

## South Africa's revised History curriculum on globalism and national narratives in grade 12 textbooks

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Transcontinental trends, for example, to change history curricula as highlighted by LaSpina,<sup>1</sup> fit the South African shoe very well. The multicultural, global-like model of representation in history specifically signals its visibility in the History Curriculum Statement of South Africa as approved in 2003. In many ways, educational trends were also fed by the ideological trends of the day and began having an effect on debates on the trends in the representation of the history of South Africa.<sup>2</sup> This article focuses broadly on the transformation of the South African curriculum after 1994; it provides a critical assessment of the utilisation of the concept of globalism,<sup>3</sup> as stated in the newly revised and approved History curriculum in the most recently published grade 12 textbooks. Although approved and included in these textbooks, this theme is still in its developmental stages of implementation. Another concern, namely the approach to national narratives, is also debated. The intention, among others, is to stimulate debate among historians, history educators, authors and publishers, on the writing of grade 12 History textbooks – rather than remaining ignorant for too long on present and future implications of the grade 12 textbooks for the Further Education and Training Phase (FET).

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1. J.A. LaSpina, "Designing Diversity: Globalization, Textbooks, and the Story of Nations", *Journal for Curriculum Studies*, 35, 6, 2003, pp 667–696.
2. L. Chisholm and R. Leyendecker, "Curriculum Reform in Post 1990s Sub-Saharan Africa", *International Journal of Educational Development*, 28, 2, 2008, pp 195–205; and *Yesterday&Today*, May 2008. This later publication covers articles on the current History debate, OBE utilising and curriculum changes in South Africa and is also available at <http://www.sashtw.org.za> See also S. Dryden-Peterson and 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; L. Chisholm, "The Politics of Curriculum Review and Revision in South Africa", Paper presented at the Oxford International Conference on Education and Development, 9–11 September 2003, Oxford, UK, pp 1–20; E.S. van Eeden and J.L. 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 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.
3. "Globalism" is essentially the conceptualising of an attitude or policy of placing the interests of the world above those of individual nations. "Globalisation" refers, *inter alia*, to the decrease or increase in the degree of globalism. Globalisation also describes an ongoing process by which regional societies, cultures and economies have become integrated through a globe-spanning network of, for example, communication and trade. See P. Manning (ed), *Global Practice in World History: Advances Worldwide* (Markus Wiener, Princeton, 2008); P. Manning, *Navigating World History: Historians Create a Global Past* (Palgrave Macmillan, New York, 2003); A.G. Hopkins (ed), *Globalization in World History*, (Princeton University Press, Princeton NJ, 2003). Some textbooks use the concepts "globalism" and "globalisation" interchangeably without clearly defining the semantic difference between them.

## Trends in curriculum development, 1994–2008

Curriculum development in South Africa after 1994 (as was the case before 1994) is part of the national political process. Recommendations were made by a Ministerial Review Committee, appointed in 2000<sup>4</sup> and this committee suggested an extensive revision to the curriculum with the major function of making it more digestible with an all-inclusive, user friendly approach.

In the process, ordinary interest groups within a Babel of role player and stakeholder voices were able to make proposals,<sup>5</sup> but not all were heard or were able to affect the Revised National Curriculum Statement, which features an orientation to rights and outcomes.<sup>6</sup> In Chisholm's words, it was primarily those few voices with social power who "constructed the overall score".<sup>7</sup> Chisholm identifies the ANC, several bodies or associations in education and individual intellectuals as the dominant powers behind the eventual curriculum changes.<sup>8</sup> In the transformation progress approach to History, for example, the emphasis was on historical skills and the diversity of voices in the making of South Africa's history. It was probably underscored that the path of the past, namely a dominant narrative of white progress, was not to be followed.<sup>9</sup>

In 1994, education was also made universal and compulsory in South Africa, to be followed by a new programme (called Outcome-based Education, Curriculum 2005) from 1998.<sup>10</sup> Since then, education experts have been tasked with transforming the pre-1994 History curriculum into a more "inclusive" history. This includes alternative interpretations of the Afrikaner nationalist perspective of South Africa's past,<sup>11</sup> as well as the inclusion of a dimension of social history,<sup>12</sup> because of the key emphasis on establishing a non-racial approach and content. In addition, the value of world history and the influence of global trends on the history of South Africa were given some serious attention at national conferences and in a wide range of publications.<sup>13</sup> This trend has received some consideration in the revised History curriculum for South Africa.

