

CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF HISTORY EDUCATION IN BLACK
SECONDARY SCHOOLS, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO
MPUMALANGA, 1948–2008

by

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DECLARATION

I declare that **CHANGING PERCEPTIONS OF HISTORY EDUCATION IN BLACK SECONDARY SCHOOLS, WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO MPUMALANGA, 1948-2008** is my own work and that all the sources I have quoted have been included and acknowledged by means of complete references.

SIGNATURE

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DATE

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ABSTRACT

This dissertation examines the changing perceptions which black history educators and learners have held toward secondary school history education from 1948 to 2008. The province of Mpumalanga is focused upon, although the perceptions held about history education by black secondary school educators and learners within the wider historical context of South Africa is also examined. It is argued that while the history education offered to black learners in South Africa secondary schools during the apartheid era was unpopular largely due to its pro-government subject matter, post-apartheid secondary school education is in danger of becoming increasingly marginalized within the school curriculum as it cannot successfully compete with a modern, technological and materialistically orientated society.

KEY TERMS

Mpumalanga; Education; Bantu Education; history education; black secondary schools; educator perceptions of history education; learner perceptions of history education; apartheid education; Outcomes-based education (OBE); General Education and Training (GET); Further Education and Training (FET); National Curriculum Statement (NCS).

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| | |
|--------|--|
| ANC | African National Congress |
| AS | Assessment Standard |
| BED | Bantu Education Department |
| CASS | Continuous Assessment |
| CID | Criminal Investigation Department |
| CNE | Christian National Education |
| DEIC | Dutch East India Company |
| DET | Department of Education and Training |
| DNE | Department of National Education |
| DO | Developmental Outcome |
| DoE | Department of Education |
| EPU | Education Policy Unit |
| ERS | Educational Review Strategy |
| FAL | First Additional Language |
| FET | Further Education and Training |
| GET | General Education and Training |
| GNU | Government of National Unity |
| HL | Home Language |
| HSRC | Human Sciences Research Council |
| HSS | human and social sciences |
| IT | Information Technology |
| JC | Junior Certificate |
| JMB | Joint Matriculation Board |
| LO | Learning Outcome |
| LSM | Learning Support Material |
| ML | Main Language |
| NAD | Native Affairs Department |
| NCS | National Curriculum Statement |
| NECC | National Education Crisis Committee |
| NEPI | National Education Policy Investigation |
| NQF | National Qualifications Framework |
| NSC | National Senior Certificate |
| OBE | Outcomes-based education |
| PAC | Pan Africanist Congress |
| RSA | Republic of South Africa |
| SA | South Africa |
| SAQA | South African Qualifications Authority |
| SMT | School Management Team |
| SPCC | Soweto Parents' Crisis Committee |
| SS | Social Sciences |
| Std | Standard |
| UNESCO | United Nations Education Science and Cultural Organisation |
| UNISA | University of South Africa |

WCED
ZAR

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Purpose of the study

The purpose of this dissertation is to compare and contrast the perceptions which history-teaching educators and history-taking learners in South African black¹ secondary schools have held toward the subject from the advent of apartheid rule in 1948 until 2008, especially within the province of Mpumalanga. It will be clear that the perceived value of secondary school history among both educators and learners has undergone significant change during this time. This dissertation will assert that history enjoyed a prominent place during the apartheid era and even became a focus of resistance against the policies of the National Party government but has in the post 1994 democratic dispensation been spectacularly unsuccessful in maintaining its position in black secondary school curricula. This dissertation will attempt to explain the negative perceptions with which the subject is presently viewed and to account for its demise in black secondary schools.

Not only is history education in Mpumalanga subject to negative perceptions on the part of educators and learners but history is becoming an unpopular Further Education and Training (FET) Band subject choice. When history is chosen as one of three choice FET subjects, learners perform badly. In 2009, 12 928 learners in the Nkangala region of Mpumalanga registered for Grade 12 and 916 (7,0 per cent) took history. Grade 10 and 11 statistics were similar, with 793 of

¹ For the purposes of this dissertation, 'black' people, specifically black educators and learners may be taken to be people of African descent and speakers of Bantu languages. The term 'black' may be used in various ways. It is sometimes used to refer to any person who is not 'white' (able to trace their descent to Europe or Great Britain), and so may include people of Indian and 'coloured' descent. Only learners of African descent were surveyed for the purposes of this dissertation and aside from a coloured educator who teaches black learners at one of the four surveyed Mpumalanga secondary schools, only black (African) educators were surveyed. This dissertation attempts to investigate the perceptions of people of African descent toward history education during the apartheid era and beyond. The very fact that inverted commas have had to be used in a somewhat clumsy effort to try and isolate and define different racial groups is in itself indicative of the folly of apartheid and demonstrates that such a separation is by nature artificial. Nevertheless, as artificial as such divisions may be and as necessary as further research into the perceptions toward secondary school history among other population groups may be, this researcher opted to focus upon the perceptions of black (African) history educators and learners.

7 115 Grade 11 learners (11,1 per cent) taking history and 724 of 9 149 Grade 10 learners (7, 9 per cent) taking the subject. Geography, history's General Education and Training (GET) Band's companion subject in the social sciences learning area, fares much better at FET level with 2 997, 2 820 and 4 312 learners in Grades 10, 11 and 12 respectively.² Only 35,3 per cent of Grade 12 history candidates passed the subject in Mpumalanga in 2008. Of 8 354 candidates who entered for the history examination, 5 387 failed to achieve the 30 per cent necessary to pass. In the Nkangala region, 745 of 1 190 history candidates achieved the needed 30 per cent to pass. Only 201 of these candidates achieved over 40 per cent. Ultimately, the purpose of this research is to help propose a way forward for a struggling secondary school subject in serious danger of becoming increasingly redundant.³

1.2 Black secondary schools

During the apartheid era a black secondary school was a school which catered exclusively for the educational needs of learners of African descent. Mncube notes that the following types of black secondary schools were provided for by the Bantu Education Act No. 47 of 1953:

1. Bantu community schools were established and maintained by the Bantu authorities, tribes and communities and were subsidised by the state in approved cases;
2. Other schools, including mission schools, were to be state aided, provided that the existence of such schools did not preclude the establishment of a community or government school;
3. All existing or provincially administered and subsidised schools would become government schools – it became illegal to operate an unregistered school.⁴

The term 'secondary schools' is today taken to refer to schools which offer Grades 8–12. This encompasses the General Education and Training band (GET), which includes Grades 7–9, and the Further Education and Training Band (FET), which includes Grades 10–12. The concept of having separate GET and FET schools, which would entail placing Grade 7–9 learners together,

² Mpumalanga Education Department, 'Regional Summary of Results – June 2009', issued 2009.

³ Mpumalanga Education Department, '2008 History Feedback Document: Grade 12', issued 2009.

⁴ F.S.M. Mncube, 'The School and the Community', Paper presented at the 1969 Conference on Bantu Education (Johannesburg, 1969), p. 11.

has been proposed for a number of years but by 2008 little had been practically done to rearrange the present arrangement whereby the GET band is split between primary and secondary schools.

The term 'black secondary schools' is today in addition taken to refer to schools which have either been traditionally attended by black learners or schools which in the past were attended by a range of learners but which have come to be attended by predominantly black learners. There are in fact a great variety of black secondary schools in contemporary South Africa, each with its own set of challenges and characteristics. These schools have continued in democratic South Africa much as they did in the past. Township schools are composed of the variety of socio-economic classes as inhabit their feeder areas; some are fairly affluent while most struggle financially. Two township schools were surveyed for the purposes of this dissertation. Rural black secondary schools remain generally the poorest schools in the country in terms of financial, physical and human resources. Generally the standard of education in these schools is low because of the multifaceted handicaps which continue to impact upon them. A rural school was one of the schools surveyed for purposes of this dissertation. One of the educational features of the democratic era has been the mushrooming of private black secondary schools, especially in inner-city areas. A further type of contemporary black secondary school is the typically English-medium ex-'Model C' suburban school. Many of these schools which used to cater for predominantly white, English-speaking learners, now cater for almost, or entirely black constituencies. One of the surveyed secondary schools examined in this dissertation has such a history. By 2008, a similar demographic trend was apparent within Afrikaans-speaking suburban, ex-'Model C' schools.

1.3 The value of history as a secondary school subject

The underlying contention of this dissertation is that history is a valuable subject which deserves a prominent place in the curriculum. This is especially true in contemporary South Africa. Mazabow notes that the nurturing of historical consciousness among the youth of South Africa is an urgent undertaking at the present time.⁵ He refers to the Report of the History/Archaeology

⁵ G. Mazabow, 'The Development of Historical Consciousness in the Teaching of History in South African Schools' (D.Ed. thesis, University of South Africa, 2003), p. 23.

Panel which called for the strengthening of history, not only because it is important in its own right, but because knowledge of the past is crucial to an understanding of the present. Unless one is equipped with a knowledge of the past, criteria with which to judge the present are lacking:

contemporary problems and complexities, like the workings of race, class and gender, have to be seen within the context of their development in time... we live in a society in which contemporary issues are continually understood and judged within the powerful context of a past which has bequeathed a violent legacy of conquest, colonialism and apartheid.⁶

In the twenty-first century societal values are going through a time of change. A study of history can provide an opportunity to place these changes into context. Fisher holds that the past is ‘an essential part of a child’s cultural knowledge and experience. Only by reflecting on the past can meanings be found from it that will illuminate the present and help plan the future. Only by reference to the past can the present be fully understood’.⁷

Mulholland quotes Thomson, who asserts that ‘History offers an opportunity of a unique intellectual experience, a rigorous form of mental training which has a high educational value, and a stimulus of imagination and understanding which can enrich a man’s life by deeper insights into human behaviour’.⁸ The vast and rich tapestry of history also provides an interesting content which is grounded in humanity, is empirically verifiable and has complexities which need interpretative skills and method ... all in all, history is a subject which offers training in logical thought. Properly taught, history can enable learners to handle evidence for themselves while learning methods of research and verification and so ‘avoid the danger of having a culturally accepted account of the past foisted upon them.’⁹

Mulholland believes that a study of history is not merely a vehicle for providing content and insight, but is a method of enquiry which has the potential to help learners to become more

⁶ Department of National Education, *Report of the History/Archaeology Panel* (Pretoria, 2000), p. 7, as quoted by Mazabow, ‘The Development of Historical Consciousness’, p. 24.

⁷ R. Fisher, *Teaching Children to Think* (Cheltenham, 1990), p. 231, as quoted by Mazabow, ‘The Development of Historical Consciousness’, p. 153.

⁸ D. Thomson, *The Aims of History* (London, 1969), p. 11, as quoted by R.B. Mulholland, ‘The Evolution of History Teaching in South Africa Vol. I and II’ (M.Ed. dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1981), p. 60.

⁹ Mulholland, ‘The Evolution of History Teaching’, p. 335.

discerning consumers of the mass-media. In other words, the subject can help people to better discern between truth and falsehood.¹⁰ Manyane states that history is both a discipline and a medium of education which closely engages interrelationships between individuals, groups and entire societies as well as between people and the environment they live in. Thus history is a significant component of the educational process which is geared at preparing young people to take their place in society.¹¹ Mazabow refers to Bam and Visser who point out that, especially in South Africa, history classrooms have become the arena where ‘teachers and students confront questions about why people have thought and acted as they have, and about the norms and values we use to interpret and judge their actions’.¹² The history class can be the place where answers for past injustices are found.

As optimistic and noble as the aims of history education may be in a utopian world, the sad truth is that South African history education itself has a long history of misuse, as it has been subordinated to the propagation of ideology. It is generally agreed that history, and especially school history is written from the point of view of those who wield political and economic power. Bam notes that what is in fact presented as ‘school history’ is a version of a society’s past, written by the dominant political group which hopes to realise the political aim of winning the hearts and minds of learners. The experiences and traditions of the dominant group which are considered (by them) to be valuable, are presented for learning in school. This is the version of the past which for Bam, is in the end validated as ‘worthwhile historical knowledge’.¹³ Bam laments the fact that with the presentation of such a school history, all learners, including those from both the dominant and dominated groups, suffer ‘educational deprivation’. The dominated groups in society are even denied a full place in history.¹⁴

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 336.

¹¹ R.M. Manyane, ‘History Teaching in South Africa within the Context of the Human and Social Sciences: An Outcomes Based Approach with Reference to Anti-Racism’ (D.Ed. thesis, University of South Africa, 1999), p. 40.

¹² J. Bam and P. Visser, *A New History for a New South Africa* (Cape Town, 1996), p. 2, as quoted by Mazabow, ‘The Development of Historical Consciousness’, p. 188.

¹³ J. Bam, ‘The Development of New History Curriculum for the Secondary Level in South Africa: Considerations Related to the Possible Inclusion of Themes Drawn from Unity Movement History’ (M.Ed. dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1993), p. 17.

¹⁴ Bam, ‘The Development of New History Curriculum’, p. 19.

Purveyors of South African school history, whether they were missionaries, Dutch or later British authorities, Boer Republics, the Union and later the Republic of South Africa, were keenly aware that the nature of school history which was taught to every South African school learner was vital, as it could, and did determine values and attitudes which could persist long into life. Mulholland emphasises that the attitudes which are conveyed in a history lesson could easily become the foundation for a belief on the part of a learner.¹⁵

There can be little doubt that under apartheid education, the greatest value of school history education was perceived to be in its usefulness as an apology for government policies. Approved textbooks and history syllabi unashamedly promoted the ideology of racial separation. The value of school history in the post-apartheid era is largely perceived as redemptive in nature. History is viewed as a subject which has the potential to help people deal with the trauma of the past, promote reconciliation and point learners toward a brighter future. This is made very clear in the new syllabi and policy documents which have accompanied the implementation of post-apartheid history education.¹⁶

The finding of this dissertation that secondary school history education has slipped from a place of preeminence in the curricula of apartheid education to a place of increasing obscurity in post-apartheid South Africa is sad confirmation of the belief that school history education tends to do better within totalitarian societies than in open, democratic societies. The value of school history education in an open, democratic society appears more nebulous and less tangible than the clear usefulness it has in a totalitarian society as a vehicle for pro-establishment propaganda. It is clear to me that maintaining the apartheid state necessitated a world view among its citizens which preeminently dwelt in the achievements of the past while the prevailing outlook of the vast majority of young citizens of the South African democracy emphasises the possibilities of the future. As positive as this may be, such an outlook does not bode well for the longevity of history as a secondary school subject.

¹⁵ Mulholland, 'The Evolution of History Teaching', p. 20.

¹⁶ See Bibliography for a comprehensive list of post-apartheid education policy documents.

1.4 Historical nature of the study

This dissertation is concerned with the perceptions with which history as a subject was viewed by both educators and learners in black secondary schools, particularly in Mpumalanga. As such it is concerned with the field of education. The study is however presented in a historical format, tracing historical developments through time, as history education within black secondary schools is examined within the context of the National Party government's Department of Bantu Education and Department of Education and Training and the Government of National Unity which ushered in the new democratic dispensation which followed the election of 1994, to an examination of the position of history education by 2008.

1.5 Geographical area of the study

This dissertation examines the general history of history education within black secondary schools and the experiences and perceptions that it created, within the Republic of South Africa. Detailed field research concerning learners was conducted within a selection of black secondary schools situated within the Nkangala region of the province of Mpumalanga, which includes the Witbank/Emalahleni, Middelburg and Hendrina areas. The educators who were interviewed or who filled out questionnaires also taught within this geographical area. It must be noted that one of the findings of this study will be that the perceptions of black secondary school educators and learners in this region of Mpumalanga closely resembled the findings of similar research conducted elsewhere in South Africa.

1.6 Research question

To what extent have the negative perceptions of history education, held by educators and learners in black secondary schools during the apartheid era been positively changed in the province of Mpumalanga?

1.7 Research journey

I developed an interest in the well-being of history at black secondary schools when, from 2003, I found myself teaching Grade 12 history at such a school. My personal experience of this and the many encounters I had with fellow Mpumalanga secondary school history educators informed me of the need to research a secondary school subject which was widely perceived to be in decline.

During 2008, various black Mpumalanga secondary school educators and learners were surveyed. This was done for two reasons: first, there are very few white secondary school learners in Mpumalanga who take history as a FET subject; second, my own history teaching experience is within the setting of a black secondary school. When surveyed, learners proved to be more cooperative than educators in terms of their response rate to the issued questionnaires. Questionnaires were filled out in detail and most learners appeared eager to share their perceptions. It must however be noted that the learners were polled whilst attending classes at school and were admittedly therefore something of a captive audience. The response rate of educators in relation to completing and returning the issued questionnaires was quite poor. Eight local black secondary school history educators returned a detailed 52-question questionnaire – some 25 questionnaires were issued (a response rate of 32 per cent). The educators who did return questionnaires all completed them in detail. A mixed reception was afforded to me as I addressed the Middelburg and Witbank/Emalahleni history cluster groups and issued the questionnaires to black secondary school educators. Some educators appeared keen and willing to help; others appeared apathetic and disinterested.

Some of the findings of the research were predictable. These included a negative attitude toward secondary school history education among School Management Teams (SMTs)¹⁷ and a general preference among black youth for success in commercial, scientific and technological fields of study as opposed to the study of the ‘humanities’, history included. Some findings were more

¹⁷ For detail on the attitude of SMTs toward secondary school history education, see Chapter 3.

surprising. These include an aversion among many black secondary school youth to engaging with the apartheid past¹⁸ and the resistance to apartheid education and policies in general undertaken by members of the history teaching staff of Sozama Secondary School in Middelburg during the apartheid era.¹⁹

I had the privilege of interviewing several stalwarts of the history teaching profession within Mpumalanga's black secondary schools. Mr Moses Nkhlemo, now principal of the Kanhym Agricultural School outside Middelburg, related many interesting anecdotes about life as a black secondary school history educator during the apartheid era and shared much accumulated wisdom.²⁰ Mr Job Mathunyane, who is something of a teaching legend in Mpumalanga, shared his fascinating experiences of history teaching during the darkest days of apartheid at Sozama Secondary School in Middelburg.²¹ This eminent man is a veritable repository of cultural and historical knowledge.

The undertaking of this research journey helped me to grow academically. I had not undertaken formal studies for 17 years and therefore was not familiar with the conventions of academic writing or research. This journey awakened and enlivened a mind which had for some time been dormant toward matters academic.

The research journey further helped me to appreciate the difficult conditions under which black educators worked, both during the apartheid era and beyond, to the present.²² The creative, if negative, ingenuity of the apartheid system in imposing and maintaining apartheid education policies never ceases to inform and surprise any researcher.²³

¹⁸ For detail on the various perceptions adopted by black secondary school learners, see Chapter 7.

¹⁹ For details of Sozama Secondary School's history educators' resistance to apartheid education, see Chapter 3.

²⁰ Interview, Mr I. Nkhlemo, Middelburg, 2 May 2008.

²¹ Interview, Mr J. Mathunyane, Witbank/Emalahleni, 28 April 2008.

²² For details of the contextual situation under which black secondary history educators worked during and beyond apartheid times, see Chapters 2, 3 and 6.

²³ A brief overview of black secondary school education is provided in Chapter 2.

In conclusion, this research journey deeply enriched me, as I uncovered interesting material for the purposes of writing a dissertation, but I also came to learn and understand more about the struggles and challenges which face so many of my fellow educators on a daily basis.

1.8 Research methods

The nature of the field research undertaken for the purpose of this dissertation was qualitative, rather than quantitative. Qualitative research is aimed at producing descriptive data in an individual's own words or writing, or observable behaviour. It is descriptive data which is yielded by this kind of research.²⁴ The purpose of this study was to determine and describe the perceptions which black history educators and learners, past and present, held toward the subject. Attitudes and feelings needed to be uncovered and explored. The theoretical perspective was interpretative, rather than positivist. As might have been the case with quantitative research which may specify the problem to be investigated and the method to be used from the outset, the research undertaken for this dissertation was instead by its nature interpretative. Holosko notes that qualitative research is 'concerned with understanding the meaning of human experience from the subject's own frame of reference'.²⁵ Holosko further notes that the point of qualitative research is to 'describe and understand the lived experiences of individuals'.²⁶ This is precisely what this dissertation has sought to do with regard to the perceptions of its target groups toward secondary school history education in Mpumalanga.

The qualitative research undertaken for the purpose of this dissertation was designed to assist this researcher to enter into the worlds of black secondary school history educators and learners, past and present in order to explore how they experienced teaching and learning the subject during the apartheid era and the democratic dispensation after 1994. The research yielded a rich collection of descriptive data.

²⁴ M.J. Holosko, *Primer for Critiquing Social Research: A Student Guide* (Belmont, CA, 2006), p. 12.

²⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 59.

1.9 Description of surveyed Mpumalanga black secondary schools

Steelcrest High School is a typical example of an ex-model C English language secondary school. It is situated within the traditionally white suburbs of Middelburg and now caters for black learners who are drawn from mainly upper and middle income families. Parents' occupations range from domestic workers to educators, government employees and Members of Parliament. Average annual enrolment is about 670 learners. Ninety-five per cent of these learners are black and all history-taking learners are black. Matriculation pass rates over the years vary between 95 and 100 per cent. The Matriculation history pass rate has always been 100 per cent, except for 2008, the first year of the new National Senior Certificate examination, when a 76,5 per cent pass rate was recorded. The school has decided to phase out history as a Further Education and Training (FET) subject and so did not offer history as a Grade 10 option in 2009. The school fees in 2008 were R6000 per annum.

Tshwenyane Combined School is situated in the township of Mhluzi, just outside Middelburg. Its population is entirely black. There were 882 learners in 2008. Most cannot afford the R300 per annum school fees. The school has found it necessary to run a feeding scheme for learners, many of whom receive their only substantial meal of the day at school. Facilities at the school are poor, both in terms of availability of educational equipment and the conditions of the grounds and buildings. No details of past Matriculation pass rates were provided by the school.

Tsiki-Naledi Secondary School is situated in the small rural town of Hendrina. It occupies the facilities of the old Hendrina Laerskool/Primary School and is separated from the predominantly white Afrikaans Combined School by a wire fence. The fence is not the only indicator of the separation between the two schools. The Afrikaans Combined School is wealthy and generously equipped with all the equipment and facilities it could possibly need, while Tsiki-Naledi is visibly poor and run down. No audio-visual equipment is available. Most of the 429 learners who were registered at the school in 2008 cannot afford to pay minimal school fees of R300 per annum. Many learners have recently left the school to attend rural schools in the countryside where school fees are as low as R20 per annum, but where facilities are even worse than at Tsiki-Naledi. The history educator complains that most parents spend the limited resources they have

on ritual practices. Matriculation pass rates have varied between 34 per cent and 58 per cent over the last five years, while the history matriculation pass rate has varied between 20 and 41 per cent during the same period.²⁷

Middelburg Combined School is situated in the township of Nazareth, just outside Middelburg. It has 1700 learners, almost all of whom are black. A few Coloured learners attend. The learners come from middle to lower income homes. Unemployment in the area is very high. The matriculation pass rate over the last five years has varied between 87 and 96 per cent. The history matriculation pass rate has varied between 91 per cent and 100 per cent during the same period.²⁸ The school began phasing out history as a FET subject from 2007.

These schools represent the diversity of black secondary schools in Mpumalanga. The selected schools may not represent the best or worst performing black secondary schools but they are nonetheless representative of the common situation. Learners from the four schools revealed very similar findings relating to learner perceptions of history education, although each school presented its own unique characteristics in terms of size, socio-economic status and geographic situation. A summary of the findings of the three surveys which recorded the various perceptions of learners within these black secondary schools in the Nkangala region of Mpumalanga will be presented in Chapter 7.

1.10. Details of surveys undertaken within Mpumalanga black secondary schools

1.10.1 Learner surveys

Three separate surveys were conducted among black Mpumalanga secondary school learners during 2008 in order to gain an idea of how learners perceive the school history education which is currently being offered to them. The responses to these surveys will be examined thematically in Chapter 7. The questionnaires which these groups answered (the post Grade 10 history-taking

²⁷ Educator's questionnaire, Response 5.

²⁸ Educator's questionnaire, Response 8.

and the non-history-taking groups) are to be found in the appendices at the end of this dissertation.

The first survey examined the perceptions toward history education of a group of 22 Grade 9 and 68 Grade 10 learners at Steelcrest High School. Learners were invited to submit written responses to the question ‘Is history education in South African schools necessary or not?’ Ninety responses were received. Four responses were discarded as being spoilt – three of the responses made no sense and did not address the subject and one was copied from another learner. The sample size was thus reduced from 90 to 86. The learners surveyed in this way were all members of English classes. Forty-eight of these Grade 10 learners did not take history as an FET subject. All of the Grade 9 respondents took history (with geography) as a component of their Grade 9 social science course.

The second survey took the form of a short six-question questionnaire which was issued to Grade 10 to 12 non-history-taking learners at each of the four surveyed schools.²⁹ One hundred and twenty questionnaires were issued and 78 completed questionnaires were returned. This questionnaire is recorded in Appendix B.

The third survey took the form of a detailed 15-question questionnaire which was issued to history-taking Grade 10 to 12 learners at each of the four surveyed schools.³⁰ One hundred and twenty questionnaires were issued and 84 completed questionnaires were returned. This questionnaire is recorded in Appendix C.

²⁹ Surveyed non-history-taking learners details are as follows:
 Steelcrest High School Grade 11: 25 learners
 Tshwenyane Combined School Grade 12: 10 learners
 Tsiki-Naledi Secondary School Grade 11: 10 learners; Grade 12: 1 learner
 Middelburg Combined School Grade 11: 25 learners; Grade 12: 7 learners
 Total learners surveyed: 78

³⁰ Surveyed history-taking learners details are as follows:
 Steelcrest High School Grade 10: 30 learners; Grade 11: 7 learners; Grade 12: 15 learners
 Tshwenyane Combined School Grade 11: 3 learners; Grade 12: 5 learners
 Tsiki-Naledi Secondary School Grade 12: 6 learners
 Middelburg Combined School Grade 11: 6 learners; Grade 12: 12 learners
 Total learners surveyed: 84

Three surveys were undertaken in order to obtain a broad spectrum of learner perceptions toward secondary school history education. The general group of Steelcrest learners included Grade 9 learners who were taking history as a compulsory component of the General Education and Training (GET) band and Grade 10 learners, a few of whom were taking history as a FET subject. History-taking and non-history-taking learners were surveyed separately as their perceptions of secondary school history differed and to enable questions specifically related to their history courses to be posed to history-taking learners. A small degree of overlap between the Steelcrest Grade 9 and 10 learners and the Steelcrest history-taking learners did occur, but this did not have any negative influence on the outcomes of the surveys.³¹

1.10.2 Educator surveys

Data for this section was drawn from a response form which was returned to the University of South Africa's History Department by students who had completed the Department's Short Course in School History Enrichment between 2006 and 2008. The respondents who were considered were all black secondary school educators. They were drawn from every province of South Africa and hence represent a wide cross-section of black history teaching educators. Since all of these respondents were educators who had taken the trouble to enroll for and pass the Short Course, it must be assumed that they represent motivated, dedicated history educators. Thirty responses were received.³²

Further data was drawn from my own questionnaire responses of Mpumalanga black secondary school history educators who are teaching in the Nkangala area of the province. The questionnaires were completed in 2008. Most of these educators had also taught the subject during the apartheid era. The educator with the most experience of history teaching during the apartheid era began teaching in the early 1970s. As it proved difficult to uncover black secondary school history educators who had teaching experience before this, educator perceptions toward history education before the 1970s had to be obtained from secondary sources such as books and

³¹ Twenty of the ninety Steelcrest Grade 10 learners who were surveyed also took history as an optional Grade 10 subject.

³² Appreciation is expressed to the UNISA Short Course facilitator, Ms Henriëtte Lubbe, for allowing access to the response questionnaire of this course, which forms part of her personal archives.

dissertations. All the surveyed educators had in fact had personal experience of receiving history instruction in black secondary schools during the apartheid era and were therefore able to contribute their ideas about how they as learners had perceived their history education. Twenty-five questionnaires were issued and eight were returned, representing a response rate of 32 per cent. A sample of the detailed 52-question questionnaire which was issued to surveyed black secondary school educators is included in Appendix A.

1.11 Literature survey

A wide variety of literary sources were utilised for purposes of this dissertation. These included some books which provided a general historical background to the education offered to black learners from, and before 1948. Anybody wishing to learn more about apartheid educational practice as it related to black education should consult the many works of Muriel Horrell. Several of her books proved very helpful. Horrell's work provides abundant statistical data about Bantu Education in general, from its introduction through to the 1960s and about conditions in black schools during this period.³³ Peter Kallaway has edited several works which provide good coverage of apartheid education. The many chapters in these books are written by prominent academics and provide a varied and extensive overview of the workings of apartheid education.³⁴ The writings of J.B. Tabata are a passionately written expose of apartheid education in the early days of its implementation. Tabata's work is useful in that it displays the angry passion which the introduction of apartheid educational practices evoked within many black educators.³⁵

Books which dealt with general educational issues during and beyond the apartheid era were consulted. The most useful of these included P. Christie's³⁶ and A.L. Behr's³⁷ general works on the history of South African education. P.A. Duminy's *Trends and Challenges* provided useful

³³ M. Horrell, *A Decade of Bantu Education* (Johannesburg, 1964); *Bantu Education to 1968* (Johannesburg, 1968).

³⁴ P. Kallaway, ed., *Apartheid and Education: The Education of Black South Africans* (Johannesburg, 1984); *Education after Apartheid: South African Education in Transition* (Cape Town, 1997); *The History of Education under Apartheid, 1948–1994: The Doors of Learning and Culture shall be Opened* (New York, 2002).

³⁵ J.B. Tabata, *Education for Barbarism* (Durban, 1959).

³⁶ P. Christie, *The Right to Learn: The Struggle for Education in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1991).

³⁷ A.L. Behr, *Education in South Africa: Origins, Issues and Trends: 1652–1988* (Cape Town/Pretoria, 1988).

insight into some of the perceptions which underlay Bantu Education. Much of the content contributed by various writers reflects the conservative perceptions and presuppositions of white educationalists of the 1960s, which in itself makes this work an illuminating source for a researcher wishing to understand some of the factors which motivated Bantu Education.³⁸ The numerous works by Ken Hartshorne on matters concerned with Bantu Education proved to be very helpful, not least of all because of the fact that Hartshorne writes both as academic and school educator and administrator.³⁹ His pragmatic style of writing makes his work both interesting and easy to read.

Some educational books which specifically concerned history education were consulted. These include the several editions of quantitative research published by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC), especially the 1991 edition. Although some of these works have suffered criticism for the perceived bias they contain, the statistics they provide are useful if approached with due critical consideration.⁴⁰ Information about history education during the apartheid era in Mpumalanga can be gleaned from the chapter by P. Holden and S. Mathabatha in Peter Delius's *Mpumalanga History and Heritage*. This work, enlivened by the contributions of several prominent academics, provides a broad yet detailed examination of the history and heritage of Mpumalanga and is indispensable to any person wishing to discover more about the province.⁴¹

A wide range of school history textbooks were examined. These are examined in some detail in Chapter two. The work by E. Dean et al., *History in Black and White: An Analysis of South African School History Textbooks*, is a comprehensive and thoughtful guide as to the philosophies which guided the production of the history textbooks which South African secondary school learners used during the apartheid era.⁴²

³⁸ P.A. Duminy, ed., *Trends and Challenges in the Education of the South African Bantu* (Pretoria, 1967).

³⁹ K.B. Hartshorne, *Education in the Homelands: in a Cul-de-sac or at the Crossroads* (Johannesburg, 1989) and *Crisis and Challenge: Black Education 1910–1990* (Cape Town, 1992).

⁴⁰ A. Van der Merwe, et al., *An Empirical Investigation into the Teaching of History in the RSA: HSRC Education Research Programme No 19* (Pretoria, 1991).

⁴¹ P. Holden and S. Mathabatha, 'The Politics of Resistance: 1948–1990', in P. Delius, ed., *Mpumalanga History and Heritage* (Scottsville, 2007).

⁴² E. Dean, et al., *History in Black and White: An Analysis of South African School History Textbooks* (Paris, 1983).

Other books which were consulted concerned the technicalities of history and dissertation writing. These include A. Marwick's classic work on the nature of history,⁴³ and M.J. Holosko's recent work which captures the essence of social research techniques in simple terms so as to assist researchers who are not proficient social scientists.⁴⁴ Books about thesis writing in general, such as that of J. Anderson and M. Poole provided this researcher with much needed, valuable guidance.⁴⁵

Many journal articles proved to be helpful in the compilation of this dissertation. Among the most useful of these were J. Dean and R. Siebörger's 'After Apartheid: the Outlook for History'⁴⁶ and Dryden-Peterson and Siebörger's 'Teachers as Memory Makers: Testimony in the Making of a New History in South Africa'.⁴⁷ The latter is a follow-up to Dryden's 1999 dissertation which sought to probe the perceptions of Cape Town educators and learners toward the History education which they were receiving.⁴⁸ Siebörger's article 'History and the Emerging Nation: The South African Experience' also proved valuable for the insight it provided into the creation of post-apartheid history education policy-making in South Africa.⁴⁹

Peter Kallaway's article 'History Education in a Democratic South Africa' is a good general summary of the state of history education in South Africa up until 1995.⁵⁰ Various articles by Cynthia Kros are helpful reading for anyone wishing to build a good general background to some of the issues surrounding history education in South Africa.⁵¹ The article by S.P. Lekgoathi

⁴³ A. Marwick, *The Nature of History*, 3rd edition (London, 1970).

⁴⁴ Holosko, *Primer for Critiquing Social Research*.

⁴⁵ J. Anderson and M. Poole, *Thesis and Assignment Writing*, second edition (Brisbane, 1994).

⁴⁶ J. Dean and R. Siebörger, 'After Apartheid: the Outlook for History', *Teaching History*, 79 (1995), pp. 32–33.

⁴⁷ 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 (2006), pp. 394–403.

⁴⁸ See details about this dissertation under 'Dissertations and theses' in the bibliography.

⁴⁹ R. Siebörger, 'History and the Emerging Nation: The South African Experience', *International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research*, Vol I No I (2000), pages unnumbered.

⁵⁰ P. Kallaway, 'History Education in a Democratic South Africa', *Teaching History*, 78 (1995), pp. 11–16.

⁵¹ Cynthia Kros is a prolific writer on South African school history matters. Some of her work includes: 'Ethnic Narcissism and Big Brother: Culture, Identity and the State in the New Curriculum', *Canadian Journal of African Studies*, 38, 3 (2004), pp. 587–602; 'History for Democracy', *Lengwitch*, 4, 1 (1987), pp. 5–23; 'Pardoning the Past?', *South African Historical Journal*, 38 (1998), pp. 205–213; 'Telling Lies and then Hoping to Forget all about History', *South African Historical Journal*, 42 (2000), pp. 69–88; and 'The Making of a Class: A Preliminary Critique of the Presentation of History in South African Schools', *Perspectives in Education*, 10, 1 (1988), pp. 87–99.

‘Teacher Militancy in the Rural Northern Transvaal Community of Zebediela, 1986–1994’ provided much insight into the process of changing perceptions among black secondary school educators during the end of the apartheid era, which affected the perceptions which were held about history education.⁵²

The richest sources of information for purposes of this dissertation emerged from various dissertations and theses written about different aspects of secondary school history education during and beyond the apartheid era. Some dissertations provided a valuable contextual background for this study while others provided more direct and relevant information about black secondary school educators’ and learners’ perceptions of history education.

