable to trace, from the past historiography of FET History<sup>23</sup> curricula and History teaching methodologies, specific academic contributions that associate the significance of History curriculum content with the methodological ways educators facilitate content. This recalls Van Jaarsveld's impressions of History curricula back in the 1960s. It appears to

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19 See T Schieder, *Geschichte als Wissenschaft - eine Einführung*, 2. Überarbeitete Auflage, R Oldenbourg. München-Wien, 1968, p. 154 as quoted in: MH Trümpelmann, "Geschiedeniswetenskap in tydgenootlike perspektief, *Historia*, 16(3), 1971, p. 194.

20 See the suggestions made by ES van Eeden on the value of regional history in progressing with teaching local content to understand broader trends via a universal methodology model. Its also efficient in teaching world history from a local/regional point of departure. See ES van Eeden, *Didactical guidelines for teaching History in a changing South Africa* (Keurkopie Uitgewers, Potchefstroom, 1999), Chapter 9; ES van Eeden, "Exploring local histories in the use and appreciation of Heritage and History in history curricula", *Yesterday & Today*, 5 October 2010, pp. 23-50.

21 Compare P Kallaway, "History in senior secondary school CAPS 2012...", *Yesterday & Today*, 7 July 2012, pp. 23-62.

22 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*, 28(1), Winter 2000.

23 The reference to Further Education and Training (FET) for Grades 10-12 in high schools in South Africa did not exist in the 1960s. They were then known as Standards 10-12 in the senior high school phase. For ease of discussion the present day concept of FET is used.

be a solo debate (although some of his comments are somewhat valid) on the dilemmas of selective choices in the various History curricula at, among others, the FET level of the former provinces:<sup>24</sup>

*In the Std VI History curriculum in Natal, no South African history is required for examination purposes, whilst for non-examination purposes the rise of democracy in South Africa is allowed as choice between five subjects. For the Junior Certificate (Std VII and VIII), the history of South Africa from 1595 until 1662 only is compulsory. The learner does not learn anything else from South African history from Std VI to VIII. What the Transvaal curricula have too much of, the Natal curriculum has too little. Fortunately, General and Fatherland history for Std IX and X are divided more appropriately in both provinces. This is also true of the Free State and Cape Province that lecture Social Studies instead of History as a subject up until Std VIII. Social Studies also narrow down the view to the outside.*

Most of the criticism of History education in South Africa in black-on-white debates and conferences from the 1970s dealt with the aims and objectives<sup>25</sup> as well as content choices of the History curricula of the four former provinces (Transvaal, Natal, the Cape and the Orange Free State).<sup>26</sup> Occasionally aspects of teaching methodologies, as well as the career-oriented significance of History, were questioned.<sup>27</sup>

Criticism of curriculum content remained contentious after the 1980s. As a leading voice in the teaching of History, Van Jaarsveld in 1990 remarked:<sup>28</sup>

*Today it is unfortunately true that education in history does not promote knowledge because it is too much of a collection of stereotypes, master symbols and enemy images; it misses a South African institution, is strongly politically viewed and without cohesion with societal history and cultural and socio-economical developments which cannot instil insight and cohesion. It is still mainly aimed at being a sort of encyclopaedic overview and only serves as preparation for an examination. Because the curriculum lacks contemporary history, learners cannot comprehend their contemporary development. Where white schools stopped in 1970, the end period for black schools was 1948. When History loses its relevance,*

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24 FA van Jaarsveld, "Geskiiedenis in na-oorlogse Duitsland", *Historia*, 6(1), 1961, p. 15.

25 Compare AM Grundlingh, "Doelstellings van geskiedenisonderrig op skool", *Historia*, 18(3) 1973, pp. 154-155.

26 FA van Jaarsveld, "Skoolgeskiedenis in die nuwe Suid-Afrika", *Gister & Vandag/Yesterday & Today*, 20 September 1990, p. 2.

27 Compare FA van Jaarsveld, "Geskiiedenis in na-oorlogse Duitsland", *Historia*, 6(1), 1961, p. 15; ES van Eeden, "Historiographical and methodological trends in the teaching of History in a changing South Africa", *Historia*, 42(2), November 1997; ES van Eeden, "History as silent formative force in all careers with specific reference to history training and its career receptiveness", *New Contree*, November 1997; 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*, 28(1), Winter 2000; ES van Eeden, "The 21st century value of History and the history educator revised – a motivational discourse", *New Contree*, 51, May 2006, pp. 25-54; C Venter, "Soeklig op die probleme met geskiedenisonderrig", *Gister & Vandag/Yesterday & Today*, 5, 1983, pp. 7-8.

28 FA van Jaarsveld, "Skoolgeskiedenis in die nuwe Suid-Afrika", *Gister & Vandag/Yesterday & Today*, 20 September 1990, p. 2.

one can expect that interest will wane ... [Author's translation]

The main aspect among his observations that is of concern in this discussion is the absence or limitations of contemporary and social history in FET curricula to replace and/or complement the dominant and obvious political history. Indirectly, Van Jaarsveld's plea boiled down to the inclusion of themes that featured in historical writing trends of the time (namely social history<sup>29</sup> and history embedded in communities, which includes regional and oral history) – these imply content and methodology revision.<sup>30</sup> Other educators of History, shortly before and after 1994, rather emphasised multi-cultural History teaching<sup>31</sup> or hinted at nation-building History teaching content.<sup>32</sup>

In 1994, amid continuous dissatisfaction with regard to the status of the FET curriculum content,<sup>33</sup> Van Jaarsveld wondered whether multiculturalism in a multi-ethnic society would ever be recognised, on the basis of which a multiperspective History education could be presented.<sup>34</sup> Multiperspectivity

