

EDITORIAL

The teaching and learning of History has recently been highlighted in the news with the release on Thursday 31 May 2018 of the long-awaited Report of the History Ministerial Task Team (MTT) to the Minister of Basic Education (See full report at: <https://www.naptosagp.org.za/index.php/documents-02/89-bulletin-board/902-executive-summary-of-the-history-ministerial-task-team-final>).

Appointed on 4 June 2015 the MTT recommended, amongst others, that as from 2023 History should be made compulsory at the FET phase and replace Life Orientation. Furthermore, History should be made a stand-alone subject in the GET phase, doing away with Social Sciences (History and Geography).

As expected, the proposals contained in the Report have been applauded by some while others were less excited about the news. Those who are sceptical fear that History might be abused as political propaganda. Others believe that the proposals will face steep challenges, one of the most important being the lack of enough well-trained History teachers to meet the demand. Another concern is the timeous availability of textbooks in schools to cater for the “overhauled” and “restructured” content. Furthermore, some voices for the Africanisation of the existing CAPS so that it contributes to a more “tolerant” youth seem to be too vague to be fully embraced as a way forward to an inclusive tolerance.

It must also be said that as a scientific document the MTT disappoints. Oddly enough, the mandate it was given was not fully complied with either. In 2015 the SASHT also responded to the request to offer advice and suggestions based on the MTT mandate. The MTT makes no reference thereto nor does it seem to have been acknowledged or considered. As long as a request for compulsory History is dictated from government level and expert inclusivity for a proper and sober discussion is absent, so long will it take to get the buy-in from all levels in the History profession.

This first issue of 2018 includes a good variety of contributions from South African as well as international scholars. The articles reflect on the topics of History textbooks and the use of technology in the teaching and learning of History.

In the first of two international contributions, entitled *Virtues in Danish History textbooks since Enlightenment*, Harry Haue focuses on the impact of virtues in a sample of five popular Danish History textbooks (dated 1777,

1858, 1893, 1985 and 2008) that were largely used in upper secondary schools over a period of three centuries. He selects two topics, namely Christianity in Denmark during the Viking era, and the Danish slave trade, for their moral/ethnic content. Using the rhetorical pentagram as methodological tool he is able to draw a comparison between the five History textbooks. Haue concludes by, inter alia, stating that the books had a variety of interdiscursivity and that striking corresponding attitudes on virtues were found in comparing the textbooks of 1777 and 2008. However, as from 2008 the concept “virtue” was not reused in History textbooks, which Haue ascribes to moral and linguistic changes over time.

In their article, entitled *Mobile concepts in a mobile environment: Historical terms in LSP lexicography*, Michelle van der Merwe and Karin Horn explore the practical value of a Language for Specific Purposes (LSP) mobile dictionary (called MobiLex) of historical concepts at tertiary level, and the results thereof for mobile LSP lexicography. By analysing the development of the two substantive concepts *nationalism* and *democracy* within different historical contexts, they found that the historical meaning of these concepts is complex and that the interpretation thereof is influenced by not only their specific historical period but also the geographical location of the historical events. For this reason they argue that a single definition for a substantive concept does not necessarily convey the historical meaning effectively and is therefore inadequate in fostering historical understanding. For Van der Merwe and Horn, MobiLex holds the potential to expand the historical understanding of terms and concepts by supplying more and appropriate context through adding links to more extensive definitions, adding podcasts and vodcasts to the application.

Another contribution on using digital technology in the History classroom is that of the international scholars Helena Vieira and Cláudia Pinto Ribeiro, entitled: *Implementing flipped classroom in History: The reactions of eighth grade students in a Portuguese school*. As a blended learning model, the flipped classroom is a relatively new educational model and is growing in popularity. In their case study with 80 learners averaging 13 years of age and distributed over three classes, Vieira and Pinto Ribeiro installed *apps* on the learners’ personal mobile phones, after which they were asked to develop some activities during and after class. The aim of the study was to analyse the learners’ experiences and opinions after they were introduced to the flipped classroom for the first time. With the three classes experiencing the flipped

classroom in different ways, the overall result of this case study showed that 51.1% of the participants considered the flipped classroom to be an effective practice of learning which they experienced as interesting, fun and different. Vieira and Pinto Ribeiro conclude by admitting that the flipped classroom as a teaching approach is still in its early stages of development, but definitely a strategy in the future where the teacher can promote learner-centred and self-directed learning in order to improve the teaching and learning of History.

In the article by Tarryn Halsall and Johan Wassermann, entitled *A comparative investigation into the representation of Russia in Apartheid and post-Apartheid era South African History textbooks*, the focus is on how and why Russia is represented the way it is in textbooks in the two ideologically different eras of Apartheid and post-Apartheid. Initially the authors provide an insightful overview of the relationship between Russia and South Africa over the past decades, indicating that despite ideological differences, a common history is shared. Adopting an interpretivist research philosophy within a qualitative approach and by using mostly convenience sampling for the three Apartheid era textbooks and only purposive sampling for the three selected post-apartheid textbooks, interesting findings are made, namely that the content on how Russia is represented has not, with the odd exception such as references to women, changed discernibly. This speaks to a persistence of a certain memory. However, what has radically changed is what, with the focus on History as a disciplinary discipline, teachers and learners in the post-Apartheid era do with the content when compared to the Apartheid era.

In his article in the hands-on section, entitled *Reimagining the journey – Expanding the History curriculum to teach for depth of understanding in the FET Phase*, Gordon Brookbanks argues the necessity of teaching and learning additional or extended topics in the last three years of the History learner's school career. With the support of historical content, he expertly demonstrates insight on how to teach additional or extended topics in Grades 10 and 11 in order to develop a greater contextualization and a deeper grounding for the learners in their understanding of the topics prescribed in the Grade 12 CAPS. Brookbanks concludes with practical recommendations for History educators to contribute towards a depth of understanding of the teaching and learning of History in the FET Phase, and through which he believes learners will develop a comprehensive knowledge of the past.

Apart from the above contributions, included in this issue are three interesting and worthwhile book reviews. The books under review were written by

Thembanani Hlatshwayo (*African muckracking: 75 years of investigative journalism in Africa*); Simphiwe Ngwane (*The rise of Africa's middle class: Myths, realities and critical engagements*) and Arend Carl (*Teaching and learning History and Geography in the South African classroom*).

This issue also contains more news on the 32th Annual Conference of the SASHT, which will take place from Friday 5 October to Saturday 6 October 2018 at the Cape Peninsula University of Technology, Mowbray Campus. The theme of the conference is: *Bridging the divide between theory and practice in the History curriculum and reflecting on the intended, enacted and assessed curricula as it is manifested in school classrooms*.