Cameron’s dissertation about the varied reactions of educators to the introduction of Bantu Education in the Cape Town area helps to establish a pattern for exploring the different perceptions which black secondary school history educators adopted toward their subject.⁵³ Other works which assist in providing a conceptual backdrop for this study include Chernis’s thesis on South African school history textbooks, 1839–1990.⁵⁴ This thesis provides a detailed examination of the syllabi and textbooks which have influenced history education in South Africa. Gebhard’s thesis about black perceptions of South African history provides an account of how black historians have at various times sought to explain and interpret South African history and is therefore a useful conceptual backdrop to this dissertation.⁵⁵ Legodi’s thesis is about educational change in South Africa since 1994 and so describes post-apartheid educational legislation and its effect upon South African educational institutions.⁵⁶ Mazabow’s recent thesis is about how a sense of historical consciousness could be developed in twenty-first century South African schools. This work is helpful to anyone who desires to better understand the theory and philosophy which underlies the concept of historical consciousness as well to history educators

⁵² S.P. Lekgoathi, ‘Teacher Militancy in the Rural Northern Transvaal Community of Zebediela, 1986–1994’, *South African Historical Journal*, 58 (2007), pp. 226–252.

⁵³ M.J. Cameron, ‘The Introduction of Bantu Education and the Question of Resistance: Cooperation, Non-Collaboration or Defiance? The Struggle for African Schooling with Special Reference to Cape Town, 1945–1960’ (M.Ed. dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1989).

⁵⁴ R.E. Chernis, ‘The Past in Service of the Present: A Study of South African School History Syllabuses and Textbooks, 1839–1990’ (Ph.D. thesis, University of Pretoria, 1990).

⁵⁵ W.R.L. Gebhard, ‘Black Perceptions of South African History’ (Ph.D. thesis, University of Pretoria, 1988).

⁵⁶ M.R. Legodi, ‘The Transformation of Education in South Africa since 1994: a Historical-Educational Overview’ (D.Ed. thesis, University of South Africa, 2001).

looking for practical methods to enhance the advancement of a sense of historical consciousness within their learners.⁵⁷ The excellent dissertation of R.B. Mulholland which offers a comprehensive account of the evolution of history teaching in South Africa from 1652 until 1981, seems to have become a standard reference for subsequent writers in the field. Mulholland does not write much about history education within black secondary schools but her work provides an excellent general introduction to the underlying philosophies and practice of history teaching in South Africa.⁵⁸ All these works greatly assisted me to develop a good understanding of the field of South African school history education.

Some theses and dissertations were more directly related to the task of this work. The dissertation and thesis of Malie⁵⁹ and Motshabi⁶⁰ respectively make for interesting reading and provide the reader with a window into the conservative mindset of many black history educators during the 1960s and 1970s. Many of the assertions posited by these writers must be approached with critical circumspection, yet this study's chief concern was to examine the perceptions revealed rather than the philosophies embraced by such works. The works of Ndlovu,⁶¹ Nuxumalo,⁶² Zwane,⁶³ and Seroto⁶⁴ all relate in their own ways to the perceptions which black secondary school educators and learners have held about the history education they received. Nuxumalo investigates the teaching of history at black secondary schools from a sociological perspective; Zwane is interested especially in the textbook issues which confronted history educators and learners at black secondary schools; Ndlovu is concerned to demonstrate how

⁵⁷ Mazabow, 'The Development of Historical Consciousness'.

⁵⁸ Mulholland, 'The Evolution of History Teaching'.

⁵⁹ E. Malie, 'The Teaching of History in the Bantu Secondary High Schools of the Southern Transvaal Region' (M.Ed. dissertation, University of South Africa, 1967).

⁶⁰ E. Motshabi, 'The Use of the Textbook in the Teaching of History in Bantu High Schools' (D.Ed. thesis, Fort Hare University, 1973).

⁶¹ S.M. Ndlovu, 'Perceptions of History and Experiences of Learning among African Students in the Early 1990s, in the Department of Historical Studies at the University of Pietermaritzburg' (M.A. dissertation, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1993).

⁶² O.E.H.M. Nuxumalo, 'The Sociological Significance of the Teaching of History as a Variable in the Socialization of African Secondary School Pupils (in Kwa-Zulu)' (M.A. dissertation, University of South Africa, 1980).

⁶³ I.E. Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History in Black Secondary Schools, with Particular Reference to the Period since the Introduction of Bantu Education' (Research Report in partial fulfilment of M.Ed., University of the Witwatersrand, 1991).

⁶⁴ J. Seroto, 'The Impact of South African Legislation (1948–2004) on Black Education in Rural Areas: a Historical Perspective' (D.Ed. thesis, University of South Africa, 2004).

history learners at such schools experienced the teaching of history and Seroto examines the legislative background underlying black education in South Africa since 1948.

The dissertation of Sarah Dryden deserves special mention.⁶⁵ Dryden's work, which investigated the perceptions of secondary school history educators and learners toward their subject in the Cape Town area, yielded significant information for this study. Dryden examined two black secondary schools in depth. Interestingly, the perceptions which Dryden uncovered do not differ greatly from the perceptions which were uncovered by this study, some nine years later and based in a very different geographical region of South Africa. Dryden's dissertation is written in a unique direct and personal style and any person interested in the subject matter of this dissertation is urged to peruse it in some detail.

Certain government and Department of Education publications proved indispensable as a background to the legislation which underpinned the political and educational dispensation within which black secondary school history education occurred. These documents include fundamental policy documents which influence all aspects of life in South Africa such as the 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.⁶⁶ The South African School's Act underpins all significant areas of school life in South Africa.⁶⁷ Various publications from various education departments such as the Department of Education and Training, the National Department of Education and the Mpumalanga Department of Education are also used to support some segments of this dissertation.⁶⁸ The House of Assembly and Senate Debates are an absorbing primary source for historical research. The study of the original policy speeches made by Dr Verwoerd, then Minister of Native Affairs, in 1953 and 1954 to the House of Assembly and Senate respectively, assisted me to obtain a broad picture of the rationale behind the introduction of Bantu education as well as some insight into the intellect and passion of Verwoerd himself. While the ideas which he propagated in these speeches do not enjoy broad appeal today, they nevertheless do reflect the mental agility for which Verwoerd was renowned.⁶⁹

⁶⁵ S. Dryden, 'Mirror of a Nation in Transition: Case Studies of History Teachers and Students in Cape Town Schools' (M.Ed. dissertation, University of Cape Town, 1999).

⁶⁶ *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996* (Pretoria, 1996).

⁶⁷ *South African Schools Act 84 of 1996* (Pretoria, 1996).

⁶⁸ A comprehensive list of these documents may be found in the bibliography at the rear of this dissertation.

⁶⁹ Union of South Africa, *House of Assembly Debates: Volume 83*, Column 3576, September 1953 (Pretoria)

1.12 Overview of chapter content

A brief overview of the content of the remaining chapters of this dissertation follows:

Chapter 2 is an overview of history education within black secondary schools and will examine various important contextual issues which influenced the way in which the subject came to be perceived by educators, learners and the black community in general. Issues such as the many secondary school history syllabi which were used in black secondary schools during the apartheid era; the various textbooks which were used to support these syllabi; as well as various other factors such as available physical facilities, class sizes, availability of libraries and other resources, will be examined as all these contextual factors strongly influenced the perceptions which black people came to have toward history education at secondary school level. A brief historical background will be provided so as to place the teaching of school history in black secondary schools during the period 1948–1994 within an educational and political context.

Chapter 3 examines the perceptions and attitudes of black secondary school history educators toward their subject during the apartheid era. This entailed observing the varied reactions of black educators in general to the introduction of Bantu Education in the early 1950s, as well as noting the general decline in the educational standard of black educators from this time. The perceptions and attitudes of black history educators were defined against this background. Using examples from Mpumalanga and elsewhere, the perceptions of black history educators toward their subject will be examined. Against a general attitude which ranged from indifference and apathy to a willing compliance with the educational authorities as apologists for government policies, some shining examples of black history educators who were prepared to risk the wrath of the Security Police and teach school history beyond the narrow confines of government approved textbooks stand out. The teaching methods employed by black secondary school history educators during this time will be examined as the way in which they taught the subject reflects heavily upon the perceptions and attitudes which they held toward it. Finally, the general

ideological change among black secondary school educators which took place from the mid-1980s and which witnessed an increased willingness to challenge the apartheid educational system will be examined as this also influenced secondary school history educators in taking a less conservative approach toward the subject.

Chapter 4 seeks to explore the perceptions of and attitudes toward history education of black secondary school learners during the apartheid era. These generally negative perceptions cannot fail to have been generated by contextual difficulties which these learners faced, most especially the use of a foreign medium of instruction to teach the subject. General perceptions which were held about history education, as well as the perceptions which learners held of the various history syllabi which they encountered will be examined. The process of ideological change among secondary school learners which occurred from the 1970s will be explored in order to discover how these changes impacted upon the perceptions which these learners developed toward history education.

Chapter 5 provides a brief overview of how South African secondary school education in general and history education in particular have changed since the introduction of Outcomes-based education (OBE). It will be seen that the changes have been sweeping and profound. An understanding of the philosophy and method behind South Africa's present secondary school history education is necessary if one is to appreciate how post-apartheid era history educators and learners have perceived and valued it.

Chapter 6 explores the perceptions which history educators in black secondary schools in general and specifically within Mpumalanga have held about the subject since 1994 to 2008. Factors which may influence present-day history educator perceptions of their subject, such as educator qualifications and their professional conduct are also briefly examined.

Chapter 7 explores the perceptions which black secondary school learners from the 1990s to the present-day hold about the history education which they receive. The chapter investigates the perceptions of a range of black secondary school GET and FET learners toward history education. It will be demonstrated that although many black secondary school learners do value

and appreciate the study of history, the predominant perception among these learners is that the subject is outdated and does not serve to equip them for a successful life in a world which they perceive to be materially orientated. This negative perception of history education on the part of secondary school learners is one of the major reasons why the subject is under threat at school level.

Chapter 8 will conclude that contemporary history education within black secondary schools in the Nkangala region of Mpumalanga and indeed throughout South Africa is in deep trouble. Although history education within black secondary schools during the apartheid era was considered to be important by those wielding political power, it nevertheless generated negative perceptions among black secondary school educators and learners alike. A brief period of more positive perceptions toward history education during the time of the Government of National Unity (GNU) has done little to hinder the steady decline of the subject within black South African secondary schools ever since, to the point where it is today facing the challenge of surviving as a viable FET subject.

CHAPTER TWO

PERCEPTIONS OF HISTORY EDUCATION WITHIN BLACK SECONDARY SCHOOLS IN SOUTH AFRICA, 1948–1994: PERTINENT CONTEXTUAL FACTORS

2.1 Educational and political background, 1948–1994

In order to understand the nature of the history syllabi, textbooks and even the unfortunate physical conditions which were created within black secondary schools during the apartheid era, the broad educational and political framework against which the subject was presented needs to be appreciated. This overview is not exhaustive – apartheid educational policy and practices have been well documented¹ – but is intended only to provide a necessary background to understanding the motives behind the kind of syllabi, textbooks and physical resources which were provided for the use of black secondary school learners and which played so important a role in creating the negative perceptions which came to be held toward history education during this period.

The story of black school education in apartheid South Africa can be said to begin with the appointment of the Eiselen Commission. The establishment and subsequent report of this Commission are crucial in understanding later Afrikaner nationalist educational history, and the history of black education in South Africa until 1994. The Commission was established in 1949, soon after the National Party election victory and its findings were reflected in several subsequent major pieces of legislation, the most important for black education being the Bantu

¹ See for example, M.Ashley, *Ideologies and Schooling in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1989); Behr, *Education in South Africa*; Cameron, 'The Introduction of Bantu Education'; Christie, *The Right to Learn*; Hartshorne's works *Crisis and Challenge* and *Education in the Homelands*; Horrell's works *A Decade of Bantu Education* and *Bantu Education to 1968*; Kallaway edited *Apartheid and Education* and *The History of Education under Apartheid*; Malie, 'Bantu Secondary High Schools'; Mulholland, 'The Evolution of History Teaching'; Seroto, 'The Impact of South African Legislation'; Tabata, *Education for Barbarism* and E. Unterhalter, *et al.*, eds, *Apartheid Education and Popular Struggle* (Johannesburg, 1991).

Education Act, no. 47 of 1953. The ideology of Christian National Education (CNE) provided the foundation for the Commission's recommendations. Seroto discusses the basic tenets of Christian National Education and its impact on the National Party's Bantu Education policy. CNE principles underpinned the Bantu Education Act of 1953. According to Seroto, CNE advocated the use of mother tongue as medium of instruction throughout primary and secondary schools. The mixing of different languages and cultures was regarded as ungodly. It should prepare the black people for their station in life (which was not equal to that of the white people). It should preserve the 'cultural identity' of the black people who were in a state of 'cultural infancy' and must be guided by 'senior white trustees'. It must of necessity be organised and administered by white people as guardians. It called for the teaching of religion at schools, preferably Calvinism. Subjects such as civics, geography and history were to be taught in accordance with Calvinistic tenets.²

The main ideas of the Eiselen Commission's report were expressed in the Bantu Education Act. The Act made continued missionary education difficult at best. The Commission argued that missionary education had more often than not been poorly run and it called for a system of black education which was better coordinated. The joint control of black education which had been in the hands of the missionaries and the provincial education departments was now transferred to the central government through the Native Affairs Department (NAD). All black schools would in future have to be registered with the government, such registration being at the pleasure of the Minister. Ndlovu notes that by 1959, virtually all black schools, apart from some 700 Catholic schools had been brought under the control of the NAD.³ While it may have been true that black education needed to be better coordinated, this really meant that the ideology behind schooling could now be used to support other apartheid policies. Seroto points to the heart of the matter: 'These past policies that propagated the ideology that different races should develop along different lines in accordance with their inherent cultural propensities, implied that different races, with separated territories, required different types of education'.⁴

² Seroto, 'The Impact of South African Legislation', pp. 105–107.

³ Ndlovu, 'Perceptions of History', p. 11.

⁴ Seroto, 'The Impact of South African Legislation', p. 105.

The Minister of Native Affairs, Dr H.F. Verwoerd, left no doubt about the racist philosophy which was to be the foundation of Bantu Education and that Bantu Education was to be the handmaiden of other apartheid policies in his 1953 and 1954 speeches:

Racial relations cannot improve if the wrong type of education is given to Natives. They cannot improve if the results of Native education is the creation of frustrated people who, as a result of education they have received, have expectations in life which circumstances in South Africa do not allow to be fulfilled immediately, when it creates people who are not trained for professions not open for them ...Therefore good racial relations are spoilt when the correct education is not given. Above all good racial relations cannot exist when the education is given under the control of people who create wrong expectations on the part of the Native himself, if such people believe in a policy of equality ... It is therefore necessary that education should be controlled in such a way that it should be in accord with the policy of the state.⁵

My department's policy is that education should stand with both feet in the reserves and have its roots in the spirit and being of Bantu society ... The Bantu must be guided to serve his community in all respects. There is no place for him in the European community above the level of certain forms of labour. Within his community, however, all doors are open...⁶

Seroto comments that while the perceived aim of missionary education was to evangelise black people, the National Party government's educational aim was to educate black peoples for a subordinate status in society and as far as possible to keep them in rural areas. Seroto further outlines the aims of Bantu Education as follows: maintenance of white domination – politically and economically; subordination of black people by whites; separate development by preserving separate identities of different racial groups; inequalities among different racial groups by perpetuating differentiated educational systems; preservation of separate identities with black people located to rural areas; and education being diverted towards the needs of rural population and prescribed by differentiated and discriminatory legislation.⁷ Between 1954 and 1958, the Department of Native Affairs was responsible for Bantu Education. New syllabuses which conformed to the aims of Bantu Education had to be devised for all subjects and these were implemented in 1956. In 1958, a separate Department of Bantu Education was established.

⁵ Union of South Africa. *House of Assembly Debates*, Volume 83, Column 3576, September 1953.

⁶ Union of South Africa. *Senate Debates*, Volume II, Columns 2618–2619, 1954.

⁷ Seroto, 'The Impact of South African Legislation', pp. 112–113.

Hartshorne points out that the government paid little attention to black secondary school education between 1955 and 1967 and tried to make secondary education for black people very difficult to obtain. In urban areas, restrictive legislation laid down that junior secondary schools (Stds 6–8) were to be paid for on a rand-for-rand basis providing that communities undertook to erect the buildings themselves. The government would undertake to pay half the costs *if* funds were available. It was also difficult to register schools, and senior classes (Stds 9–10) were approved only in the new ‘homeland areas’ in line with the government’s ‘separate development’ policy. In fact, Hartshorne notes that during this period, a number of missionary schools were closed down because they were situated in white areas, and few schools were built to replace them. When this approach to providing black secondary school education is contrasted to the policy concerning white secondary education at the time, which was provided free of charge with the provision of top-class facilities, the government’s stance on the issue cannot be regarded as less than scandalous.⁸ The added fact that black learners, who could least afford it, had to pay for the privilege of receiving an education while white learners received their education for free (or for a nominal fee charged by schools) is a further indictment on the profound discrimination of the apartheid system of education.

By 1967, when the National Education Policy Bill which controversially sought to apply the principles of CNE to English-medium schools was passed, black secondary schools were well and truly separate from white education. In fact, during the 1960s and early 1970s, the desire for complete racial separation was at its strongest within National Party circles. Mulholland quotes Dr Kotze, who in 1971 was the Director of Education in the Transvaal as saying: ‘Racial integration would be nothing less than a crime against humanity’.⁹

From the beginning of the 1970s, black schools began to be caught up in the liberation struggle which was beginning to intensify in South Africa. Legodi perceives black schools as having been used as tools to achieve political objectives in the liberation struggle at the cost of a culture of learning and teaching which slowly began to erode.¹⁰

⁸ Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, pp. 67–68.

⁹ Mulholland, ‘The Evolution of History Teaching’, p. 248.

¹⁰ Legodi, ‘The Transformation of Education’, p. 75.

The Soweto Uprising of 1976 may rightly be seen as a landmark event in the history of black education in South Africa. Hartshorne identifies the two major educational causes of the uprising. The first was a departmental decision to change the structure of black education from a thirteen-year school system to a twelve-year system, so as to accord with the system prevailing in white schools. The result was a chaotic bulge in school numbers, especially in Standard 10 (Grade 12) which caused great unhappiness for educators and learners alike. The second educational cause of the uprising was the better-known departmental decision to apply the 50/50 language medium policy more strictly and inflexibly. Half of the subjects taken by learners would have to be taught through the medium of either English or Afrikaans. Schools subsequently became places of disruption and conflict as learners themselves organised or became entangled in unrest.¹¹

School boycotts and disruptions continued in 1977 and 1978. Hartshorne characterises the period after the Soweto Uprising as the time of the ‘disintegration of learning’.¹² One of the Bantu Education Department’s responses to the chaotic educational situation was to effect a change of name. In March 1978, it was announced that the Bantu Education Act would be replaced. On 10 November 1978, the draft of the proposed Act was circulated for general comment. The bill, which sought to provide for the education and training of Africans to replace the Bantu Education Act of 1953 and the Bantu Special Education Act of 1964, was enacted by parliament on 29 June 1979 as Act 90 of that year. The Bantu Education Department was replaced by the Department of Education and Training.¹³

Zwane notes that the series of reforms which were enacted by the government to deal with the root causes of the 1976 unrest simply papered over the problems. The De Lange Commission of 1981, which had the mandate of addressing a number of educational issues, failed to provide any solutions to the continued turmoil in black schools.¹⁴ From 1981, black education survived in a culture of school boycotts which reached a climax in 1985 when the school system collapsed

¹¹ Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, pp. 73–74.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 80.

¹³ S. Blignaut, *Statistics on Education in South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1981), p. 9, as quoted by Zwane, ‘An Examination of the Position and Role of History’, p. 91.

¹⁴ Zwane, ‘An Examination of the Position and Role of History’, pp. 91, 42.

under the ongoing pressure of students and working-class communities.¹⁵ Hartshorne, examining the matriculation results for the decade 1980–1989, reflects upon ‘a dismal record of failure’, and wonders how any government could have allowed such a disastrous situation, with the accompanying waste of human potential, not to mention lost economic development and social health and stability, to continue.¹⁶

Various educational reform initiatives which were undertaken during the mid-1980s through to the early 1990s, while helpful in preparing the way for a new approach to post-apartheid history education, did little to influence the chaotic situation experienced by black secondary schools. The National Education Crisis Committee (1985), the Educational Renewal Strategy (1990), the National Education Policy Investigation (1991) and the Education Policy Unit (1994) had little impact on everyday history teaching in black secondary schools. The 1993 Interim Constitution which emphasised the fundamental human rights of all South Africans, did help to prepare the way for a new and inclusive educational system for all.

The wider context sketched above was not a happy one. Understanding this sad history of abuse and oppression is necessary if one is to appreciate the diverse perceptions of educators and learners alike toward the subject of history.

2.2 Curriculum and syllabus issues, 1948–1994

A ‘curriculum’ may be defined as a set of courses offered by an educational institution or one of its branches, or a set of courses containing an area of specialisation.¹⁷ Within the context of secondary school education, a curriculum refers to an overall, broad learning plan to be followed by learners in a particular school grade or phase. A ‘syllabus’ may be defined as: ‘a summary outline of a discourse, treatise, or course of study or of examination requirements’.¹⁸ Within the context of secondary school education the syllabus refers to a list of topics which are required to be studied in a particular grade during the course of an academic year for a particular subject. It

¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 86.

¹⁶ Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, p. 81.

¹⁷ H.B. Woolf, ed., *Webster’s New Collegiate Dictionary* (Springfield Massachusetts, 1980), p. 277.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 1171.

follows that the topics and aims of a particular syllabus must conform to the desired outcomes of the curriculum of which it is a part. Chernis correctly points out that no school history anywhere has ever satisfied all elements of the community, and that the greater the degree of fragmentation of society, the more controversial its history teaching will be.¹⁹

An analysis of school curricula and various history syllabi from 1954 is an important way of discovering how the school subject of history was perceived by black educators and learners during the apartheid era. Mulholland, writing about what determines values in schools, asserts that ‘methods of organisation in schools and the way in which subjects are taught are important factors, but in the final analysis the content of curricula and syllabi decides what beliefs and attitudes are imparted to pupils.’²⁰ She further asserts that the history syllabi imposed upon schools at different periods in South Africa’s history should reveal the degree of correlation between the social and political motivations of the rulers on the one hand and the content and objectives of the history syllabus on the other.²¹ The curriculum is drawn up under the control of the state, and if the party system of the state is rigid enough, politicians exert a great deal of control over its content.²² Mulholland points out that the curriculum is powerful since in the formative years of a child’s life it has the power ‘to define and control the meaning of the very categories and modes of thinking which the child will use.’²³ From the point of view of political rulers, the school subject ‘history’ has a most significant place in a curriculum. All education will attempt to impart the skills and values which society judges to be of most value to learners. The content of any syllabus will reveal to any but the most casual observer that certain goals and values of society are built into it.²⁴ Walsh’s words could be said to accurately describe education in apartheid South Africa:

The political system will tend to be reflected in the educational system it supports. In a dictatorship there will be little emphasis on criticism and analysis, teaching will tend to be doctrinaire and the system will be standardised and carefully controlled, once the cycle has started, it becomes extremely difficult to break it ...

¹⁹ Chernis, ‘The Past in Service of the Present’, p. 330.

²⁰ Mulholland, ‘The Evolution of History Teaching’, p. 251.

²¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 5–6.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 50.

²³ *Ibid.*, p.54.

²⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

The emphasis is on preservation of the past, rather than a concern with the future.²⁵

All curricula and syllabi which were followed by learners in black secondary schools were not merely politically motivated attempts to justify the wider policies of apartheid, but also had a generous portion of religious motivation added to them through the dogma of Calvinism. This religious philosophy was enrolled in support of the political philosophy of separate development, and was very evident in the school history syllabi of the apartheid era. Mulholland notes that Calvinism tends to dignify the status quo by interpreting history as the manifestation of God's plan on earth. A strict Calvinist approach to the study of history would serve to relieve a student of history of the need to exercise any critical faculties at all. If this religious philosophy accompanies a philosophy of a 'chosen race', it is clear that such education will regard diverse points of view as irrelevant. History as a subject will fall victim to political manipulation.²⁶ There is little doubt that the twin influences of Calvinism and the political ideal of separate development inspired those who designed apartheid-era curricula and history syllabi for use in black education. Negative perceptions of the subject by generations of black people were the end result of these unfortunate curricula and syllabi.

Malie also believed that one of the major functions of the curriculum was to inculcate spiritual values into learners. History was a subject which would enable learners to realise that all things are transient and that all mankind's political endeavours will in the end amount to nothing.²⁷ Spiritualising the history syllabus was clearly not the sole preserve of Christian-Nationalist-inspired white politicians and educational administrators, but was also practised by conservative black history educators. Malie believed that one spiritual task of the history syllabus was in fact to show black learners that their belief in the supernatural was wrong. The history syllabus should enable them to discover what was 'good and beautiful' about Western civilisation so as to enable them to change their own lives for the better. Malie felt that the Joint Matriculation Board (JMB) history syllabus was positive in exposing black children to Western civilisation.²⁸

²⁵ J.E. Walsh, *Education and Political Power* (New York, 1964), p. 8, as quoted by Mulholland, 'The Evolution of History Teaching', p. 48.

²⁶ Mulholland, 'The Evolution of History Teaching', pp. 325–326.

²⁷ Malie, 'Bantu Secondary High Schools', pp. 18, 32, 53.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 121–122.

Prior to the establishment of the Bantu Education Department in 1954, black schools used either the provincial departmental syllabi if they were under provincial control, or the JMB syllabuses if they were under the control of the church.²⁹ Seroto notes that after 1953, the curriculum was drawn up by white officers of the Education Department, although one of the stated intentions of the Bantu Education Act was to involve black parents in the education of their children.³⁰ Black educators, parents or any interested organisations had almost no say in the compilation of the Bantu Education curriculum. Malie points out that the history syllabus was not framed by black people themselves and did not stress their ‘national heritage’.³¹

The National Party government was concerned that the curriculum for black learners should support and fit into the political and economic policies of the country. This meant that the educational system should be directed at the idea that black people belonged in rural areas. The curriculum should therefore address the question of what knowledge black learners needed, assuming they remained in the homelands.³²

The 1954 Senate speeches delivered by Dr Verwoerd on the matter of the curriculum for black schools reveals the extent to which Bantu Education supported the wider apartheid policies of the government:

The [old] curriculum ... and educational practice, by ignoring the segregation or ‘apartheid’ policy, was unable to prepare for service within the Bantu community. By blindly producing pupils trained on a European model, the vain hope was created among Natives that they could occupy posts within the European community despite the country’s policy of ‘apartheid’. This is what is meant by the creation of unhealthy ‘White collar ideals’ and the causation of widespread frustration among the so-called educated Natives.³³

It is clear that an education provided in this form must stand isolated from the life of Bantu society. It prepares them not for life within a Bantu community, progressively uplifted by education, but for a life outside the community and for posts which in fact do not exist – the curriculum therefore, envisages a system of

²⁹ Chernis, ‘The Past in Service of the Present’, p. 294.

³⁰ Seroto, ‘The Impact of South African Legislation’, p.121.

³¹ Malie, ‘Bantu Secondary High Schools’, p. 92

³² Seroto, ‘The Impact of South African Legislation’, pp. 121–122.

³³ Union of South Africa, *Senate Debates*, Volume II, Columns 2598–2599, 1954.

education which is based on the circumstances of the community and aims to satisfy the needs of that community. The vehicle of instruction will be the mother tongue of the pupil. Besides the usual subjects – religious instruction, handicrafts, singing and rhythm must come into their own, that is self evident.³⁴

Hartshorne notes that from 1955 until 1975 black candidates followed the same Senior Certificate syllabuses (Standards 9 and 10) as white candidates. He further notes that while white learners took the various provincial examinations, from 1962 black learners took the National Senior Certificate. Increasingly, the Bantu Education Department took over the administration of this examination, with examiners and markers coming from within the Department.³⁵ Those students who were keen to pursue a matriculation course had to follow syllabuses offered by other education departments, but invariably those of the Joint Matriculation Board (JMB). Among others these were: the National Senior Certificate, Transvaal Senior Certificate, Natal Senior Certificate and the Cape Senior Certificate syllabus. The history syllabi of the mid 1960s, used by those education departments, were followed in black secondary schools and the textbooks used were identical.³⁶

The Junior Certificate syllabi (Standards 6–8) was however not the same for black and white learners. The first distinctive Junior Certificate designed for black learners was introduced in 1957, with a major revision in 1967. It was, for Hartshorne, at the level of these curricula that attempts were made to emphasise apartheid ideology.³⁷ Hartshorne points to the preamble of the social studies syllabus, which states that the various institutions such as home, school and church should contribute toward the moulding of the learner and his adaptation to life:

To give the pupil a clear conception of his social and economic environment, taking into account that he must of necessity adapt himself to the environment in which he will have to live as an adult. To awaken in him a realization of his relationship to others, and the nature of his social responsibilities and duties based on the knowledge and experience accumulated by him at school, as well as in other spheres of life.³⁸

³⁴ Union of South Africa, *Senate Debates*, Volume II, Columns 2610–2611, 1954.

³⁵ Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, p. 71.

³⁶ Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', p. 52.

³⁷ Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, pp. 71–72.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 72.

Hartshorne notes that while many changes in detail were made to the syllabi as a result of the 1967 revision, the general ideological approach in social studies remained as it had been.³⁹

In the 1980s a core history syllabus was drawn up for all education authorities, black and white included, by an authority consisting of the heads of 'white' education of the four provinces and the Director-General of National Education. In essence this step, which might have been progressive, shows how little had really changed. Educational decision-making still rested entirely in white hands and specifically with the Afrikaner elite. The result was that the history syllabus continued to reflect the ideology of the white ruling class.⁴⁰ Bam, writing of the core history syllabus of the 1980s, noted that it still contained 'eiesoortige' white bias in the content it offered and that it still reflected a Nationalist perspective of history.⁴¹

There is no doubt that in terms of syllabus, history education became more sophisticated during the late apartheid era in order to keep up with constitutional developments such as the advent of tricameralism.⁴² Bam confirms that the educational policies of the ruling National Party government moved over time 'from the Verwoerdian dream toward a multi-cultural reformist dream. Curriculum content in schools evolved from being blatantly racist to more subtle forms of justifying white rule in South Africa'.⁴³ In terms of history education, a new ethnic landscape was created in which heroic black figures were even shown to invoke and legitimise separate development. Shaka, rather than Verwoerd, was depicted as the original creator of the homelands. In the same way, the exploitation and resistance of the coloured people was replaced by an approach which emphasised their 'positive' contribution to white South Africa, an interpretation which better suited their envisioned new role as junior partners in government.⁴⁴

Writing of the Core Syllabus for Standard 10, Higher Grade, 1988: South African History Section B, Ndlovu confirms the assertion that even though the history syllabi during the last

³⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 72–73.

⁴⁰ M.J. Walker, 'History and History Teaching in Apartheid South Africa', in J. Brown, *et al.*, eds, *History From South Africa: Alternative Visions and Practices* (Philadelphia, 1991), p. 273.

⁴¹ Bam, 'The Development of New History Curriculum', p. 22.

⁴² G. Cuthbertson and A. Grundlingh, 'Some Problematical Issues in the Restructuring of History Education in South African Schools', *South African Historical Journal*, 26 (1992), p. 158.

⁴³ Bam, 'The Development of New History Curriculum', p. 22.

⁴⁴ Cuthbertson and Grundlingh, 'Some Problematical Issues in the Restructuring of History Education', p.158.

years of apartheid may have changed, they still presented an apology for apartheid, albeit in a more refined way. This section of the syllabus, for example, contained the following: The amalgamation of the South African Party and the Unionist Party; the Labour Party; the political implications of the 1922 strike on the Witwatersrand and the growth of extra-parliamentary activity. However, the significant post-1970s era was omitted from the syllabus and the syllabus content in black schools did not proceed beyond 1948. Syllabus changes in black schools were therefore at this time only cosmetic.⁴⁵ Commenting on the same syllabus, Zwane notes that it was ‘dominated by Afrikaner-orientated actors and events. Whilst the English speaking activities and events are presented in a low profile manner, those of blacks are portrayed as appendages not forming part of the South African history’.⁴⁶

The sidelining of black people and their history is evident in the Transvaal Education Department (TED) Standard Grade history syllabi for Standards 8–10.⁴⁷ An examination of the stated aims and contents of these syllabi reveal that during the late apartheid era little had changed which might have created a more positive perception of the subject by a black community eager for social and political reform. Several of the stated aims of the teaching of history, which form a section of the prefix to the syllabi reveal close links to apartheid ideology. Separate groups, nations and cultural identities are strongly stressed. One example is found under aim 3.3.2 and is titled ‘Group development’:

To give the pupils the knowledge and insight into the origin and establishment of the society, cultural group, nation and church to which he belongs, so as to develop an appreciation of his own identity. This may result in service.⁴⁸

Ironically, the above sentiment about pupils appreciating their own culture, identity and national history really only applied to white learners. The South African section of the TED Standard Grade Standard 8 history syllabus concerns the ongoing power struggle between the British and Afrikaner groups in South Africa between the time of the Great Trek to the annexation of the ZAR up to and including 1884. The final section of this syllabus has a hopeful title: ‘The history

⁴⁵ Ndlovu, ‘Perceptions of History’, p. 17.

⁴⁶ Zwane, ‘An Examination of the Position and Role of History’, p. 168.

⁴⁷ Transvaal Education Department: Syllabus for History Standard Grade Standards 8–10. TED Document 736. Undated.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 6.

of a community south of the Limpopo during the second half of the nineteenth century', but only one of three themes could be studied. These three themes included the contribution of German immigrants to the development of the Transvaal; life on the gold fields of the Eastern Transvaal (social and economic) or the history of education in the Transvaal.⁴⁹ Little attention was paid to the history of black people in South Africa, which may have been more relevant to black learners. History still appeared to be a subject written by white people for white people, which confined itself to a study of their own interests.

The TED Standard Grade Standard 9 South African history syllabus simply took the story of the rivalry between English and Afrikaans speaking whites further. The syllabus began with the discovery of gold and its economic and social effects up to 1910. The rivalry between British Imperialism and Afrikaner Republicanism and the incorporation of the independent chiefdoms into the ZAR, up until the Peace of Vereeniging was covered. Finally the period between the South African War and the formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 was investigated.⁵⁰ Again, the Standard 9 Standard Grade TED history syllabus was almost entirely devoted to white South African history.

The TED Standard Grade Standard 10 South African history syllabus was concerned with the period 1910–1970, with a more detailed study of the period 1924–1970. The period until 1924 was exclusively concerned with white political developments aside from a brief look at Hertzog's 'non-white policy'. The period 1934–1948 explores issues such as extra-parliamentary political activity and race relations, but was mainly concerned with white political issues. In any event, the textbooks which covered the content of this syllabus did not deal sympathetically with black political and social aspirations of the time.⁵¹ The period 1948–1970 concerned the National Party's introduction of apartheid policies, the formation of the Republic of South Africa in 1961 and the South West Africa question.⁵² While the Standard Grade Standard 10 history syllabus had to involve black history simply because of the time period it addressed, Zwane's assessment

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 16–17.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 19.

⁵¹ See Section 2.5 of this chapter, which examines the various history textbooks which were used in black secondary schools during the apartheid era.

⁵² Transvaal Education Department: Syllabus for History Standard Grade Standards 8–10 TED Document 736. Undated.

of the 1988 Core Higher Grade syllabus for Standard 10 remains valid. Black people were regarded as ‘appendages not forming part of South African history.’⁵³

Chernis makes the important point (so evident in the TED Standard Grade 1985–1987 syllabi) that school history syllabi tend to lag far behind contemporary political realities.⁵⁴ He points out that by the end of the 1980s history syllabi and textbooks in use at schools mirrored an image of the past which was a decade old, dominated by the white Afrikaner National Party government. By the end of the 1980s, even the government had, according to Chernis, left the conservative officials responsible for drawing up the syllabus, far behind. The history syllabuses of this time were ‘perpetuating an image of the past not necessarily still accepted by the ruling party ... helping to prop up a political and social dispensation which no longer exists’.⁵⁵

It is clear that by the end of the apartheid era, black history educators held strong and widely divergent perceptions of the history syllabus as compared to their white colleagues. This assertion is confirmed by detailed research undertaken under the auspices of the Human Sciences Research Council in 1991.⁵⁶ The researchers point out that at least 15 schools from each department of education were used in the sample, namely from the Department of Education and Culture, the House of Assembly, Representatives and Delegates, and the Department of Education and Training.⁵⁷ Table 2.24, which details various reactions to topics in the syllabi is reproduced in full as the perceptions of black history educators toward the syllabi, especially when contrasted to the perceptions of history educators from other race groups reveals interesting insights and differences.⁵⁸ The respondents were asked to indicate whether or not various themes taken from syllabi on offer at the time should be further elaborated, reduced or excluded altogether.