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- 29 Compare G Cuthbertson & AM Grundlingh, "Some problematical issues in the restructuring of History education in schools", *South African Historical Journal*, 26(1), 1992, pp. 154-171; A Grundlingh, "Herhistorisering en herposisionering: Perspektiewe op aspekte van geskiedenisbeoefening in hedendaagse Suid-Afrika", *Historia*, 46(2), November 2001, pp. 312-314.
- 30 Compare RE Chernis, "The study of South African school history syllabuses and textbooks, 1839-1990", *Yesterday & Today*, 21 April 1991, pp. 12-23; ES van Eeden, "Exploring local histories in the use and appreciation of Heritage and History in history curricula", *Yesterday & Today*, 5 October 2010, pp. 23-50; MH Trümpelmann, "Geschiedeniswetenskap in tydgenootlike perspektief", *Historia*, 16(3), 1971, p. 199; SP Olivier, "Die onderrig van plaaslike geskiedenis", *Historia*, 13(4), 1968, pp. 237-245.
- 31 Compare BC Mohamed, "Alternative history as a response to multi-culturalism in History teaching", *Yesterday & Today/Gister & Vandag*, 21 April 1991, pp. 24-26; MH Trümpelmann, "The HRSC investigation on history teaching – a response", *Yesterday & Today/Gister & Vandag*, 23 May 1992, pp. 46-49.
- 32 E Bornman, "National symbols and nation building in the post-apartheid South Africa" (Department of Communication, Unisa, available at [https://my.unisa.ac.za/.../National%20symbols%20and%20nation\\_bui...](https://my.unisa.ac.za/.../National%20symbols%20and%20nation_bui...), as accessed on 13 June 2011); A Stinson, "National identity and nation-building in post-apartheid South Africa" (MA thesis, Rhodes University, 2010), pp. 1-72; FA van Jaarsveld, "Skoolgeskiedenis in die nuwe Suid-Afrika", *Gister & Vandag/Yesterday & Today*, 20, September 1990, pp. 1-2; BC Mohamed, "Alternative history as a response to multi-culturalism in History teaching", *Yesterday & Today/Gister & Vandag*, 21 April 1991, pp. 24-26; WRL Gebhard, "Does history teaching ask and answer relevant questions in a multi-cultural society?: Some suggestions for enlarging the vision of History", *Yesterday & Today/Gister & Vandag*, 22 September 1991, pp. 1-12; P Kapp, "Culture context and historical text", *Yesterday & Today/Gister & Vandag*, 26 October 1993, pp. 4-9; PG Warnich, "Uitkomsgebaseerde assessering van geskiedenis in Graad 10" (PhD, NWU, 2000).
- 33 LJ Alilunas, "The problem of children's historical mindedness" in JS Roucek (Ed.), *The teaching of History* (New York, 1967), p. 192 as quoted from JML Horn, "Die primêre skoolleerling en geskiedenisonderrig", *Historia*, 24(2), 1979, p. 60; C Kros, "The making of class: Beyond model curricula - a preliminary critique of the presentation of history in South African schools", *Perspectives in Education*, 10(1), 1988, pp. 87-100; S Krige & L Witz, "Changing history in the classroom and university", *Perspectives in Education*, 12(1), 1990, pp. 69-71; S Krige, N Taylor & I Vadi, "History for the future: Taking another look at 'What is history?'" University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg: Education Policy, 1992. J Kloppers-Lourens, "'n Nuwe 'leitmotief' vir die onderrig van Suid-Afrikaanse geskiedenis", *Yesterday & Today/Gister & Vandag*, 31 May 1996, pp. 3-8; Compare T Nuttall and J Wright, "Probing the predicaments of academic history in contemporary South Africa", *South African Historical Journal*, 42, May 2000, pp. 26-48.
- 34 FA van Jaarsveld, "Weereens 'n skoongeveegde lei? – Afrekening met, en nuwe singewing aan die Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis?", *Historia*, 39(1), May 1994, pp. 95-96, 98, 101.

in History<sup>35</sup> is possible and could be made workable via the curriculum, with its outlet in textbooks and the selection of applicable teaching methodologies.<sup>36</sup> The History/Archaeology Panel in 2000,<sup>37</sup> and Bundy endorses the significance of teaching methodology. Bundy endorses the significance of teaching methodology. Bundy accentuates the importance of an open, democratic approach to FET history curriculum content:<sup>38</sup>

... [to be] concerned with the content and interpretation of South African history, its main emphasis being that history should 'reflect advances in the discipline of history'. That is: school texts should reflect recent and current debates about the past: the approach to the past should be inclusive and democratic; the approach to historical knowledge should be analytical and explanatory; skills and content should be inseparable so that the curriculum conveys a sense of how knowledge is produced and history not presented as a set of given facts ... South African history should reflect the diversity of its population, while also accounting for processes that have created a single society; and should locate the country's history within regional, continental and global events and processes.

A diversity of academic contributions<sup>39</sup> (research) and diverse perspectives (content) are required in History education to limit a misinterpretation of the broader South African history (and even to try to avoid content distortions completely). Similarly, openness is required when expertise and experience are employed across provincial borders to help achieve a crossover from the old to existing and new processes in curriculum development and textbook assessments. If openness is sidestepped, and a portion of the research or expertise excluded or disregarded, uncertainty and unhappiness will only

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35 Not all History educators and historians understood the concept in the same multi-perspective way, therefore division sprouted from that for a while as well. See P Kallaway, "History education in a democratic South Africa", *Yesterday & Today/Gister & Vandag*, 26 October 1993, pp. 10-17; MH Trümpelmann, "The HRSC investigation of history teaching – a response", *Yesterday & Today/Gister & Vandag*, 23 May 1992, pp. 46-49.

36 Compare K Harris, "Transforming school history texts", *South African Historical Journal*, 34(1), 1996, pp. 267-275; South African Historical Society (SAHS) members, "Statement on the Implications of Curriculum 2005 for History Teaching in Schools", *South African Historical Journal*, 38, May 1998, pp. 200-204; L Chisholm, "Migration, citizenship and South African history textbooks", *South African Historical Journal*, 60(3), 2008, pp. 353-374; K Morgan, "Reflexive grappling with theory and methods of text analysis: Race and racism represented in history textbooks", *South African Historical Journal*, 62(4), 2010, pp. 753-770.

37 See DoE, "Report of the History/Archaeology Panel to the Minister of Education, 2000" (NS Ndebele as Chair), pp. 5-11. This report is not dealt with in depth in this article but is done so in another report, published internationally, and more appropriate in that thematic context.