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4. Chisholm, "The Politics of Curriculum Review", p 2.
  5. 'Voices' in this context is conceptualised as authorities, interest groups, and individuals from within communities who play a role in making or shaping the history of South Africa.
  6. Chisholm, "The Politics of Curriculum Review", pp 1–5.
  7. Chisholm, "The Politics of Curriculum Review", p 4.
  8. See for example, J.D. Jansen, "Curriculum Reconstruction in Post-Colonial Africa: A Review of the Literature", *International Journal of Educational Development*, 2002, pp 1–2; J.D. Jansen, "The School Curriculum since Apartheid: Intersections of Politics and Policy in the South African Transition", at [www.up.ac.za/dspace/bitstream/2263/131/4/Jansen+\(1999\)a.pdf](http://www.up.ac.za/dspace/bitstream/2263/131/4/Jansen+(1999)a.pdf), pp 1–17.
  9. See Chisholm, "The Politics of Curriculum Review", pp 1–14.
  10. Chisholm & Leyendecker, "Curriculum Reform", pp 195–205; Jansen, "Curriculum Reconstruction", pp 1–2; J. Wilmot and K. Asmal (eds), *Values, Education and Democracy* (Department of Education, Cape Town, 2001), pp 189–190.
  11. E.S. van Eeden and T. Vermeulen, "Christian National Education and People's Education: Historical Perspectives on Some Common Grounds", *New Contree*, 50, March 2005.
  12. E.S. van Eeden, "Historiographical and Methodological Trends in the Teaching of History in a Changing South Africa", *Historia*, 42 (2), November 1997; Van Eeden & Van der Walt, "Creating a Future", pp 85–95.
  13. See E.S. van Eeden, "An Approach to the Teaching of Universal Global History Concepts in World History Practice in South Africa", *International World History Bulletin*, 14, 1, Spring 1998; E.S. van Eeden, *Didactical Guidelines for Teaching History in a Changing South Africa*

## General aspects of transforming the History curriculum

According to Gail Weldon, a leading role player in the transformation 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.<sup>14</sup> Other key drivers in the process were to redress the “visibility of the formerly marginalised and subjugated voices”,<sup>15</sup> and to engage with the South African situation in the awareness that it was a typical post-conflict society.<sup>16</sup> By the late 1990s historians and history associations raised concerns about their lack of involvement in the decision making on content and the future status of History as a subject within the curriculum transformation approach.<sup>17</sup> On the other hand, Lawson argues that black educators at least had an opportunity to engage in the revision of the History curriculum.<sup>18</sup>

For a select group of experts, the process of transforming History curricula was undoubtedly 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 order to support the development of an acceptable human identity.<sup>19</sup> With this approach, the ideal was 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>20</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; it has been widely debated, for example, in historical literature throughout the world.<sup>21</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, Kader Asmal, as an expert in law; and by his co-author, Wilmot, as an expert in diversity studies), that “learners should receive more education in global challenges and ethical values in order to rebuild social cohesion in a democratic South Africa”.<sup>22</sup> The strengthening of teaching skills in the subject and the training of history teachers were also mentioned

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(Keurkopie, Potchefstroom, 1999); Van Eeden & Van der Walt, “Creating a Future”, pp 85–95.

14. G. Weldon, *A Comparative Study on the Construction of Memory and Identity in the Curriculum of Post-Conflict Societies: Rwanda and South Africa*, available online at [www.centres.ex.ac.uk/historyresource/journal11/](http://www.centres.ex.ac.uk/historyresource/journal11/) 2006, pp 1–2.
15. G. Weldon, “History Education and the Democratic Nation in Post-Apartheid South Africa”, Paper presented at the South African Society for History Teaching (SASHT) conference, 26–27 September 2008, p 7, as quoted in the Department of Education, South Africa National Curriculum Statement, History, 2003, pp 22–33.
16. Weldon, “History Education and the Democratic Nation”, pp 7–14.
17. P.G. Warnich, “Uitkomsgebaseerde Assessering van Geskiedenis in Graad 10.” PhD thesis, NWU, 2008, pp 107–108.
18. R. Lawson, “Black Teachers (Re) Negotiation and (Re) Construction of their Pedagogical Practice within South Africa’s Post-Apartheid Curriculum.” PhD thesis, Ohio State University, 2003, pp 1–170.
19. Weldon, *A Comparative Study*, pp 7–14.
20. Wilmot & Asmal, *Values, Education and Democracy*, p 186.
21. See C. Coffin, *Historical Discourse* (British Library, London, 2006), pp 3, 44, 47, 66, 72, 130, 158–159, 169–170; Van Eeden, *Didactical Guidelines*, chapters 9 and 10.
22. Wilmot & Asmal, *Values, Education and Democracy*, pp 194–195, 200.

as key factors in bringing about change.<sup>23</sup> As mentioned earlier, the focus on a far more “inclusive and nuanced view of the world” was another issue to be borne in mind. Eventually, this was indeed introduced into the national History curriculum, but there are still some concerns about its reflection in history textbooks. This being so, the discussion now turns to some aspects of globalism and national narratives as they are represented in the current grade 12 textbooks that were published in 2007.