⁵³ Zwane, ‘An Examination of the Position and Role of History’, p. 168.

⁵⁴ Chernis, ‘The Past in Service of the Present’, pp. 330–331, 353.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 331.

⁵⁶ Van der Merwe, *et al.*, *An Empirical Investigation into the Teaching of History*.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 24–26.

Table 2.24 Topics in the Syllabi

| Topics | Response | Population group | | | | | | | |
|---|--------------------------|------------------|--------|-------|-------|----------|-------|--------|-------|
| | | Black | | White | | Coloured | | Indian | |
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| a) The History of Africa | Included but elaborated | 11 | 68,75 | 11 | 52,38 | 12 | 70,59 | 21 | 67,71 |
| | Included but reduced | 3 | 18,75 | 9 | 12,86 | 1 | 23,53 | 7 | 22,58 |
| | Excluded | | | 1 | 1,76 | 1 | 5,88 | 3 | 9,68 |
| b) Cultural history | Included but elaborated | 1 | 25,00 | 4 | 19,05 | 1 | 5,88 | 11 | 35,18 |
| | Included but reduced | 10 | 62,50 | 8 | 38,10 | 12 | 70,59 | 15 | 18,39 |
| | Excluded | 2 | 12,50 | 9 | 12,86 | 1 | 23,53 | 5 | 16,13 |
| c) Ideologies | Included but elaborated | 13 | 81,25 | 15 | 71,13 | 10 | 58,82 | 25 | 80,65 |
| | Included but reduced | 3 | 18,75 | 6 | 28,57 | 7 | 11,18 | 6 | 19,35 |
| d) The history of the black man in SA | Included but Elaborated | 15 | 93,75 | 12 | 57,11 | 16 | 91,12 | 23 | 71,19 |
| | Included but Reduced | 1 | 6,25 | 9 | 42,86 | | | 7 | 22,58 |
| | Excluded | | | | | 1 | 5,88 | 1 | 3,23 |
| e) Problems of multi-cultural societies in overseas countries | Included, but Elaborated | 7 | 13,75 | 1 | 19,05 | 7 | 11,18 | 11 | 15,16 |
| | Included but Reduced | 8 | 50,00 | 15 | 71,13 | 10 | 58,82 | 10 | 32,26 |
| | Excluded | 1 | 6,25 | 2 | 9,52 | | | 6 | 19,35 |
| f) "Apartheid" | Included but elaborated | 10 | 62,50 | 14 | 19,05 | 12 | 70,59 | 20 | 61,52 |
| | Included but Reduced | 1 | 25,00 | 16 | 76,19 | 2 | 11,76 | 6 | 19,35 |
| | Excluded | 1 | 6,25 | 1 | 1,76 | 3 | 17,65 | 5 | 16,13 |
| g) History of liberation movements in South Africa | Included but elaborated | 16 | 100,00 | 9 | 12,86 | 16 | 91,12 | 27 | 87,10 |
| | Included but Reduced | | | 11 | 52,38 | | | 1 | 12,90 |

| Topics | Response | Population group | | | | | | | |
|-----------------------------------|-------------------------|------------------|-------|-------|-------|----------|-------|--------|-------|
| | | Black | | White | | Coloured | | Indian | |
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| | Excluded | | | 1 | 1,76 | 1 | 5,88 | | |
| h) Contemporary history | Included but elaborated | 11 | 87,50 | 19 | 90,18 | 11 | 82,35 | 21 | 77,42 |
| | Included but Reduced | 2 | 12,50 | 2 | 9,52 | 1 | 5,88 | 6 | 19,35 |
| | Excluded | | | | | 2 | 11,76 | 1 | 3,23 |
| i) Precolonial history of SA | Included but elaborated | 9 | 56,25 | 3 | 11,29 | 2 | 11,76 | 6 | 19,35 |
| | Included but Reduced | 6 | 37,50 | 7 | 33,33 | 11 | 61,71 | 13 | 11,91 |
| | Excluded | 1 | 6,25 | 11 | 52,38 | 3 | 17,65 | 12 | 38,71 |
| j) An introduction to archeology | Included but elaborated | 1 | 25,00 | 1 | 1,76 | 2 | 11,76 | 1 | 12,90 |
| | Included but Reduced | 9 | 56,25 | 6 | 28,57 | 7 | 11,18 | 11 | 35,19 |
| | Excluded | 3 | 18,75 | 14 | 66,67 | 8 | 17,06 | 15 | 18,39 |
| k) Dispossession of land | Included but elaborated | 11 | 68,75 | 1 | 1,76 | 9 | 52,91 | 11 | 35,18 |
| | Included but reduced | 1 | 25,00 | 12 | 57,11 | 6 | 35,29 | 11 | 15,16 |
| | Excluded | 1 | 6,25 | 8 | 38,10 | 2 | 11,76 | 6 | 19,35 |
| l) Capitalism and class struggles | Included but elaborated | 13 | 81,25 | 1 | 19,05 | 6 | 35,29 | 16 | 51,61 |
| | Included but reduced | 2 | 12,50 | 15 | 71,43 | 11 | 61,71 | 11 | 45,16 |
| | Excluded | 1 | 6,25 | 2 | 9,52 | | | 1 | 3,23 |
| m) Trade unions | Included but elaborated | 12 | 75,00 | 6 | 28,57 | 10 | 58,82 | 18 | 58,06 |
| | Included but reduced | 1 | 25,00 | 12 | 57,11 | 7 | 11,18 | 12 | 38,71 |
| | Excluded | | | 3 | 11,29 | | | 1 | 3,23 |

| Topics | Response | Population group | | | | | | | |
|--------|-------------------------|------------------|-------|-------|-------|----------|-------|--------|-------|
| | | Black | | White | | Coloured | | Indian | |
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| Other | Included but elaborated | 9 | 56,25 | 7 | 33,33 | 7 | 11,18 | 16 | 51,61 |
| | Included but reduced | 2 | 12,50 | 3 | 11,29 | 5 | 29,11 | 7 | 22,58 |
| | Excluded | | | | | | | 1 | 3,23 |

Table 2.24 reveals that the perceptions of black secondary school history educators toward the syllabus differ markedly from the perceptions of other secondary school history educators, especially from surveyed white educators. Significantly more black educators wanted ‘The History of Africa’ to be increased in the syllabus than did their white counterparts. Likewise, the vast majority of black secondary school history educators wanted increased syllabus representation for ‘The History of the Black Man in South Africa’, ‘Apartheid’, ‘History of Liberation Movements in South Africa’, ‘Pre-colonial History of South Africa’, ‘Dispossession of Land’, ‘Capitalism and Class Struggles’ and ‘Trade Unions’. It is clear that by 1991, black secondary school history educators were unconvinced by government attempts to reform history syllabi and were strongly desirous to include topics of more relevance to the history of black people in general and of their struggle against apartheid in particular. In contrast, aside from ‘The History of the Black Man in South Africa’ and ‘The History of Africa’, white respondents felt that all the topics listed above should not be given increased weight in the history syllabus; indeed, they should even be excluded from the syllabus altogether.

Research among history educators in the Nkangala region of Mpumalanga who had taught the subject during the apartheid era, further reveals a negative attitude to the history syllabus among both learners and educators at the time. Asked how learners had felt about the syllabus, respondents commented that they would be reluctant to study it and were negative towards it. Textbooks had reminded learners about painful issues like Land Acts and other discriminatory

apartheid legislation.⁵⁹ One educator noted that as he attempted to avoid teaching about politically sensitive questions, his learners did not attempt to hide the fact that they ‘were aware of the truth and that our teachings were factually incorrect.’⁶⁰

A few educators dared to step beyond the bounds of the syllabus, but most reported that they would simply stick to the syllabus content, no matter how much they personally disagreed with it. One respondent reported that he had taught history from a Black Consciousness perspective, emphasising aspects of Black Consciousness such as ‘black is beautiful’ and the reality of black resistance to white conquest as well as emphasising the careers of black historical figures such as Shaka, Dingane, Cetewayo, Moshosho and Sekhukuni.⁶¹ Another respondent noted that he had felt pressured to have to follow textbooks, ‘though it was really painful to know the truth – one could do nothing as one had to take care not to say or comment negatively’.⁶² One educator noted that he would tell learners ‘the truth’ and refer them to alternative sources of information when approached privately by learners but otherwise had to keep rigidly to the syllabus as ‘Big Brother was keeping a watchful eye on us all the time’.⁶³

By the end of the 1980s, both black and white people were insisting on a drastic revision of history syllabi. Chernis cites the example of the Transvaal High Schools’ History Teachers’ Association which complained in 1988 about the biased treatment of issues in the syllabus and textbooks and called for varied points of view to be reflected. Even in Afrikaner circles the ‘official’ version of South Africa’s past no longer seemed tenable.⁶⁴ By the 1990s it was clear that apartheid, together with its educational policies had failed dismally. The educational blueprint which was originally expressed in Verwoerd’s ‘visionary’ Senate speeches of 1954 had not succeeded in engendering enthusiasm for ethnicity, but instead resulted in a rejection of separate development. A new history syllabus, more inclusive and more suited to a democratic disposition, was sorely needed by 1994.

⁵⁹ Educator’s questionnaire Response 5.

⁶⁰ Educator’s questionnaire Response 7.

⁶¹ Educator’s questionnaire Response 3.

⁶² Educator’s questionnaire Response 5.

⁶³ Educator’s questionnaire Response 7.

⁶⁴ Chernis, ‘The Past in Service of the Present’, pp. 332–333, 352.

It is clear that from the introduction of Bantu Education in the 1950s to the late apartheid era, the school history syllabi in use in black secondary schools did much to create and sustain a negative perception of the subject.

2.3 New initiatives, 1985–1994

Different initiatives were undertaken by various interest groups from 1985 onwards to promote the creation of a ‘new’ approach to South African school history, as well as a fresh syllabus. All the initiatives in the end contributed cumulatively to the development of the history syllabi which would be taught in black secondary schools after the advent of the democratic era.

The Soweto Parents’ Crisis Committee (SPCC) was formed in 1985. This led to the call ‘People’s Education for People’s Power’ and the demand that all stakeholders, including learners, teachers, parents and workers, should have a say in what kind of education was provided. The SPCC convened a Consultative Conference which formed the National Education Crisis Committee (NECC) in March 1986. A History Commission was established in June 1986 with the aim of assisting educators and learners to present the syllabus in different ways and to produce sufficient resources to enable communities themselves to run their own alternative educational programmes outside of the school system.

The history of the History Commission was not a happy one. Kallaway notes that the initiative failed to make headway with regard to school history, as the DET refused to allow any NECC publications into its educational institutions. By 1988, the Commission had ceased to function effectively, but its work was not entirely in vain. Kallaway concluded that it did at least promote political conscientisation and provided a space for considering the nature of school history for the curriculum of the future.⁶⁵

In 1987, the NECC published an alternative history book entitled *What is History? A New Approach to History for Students, Workers and Communities*. The aim of the book was to enable learners to perceive the distortions of school history. The material was to supplement gaps in the

⁶⁵ Kallaway, ‘History Education in a Democratic South Africa’, p. 14.

official history syllabus or to provide a complete alternative to it. The aims of the project were outlined by its initiators:

History – properly taught – should not just tell of the deeds and sayings of people in authority; it should recover and comprehend the doing and thoughts of ordinary men and women. It should identify the historical sources of dispossession, oppression and exploitation, and examine the ways in which these were resisted.⁶⁶

Mazabow reflects popular professional historical opinion when he asserts that the book was widely criticised for presenting the idea that South African history is little else but a series of conflicting opinions.⁶⁷ He quotes Dean and Siebörger who note that the main issue in the teaching of history is that there should be ‘more than one view of the past’ and that existing views ‘take account of each other, and inform and react against each other’.⁶⁸ Bam criticised the NECC initiative, noting that its focus was on content change and that the development of critical skills was seen as ‘a mere vehicle towards comprehending the past in full’.⁶⁹

An important initiative to formulate an appropriate educational policy for a democratic society was that undertaken by the National Educational Policy Investigation (NEPI) in 1992. NEPI was in fact a project of the NECC. Major emphasis was given to issues such as equity and resource provision, the redress of present inequalities, and the matter of democratic policy-making decisions. In regard to school history education, NEPI made a case for retaining the subject in schools on the grounds that an alternative history curriculum could help address past wrongs in the interpretation of history and restore the history of the oppressed as part of a common heritage. History was also viewed as being able to teach valuable academic skills and assist in the development of historical insights and offer a perspective on the changing world of work.⁷⁰

⁶⁶ National Education Crisis Committee (NECC), *What is History? A New Approach to History for Students, Workers and Communities* (Johannesburg, 1987), p. 1, as quoted by Mazabow, ‘The Development of Historical Consciousness’, p. 103.

⁶⁷ Mazabow, ‘The Development of Historical Consciousness’, p. 103.

⁶⁸ Dean and Siebörger, ‘After Apartheid: The Outlook for History’, pp. 32–33, as quoted by Mazabow, ‘The Development of Historical Consciousness’, p. 103.

⁶⁹ Bam, ‘The Development of New History Curriculum’, pp. 25–26, as quoted by Mazabow, ‘The Development of Historical Consciousness’, p. 103.

⁷⁰ National Educational Policy Investigation (NEPI), *Curriculum: Report of the NEPI Curriculum Research Group* (Cape Town, 1992), p. 163, as referred to by Mazabow, ‘The Development of Historical Consciousness’, p. 104.

The above initiatives undertaken during the last years of the apartheid era collectively contributed to the eventual formulation of a new school history approach, the first fruits of which were to be realised during the time of the Government of National Unity (GNU), when school history was to enjoy a new-found popularity. The negative perceptions of the subject among black people, created during decades of apartheid education, had at least a chance of being reversed.

2.4 Textbook issues

The question of the history textbooks which were used in black secondary schools is an important one, as the perceptions which educators and learners alike had and have of the subject of school history are largely determined by textbooks. Problems with apartheid-era history textbooks have been well documented.⁷¹ The history textbooks in use in the present day are better. They are less obviously biased and follow a more interesting and less prejudiced syllabus. Yet it will be clear that South African present-day school history textbooks are still far from ideal.

Mulholland contends that history textbooks are always changing, because they do not contain immutable facts, but rather deal with whatever are the major preoccupations of society at a given time. They illustrate current attitudes toward past generations and highlight what values and knowledge is considered important. Mulholland further notes that the ideology which history textbooks seek to justify is the ideology and interest of the dominant group in society. Competing groups in society do not receive any such support. School textbooks, because they have the task of justifying the position of a dominant class, are bound to be full of stereotypes, value-laden

⁷¹ See, for example, Chernis, 'The Past in Service of the Present'; P. da Cruz, 'From Narrative to Severed Heads: The Form and Location of White Supremacist History in Textbooks of the Apartheid and Post-Apartheid Eras. A Case Study' (M.Phil dissertation, University of Cape Town, 2005); Dean, *et al.*, *History in Black and White*; G. Evans, 'Textbooks and the Cultural Reproduction of Knowledge' (M.Ed. dissertation, University of the Witwatersrand, 1990); P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York, 1970); Motshabi, 'Use of the Textbook'; Mulholland, 'The Evolution of History Teaching'; J. Nicholls, 'Methods in School Textbook Research' in S. Foster and K. Crawford, eds, *What Shall We Tell the Children: International Perspectives in School History Textbooks* (Greenwich, CT, 2005); R. Siebörger, 'The Dynamics of History Textbook Production During South Africa's Educational Transformation' in S. Foster and K. Crawford, eds, *What Shall We Tell the Children: International Perspectives in School History Textbooks* (Greenwich, CT, 2005) and Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History'.

terminology, over-simplified dichotomies and self-centered selections of historical events. These assertions are valid when describing the textbooks used in black history education during the apartheid era. Mulholland makes the point that both the syllabus and content of the textbooks compiled by the National Party government contained an increasing emphasis on a Calvinistic interpretation of events, an increasing nationalist emphasis, an increasing stress on the Afrikaner's role in history and on racial purity and separation. In short, an increasing Christian National Education emphasis was stressed.⁷²

Dean, Hartmann and Katzen argue that the school subject of history was used by the National Party government as an apology for apartheid policies, so as to convince people that racial separation was a natural state of affairs. The key concept that they refer to is that of 'legitimation' which they define as the process of securing consent among the members of a society to existing social and political arrangements. In the context of South Africa, legitimation attempted to retain white ascendancy by persuading the (black) subordinate group to accept a subservient position in society. This status should ideally be seen as God-given. Dean *et al* noted that a dominant elite needs to rely on the enthusiastic support of some of the members of its own group and at least the acquiescence of most of the rest in order to survive.⁷³ The concept of legitimation is important in the context of this dissertation, as it was a powerful force in moulding the perceptions towards history as a subject and the history of South Africa for several generations of apartheid-era black secondary school learners. The critical point is that the perceptions which secondary school learners come to have of the subject history can often lead to the development of beliefs which have the power to last a lifetime; these perceptions and beliefs are often implanted by school textbooks. Dean *et al* assert that history textbooks, more than any other type of textbook, have the capacity to influence the social and political thinking of entire generations.⁷⁴

Motshabi, writing primarily about conditions in the Eastern Cape, holds that history writing for Forms I and II (currently Grades 8 and 9) in black schools had very little real value for the black

⁷² Mulholland, 'The Evolution of History Teaching', pp. 268–272.

⁷³ Dean, *et al.*, *History in Black and White*, pp. 17–19.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, *et al.*, p. 102.

child. It was not useable in the sense that it was very far removed from the everyday experience of the learners. Nothing of local content was mentioned, although in many cases learners lived near to places of historical significance. The textbooks held little sense of immediacy and relevance for learners and facts remote from everyday experience were studied. National developments and international politics and challenges were focused upon, without any local application at all. Motshabi points out that the historical expositions evident in history textbooks of her day did not offer what people wanted or needed. The critical faculties of learners cannot be developed unless a history which relates to the own world of the learner is presented. The past needs to be recaptured emotionally, and not in a detached way if it is to make real sense. Despite the fact that the black peoples have been the central protagonists of South African history, there is a vast lack of knowledge about them in the social studies textbooks. The emphasis was rather on the deeds of foreign peoples.⁷⁵

History textbooks used in black secondary schools were almost exclusively written by whites. The authors of these books were often white inspectors of black education, or examiners of the subject. In 1969, the panel of authors responsible for the social studies textbook, *Modern Social Studies Forms I and II*, published by Better Books in that year included a Mr. Keykana, a black person.⁷⁶ This was a real departure from the norm, given that Nuxumalo states that the first English set work book ever written by a black person, Chinua Achebe, a Nigerian author, was only approved for black secondary schools in 1973.⁷⁷

Pointing to the characteristics of the history textbooks which were circulated in black secondary schools, Nuxumalo notes that all textbooks had to first be assessed and declared suitable by the Departmental authority.⁷⁸ Textbooks were written strictly for the syllabus. The tendency of the writers was to provide only the bare content required by the syllabus. No lists of recommended books or suggested further reading was provided, which Nuxumalo holds was because authors did not want to in any way promote other similar books. Most textbooks were presented in the form of lessons which largely did the educator's work for them, for example the provision of

⁷⁵ Motshabi, 'Use of the Textbook', pp. 57–58.

⁷⁶ Nuxumalo, 'Sociological Significance of the Teaching of History', p. 103.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 103–104.

notes, revision topics and test questions. Malie points out that black history educators depended on textbooks because of their low education levels.⁷⁹ Given the poor qualifications of history educators during the apartheid era, this may have been a worthwhile practice, although it could be argued that such a practice did no good when it came to improving the abilities of the black history teaching corps. Perhaps it was an adjustment to the real situation at black secondary schools at the time.

Nuxumalo makes the point that such uninspired textbooks are mainly geared to helping people pass examinations, and emphasise rote learning and ‘a painful memorization of loose unrelated facts.’⁸⁰ Ndlovu notes that most of the history textbooks produced under the auspices of the DET were descriptive rather than analytical and ignored the latest historical findings and research.⁸¹

A brief review of some of the textbooks which were used in school history teaching in South African schools before and throughout the apartheid era will demonstrate the large degree of unfair bias and stereotyping against black people evident in these books and which must have strongly contributed to the development of a negative perception of the subject among the black community. Although the crass racial stereotyping evident in the earlier textbooks tended to become more sophisticated with the passing of time, it was not until the late 1980s and early 1990s that school history textbooks which attempted to fairly represent the history of all South Africans began to emerge.

Before 1948, the most commonly used history textbook in black secondary schools was Howes and Mandelbrote’s *Juta’s History for Matriculation and Cape Senior Certificate Students* which was first published in April 1927. Zwane notes the pointed bias against black people evident in the book, which promoted a view of black culture and values as inferior, as against the myth of white supremacy.⁸² Zwane points to the depiction of the Khoikhoi people in this textbook:

⁷⁹ Malie, ‘Bantu Secondary High Schools’, p. 171.

⁸⁰ Nuxumalo, ‘Sociological Significance of the Teaching of History’, p. 109.

⁸¹ Ndlovu, ‘Perceptions of History’, p. 20.

⁸² Zwane, ‘An Examination of the Position and Role of History’, pp. 4–5.

The Hottentots had never been warlike and since their number had been very much reduced by smallpox the whole Karoo belt was comparatively free from native marauders.⁸³

Zwane notes that the first contact with African people is confined to a paragraph in *Juta's History for Matriculation and Cape Senior Certificate Students* termed 'Trouble with Natives'. Governor J. Van Plettenberg is recorded as saying that the only serious trouble was caused by Bushmen and Xhosas on the eastern frontier.⁸⁴ Referring to another early history textbook, Fowler and Smit's *New Senior History Course* (1930), the first encounter between trekboers and Xhosa people is described in the following way:

The meeting of trekboer and Bantu stopped further European expansion eastwards, for the Bantu proved to be the most formidable enemy of all the native races that had yet been encountered.⁸⁵

Zwane posits that the language used in both these pre-Bantu Education textbooks was bound to create attitudes and the development of an 'us' and 'them' mentality in the interpretation of events.⁸⁶ White settlers were depicted as bringers of civilisation and peace,⁸⁷ while black people were depicted as perpetrators of warfare against their own kind and whites alike.⁸⁸

Zwane notes that the textbooks used to teach social studies (Standards 6–8) in black secondary schools were not only written in Afrikaans (the prescribed medium of instruction for the subject) but also presented a distorted and biased view of history.⁸⁹ Black history learners became frustrated at the difficulty of having to learn in Afrikaans and also at the biased nature of the syllabus as presented in these textbooks. *Hersiene Sosiale Studie: Vorm I*, for example, depicts the seasonal visits of the Khoikhoi to the Cape as deliberate expeditions to 'steal' the livestock

⁸³ R.B. Howes and H.J. Mandelbrote, *Juta's History for Matriculation and Cape Senior Certificate Students* (Cape Town, 1938), p. 64, as quoted by Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', p. 4.

⁸⁴ Howes and Mandelbrote, *Juta's History for Matriculation and Cape Senior Certificate Students*, p. 70, as quoted by Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', p. 4.

⁸⁵ C. de K. Fowler and G.J.J. Smit, *Maskew Miller's New Senior History Course* (Cape Town, 1930), p. 83, as quoted by Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', p. 4.

⁸⁶ Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', pp. 4–5.

⁸⁷ Fowler and Smit, *Maskew Miller's New Senior History Course*, p. 210, as quoted by Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', p. 5.

⁸⁸ Howes and Mandelbrote, *Juta's History for Matriculation and Cape Senior Certificate Students*, p. 161, as quoted by Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', p. 5.

⁸⁹ Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', p. 53.

that belonged to the Dutch East India Company.⁹⁰ *Hersiene Sosiale Studie: Vorms II en III* continues the biased tradition of history writing established by its predecessor. The frontier wars between the Xhosa and whites over land possession are detailed. Zwane notes that the contents reflect ‘a litany of organized murders by blacks on whites’.⁹¹ Whites are shown to have saved the Xhosa people after the national Xhosa suicide of 1857.⁹² Bantu education is later portrayed as being advantageous to black people and as an aid in assisting them to develop their homelands.⁹³

Rehman (2008) outlined some of the features of some of the most common textbooks which were used to teach school history during the apartheid era.⁹⁴ These books were *Legacy of the Past* (1968), *Timelines 8* (1985), *History Alive* (1987), *History in Action* (1988), and *Making History 4* (1992).⁹⁵ A brief examination of these books as well as the bias within them will reveal why black South African secondary school learners so strongly rejected them.

Rehman outlines the content of *Legacy of the Past* (1968), pointing to a heavily Eurocentric bias. The content starts with the French Revolution, before proceeding to Napoleon Bonaparte, ‘The Revolt of the Nations’, and ‘The National and Liberal Movements in Europe’. Rehman notes that before the section on South African history, ‘there is no African person mentioned in the text’.⁹⁶ The South African section starts with ‘Sir George Grey’, who according to the textbook came to South Africa to solve the Xhosa frontier problem in 1854:⁹⁷

He abandoned the old policy of segregation and tried to open up Native territory by roads; his policy was to civilize the Xhosa by building schools and hospitals.

⁹⁰ B.S. Grove, *et al.*, *Hersiene Sosiale Studie: Vorm I* (Cape Town, 1971), p. 155, as quoted by Zwane, ‘An Examination of the Position and Role of History’, p. 54.

⁹¹ Grove, *et al.*, *Hersiene Sosiale Studie: Vorm II en III* (Cape Town, 1967), p. 228, as referred to by Zwane, ‘An Examination of the Position and Role of History’, p. 54.

⁹² Grove, *et al.*, *Hersiene Sosiale Studie: Vorm II en III*, p. 244, as quoted by Zwane, ‘An Examination of the Position and Role of History’, p. 54.

⁹³ Grove, *et al.*, *Hersiene Sosiale Studie: Vorm II en III*, p. 259, as quoted by Zwane, ‘An Examination of the Position and Role of History’, p. 54.

⁹⁴ J. Rehman, ‘From Bantu Education to Social Sciences: A Minor Field Study of History Teaching in South Africa 1966–2006’ (Research Report, Department Didactic Science and Early Childhood Education, University of Stockholm, 2008).

⁹⁵ A.N. Boyce, *Legacy of the Past* (Cape Town, 1968); *Timelines 8: History for Standard 8 - 1985 Syllabus, Second Edition* (Cape Town, 1985); P. Kallaway, *History Alive* (Pietermaritzburg, 1992); L. Marneweck, *et al.*, *Making History 4* (Pietermaritzburg, 1992), as quoted by Rehman, ‘From Bantu Education to Social Sciences’, p. 15.

⁹⁶ Rehman, ‘From Bantu Education to Social Sciences’, p. 16.

⁹⁷ Boyce, *Legacy of the Past*, p. 73, as quoted by Rehman, ‘From Bantu Education to Social Sciences’, p. 16.

He believed that there were three evils among the Xhosa – ignorance, idleness and superstition ... To remove ignorance he had schools built, e.g. an industrial school at Lovedale where young Xhosa could be taught trades and better methods in agriculture. To discourage idleness and to teach them the dignity of labour the Xhosa were used in the construction of roads and public works. To combat superstition a hospital was built at King William's Town where it was hoped the tribesmen would learn the benefits of the white man's medicine. This would help to destroy the power of the witchdoctor and superstition. Missionary work was also encouraged. To assist in his policy of civilizing the Bantu he encouraged immigration into British Kaffraria. He hoped the Xhosa would learn industrious habits from the European settlers.⁹⁸

Rehman notes that the *bad habits* of the Xhosa people needed to be removed. The Xhosa people, traditions and lifestyle were 'treated like they are dangerous barbarians'. Words such as 'Kaffraria' and 'Bantu' are not only insulting but also simplify the people and create stereotypes of them. A white ethnocentric perspective can be clearly discerned. Rehman makes the point that the writing is biased. This is but one example of the bias inherent in *Legacy of the Past*, which Rehman describes as 'a textbook written by the white man for the white man ... where the native groups are neglected and treated as problems for the white mans community'.⁹⁹ Rehman notes that even the front cover design of *Legacy of the Past*, which depicts a large Dutch East India Company sailing ship makes it clear that it is the history of the Afrikaner and the English people of South Africa which is being addressed.¹⁰⁰

A textbook which Zwane rates as being one of the two most popular for Standards 9 and 10 in black secondary schools during the apartheid era was Boyce's *Europe and South Africa: A History for South African High Schools*.¹⁰¹ The other most popular book, according to Zwane was Van Jaarsveld's *New Illustrated History for the Senior Certificate: Stds IX and X: Vol I South African History*.¹⁰² This textbook also describes South African history in a way which

⁹⁸ Boyce, *Legacy of the Past*, p. 75, as quoted by Rehman, 'From Bantu Education to Social Sciences', pp. 17–18.

⁹⁹ Rehman, 'From Bantu Education to Social Sciences', pp. 18–20.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 16.

¹⁰¹ A.N. Boyce, *Europe and South Africa: A History for South African High Schools* (Cape Town, 1969), as referred to by Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', p. 55.

¹⁰² F.A. Van Jaarsveld, *New Illustrated History for the Senior Certificate: Stds IX and X: Vol I South African History* (Johannesburg, 1970), as referred to by Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', p. 55.

black people perceived as a biased interpretation of history.¹⁰³ African communities of every kind are perpetually shown as the aggressors in conflicts.¹⁰⁴ The Mfecane (to quote another example of so many) was supposedly responsible for leaving the Voortrekkers a free and unoccupied land.¹⁰⁵

The *Active History* series were the most popular history textbooks to be used in the black secondary schools surveyed in the 1991 HSRC investigation into the teaching of history in South African schools.¹⁰⁶ *Active History: Standard 10* (1980) is a detailed and well illustrated history textbook which is a further example of an apology for apartheid policies.¹⁰⁷ One example of the bias inherent in this textbook will suffice. On the question of black resistance to apartheid after 1948, the Rivonia trial is referred to as follows:

The Rivonia trial, during which several Black leaders received life sentences on sabotage charges, more or less ended the phase of Black resistance which had begun in 1950 ... This underlined the government's success against subversion. Mr John Vorster, Minister of Justice, earned himself a place in history for this.¹⁰⁸

Rehman's analysis of *Timelines 8* (1985), depicts a textbook which also demonstrates uncompromising bias against black people in favour of whites.¹⁰⁹ The cover of this book shows a picture of Napoleon and his troops leaving the field of battle at Waterloo. A European heritage is sharply in focus. The first section of the book is entirely focused on European history. Rehman declares that 'What is presented is a historical consciousness of a shared past, excluding the natives and [which] cements the identity [of white people]'.¹¹⁰ The second part of the textbook concerns 'The Reshaping of South African Society 1820–1850' and is focused on the struggle between the Boers and the British. Chapters in the second part of this textbook are 'The Mfecane', 'The Great Trek', 'British Reaction to the Great Trek', 'Britain and Transorangia',

¹⁰³ Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', p. 58.

¹⁰⁴ Van Jaarsveld, *New Illustrated History for the Senior Certificate*, p. 26, as quoted by Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', p. 58.

¹⁰⁵ Van Jaarsveld, *New Illustrated History for the Senior Certificate*, p. 51, as quoted by Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', p. 58.

¹⁰⁶ Van der Merwe, *et al.*, *An Empirical Investigation into the Teaching of History in the RSA*.

¹⁰⁷ A.P.J. Van Rensburg and J. Schoeman, *Active History: Standard 10* (Pretoria, 1980).

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 230–231.

¹⁰⁹ A.C. Vlok, *et al.*, *Timelines: History for Standard 8: 1985 Syllabus*, 2nd edition (Cape Town, 1985), as quoted by Rehman, 'From Bantu Education to Social Sciences', p. 20.

¹¹⁰ Rehman, 'From Bantu Education to Social Sciences', p. 20.

‘Britain and the Diamond Fields Dispute’, ‘Carnarvon’s Federation Policy and its Aftermath to 1884’ and ‘Political, Social and Economic Aspects of the History of a Society South of the Limpopo: 1815–1900’.¹¹¹ An example of clear bias in the telling of history is evident in the way in which the Mfecane is dealt with. The writers’ view of the Mfecane is that Shaka was solely responsible:

Chaka’s destructive wars started a terrible chain-reaction of killing. Wherever the remnants of these tribes fled, into the Transvaal highveld, Lesotho, the Orange Free State and beyond the southern boundary of Natal, they in turn attacked and destroyed all the black tribes in their path so that a buffer-zone was created between themselves and the power and cruelty of Chaka and the Zulu impis.¹¹²

Timelines 9 (1989)¹¹³ and *Timelines 10* (1988)¹¹⁴ continue the Eurocentric tradition established by *Timelines 8*. The cover design of *Timelines 9* depicts a nineteenth-century mining scene set against the backdrop of modern Johannesburg. All four of the figures depicted are white – no black person is shown. In fact, aside from a depiction of Gandhi, no black person is depicted in a text well endowed with photographs and illustrations. This confirms that the textbook is directed to a white readership. The cover design of *Timelines 10* is a confusing cartoon-like depiction of various armed combatants holding a world globe aloft with a variety of weapons. Predictably, no black person is shown to be among this turbulent collection of people.

History Alive, published in 1987 and edited by Kallaway, does mark a departure from school history textbooks which served as apologies for apartheid policies toward an open-minded approach which attempted to take account of the history of all South Africans.¹¹⁵ Rehman notes that the cover design of the textbook which depicts a view of a township, with two big grain silos on the horizon is a statement that the book intends to show not only the history of great men, but

¹¹¹ Vlok, *et al.*, *Timelines: History for Standard 8: 1985 Syllabus*, second edition, Contents, as quoted by Rehman, ‘From Bantu Education to Social Sciences’, p. 21.

¹¹² Vlok, *et al.*, *Timelines: History for Standard 8: 1985 Syllabus*, second edition, p. 101, as quoted by Rehman, ‘From Bantu Education to Social Sciences’, p. 21.

¹¹³ H.G.J. Lindveld, *et al.*, *Timelines 9: TED Edition: History for Standard 9, 1986 Syllabus* (Cape Town, 1989).

¹¹⁴ H.G.J. Lindveld, *et al.*, *Timelines 10: TED Edition: History for Standard 10, 1987 Syllabus* (Cape Town, 1988).

¹¹⁵ P. Kallaway, *History Alive* (Pietermaritzburg, 1987).

instead focuses on the history of everyone.¹¹⁶ In the preface to the textbook, Kallaway clearly states what the purpose of the book is:

... it is our aim to try to provide a world history perspective on the 20th century. We wish to move away from a parochial view of historical events and processes and examine them against a background of social, economic and political change on a global scale ... in the second place the 'new history' relates to the attempt in this text to provide a comprehensive vision and interpretation of South African history. School textbooks have long been dominated by the Afrikaner nationalist interpretation of South African history. Some have drawn on the work of 'liberal' historians, but they have neglected the rich tradition of African and revisionist history that has informed and enriched the understanding of our history in the past two decades.¹¹⁷

What is History? A New Approach to History for Students, Workers and Communities (1987) was published by the National Education Crisis Committee as an attempt to redress the pro government bias of other current history textbooks, to be used as a supplement to them or to replace them altogether.¹¹⁸ While the textbook certainly redresses the political balance and is lavishly illustrated with documents, diagrams and photographs, its content is episodic and it lacks the detailed explanation and analysis which should accompany history textbooks. The book is really more of an anthology of historical sources. It is hard to see how it could be used on its own merit as a secondary school textbook. The textbook never enjoyed a wide circulation, particularly among black secondary schools. The DET refused to allow it into schools under its control. I used some of the illustrations in *What is History?* to enliven a Grade 12 June history examination paper which I set in 2006. Reference was made to the publication in the examination paper which was widely used in the Middelburg area of Mpumalanga. Not one of many black history educators reported ever having heard of the publication. Even the region's Curriculum Implementer had no knowledge of the textbook. Surveyed and interviewed black history educators who had taught history during the late apartheid era also did not know of the textbook. Nonetheless, the content of the textbook was certainly an advance on what had gone before. Had the publication been more successfully circulated, it may have had a positive influence on the perceptions of black secondary school educators and learners alike.