38 View of historian Colin Bundy as quoted in L Chisholm, "Migration, citizenship and South African history textbooks", *South African Historical Journal*, 60(3), 2008, pp. 357-358. P Kapp's argument also hints at this. See P Kapp, "Die toekoms van Geskiedenis as skoolvak in Suid-Afrika", *Yesterday & Today/Gister & Vandag*, 25, May 1993, pp. 6-7.

39 Compare T Nuttall and J Wright, "Probing the predicaments of academic history in contemporary South Africa", *South African Historical Journal*, 42, May 2000, pp. 26-48.

increase. There are abundant examples of such scenarios before and after<sup>40</sup> 1994 in South Africa. A lack of sufficient participation and transparency is especially noticeable in the 2011 to 2012 handling of curriculum content,<sup>41</sup> as is the Department of Education's secretive approach in 2011 to the Grade 10 History school textbook selection assessment, and narrow-mindedness in finalising the CAPS curriculum document in 2011.<sup>42</sup> How historical knowledge should be contextualised into pedagogical communication is also an important aspect that is sometimes overlooked (see Bertram's study).<sup>43</sup> The plea elsewhere for not downplaying the value of teaching methodology in this process could be added to Bertram's debate.

Where do the youth feature, especially as far as their thinking about curriculum content and textbooks is concerned? Limited responses from the youth exist, although some could be traced to a certain degree in few research reports on the status of History in schools in the past (discussed below). A decisive but very clear response to the thinking of the youth that still applies today was picked up in the 1971 Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) report:<sup>44</sup>

*The History [at school, that is] of adults, which is about adults and appeals to adults rather than children, especially before the age of 15 years... [Own translation]*

The HSRC report of 1966 (published in 1971) and the 1989 report (published in 1992) were initiated and funded by the HSRC.<sup>45</sup> In these accounts, some historians and educators of History made landmark contributions to the

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40 K Harris, "Transforming school history texts", *South African Historical Journal*, 34(1), 1996, pp. 267-275; South African Historical Society (SAHS) members, "Statement on the Implications of Curriculum 2005 for History Teaching in the Schools", *South African Historical Journal*, 38, May 1998, pp. 200-204; H Phillips, "The role of the University in writing and teaching History...", *South African Historical Journal*, 50, 2004, pp. 216-218; 218-221; L Chisholm, "Migration, citizenship and South African history textbooks", *South African Historical Journal*, 60(3), 2008, pp. 353-374; K Morgan, "Reflexive grappling with theory and methods of text analysis...", *South African Historical Journal*, 62(4), 2010, pp. 753-770.

41 P Kallaway, "History in senior secondary school CAPS 2012...", *Yesterday&Today*, 7 July 2012, pp. 23-62.

42 SASHT-documents (NWU), Letters of SASHT to the DBE on the history textbook process Grade 10, May 2011 – April 2012. Also based on personal experiences and observations by the author.

43 CA Bertram, "Curriculum recontextualisation: A case study of the South African high school History curriculum" (D.Phil., UKZN, 2008), pp. 1-397.

44 RGN, "Die onderlig van geskiedenis aan Suid-Afrikaanse sekondêre skole...", Compiler CR Liebenberg, Report 0-11, RGN, Pretoria, 1971, p. 235.

45 Apparently there was nothing sinister about the 1966 research initiative because all the school subjects with the most learners were subjected to the investigation to monitor their status. The need for a new curriculum for South Africa from the 1990s could well have given cause for the second research survey in 1989.

compilation of facts on the status of History in schools and learner statistics that would otherwise have been lost.<sup>46</sup>

## **A review of some past thinking on teaching History to the youth**

### ***Investigation into the state of History taught at school level***

The research process from 1966 to 1971 to monitor the state of History education at school level coincided with an overwhelming concern by academia<sup>47</sup> for the state of the subject as taught at school level in South Africa.<sup>48</sup>

### **The 1971 HSRC report**

In 1969, the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) took over the comprehensive investigation into the tuition status of subjects taken by the majority of learners at secondary school level, a task formerly undertaken by the National Bureau for Social and Educational Research (NBSER). History was subsequently identified as one of these subjects. It was during this time that Profs Floors van Jaarsveld and NG Garson and Dr JJ van Tonder, as well as other noted academics and school leaders took the lead in this inquiry. In their report, the status of teaching staff in the subject of History at secondary school level was analysed, the original goals set for the subject of History once again came under scrutiny, the syllabuses for History of the respective provincial education associations were compared, the style of instructional offerings was discussed, and the approach to learners (teaching and examination) was reviewed. The last item of the investigation was an important aspect of the report as a whole, namely the propensity for the number of History pupils at

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46 Criticism of the constitution of the research team was also present. English-speaking historians and other racial groups felt excluded. See P Kallaway, "History education in a democratic South Africa", *Yesterday & Today/ Gister & Vandag*, 26, October 1993, pp. 10-17.

47 From the limited articles in the timeframe under discussion that the author was able to retrieve (and as it appeared in all of the most prominent History journals of South Africa since the late 1950s), it appears that Afrikaans-speaking historians were more active in reporting on history teaching in schools. It may perhaps be speculated that Afrikaans-speaking historians were in a more advanced or favourable position with the apartheid government, which kept an iron grip on education and curriculum developments. However, this research did not reveal clear associations with apartheid as an ideology in the thinking of historians about HOW to teach and WHAT to teach.