### **Globalism, national narratives and textbooks**

The selection of content in South Africa’s revised History curriculum has provoked fierce debate as far as the choice of themes selected; the chronology rationale; and the sometimes inefficient liaisons between global and local/national themes, etc. It is vital to address these and other issues on the curriculum in articles with a different emphasis. In this particular discussion the focus is narrowed down to a reflection of global and national narratives in the curriculum and an examination of how these have been negotiated in the available grade 12 textbooks.

The following nine grade 12 History textbooks were published in 2007. They were approved and made available in December 2007 for the 2008 school year:

- *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 *Nuwe Afrika 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);
- *Shuter’s History* (Shuter & Shooter); and
- *Viva History* (Vivlia Publishers).

These textbooks cover the seven broad themes prescribed in the History curriculum. Parts of South Africa’s history are interwoven with international events and trends. For South African learners and educators, this is a new approach. In addition, from 2008, examinations at grade 12 level did not accommodate papers that distinguished between South African history and “general” history.

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23. Van Eeden, “An Approach to the Teaching”; Wilmot & Asmal, *Values, Education and Democracy*, p 200; R. Siebörger and J. Dean, “Values in a Changing Curriculum”, available at <http://scholar.google.co.za>, accessed 17 February 2010.



**Figure 1: Grade 12 History textbooks approved in December 2007**

The following are the concise curriculum themes for grade 12 level:

- The impact of the Cold War in forming the world as it was in the 1960s;
- The realisation of *uhuru* in Africa, 1960s–1970s;
- Forms of civil society, 1960s–1990s;
- The impact of the collapse of the USSR in 1989;
- The emergence of South Africa as a democracy from the crises of the 1990s;
- Globalisation: meaning and trends; and
- Ideologies and debates around the constructed heritage icons from the period and today. (The use of “period” in this context probably implies the timeframe covered by the other themes, that is at least 1960–2004.)

In essence, the History curriculum appears impressive, especially in theory, but it is open to criticism on everyday practicality and its textbook applications.

### **Globalism and globalisation in the curriculum and in History textbooks**

In 2008 Rob Siebörger, an expert on the teaching of History in South Africa, remarked as follows 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.<sup>24</sup>

This would indeed be so if the “forces that shape today's world”, were covered effectively in the grade 12 History textbooks. In this regard, Macmillan's *History for All* has produced a workable chapter to use for debate. The *New Africa History* devotes 38 pages to globalisation, while *Shuter's History* has a solid 70 pages. With more space available, *Shuter's* was able to cover the theme substantially and provides an exciting variety of usable sources, although the publication generally is very “busy” and tends to scare off some tentative learners. In most textbooks, however, in-depth content is lacking, specifically on globalisation.<sup>25</sup> History teachers will thus have to invest more energy and creativity to ensure that learners have a reasonable idea of globalism and the effects of globalisation.

Apart from globalism as a refreshing new theme, the focus on world history in the curriculum and its links with national history (and vice versa) should not be overlooked. In all the revised curriculum themes, the connection between the world, Africa and South Africa could have been made. Only a few of the grade 12 textbooks were creative and expansive in their thinking in this regard in all the sections/chapters. The developers of the revised curriculum could also have been more supportive (thematically and in historical chronology) by combining issues with the potential to be dealt with in a broader sense, more efficiently. See, for example, the distinctive presentation of the collapse of the USSR in 1989 in a separate discussion instead of categorising it as part of the influences on Cold War strategies of the past and how it has affected South Africa in the process. South Africa could well have formed part of the discussion on the Cold War; the Maskew Miller Longman publication, *Looking into the Past*, did well in this regard. Some of the other textbooks have indeed tried to create innovative links between some themes and South Africa, but this is emphasised mainly in the sources and sometimes does not even feature in the basic content that is supposed to guide the educator and learner towards using the sources that follow.