¹¹⁶ Rehman, 'From Bantu Education to Social Sciences', p. 22.

¹¹⁷ Kallaway, *History Alive*, p. 1, as quoted by Rehman, 'From Bantu Education to Social Sciences', p. 22.

¹¹⁸ The National Education Crisis Committee (NECC), *What is History? A New Approach to History for Students, Workers and Communities* (Johannesburg, 1987).

Making History 4 (1992) was, according to Rehman, the first example of a South African school history textbook where ‘the apartheid history blinker is gone’.¹¹⁹ The front cover of the textbook depicts the first diamond diggings on the Vaal River. This is a neutral picture of a typical landscape.¹²⁰ When the writers present the first chapter of the textbook the viewpoint of the book is made clear:

... Some things are the way they are because of what happened long ago. Different groups of white people arrived at the Cape from Europe. These people changed many things in South Africa. The biggest change was about land. Eventually the black people, who had been living here long before the whites arrived, lost most of their land.¹²¹

Many examples can be given which demonstrate the writers’ intention of telling history from the side of the previously marginalised peoples of South Africa. On the formation of the Boer Republic in the Transvaal, the writers state:

Many black people lived in the area, like the Pedi, the Venda, the Tsonga, the Swazi, the Tswana and the Ndebele. In 1852 the British allowed the Voortrekkers to form a Boer Republic, called the South African Republic ... The Boers needed workers to work on their farms. The black people farmed for themselves and did not want to work for the Boers. Slavery was against the law but Boers sometimes kidnapped black children and made them work for them.¹²²

Not all school history textbooks in use during the 1980s were in the open-minded mould of *History Alive* and *Making History*. Zwane points to *Active History Standard 10* (1980), a textbook designed for use in black secondary schools as an example of a textbook which still attempted to promote the government policy of separate development:

The policy of separate development is oriented towards the past, the present and the future

- it is based on the traditional principles of separation

¹¹⁹ Marneweck, *et al.*, *Making History 4*: first edition, as referred to by Rehman, ‘From Bantu Education to Social Sciences’, p. 28.

¹²⁰ Rehman, ‘From Bantu Education to Social Sciences’, p. 28.

¹²¹ Marneweck, *et al.*, *Making History 4*, p. 1, as quoted by Rehman, ‘From Bantu Education to Social Sciences’, pp. 28–29.

¹²² Marneweck, *et al.*, *Making History 4*, p. 10, as quoted by Rehman, ‘From Bantu Education to Social Sciences’, p. 30.

- it is designed to change the present society into various national groups by means of legislation that will ensure a new future in which separate populations will co-exist in peace, security and prosperity, without any group losing its identity.¹²³

Zwane asserts that when seen against the background of the countrywide turmoil in black secondary schools during the mid 1980s, such textbooks caused deep seated resentment and rejection of government policies.¹²⁴ Clearly, such history textbooks did little to engender any positive perceptions within black secondary schools toward the subject.

The Human Sciences Research Council 1991 investigation into history teaching in South Africa, which included responses from at least 15 schools run by the DET, revealed that a wide spread of history textbooks were used by black secondary schools. This survey revealed that among the surveyed schools *Active History* was the most popular in Standards 6 to 8 and well represented in Grade 10. Kallaway's *History Alive* was hardly used at all, except at Grade 8 level at one school. The *Timelines* series was not reported to have been used at the surveyed schools. The NECC publication, *What is History?*, was not even on the list of possible options of textbook choices. While the HSRC survey did not include a large number of black secondary schools it does point to the fact that some of the more 'liberal' history textbooks of the time were not as well used as may have been expected within black secondary schools. The survey highlighted the confused state of black secondary school education when it noted that among polled educators, 43,75 per cent had the freedom to choose the textbook which they used in class, while 56,25 per cent reported that they had no freedom of choice.¹²⁵ This may to some extent account for the minimal use of more liberal textbooks. The survey also revealed that black secondary school educators made far more use of the textbooks in their teaching of the subject than did their counterparts in white, coloured and Asian schools.

Questionnaires returned to me by black secondary school history educators who had taught the subject during the apartheid era, confirm the assertions of the above secondary sources about the perceptions which learners and educators held of the history textbooks which were used. The

¹²³ Van Rensburg and Schoeman, *Active History Std 10* (Pretoria, 1980), p. 225, as quoted by Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', p. 17.

¹²⁴ Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', p. 17.

¹²⁵ Van der Merwe, *et al.*, *An Empirical Investigation into the Teaching of History*, pp. 32–36.

educators were asked how they felt about the textbooks on offer during apartheid times. Were they easily available? Were they politically biased? Received responses revealed that history textbooks were in fact easily available in Nkangala. Several respondents held the perception that the easy availability of textbooks was due to the fact that they propagated and justified the political policies of the government.

Even though all educators surveyed felt that the textbooks were biased, every surveyed educator who had taught history during the apartheid era made extensive use of them. The reasons for this included the need to prepare learners to write successful examinations which required regurgitation of textbooks, no matter how biased they were perceived to be; that there was no alternative material available with which to replace them and the fact that educators were afraid of the consequences of not teaching the material offered in the textbooks.¹²⁶

Field research among history educators who had taught in black secondary schools in Nkangala during the apartheid era indicates that few shortages of textbooks were experienced. On the contrary, history textbooks were easily available and extensively used. It is clear that the history textbooks employed in Mpumalanga secondary schools (and elsewhere) were heavily biased and recognised as such by learners and educators alike. The use of these textbooks did not encourage a positive experience of the subject for educators or learners during the apartheid era.

2.5 Infrastructural issues, 1948–1994

An abundance of contextual difficulties encountered by black secondary school educators during the apartheid era served to make the teaching of the subject difficult. These contextual issues, while affecting all subjects taught in black secondary schools did little to create positive perceptions of history education among educators and learners. For the purposes of this dissertation, it is important to understand what the contextual challenges facing black secondary schools were and how these influenced perceptions of history education.

¹²⁶ Educator's questionnaire, Responses 2, 3, 4 and 7.

Most black people during the apartheid era lived in some degree of poverty. This impacted upon the quality of education which many black secondary school learners received. Macquarrie, writing in 1969, explains the relationship between poverty and education:

The direct effects of poverty are obvious. The Non-European Affairs Department in Johannesburg has calculated that two-thirds (68%) of the families in Soweto have incomes below the minimum living costs. The other third could manage provided that it did without luxuries like cigarettes and entertainments – but few human beings can live the austere life of mere economic man. Everyday experience and investigations into African nutrition (as carried out, for example, by the University of Natal) tend to show that malnutrition and under-nutrition inhibit the learning capacity of the child. In our crowded African townships, our labourers' quarters on farms, and our no doubt picturesque African villages in the reserves, houses are often unsanitary and over-crowded. In towns and cities, and approximately one-third of our African live in these, space for the healthy, educational exploratory activities of childhood is too often lacking.¹²⁷

The widespread poverty which afflicted so many black learners in South Africa was reflected in poor educational facilities. Inadequate facilities in South African black secondary schools were a problem long before the advent of Bantu Education. The Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Native Education of 1935–1936 (otherwise known as the Welsh Commission) found that 70 per cent of black children of school-going age were not at school, largely because of a lack of facilities to accommodate them.¹²⁸ By the early 1970s, classrooms in black secondary schools were generally inadequate. Badat points out that many classrooms were unfit for school use at all. When they were available, they were overcrowded and there was little opportunity for individual attention from educators who were overworked and underpaid.¹²⁹ McConkey states that where classrooms were provided, they had limited resources and were poorly furnished.¹³⁰ Writing about the state of South African education in 1993, Smith stated that many schools were still totally destitute and lacked books or even basic resources.¹³¹ Poor classroom facilities did little to enhance the learning or perceptions of any subject taught at black secondary schools during the apartheid era, including history.

¹²⁷ J.W. Macquarrie, 'The Main Needs for the Future in Bantu Education', Paper presented at the 1969 Conference on Bantu Education (Johannesburg, 1969), p. 2.

¹²⁸ The Report of the Interdepartmental Committee on Native Education, 1936, (UG 29/1936), as quoted by Behr, *Education in South Africa*, p. 31.

¹²⁹ S. Badat, 'The Expansion of Black Tertiary Education 1977–1990; Reform and Contradiction', in E. Unterhalter, *et al.*, *Apartheid Education and Popular Struggle* (Johannesburg, 1991), p. 90.

¹³⁰ W.G. McConkey, 'Bantu Education: A Critical Survey', *Theoria* 32 (1972), pp. 8–9.

¹³¹ I.R. Smith, 'New Lessons in South Africa's History', *History Today*, 43, 7 (1993), p. 6.

Malie noted that history educators in black secondary schools had to contend with large classes. He observed that in some of the urban areas, classes of 65 or more were found.¹³² Nuxumalo noted that a source of dissatisfaction was caused by the existence of large classes in black secondary schools. ‘Enormous’ classes were encountered by educators who had left training colleges and universities and started teaching.¹³³ Kgware, writing in 1969 noted that ‘The phenomenal increase in pupil enrolment ... has been purchased at a high price, namely, overcrowding of available school space and chronic understaffing.’¹³⁴ Referring to overcrowded black secondary school classrooms, Auerbach points out that ‘Too many pupils in the room must also encourage passive learners – and passive learners get less character training in the classrooms, both from their teachers and from one another’.¹³⁵ Malie contended that the large number of learners found in the history classes made controlling written work very difficult. As a result learners lost interest in the subject and educators became less enthusiastic about teaching it.¹³⁶

Ongoing supply problems with school history textbooks was a further contextual factor which hindered the teaching of history at black secondary schools and which assisted in creating negative perceptions of the subject during the apartheid era. Textbooks were often in short supply at black secondary schools. Ndlovu notes that the education department was notoriously slow in providing textbooks and that an unwillingness to cooperate with the department could result in some schools having to wait for up to two years to receive supplies of history textbooks.¹³⁷ Shortages of textbooks appear to have been widespread, although my field research among educators who had taught history at black secondary schools during the apartheid era in the Nkangala region of Mpumalanga indicates that few shortages were experienced in this area of the country.

¹³² Malie, ‘Bantu Secondary High Schools’, pp. 95–96.

¹³³ Nuxumalo, ‘Sociological Significance of the Teaching of History’, p. 176.

¹³⁴ W.M. Kgware, ‘Primary and Secondary Schools in African Education in South Africa’, Paper presented at the 1969 Conference on Bantu Education (Johannesburg, 1969), p. 17.

¹³⁵ F.E. Auerbach, ‘School Curricula in Relation to Community Needs’, Paper presented at the 1969 Conference on Bantu Education (Johannesburg, 1969), p. 13.

¹³⁶ Malie, ‘Bantu Secondary High Schools’, p. 96.

¹³⁷ Ndlovu, ‘Perceptions of History’, p. 19.

Many black secondary schools, especially schools in rural areas, were without electronic and audiovisual facilities. While this would have negatively impacted on the teaching of all subjects, history education is greatly enriched by the use of audiovisual facilities. Lack of such facilities meant that the history education received in many black schools would have lacked the depth and immediacy which suitable audiovisual equipment may have given it. Malie noted that electronic equipment was inadequate in black secondary schools with the result that few schools were in a position to make use of visual aids in the teaching of history. He further notes that in his time, few schools had made an effort to introduce visual aids as a way of making history study more interesting or relevant and interesting.¹³⁸

History educators who taught in Nkangala during the apartheid era related that educational resources of any kind were rare at black secondary schools, making the effective teaching of the subject difficult. One respondent reported that at the rural school which he had attended as a learner no facilities of any nature were available.¹³⁹ Another related that no audio-visual equipment of any kind was available at the school which he had attended as a learner.¹⁴⁰ A further respondent recalled that audio-visual equipment could be borrowed from educational authorities – although the material which accompanied the equipment promoted government ideology and hence did not encourage independent thinking.¹⁴¹

Horrell noted the following about the issue of the provision of funding for libraries in black schools and the control which the Bantu Education Department (BED) exercised over these libraries in 1964. Subject to certain conditions, the BED subsidised the buying of school library books on a rand-for-rand basis. Half the cost had to be paid for out of school funds. BED control over black school libraries was a method of enforcing ideological compliance. The funds contributed by the school had to be used in such a way that an equal number of books in each of the two official languages and a black language had to be bought. No subsidies were provided for the purchase of books which were not on approved BED lists.¹⁴² Horrell later noted that as

¹³⁸ Malie, 'Bantu Secondary High Schools', pp. 96, 173.

¹³⁹ Educator's questionnaire, Response 1.

¹⁴⁰ Educator's questionnaire, Response 6.

¹⁴¹ Educator's questionnaire, Response 7.

¹⁴² Horrell, *A Decade of Bantu Education*, p. 67.

from 1966, the rand-for-rand subsidy scheme was abolished as schools had not made sufficient use of it. A grant of R900 per year would instead be made to Circuit Inspectors to be given to schools.¹⁴³

The poor condition of school libraries in black secondary schools did not significantly change during the apartheid era. Horrell noted that in the Transvaal, The Institute of Race Relations found school libraries in black secondary schools to be in ‘a pathetic state with perhaps a dozen books to serve a school of several hundreds of children’.¹⁴⁴ Nuxumalo noted that the lack of reference material in black secondary schools left a lot to be desired and in fact defeated the objectives of history teaching.¹⁴⁵ Zwane, when comparing library facilities in black and white matriculation schools, noted that ‘what goes by the label of “library” in a black school cannot even begin to stand beside a library in a white primary school catering for a modest suburb[an] community’.¹⁴⁶

Nuxumalo noted that not having a school library had unfortunate educational repercussions. Learners came to hold the belief that only prescribed textbooks contain the correct information needed to pass examinations. Education is therefore confined to a single book. Learners are unable to follow up things which have aroused their interest and do not get into the habit of independently searching for information.¹⁴⁷ The development of such negative academic habits clearly did not bode well for the creation of a positive perception of history education among learners. History educators from the Nkangala region of Mpumalanga who had themselves experienced history education during the apartheid era as learners or as educators, pointed to a lack of decent school library facilities. One educator reported that no library facilities existed at the school which he had attended as a learner¹⁴⁸ while another noted that libraries at black schools were so poor that they existed in name only.¹⁴⁹ A third surveyed educator related that in his day learners had to make use of community libraries.¹⁵⁰

¹⁴³ Horrell, *Bantu Education to 1968*, p.75.

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 67–68.

¹⁴⁵ Nuxumalo, ‘Sociological Significance of the Teaching of History’, p.120.

¹⁴⁶ Zwane, ‘An Examination of the Position and Role of History’, p. 114.

¹⁴⁷ Nuxumalo, ‘Sociological Significance of the Teaching of History’, pp. 109–110.

¹⁴⁸ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 1.

¹⁴⁹ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 5.

¹⁵⁰ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 6.

Few, if any black secondary schools enjoyed the luxury of organised historical outings during the apartheid era. Legal restrictions on movement, petty apartheid regulations and the sheer cost of organising such outings made them all but impossible. The history syllabus was Eurocentric and places of historical interest mostly involved white, Afrikaans history. Access to places of historical interest were in any event limited to black people. Malie noted that there were no significant historical monuments which black learners could visit in order to stimulate an interest in the study of their own past.¹⁵¹ Educators from Nkangala who had attended secondary school as history learners during the apartheid era reported that school historical excursions were few and far between. Reasons provided for this included a lack of finance, an inability to travel freely and the fact that monuments and museums glorified apartheid.¹⁵² Whatever the reasons, it is clear that a lack of historical outings was a further contextual factor which handicapped the teaching and appreciation of history in black secondary schools during the apartheid era.

2.6 Conclusion

It is clear that many contextual factors conspired to make it difficult for educators and learners in black secondary schools to hold positive perceptions of school history. The National Party government's policy of separate development extended deeply into the education provided for black people. This inferior education was designed to support the government's apartheid policies by keeping black people under-educated and domiciled as far as possible in rural (homeland) areas. As is clearly evident in the various school history syllabi and school history textbooks which pertained to history education within all types of secondary schools, school history education was designed and eagerly promoted as ideological support for the apartheid system. Taken together with the limited physical resources available at almost all apartheid-era black secondary schools, these political and educational factors led to the development of negative perceptions about the school history education which black secondary school learners received. These perceptions took hold among the wider black community, black secondary school learners and their history educators.

¹⁵¹ Malie, 'Bantu Secondary High Schools', p. 37.

¹⁵² Educator's questionnaire, Responses 1, 3, 6 and 7.

CHAPTER THREE

EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF HISTORY EDUCATION, 1948–1994

3.1 Significance and role of black secondary school history educators

The National Party government recognised the importance of school history educators in South Africa. History education at school level was regarded as important within white and black secondary school education alike, as an apology for the policy of apartheid. It was therefore very important for history educators during the apartheid era to adhere to the official ideology which the government wished to promote. It is clear from my research that black history educators who taught history during the apartheid era were closely observed by the Special Branch of the police force to ensure that they did not speak against the policies of the government. The belief of interviewed history educators who taught history during the apartheid era was that their educational activities were of more interest to the apartheid security authorities than were other black educators of the time.¹

Until the mid 1980s the role of many black history educators was predominantly as apologists for apartheid policies – with some notable exceptions. As the ideological leanings of many black secondary school educators changed towards one of sympathy with the liberation struggle, so the role of black history educators began to change.² The reaction of black history educators to apartheid education and the perceptions which they held of the subject which they taught will be examined in general, with particular reference to black history educators who taught in the Nkangala region of Mpumalanga.

¹ Interviews, Mr J. Mathunyane, Witbank/Emalahleni, 28 April 2008 and Mr I. Nkhlemo, Middelburg, 2 May 2008.

² This process of ideological change among black secondary school educators, with special reference to the Zebediela region of what is now the Limpopo Province has been well researched by Lekgoathi, 'Teacher Militancy', pp. 226–252.

3.2 Reactions of educators to the introduction of Bantu Education

The Bantu Education Act was enacted in 1953 and began to be implemented by 1955. Along with secondary school educators teaching other disciplines, history educators were faced with various alternatives when deciding how to react to the imposition of Bantu Education.

The research of Soudien³ and Cameron⁴ provides an understanding as to how black secondary school educators reacted to the imposition of Bantu Education, with the changed curriculum, pedagogical, administrative and political arrangements that it entailed. Soudien's findings were based upon six years of oral research conducted between 1993 and 1999, during which over 80 interviews were conducted. Cameron's M.Ed. dissertation of 1989 which explored the question of black educators' responses and resistance to the introduction of Bantu Education with special reference to the Cape Town area formed the basis of Soudien's later work. Cameron investigated black educator reactions to Bantu Education between 1945 and 1960.

Soudien examined the responses of educators to the introduction of Bantu Education in four categories. *Resistance* entailed the use of reaction strategies which were overtly hostile towards Bantu Education. *Strategic resistance* entailed the use of a cooperative strategy, as educators chose to work within the system, but tried to subvert it from the inside. *Compliance* involved educators who opted to conform to the new educational regime without accepting it. *Acceptance* referred to those educators who gladly embraced the changes introduced by the government.

Soudien points to the work of Cameron, which illustrates the fact that much unhappiness accompanied the introduction of Bantu Education. The principles of Bantu Education were strongly opposed by many black educators and their unions. A climate of suspicion and uncertainty prevailed. As educators attempted to make their feelings known, public meetings were called for. Agitation began within communities. Some educators remained within the

³ C. Soudien, 'Teachers' Responses to the Introduction of Apartheid Education', in Kallaway, ed., *The History of Education under Apartheid*.

⁴ Cameron, 'The Introduction of Bantu Education'.

teaching profession and others left, moving to private schools or out of education altogether. Soudien sadly notes that some became clerks or insurance salesmen.

Many educators opted not to actively oppose the authorities, but rather to resist in more subtle ways. Departmental prescriptions were evaded and instructions ignored. Soudien notes that many educators believed that their very role as educators was to confront the authorities and deal with them. Some educators tried to critique the new curriculum in their classrooms, and so attempted to educate their learners to be critically minded.

Yet other black educators chose the route of compliance. Some found themselves isolated from supportive organisations or colleagues and therefore in a difficult position to oppose Bantu Education. Indeed, it was difficult to challenge the system, when under the authority of Bantu Education inspectors and school principals. Soudien points to the cultural habit of the day which encouraged the virtue of obedience to authority. Black people had been taught at home, school and church to 'behave and obey'. While it is easy to criticise such an attitude from a comfortable distance of space and time, it must be remembered that many educators had family responsibilities and dependents to care for, and thus feared losing their jobs.

Soudien notes that a large degree of acceptance of Bantu Education was also visible. Many black educators actually welcomed it. Some had not felt that missionary education was altogether a good thing. Some were in favour of the notion of separate identities which apartheid ideology proposed. Some welcomed Bantu Education as an escape from the negative attentions of the authorities.⁵

Tabata is less tolerant than Soudien or Cameron on the question of the varied nature of black educator responses to Bantu Education.⁶ Referring (rather emotionally) to a new breed of black educator ushered in with the advent of Bantu Education – an educator who had not opted to resist

⁵ Soudien, 'Teachers' Responses to the Introduction of Apartheid Education', pp. 214–221.

⁶ Tabata, *Education for Barbarism*.

its imposition – Tabata notes that ‘Obviously a special creature, a Bantu-ised teacher is necessary for Bantu Education...’⁷

Tabata saw Bantu Education as demeaning and humiliating to black educators who had chosen to remain within the system, or had entered it:

The debasement of the teacher is something to outrage those who are accustomed to thinking of teaching as an honourable profession. He is not only robbed of status but of security of tenure and the proper practice of his calling. Under normal circumstances, any professional or civil servant, once employed, has certain rights which ensure the security of his employment. But under Bantu Education the position of a teacher with respect to his immediate employer is reduced to that of master-and-servant. The long list of regulations governing his employment would be more appropriate to the control of a criminal than a teacher...⁸

Tabata goes on to point out that a ‘reign of terror’ had been let loose on teachers. He cites cases of the Criminal Investigation Department (CID) swooping on schools, interrogating and searching teachers in front of pupils. He cites examples of teachers with long and distinguished records being dismissed simply on the grounds of being ‘unsuitable’ for Bantu Education.⁹

Lekgoathi, writing about the development of educator militancy in the present-day Limpopo area of Zebediela, also asserts that until the period of the mid-1980s school crisis, black educators had generally been unwilling to oppose the educational authorities. He notes that since the 1950s educators’ unions were led by a ‘cautious leadership’ which supported the idea of remaining politically neutral and working with the educational authorities. Lekgoathi states that unions were in fact often perceived to be taking the side of the authorities, rather than the educators they claimed to represent.¹⁰

Under these circumstances, it is hardly surprising that most black educators in the 1950s and 1960s opted to cooperate with apartheid authorities in general and the Bantu Education Department in particular. During this period, it is clear that most black history educators also

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 31.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 32.

⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 33.

¹⁰ Lekgoathi, ‘Teacher Militancy’, pp. 230–231.

chose the path of least resistance. Many were to exhibit a surprising enthusiasm for apartheid ideology.

My primary research, conducted among history educators in the Nkangala region of Mpumalanga, suggests that the majority of history educators in the 1950s and 1960s adopted a very conservative approach to history teaching. Some of the respondents who completed detailed questionnaires were able to remember their own history lessons as educators and learners. The universal response to a question concerning how history was taught as a subject in black secondary schools before 1976 was that nothing contentious or out of line with apartheid policy was propagated:

Before 1976, history was taught to be in line with the political prescription of the Nationalist Party government of the time. Apartheid was justified politically and religiously...¹¹

In this case educators were to use the variety of teaching methods such as the textbook method, discussion method, narrative method – but in the absence of politics as it was separated from education – and an educator was not allowed to talk politics...¹²

Many black educators in general, and many black history educators in particular opted not to resist the prescriptions of Bantu Education. This would clearly have had an impact on how they perceived not only their vocations as educators but also as to how they perceived history as a school subject. It would influence their perceptions of the value of the subject itself and values attached to the teaching of history at secondary school level. It would also influence the strategies they used to teach the subject.

3.3 Quality of black history educators after the introduction of Bantu Education

Nuxumalo describes some of the qualities which a competent history educator should possess:

¹¹ Educator's questionnaire, Response 3.

¹² Educator's questionnaire, Response 5.

The functional interpretation of history will also depend on the ability of the teacher to understand history. This calls for experience, qualifications, the way in which the history teacher was himself taught history, and his attitude towards the subject at the present given time. The teacher must therefore be aware not only of the reasons of teaching history generally, but of those that hold good throughout a child's education and which are valid only for children of particular ages. The teacher must be sufficiently aware of the facilities and inhibitions the child of a certain age has in adapting to his environment, in relating to his multiracial society and in playing his role in the perpetuation of those ideals on which society survives.¹³

Malie notes that the study of history is necessary since of all subjects, history gives most clues to an understanding of human life. Teachers should be people of knowledge, character and wisdom. History educators should believe in their subject and be interested in their work. They must know their subject, and show interest in places and events of historic interest. They should keep abreast of current events and be alive to the historical needs of learners. They must be able to assess and discuss the problems of their subject intelligently. They must have the power of seeing the correlation of history to other subjects. They should be able to interpret the subject in such a way that their teaching emphasises tolerance, intellectual adventurousness, cooperation, honesty, a sense of responsibility and consideration for other social groups.¹⁴ These are high ideals indeed. Competent school history teaching clearly requires an impressive array of skills and abilities. Sadly, competent history teaching is hard to find in many South African secondary schools from the introduction of Bantu education to the present-day.

After the introduction of Bantu Education, it is clear that the standard of education of black educators experienced a sharp drop. Macquarrie notes that as many white educators chose to leave 'African work' because of deliberate government policy and in some cases distaste for the new system, the 'Africanisation' of Bantu Education resulted in an influx of poorly qualified black educators. Macquarrie noted that only three per cent of black educators had comparable qualifications to educators in white schools, and that about a fifth had no recognisable qualifications at all.¹⁵

¹³ Nuxumalo, 'Sociological Significance of the Teaching of History', p. 96.

¹⁴ Malie, 'Bantu Secondary High Schools', pp. 38, 69, 81–82.

¹⁵ Macquarrie, 'The Main Needs for the Future in Bantu Education', p. 11.

Tabata, writing of young black educators entering the profession, puts the case very strongly:

A Nazi-like regimentation governs these young trainees, as it does the schooling from top to bottom. They are carefully screened, selected and indoctrinated before they are let loose on the children. To begin with their educational qualifications are scandalously low. They require no more than a Standard 6 pass to enter a course of training for one, two or three years to become primary school teachers. Those who are to teach in the higher primary classes take a Junior Certificate (J.C.) and a couple of years of teacher training. Their wages are those of an unskilled labourer.¹⁶

Horrell adds ‘... It is perturbing to note that the number of employed teachers with no professional qualifications and an academic background ranging merely from Standard VI to matriculation has been increasing – from 1 979 in 1961 to 4 826 in 1966’.¹⁷ Those educators who had university degrees also dropped, from 36.3 per cent of the total number in secondary high schools in 1961 to only 25.5 per cent in 1965.¹⁸

Malie, describing the situation in the Southern Transvaal Region (now the province of Gauteng) in 1967, noted that most educators did not possess the qualifications to be effective history educators. More than 95 per cent of the history educators in the schools which he surveyed did not major in history or were undergraduates whose area of study and interests were in completely different fields. Quoting from the *Statistical Annual Report of Bantu Education: Annual report for the Calendar Year, 1963*, Malie illustrates that out of 30 119 black educators in South Africa, only 667 held degrees and professional qualifications, which means that only two per cent were fully qualified. In Malie’s particular geographical area of study, the Southern Transvaal Region, 78 educators taught history but only four had majored in the subject.¹⁹

Writing about the politics of resistance in the former Eastern Transvaal (now Mpumalanga), Holden and Mathabatha describe a boom in the number of schools in the province. Sadly though, the provision of schools was not complemented by the provision of quality educators. They point

¹⁶ Tabata, *Education for Barbarism*, p. 33.

¹⁷ M. Horrell, ‘Bantu School Education, 1955 to 1968: A Review and Assessment’, Paper presented at the 1969 Conference on Bantu Education (Johannesburg, 1969), p. 19.

¹⁸ Macquarrie, ‘The Main Needs for the Future in Bantu Education’, pp. 11–12.

¹⁹ Malie, ‘Bantu Secondary High Schools’, pp. 75–76.

out that many educators were untrained and unqualified – indeed, some had only recently matriculated.²⁰

By the time of the 1976 Soweto uprising, black educators were perceived to be challenged by learners in a variety of ways. Learners became unhappy due to perceived educator inability, corporal punishment, general unhelpfulness, a lack of commitment and effort, failure to explain work, drinking too much and school absenteeism.²¹

The poor teaching of history in black secondary schools may in part have been caused by the difficulties of motivating history educators to do ‘extra’ work which could serve to enliven the subject. Educators lacked the funds to buy extra books, which were seen as an unwarranted expense, and even as a factor contributing to ‘his starvation’. The lack of libraries also demotivated and deprived history educators of additional reading. An attitude of general indifference towards books developed. Nuxumalo posits that it is only when the history educator himself perceives the value of history, that he can be an asset to his learners concerning the teaching of it.²²

By the 1980s most learners were well aware that the education which they were receiving was of a very poor quality. Lekgoathi states that new educators coming into the system in this period either had no training at all or had received their training at poorly resourced ‘Bantustan’ colleges or universities. Most were ill-equipped as educators. Failure rates rose dramatically, and in some areas 80 per cent of learners failed to matriculate.²³ Writing in 1982, Van der Berg and Buckland noted that there was a need for the corps of history educators to become better acquainted with the nature of history as a discipline and with the debate about the interpretation of history in South Africa, and to become better at styles of teaching other than a simple transmission model. Van den Berg and Buckland also point to the fact that even at this time, 65

²⁰ Holden and Mathabatha, ‘The Politics of Resistance’, in P. Delius, ed., *Mpumalanga History and Heritage*, p. 411.

²¹ Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, p. 79.

²² Nuxumalo, ‘Sociological Significance of the Teaching of History’, pp. 177,179.

²³ Lekgoathi, ‘Teacher Militancy’, pp. 238–239.

per cent of educators in 'coloured' and 'black' schools had no academic background beyond matriculation to support their teaching of history.²⁴

Lekgoathi regards poor quality of teaching to have been one of the factors which precipitated the widespread class boycotts of 1985–1986.²⁵ He points out that educators were 'walking a tightrope', caught between the demands of the educational authorities and students.

They dragged themselves to school with little hope of achieving anything. They feared that the authorities would misconstrue remaining at home as tacit support for the students and victimise them. At the same time, they knew that the students were watching their movements. These pressures led to a high rate of drunkenness, absenteeism, resignation and apathy among teachers...²⁶

Many of the 'compromised' educators who had been coopted by the state were able, according to Lekgoathi to 'hastily' join liberation movements after February 1990, when a freer political environment had opened up.²⁷ Lekgoathi is heavily critical of unionised black educators in the early 1990s whom he maintains used the unions as a shield to hide their own incompetence and lack of commitment to their students. He describes their actions as a dereliction of duty, which 'signified something not particularly radical or revolutionary, which was indefensible even by the standards of a radical reinterpretation of professionalism.'²⁸

Smith reflects that by the early 1990s history educators were demoralised. He notes that at secondary schools, learners were subjected to an authoritarian 'top-down' tradition of teaching, imposed by educators who themselves were poorly educated. The emphasis of education in black schools was for Smith, on learning how to pass examinations, rather than on education.²⁹

The Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) 1991 survey of the state of history education in South African secondary schools indicates that during the early 1990s black history educators were still considerably less academically qualified than their white, coloured or Indian

²⁴ O. Van den Berg and P. Buckland, 'History as a Subject in South African Schools', *Teaching History*, 34 (1982), p. 25.

²⁵ Lekgoathi, 'Teacher Militancy', p. 239.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 241.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 245.

²⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 252.

²⁹ Smith, 'New Lessons', p. 6.

counterparts. Fifty per cent of the surveyed black group had a History III qualification, compared to 95,23 per cent of white secondary school history educators, 88,24 per cent of coloured and 90,32 per cent of Indian history educators. Of the HSRC sample group, 31,25 per cent of black secondary school history educators had no formal qualifications in the subject at all. No post-graduate qualification in history was possessed by 93,75 per cent, a figure considerably higher than their counterparts of other racial groups.³⁰ Alarming, 62,5 per cent of black secondary school educators felt that their training in history was adequate. Ironically, few of the better qualified educators felt their history training to be adequate.³¹ The HSRC study further reveals that 62,5 per cent of black secondary school history educators had not attended any form of in-service training course compared to 23,81 per cent of their white counterparts.³²

It is clear that various factors contributed to the general poor quality of black educators during the apartheid era. The government did not encourage a high level of education among black educators, who had little incentive to improve their own qualifications. The political situation in which these educators had to operate made it difficult for them to adopt a professional attitude toward their vocation. History educators had to teach their subject along government-approved lines and trod an awkward path between placating educational authorities and measuring up to the increasingly liberal aspirations of their learners. Given this situation, the fact that the majority of black secondary school history educators adopted an apathetic perception toward their subject or even cooperated with the educational authorities of the day, is not difficult to understand.

3.4 Perceptions of history educators

While most black history educators were, at least until the 1980s of a conservative political (and educational) disposition, there were some exceptions to this pattern. Some educators during the apartheid era (and indeed up to the present) perceived the value of history and any other school education as being little more than a passport to obtaining a Junior or Senior Certificate. Some

³⁰ Van der Merwe, *et al.*, *An Empirical Investigation into the Teaching of History*, p. 10.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 12. In contrast to the black history educators sampled, only 38,10 per cent of white educators; 23,53 per cent of coloured educators and 38,71 per cent of Indian educators sampled felt that the history training they had received was adequate, despite the fact that these groups were on average far better qualified.

³² *Ibid.*, p. 14.

who had chosen the route of acceptance of the apartheid order saw history education as supporting the ideals of separate development espoused by the government.³³ Some educators saw history education as a tool which could be used for cultural and political liberation while others saw history education as a way of Westernising their learners, seeing their own culture as primitive and deficient. An interesting mixture of these sentiments was expressed by one of the educators surveyed in Nkangala who related the idea that ‘British’ education and values were seen to have a high premium during and beyond the mission school education period. Job Mathunyane approved of the infusion of these values into black secondary school classrooms despite having later become a staunch adherent of Black Consciousness ideals – seemingly contradictory attitudes but nevertheless indicative of the attitudes of many black educators at least until the mid 1970s.³⁴

The various reactions to the introduction of apartheid education as outlined by Cameron (1986) and Soudien (2002) are all reflected in the perceptions of black history educators toward their subject.³⁵ The research which I conducted in 2008 among black secondary school history educators from the Nkangala region revealed varied responses to apartheid education and perceptions of the value of their subject. While most educators were politically passive by choice or because of the pressure of difficult circumstance, there were those who boldly defied the conservative, prescriptive approach toward history education advocated by the Bantu Education Department and later the Department of Education and Training.