48 Compare AG Coetzee, "Kruispaaie in ons Geskiedenisonderrig", *Historia*, 8(4) 1963, pp. 233-237; FA van Jaarsveld, "Geschiedenis in na-oorlogse Duitsland", *Historia*, 6(1), 1961, p. 15; JJ van Tonder, "Geschiedenis op die drumpel – in of uit", *Historia*, 14(2), 1969, pp. 93-97; C Venter, "Soeklig op die probleme met Geskiedenisonderrig", *Gister & Vandag/Yesterday & Today*, 5, 1983, pp. 7-8.

secondary school level to decline.<sup>49</sup> It would appear that the investigation was unfortunately limited to white South African schools. Despite this, some of the most noteworthy findings were:

- The state of teaching staff (numbers): Satisfactory
- Examination-oriented History teaching: Problematic
- Relevant aspects at secondary level by 1969:
  - A worldwide decrease in the number of learners taking History as a school subject
  - The lack of interest of the public and official institutions
  - Unacceptable objectives
  - Ill-prepared teachers

The following reasons were put forward for the decrease in the number of learners taking History as a school subject:

- Members of older generations that had lived through or experienced prominent events and key moments in history were decreasing.
- An increased focus on vocational/professional, i.e. “bread-and-butter”, subjects.
- “The employment of inefficient, irresponsible and pedagogically unsound methods in order to attain good examination results.” Attention has been drawn to the mindless repetition, memorisation and regurgitation of facts that make learners want to “flee from the subject”.
- The ill-considered use of the prescribed textbook in class, namely overemphasising it at the expense of other relevant History publications. It has been said of History teachers that they are the victims of unworldly isolation, and should the situation prevail, they will smother the subject.

In the 1971 HSRC report, it was recommended that:

- History should be a compulsory subject up to Grade 12.
- The exemplary method of instruction (i.e. according to example) in the teaching of History should enjoy reflection and contemplation and should be researched; this was considered to be a radical move away from the classic method of instruction.
- Greater priority should be given to insight and interpretation.

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49 Human Sciences Research Council, “Die onderrig van geskiedenis aan Suid-Afrikaanse sekondêre skole; ’n Verkorte weergawe van ’n opname in die jaar 1966”, compiled by CR Liebenberg, Report 0-11, HSRC, Pretoria, 1971, pp. 1-36.

As far as the number of learners taking History at senior secondary school level is concerned, data were presented in the HSRC report<sup>50</sup> that have been supplemented in Table 1 below in order to present a more comprehensive perspective of the state of affairs up to the subsequent 1992 report

Table 1: Percentage of History<sup>51</sup> matriculants per province

<i>Province</i>	<i>1940</i>	<i>1953</i>	<i>1956</i>	<i>1962</i>	<i>1963</i>	<i>1965</i>	<i>1966</i>	<i>1973</i>	<i>1983</i>	<i>1992</i>
<b>Cape</b>	82.8%	66.1%	62.7%	53.9%	54%	53.4%	53%	51.2%	31%	28.8%
<b>Transvaal</b>	-	63.6%	57.1%	54.9%	52.1%	49.0%	47.6%	49.0%	23.5%	20.1%
<b>OFS</b>	-	74.8%	71.9%	56.5%	56%	47.5%	42.8%	41.7%	24%	22.01%
<b>Natal</b>	-	47.3	45.5%	-	45%	42.6%	43.9%	40.9%	25%	25.4%

According to the data collected by the HSRC concerning the status of History in mainly white schools as of 1966:

- An average of 49% of Standard 10 pupils (now known as Grade 12) in South Africa took History (thus a significant decrease when compared to 1953, when the average percentage of matriculants taking History was 63%, taking into account Natal's smaller matriculant body). By 1966, the decrease in the former Orange Free State was the greatest.
- In private schools (non-departmental schools), the opposite was evident, namely an increase in matriculants taking History from 61.6% to 66.6%.
- 32% of the school principals across the country who answered a questionnaire compiled by the HSRC were inclined to see History as a compulsory subject up to Std. 10 (Grade 12).

Two reasons for the decrease were put forward in the 1971 HSRC report:

- the large quantity of work to be learnt and memorised; and<sup>52</sup>
- the limited utilitarian value with which the field of study was viewed, and,

50 Human Sciences Research Council, "Die onderrig van geskiedenis aan Suid-Afrikaanse sekondêre skole; 'n Verkorte weergawe van 'n opname in die jaar 1966", compiled by CR Liebenberg, Report 0-11, HSRC, Pretoria, 1971, pp. 1-36.

51 Statistics obtained from various sources: Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), "Die onderrig van geskiedenis aan Suid-Afrikaanse sekondêre skole: 'n Verkorte weergawe van 'n opname in die jaar 1966", compiled by CR Liebenberg, Report 0-11, HSRC, Pretoria, 1971, pp. 1-36; JJ van Tonder, "Geskiedenis op die drumpel – in of uit", *Historia*, 14(2), 1969, pp. 93-97; C Venter, "Soeklig op die probleem met Geskiedenisonderrig", *Gister & Vandag/Yesterday & Today*, 5, 1983, pp. 7-8; GJ Thirion, "Die geskiedenis-handboek – 'n onmisbare ergernis?", *Gister & Vandag/Yesterday & Today*, 19, 1990, pp. 16-18; JS Bergh, "Historiese verenigings en tydskrifte in Suid-Afrika: Verlede, hede en toekoms", *Historia*, 38(2), November 1993, p. 48. The 1992 results are inclusive of all learners in South Africa.

52 CJS Langenhoven, "Die onderrig van Geskiedenis in hoërskool", *Historia*, 1292, 1967, p. 116.

broadly speaking, the view of vocational prospects.<sup>53</sup>

In 1973 Grundlingh confirmed the “general phenomenon” that many learners who do take History up to matric level do not continue with the subject at university because during their final two years at school they apparently acquire a definite dislike for the subject.<sup>54</sup> He further stated that this negative trend has also been observed in the USA. The reasons given in the USA are similar to those that have been put forward for years in South Africa:<sup>55</sup>

- an outdated examination system,
- the existing textbook system,
- inadequately qualified and incompetent teachers,
- a rigid syllabus, and
- an a-historic *Zeitgeist* (spirit of the times).