In academic treatises there has been support for this curriculum innovation. The use of globalism and the global/world history teaching approach was given the nod both prior to and after the final curriculum revision.<sup>26</sup> However, leading exponents of teaching methodology and academic historians have warned against a possible imbalance in the curriculum and evidence of this coming through into the textbooks.<sup>27</sup> They claim that a decrease of European content in the approved history

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24. R. Siebörger, “Don't Deprive Pupils of the Chance to Study History”, *Cape Times*, 12 June 2008, p 9; and Anon., “Don't Rob Pupils of our Rich History”, *The Star*, 19 June 2008, p 19.
  25. A lack of “in-depth content” in this context implies the presentation of themes and chapter background in a superficial way; educators and learners are thus unable to gain a full grasp of the who, what, where, when and how of the topics addressed.
  26. L.D. Beukes, L.J. de Jager, A. Engelbrecht, A. Niemann, R. Swart and C.N. van der Westhuizen, “Changes and Continuities in History Textbooks after Apartheid”, Draft article presented for peer review to the *South African Journal of Education*, 2008, pp 1–32; A. Engelbrecht, “The Impact and Role Reversal in Representational Practices in History Textbooks after Apartheid”, *South African Journal of Education*, 28, 2008, pp 519–541; Van Eeden, “An Approach to the Teaching”; Van Eeden, *Didactical Guidelines*.
  27. See F. Pretorius, “Unfair Affirmative Action in South African Historiography”, *Yesterday&Today*, 1 May 2007, pp 1–8.

textbooks may well lead to the elimination of valuable cultural content,<sup>28</sup> because the South African nation is as much a product of European intervention as African tradition.<sup>29</sup>

Some ten years after 1994, the University of Cape Town hosted several colloquium sessions on writing and teaching national history in Africa in an era of global history. Based on the feedback from Howard Phillips, the participants were picking up the vibes from historians abroad, specifically from Toyin Falola of the University of Texas and Patrick Harries of the University of Basle, Switzerland, that the concept of “nation” and national history from the bottom up is meaningful and vital in the current era of globalisation.<sup>30</sup>

Although it probably cannot be ignored that global history is an important means to understand modern processes and events, Falola has emphasised that national history is a “means of survival against the dominant brand of global history in the contemporary world”, which he viewed as “a narrative of Western power and expansion” that tended to turn national history into a meta-narrative of global history. The result, he said, was that “local identities” were erased and the “dust of ethnic is swept under the carpet of the national, and the national itself under the table of the universal”. To guard specifically against this kind of unbalanced approach, articles were published and structures proposed as guidelines. Falola’s work was quoted widely and many of the historians who attended the colloquium agreed that national history could not and should not ignore global history – but, importantly, it should not be superseded by it either ...<sup>31</sup>

It is interesting to note that June Bam, representing the Department of Education and also one of the leaders of the South African History Project, assured the historians involved in 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 well have been the intention, but the products to be utilised in practice – the History textbooks – fall short because the curriculum is too open and vague in this regard.

Considering the empirical debate in South Africa and elsewhere, the didactical guidance and the key features of the revised History curriculum, international history appears to be particularly dominant in grade 12 textbooks. South African history is

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28. C. de Wet, “Die Uitbeelding van Swart Mense in SA Geskiedenis-handboeke”, *Acta Academica*, 33, 1, 2001, pp 99–129; L.R. Reuter and H. Döbert, *After Communism and Apartheid. Transformation of Education in Germany and South Africa* (Frankfurt, Peter Lang, 2002); Engelbrecht, “The Impact and Role Reversal”, pp 537–538.
  29. C. Bundy, “What Makes a Nation Happy? Historiographical Change and the Implications for Textbooks”, Paper at the seminar on school history textbooks for a democratic South Africa, Rustenburg, 1993; F. Pretorius, “Onbillike ‘Regstellende Aksie’ in SA Geskiedskrywing”, *De Vrye Afrikaan*, 19 May 2006; L.K. van der Steinen, “Three Decades of SA School History Textbooks: Historiographical Influence, Change and Continuity from the 1970s to the 1990s.” MEd dissertation, University of the Free State, 1997.
  30. H. Phillips, “Writing and Teaching National History in Africa in an Era of Global History”, Reports on colloquium sessions, University of Cape Town, c. 2004, pp 215–221.
  31. See Van Eeden, “An Approach to the Teaching”; Phillips, “Writing and Teaching National History”, p 216.

clearly visible in three of the seven themes but it is not always efficiently linked to the international and African themes or to “globalism” as a theme. Indications of how South Africa has been influenced are sometimes visible, but this option as a focus could be expanded; much more is needed on how world history has influenced South Africa and indeed how South Africa has perhaps influenced continental and world histories. After all, we are dealing with grade 12 learners at the highest level so they should be exposed to this multi-dimensional methodology.

In the current textbooks, grade 12 learners will learn how the Cold War transformed the world of the 1960s; and also how it affected the outcome of African history in a period of aspirations for *uhuru* or freedom in the aftermath of colonial transgression. After the first two themes, another two follow that also reflect world events that hold the promise of gradually working their way towards South African history. They are forms of civil society protest that emerged in the 1960s and continued until the 1990s; the effect of the collapse of the USSR in 1989; and South Africa’s triumphant emergence from the crises of the 1990s into a democracy. (See more on this in the discussion of national narratives below.)