Moxolisi ‘Bra Ace’ Mgxashe relates how during the 1950s while at school in the Eastern Cape, his history educator, a Mr Mntanase, refused to teach history according to the prescribed guidelines and attempted to educate his learners in a different way:

Our history teacher at the Dutch Reformed Church School, Mr Mntanase, strongly refuted the claims of the white colonial historians that the so-called ‘Kaffir Wars’ had come about because the Africans had stolen cattle from the whites. His argument was that Jan van Riebeeck and the British settlers who had come to this country did not bring any cattle with them. ‘Who were the thieves then?’,

³³ As outlined by Soudien, ‘Teachers’ Responses to the Introduction of Apartheid’, p. 214.

³⁴ Interview, Mr J. Mathunyane, Witbank/Emalahleni, 28 April 2008.

³⁵ Soudien, ‘Teachers’ Responses to the Introduction of Apartheid’, p. 214 ff.

Mntanase would ask. We screamed in reply, ‘Ngabelungu!’ (‘the white people, of course’).³⁶

Some history educators opted for what Soudien terms ‘strategic resistance’.³⁷ Writing of the situation in Mpumalanga in the 1960s and 1970s, Holden and Mathabatha note that some schools were staffed by educators who had strong political views.³⁸ Such schools could become sites of political education. Mathabatha relates an interview which he conducted with Patrick Motau, who remembers how his history teacher would often interrupt the syllabus to give the ‘real’ history of South Africa:

I enrolled for my Form I at Elukhanizweni Secondary in 1956. We were taught by teachers from all over South Africa but my own teachers mainly came from Pretoria. Erik Nkondo, Walter Sibone and Sehlogo were all from townships near Pretoria. I must say, our teachers were very political, especially those who taught us history. At times they would stop in the middle of the lesson and start talking about the unfairness of the apartheid system in South Africa and anti-colonial struggles in Africa for example Kenya and Ghana. We would usually have contentious political debates on such issues.³⁹

Some political activists in Mpumalanga were given their introduction to politics by history educators. An example is given of activist Sam Mkhabela, who was given his first taste of politics by a Mr Mababaso, his history educator. Holden and Mathabatha point to a link between learners who had a strong interest in history and political activity.⁴⁰

An attitude of compliance, rather than resistance was adopted by some black secondary school history educators during the apartheid era. Referring to the period 1961–1964, Zwane declares that most educators who taught South African history during this period were seen to be lukewarm about the issues of textbook contents, despite a growing political disquiet around them in the wider community. Zwane also reports that his respondents pointed out that their history educators during this period never encouraged open discussions in class, possibly because it was

³⁶ M. Mgxashe, *Are You With Us? The Story of a PAC Activist* (Cape Town/Houghton, 2006), p. 34.

³⁷ Soudien, ‘Teachers’ Responses to the Introduction of Apartheid’, p. 214.

³⁸ Holden and Mathabatha, ‘The Politics of Resistance’.

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 405.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, pp. 408, 415.

not unusual at this time to have police informers planted in classrooms for the express purpose of informing the authorities about the activities of their peers and educators.⁴¹

Maree spent some time during April 1975 observing history and social studies lessons in various black Soweto schools. She made a special effort to observe the relationships between educators and learners to the content of their learning. She reported on the teaching of a wide variety of secondary school educators, ranging from missionary trained educators to new graduates and young unqualified educators. Maree noted that some sections of the history syllabus were left out. Although the grounds given for this was that the syllabus was too long to teach everything, Maree concluded that there were in fact two causes for this – that what was written in the textbook was disliked, and an unwillingness to teach it to students who would ridicule. She observed an older teacher reading from the textbook, without allowing any opportunity to learners to ask questions, thereby avoiding the possibility of difficult issues arising.⁴²

Maree and Zwane's work points to the politically conservative disposition of many black secondary school educators through the apartheid era until the mid 1980s when various circumstances conspired to change these attitudes. The assertions of Malie⁴³ are an example of an even deeper conservatism which extends to the point of a self depreciating view toward the aspirations and culture of his own people. Malie's view of black culture can be seen as self-depreciating at best. 'Bantu culture', for Malie, is loaded with superstition which has led to disastrous consequences. A sense of security and spiritual peace can be obtained from Western civilization. The function of the history syllabus is to emphasise what is wrong with the belief which black people have in the supernatural. The history syllabus should aspire to teach black learners what is good and beautiful by educating them about Western democratic principles and responsibilities. Malie's views on the intrinsic poverty of black culture become shocking to modern readers as he notes that the 'Bantu' 'would have to dig deep into the pages of their national history to look for the useful heritage bequeathed upon them by the past.'⁴⁴

⁴¹ Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', pp. 44, 63.

⁴² J. Maree, 'The Hearts and Minds of the People', in Kallaway, ed., *Apartheid and Education*, pp. 152, 155.

⁴³ Malie, 'Bantu Secondary High Schools'.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 120–123.

A spirit of reconciliation (which at times could be seen as subservience) is evident in Malie's writing, an attitude made all the more remarkable since in the late 1960s the government was not known for incorporating the ideals of black people. Malie notes that black people should study the history of the Great Trek without bias. They should stop making South African history a story of racial conflict and hatred. It would be easy, notes Malie, for black people to see themselves as the 'wronged party', but this would fail to produce mutual respect and love. In the study of history, radicalism should be avoided. Black people should focus on the study of their own nations to develop a spirit of patriotism and nationalism.⁴⁵

Malie's views on Communism seem to echo those of the National Party government. Black children should study the conflict between communism and capitalism so as to be able to choose in an unbiased manner what is ideal for them. Malie then prescribes the answer as to what is best by stating that the 'Bantu people by tradition are not communistically inclined and the dangers of communism should be emphasized.'⁴⁶ African Nationalism is a topic which needed to be studied with the emphasis that it portrayed a 'narrow nationalism which would be in conflict with internationalism and real patriotism'.⁴⁷

Two further quotes are taken from Malie's dissertation, as they demonstrate the depths of conservatism to which he, and many other black history educators of the time were prepared to go. The first concerns visiting various places of historical interest:

Besides occasional expeditions to places of historical significance, like museums, art galleries, battle-fields, and churches, pupils should go to places like the Voortrekker Monument. These symbols of the past should be visited with a positive attitude. The aim should not be to see it as a glorification of the conqueror over the conquered but as a triumph of the ultimate good over forces of antagonism...⁴⁸

Finally, on the battle of Blood River:

...one can remember the battle of Blood River, which signifies the break of the Zulu power. A visit to such a place should therefore be tackled with care and [an]

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, pp. 124, 125.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 127.

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 185–186.

unprejudiced approach. This should not be shown as signifying the break of Zulu power but the culmination of the essential understanding between races. It was this war which ties the destinies of the Afrikaners with that of the Bantu people together and laid the foundations of present day South Africa...⁴⁹

Malie's understanding of South African history, unusual as it would appear to be to twenty-first century South Africans is interesting in itself, yet it is his subservient approach to white political power, so typical of many black educators of the early apartheid era which is of interest to this study.

Eva Motshabi's 1973 thesis researched various aspects of black secondary school history education in the Eastern Cape area and provides further evidence of the conservative values which black historians of the time espoused.⁵⁰ Motshabi refers to three 'stages' in the development of 'Bantu historiography'. She refers to an 'embryonic' stage, wherein emphasis was placed upon legends, myths, allegories and sagas which were an account of the heroic deeds of African ancestors. These were related in oral form, with little apparent regard for facts. Motshabi regards them as primarily moral in nature and unreliable as real sources of historical information.

Motshabi terms the second stage of African historiography as 'adolescent'. This was, for her, a stage of protest against white, or Western accounts of history. History was written primarily to awaken a political consciousness in urban and educated non-Europeans. Centered on black people, this history writing was designed to further the cause of their liberation and to correct past falsifications and distortions evident in the white people's recording of history. Motshabi notes that according to this approach, 'the few African chiefs and heroes are elevated beyond reasonable proportions'. This she terms 'undue lionization'. She also notes that some black historians react bitterly to the unfair treatment which blacks are accorded in the pages of the textbooks which were current in her day.⁵¹

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 187.

⁵⁰ Motshabi, 'Use of the Textbook'.

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 44-45.

It is the third, final and what Motshabi terms the ‘mature’ stage of Bantu historiography which is of great interest to this study. Motshabi posits that:

The adult stage of Bantu historiography is that which dispenses with the ‘melting pot’ idea of the racial groups in South Africa and accepts *the principle of separate development* [own emphasis] of the national groups in the Republic, if this principle is carried to its logical conclusion...⁵²

Motshabi is suspicious of what she terms a new political and national consciousness which she related to an upsurge of nationalism in Africa. She saw this as a disturbing new trend which negatively influenced learners.⁵³ She further adds that the African is under the obligation to interact positively with other South African racial groups.⁵⁴

As with Malie’s work, Motshabi also exhibits the tendency to devalue her own black culture. In the early apartheid years history was clearly not valued by most black educators for its liberative properties. It would be easy from a contemporary standpoint to see Malie, Motshabi and many others as sad ‘Uncle Tom’ figures. Yet as the work of Soudien, Cameron, Lekgoathi and others illustrate, black educators during this time were under immense pressure from many quarters to conform to the status quo, no matter how distasteful it was.

Legodi argues that after June 16 1976 the culture of learning and educating collapsed in black schools. From the late 1970s, black secondary schools came to a complete standstill as authority collapsed. Educators and principals became ‘spectators’ in their schools and were widely seen as tools of the apartheid system. In this environment, educators became demoralised, going to school unprepared and thus, argues Legodi, they contributed to a collapsing school system.⁵⁵

Sozama Secondary School, situated in Mhluzi township outside Middelburg, Mpumalanga, was a focal point of resistance to apartheid generally and apartheid educational practices in particular, from the 1950s through to the turbulent resistance of the mid 1980s. Much of this resistance was

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 3.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 46.

⁵⁵ Legodi, ‘The Transformation of Education’, pp. 77–80.

due to the activities and influence of history educators who were clearly not of the typically conservative persuasion which seems to have been the norm.

Mr Job Mathunyane, a learner who completed his Junior Certificate at Sozama in 1964, before moving to the Botshabelo Mission Station outside Middelburg to complete his Senior Certificate in 1966, later became a history educator at Sozama from the early 1970s. He relates how the atmosphere at black schools in the 1950s was military, as a result of the influence of two world wars. Resistance to apartheid education took a military form:

We had to do 'Scouts' [cadets] and corporal punishment was done. Blacks feared and hated Afrikaners. We did resist in certain ways. In Scouts we sang songs – political songs – in the vernacular. One song was sung to the tune of 'John Brown's Body', which we knew because of the war. The words went 'The world is topsy-turvey 'cause Malan is going to rule...' We also sang Pedi songs of resistance...⁵⁶

Mathunyane relates how by the 1960s resistance to apartheid within Sozama had become more intense. The attainment of independence by African countries was expounded upon by his history educators:

These countries became role models for African resistance. History teachers encouraged their learners to emulate Ghana and become more vocal in the classroom. The learners I was with, including myself, read international magazines on politics – anything we could find. We took books from our poor school libraries and shared them among ourselves. We read *Drum*, *The Plain Truth*. There was no difference between politics and history. In fact, history teachers did not have to teach politics, the learners were reading for themselves. Children were politicized. We read newspapers like the *Sunday Times* and *The Rand Daily Mail* every week. At Sozama my history teachers encouraged this reading...⁵⁷

⁵⁶ Interview, Mr J. Mathunyane, Witbank/Emalahleni, 28 April 2008. Mxolisi Mgxashe in *Are you with us?* pp. 29–30 also relates how music and song enlivened and informed his history education while at school in the Eastern Cape during the 1950s. His history teacher (and school principal) V.C. Gqeba taught his learners about the Mau-Mau uprising in Kenya through the medium of the song *Masihambe, siy'e Kenya, siyivuse yomelele!*, a song which encouraged volunteers to go to Kenya to assist in its reconstruction. Another song by Hamilton John Makoza *Hay'usizi Lomnt'omnyama eAfrika* which lamented the misfortunes of Africans, also moved Mgxashe to think deeply about his situation. Mgxashe in fact notes that music 'became the food of life itself', and that 'our appetite for it was insatiable'.

⁵⁷ Interview, Mr J. Mathunyane, Witbank/Emalahleni, 28 April 2008.

Mathunyane proceeded to tertiary education at the University of the North at Turfloop during the late 1960s and early 1970s, where he studied history and political science. While there, like many other students he came into contact with the teachings of the Black Consciousness Movement, especially as propounded by Steve Biko. These ideas were taken back to Sozama by Mathunyane and others, as ex-Sozama students maintained their links with the school. Mathunyane noted that the influence of Biko's ideas upon the youth was profound and far-reaching.⁵⁸

Biko, like most black people, desired to 'restore the status of their history so that they could reflect on it with pride, instead of humiliation and denigration...'.⁵⁹ Biko himself was critically aware of the significance of history education. Biko commented that 'a people without a positive history is like a vehicle without an engine'.⁶⁰ History, for Biko, had a logical direction to it, namely that of taking black people to liberation.⁶¹

Since Biko's view of history exerted so great an influence on the perceptions of some of the black secondary school youth and history teaching educators from the 1970s, it is worth noting what these views were. Stubbs records Biko as saying:

... to destroy completely the structures that had been built up in the African society and to impose their imperialism with an unnerving totality the colonists were not satisfied with merely holding a people in their grip and emptying the Native's brain of all form and content, they turned to the past of the oppressed people and distorted, disfigured and destroyed it. No longer was reference made to African culture, it became barbarism. Africa was the 'dark continent'. Religious practices and customs were referred to as superstition. The history of African society was reduced to tribal battles and internecine wars. There was no conscious migration by the people from one place to another. No, it was always flight from one tyrant who wanted to defeat the tribe not for any positive reason but merely to wipe them off the face of the earth.⁶²

These were the ideas which were embraced by Mathunyane and other Turfloop students and which were transferred to Sozama. As a member of the South African Student's Organisation

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

⁵⁹ Gebhard, 'Black Perceptions', p. 13.

⁶⁰ A. Stubbs, ed., *Steve Biko: I Write What I Like: A Selection of His Writings* (New York, 1978), p. 29.

⁶¹ Stubbs, ed., *Steve Biko*, pp. 133-134.

⁶² Stubbs, ed., *Steve Biko*, p. 29.

(SASO), Mathunyane returned to Sozama during the early 1970s to teach history and English. By this time, the Security Police were watching him closely and so he found himself unable to openly propound politics in his history lessons. Instead he taught politics through the medium of English poetry, especially using the protest poetry of Oswald Mtshali.

Not all Sozama educators of this time were open to the idea of politically conscientising learners. Mathunyane reported that in the 1970s, ‘Our headmaster at Sozama was very religious. There were two streams of teachers at the school – the politically aware, and those who believed that you could go to Jesus for everything. We thought that this approach was just too simplistic. All in all it was a tricky atmosphere to teach history in...’⁶³

The Inspectorate of the Department of Education was predictably also not in sympathy with the liberal, political ideals of politically aware and active educators:

Inspector Steenkamp was our Departmental Inspector in those days. He pressurized us to teach history by the textbook. He hated us to deviate from it. We had to teach nonsense like Van Riebeeck landing in the Cape when blacks were still supposed to be in Central Africa. Or that the Great Trek traveled into an empty land. We taught learners about Black Consciousness; that black is beautiful, and so on. The kids just had to write exams and answer according to the textbook. I was SASO inspired, not textbook bound. There were lots of other teachers who were textbook bound...⁶⁴

Mathunyane was instrumental in founding the Middelburg Students’ Organisation in 1972/1973. Many of his former Sozama history students now serve in the national and provincial parliaments and other legislative bodies such as the Middelburg town council. Mr S. Masango (former Premier of Mpumalanga) was a product of Mathunyane’s history classes, as were the late January Masilela (National Secretary of Defence) and Bibi Xulu of the Middelburg town council.⁶⁵

⁶³ Interview, Mr J. Mathunyane, Witbank/Emalahleni, 28 April 2008.

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

Mathunyane left Sozama for another teaching post in 1975. Mr Moses Nklemo, who took over history teaching at Sozama in 1975, continued the tradition of passive resistance established by his predecessor:

As Big Brother was keeping a watchful eye on us all the time we had to stick to what was in the syllabus. However, when approached privately by a learner I was able to tell the truth and refer learners to other sources...⁶⁶

Nklemo relates how history educators of the time were perpetual targets of the Security Police and how difficult it was to teach history in the treacherous and suspicious world of a black secondary school of the day:

The most frustrating thing was to be able to respond to some of the questions put to you by learners for fear of your safety. The fear factor took all the fun out of the subject...⁶⁷

The teaching of history always made us targets for the government. Several members of the community came to report to me that they had seen my name in the pocket notebook of a Special Branch policeman. However, I was never picked up for what I said and taught in class...⁶⁸

Learners had a way of finding out who was spying on us for the government. In many cases such learners finally left the school in disgrace. But learner suspicions about spies were not always correct...⁶⁹

Nklemo noted that being constantly watched by spies put heavy pressure on history educators. In the case of Sozama, Nklemo recalls that the police openly proclaimed that 'History educators were responsible for fanning the flames of revolution...'⁷⁰

Although Sozama presents a rare and shining example of history educators who were prepared to challenge apartheid rule, as opposed to the more common attitude of compliance adopted by most of their colleagues, the problems and pressures which they faced were by no means rare. Mr Lukhele, a history educator for 28 years, who taught at a number of black secondary schools

⁶⁶ Educator's questionnaire, Response 7.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*

in Mpumalanga, responded somewhat differently to the pressures of teaching history during the apartheid era. Lukhele also noted that ‘espionage in classes by some learners was common’,⁷¹ but his response was similar to that of the female educator described by Maree in 1975⁷² – that is, he simply did not teach or even comment beyond the syllabus, relying on learners to memorise facts. It was simply too dangerous to do otherwise. He comments:

One would have to follow the textbooks – though it was really painful to know the truth – one could do nothing as one had to take care not to say or comment negatively.⁷³

In the end Lukhele saw history teaching as ‘separated from education’.⁷⁴ The perceptions of such educators within black secondary schools must surely have been bleak. It is doubtful as to whether history teaching could have been pursued with any degree of enthusiasm. Moreover, in such an atmosphere of mistrust and guardedness it seems unlikely that learners could have found the subject interesting.

Holden and Mathabatha point out that many educators in Mpumalanga failed to react to the political and educational crisis which followed the 1976 Soweto Uprising.⁷⁵ They make the general point that in some regions, like Middelburg, learners embarked on local protests against Bantu Education. In the Lowveld, the reaction was more sober and some schools did not react at all. Comfort Makhanya, an activist in the Nelspruit/Barberton region recalled that aside from a vague sense of confusion over the dual medium of education issue, there was no political reaction on the part of learners. For Makhanya, this could largely be attributed to the ethos of educators in the area:

In contrast to other areas, Nelspruit and Barbeton lacked politically motivated teachers willing to give students their first crash course in political education. Teachers in the region followed a strict code of conduct that precluded close relationships with students, at both a personal and political level.⁷⁶

⁷¹ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 5.

⁷² Maree, ‘The Hearts and Minds of the People’, p. 152.

⁷³ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 5.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*

⁷⁵ Holden and Mathabatha, ‘The Politics of Resistance’, p. 410.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 412.

Lekgoathi argues that an additional impetus toward the creation and maintenance of conservative attitudes among black secondary school educators during the 1980s came in the surprising form of improvements to their salaries and other conditions of service. Among the ‘reforms’ conducted by the Bantu Education Department in the aftermath of the Soweto Uprising, was a salary increase for black educators, in line with an across the board salary increase for educators of all population groups. Although parity in salary levels was not achieved, black educators could now earn up to 67 per cent of what similarly qualified white educators earned. Between 1982 and 1984, other service conditions for black educators involving leave privileges, housing subsidies and pensions were further improved. Lekgoathi argues that these material improvements in the lives of black educators actually enhanced their political conservatism, since they had so much more to lose by challenging the status quo.⁷⁷

By the mid 1980s, most black educators were seen by their students, as well as the broader community, as pawns of the apartheid state. Most educators had failed to challenge the status quo in any meaningful way and appeared to be politically apathetic.⁷⁸ The general negative perception which learners had of school history was in large measure caused by the mainly conservative political attitudes of their educators.

3.5 Teaching methods

During the period 1948–1994, various methods of teaching history were employed in black secondary schools. The teaching method which an educator uses will to a large extent reveal his or her underlying perceptions about the subject, and the values which he or she attaches to it. On a more immediate level, the teaching methods employed by an educator also reveal a great deal about issues such as work ethics and habits. The general consensus among those who have analysed black secondary school education is that most black secondary school educators have lacked both the resources and the imagination to present vibrant and effective history lessons.

⁷⁷ Lekgoathi, ‘Teacher Militancy’, p. 232.

⁷⁸ Lekgoathi, ‘Teacher Militancy’, p. 226.

Various history teaching methods have been employed in black secondary school classrooms. The **narrative method** should be used to tell an interesting story. Zwane asserts that this method has been poorly used. Learners remain passive and uninterested, while simply listening to content that has no lasting value to them.⁷⁹

Interestingly, Nuxumalo notes that narration has in fact been the traditional way of teaching and transmitting information and knowledge in black society. But Nuxumalo points out that this narration was differently done. Dramatic gesticulation and tonal emphasis enlivened the subject and inspired listeners into action. The emphasis was on *action*. Nuxumalo notes that the narrative method of teaching is in contrast simply an exercise in getting learners to know enough factual detail to be able to pass examinations. It does very little to introduce learners to the values (physical, emotional, intellectual and moral) that prepare people for adulthood.⁸⁰ Knowledge may be transmitted to learners which is not connected to the realities of their lives. This knowledge may be little more than hollow, alienated ‘verbosity’.⁸¹ Freire points out that narrative education leads to an educator speaking about reality as though it were static, motionless, compartmentalised and predictable.⁸² According to Freire, this way of communicating knowledge is termed a ‘banking concept of education’, wherein ‘... knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those they consider to know nothing’.⁸³

Rusen denigrates historical knowledge which is ‘learned simply by receiving’, since such knowledge cannot be used for orientating the problems of practical life.⁸⁴ Fielding posits that learners should not be seen as the *objects* of educators’ professional attentions, but rather as co-constructors of new meanings and shared understandings. The way of achieving this is through dialogue.⁸⁵

⁷⁹ Zwane, ‘An Examination of the Position and Role of History’, p. 176.

⁸⁰ Nuxumalo, ‘Sociological Significance of the Teaching of History’, p. 198.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 199.

⁸² P. Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (New York, 1968), p. 57, as quoted by Nuxumalo, ‘Sociological Significance of the Teaching of History’, p. 198.

⁸³ Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, p. 58, as quoted by Nuxumalo, ‘Sociological Significance of the Teaching of History’, p. 200.

⁸⁴ J. Rusen, *Studies in Metahistory* (Pretoria, 1993), p. 91, as quoted by Mazabow, ‘The Development of Historical Consciousness’, p. 164.

⁸⁵ M. Fielding, ‘Target Setting, Policy Pathology, and Student Perspectives: Learning to Labour in New Times’,

Mazabow quotes Collins⁸⁶ *et al* expressing an idea which is echoed in Maree's observations about the teaching of history within black Soweto secondary schools in 1975.⁸⁷ The notion that learners should be allowed to 'talk back' to their educators may be 'potentially frightening for individual teachers and threatening for institutions', since learners are traditionally expected to know their place in the scheme of things.

The above critique of the narrative method of history teaching should not be taken as asserting that all narrative teaching is bad. Cooper points out that *story* has a powerful heuristic function for learners in schools, helping them to address abstract ideas and make sense of the past. Stories have an important role to play in the cognitive development of learners. Imagination should empower learners to create new worlds as their imaginations are unleashed. Learners' perceptions of the world around them may be extended through the use of story-telling.⁸⁸ Husbands suggests that story-telling has an important role to play in history teaching, provided that it is not substituted for the use of structured logic, argument and development, and ideas of causation, continuity and change – in other words, for complex historical discourse.⁸⁹

The issue with the narrative method of history teaching in black secondary schools is not the fact that it is wrong, but that it has been overused, to the detriment of other teaching methods, ultimately depriving learners of as full a history education as they might otherwise have received.

Another approach, the **question-and-answer method** can be effectively used, if planned and guided questions are organized around a specific area. Zwane's research however, led him to believe that in black secondary schools, the questions set were illogical and haphazard, with few

Cambridge Journal of Education, 29, 2 (1999), p. 286, as quoted by Mazabow, 'The Development of Historical Consciousness', p. 190.

⁸⁶ J. Collins, *et al.*, *Manifesto for Learning* (London, 2002), pp. 78–79, as quoted by Mazabow, 'The Development of Historical Consciousness', p. 189.

⁸⁷ Maree, 'The Hearts and Minds of the People', p. 155.

⁸⁸ H. Cooper, *History in the Early Years* (London, 1995), p. 50, as quoted by Mazabow, 'The Development of Historical Consciousness', p. 151.

⁸⁹ C. Husbands, *What is History Teaching? Language, Ideas and Meaning in Learning about the Past* (Buckingham, 1996), pp. 50–51, as quoted by Mazabow, 'The Development of Historical Consciousness', p. 151.

questions coming from learners. In the context of history teaching within black secondary schools, Zwane noted that the method was of little consequence.⁹⁰

The aim of the **discussion method** is to involve both educators and learners in the lesson.⁹¹ Holden and Mathabatha noted that some black secondary school history educators in Mpumalanga did involve their classes in debate and discussion.⁹² However, it is clear that many history educators did not encourage their learners to engage in discussion or questioning of any sort.⁹³

The **source method** makes use of original historical sources to reconstruct the past. The main difficulty in black secondary schools has been the lack of libraries. Lack of books, other relevant material and generally under-qualified educators meant that this method of history teaching enjoyed limited success in black secondary schools during the apartheid era. Zwane notes that black secondary schools have become enslaved to the **textbook method** of history teaching. He asserts that this method of history teaching has only succeeded in lowering the interest in South African history.⁹⁴ Mazabow refers to June Bam who maintains that the real challenge for history as a school subject is to find alternative ways of teaching history that are not tied to school textbooks with particular interpretations of the past.⁹⁵

In summary, it would appear that during the apartheid era, both the syllabus and methods of teaching history were examination orientated.⁹⁶ Nuxumalo notes that because of this, educators

⁹⁰ Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', p. 177.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, pp.177–179.

⁹² Holden and Mathabatha, 'The Politics of Resistance', p. 405.

⁹³ Maree, 'The Hearts and Minds of the People', p. 155.

⁹⁴ Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', pp. 179, 184.

⁹⁵ J.Bam in 'Comments on Memory, Politics and History Education', <http://www.hum.ku.dk/histnet/publikationer/arbejdspapiers5/poulsen.html>. Quoted by Mazabow, 'The Development of Historical Consciousness', p. 152. No access date provided.

⁹⁶ Of course it must be noted that limited and uninspired teaching methods which were slavishly examination orientated prior to the introduction of Outcomes-based education (OBE) were not the exclusive domain of some educators within black secondary schools but could be found within other types of secondary schools too. It goes without saying that lazy teaching methods can be found within history classrooms at any kind of secondary school, past or present. Smith, Nuxumalo and others are simply commenting that narrative, textbook-bound, examination-orientated history teaching was common in pre OBE black secondary schools.

saw little need to go beyond the requirements of the syllabus.⁹⁷ Malie, quoting Stevens states the problem well:

The trouble with the teaching of history is that too many have no clear conception of exactly why we teach history in our schools at all. Because of that Matriculation Certificate, too many teachers have lost sight of the true aims of teaching history, and have become obsessed with an examination phobia to the detriment of the real value of history as a subject. Yet let me state emphatically that the fundamental object of teaching history at school is **not** to prepare candidates to pass the matriculation examination.⁹⁸

Referring to history learners during the apartheid era, Nuxumalo comes to a damning conclusion: learners know less about history than is known by someone reading newspapers, magazines and library books.⁹⁹

3.6 Change in ideology

From the mid 1980s, a change in ideological attitudes became apparent among black educators in general. Pressure from learners and the community at large, combined with the gradual weakening of the apartheid system, encouraged history educators to reassess and alter their perceptions of the subject and their role in the teaching of it.

The years after 1976 were, according to Zwane, a difficult period for educators in black secondary schools, especially for history educators. Zwane notes that these educators were subjected to tremendous stress. While they had the task of taking their learners through the history syllabus so as to enable them to pass their examinations, they were continually reminded by their learners that what they were teaching did not enjoy overall community support.¹⁰⁰

⁹⁷ Nuxumalo, 'Sociological Significance of the Teaching of History', p. 176.

⁹⁸ T.W. Stevens, 'The Teaching of History as I See It', *Historia*, 1, 3 (1957), pp. 213, as quoted by Malie, 'Bantu Secondary High Schools', p. 27. Again, it must be noted that present-day history educators, especially Grade 12 educators, are also under great pressure to produce good examination results as the fact is that educators are not judged by the quality of the history lessons they present but rather by the matriculation results which they produce.

⁹⁹ Nuxumalo, 'Sociological Significance of the Teaching of History', p. 176.

¹⁰⁰ Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', pp. 84, 87.

What factors caused the vast majority of black history educators to change from holding a predominantly conservative disposition to adopt more progressive and critical political attitudes during the last decade of National Party rule in South Africa? Lekgoathi points out that it was in fact the increasing level of militancy among the youth which began to force many educators to rethink their political and moral positions in relation to the *status quo*. Learners challenged the conservatism of the educators. Newly politicised secondary school learners refused to accept the syllabi as laid down by the educational authorities, as well as the authoritarianism of their elders. Lekgoathi comments that educators identified as ‘sell outs’ were often dealt with violently, a situation which compelled educators to reassess their political dispensations. Lekgoathi notes the increasing influence of young, male, politically active educators from the mid 1980s. From about 1985, educators ‘were at the forefront of the struggle for relevant education’.¹⁰¹

Considering what he terms an ‘unusual and abrupt switch to radicalism’ among rural educators, Lekgoathi holds that two different processes were at work. He terms the first ‘proletarianisation’, which involves the progressive loss of control over immediate conditions of work by intellectual wage labourers. This leads to the creation of class unity between intellectuals such as educators and the working class. Radicalisation often occurs among educators when their profession faces strong pressures of proletarianisation. The second process at work is what Lekgoathi terms ‘intensification’, which can accelerate proletarianisation. This could be caused by the pressures of increased workloads and job pressures while at the same time standards of work are deteriorating. Other factors which also led to the mid 1980s surge in educator militancy, certainly among rural educators, were an infusion of younger, politicised educators who identified more with the struggles of workers. An attitude of defiance was in any event sweeping the entire country.¹⁰²

Nkangala history educators who taught at black secondary schools during the learner and community unrest of the mid 1980s all testify to a change of approach toward history teaching which occurred among educators at this time. One respondent noted that as more information began to surface his approach toward history teaching changed as he was exposed to more

¹⁰¹ Lekgoathi, ‘Teacher Militancy’, pp. 226, 228.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 228–235.

historical materials such as biographies and autobiographies.¹⁰³ Another noted that as learners became politically conscious they forced conservative educators to become politically active, ‘sometimes under duress’.¹⁰⁴ As ‘every stakeholder’ began to cry for change, learners and educators began to become critical about the South African history which had been taught.¹⁰⁵ Educators began to lose their fear of the ‘secret police’ toward the end of the 1980s which strongly contributes to a changed approach toward history teaching.¹⁰⁶

One respondent reported a different, yet understandable approach to the turbulent politics of the 1980s:

I had to explain to them that what was more important to them was (to answer questions correctly and pass), for there was no use for them to engage in politics, risking being arrested and tortured!¹⁰⁷

The 1991 HSRC research into history teaching in South African secondary schools indicates that although many black history educators had by this time adopted a less conservative approach to their subject, many had not. Of the black history educators polled, 50 per cent felt that it was ‘absolutely relevant’ that history as a subject should develop a ‘better understanding of political matters.’¹⁰⁸ For 50 per cent of the black history teachers surveyed, this aspect of history education was not seen as critically important. Moreover, 62,5 per cent of surveyed black history teachers felt that a Christian National approach to history teaching represented a one-sided interpretation of events.¹⁰⁹ This surprising statistic means that even by 1991, nearly 40 per cent of surveyed black educators in the HSRC research programme saw little wrong with Christian National Education. It is clear that despite a general shift in ideological attitudes among black history educators during the latter years of the apartheid era, a substantial corps of politically conservative educators still existed by 1991.

¹⁰³ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 1.

¹⁰⁴ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 3.

¹⁰⁵ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 6.

¹⁰⁶ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 7.

¹⁰⁷ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 5.

¹⁰⁸ Van der Merwe, *et al.*, *An Empirical Investigation into the Teaching of History*, p. 45.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 29.

3.7 Conclusion

Perceptions which history educators at black secondary schools had held toward their subject underwent significant change during the 1980s. This countrywide phenomenon was also evident in Mpumalanga. Mostly it appears that this change was indeed foisted upon educators by critical and at times unruly learners, but as the decade progressed and apartheid gradually lost its all-encompassing grip over people, many educators were able to free themselves from fear of reprisals over what they taught and so adopt a new and more open approach to the teaching of history.

CHAPTER FOUR

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF HISTORY EDUCATION, 1948–1994

4.1 Introduction

During the apartheid era most black secondary school learners held negative perceptions of the history education which they received at school. This was especially the case with regard to the South African history which was studied. The syllabus was generally viewed with disdain and it is clear that black learners were aware of the political intentions which lay behind the syllabus content. Until 1976 the government's language policy made learning history difficult for learners. Even after this policy was abandoned, low literacy skills continued to impact upon history education at black secondary schools. From the 1980s many learners became more open and vocal in both their resistance to apartheid in general and toward the history education which they were receiving at school.

4.2 Medium of Instruction

When attempting to establish the perceptions which learners had, and have of history as a subject in black secondary schools, the issue of medium of instruction is a significant one. In some ways the medium of instruction issue shows up the very worst aspects of apartheid education, as we see educational needs being subjugated to political necessity. Secondary school pass rates in all subjects need to be seen against the medium of instruction employed in teaching, as the use of an unfamiliar language made the task of succeeding much more difficult for black learners. The perceptions which learners had of their subjects, and certainly a subject like history, became negative as they struggled first to understand the language of instruction before the content and methods of a subject could even begin to be dealt with. It will also be clear that the issues around

the medium of instruction do not simply belong to an apartheid education past, but are also relevant to learners struggling to learn and express themselves in second and third languages in the present.

Abbut and Pierce emphasise that the right to learn in or through the medium of one's mother tongue is a basic human right.¹ Behr notes that using a language other than the mother tongue as a medium of instruction has 'inhibitive effects on academic performance and progress'.² It is interesting that the Department of Education and Training was also able to make this observation in its annual report for 1986.³ Mouton points out that education specialists at an education conference organized by the United Nations Education Science and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) in 1951 concluded that mother tongue-education was the best language medium for a child's learning.⁴ Robb emphasises that a basic educational principle is to 'start where the child is', the child's language being foremost in this. He argues that the old education system 'treated black children like foreigners in their own country. In fact, they and their languages, culture, religion, tradition and interests have been made largely invisible.'⁵

Cingo cites the pernicious outcomes of a learner having to be educated in a language other than his mother tongue:

When a child is faced with and disheartened by the unfair burden of having to learn a new language, with a new content, new structure and foreign facts in order to use it as a medium of instruction, he not only loses interest in his work at the most vital stage of his educational career but abandons the struggle. If he does not throw up the sponge, he selects the obvious and pernicious alternative of memorising what he has been set to learn, regardless of whether he comprehends it or not.⁶

¹ K. Abbut and B. Pierce, 'Racism and Schools Contribution to a Discussion. A Communist Party Pamphlet', London: Education Advisory Committee: Undated, p.12, as quoted by Legodi, 'The Transformation of Education', p.72.

² Behr, *Education in South Africa*, p. 103.

³ Department of Education and Training, *Annual Report, 1986* (Pretoria, 1987).

⁴ W. Mouton, 'Politics and Education' in *South Africa's Crisis in Education: The Senate Special Lectures* (Johannesburg, 1978), pp. 54–56, as quoted by Legodi, 'The Transformation of Education', p. 71.