From the statistics it would appear that since the HSRC inquiry in the mid-1960s, the tendency of learner numbers to decrease continued at many schools, and this uncontrolled and distressing state of affairs concerning History as a school subject has persisted. Many reasons have been proposed for this, the most prominent of which are the content of the curricula (expressed in textbooks) is experienced as uninspiring and overwhelming; perceptions regarding the value and importance of the subject; testing and examining seen as trivial; and a vocational environment viewed as competitive, in which the human sciences<sup>56</sup> – of which History is a part – are being progressively downplayed.<sup>57</sup>

Although all statistics are subject to an array of complexities and variables, it can nevertheless be deduced from the discouraging statistics from 1973 to 1992 that, notwithstanding the observations that may have been made since 1971, any corrective measures or improvements could not turn around or halt the declining number of learners who took History. The drastic drop in matriculants between 1966 and 1992 who took History as a subject (a

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53 Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), “Die onderrig van geskiedenis aan Suid-Afrikaanse sekondêre skole: ’n Verkorte weergawe van ’n opname in die jaar 1966”, compiled by CR Liebenberg, Report 0-11, HSRC, Pretoria, 1971, pp. 22-23.

54 The reasons for the dislike are not stated by Grundlingh. Cf. AM Grundlingh, “Doelstellings van Geskiedenisonderrig op skool”, *Historia*, 18(3) 1973, p. 146.

55 AM Grundlingh, “Doelstellings van Geskiedenisonderrig op skool”, *Historia*, 18(3) 1973, pp. 154-155.

56 Cf. Academy of Science of South Africa (Assaf) Report, “Study of the humanities of South Africa, Media release, 5 August 2011.

57 These observations, although decades old, are still valid today.

drop of 24% in the Cape, 27% in the Transvaal, 21% in the Orange Free State and 19% in Natal) was understandably a matter of concern for those with enthusiasm for the subject and the discipline. In addition to the usual pressure experienced by the human sciences in a society increasingly geared towards commerce and industry, the lack of unity among academic circles (e.g. the different trends distinguishable in nationalist, revisionist, liberal and radical historiography), as well as an upheaval in education (the call for a “People’s History”), probably also contributed to the disappointing figures. A limited number of academic historians were justifiably concerned by what was happening to History at school level. *Historia junior* was launched in 1956 as a popular and well-received history mouthpiece for schools. By 1977, this essentially one-man effort by inspector JJ van Tonder<sup>58</sup> had to sound the retreat due to his retirement from education and because no FET or higher education educator of History appeared to be willing and enthusiastic enough (or had the necessary funds at their disposal) to continue this worthy cause.<sup>59</sup>

During the 1980s, experts in the methodology of History education made a renewed attempt to mobilise forces for the benefit of the youth and the teaching of History by the re-institution of the History journal *Yesterday & Today/Gister & Vandag* as a mouthpiece, and by establishing a national society for the teaching of History in 1986. These movements were particularly encouraged from within traditional Afrikaans universities, and were labelled during this time as being the instigators of Christian National Education (CNE), Afrikaner Nationalism, apartheid and rapporteurs in the 1992 HSRC report.<sup>60</sup> For a while these History-awareness initiatives had the opposite effect on their attempts to turn around the declining trend of learners taking History at school level.<sup>61</sup> Despite internal turbulence and differences among FET educators, especially academia espousing “left wing” or “right wing” initiatives, an effort to remind the youth about the significance of History occasionally appeared in the first *Yesterday & Today* issues (see Figure 1).

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58 It should be noted that content in the *Historia junior* covered interesting regional features of the history of all cultures and ethnicities, especially in South Africa. Contributions written in a popular and informal style were mainly made by teachers or pupils from several language groups. The value of the *Historia junior* at the time and for history educators in present day contexts still requires some extensive research.

59 See the editorials in the issues of *Historia junior* since 1957-1980 and JS Bergh, “Historiese verenigings en tydskrifte in Suid-Afrika: Verlede, hede en toekoms”, *Historia*, 38(2), November 1993.

60 Cf. P Kallaway, “History education in a democratic South Africa”, *Yesterday & Today/Gister & Vandag*, 26 October 1993, pp. 10-17; B Trabold, “Historical narratives as rhetoric of resistance in Apartheid South Africa: The History workshop and “The new nation”, *South African Historical Journal*, 62(4), 2010, pp. 735-752; S Krige, “Organizational history from above”, *South African Historical Journal*, 26 May, 1992.

61 ES van Eeden, “The role and focus of the South African Society for History Teaching in decades of educational transformation, 1986-2006”, *New Contree*, 52, November 2006.

Image 1: Marketing the significance of History in the 1980s in the former *Gister & Vandag/ Yesterday & Today* journal

**QUESTION:**

**WHY SHOULD WE TAKE HISTORY?**

**ANSWER:**

1. **History teaches you:**

- ★ to use your reason as well as your memory
- ★ to find information
- ★ to discern what is relevant and irrelevant
- ★ to select, extract
- ★ analyse, evaluate
- ★ discuss and use information correctly
- ★ to develop logical thought
- ★ to present logical thought
- ★ to present effective arguments

2. These skills are needed daily in a wide variety of **CAREERS** in commerce and industry.

3. **A background in History is valuable for:**

- ★ aspiring **managers** in accounting firms and banking institutions
- ★ economists & marketing researchers
- ★ journalists and reporters
- ★ librarians
- ★ writers
- ★ politicians
- ★ performing artists
- ★ parents

4. History is a **SOCIAL SCIENCE** and introduces you to:

- ★ sociology
- ★ economics
- ★ psychology
- ★ race relations
- ★ politics

5. In our everchanging world **HISTORY** makes us:

- ★ understand the past
- ★ analyse the past
- ★ prepare for the future

6. **HISTORY** is

- ★ stimulating
- ★ a challenge
- ★ for you

**Appreciate**  
the past  
my heritage  
the  
advantages I have

**Understand**  
the present  
the world I live in  
other people's  
problems

**HISTORY HELPS ME**

**Enjoy**  
historical programmes  
books about the past  
visits to new places

**Think**  
independently, clearly  
and logically  
recognise bias

From the initiatives that were implemented, it appears that the HSRC report of 1971 was taken seriously, especially by experts in higher education, although some major stumbling blocks in efficiency (assessing textbooks for quality selection and consolidating curriculum issues to address during workshops) still remained.