The last two sections of the grade 12 curriculum are new FET themes focused on providing interesting scope on globalising on a wide community front. Reflections are exchanged on ideologies and there are debates on the country’s heritage. In most textbooks for grade 12 (apart from those mentioned earlier), South Africa does not really feature in the globalism theme. There is only one sub-section where some discussion is devoted to South Africa’s contribution in Africa since 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. Nor is it clear why the textbook authors have shied away from important themes such as post-colonial theft in Africa’s biodiverse heritage.

### **National narratives in the curriculum and textbooks: Teaching history to promote whom ... and what ...?**

It is ironic that textbook development and the results of empirical research on textbooks of the past (as well as guidance on compiling textbooks and the pitfalls to be avoided) are not being utilised effectively in the marketplace. Publishers appear to have their own agendas.<sup>32</sup> In South Africa at the moment (as in the pre-1994 period), their focus appears to be to satisfy the Ministry of Education by not stepping too much on political toes. There is a tendency to ensure that textbook activities reflect the political majority of the day, regardless of whether they effectively present the (open, vague) History curriculum – a curriculum that purports to reflect multiple voices.

As elsewhere, prior to acceptance, newly developed History textbooks in South Africa were submitted to state-appointed review panels for screening.<sup>33</sup> 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 to express preference for one textbook over another. The publishers knew very little about the books being

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32. M.W. Apple and L.K. Christian-Smith (eds), *The Politics of the Textbook* (Routledge, New York, 1991), pp 1–22.

33. LaSpina, “Designing Diversity”, pp 667–696.



produced by their competitors; nor were they given guidance or informed about avoiding sensitive loopholes. A representative from one of the publishing houses 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 not sufficiently covered.<sup>34</sup>

Furthermore, insufficient time was allowed to prepare grade 12 textbooks. There was little opportunity to expose them to the broader academic community for comment from historians and educators. This would have been the most feasible and long-term solution to ensure quality.

The selection of content will probably always evoke controversy because it involves different cultures and there is bound to be racial sensitivity in cosmopolitan environments. For this reason it is an absolute necessity that those well versed in History didactics are consulted. This would go a long way towards equipping educators to deal with controversial concerns. However, I am not convinced that those involved in the teaching process should be forced to utilise history topics to serve external purposes beyond its methodological scope. The primary aim of teaching History is to present a balanced multiple-voice approach; the content must be as scrupulously objective as possible and should focus on a reasonable and fair analytical response. In this way, dealing with human issues such as tolerance of differences; understanding human rights; and avoiding racism; should be handled spontaneously and not enforced in a compulsory manner to serve as a “social agent” for whomever. History cannot act as an agent to teach learners about the ultimate moral way to live. It can only present the ways in which people lived and cherished certain moral values.

Teaching History in a diverse, unprejudiced, balanced and methodologically passionate way requires that the educator apply scientific and professional morals to the discipline/subject. These should always be respected.

### **Inclusivity?**

Whatever historical thinking (in “my” and “our” histories), methodologies or personal ideas and reasoning for inclusiveness 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>35</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 historical context. On the other hand, a voice can also be defined as the learner in the process of arguing a genre as adjudicator.<sup>36</sup> Application of this knowledge should also be put to use in the textbook interpretation of South Africa's revised History curriculum.

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34. P. de Villiers, e-mail correspondence with E.S. van Eeden, 23 February 2008.

35. Coffin, *Historical Discourse*, pp 44–65.

36. Coffin, *Historical Discourse*, p 158.

Cole and Barsalou argue that it remains difficult to decide what history content should be taught in a post-conflict society.<sup>37</sup> Questions such as who decides what version(s) should be taught and what effect choices may have on promoting stable, cohesive and tolerant societies, are indeed crucial issues. The relationship between the (re)writing of history by academic historians and the development of secondary school history textbooks can also be debated. Moreover, as mentioned above, there is often insufficient time to prepare grade 12 textbooks carefully and expose them to the broader academic community for its input. Unfortunately, this was the case in South Africa. In a keynote address in 2007, Kader Asmal said:

... 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 ...<sup>38</sup>

What Asmal probably meant by referring to “good” History is history that is supposed to be all-inclusive and focused on balance, variety and sensitivity to promote a healthy attitude towards nation building. Sensitivity and all-inclusiveness as a means towards creating a platform, for example for nation building, are indeed explored in the fifth and seventh themes in the grade 12 curriculum. Both these themes cover South African history content. However, this content is far from “healthy” and still requires extensive refinement in balancing the “my” histories so that they present a reasonable “our” history.