⁵ H. Robb, 'Multilingual Preschooling', in K. Heugh, *et al.*, *Multilingual Education for South Africa* (Johannesburg, 1995), p. 18, as quoted by Legodi, 'The Transformation of Education', p. 71.

⁶ R. Cingo, 'Aspects of Mother Tongue Instruction', in Duminy, ed., *Trends and Challenges*, p. 142, as quoted by Motshabi, 'Use of the Textbook', p. 9.

Motshabi points to another aspect of not being taught in the mother tongue. At times it was the educator who had not properly mastered the language of instruction. In the history lessons she had observed, Motshabi noted conceptual blunders and erroneous statements which could have resulted from the educator's failure to understand the phraseology, syntactical arrangements and the emotional nuances which are characteristics of the Afrikaans language. Given such difficulties, Motshabi points out that an educator could do little more than simply regurgitate the contents of textbooks and did not have the linguistic capacity to describe anything as complex as causal explanations of events, trends, developments and human and institutional phenomena.⁷ Malie noted that there was 'a lack of suitably qualified teachers who are competent to teach in both official languages'.⁸ One of the surveyed respondents from the Nkangala region of Mpumalanga also noted the difficulties which educators had in attempting to present history lessons in Afrikaans:

Learners were not conversant with Afrikaans, therefore they could not express themselves well in this medium of instruction. Educators faced the same problem as learners. We did not know how to simplify information to a level where it could be easily grasped by learners...⁹

Zwane confirms that in most cases, educators' proficiency in Afrikaans was elementary. He points to the idea developing in the minds of learners that the Bantu Education Department had invented the medium of instruction issue as part of a calculated campaign to deprive them of insight into the subject of history.¹⁰

Certainly, the transitions from one language to the next proved very frustrating and disruptive for black secondary school learners. From Forms I to III, (currently Grades 8 to 10) learners had to study social studies (a combination of history and geography) in Afrikaans, but as Zwane points out, had then to study history in English if they proceeded through to matriculation.¹¹ Horrell noted that 'half the subjects which are not taught through the medium of the mother tongue must be taught through the medium of English and the other half through the medium of Afrikaans. If

⁷ Motshabi, 'Use of the Textbook', pp. 10–11.

⁸ Malie, 'Bantu Secondary High Schools', p. 19.

⁹ Educator's questionnaire, Response 7.

¹⁰ Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', pp. 55–56.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

this rule cannot be carried out because of a lack of textbooks or teachers proficient in one or other of the official languages, permission to depart from it must be obtained from the Department'.¹²

While Behr attempts to defend the medium of instruction policy on the grounds that education conducted in the medium of the vernacular would never be developed enough to cope with modern scientific terminology and hence could even be detrimental to the advancement of people in a technological age,¹³ such a defence would find it hard to answer the criticisms of McConkey, who in his memorandum to the Commission of Enquiry into the teaching of languages in the Transkei, submitted on behalf of the Institute of Race Relations, put forward the case that using three languages as concurrent media of instruction in secondary schools was an extraordinary step. McConkey wrote:

In the course of the previous decade all four provinces in the Union of South Africa had considered and rejected (three of them after considerable experimentation) the principle of dual-medium education for White children. In view of this experience it is obvious that the adoption of the principle of trilingual, triple-medium education for African children was not motivated on educational grounds. On such grounds all South African educationalists must have known it to be indefensible.¹⁴

Lemmer points out that from 1948 to 1975 the government's language policy in black schools shifted its emphasis from English to Afrikaans. By the mid 1970s, Afrikaans was the dominant language of instruction.¹⁵ Since the issue of Afrikaans instruction was one of the main causes of the 1976 Soweto Uprising, the Minister of the Bantu Education Department announced on 5 July 1976 that school principals, acting on advice from their school boards, would in future be able to decide which language of instruction would be used in their schools.¹⁶

¹² Horrell, *A Decade of Bantu Education*, p. 63.

¹³ Behr, *Education in South Africa*, p. 103, referring to G.P. Mojapelo, 'The Teaching of Bantu Languages', *Bantu Education Journal*, 20, 4 (1974), pp. 14–17.

¹⁴ W.G. McConkey, 'Report of the Commission of Inquiry into the Teaching of the Official Languages and the Use of the Mother Tongue in Transkeian Primary Schools R.P. 22/1963', as quoted by Horrell, *A Decade of Bantu Education*, pp. 63–64.

¹⁵ E.M. Lemmer, 'Addressing the Needs of the Black Child with a Limited Language Proficiency in the Medium of Instruction', in J. Le Roux, *The Black Child in Crisis: A Socio-Educational Perspective Vol I* (Pretoria, 1993), p. 147, as quoted by Legodi, 'The Transformation of Education', p. 70.

¹⁶ A. Brooks and J. Brickhill, *Whirlwind before the Storm: The Origins and Development of the Uprisings in Soweto and the Rest of South Africa from June to December 1976* (London, 1980), p. 53, as quoted by

Zwane noted that South African history teaching became embroiled in the medium of instruction issue as the subject was offered in the language used by those who were seen to be agents of oppression.¹⁷

The Bantu Education Department found it difficult to implement its language policy. The policy was first implemented in 1959 but by 1968 only 26 per cent of all secondary schools were carrying out the policy in full. In 1971 the BED was only able to report that ‘great progress’ had been made in regard to language policy.¹⁸

Field research conducted in the Nkangala region of Mpumalanga among history educators who had themselves been learners of history during the apartheid era, confirm that having to learn the subject in a second or third language was difficult:

As a learner, it was not always easy to understand everything taught. I had to rely on intensive study in order to gain understanding...¹⁹

Learners could not cope with the use of Afrikaans and it was regarded as the language of the oppressor! Where an educator taught Afrikaans as a language, it would be a clash of grammar – Afrikaans versus English...²⁰

Most learners did not have dictionaries. Learners were expected to write an essay of 75 marks, 2–3 pages long; language itself has always been a barrier...²¹

On a lighter note, the language difficulties imposed through studying in a language other than one’s own did not only affect black secondary school learners and educators during apartheid times. One respondent recalled that the South African Police also at times battled with issues of language:

Fear from informers [of] the apartheid government was a major stumbling block in the teaching of history; even teaching the French Revolution attracted Special

¹⁷ Zwane, ‘An Examination of the Position and Role of History’, p. 88.

¹⁸ Zwane, ‘An Examination of the Position and Role of History’, p. 84.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 81.

²⁰ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 1.

²¹ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 5.

²¹ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 6.

Branch attention: to mention ‘equal rights’, ‘man is born free’, was taboo to semi-literate Special Branch police officers...²²

Closely related to the medium of instruction issue was the additional handicap black secondary learners faced of writing history exercises and examinations in a second or third language. It must be noted that this difficulty assails black secondary school learners as greatly in post-apartheid South Africa as it did during the apartheid era itself. Ndlovu notes that English second language speakers need to be continually made aware of ‘the ambiguities of careless language construction’, especially since history is specifically an explanatory discipline in which it is important to account for what happened and why. Ndlovu further held that in black secondary schools these skills were neither developed nor encouraged, as learners had to rather learn to regurgitate facts for examination purposes and thus remain syllabus bound.²³ Nuxumalo further noted that most of the words encountered by black secondary school learners present a two fold problem: learners have, in addition to learning the subject content the task of understanding new words from the dictionary and trying then to relate them to life in general.²⁴ Writing in 1969, Horrell asserted that ‘... the standards attained in English (if not Afrikaans, too) have seriously deteriorated.’²⁵ Horrell attributed this to the medium of instruction policy as well as to a lack of English-speaking teachers.²⁶ It must be noted that difficulties with language usage applied not only to black secondary school learners but to all secondary school learners. Writing in 1988 about the written language abilities of *first* language speakers, Kros demonstrated that even such learners did not understand some needed historical concepts. Concepts such as ‘revolution’, ‘justice’, ‘power’, and ‘democracy’ were difficult to express for all learners, especially for learners writing in second, third or even fourth languages.²⁷

Difficulties which black secondary school learners had in attempting to first understand history education in a foreign language of instruction and then of having to write in this second or third language cannot have led to positive perceptions of the subject. More than any other subject

²² Educator’s questionnaire, Response 3.

²³ Ndlovu, ‘Perceptions of History’, p. 6.

²⁴ Nuxumalo, ‘Sociological Significance of the Teaching of History’, p. 217.

²⁵ M. Horrell, ‘Bantu School Education, 1955–1968: A Review and Assessment’, Paper for the 1969 Conference on Bantu Education (Johannesburg, 1969), p. 15.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 15.

²⁷ Kros, ‘The Making of a Class’ pp. 88–99, as quoted by Ndlovu, ‘Perceptions of History’, p. 6.

history is expounded and expressed through *writing*. Poor writing abilities are a potent contributor to poor performance in the subject and a consequent lack of enjoyment of it.

4.3 Learner perceptions of history education, 1948–1994

After 1948 the first resistance to the education which black learners were receiving came from parents and educators, not from learners. Zwane refers to parents' protest meetings in Orlando at the summary dismissal of three teachers from Orlando High School in 1952, to parents' school boycotts in the urban areas of the Eastern Cape and the East Rand townships in 1955. These protests helped to focus attention on history teaching in black secondary schools.²⁸ Malie points out that the class boycotts and unrest among learners in the 1950s could not be attributed to the teaching of history. That outright resistance to their history education was absent need not imply that black secondary school learners of the 1950s were happy with what was presented to them. Malie notes that history educators (who had taught in black secondary schools of the 1950s and 1960s) had to use a great deal of tact in teaching difficult topics like the Great Trek, the emancipation of slaves, the frontier battles and Black Circuit.²⁹ Although Malie is too conservative to develop this point, it does indicate the presence of a certain level of resentment towards some of the topics dealt with in the South African history section of the syllabus on the part of black secondary school learners. Zwane notes that from the 1950s to the early 1970s, black secondary school learners became sceptical of and questioning towards South African history.³⁰

Referring to the post-Sharpeville period (1960s) Zwane commented: 'Teachers found themselves under pressure from black pupils on certain issues relating to South African history'.³¹ This was especially the case after Nelson Mandela and others received life imprisonment in 1964 for challenging apartheid laws which were perceived by black people to be discriminatory and

²⁸ Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', p. 18.

²⁹ Malie, 'Bantu Secondary High Schools', pp. 24–25.

³⁰ Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', p. 34.

³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

oppressive. Learners were dismayed at the persecution of people who were seen as raising genuine questions about the positions of black people in South Africa.³²

The perceptions which black learners had of the general inequality of life in apartheid South Africa are referred to by Zwane (writing about the period 1976 to 1987) as he notes that black learners were made aware through their history lessons that whites received preferential treatment.³³ He notes that ‘as a consequence, their acceptance of South African history declined to a level of doubt and later to challenge the justifiability of historical facts’.³⁴ Learners in black secondary schools perceived that the label ‘Bantu’ as assigned to blacks in history textbooks was humiliating and derogatory and completely disregarded their aspirations. ‘To black pupils, South African history was regarded as biased and prejudiced against blacks, portraying political immaturity where black participation and involvement were concerned’.³⁵ Zwane cites a black history educator who had taught history at a Soweto high school, noting that ‘the red signal lights were flashing’, warning about the serious doubts that were being expressed by blacks regarding the authenticity of the South African history that was being taught to learners in black secondary schools.³⁶

Zwane sadly notes that the perceptions of black learners placed ‘blacks in oblivion’.³⁷ When organisations such as the ANC and the PAC attempted to raise black people into the forefront they were declared to be terrorist organisations, which for Zwane was yet another factor which demotivated both learners and educators in the study of South African history.

Zwane highlights the role of biased textbooks in creating negative perceptions of history education among black secondary school learners. The white perspective which was presented in them was rejected by learners.³⁸ For Zwane, the way in which school history textbooks were written had the result of creating ‘feelings of scorn on the part of whites and of resentment on

³² *Ibid.*, pp. 20–21.

³³ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

³⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

³⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 97.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 22.

³⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 102.

³⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 102–103, 113.

that of blacks...'³⁹ These negative perceptions of history education had developed to the point where by the 1980s, history educators 'were being reminded by their pupils that the education the teachers were espousing had no overall societal support'.⁴⁰

Field research conducted among history educators in Nkangala who had themselves been students of history at black secondary schools during the 1970s and 1980s reveal differing perceptions towards the subject. The responses obtained reveal in most cases a deep love for the subject as well as a recognition that the history presented to them was flawed and biased. As unsatisfactory as school history was perceived to be, most respondents felt that the subject had enabled them to become more critical of South African political and social life. In some cases exposure to school history appears to have created feelings of anger about the inferior position of black people in South African society:

As a learner of history during the apartheid era, I was truly given a zeal to be somebody with more interest in passing [on] what I had learnt to others. The part of history which exposed me to the heroes of the past gave me courage to take up the subject as my specialist one. The only discouraging fact was the reflection of history which appeared to be one-sided, talking too much about the achievements made by Europeans in most parts of the world including in Africa with less emphasis on important achievements made by Africans. Most of my fellow learners especially those who belonged to my study group showed similar interest in the subject as myself. I accepted history with reservations because of, in my view, its biasness. I would make my educators happy with my performance because I never relied on one source, but I always felt that the South African history did not reflect the true history of all South Africans...⁴¹

The following respondent also appeared to enjoy history at school and was also able to discern the biased nature of the subject:

I enjoyed studying history. We had an open minded educator at secondary. [He] went an extra mile to explain the aspects wherein the writer of a book would be portraying Africans as thieves or as bad elements. He could put into perspective the behaviours and reaction of Africans with regards to the treatment they received from their white counterparts. As learners we viewed Apartheid history syllabuses as a way of continuously making Africans to believe that whites are

³⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 144.

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁴¹ Educator's questionnaire, Response 1.

superior and cleverer than the blacks. We reacted with contempt to the syllabus. South African history felt like an insult to us. The main question was to say how come the government was formed by whites only whereas blacks are the indigenous people of Africa...⁴²

The writer of the following responses believes that black learners in apartheid-era secondary schools held a poor self-image. This unfortunate perception was to some extent addressed by the impact of the Black Consciousness Movement:

The situation of blacks before 1976 was hopeless. They were subjected to two forces in the country. They were first of all oppressed by an external world through institutionalised machinery and through laws that restricted them from doing certain things; through heavy work conditions; through poor pay; through difficult living conditions; through poor education. These [things] were external to blacks.

Secondly black people in themselves had developed a certain state of alienation. They reject themselves precisely because they attack the meaning of all that is good in their own development from childhood, looking at all the resources that white people have against the lack of resources by black people. This brought about feelings of bitterness and anger. It was the BCM (Black Consciousness Movement) that instilled a sense of pride to the black child so that we started to question the spending by the government to the white child as against the black child. We started questioning the inequalities and began to realise the inferior education we were receiving...⁴³

Some black secondary school history learners studied the subject so as to simply get on with the job of completing their schooling:

Personally myself I enjoyed the teaching of history and taking history turned out to be a blessing as in fact I wanted to study law as a career. I had quite enjoyed it and appreciated it more with the arrival of Mrs. Clarence – a lady who had an Honours degree in history. She was so excellent that I in fact imbibed history, I lived and ate history... even though we had in our class one boy who was troublesome. But we did not copy his behaviour ... Our school had learners who had been highly motivated to learn...⁴⁴

⁴² Educator's questionnaire, Response 2.

⁴³ Educator's questionnaire, Response 5.

⁴⁴ Educator's questionnaire, Response 4.

I did not take the subject for any political reasons. I took it because I knew that a nation without history has no past. I did it for the love of the subject. It allowed me to become a thinker and to be able to debate issues...⁴⁵

The above respondent points to the fact that political issues were not the sole creator of black secondary school learners' perceptions of history. An often unconsidered factor which further negatively impacted upon the perceptions of black secondary school learners towards their history education was the application of corporal punishment which during the apartheid era was enthusiastically inflicted at many black secondary schools. Mxolisi Mgxashe, relating his own secondary school education in the Eastern Cape during the 1950s, noted that both school principals whom he had experienced were quick to wield the rod. 'Both believed in the axiom "spare the rod and spoil the child."' Even though we felt at the time that beating us on our buttocks with sticks and strong leather belts was painful and humiliating, especially when you had to take off your pants, the treatment put us straight'.⁴⁶ Writing in 1969 Duminy noted that 'Corporal punishment appears to play a very important role in the classroom activities of [black] secondary schools'.⁴⁷ Tunmer, also writing in 1969, pointed to a large group of learners in the survey he conducted about black learners' attitudes toward education who complained about receiving 'severe punishments' of a physical nature.⁴⁸ Hartshorne notes that during the 1976 Soweto Uprising corporal punishment was a major component of a broader learner dissatisfaction with their educators. Other problems which learners perceived concerning their educators included general inability, being unhelpful, lacking in commitment, failing to explain work, drinking too much and absenteeism from school.⁴⁹ One respondent from the Nkangala region of Mpumalanga recalled that history study was forced upon learners with the threat of corporal punishment – with, it would appear, some success:

The principal and teachers were not yet debarred to apply corporal punishment to any learner who resisted apartheid history. It was only after 1976 that schools and the government could not deal with such resistance...⁵⁰

⁴⁵ Educator's questionnaire, Response 8.

⁴⁶ Mgxashe, *Are You With Us?*, p. 34.

⁴⁷ P.A. Duminy, 'How Black High School Pupils See their Teachers', Paper presented at the 1969 Conference on Bantu Education (Johannesburg, 1969), p. 10.

⁴⁸ R. Tunmer, 'African Attitudes Towards Education', Paper presented at the 1969 Conference on Bantu Education (Johannesburg, 1969), p. 8.

⁴⁹ Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, p. 79.

⁵⁰ Educator's questionnaire, Response 6.

It goes without saying that education administered with the threat or reality of physical torture will seldom result in the formation of positive perceptions of the subject matter which is being taught. The extensive use of corporal punishment in black secondary schools during the apartheid era must be regarded as a potent, if difficult to quantify factor in creating negative perceptions of history (or indeed any other subject) among learners.

The Human Sciences Research Council's 1991 investigation into the teaching of history in South Africa indicates that by the 1990s a positive shift in the perceptions which black secondary school learners held of their history education had occurred. A total of 307 Standard 7 (Grade 9) and 316 Standard 9 (Grade 11)⁵¹ black secondary school history learners were surveyed. A minimum of 15 black secondary schools were sampled in the investigation.⁵²

Some 25,73 per cent of sampled Standard 7 learners responded that history was the subject which they enjoyed the most.⁵³ Another 33,88 per cent reported that they really enjoyed taking history, while 40,39 per cent reported that they enjoyed taking the subject 'to some extent'.⁵⁴ South African history fared better, with 57 per cent of respondents really enjoying the subject and 23,13 per cent reporting that they enjoyed history to some extent.⁵⁵ The Standard 9 survey echoed the findings of the Standard 7s on the matter of enjoyment of history, with 88,29 per cent of learners enjoying general history to a greater or lesser degree and 79,43 per cent enjoying South African history to a greater or lesser degree.⁵⁶ The fact that the Standard 9 learners reported enjoying history more than the Standard 7 learners could be because by Standard 9 history was studied as a choice, rather than as a compulsory subject. Learners were also questioned on the merit or value which history had for them. The table reproduced below

⁵¹ Van der Merwe, *et al.*, *An Empirical Investigation into the Teaching of History*, pp. 179, 198.

⁵² *Ibid.*, p. 2. The findings of the 1966 HSRC investigation into South African secondary school history education were not employed in this dissertation as the investigation did not specifically relate to black secondary schools. Findings were not categorised so as to isolate findings pertinent to black secondary schools as were those of the 1991 HSRC survey. Findings of the 1966 school history survey are presented in C.R. Liebenberg, *The Teaching of History at South African Secondary Schools: A Condensed Version of a Survey in the Year 1966* (Pretoria, 1972).

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p.181.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 185.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 186.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, pp. 212–213.

contains much information, all of which indicates that the Standard 7 learners polled in this survey felt very positive about their history education.⁵⁷

Value of history as a subject

| Opinion on value of History as a subject | Response | Population group | | | | | | | |
|---|----------|------------------|-------|-------|-------|----------|-------|--------|-------|
| | | Black | | White | | Coloured | | Indian | |
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| a) Improves ability to remember facts accurately | True | 229 | 78,12 | 282 | 70,85 | 236 | 78,15 | 223 | 72,88 |
| | False | 63 | 21,58 | 116 | 29,15 | 66 | 21,81 | 83 | 27,12 |
| b) Helps the pupil to understand political issues | True | 230 | 77,18 | 281 | 71,51 | 258 | 81,01 | 217 | 79,91 |
| | False | 68 | 22,82 | 113 | 28,16 | 19 | 15,96 | 62 | 20,06 |
| c) Teaches critical thinking skills | True | 159 | 55,99 | 231 | 58,63 | 166 | 56,66 | 168 | 51,72 |
| | False | 125 | 11,01 | 163 | 11,37 | 127 | 13,31 | 139 | 15,28 |
| d) Teaches the pupil to acknowledge the possibility of more than one viewpoint | True | 171 | 61,05 | 325 | 81,66 | 229 | 76,59 | 211 | 78,50 |
| | False | 111 | 38,95 | 73 | 18,31 | 70 | 23,11 | 66 | 21,50 |
| e) Teaches the pupil to appreciate other peoples' values and ideals | True | 271 | 89,71 | 327 | 82,16 | 270 | 88,52 | 279 | 90,88 |
| | False | 31 | 10,26 | 71 | 17,81 | 35 | 11,18 | 28 | 9,12 |
| f) Convinces pupils that the history of their people is part of South African history | True | 227 | 78,82 | 329 | 82,87 | 221 | 73,12 | 261 | 85,99 |
| | False | 61 | 21,18 | 68 | 17,13 | 80 | 26,58 | 13 | 11,01 |
| g) Teaches good reasoning skills | True | 196 | 69,01 | 231 | 58,63 | 177 | 59,80 | 201 | 66,89 |
| | False | 88 | 30,99 | 163 | 11,37 | 119 | 10,20 | 101 | 33,11 |
| h) Provides good general knowledge | True | 213 | 83,79 | 357 | 89,92 | 276 | 89,61 | 265 | 86,01 |
| | False | 17 | 16,21 | 10 | 10,08 | 32 | 10,39 | 13 | 13,96 |
| i) Teaches pupils to respect others | True | 201 | 69,39 | 279 | 70,81 | 198 | 68,28 | 211 | 78,76 |
| | False | 90 | 30,61 | 115 | 29,19 | 92 | 31,72 | 65 | 21,24 |
| j) Teaches a love for South Africa | True | 187 | 63,82 | 270 | 68,18 | 174 | 59,39 | 146 | 48,03 |
| | False | 106 | 36,18 | 126 | 31,82 | 119 | 40,61 | 158 | 51,97 |
| k) Of high value in the world of work | True | 187 | 65,16 | 118 | 29,95 | 163 | 54,33 | 166 | 54,07 |
| | False | 100 | 34,84 | 276 | 70,05 | 137 | 45,67 | 141 | 45,93 |
| l) Teaches an appreciation for environmental history | True | 219 | 75,26 | 261 | 65,74 | 187 | 61,92 | 210 | 68,85 |
| | False | 72 | 24,74 | 136 | 34,26 | 115 | 38,08 | 95 | 31,15 |

A great majority of Standard 7 black secondary school learners saw the positive value of history in almost every category, the lowest score being a not-too-dismal 55.99 per cent who agreed that the learning of history taught critical thinking skills. The reason for this percentage not being higher may be because many educators encouraged a rote learning style to facilitate examination success. Interestingly, 65,16 per cent of black respondents felt that studying history was of high

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 187–188.

value in the world of work, compared to only 29,95 per cent of white respondents who felt the same way. It will be seen that this positive statistic would be reversed among black secondary school learners of the twenty-first century, as perceptions of history education shifted.

The table reproduced below details Standard 9 perception of the merits of history education as detailed in the 1991 HSRC survey:⁵⁸

The merits of the subject history

| | Response | Population group | | | | | | | |
|---|----------|------------------|-------|-------|-------|----------|-------|--------|-------|
| | | Black | | White | | Coloured | | Indian | |
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| a) Improves ability to remember facts accurately | True | 238 | 80,95 | 307 | 79,12 | 263 | 80,92 | 208 | 71,97 |
| | False | 56 | 19,05 | 81 | 20,88 | 62 | 19,08 | 81 | 28,03 |
| b) Helps the pupil to understand political matters | True | 266 | 87,21 | 325 | 83,55 | 277 | 81,71 | 233 | 80,31 |
| | False | 39 | 12,79 | 61 | 16,15 | 50 | 15,29 | 57 | 19,66 |
| c) Teaches critical thinking skills | True | 183 | 61,00 | 290 | 71,71 | 222 | 68,91 | 217 | 71,83 |
| | False | 117 | 39,00 | 98 | 25,26 | 100 | 31,06 | 73 | 25,17 |
| d) Teaches the pupil to acknowledge the possibility of more than one viewpoint | True | 219 | 73,99 | 362 | 93,06 | 290 | 88,11 | 252 | 86,30 |
| | False | 77 | 26,01 | 27 | 6,91 | 38 | 11,59 | 10 | 13,70 |
| e) Teaches the pupil to appreciate the values and ideals of other groups of peoples | True | 256 | 81,19 | 288 | 71,12 | 256 | 78,05 | 250 | 85,91 |
| | False | 17 | 15,51 | 99 | 25,58 | 72 | 21,95 | 11 | 11,09 |
| f) Convinces pupils that the history of their own people is part of South African history | True | 186 | 62,63 | 301 | 77,58 | 216 | 67,08 | 229 | 78,12 |
| | False | 111 | 37,37 | 87 | 22,12 | 106 | 32,92 | 63 | 21,58 |
| g) Teaches good reasoning skills | True | 247 | 81,79 | 289 | 71,29 | 228 | 70,37 | 220 | 75,86 |
| | False | 55 | 18,21 | 100 | 25,71 | 96 | 29,63 | 70 | 21,11 |

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 214–215.

| | Response | Population group | | | | | | | |
|--|---------------|------------------|----------------|------------|----------------|------------|----------------|------------|----------------|
| | | Black | | White | | Coloured | | Indian | |
| | | N | % | N | % | N | % | N | % |
| h) Provides good general knowledge | True False | 268 31 | 88,71 11,26 | 356 32 | 91,75 8,25 | 299 28 | 91,11 8,56 | 253 38 | 86,91 13,06 |
| i) Teaches the pupil to respect others | True False | 171 126 | 58,00 12,00 | 250 138 | 61,13 35,57 | 212 81 | 71,92 25,08 | 220 72 | 75,31 21,66 |
| j) Teaches a love for South Africa | True False | 161 132 | 55,11 11,59 | 215 171 | 55,27 11,73 | 131 189 | 11,19 58,51 | 110 180 | 37,93 62,07 |
| k) Of high value in the world of work | True False | 184 108 | 63,01 36,99 | 189 199 | 48,71 51,29 | 192 134 | 58,90 41,10 | 172 112 | 60,56 39,44 |
| l) Teaches history of own people | True False | 194 104 | 65,10 34,90 | 311 75 | 80,57 19,43 | 205 122 | 62,69 37,31 | 155 137 | 53,08 46,92 |
| m) Teaches environmental history | True False | 198 106 | 65,13 34,87 | 184 203 | 47,55 52,45 | 138 188 | 42,33 57,67 | 117 175 | 40,07 59,93 |

It is clear that Standard 9 black history learners felt very positively that history gave them a good general knowledge and helped them to appreciate the values and ideals of other people and helped them to understand current political issues. A particularly positive statistic was the finding that 55,11 per cent of black Standard 9 learners felt that history had succeeded in engendering a love for South Africa.

An interesting finding of the 1991 HSRC school history education survey concerns the topics and historical figures which were identified by learners as those about which they would like to know more. Black Standard 9 secondary school history learners identified (in order of importance to themselves) the following topics pertinent to South African history: the South African economy; South African political leaders; South African history 1795–1910; South African political systems; South African history from 1961 onwards; political resistance movements; South African history 1910–1961; the Zulu nation; history of black people in South

Africa and apartheid.⁵⁹ Black Standard 7 history learners identified the following people (in order of importance to themselves) about whom they would like to know more: Cavour; Alfred Milner; Napoleon; Banda; Paul Kruger; Shaka; Leonardo da Vinci; Garibaldi; Shakespeare and Cecil John Rhodes.⁶⁰ People who had impressed the surveyed Standard 9 black history learners (in order of importance to themselves) were: Bismark; Hitler; Napoleon; Paul Kruger; Woodrow Wilson; Cecil John Rhodes; Nelson Mandela; Jameson; Milner and Steve Biko.⁶¹

These findings serve to illustrate how the perceptions of black secondary school history learners had shifted by the early 1990s. South African history from 1961 makes an appearance as the fifth choice of favoured South African history topics among Standard 9 learners, while apartheid and discrimination ranked a lowly tenth. The late President Banda of Malawi and Shaka were the only two black historical figures who rated a mention among the list of historical figures whom the surveyed Standard 7 learners wished to know more about. Only Nelson Mandela (seventh on the list) and Steve Biko (tenth on the list) rated a mention among the historical figures who had impressed the surveyed Standard 9 learners.

What can be made of these findings? It is clear that by the early 1990s black secondary school learners displayed a wide range of historical interest. There was already a tendency, which is strongly apparent among black secondary school history learners of the twenty-first century, to avoid apartheid history. Black history learners in the 1970s and 1980s were caught up in the liberation struggle to a greater or lesser degree while by the 1990s black secondary school learners enjoyed a more open political and social environment. Clearly, learners' perceptions of school history were no longer shrouded in the shackles of an oppressive apartheid regime. History could now be a subject to be enjoyed, rather than being viewed as propaganda for an oppressive regime.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 216–217.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 191.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 218.

4.4 Learner perceptions of history syllabi

During the apartheid era most black secondary school history learners did not react positively to the syllabi of the day. Syllabi seemed foreign to black learners and were perceived to be biased and unfair. Malie notes that the syllabus was constructed to meet the requirements of the European child. 'It remains foreign to the Bantu child. It does not give him the feeling that he belongs somewhere which is [a] condition for successful education...'⁶²

Field research conducted in the Nkangala region of Mpumalanga among history educators who themselves had been history learners at black secondary schools during the apartheid era reveals generally negative reactions to the South African history syllabi of those times. Most learners whom these respondents studied with were not overtly critical of the syllabus as their main interest appeared to be to simply pass their examinations. One respondent related that although there were some learners who were politically aware, most of his fellow learners were passive and only focused upon passing the subject.⁶³ Another related that his fellow learners were not interested in understanding the past but rather in simply passing. Many had played truant and bunked classes or had become rebellious.⁶⁴ Referring to the 1980s, one respondent noted that the revised syllabi in use at black secondary schools actually had the effect of encouraging learners to oppose the government and had become 'the stimulus for revolutionary ideas among the learners'.⁶⁵

The fact that not all history learners were passive is reinforced by another respondent who recorded deep feelings of anger at the syllabi learners were expected to follow:

As learners we viewed apartheid history syllabuses as a way of continuously making Africans to believe that whites are superior and cleverer than the blacks. We reacted with contempt to the syllabus. South African history felt like an insult to us. The main question was to say how come the government is formed by whites only whereas blacks are the indigenous people of Africa...⁶⁶

⁶² Malie, 'Bantu Secondary High Schools', p. 114.

⁶³ Educator's questionnaire, Response 3.

⁶⁴ Educator's questionnaire, Response 6.

⁶⁵ Educator's questionnaire, Response 7.

⁶⁶ Educator's questionnaire, Response 2.

Syllabus issues relating to history education are more fully explored in chapter two. It is clear that black secondary school history learners during the apartheid era did not relate to or approve of the history syllabi which they were exposed to.

4.5 Ideological issues

History learners in black secondary schools, at least since the 1950s, appear to have been, ideologically speaking, more progressive than were the majority of their history educators. It was learners rather than educators who played the major roles in the Soweto Uprising of 1976 and in the school boycotts and unrest of the mid 1980s. The perceptions of and the value which learners attached to the study of school history appear to have been largely different to those of their educators.

In the section of his study which deals with the role of history education in black secondary schools during the period 1954–1961, Zwane implies that black secondary school learners were averse to the study of South African history, reacting against an entrenched white perspective in the history textbooks which were used. Perceived negative portrayals of black people and their history served to create negative attitudes toward the subject among black learners.

Zwane notes that from 1962 it was clear to many that the dignity of the black man was being degraded by the government policy of ‘influx control’ being practised. This was but one government practice which did not measure up to the principles of democracy which were outlined in history textbooks at the time. Black secondary school history students were alive to the many contradictions between what they were taught and the reality of life in South Africa.⁶⁷ Motshabi, writing about history education among black learners in the Eastern Cape, noted that in her experience, ‘Bantu pupils are tetchy and alert to a new political and national consciousness which is related to the upsurge of nationalism in Africa’.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Zwane, ‘An Examination of the Position and Role of History’, pp. 46–52.

⁶⁸ Motshabi, ‘Use of the Textbook’, p. 3.

Further evidence of a developed level of political awareness among black secondary school learners during the apartheid period is furnished by Maree who spent a period of time in April 1975 observing mainly history and social studies lessons in Soweto secondary schools. She relates that on occasions she was questioned by learners, about herself or South Africa. Maree found many of the questions to be quite searching. Some examples include: 'If you are a South African, why do you live in Britain?' and 'How must we answer questions in the exam? For example, if we are talking about the Eastern Frontier must we say Boers and Kaffirs, rather than blacks and whites so that they don't think that we are politically minded?' On the topic of the French Revolution, their educator was asked questions such as, 'How can the rich have no power? Were palace servants paid? Couldn't the King imprison the thinkers? From which estate came the soldiers?' Maree concluded that these kinds of questions revealed a high degree of political awareness among learners.

On the basis of her research project, Maree noted that by 1975, Bantu Education had not been able to blind secondary school learners from the experience of their lives in Soweto, or from having a sense of a history of oppression. Black learners in secondary schools were aware of their exploitation, and the educational system had not been successful in creating a sense of acceptance of their position in society. Learners were becoming aware of the unfairness of the system.⁶⁹

Maree's research also demonstrates that black secondary school learners had perceived that two kinds of school history co-existed in their classrooms: the kind of history which needed to be learnt and regurgitated for the purposes of passing examinations and the kind of history which was not associated with government propaganda. This perception which black secondary school learners of history held was apparent in the responses which I obtained from black history educators in Mpumalanga who had themselves experienced history education as learners during the apartheid era.

One respondent noted that when he was a history learner during the early 1970s he and his classmates formed study groups of their own so as to study beyond the bounds of the syllabus.

⁶⁹ Maree, 'The Hearts and Minds of the People', pp. 155–158.

The syllabus was learnt to facilitate examination success and the learners in the study groups shared study material about history and politics amongst themselves.⁷⁰ Another educator related that as a learner his own history educator had taken care to point out the differences between the different versions of history presented in the syllabi and textbooks and what had really happened.⁷¹

Black secondary school learners also tended to view history as a negative and boring exercise. Nuxumalo noted how learners (during the 1970s) harboured a negative attitude toward history as they entered higher education. As well as believing the subject to be an exercise in indoctrination, they ‘view it mainly as a chronological exercise in remembering dates, events and places.’⁷²

The scepticism evident in the above reactions is reflected by Ashley who notes that the South African history learnt by learners at black secondary schools became an emotive and sensitive issue as leaders of banned organisations were either detained or had fled the country. Learners were developing an interest in the activities of political leaders, and as they did so, the Eurocentric South African history became an area of doubt.⁷³ Black secondary school learners were beginning to question that all the facts which related to black people in South African history were in fact true. Zwane points to the development of a negative attitude among learners to the subject content. He notes that this was one of the many factors which contributed to the rejection of Bantu Education in 1976. South African history as taught in black secondary schools lost credibility among learners. Zwane notes that it even evoked hatred for those who were perceived to be perpetuating the subordination of black people.⁷⁴ The negative views which black secondary school learners took towards their history education increased and intensified after the Soweto Uprising of 1976. An article in the *Financial Mail* of 5 August 1977 reflects the views of black secondary school learners about the South African history which they were being

⁷⁰ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 1.