### **The 1992 HSRC report**

The 1992 HSRC report<sup>62</sup> on the state of History teaching in South Africa focused on black, white, Coloured and Indian schools. Notwithstanding the ever-declining number of learners taking History, it was found that black and Coloured learners still indicated History (beside the compulsory language component, Mathematics, Natural Science and Biology) as the most popular optional subject when the Grade 10 intake is viewed. At white and Indian schools, History as an optional subject was far less popular. When these learners were asked to arrange the subjects that they enjoyed most in Grade 9 (Std. 7) in order of preference, History, however, was rated higher. In black, Coloured and Indian schools History was placed at the top, whereas in white schools it was placed third (following closely behind Biology, which was placed second, and Mathematics, which was the learners' first choice). Ignorance of the importance of the subject and the discipline remained a concern in a society predominantly driven by commerce and industry, especially when the value of History is correlated to the number of learners.<sup>63</sup>

Despite the fact that the respondents at black, Coloured and Indian schools emphasised the need for an inclusive History curriculum, virtually nothing new was added to the 1971 report. Some of the most important observations made in the 1992 report regarding the training of teachers, subject content and other requirements were the following:

- Teachers are not adequately trained. Some teach History classes without ever having received any training in the subject. The concern was that precisely this shortcoming gives rise to the situation where teachers are unable to adequately deal with complex matters in the History syllabus, and are even less able to deal with new approaches in the teaching of History (for example explaining the logic behind a diversity of perspectives regarding certain events).
- Opportunities available to teachers for in-service training on a regular basis are necessary. It has apparently been found that 31.25% of black teachers teaching History have received no training whatsoever in that subject; nonetheless they indicated on the questionnaire that they deemed themselves to be sufficiently competent (it seems, however, that they were alluding to the methodology and

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62 MH Trümpelmann, "The HSRC investigation on history teaching – a response", *Yesterday & Today/Gister & Vandag*, 23 May 1992, pp.46-49; Anon., "What our pupils think", *Yesterday & Today/Gister & Vandag*, 24 October 1992, pp. 45-60.

63 Compare ES van Eeden, "Beroepsmoontlikhede in, en die bemerking van Geskiedenis - 'n herwaarderung van die Geskiedenisonderwyser/dosent se rol", *Gister en Vandag*, May 1995; ES van Eeden, "History as silent formative force in all careers with specific reference to history training and its career receptiveness", *New Contree*, 41, May 1997; ES van Eeden, "The 21st century value of History and the history educator revised – a motivational discourse", *New Contree*, 51, May 2006, pp. 25-54.

not necessarily to their knowledge of history).

- It would also seem that the approach of black teachers to Eurocentric history was still positive as these themes did not necessarily allude to their lack of political legitimacy in South Africa.
- More African content, ideologies, the history of black people, apartheid, contemporary history, land settlement and tenure, liberation movements in South Africa and the class struggle (including capitalism) was pointed out by black, Coloured and Indian teachers as ideal for history education.
- All the teachers who answered the questionnaire indicated that learners should be made aware of the diverse perspectives regarding historical themes.
- The volume, as far as content is concerned, for final examination was still too great.
- Methods of innovative assessment are poor and insufficient.
- The value of the knowledge gained through the study of history to acquire insight into or to form a concept or notion of the present and to keep citizens informed, was indicated by the majority of learners and teachers as important.
- Grade 9 (Std. 7) teachers play an important part in learners' decision to continue with the subject.
- An illuminating point at that time is lack of knowledge (probably a case of "unfamiliarity breeds contempt"): regarding the question as to whether environmental history should form part of the syllabus, the response was particularly negative. White learners did not attach any significance to it, while black, Coloured and Indian schools perceived it as somewhat more important. A similar trend was noticed regarding the question of social history.

Some of the members who served on the panel at the time of the 1992 HSRC report are of the opinion that few of the observations outlined above were followed up in later years because of the change in government and the unbridgeable differences among the members of the panel.<sup>64</sup> Prior to this, one notes the "insurmountability" and only-right-for-criticism approach present in commentaries on the writing of school textbooks. Nonetheless, an important lesson has not been learned yet – namely that a hasty effort when it comes to drafting and developing textbooks may lead to inadequate consideration of the quality of the work. Reasonable cut-off dates to consider content, to deliberate and ultimately to take care that only the best remains, are still lacking.<sup>65</sup> A tendency towards stereotyping, language bias and racism

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<sup>64</sup> E-mail discussion between ES van Eeden and Prof. P Kallaway, 2 September 2011.

<sup>65</sup> Personal experience of the process of writing text books for Grade 10 and the Department of Education's reticent approach towards it.

may still be a source of concern, as recorded before and since the Second World War.<sup>66</sup> Inadequate content and research with regard to the histories of previously disadvantaged races in South Africa have left a void in History education, not only in the past,<sup>67</sup> but also the present.<sup>68</sup> Indeed, several black, Coloured and Indian historians in South Africa have made contributions to parts of the perspectives of South African history since 2001, and – ironically enough and contrary to the direction in which the current History curriculum is forcing the History content – the contributions of these historians seem to be regionally bound,<sup>69</sup> which is actually a sound point of departure.

### **The 1992 CCUP report**

In addition to the 1992 HSRC report, a study prompted by concern from other ranks at the waning number of History learners was also undertaken during that same year by a two-man panel from the former University of the Orange Free State at the request of the Curriculum Committee of University Principals (CCUP). The investigation was launched in white (Afrikaans and English) South African schools. In addition to what could be gleaned from the 1992 HSRC report, and occasionally confirming it, the following observations were made:<sup>70</sup>

- History places a great demand on one's time, more so than other subjects, as memorising facts plays an important part.
- Parents play a decisive role in the choice of subjects of Grade 9 (Std. 7) and Grade 10 (Std. 8) learners.
- If History offered wider opportunities concerning a choice of profession, and if possibilities and opportunities could be better explained, learners would more readily decide to take History up to Grade 12 (Std. 10).
- The majority of respondents preferred doing assignments to writing examinations.

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66 Cf. FA van Jaarsveld, "Probleme by die skryf van Geskiedenis-handboek", *Historia*, 7(3), 1962, pp. 147-163.