Typical examples that have been ignored in textbooks are the results of the white minority poll in both the 1982 and 1993 referendums, and the political opinions of newspaper reporters of the time (for example, Max du Preez) and other opinion formers such as Frederick van Zyl Slabbert. Some of these people made their voices heard under very difficult circumstances. The only examples used in the current grade 12 textbooks (and then specifically in the textbook *In Search of History*) to portray the resistance of Afrikaner whites against political transformation in South Africa (as if it represents the majority opinion of white people) is that white minorities, namely the politically focused movement called the Afrikaner Weerstandsbeweging or AWB (Afrikaner Resistance Movement) and the Herstigte (Re-established) National Party or HNP.

Although the role of these resistance movements undoubtedly forms part of South Africa’s history, their presentation in textbooks – as if they represent all Afrikaner whites – may be interpreted as a stereotypical and distorted historical presentation of the reality of the time. In the early 1990s and later, South Africans also had to witness conflicts among civilians, especially among black groups, that resulted in brutal deaths. In the textbooks the government of the time is accused of being the prime instigator of these events – and this can certainly be debated because these

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37. E.A. Cole and J. Barsalou, “Unite or Divide? The Challenges of Teaching History in Societies Emerging from Violent Conflict”, United States Institute of Peace, Special Report no. 163, June 2006, p 3.

38. K. Asmal, “Keynote Address: Interrogating the History Curriculum after Ten Years of OBE”, SASHT Conference, KwaZulu-Natal. Featured in *Yesterday&Today*, 21–22 September, 2007, pp 12–13.

speculations have been raised in academic articles. But they should not be emphasised to portray an innocent history of the black majority against a white minority regime. Ironically, grade 12 learners are only “introduced” to this brutality in the history of South Africa in some textbooks as an assignment where they are tasked to find out more. It does not form part of the main content and thus reflects a distorted national narrative and a lack of multiple perspectives. Methodologically, all content in all the themes should link with assessment assignments and not only rely on neutral, broadly covered assignments. If the critical and learning outcomes (linked to the assessment standards) were followed critically, such distortions and imbalances would perhaps have been spotted in the writing process.

### **Is a “healthy” identity presented in textbooks?**

A healthy identity in a historical context can imply a heartfelt, active or blooming passion for one’s country and its broader groups of people. It also embodies having a sober knowledge of the role and achievements of the specific group the individual identifies with as “my” history.

As broad as the revised national curriculum content structure may be (in order to promote a healthy identity), the fundamental core of some grade 12 curriculum themes in the new textbooks is intellectually thin. When this is the case, it simply means that it becomes impossible to balance diversities, multiple perspectives,<sup>39</sup> inclusivity and healthy identities. Then Asmal’s concerns are shared, although the process he suggests to address them (referred to in the previous section), does not necessarily guarantee success (for example, more black writers, a more balanced presentation, etc., as Asmal puts it). The basic historical method of ensuring multi-perspectivity and a diversity of genres and voices in any historical publication should apply. What is furthermore required is ample knowledge of examples of a specific content theme, and the simple but important application of the 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 one another’s personal cultural, linguistic and racial experience in the process of content development and in designing assessment tasks. Individually they may lack the ability to ensure depth, balance, cohesion, tolerance and progress. In many ways, historians and skilled history educators should always be reminded of the manner in which a magistrate as a law practitioner should manage, consider and interpret the voices of evidence with which he/she is working, regardless of the typically human obstacles such as colour and race.

In the new grade 12 textbooks, the trend in the nationally focused themes 3, 5 and 7 seems to be to present discussions that the majority of South Africans will be obliged to “accept” rather than 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 towards a collective identity that reflects healthy attitudes and a sound historical consciousness. The absence of a multi-diverse representation, as a crucial requirement in the methodology of History

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39. The use of the word “perspective” in this context refers to expert contributions by freelance writers of history textbooks; and to history educators in the General, Further and Higher Education and Training Phases.

and emphasised in current transcontinental perspectives, leads to products that are sadly no different from the curriculum interpretations in pre-1994 textbooks. In fact, they can hardly be seen as adopting a transformational approach towards creating a healthy, nation-building democracy.