⁷¹ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 2.

⁷² Nuxumalo, ‘Sociological Significance of the Teaching of History’, p. 205.

⁷³ M. Ashley, *Ideologies and Schooling in South Africa* (Cape Town, 1989) p. 24, as quoted by Zwane, ‘An Examination of the Position and Role of History’, p. 63.

⁷⁴ Zwane, ‘An Examination of the Position and Role of History,’ pp. 63, 88.

taught: 'The courses ignore our views of history and stress things like Bantustans which we reject.'⁷⁵

As opposed to some expectations, the enactment of Act 90 of 1979 which introduced the new Department of Education and Training did not soften the learners' rejection of the school system. Rather, the 1980 school boycotts in black townships as well as wider political and social unrest followed. In fact, Zwane makes the case that the attitudes of learners within black secondary schools to South African history hardened after the post-1976 Bantu Education Department 'reforms'.⁷⁶ Black learners perceived South African history as being biased and prejudiced against black people who were depicted as politically immature. The content of the history syllabi which was taught at black schools demotivated both educators and learners studying South African history.⁷⁷

Respondents whom Zwane interviewed corroborated the viewpoint that most of the sections of South African history taught at black secondary schools reflected a 'white' perspective of South Africa's history, showing how white people were responsible for most significant historical development. The idea that 'exaggerated notions and interpretations' of the Afrikaners were taught to white learners was widely held by blacks.⁷⁸

By the 1980s, Lekgoathi identified 'a rising tide of student militancy' even in secondary schools in rural Lebowa, in the present-day Limpopo province. Learners began to seriously challenge the moral authority of their educators. It was not rare for learners to react violently against educators they regarded as 'sell-outs'.⁷⁹ Holden and Mathabatha, writing of the politics of resistance in the former Eastern Transvaal (now Mpumalanga), identify an increase in learner militancy in the province after the Soweto Uprising of 1976. Interestingly, the influence of history as a subject and of history educators at secondary schools is noted as a factor which at times encouraged learner militancy. Several political activists are mentioned who owed their subsequent

⁷⁵ *Financial Mail*, 5 August 1977, as quoted by Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', p. 90.

⁷⁶ Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', p. 91.

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 97, 103. The question of the content of history syllabi being taught at black secondary schools during the apartheid era is examined elsewhere in this dissertation.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, pp. 113, 141.

⁷⁹ Lekgoathi, 'Teacher Militancy', p. 226.

involvement in the liberation struggle to the impression which a history educator made upon them.⁸⁰

Black history educators from Nkangala who had themselves experienced the social and educational unrest of the 1980s recorded the following about how learners' perceptions of history education changed during this turbulent time:

The unrest was some kind of enlightenment to many learners. Most have now a passion to know more about what happened as well as about roles and people who brought about change...⁸¹

This respondent claimed that one positive aspect of the 1980s unrest was that it did spark a curiosity in learners to know their history. Most of the other respondents did not however view the results of the 1980s unrest for history education within black secondary schools in so positive a light. Learners appeared to have lost interest in schooling and no longer valued or upheld history education.⁸² Learners began to resist and question sections of the history syllabus⁸³ and developed an open dislike for 'Afrikaner history'.⁸⁴

The perceptions which black secondary school learners held of history cannot fail to have been influenced by an education which from 1976, took place in a context of social turmoil and political unrest. Hartshorne refers to the disintegration of learning which occurred during periods of protest and revolt through 1976–1980, 1984–1986 and from 1988 onward, and learner reactions to school authority during these periods. As the learning environment began to deteriorate, first in urban and then rural schools, when calls to return to school were accepted, there were still no guarantees that learning would in fact take place. Learners came to school at various times, left when they wanted to, brought no books to school, refused to take tests or to do homework, and generally rejected any form of authority. In referring to black youth who had a misplaced confidence in what they could achieve on their own without the assistance of educators, Hartshorne refers to the lost generation of secondary school youth, who, 'had been the

⁸⁰ Holden and Mathabatha, 'The Politics of Resistance', pp. 405, 408, 415.

⁸¹ Educator's questionnaire, Response 1.

⁸² Educator's questionnaire, Response 5.

⁸³ Educator's questionnaire, Response 6.

⁸⁴ Educator's questionnaire, Response 7.

leaders of the political struggle in 1976–1980 [and] more and more became the victims of that struggle’.⁸⁵

4.6 Conclusion

It is clear that by the 1990s as the grip of the apartheid government loosened, the perceptions of learners towards history education became more positive. The 1991 HSRC research on history education in South Africa clearly reflects this.⁸⁶ A freer political climate which enabled more positive perceptions of history to develop at black secondary schools is reflected by an educator who reported that from the late 1980s, ‘I began to lose fear of the secret police because of the rate of which change was moving...’⁸⁷ The promise of new life for all and the development of fresh, positive perceptions of secondary school history which seem to have appeared by the 1990s will however be shown to have been short lived as improved syllabi, textbooks and teaching methods did little to counteract a growing trend toward pragmatic materialism encouraged by a technologically oriented society which has not set a high premium upon humanistic education.

⁸⁵ Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, p. 80.

⁸⁶ Van der Merwe, *et al.*, *An Empirical Investigation into the Teaching of History*.

⁸⁷ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 7.

CHAPTER FIVE

OVERVIEW OF POST-APARTHEID HISTORY EDUCATION, 1994–2008

5.1 Introduction

A brief overview of the manifold syllabus changes and indeed the changes which have been made to the entire structure of South African school education is necessary if the varied perceptions of history educators and learners as described in Chapters 6 and 7 of this dissertation are to be appreciated. This story of educational change in democratic South Africa is a long and involved one. The new structures of school education in general and history education in particular are described in sufficient detail so as to facilitate an understanding of the position of history education in contemporary South African schools.

After the election of 1994, the Government of National Unity (GNU) assumed power until 1999. Legodi notes that the GNU inherited some unfortunate cultures which had existed before 1994 and remained intact for its duration. These cultures included crime, violence, poor discipline and a habit of emphasising rights but neglecting responsibilities. The GNU inherited a society weakened by many years of misgovernment, mismanagement and exploitation.¹ Enslin outlines the magnitude of the difficulties which faced the new government:

It is difficult to find an example of a more divided society than South Africa was in 1994, when its first democratic elections marked the transition from apartheid to democracy. The new government of national unity assumed responsibility for a society systematically fractured across a range of divisions: not only by race, class and gender, but also by ethnicity and language, and between rural and urban dwellers as well as between those with land and the landless.²

Into this broken situation, the GNU attempted a process of educational reform.

¹ M.R. Legodi, 'The Transformation of Education', p. 194.

² P. Enslin, 'Citizenship Education in Post-Apartheid South Africa' *Cambridge Journal of Education*, 33, 1 (2003), p. 73.

The *White Paper on Education and Training* asserts the right to education of all people, including adults, youths and children.³ This document makes the important shift from a traditional approach to education which aimed through education to determine how far learning had been mastered, to a new integrated approach based on a system of credits for achieving certain learning outcomes.⁴

From 1994, the GNU began the task of enacting new educational laws. In 1994, the new Minister of Education, Sibusiso Bengu, set about an interim revision of school syllabi in order to remove inaccuracies and contentious and outdated content. Siebörger notes that an important proviso to Bengu's syllabi revisions was that any changes made would not necessitate the production of new textbooks.⁵

The GNU was also responsible for producing Curriculum 2005. In March 1997 Bengu announced that Curriculum 2005 would be implemented in Grade 1 from 1998, to be phased in until the curricula of every school grade had changed. Legodi notes that the government's plan was to introduce Outcomes-based education (OBE) while at the same time phasing out the old content-based system of learning.⁶ Pela reported Bengu describing Curriculum 2005 as encompassing cultures of human rights, multi-lingualism and sensitivity towards reconciliation and nation building.⁷

The 1996 Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996 proved significant for education. Chapter Two of the Constitution contains the Bill of Rights, a list of the basic human rights which all South Africans have. These rights include the right to a basic education; the right to adult education and the right to further education.⁸

³ *White Paper on Education and Training. Notice No. 196 of 1995* (Pretoria, 1995), p. 40, as quoted by Legodi, 'The Transformation of Education', p. 160.

⁴ Legodi, 'The Transformation of Education', p. 163.

⁵ R. Siebörger, 'History and the Emerging Nation', page unnumbered.

⁶ Legodi, 'The Transformation of Education', pp. 180–181.

⁷ M. Pela, 'School Curricula need Questions', *Sowetan* 26 March 1997: 8, as quoted by Legodi, 'The Transformation of Education', p. 181.

⁸ *The Constitution of the Republic of South Africa Act 108 of 1996*, as quoted by Legodi, 'The Transformation of Education', p. 159.

The South African Schools Act 84 of 1996 was first implemented in January, 1997. The Act aimed to provide a uniform system for organising, governing and funding schools, to amend the Educator's Employment Act (Proclamation 138 of 1994) and to repeal some sections of the Coloured Persons Education Act 47 of 1963, the Indian Education Act 61 of 1995, the (infamous) Education and Training Act 90 of 1979, the Private Schools Act 104 of 1986 and the Education Affairs Act 70 of 1988.⁹ The main objectives of the Act were to facilitate transiting from the old to the new education system, to create a single national system, to lay a foundation for improving the quality of education, to create equitable systems of funding, to instill an awareness among educators that they were paid and employed by the state, to establish representative school governing bodies and learner representative councils, to restore school discipline, to make education compulsory for young people between the ages of six and fifteen and to ensure that all learners have access to public schools.¹⁰

Even though a new order in education had clearly arrived, massive inequalities in access and facilities still continued, crime at schools intensified, learner problems such as unwanted pregnancies and dishonesty, educator non-professionalism and even criminal practices continued unabated and so made the transition to a brighter educational future for South Africans very hard to achieve.¹¹

5.2 History education initiatives

History as a school subject underwent something of a revival between 1994 and 1999. Controversial subjects like history enjoyed a new-found popularity.¹² The tone of history writing improved considerably during this time.¹³

⁹ E. Bray, 'Education in Transition: The Impact of the Draft South African Schools Bill of 1996' in J.De Groof and E. Bray *Education under the New Constitution in South Africa* (Leuven, 1996), pp. 39–42, referring to South Africa (RSA), *South African Schools Act 84 of 1996* (Pretoria, 1996), as quoted by Legodi, 'The Transformation of Education', p. 161.

¹⁰ Legodi, 'The Transformation of Education', p. 162.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 170, 201–209, 217–220.

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 185.

¹³ N.C.G. Vakalisa, 'Construction of a school Curriculum Consistent with the Needs of the Country and its People: Uniting and not Polarizing Them', *Paidonomia*, 19, 1 (1996), p. 12, as quoted by Legodi, 'The

Under the GNU, the Legacy Project was launched in 1998 by the Minister of Arts, Culture and Technology. Among the aims of the project were to acknowledge the contribution of all to the country's heritage; to acknowledge the previously neglected, distorted and marginalised South African heritage and to interpret historical events in a way that did not imply the supremacy of any one race.

During the period of the GNU several new school history textbooks with a totally new approach were published. The Oxford University Press launched a new book *In Search of History* and Maskew Miller Longman released two series for primary schools, *The Broken String* and *Looking into the Past*. The tone and approach to history writing in these books signified an attempt to transform the story of South Africa's history.¹⁴

Along with other syllabi, a revision of the history syllabus was undertaken by the GNU as part of Minister Bengu's interim revision of school syllabi. Siebörger outlines the disconcerting process which was used to revise the different syllabi.¹⁵ The National Education and Training Forum (NETF) conducted the syllabus revision. The NETF was a bargaining forum of various stakeholders in education and represented education departments, business, parent, teacher and student organisations.¹⁶ Similarly, the history sub-committee was composed of various stakeholder representatives. These included a departmental official who had served on apartheid-era syllabus committees, five representatives of teacher organisations, a high school and a university student.¹⁷

History was now, together with geography, regarded as a sub-field of human and social sciences, which as Siebörger points out, was an arrangement first conceived of by the previous

Transformation of Education', p. 186.

¹⁴ Legodi, 'The Transformation of Education', p. 187.

¹⁵ Siebörger, 'History and the Emerging Nation', page unnumbered.

¹⁶ Y. Selati, *From History to Human and Social Sciences. The New Curriculum Framework and the End of History for the General Education and Training Level* (Durban, 1997), p. 10, as quoted by Siebörger, 'History and the Emerging Nation', page unnumbered.

¹⁷ S. Lowry, 'A Review of the History Curriculum Process', in J. Reid and R. Siebörger, *Proceedings of the Workshop on School History Textbook Writing from Principles to Practice* (Cape Town, 1995), p. 20, as quoted by Siebörger, 'History and the Emerging Nation', page unnumbered.

Department of National Education as part of the educational renewal strategy of the early 1990s. This educational renewal strategy was a counter to the NECC and ANC curriculum initiatives of the time.¹⁸

The interim history syllabus had great flexibility. This syllabus, which was first introduced into schools in January 1995, was a five-page document which listed a choice of topics to be covered in each grade, left individual educators to choose between topics and then to devise their own specific content and methodology.¹⁹ Dryden recognised that the rationale for the study of history given to guide the educators' implementation of the curriculum in their classrooms was positive:

History is a systematic study of the past. It is a study based on evidence: a selection of facts and events that are arranged, interpreted and explained. Thus history, in addition to its content, is also a mode of enquiry, a way of investigating the past which requires the acquisition of skills. The events, communities and peoples of the past are studied in order to develop an appreciation of other times and places, but also because they are interesting in themselves. History develops both the imagination and the understanding of people and communities, while a study of recent history is essential for an understanding of the present, just as an understanding of the present is necessary to understand the past.²⁰

The specific aims of the interim syllabus, mentioned in the same document also positively confirm the importance of the discipline and provide an indication of how far the reasons for studying school history had moved since the apartheid era:

To give pupils the sense of such characteristics of historical knowledge as its time dimension; the importance of placing events in their historical context; the concepts and terminology and the interpretations and perspectives of historical knowledge; the changing state of historical knowledge and contribution made by the related disciplines to historical knowledge.

To give pupils an understanding of such historical skills as the ability to locate evidence (sic), to organise, classify and interpret this evidence in a logical way and to communicate historical ideas.²¹

¹⁸ Siebörger, 'History and the Emerging Nation', page unnumbered.

¹⁹ S. Dryden, 'Mirror of a Nation', p. 6.

²⁰ Western Cape Education Department, 'Interim Syllabus for History Ordinary Grade, Standards 5, 6 and 7', 1995, p. 10, as quoted by Dryden, 'Mirror of a Nation', p. 6.

²¹ Western Cape Education Department, 'Interim Syllabus for History Ordinary Grade, Standards 5, 6 and 7', 1995, as quoted by Siebörger, 'History and the Emerging Nation', page unnumbered.

Not surprisingly, despite the positive elements which the interim history syllabus contained, the interim syllabi were little more than adaptations of old syllabi and few people involved in history education were pleased.

The GNU did however make an effort to begin a transformation of school history. The new syllabus (flawed as its beginnings may have been) and new textbooks which came on the market signaled a clear break from school history education of the past. At least the way was prepared for black South Africans to begin to develop a more positive perception of and relationship with the past.

5.3 Outcomes-based education (OBE)

The introduction of outcomes-based education from 1998 marks a watershed in the history of education in South African schools. Every new modification of the educational system – and there have been many – have retained OBE principles and features. Methods of educating as well as the content of subjects and learning areas underwent large-scale change. Along with all secondary school educators, history educators were swept along by this tide of educational change. Most educators found it difficult to keep up and cope with the changes, as the interim syllabi gave way to Curriculum 2005 and OBE, to be followed by the General Education and Training band (GET), the Further Education and Training band (FET) and the National Curriculum Statement (NCS).

Lifelong learning, flexible education and training structures, the integration and transfer of learning, the need to teach towards critical cross-fields and specific outcomes and the need to develop learner competence are the principles which are emphasised in OBE.²² Mazabow notes that OBE places great emphasis on learning outcomes.²³ According to the *Revised National*

²² C. Lubisi, *et al.*, *Understanding Outcomes-Based Education: Teaching and Assessment in South Africa: Learning Guide* (Cape Town, 1998), p. 56.

²³ Mazabow, 'The Development of Historical Consciousness', p. 17.

Curriculum Statement a learning outcome is defined as ‘a description of what (knowledge, skills and values) learners should know, demonstrate and be able to do’.²⁴

OBE is geared towards social transformation. The future role that learners will play after completing their formal school education is central to the OBE approach. The economic, social and political needs of the country were included in the formulation of the learning outcomes. Mazabow points to the *Senior Phase (Grades 7–9) Policy Document* which notes that learners should be ‘empowered through the internalization of competencies to contribute to the development of the country’.²⁵ The *Curriculum Framework for General and Further Education and Training* expresses the desire that learners ‘articulate, activate and energise rigorously, the South African perspective of transformation’.²⁶

The OBE approach argues against the content-based teaching approach of the past which has been perceived to neglect the needs of learners, the community and the business sector.²⁷ OBE argues in favour of empowering learners and emancipating critical skills and attitudes, to assist learners in constructing their own meanings and knowledge and assisting them to become competent citizens.²⁸ The OBE approach is learner-centered, rather than teacher-centered. Learners assume the central position and educators become organisers and facilitators in the learning experiences of the learners.²⁹

Assessment methods which are based primarily on rote learning and memory work are questioned by OBE. The progress of a learner is measured rather in terms of the effectiveness of the practical application of the skills which they have been taught. The personal performance of

²⁴ Department of National Education, *Revised National Curriculum Statement* (Pretoria, 2002), p. 14, as quoted by Mazabow, ‘The Development of Historical Consciousness’, p. 17.

²⁵ Department of National Education, *Department of Education. Senior Phase (Grades 7- 9) Policy Document* (Pretoria, 1997), p. 8, as quoted by Mazabow, ‘The Development of Historical Consciousness’, p. 18.

²⁶ Department of National Education, *Curriculum Framework for General and Further Education and Training* (Pretoria, 1996), p. 17, as quoted by Mazabow, ‘The Development of Historical Consciousness’, p. 18.

²⁷ African National Congress (ANC), *Policy Framework for Education and Training* (Pretoria, 1995), p. 17, as quoted by Mazabow, ‘The Development of Historical Consciousness’, p. 18.

²⁸ Department of National Education, *Revised National Curriculum Statement R–9 (schools)* (Pretoria, 2002), p. 12, as quoted by Mazabow, ‘The Development of Historical Consciousness’, p. 18.

²⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 9, as quoted by Mazabow, ‘The Development of Historical Consciousness’, p. 18.

the learner is critical, rather than the traditional method of being measured against the performance of others.³⁰ The *Curriculum 2005 Assessment Guidelines* notes that the assessment should ‘help students to make judgements about their own performance, set goals for progress and improve further learning’.³¹

An OBE curriculum model possesses certain advantages. Clearly stated outcomes and assessment criteria mean that learners know what is expected of them and can assess their own progress. Learners are provided with support especially in terms of the assistance of peers in learning situations. Learners cannot fail in the sense that they enjoy further opportunities to meet required standards. Understanding concepts is considered more important than rote learning and simply absorbing disparate facts. Real-life knowledge, skills and values are emphasised, rather than an artificial classroom situation.³²

The new Curriculum 2005 had many positive features in general as well as for history education. The break which it provided with old authoritarian learning systems of the past was welcome, as were its commitment to equality in learning and training, its recognition of the need to create better opportunities for entrance into every level of teaching and training; its greater recognition of skills and qualifications in work-related training, its encouragement of lifelong learning, its promotion of a more direct relationship between learning and training, the more rational integration of knowledge and skills in various learning areas, its emphasis upon cooperative learning, its promotion of critical thinking and civic responsibility, as well as its recognition that some knowledge and understanding of history was important and was included in the school syllabus.³³

Perceived weaknesses of OBE have been identified. The OBE concept has been seen as a theory which was developed in other countries and then transplanted to South Africa. There were few, if

³⁰ Mazabow, ‘The Development of Historical Consciousness’, pp. 18–19.

³¹ Department of National Education, *Curriculum 2005 Assessment Guidelines* (Pretoria, 2002), p. 18, as quoted by Mazabow, ‘The Development of Historical Consciousness’, p. 19.

³² H. Van der Horst and R. McDonald, *Outcomes-Based Education: A Teacher’s Manual* (Pretoria, 1997), pp. 14–16, as quoted by Mazabow, ‘The Development of Historical Consciousness’, p. 141.

³³ M. Legassick, ‘Statement by the South African Historical Society on the Implications of Curriculum 2005 for History Teaching in the Schools’ *Kleo*, 30 (1998), p. 6.

any precise and definite answers as to what is to be achieved. Issues such as the importance of acquiring much needed social values such as non-racism were not included in the curriculum. The Curriculum Review Committee, which was commissioned by Minister of National Education, Kader Asmal, to review Curriculum 2005, found that educators, officials, managers and learners were confused, and did not understand what was expected of them. Other complicating factors around OBE and Curriculum 2005 included too many design features, lack of specifications, too much complex and difficult terminology, too many learning areas, a lack of effective implementation of techniques, not enough resources such as textbooks and stationery and not enough provision of effective in-service training for educators.³⁴

Legassick noted that there were certain areas in which Curriculum 2005 did not advance the teaching of history in particular. A chronological framework, or context of the past needs to be provided so as to understand the interactions of people and the forces of change at particular times. The design of the learning programmes with their accompanying specific outcomes, range statements and assessment criteria made it difficult for history to be taught and learned in this way. Insufficient care had been taken in the use of documents as a method of understanding and analysing the past and in considering different interpretations of history. Very little about human agency was apparent in the documents, which led to the idea that change was something that occurred subject to fixed laws in a mechanistic and deterministic way. Legassick felt that the way in which the concept of identity was presented in the curriculum did not break with the South African patterns of the past which viewed communities as fixed and unchanging. Even though a somewhat wider definition of community was allowed for, human agency was again neglected.³⁵

In Mpumalanga, reactions to the introduction of OBE were overwhelmingly negative among educators in all subjects, including history.³⁶ My own observations confirm the well-worn criticisms leveled against OBE and Curriculum 2005, as outlined above. Educators complained unceasingly about the fact that OBE was essentially an educational import and that it did not suit

³⁴ Legodi, 'The Transformation of Education', pp. 184–185.

³⁵ Legassick, 'Statement by the South African Historical Society', p. 8.

³⁶ The Nkangala region of Mpumalanga is referred to, especially the Middelburg, Witbank/Emalaheni and Hendrina areas.

local conditions, whatever these were perceived to be. The system was perceived to be very difficult to implement. OBE was seen to be a watering down of traditional academic study, to be less factual and subject to the imposition of an individual educator's nebulous personal values. More than anything, this researcher perceived an intense reluctance on the part of educators to deal with the prospect of change. Departmental training seminars which were organised to train educators in the new ways of OBE were poorly attended, and those educators who did attend often displayed negativity, pre-judging the courses even before they began. OBE was in reality perceived to be a full frontal attack on educators' professional comfort zones. Despite the perceived shortcomings of OBE and Curriculum 2005, the new educational approach did have merit, but most educators never gave either approach a fair and open-minded chance.

Schoeman and Manyane mention the often-aired apprehension that existed within the history educating profession as to whether educators would be able to master the new OBE approach to history education and teach the subject successfully in their classrooms.³⁷ These concerns arose at a time when learner support material was lacking and when educator training seemed inadequate and inconsistent.³⁸

Many secondary school history educators found that the OBE approach was indeed conducive to history teaching. OBE methods had in any event already been used within history classrooms by educators who had tried to make use of various sources to teach the subject and who attempted to encourage learners to self-explore the syllabus content. As Legassick has pointed out, many features of OBE suit history education at secondary schools.³⁹

³⁷ S. Schoeman and R.M. Manyane, 'Understanding the Introduction of Outcomes-Based History Teaching in South Africa' *Educare*, 31, 1 & 2 (2002), p. 177, as quoted by Mazabow, 'The Development of Historical Consciousness', p. 19.

³⁸ Mazabow, 'The Development of Historical Consciousness', p. 19.

³⁹ Legassick, 'Statement by the South African Historical Society', p. 6.

5.4 The General Education and Training (GET) Band: human and social sciences (HSS)

Human and social sciences conceived a broad mixture of history and geography. The ‘Introduction to the Learning Programme’ (syllabus) explains the rationale of the subject as follows:

Human and social sciences contribute to developing responsible citizens in a culturally diverse, democratic society within an interdependent world. They will equip learners to make sound judgements and take appropriate actions that will contribute to sustainable development of human society and the physical environment... human and social sciences comprise the study of relationships between people, and between people and their environment. These interactions are contextualised in space and time and have social, political, environmental and spiritual dimensions... They develop distinctive skills and a critical awareness of social and environmental patterns, processes and events, based on appropriate investigations and reflection within and across related focuses.⁴⁰

Like all other Learning Areas, human and social sciences was based on the attainment of certain Critical Outcomes. Many of these were conducive to history education:

An educated person should have the following competencies:

- Identify and solve problems in which responses display that responsible decisions using critical and creative thinking have been made. (Thinking skills/problem solving)
- Work effectively with others as a member of a team, group, organisation, community. (Groupwork/people skills)
- Organise and manage oneself and one’s activities responsibly and effectively. (Independence and self-management skills)
- Collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information. (Research skills)
- Communicate effectively using visual, mathematical, and/or language skills in the modes of oral and/or written persuasion. (Communication skills)
- Use science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and health of others. (Technological and environmental health)
- Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a collection of interrelated systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation. (Cognitive skills)

⁴⁰ Department of National Education, ‘Rationale for Human and Social Sciences’ from *Human and Social Sciences: Senior Phase* (Pretoria, 2004), p. 4.

Contribute to the personal development of each learner and the social and economic development of society at large, by making it the underlying intention of any programme of learning to make an individual aware of the importance of:

- Reflecting on and exploring a variety of strategies to learn more effectively. (Learning skills)
- Participating as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities. (Citizenship)
- Being culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts. (Cultural and aesthetic sensitivity)
- Exploring education and career opportunities. (Employment seeking skills)
- Developing entrepreneurial opportunities (Entrepreneurship)⁴¹

In addition to these general Critical Outcomes, the following Specific Outcomes applied to human and social sciences:

- SO 1 Demonstrate a critical understanding of how South African society has changed and developed.
- SO 2 Demonstrate a critical understanding of patterns of social development.
- SO 3 Participate actively in promoting a just, democratic and equitable society.
- SO 4 Make sound judgements about the development, utilisation and management of resources.
- SO 5 Critically understand the role of technology in social development.
- SO 6 Demonstrate an understanding of the interrelationships between society and the natural environment.
- SO 7 Address social and environmental issues in order to promote development and social justice.
- SO 8 Analyse forms and processes of organisations.
- SO 9 Demonstrate the ability to use a range of skills and techniques in the human and social sciences context.⁴²

In addition to all the Critical and Specific Outcomes which had to be attained by learners, various 'Phase Organisers' also had to be covered within a learning programme. These Phase Organisers were broader areas of interest which had to be incorporated within the designated Critical and Specific Outcomes.⁴³ In Grade 8, for example, these included such themes as

⁴¹ P. Avery, *et al.*, *Shuters Human and Social Sciences: Grade 8 Educator's Guide* (Pietermaritzburg, 2000), p. iv.

⁴² *Ibid.*, p. v.

⁴³ Such was the level of misunderstanding of the new system that this researcher encountered prominent Pretoria high schools who had taken 'Phase Organiser' to refer to an appointed educator to take charge of a 'Phase' (e.g. Grade 7 and 8), rather than to refer to a set of curriculum prescriptions. If the level of misunderstanding was so generally high at well provisioned schools, the chaos which the new system engendered at less well provisioned schools can only be imagined.

‘Communication’, ‘Culture and Society’, ‘Personal Development and Empowerment’, ‘Environment’ and ‘Economy and Development’.⁴⁴ Educators also had to be conversant with various ‘Assessment Criteria’ in order to assess their learners’ attainment of the Outcomes and also had to ensure that the instruction in one Learning Programme (e.g. human and social sciences) integrated successfully into what was being taught in all the other learning areas. Assessment Criteria were accompanied by various ‘Range Statements’ which were in reality something of a vaguely defined syllabus, giving guidance to the educator about what topics might assist learners to achieve the Specific Outcomes. ‘Performance Indicators’ stated what demonstrated skills would indicate whether or not the Specific Outcomes had been achieved. Within the ‘Phase’ (i.e. the General Education and Training Band, Grades 7–9) some 66 Critical Outcomes had to be successfully attained by a learner across the entire range of learning areas.

Needless to say, this well-intentioned but complex system of education proved to be understood by very few educators, despite intense training drives by the education department. Few educators were able to properly implement the system, or even tried to do so. History educators complained that their subject had been watered down to a kind of limpid social science course. Another strong perception held by history educators was that when geography-qualified educators taught HSS the history component of the course was neglected.⁴⁵ Most history educators held very negative perceptions of HSS, an attitude which cannot help but have influenced their learners.⁴⁶ It was clear that a new approach to OBE education in secondary schools had to be formulated.

5.5 The General Education and Training (GET) Band: social sciences (SS)

The many concerns about the implementation of Curriculum 2005, together with fears that it would prove to be counter-productive, led to the appointment of a Ministerial Review Committee in February 2000. The committee’s report, produced during May of the same year, was critical of

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. v.

⁴⁵ These views emerged strongly in the survey which this researcher conducted among black secondary school history educators in the Nkangala area of Mpumalanga during May 2008.

⁴⁶ The perceptions of black secondary school history educators toward HSS and SS are explored in Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

many aspects of Curriculum 2005, including teacher training and understanding about the new curriculum, the provision of learner support materials and design features of the curriculum itself. Siebörger quotes the report of this Review Committee, which states that the curriculum ‘is strong in integration and weak on conceptual coherence or progression. It overemphasises connective relations and fails to provide structured guidelines for sequence, progression and pacing...’⁴⁷ A rationalisation of learning areas was recommended, which entailed human and social sciences becoming social sciences. Siebörger further quotes the Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005 as specifying:

These (the disciplines of history and geography) should not be integrated mechanically but should ensure that the distinctive concepts and ‘ways of thinking’ of each is fostered and developed. The teaching of history should ensure that learners develop a ‘narrative’ and a conceptual understanding of the history of South Africa and their place in the world...⁴⁸

Siebörger viewed this as a positive development, stating that a lifeline had been thrown to the school subject of history, which once more had a real place in the curriculum.⁴⁹

There are six Learning Outcomes in social science, three of which pertain to history and three of which pertain to geography. These replace the previous nine outcomes which applied to HSS. Each Learning Outcome is accompanied by several Assessment Standards which are statements designed to measure whether the requirements of the Learning Outcomes have been practically achieved by the learner.⁵⁰ The social sciences Learning Outcomes (LOs), accompanied by their respective Assessment Standards (ASs) which pertain to history are:

LO 1 Historical Enquiry

The learner will be able to use enquiry skills to investigate the past and present.

AS 1: Investigates a topic by asking key questions and identifies a variety of relevant sources to explore this topic (find sources).

⁴⁷ Ministry of Education, *Values, Education and Democracy: Report of the Working Group on Values in Education* (Pretoria, 2000), p. 44, as quoted by Siebörger, ‘History and the Emerging Nation’, pages unnumbered.

⁴⁸ Ministry of Education, *Values, Education and Democracy: Report of the Working Group on Values in Education* p. 138, as quoted by Siebörger, ‘History and the Emerging Nation’, pages unnumbered.

⁴⁹ Siebörger, ‘History and the Emerging Nation’, page unnumbered.

⁵⁰ History educators at one of the surveyed black secondary schools did not appear to see the changes implied in the significant shift from HSS to SS. These educators informed the researcher that they had simply erased the word *Human* from all previous HSS documents and continued teaching the subject unchanged as SS.

- AS 2: Asks significant questions to evaluate the sources (e.g. to identify bias and stereotypes, omissions and gaps) (works with sources).
- AS 3: Analyse the information in the sources (works with sources).
- AS 4: Presents an independent line of argument in answering questions posed, and justifies (using evidence) the conclusions reached (answers the question).
- AS 5: Communicates knowledge and understanding by constructing own interpretation and argument based on the historical sources (including extended writing, artwork, graphics and drama); uses information technology where available and appropriate (communicates the answer).

LO 2 **Historical Knowledge and Understanding**

The learner will be able to demonstrate historical knowledge and understanding.

- AS 1: Places events, people, and changes in the period of history studied within a chronological framework (chronology and time).
- AS 2: Identifies categories of causes and effects (e.g. immediate and long-term, direct and indirect) (cause and effect).
- AS 3: Explains and analyses the reasons for and the result of events in history (cause and effect).
- AS 4: Recognises that change and development does not always mean progress (change and continuity).

LO 3 **Historical Interpretation**

The learner will be able to interpret aspects of history.

- AS 1: Understands the contested nature of content, and that historians construct histories when writing about events from the past (source interpretation).
- AS 2: Constructs an interpretation based on sources, giving reasons for an interpretation (source interpretation).
- AS 3: Analyse issues which influence the way history has been written (influences on interpretation).
- AS 4: Explains the way in which symbols are used to remember events and people from the past, and how oral histories can contribute to our understanding of the symbols (representation of the past).⁵¹

The syllabus outlines in the textbooks *Social Sciences Today: Grade 8* and *Social Sciences Today: Grade 9* have been used to provide detail about the content of the social science syllabus for Grade 8 and 9.⁵² The pacesetter which these textbooks closely follow had not been distributed to educators in Nkangala.⁵³

⁵¹ J. Earle, *et al.*, *Learners Book, Social Science Today: Grade 9* (Cape Town, 2006), Introduction.

⁵² J. Earle, *et al.*, *Learners Book, Social Sciences Today: Grade 8* (Cape Town, 2005), Contents page and Earle, *et al.*, *Learners Book, Social Sciences Today: Grade 9*, Contents page.

⁵³ Educators teaching Social Science in the Middelburg area complained that the Mpumalanga Education Department, through the office of the local Curriculum Implementer for Social Science had not provided any guidance about how organize and teach the course to the extent that they had to improvise and follow guides in textbooks as best they could. The subject knowledge of the Curriculum Implementer was called into

The history section of the Grade 8 social science syllabus includes The French Revolution; Industrialisation (in Britain and South Africa); Resisting British control (in South Africa); The Experience of Colonialism (in Africa); and a section on the First World War. The history section of the Grade 9 Social Science syllabus includes Nazi Germany and the Holocaust; Human Rights (the United Nations and human rights issues in Africa); Apartheid in South Africa; The Cold War and the Nuclear Age; and a section on various Issues of our Time (crimes against humanity; xenophobia and genocide; globalisation and Africa's economic recovery).

5.6 The National Curriculum Statement (NCS)

The curricula of the National Curriculum Statement were first applied in Grade 10 in 2006 and the first Grade 12 group to complete the new curriculum completed their National Senior Certificate in 2008. The expectations of the NCS when it comes to the kind of learner produced by the end of Grade 12 are high indeed. According to the National Education Department the kind of learner envisioned is one 'who will be imbued with the values and act in the interests of a society and social justice as promoted in the Constitution'.⁵⁴

A learner produced by the FET band should also be able to demonstrate the achievement of the following Critical and Developmental Outcomes:

- Identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking.
- Work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation, and community.
- Organise and manage themselves and their abilities responsibly and effectively.
- Collect, analyse, organise, and critically evaluate information.
- Communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes.

⁵⁴ question. Up-to-date course information and material had also apparently not been uniformly distributed. Lack of Departmental guidance is perceived by many educators in Mpumalanga as being a real difficulty. Department of Education, *National Curriculum Statement Grades 10–12 (General) HISTORY* (Pretoria, 2003), p. 5.