67 Cf. CG Coetzee, "The Bantu and the study of History", *Historia*, 11(2) 1966, pp. 96-105.

68 See for example A Grundlingh, "Herhistorisering en herposisionering: perspektiewe op aspekte van geskiedsbeoefening in hedendaagse Suid-Afrika", *Historia*, 46(2), November 2001, pp. 312-314. The author still experiences this void in the limited regional histories of local Black and Coloured townships.

69 Compare for example the valuable contribution of Prof. Bernard Mbenga with regard to the Bafokeng, the Oorlam community in Rustenburg district, the Bakgatla in the Pilanesberg and more. Dr Chitja Twala's focus is more on the regionally bound political contributions (e.g. COPE) and other community themes like the Maokeng in Kroonstad.

70 HJ Breytenbach & SL Barnard, "Die huidige stand van die vak Geskiedenis op skoolvlak in blanke hoërskole in die RSA", *Yesterday & Today/Gister & Vandag*, 23 May 1992, pp. 28-32.

A limited number of History teachers from all levels of teaching were involved in one or more of the aforementioned studies.

### **Learning from yesterday's thinking and past accounts**

Historians are usually the first to remind us that humankind should learn from the past. Therefore, the intention of the reflections in the previous sections was to recall pathways in the history of FET-level History teaching to observe progress and long-standing concerns that could be labelled as weaknesses. The following are suggested from earlier observations:

- Teacher training should be taken even more seriously in the 21st century, especially the efficient transfer of flexibilities of teaching methodologies to overcome perceived disabilities in History curricula.
- The current lack of publications in which practical guidance from research and experience are offered to prospective educators of FET History is alarming and should be addressed.
- The Department of Education and History educators should take greater note that:
  - A race and nation-wide representativeness in curriculum developments is not an option but a requirement in a democratic country, and therefore is a mandate not belonging to the DoE alone.
  - The content of history textbooks should matter to both the FET and HET educator and historian because the balanced application of content matters to everyone. It is therefore important to ensure that the principles and techniques of the methodology of History teaching (developed from research) are considered in textbooks.
  - Bulky content does not necessarily ensure balanced insight or quality, therefore the youth's and the educator's plea over decades that curricula content is overwhelming should be seriously discussed.
  - For decades up to 2012, research and opinions from research revealed that local/regional and heritage studies should be more visible and/or permanently included in the FET curriculum. Notwithstanding this, a vagueness still prevails in how to approach it, especially how to efficiently transfer methodological skills to History to utilise local/regional history more broadly in the FET curriculum.
  - An orchestrated effort should be made to revise the significance of History to give it modern-day exposure. If History educators are uncertain of its

significance,<sup>71</sup> learners of History will certainly not fare any better.

Historians (and especially educators of History) should reposition their profession in the ever-changing intellectual and political environment in South Africa, and should become more involved in History as a subject at school level (an involvement that was only occasionally apparent after 2000).<sup>72</sup> Likewise, concerns and valuable proposals as well as challenges and criticisms should be taken into account within historical circles.<sup>73</sup>

To compensate for the apparent gaps in History student numbers, historians at certain universities have tried to strengthen their research contributions, particularly in article form (and book form), during the past few years. Valuable contributions have appeared in accredited History journals, and this field of the profession (where at least 10 journals have a direct link to history) appears to rate from satisfactory to impressive.<sup>74</sup> In the period 2001 to 2010, subject groups of history from seven universities produced approximately 650 articles. This meant that 65 history-related articles were generated by seven universities per year. However, these impressive contributions conceal a negative side: a decline in History learners on the FET level impacts negatively on the activities at the Higher Education and Training level – the HET is supposed to share new research with the FET-level audience. I would like to argue that those historians who retreat into mainly research-focused interests, are also contributing to the marginalisation of the educational market for the subject and discipline. Such an approach may fill universities' purses and allow the individual to excel in the short term, but in the long term, the discipline and subject will not excel as a beneficiary. This is particularly because history practitioners appear to have become hesitant or perhaps ignorant of the needs of communities,<sup>75</sup> and have become estranged from the FET youth and the educators of the youth. Current statistics on the recent status of learner enrolment in History from Grades 10 to 12 reflect reduced growth (see Table

71 C Venter, "Soeklig op die probleme met Geskiedenisonderrig", *Gister & Vandag/Yesterday & Today*, 1983. C Venter pointed out that, according to a survey amongst 49 Afrikaans History teachers, 83.3% felt that History offers very little vocational opportunities. At the same time, no less than 76% indicated in another question that they, as teachers, are not always aware of the vocational possibilities of History.

72 Compare L Chisholm, "Migration, Citizenship and South African history textbooks", *South African Historical Journal*, 60 (3), 2008, pp. 353-374; K Harris, "Transforming School History Texts", *South African Historical Journal*, 34(1), 1996, pp. 267-275; F Pretorius, "Unfair 'affirmative' action" in South African historiography, *Yesterday & Today*, 1(1), May 2007, pp. 1-8.

73 Compare J Carruthers, "The changing shape and scope of Southern African Historical studies", *South African Historical Journal*, 60(2), 2010, pp. 384-393.

74 This observation was made on the basis of information obtained from a number of History subject groups at tertiary institutions in South Africa during May – August 2011.

75 Compare L Witz & C Rassool, "The dog, the rabbit and reluctant historians", *South African Historical Journal*, 27(1), pp. 238-242, especially p. 242.

2), but the expected decline in learner enrolment appears hardly to have been noticed by historians and History educators. The percentages per province in Table 2 indicate mainly a reduction in learner numbers in History from 2004 to 2010.