Most of the textbooks display creative variety; some go the extra mile with sources and source creativity. The problem in using sources is the way they are approached as assessment activities. An appropriate example that made news in 2008, is the cartoon of Mangosuthu Buthelezi used in the Oxford University Press publication. Siebörger commented as follows:

News of another kind was that the IFP had taken exception to what was contained in an Oxford University Press history (Grade 12) textbook, in particular the use of a cartoon by Zapiro, which depicted Mangosuthu Buthelezi's pen dripping with blood at the time of the pre-election violence in 1994. The cartoon, however, was not an illustration. It was used in an exercise to analyse bias, set out in a sophisticated and thorough way. Ironically, in the light of the criticisms made, the most likely conclusion of the exercise is that the media in 1994 was biased in its treatment of Buthelezi and that history ought to reflect that. It is, thus, again a reflection of a lack of good history teaching in school that gives rise to an inability to see that the intention of the textbook was sympathetic to Buthelezi.<sup>40</sup>

Siebörger's argument is questionable, although the merits of reflecting a wrong approach to a cartoon as a "lack of good History teaching" perhaps should not be overlooked. Certainly, the writers of the textbook may have been sympathetic to the personality in the cartoon, but because of a lack of creativity in the assessment questions and possible options for debate, they failed to guide the learners towards effectively identifying bias. Only one activity question is set and this has no guidance whatsoever of additional facts to assist learners and educators to contradict or to support the views of the cartoonist, Zapiro.

It is always worthwhile when a variety of sources on a specific theme covers multiple voices (a variety of sources) and perspectives (thoughts of people at the time). The lack of an in-depth content presentation can also distort the actual value of exploring source activities. Grade 12 textbooks, with exceptions here and there, fail to provide content with a solid and well-researched historical background as narrative.

A remark Tully made in 1995,<sup>41</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'<sup>42</sup> of a nation is not negative, but to act 'stone-deaf to deep-seated conflict'".<sup>43</sup> Underplaying the diversity in the South African cultural heritage, and an ignorance in approaching the South African heritage within the theme on globalism,

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40. Siebörger, "Don't Deprive Pupils", p 9; Anon., "Don't Rob Pupils of our Rich History", p 19.

41. As quoted by LaSpina, "Designing Diversity", pp 682–683.

42. Educational progress is defined as a "forward moving" to the benefit (and not the detriment) of the teaching and learning 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. This being so, South African history teaching has a long way to go to ensure that these traits are reflected in the curriculum; in teacher training; and in textbooks, which are after all, the ultimate outlet for what History teaching principles present.

43. LaSpina, "Designing Diversity", pp 682; Coffin, *Historical Discourse*, pp 1–208.

for example, as if there is nothing to offer, may only set the table for a distortion of the South African heritage and yet other kinds of conflicts.

### Analysis and conclusion

Issues on the development and interpretation of South Africa's revised History curriculum, particularly in grade 12, have been discussed.<sup>44</sup> It is more than a fact, so to speak, that different views of history affect ways of writing about the past.<sup>45</sup> The same applies to assembling and presenting content within the structures of History curricula that eventually find their way to textbooks and support materials. Another complexity that accompanies the writing process of History textbooks in particular is the use of different styles (for example, a gripping, narrative style or a detached, logical, argumentative analysis). In using support materials, the idea is also to allow learners not to rely on the interpretation of the textbook author/historian, but to use primary material and, based on the assessment focus, reach their own conclusions.

However, to be able to approach primary source material in this way, the perceived basic secondary source content – related to a specific theme as utilised in a textbook and written by History educators or historians – should be multi-diverse and moulded in a discourse analysis. If not, it implies that the selection of source material may also not reflect a multi-diverse approach and a richer understanding of the range of texts within a specific linguistic make-up, different dimensions of context and perhaps with different cultural dimensions. It is also likely that an effective utilisation of a supposedly “arguing genre” style<sup>46</sup> in grade 12 will be absent because secondary and primary basics are not representative.<sup>47</sup>

Difficulties in the evaluation of historical interpretation are a matter of concern abroad as well as in South Africa. History educators and learners still have to use different interpersonal strategies and new ways of organising text in the process of utilising the arguing genre. According to Coffin, this genre often unfolds into an “exposition” (arguing for a particular interpretation), a “discussion” (considering different interpretations before reaching a position) or a “challenge” (arguing against a particular interpretation).<sup>48</sup>

Because grade 12 learners should primarily be occupied with the arguing genre, the key argument of this article is that recently published grade 12 textbooks in South Africa, based on the revised History curriculum, do not meet this requirement, especially in content related to globalism and national narratives; language style; and their assessment tasks. Furthermore, the content of the approach to globalism and globalising trends that have impacted upon the history of South Africa is poorly organised and is not equipped to provide a multi-diverse setting.

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44. Siebörger, “Don’t Deprive Pupils”, p 9; Anon., “Don’t Rob Pupils of our Rich History”, p 19.

45. Coffin, *Historical Discourse*, p 3.

46. As discussed by Coffin, *Historical Discourse*, pp 1–208.

47. Coffin, *Historical Discourse*, pp 27–28, 42, 47.

48. Coffin, *Historical Discourse*, pp 77–87, 130–131, 138.

Cole and Barsalou emphasise the requirement of a social consensus that must be reached to ensure approval and adoption of History textbooks that break old myths that glorify one group and demonise others.<sup>49</sup> They write:

... much of history depends on the viewpoint of those writing it. Although post-conflict societies could benefit from accounts of history that play down the differences between former enemies, some truths do exist: ... Denying them results in dangerous moral relativism ...<sup>50</sup>

It must be admitted that the grade 12 publications are the first within the revised History curriculum of South Africa and are admirable efforts. But they will certainly require revision especially in structure, in-depth content and effective History methodology practices. Although textbooks are not produced every year, publishers, the DoE and the broader educator community, should take cognisance of the key ideal in a presentation of our discipline, 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.

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 refers to it as being "self-contained as a graphic advertisement. Potentially, the 'story' becomes as thin as the page it is printed on". He continues by reflecting:

... 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.<sup>51</sup>

Perhaps the question is not whether the nation's story should be reflected from a broader context of world systems or not, but *how* it should be done. The reality is that constraints still tend to dispose people to think and act locally in terms of modernity. All nations are caught up in a "rapidly developing and ever-densening network of interconnections and interdependences". Therefore, to get "inside" a particular "my" history in the broader "our" and "their" context, a global and comparative look at it from past to present is required.

### Abstract

The early twenty-first century evidenced a worldwide change in teaching History through the means of several revised History curricula in the Further Education and Training (FET) Phase, and the development of textbooks as a result of this revision. In South Africa these trends have coincided with a period of educational transformation since the African National Congress (ANC) took over as the leading political party in 1994. After 16 years of democracy the transformational outcome also saw a change in the approach to History in the school curriculum and textbooks. This article is structured to debate globalism and national narratives as themes in South Africa's

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49. Cole & Barsalou, "Unite or Divide?", pp 3, 9.

50. Cole & Barsalou, "Unite or Divide?", p 9.

51. LaSpina, "Designing Diversity", pp 685-686.

revised History curriculum. The aim is to precipitate a critical discussion on the general interpretation of these themes in the grade 12 History textbooks. This is also a way of ensuring that educators and learners are aware of the strengths and weaknesses of the textbooks on these themes for the day when they will be activated as part of the teaching and assessment programme for grade 12 History.

### **Opsomming**

#### **Die hersiene Suid-Afrikaanse Geskiedenis-kurrikulum oor globalisme en nasionale vertellinge in die jongste graad 12-skoolhandboeke**

Ten aanvang van die een-en-twintigste eeu is 'n wêreldwye tendens van verandering binne die onderrig van Geskiedenis as vak/dissipline opgemerk deurdat 'n aantal hersiene geskiedenis-kurrikula bekend gestel is. Hierdie tendens was ewe sigbaar in die Verdere Onderwys en Opleidingsfase (VOO) van Suid-Afrika veral in die ontwikkeling van nuwe geskiedenis-handboeke vir gebruik in skole. Hierdie tendens het saamgeval met 'n fase van onderwystransformasie, veral nadat die African National Congress (ANC) vanaf 1994 as leidende politieke party die regeringsbestuur oorgeneem het. Na 16 jaar het hierdie gebeurtenis en onderwysgerigte veranderinge ook 'n sigbare uitwerking op die benadering tot die onderrig van Geskiedenis gehad. Dit is onder meer sigbaar in die hersiene VOO-Geskiedenis-kurrikulum en in die handboeke wat in die afgelope jare ontwikkel is. In hierdie artikel word kortliks gefokus op die algemene benadering van globalisme en nasionale vertellinge as temas (soos in die hersiene Geskiedenis-kurrikulum op graad 12-vlak) in die jongste skoolhandboeke. Dit is dan hoofsaaklik veronderstel om 'n voortydige debat te wees oor besorgdhede daarin vervat, en die wyse van hantering van hierdie temas in die graad 12 Geskiedenis-handboeke vir wanneer dit wel in die toekoms aktief as deel van die onderrig- en assesseringsprogram sal geld.

### **Keywords**

Revised South African History Curriculum; globalism; national narratives; grade 12; history textbooks; globalisation; trans-continental trends; history curriculum development; curriculum transformation; outcomes based education; assessment in history; Kader Asmal; inclusive history.

### **Sleutelwoorde**

Hersiene Geskiedenis-kurrikulum vir Suid-Afrika; globalisme; nasionale vertellinge; graad 12; geskiedenis skoolhandboeke; globalisering; transkontinentale tendense; geskiedenis-kurrikulumontwikkeling; kurrikulum transformasie; uitkomsgerigte onderwys; assessering in geskiedenis; Kader Asmal; inklusiewe geskiedenis.