Table 2: Learner numbers in History per province in South Africa, 2004 to 2010

<b>Eastern Cape</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>% decrease (an estimate)</b>
Grade 10	46 657	32 379	31%
Grade 11	31 925	23 372	27%
Grade 12	19 050	13 225	31%

<b>Free State</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>% decrease (an estimate)</b>
Grade 10	11 528	7 981	30%
Grade 11	6 980	4 921	30%
Grade 12	3 680	2 932	21%

<b>Gauteng</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>% increase (an estimate)</b>
Grade 10	29 051	36 482	21%
Grade 11	21 058	24 213	13%
Grade 12	13 226	15 981	17%

<b>KwaZulu-Natal</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>% decrease (an estimate)</b>
Grade 10	55 797	38 427	31%
Grade 11	45 292	32 008	30%
Grade 12	24 050	18 500	23%

<b>Limpopo</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>% decrease (an estimate)</b>
Grade 10	34 997	31 702	10%
Grade 11	36 152	22 242	39%
Grade 12	13 827	13 973	1% increase

<b>Mpumalanga</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>% decrease (an estimate)</b>
Grade 10	13 200	2 445	82%
Grade 11	9 468	2 058	78%
Grade 12	4 941	1 399	72%

<b>Northern Cape</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>% increase (an estimate)</b>
Grade 10	4 151	5 792	29%
Grade 11	2 866	4 251	34%
Grade 12	1 536	2 544	40%

<b>North West</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>% decrease (an estimate)</b>
Grade 10	15 268	12 046	21%
Grade 11	9 322	8 368	10%
Grade 12	5 841	4 969	15%

<b>Western Cape</b>	<b>2004</b>	<b>2010</b>	<b>% decrease (an estimate)</b>
Grade 10	29 613	19 053	36%
Grade 11	19 048	13 997	27%
Grade 12	12 876	11 393	12%

## Conclusion

This retrospective of past thinking and accounts of the status of History on FET level could serve as an audit of some kind. Educators of History have to be honest and take note of the departure point of the discipline and subject so that they can sensibly and proactively work towards a tomorrow with the purpose of improving on yesterday. At some point in the past, historians and History educators exchanged important thoughts about the subject and discipline. These thoughts may be old, but they do not have an expiry date just yet. Even historians can learn from the histories of the past (to recall Hegel's quote: "What experience and history teach is that people and government never have learned anything from history, or acted on principles deduced from it").

Some decades ago Prof. van Jaarsveld and others proposed that the training of History should be viewed in its totality, including: i) "secondary school teaching" (FET-level teaching) as well as ii) undergraduate and iii) postgraduate training. These phases and sections of training, according to Van Jaarsveld, are not three detached or separate units. In many ways, the one remains dependent on the other.<sup>76</sup> Somewhere along the line, practitioners of History, for many reasons that differ from educational institution to educational institution,<sup>77</sup> upset the balance and slackened their responsibility towards History, especially at the FET level.

It is high time that South African historians and History educators proactively share and develop their thoughts on collaboration at all education

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76 FA van Jaarsveld, "Oor die opleiding van geskiedkundiges", *Historia*, 16(2) 1971, p. 80.

77 Since the 1960s, History as a practised discipline in South Africa gradually transformed to emphasise research more than teaching the discipline or subject. For a broader view of all three educational levels in which History is visible, see ES van Eeden, Lecture: "Die jeug en Geskiedenis – vandag en gister, met verwysing na die Hertzog-era", Suid-Afrikaanse Akademie vir Wetenskap en Kuns, 21 September 2011 (lecture available at [akademie@akademie.co.za](mailto:akademie@akademie.co.za)), pp. 1-36.

phases in order to revitalise the subject of History, despite the long-standing complexities and obstacles (already historically recorded but not addressed) that such attempts might entail. The ever-decreasing popularity of History as a FET-level subject and the large (but often artificially driven) number of first-year students of History necessitate urgent discussion and speedy action.

Other important ways of encouraging cooperation between History educators (by means of financial aid), decision-makers at higher level, History practitioners and History subject didactics are to:

- Involve History teachers in historical conferences to promote quality teaching
- Organise regional conferences
- Encourage History teachers and young historians (also experienced historians) to publish their knowledge and experience of History lecturing
- Encourage History teachers to improve their knowledge through postgraduate qualifications
- Become involved in the writing and assessment of curricula and school text books/teachers' guides at GET and FET levels
- Develop and distribute History marketing pamphlets which communicate the value of History
- Focus on the writing of standard works and thematic publications that may be of help for History teachers and learners.

As a concluding argument for coordinating historical work in South Africa, I would like to concur with the valid remarks by Oberholster,<sup>78</sup> Chernis,<sup>79</sup> Koen<sup>80</sup> and the editorial staff of *Historia*,<sup>81</sup> which is important to all the History educators, who are involved, in one way or another, directly or indirectly, with the shaping of the youth of South Africa.

*... no science can prosper in isolation. The growth of all science is the result of the intentional or unintentional cooperation between scientists. This is especially true of History, because it is a societal subject ... Reaching the ideal of greater coordination in our historical work towards the promotion of the science of History is no easy task. At the basis of such coordination lie personal relationships and attitudes [Oberholster] [Author's translation]: South Africa's past never did belong to the British, it does not now belong to the Afrikaners, nor should it in*

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78 Quotations taken from JJ Oberholster, "Die koördinerings van historiese arbeid in Suid-Afrika", *Historia*, 10(3), 1965, pp. 150-156.

79 RE Chernis, "The study of South African school history syllabuses and textbooks, 1839-1990", *Yesterday & Today*, 21, p. 23.

80 AJ Koen, "Gedagtes oor die onderwys van Geskiedenis", *Historia*, 17(2), 1972.

81 Editorial, *Die krisis van Geskiedenis as dissipline*, *Historia*, 44(1), May, 1999, pp. 1-2.

*a future South Africa belong to blacks. Our past, like our future, belongs to all who call South Africa home [Chernis].*

*The best way to move learners and students to choose a subject is to make the study of the subject interesting and worth their while. History is one of the subjects that can be “murdered” or made unpopular by methods bordering on the mere training for exams, studying “spot” questions and chasing results [Koen] [Author’s translation].*

*The task that professional historians have is to act as ambassadors and practitioners of one of the most encompassing cultural disciplines in the human sciences. It has now become necessary for historians to clearly see the current crisis, with the knowledge that there is – as Nietzsche saw in the 19th century – something beyond good and evil ... [Historia] [Author’s translation].*