- Use science and technology effectively and critically showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others.
- Demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem-solving contexts do not exist in isolation.⁵⁵

The Developmental Outcomes require learners further to be able to:

- Reflect on and explore a variety of strategies to learn more effectively.
- Participate as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities.
- Be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a broad range of social contexts.
- Explore education and career opportunities.
- Develop entrepreneurial opportunities.⁵⁶

In addition to all the above, learners produced by the FET band should also:

- Have access to, and succeed in, lifelong education and training of good quality.
- Demonstrate an ability to think logically and analytically, as well as holistically and laterally.
- Be able to transfer skills from familiar to unfamiliar situations.⁵⁷

These general educational goals of the FET educational band – not to mention the specific goals for the study of history, are praiseworthy – if ambitious and lofty. While the noble intentions which underpin them cannot be disputed, it will become clear that within the educational environment which persists at the vast majority of black secondary schools in twenty-first century South Africa, such educational aspirations are seldom attained by FET educators, let alone FET learners.

The accreditation finally produced by the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) is the National Senior Certificate (NSC), which was first obtained by successful Grade 12 candidates in 2008. The NSC is a 130-credit certificate at level 4 on the NQF (National Qualifications Framework). History is one of three choice subjects which may be taken. Of the choice subjects, at least 40 per cent must be obtained for one subject and at least 30 per cent for the remaining two in order to

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 2.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 5.

pass the grade. Tasks undertaken during the course of the school year count for 25 per cent of the subject's assessment requirements and 75 per cent is obtained in the final examination papers. Four hours of teaching time is allocated to history during a school week.⁵⁸

5.7 The Further Education and Training (FET) Band (Grades 10–12): history education

5.7.1 A new approach to and definition of history education

The FET approach to history education as well as the content of the FET history syllabus can only be regarded as a huge improvement upon the syllabi which preceded it. The cornerstone of the FET approach is that the subject has moved away from the old content orientation of the past. Memory skills are still significant, although it is emphasised that content knowledge should not be assessed simply for its own sake, but rather as a way of measuring whether or not the history skills as outlined in the various Learning Outcomes have been achieved. It is clear that the history offered in the FET band has not only radically departed from the content offered in the past – and particularly the skewed content offered during the days of apartheid history education – but also signals a new (and exciting) conception of what is important about the subject.

All investigations in history are organised around key questions. The two overall key questions for FET are:

- How do we understand our world today?
- What legacies of the past have shaped our present?⁵⁹

Unlike previous school history syllabi, content is no longer divided between South African and World history. South Africa is located within Africa as well as within a global community. Human rights and indigenous knowledge are both emphasised, and a comparative approach to the past is taken, as case studies from various continents are explored. Content has been

⁵⁸ Mpumalanga Department of Education, 'NCS Training: Gd 10–12 (General) Resource Pack: Subject History', issued 2006, pages unnumbered.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, page unnumbered.

organised around various broad organising themes, which are: power alignments in the world (both past and present), human rights, issues of civil society and globalisation. It is emphasised that any ‘old’ content needs to be explored in new ways.

The definition offered of NCS history appears both comprehensive and interesting:

History is the study of change and development in society over time and space. It also draws on archaeology, palaeontology, genetics and oral history to interrogate the past. The study of history enables us to understand and to evaluate how past human action impacts on the present and influences the future.⁶⁰

The purpose of the study of history is to build the capacity of people to make informed choices in order to contribute constructively to society and to advance democracy. History should be a vehicle of personal empowerment for a learner and lead to an understanding of human agency. Learners should come to realise that they have the power of choice and that the choices which they make can change the world for the better.⁶¹

A rigorous process of historical enquiry should:

- encourage and assist constructive debate through careful evaluation of a broad range of evidence and diverse points of view;
- provide a critical understanding of socio-economic systems in their historical perspective and their impact on people; and
- support the view that historical truth consists of a multiplicity of voices expressing varying and often contradictory versions of the same history.⁶²

The study of history supports democracy by:

- engendering an appreciation and an understanding of the democratic values of the Constitution;
- encouraging civic responsibility and responsible leadership;
- promoting human rights, peace and democracy; and
- fostering an understanding of identity as a social construct, preparing future citizens for local, regional, national, continental and global citizenship.⁶³

⁶⁰ Department of Education, *National Curriculum Statement Grades 10–12 (General)*, p. 9.

⁶¹ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶² *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶³ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

As a vehicle for human rights, history:

- enables people to examine with greater insight and understanding the prejudices involving race, class, gender, ethnicity and xenophobia still existing in society and which must be challenged and addressed;
- enables us to listen to formally subjugated voices and focus on the crucial role of memory in society. This comes particularly through an emphasis on oral history and an understanding of indigenous knowledge systems;⁶⁴
- History promotes non-discrimination, raises debates, confronts issues and builds capacity in individuals to address current social and environmental concerns.⁶⁵

It is clear that the FET history syllabus aims to encompass the totality of human experience. It aims to be politically and socially redemptive, as it attempts to address a post-apartheid society. This approach to and definition of school history education can only be lauded for both the broadness and depth of its bold new vision. Whether this vision has been actualised in black South African secondary schools, is however another matter.

5.7.2 Subject matter of the FET history curriculum

The following table indicates the subject matter for the FET Grades 10, 11 and 12 history curricula. It illustrates what material has been retained from the old curriculum, what material is new and what has been jettisoned.⁶⁶

| Gr | NEW | OLD | OUT |
|----|--|--|---|
| 12 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the impact of the Cold War in forming the 1960s world? • How was uhuru realised in Africa in 1960s and 1970s? What forms of civil society protest emerged from the 1960s -1990s? • What was the impact of the collapse of the USSR in 1989? (South Africa, Africa, on dominance of the USA) • What do we understand by | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Independent Africa • How did SA emerge as a democracy from the crises of the 1990s? • Communism and Eastern Europe in the 1960s. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A number of topics from Grade 12 have been moved into the new Grade 11 syllabus • SA political history 1924-1948 that focuses on the white political parties • The Great Depression in SA • Constitutional development in SA 1948-61 |

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 9.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 10.

⁶⁶ Mpumalanga Department of Education, 'NCS Training: Gr 10–12 (General)', Table 'What is new, what is old, what is out?', pages unnumbered.

| | | | |
|-----------|--|---|---|
| | <p>globalisation and the challenges to globalisation?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How different is the world today from the 1960s? • What are the ideologies and debates around the constructed heritage icons from the period? (Ideologies and debates around SA heritage symbols and representations today; palaeontology, archaeology and genetics and transforming notions of race.) | | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Political and constitutional development 1977-89 • SA foreign relations • International crises and relations 1933-39, entry of USA and Japan into WW2 |
| 11 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the world like by 1850? • What was the nature and consequences of imperialism in the 19th and early 20th centuries? (The link between imperialism and WWI, imperialism, colonialism and ideas of race, domination of indigenous knowledge production.) • What were the range of responses to colonialism in Africa and Asia? • What was the impact of pseudo-scientific racism and Social Darwinism on the 19th and 20th centuries? (Eugenics movement and its impact on race and racism in Africa, USA, Australia, Europe and Nazi Germany and the Holocaust) • Competing nationalisms and identities in Africa, impact of WW2 on independence movements in Africa, nationalist impact on the construction of heritage and identities • How unique was apartheid South Africa? (segregations, apartheid as neo-colonialism after WW2, apartheid entrenching ideas of race, nature of resistance to apartheid and its links with wider resistance in the world to human rights abuses) • How did the world change between 1850 and 1950? • How has South Africa been publicly represented in e.g. museums and monuments? | <p>Some 'old' topics from Grade 12 are now in Grade 11:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Early post-WW2 communism in Europe • Colonialism in Africa • Challenges to capitalism: Russian Revolution and the establishment of the communist state • Crisis of capitalism: the Great Depression in the USA and its wider impact in terms of the emergence of fascist economies and states (e.g. Nazi Germany and Japan) • Segregation, apartheid and resistance | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Unification of Italy and Germany |
| 10 | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What was the world like in the mid-15th century? • What was the impact of conquest, warfare and early colonialism in the Americas, Africa and India? • What was the connection between slavery and the accumulation of wealth during the Industrial Revolution; the link between the | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Aspects of conflict over land in SA remain and are incorporated into Transformations in Southern Africa 1759 - 1850 • How did the Industrial Revolution lay the foundations for a new | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Conflict over land in SA in 1840-1880 • Diamonds and the conquest of African states 1867-1880 |

| | | | |
|--|--|---|--|
| | <p>Atlantic slave trade and racism?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The quest for liberty: How did the American War of Independence challenge the old basis of power and who benefited? Abolition of the slave trade in USA. Did American society change after the Civil War? • What transformations occurred in southern Africa between 1750 and 1850? • How did the world change between 1450 and 1850? • What heritage icons from the period are celebrated today? | <p>world economic system and change society?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The French Revolution and ideas of liberty, equality, fraternity and individual freedom (what sort of liberty, equality and fraternity?) • Aspects of the slave trade • Abolition of the slave trade in British colonies | |
|--|--|---|--|

5.7.3 The four history Learning Outcomes

In the FET band, history has four Learning Outcomes. The various Learning Outcomes work together in tandem, but have been written separately. The first three focus on the way in which historians investigate the past. Historical enquiry, conceptual understanding and knowledge construction skills are developed. Issues around heritage are dealt with in the fourth Learning Outcome, and critical questions such as analysis, interpretation and presentation are raised. The various Assessment Standards related to the Learning Outcomes include issues related to human rights and indigenous knowledge systems.⁶⁷

The four Learning Outcomes for history in the FET band are:

Learning Outcome 1: Enquiry Skills (Practical Competence)

The learner is able to acquire and apply historical enquiry skills.

In the Further Education and Training band, learners will be expected to raise questions about the past, identify issues relating to the past and use a range of enquiry skills in order to extract and organise evidence from a variety of historical sources and information. By the end of the band, learners will be expected to demonstrate an ability to work independently, formulating enquiry questions and gathering, analysing, interpreting and evaluating relevant evidence to answer questions.⁶⁸

⁶⁷ Department of Education, *National Curriculum Statement Grades 10–12 (General)*, p. 11.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

Learning Outcome 2: Historical Concepts (Foundational Competence)

The learner is able to use historical concepts in order to analyse the past.

Learners will be expected to work progressively towards acquiring an informed understanding of key historical concepts as a way of analysing the past. They will be expected to understand and explain the dynamics of change in the context of power relations operating in societies. They will also be expected to compare and contrast points of view/perspectives of the past and draw their own conclusions based on evidence.⁶⁹

Learning Outcome 3: Knowledge Construction and Communication (Reflexive Competence)

The learner is able to construct and communicate historical knowledge and understanding.

In the Further Education and Training band learners will be expected to work and draw conclusions from a variety of forms of data, and to synthesise information about the past in order to develop, sustain and defend an independent line of historical argument. They will be expected to communicate and present information reliably and accurately in writing and verbally.⁷⁰

Learning Outcome 4: Heritage (Reflexive Competence)

The learner is able to engage critically with issues around heritage.

This Learning Outcome introduces learners to issues and debates around heritage and public representations, and they are expected to work progressively towards engaging with them. Links are drawn between different knowledge systems and the various ways in which the past is memorialised. Learners also investigate the relationship between palaeontology, archaeology, and genetics in understanding the origins of humans and how this has transformed the notions of race.⁷¹

5.7.4 Criticism of FET history

The apparent abandonment of the narrative style of school history education in favour of teaching History as a mode of inquiry has not been without its critics. It has been argued that school history should encourage some interest in and understanding of the past and that a ‘history as narrative’ approach should not simply be abandoned for an enquiry-based approach.

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 12.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 13.

⁷¹ *Ibid.*, p. 14.

While the current approach helps learners to understand that the making of history is a human construction and that texts need to be read with a critical eye, care needs to be taken that all that is good in the narrative approach is not lost.⁷²

In 2007 a survey was conducted by Bertram at three KwaZulu-Natal secondary schools to determine how learners were exposed to contextual source-based questions and what skills answering them required. One of the target schools was in fact a traditionally black secondary school. The findings were that the way in which sources were used did not require learners to display the insights and skills of historians. Learners were not required to read the sources in an in-depth way, to look for bias, nuance, context, author or context of a source.⁷³ Source-based tasks degenerated into simple visual comprehension exercises. An analysis conducted of tests written by Grade 10 learners in 2006 at the traditionally black secondary school surveyed revealed that one was a simple comprehension exercise and the other a test involving a list of recall questions.⁷⁴

My own experience in teaching FET history at a black secondary school leads me to agree with Bertram's sober findings about the misuse of the source-based method of teaching and assessing school history. Source-based assessments tend to be little more than simple visual comprehensions. Like most of my history teaching colleagues, I do not encourage learners to answer the source-based questions in depth, but rather to answer the questions in a simple point-by-point format so as to be as close as possible to the anticipated marking memoranda which are used to assess the learners' performance. Matriculation examiners in all subjects are not renowned for the latitude of interpretation applied to learners' scripts. Since the FET matriculation examinations are now assessed nationally, the marking memoranda used to assess them have quite understandably become more rigid, allowing for less divergence of interpretation. The reality is that within their schools, educators are judged on Grade 12 results. As was often the case with the old-style narrative history education favoured by South African education departments, so too the new source-based FET history is also liable to be taught

⁷² C. Bertram, 'Doing History?: An Analysis of Grade 10 Assessment Tasks in the New History Curriculum', Paper presented at the South African Society for History Teaching Conference, 2007.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 1, 6.

mainly with an eye to coaching learners in examination-answering techniques, with all the negative connotations which this implies.

5.8 Conclusion

Since the demise of apartheid history education the subject has undergone great change at secondary school level. The philosophy and rationale underlying the subject as well as the content and teaching method have all changed. Although many academics and history educators themselves have been critical of certain aspects of the final FET and GET product which had its first implementation in Grade 12 in 2008, there is universal consensus that history as a school subject is founded on a much more sound basis than was the case during the time of apartheid education. Secondary school history now boasts a broader syllabus and appears to be generally interesting to the learners who take the subject. African history is given a place of greater prominence. The open-minded emphasis on heritage issues is a pleasing improvement on the rather one-sided cultural emphasis which many felt had characterised the South African history offered in the school history syllabi of the past. Less blatant bias is present in the school history textbooks which present the content than was the case in the past, despite the feeling of some educators that the old subjectivity of apartheid history has simply been replaced by a new subjectivity which favours the new political order. GET and FET history may be criticised on technical and educational grounds, but it is clear that it is no longer founded on the presumption that school history is a form of blatant propaganda, or a tool for political indoctrination.

Despite the positive evolution of school history education, some negative perceptions of the subject among educators and academics still persist. Teaching in most secondary schools is still examination oriented. Assessment methods have been criticised for being simple exercises in comprehension which do not attempt to measure any deeper understanding of the context which surrounds topics.

Despite the confusion which the educational changes have created among so many educators it is clear that the sweeping changes in the approach to history education in South African secondary schools have clearly ushered in new perceptions of the subject – mostly positive – on the part of

educators and learners alike. It will be demonstrated however, that these fresh positive perceptions about history have not been enough to prevent the subject slipping into oblivion at most black secondary schools.

CHAPTER SIX

EDUCATORS' PERCEPTIONS OF POST-APARTHEID HISTORY EDUCATION, 1994–2008

6.1 Introduction

Mostly, the perceptions of history educators in black secondary schools toward their subject during the democratic era in South Africa have been negative. There are many reasons which account for this perception.

Iain Smith provides a picture of the state of history education in black secondary schools at the time of South Africa's transition to democracy. The perceptions of educators and learners alike toward history education were driven by the idea that it could be a useful tool toward attaining success in examinations. Smith notes that at '... secondary school, students are subjected to an authoritarian 'top-down' tradition of teaching by the teachers, often themselves poorly educated, who know that the emphasis in black schools is not on education, but on trying to pass examinations'.¹

Sarah Dryden's 1999 dissertation on the perceptions of Cape Town learners and educators toward history education included a survey of black secondary schools.² The history educators questioned by Dryden all felt that history education had a redemptive, moral role to play in helping learners to cope with life in post-apartheid South Africa. Educators saw the value of history education in building up the confidence of children damaged by a violent and troubled society. '...We'll have to try and build up their future. We'll have to try and build up confidence in these children, teach them not to give up...'³ Educators considered it important that learners knew their roots, and history education was seen as a way to give students hope for the future. Given the often desperate socio-economic situation of the learners Dryden surveyed, many

¹ Smith, 'New Lessons in South African History', p. 6.

² Dryden, 'Mirror of a Nation'.

³ *Ibid.*, p. 49.

educators felt that it was not so much what the learners were learning at school that was so important, but rather that they were at school at all.⁴

While these stated perceptions of history educators toward their subject are noble, the disconcerting fact mentioned by Dryden is that these educators seldom bothered to turn up to classes to teach the subject which they so enthused about. Dryden notes that out of 36 classes which occupied a 16-day period, educators were present at only four.⁵ In any event, Dryden cites examples to show that at many occasions when educators were present in class, very little substantive history teaching took place. These unfortunate statistics may in fact reveal the true perceptions which history educators in Dryden's surveyed black secondary schools in Cape Town held about their subject.

Sadly, statistics concerning the perceptions of black secondary school educators (or indeed learners) toward school history education which pertain to South Africa's democratic era are hard to find. This lack of data and research in this area was confirmed by the helpful assistance of Rob Siebörger of the University of Cape Town. When asked about recent research into the perceptions of secondary school educators or learners, he said: 'There's very little that I know of ... Have you looked at the links on my webpage, specifically Sarah Dryden's work, though a bit old now?'⁶ Since secondary source data concerning the perceptions of educators and learners toward secondary school history education was scanty, most of the information presented in Chapter 6 and 7 derived from the primary research which I conducted during 2008.

6.2 Negative educator perceptions

Research conducted among black secondary school history educators in the Nkangala region of Mpumalanga in 2008 (nine years after Dryden's study) largely captured Dryden's findings. Several negative perceptions about history education are held by educators. These perceptions are amplified by responses obtained from respondents who had completed the UNISA Short Course in School History Enrichment between 2006 and 2008. According to these findings,

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 49–50.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

⁶ R. Siebörger, e-mail correspondence, 25 August 2008.

many educators were confused by the new GET and FET systems of education. The NCS syllabus and methodology perplexed many educators. Educators complained that they did not receive enough training and support from the Department of Education when it came to implementing GET and FET history. The main complaint which educators had about the GET social science curriculum was that history and geography education did not work well together. Many educators felt that the FET history syllabus was ideologically biased. History educators whom I had surveyed also reflected feeling vulnerable to the perceived higher claims of scientific, commercial and technological subjects or learning areas and also felt insecure about the perceived bias of the Education Department and local school management against history education. Educators further felt that conducting history education within communities and schools which were poor was difficult.

Surveyed Nkangala educators are confused and at times bewildered by the frequency of change in the school educational system over recent years. This applies to some degree to all FET subjects. Syllabi have changed frequently. Methods of implementation have also changed, at times more than once a year. This has negatively affected the perceptions which history educators hold toward their subject.

Many educators hold the perception that the instructions which arrive from the Department of Education are at times vague, or never arrive at all. Different officials appear to have different interpretations of how administration and educating are to be practically carried out. This has demoralised educators and has not contributed toward a positive perception of their subjects.

The lack of guidance from the Department of Education is reflected in the overwhelming response received from educators who had completed the UNISA Short Course in School History Enrichment which indicated that they were not receiving support from the Department of Education when it came to understanding the new NCS history education. Every respondent noted that there had been inadequacies in their understanding of the functioning of the new system. Four specifically noted that they had received no or little guidance from the Department of Education concerning the new system. This was in fact why many of these students had registered for this course in the first place. In the Short Course return form, all of the respondents

reported having enrolled for the course to help themselves understand the new NCS approach to history which strongly implies that not enough training had been provided by the Department of Education. Respondents all reported that they had not been trained in how to understand and apply Assessment Standards and Learning Outcomes.⁷ Three respondents related that they had not known how to put together a lesson plan.⁸ A general lack of understanding of the new NCS curriculum was reported by Short Course respondents, who related that little NCS training had been undertaken by the Department of Education.⁹ Another respondent felt that before undertaking the Short Course he had not known enough about the rubrics, matrix and grids which accompany the NCS.¹⁰

In her research paper presented at the South African Society for History Teaching Conference held in 2007, Bertram suggested that ‘what counts as history’ in South African secondary schools had changed. She posited that the ‘legitimate text’ for history was ‘now an ability to interpret and analyse sources and not to remember a number of facts’.¹¹ Some educators had long been implementing the new history approach, while others had not and so are faced by the demands of a ‘new’ approach. Three KwaZulu-Natal secondary schools were surveyed in order to determine to what extent the ‘new history’, in terms of the assessment tasks which were being set for learners was being implemented. In findings which echoed those uncovered by my own study, it was established that the assessment tasks which were set for learners at the surveyed black secondary school revealed a significant lack of understanding of new assessment techniques.¹² This may indicate that the lack of knowledge apparent among the black secondary school educators surveyed for my own study may be widespread.

That most black secondary school history educators in Mpumalanga struggle with the NCS approach to history teaching was confirmed by Calvin Buthelezi, the province’s Chief Education Specialist for FET history education who is in charge of Grades 10–12 history education in the

⁷ Short Course in School History Enrichment, Returns 1–30.

⁸ Short Course in School History Enrichment, Returns 3, 7, 11.

⁹ Short Course in School History Enrichment, Returns 4, 5, 7, 9, 11, 21, 29.

¹⁰ Short Course in School History Enrichment, Return 11.

¹¹ C. Bertram ‘“Doing history?”’, p. 4.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 4–6.

province. 'Most history teachers are struggling to cope with the new NCS system because of the skills based approach i.e. they find it difficult to teach learners on how to work with sources'.¹³

A mixed response to the question 'Do you as a history educator believe that you are receiving enough support from the Department of Education' was received from Nkangala respondents who had completed the detailed questionnaire which I issued to them in 2008. Negative responses included the perception that adequate facilities which would enable better presentation of OBE and NCS methods were not provided by the Department¹⁴ and that it over-emphasised mathematics and science subjects at the cost of history.¹⁵ Lack of support from the Department of Education is a factor which cannot positively influence educator perceptions of history education.

An interesting (and disturbing) point which arose during my 2008 survey was that years after its implementation, few history educators appeared to know whether there was any difference between the GET social science (SS) and the human social sciences (HSS) which it replaced. The differences between the two are profound. For example, the three history Learning Outcomes in SS replaced the previous nine which had applied to HSS. The various Assessment Standards which apply to each of the three SS Learning Outcomes are also new. Surveyed Mpumalanga educators responded in a disconcerting way to a question which asked them whether they regarded SS as an improvement on HSS. Over half of the respondents were unable to answer the question at all. The remainder of the responses were vague and offered no real answer to the question.¹⁶ This may indicate that many educators have given up trying to follow rapidly changing syllabus developments. The inability of educators to answer the question also raises the issue of their course and lesson preparation, which should surely involve a daily use, in one form or another, of the SS Learning Outcomes and Assessment Standards.

Most present-day educators feel negative about the GET (Grade 7–9) system of incorporating history and geography education under the umbrella of a single Learning Area (subject) namely,

¹³ C. Buthelezi, e-mail correspondence, 28 May 2009.

¹⁴ Educator's questionnaire, Response 3.

¹⁵ Educator's questionnaire, Response 8.

¹⁶ Educator's questionnaire Returns.

social science. One Nkangala educator noted that educators tend to be proficient in teaching either geography or history which led to one of the subject areas suffering.¹⁷ Another respondent indicated that because of this, learners were given half or incomplete information.¹⁸ A third respondent pointed out that while some educators concentrate on history, others focus on the geography section of social science.¹⁹

Calvin Buthelezi confirmed that Mpumalanga secondary school history educators hold a prejudiced view of the relationship between history and geography within the GET social sciences syllabus:

Most educators feel that there is very little connection between the GET and FET syllabi because they feel some educators concentrate more on geography and neglect the skills needed to do the history section and as a result learners pass grade 9 with very little knowledge of how to work with sources or how to start writing an essay.²⁰

Nkangala history educators who were surveyed do not approve of the GET history syllabus. The result of this is that they perceive the subject negatively. The syllabus was perceived to lack deep-rooted information. The information which is presented in social sciences textbooks was perceived as episodic and somewhat unrelated.²¹ One educator mentioned that the syllabus did not in his view give learners an opportunity to develop a love for and an interest in history.²² A further respondent believed that the level of the social science syllabus was ‘too much above the intellectual level of learners’, who did not therefore understand what history was all about.²³

Most of the surveyed present-day black Nkangala history educators do not appear to approve of the FET (Grades 10–12) syllabus either. One respondent felt that topics were not dealt with in enough depth with too little background information being provided.²⁴ Other complaints centered around content which was perceived as biased. Some sections of the syllabus were seen

¹⁷ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 2.

¹⁸ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 5.

¹⁹ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 6.

²⁰ C. Buthelezi, e-mail correspondence, 28 May 2009.

²¹ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 1.

²² Educators’ questionnaire, Response 3.

²³ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 7.

²⁴ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 2.

as promoting hatred: ‘... They are an embarrassment’.²⁵ Two other respondents also felt that the FET syllabus was politically biased and did not provide a balanced and complete picture of history:

It excludes the Great Trek, Mfecane, discovery of minerals, the South African War (Anglo-Boer War). It is more biased towards civil rights protest...²⁶

It is too politicized – SA history, African history. European history – refers to most of the bad things that have been done...²⁷

It is clear that many educators in present-day black secondary schools perceive the FET syllabus as being too biased in favour of the new regime. According to them, it lacks balance and many important sections of South African history are left out. Even Job Mathunyane, a veteran history educator responsible for promoting protest against apartheid education in the 1970s and 1980s and founder member of SASO in Mpumalanga, related that present-day history education at secondary schools is one-sided and that valuable topics are omitted because they do not accord with the democratic government’s conception of political correctness.²⁸ Mathunyane further makes the point that:

The whole history must be told – Luthuli, Smuts, Verwoerd, even the Great Trek – from all sides. Today we’re still being selective about history, leaving out ‘white’ stuff therefore kids aren’t getting the whole picture ... Let the white guy say he brought ‘civilization’ but let the black guy say that the government took his land – give it back...²⁹

It is not surprising that most of the surveyed Nkangala secondary school history educators felt that the GET and FET approach to history had had a negative effect upon learner and educator perceptions of the subject. In response to a question which asked whether a positive effect upon perceptions of history education had been created by the GET and FET approach, respondents noted that the numbers of learners doing history were shrinking and that learners and educators were no longer motivated to study or teach the subject.³⁰ Respondents noted that comparing GET and FET history with scientific and commercial subjects was seemingly irrelevant, but that this

²⁵ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 5.

²⁶ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 6.

²⁷ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 8.

²⁸ Interview, Mr J. Mathunyane, Witbank/Emalahleni, 28 April 2008.

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 2.

perspective was lost on learners, who did not compare social science favourably against other subjects.³¹ The most somber comment upon the effectiveness of the GET and FET approach to history education came from an educator stationed at a rural school:

I would say that with learners no positive effect except that they only study the subject for the sake of passing, finish and klaar! They have lost interest and motivation.³²

Whether it is teaching a subject regarded as suited for the less able learner (history at FET level) or a half subject (history at GET level) there can be little doubt that many present-day history educators have the perception that they teach a subject of diminished importance.

These responses indicate that a strong perception among the surveyed Nkangala secondary school history educators was that an attraction among learners to mathematics, science and commercial subjects is at least partly responsible for the creation of a negative attitude toward history. This cannot be blamed on the structure of the GET and FET syllabi. Although it may be argued that some educators did not directly address the issue of the relationship between the GET and FET history syllabi, their answers are nonetheless still of interest for the perceptions they do reveal. Two of the surveyed black secondary school educators noted a positive effect of the GET and FET approach to history, in terms of learner involvement in the course material. One noted that the new approach to history education was helping learners to develop a greater interest in history because of more opportunities for self-discovery,³³ while another had noticed a positive effect upon learners and educators as learners were able to work together in groups and as individuals, constructing knowledge from available sources.³⁴

History is all too often treated as a so-called ‘dustbin’ subject at secondary schools, suited to the needs of less able learners. All schools which were surveyed relegated history to the status of a subject reserved for those learners who were unable to take mathematics, science or commercial subjects. One Nkangala respondent did not display a high opinion of history-taking learners, noting that ‘most of them are academically challenged or [their] IQ is poor. It is not because they

³¹ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 3.

³² Educator’s questionnaire, Response 5.

³³ Educators’ questionnaire, Response 1.

³⁴ Educators’ questionnaire, Response 6.

like it [history] but because they have no choice.³⁵ Another educator mentioned that the history learners themselves regard themselves as ‘academically challenged’ and as having a poor IQ.³⁶ History learners thus suffer from a damaged sense of self-esteem. Perhaps the saddest response which I obtained in all the surveys which were undertaken came from a Nkangala history educator who described his history learners in the following way:

Learners share the same sentiment with the SMT (School Management Team) because when they are channeled to history they are told that it is because they cannot make it in maths and science. Thus learners take history already having the sense of failure...³⁷

The fact that history educators are almost without exception teaching a subject which they perceive to be reserved for the less able learner cannot but have a negative impact upon their own perceptions of the subject. Because history educators are teaching many learners of low ability, their mandate from school management is not so much to aspire to excellent Grade 12 results, but is simply to get learners to pass.

There is little doubt that mathematics and science are given preference at secondary school. This was noted by all Nkangala respondents. History may be a choice subject in the FET curriculum but in reality, ‘learners who fail to qualify for science and economic subjects are pushed into the general stream which offers history and geography’.³⁸ Most history learners, unable to cope with commercial subjects or science, ‘are forced out from the two streams by educators’.³⁹ Sozama Secondary School, with its proud record of history teaching (as related in Chapter 3) now relegates unsuccessful mathematics and science learners to the history class.⁴⁰

The study of history is seldom held in high regard by senior staff members at black secondary schools. A Nkangala respondent noted that the School Management Team (SMT) ‘look down on it [history] as a subject for poor achievers. They do not see any value to history with regards to

³⁵ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 1.

³⁶ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 4.

³⁷ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 2.

³⁸ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 3.

³⁹ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 5.

⁴⁰ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 7.

career pathing'.⁴¹ Another Nkangala respondent related that the SMT did not encourage the study of history as a priority, instead encouraging mathematics and science.⁴² History was regarded as a 'redundant subject' in one school which was thinking about replacing it with Afrikaans or tourism.⁴³

Calvin Buthelezi confirmed the perception that black secondary school history educators hold of SMTs and secondary school leadership generally toward history education. 'SMTs have shown that they will easily take a decision to cancel history in the curriculum and provide the reason that learners do not pass the subject. They do not do any research to come up with informed reasons as to why learners fail the subject'.⁴⁴ Buthelezi, referring to the practice of placing low ability learners in the history class, also noted that '... history educators feel that they are given learners that were not able to do well in the science and commerce streams. They [educators] do not cope well with the situation because they complain about the language ability of these learners'.⁴⁵ Buthelezi further noted that 'learners who do poorly academically are made to do history with disastrous consequences of high failure rates'.⁴⁶

Parents of learners at secondary schools do not appear to value the subject greatly as it holds out little opportunity of attaining educational bursaries for learners after they have finished school. It also does not appear to offer much in the way of financial reward after school. Most parents appear to discourage their children from taking history at school.⁴⁷ These factors further cannot have a positive effect on the perceptions which history educators hold towards their subject.

The most somber perception of the present-day value of history as a secondary school subject came from a rural school in Hendrina, where the history educator felt that the dire socio-economic circumstances in which learners lived almost removed the point of education altogether:

⁴¹ Educator's questionnaire, Response 2.

⁴² Educator's questionnaire, Response 3.

⁴³ Educator's questionnaire, Response 5.

⁴⁴ C. Buthelezi, e-mail correspondence, 28 May 2009.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*

⁴⁷ Perceptions of learners' parents toward history education are examined in Chapter 7.

Learners these days just feel that history teaching does not serve any purpose any more. For them, politics is only for those who secure high paying positions, accompanied by benefits and richness. Frustrations and the fact that education has little incentives on the economy has eventually created a huge vacuum. On top of these social grants cause many learners to lose focus and drop out. The issue of drugs and other factors such as HIV/AIDS has demoralized them to such an extent that education is of no use to people who could die anytime due to HIV/AIDS...⁴⁸

Given the present low academic status of history at black secondary schools as well as the poor socio-economic status of many learners, many history educators in black secondary schools have come to regard the subject as having little relevance and meaning beyond helping academically weaker learners to pass examinations.

A further perception held by present-day black secondary school history educators is that poor language abilities on the part of learners continues to handicap their ability to perform well in history:

One cannot deny the fact that English, being the language in which history is taught, which is the second language to most if not all learners I taught and am still teaching, becomes a hindrance against learners expected high performance. The willingness is there for most of them but the language becomes a barrier.⁴⁹

A UNISA Short Course respondent called on the Department of Education to be aware of the language difficulties faced by present-day black secondary school history learners, stating that he would ‘only request the Department to ask the history examiners for Grade12 to scale down the language in final papers to assist second language learners (especially questioning in source-based questions)’.⁵⁰ Mr Job Mathunyane, practicing secondary school history educator for nearly forty years, related his experience of language problems encountered by present-day black secondary school learners:

The problem with our kids today – why they can’t perform in maths and other subjects – is a language problem. Their academic performance is linked to

⁴⁸ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 5.

⁴⁹ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 1.

⁵⁰ Short Course in School History Enrichment, Return 12.

language problems. How do kids answer a question or solve a problem if they don't understand the English?⁵¹

Many black secondary school history educators continue to perceive that a lack of physical resources continues to handicap their teaching of the subject. Every surveyed Nkangala educator complained about a lack of resources. It must be assumed that that this lack of educational resources is widespread. Educators complained of a lack of classrooms, audio-visual equipment,⁵² laboratory and library facilities.⁵³ Calvin Buthelezi noted that the lack of resources can also handicap the ability of learners to master the techniques of history study: 'There are areas that struggle with resources especially when referring learners to other sources when writing an assignment or dealing with oral history. Learners do not practise on a variety of sources in order to get used to the idea of coming to their own conclusion.'⁵⁴

Surveyed Nkangala secondary school history educators also felt that a lack of resources on the part of learners' parents handicapped the subject in the sense that it prevented the taking of learners on historical excursions or other enrichment activities. Most of the surveyed educators taught in schools which had large numbers of financially struggling parents.⁵⁵ One educator pointed out that 'in black residential areas the situation has not changed much especially in squatter areas bogged down by unemployment.'⁵⁶ Poor parents are reluctant to pay for historical excursions complaining about the cost of living and high expenses.⁵⁷ One respondent noted that a lack of funds could be one cause for a lack of interest in history.⁵⁸

The lack of parents' financial resources at black secondary schools is at times an intangible factor which negatively influences educator perceptions of their vocation in its entirety. History educators are not exempt. I was told that in recent months learner numbers at Tsiki-Naledi, one

⁵¹ Interview, Mr J. Mathunyane, Witbank/Emalahleni, 28 April 2008.

⁵² Educator's questionnaire, Response 1, 4, 6, 8.

⁵³ Educator's questionnaire, Response 3, 6, 7.

⁵⁴ C. Buthelezi, e-mail correspondence, 28 May 2009.

⁵⁵ While it is true that historical excursions and other enrichment activities may also be lacking at other kinds of schools, the issue here is one of a lack of choice enforced by a lack of funds. Many black secondary school educators are unable to make enrichment activities an option in their teaching because of financial restraints. This is a different situation to situations in which educators have choice.

⁵⁶ Educator's questionnaire, Response 3.

⁵⁷ Educator's questionnaire, Response 5.

⁵⁸ Educator's questionnaire, Response 7.

of the four schools in which learners were surveyed for purposes of this dissertation, were rapidly declining. This was because parents were redirecting them to surrounding rural schools where fees as low as R20 per annum were charged, significantly less than what was charged by Tsiki-Naledi. Educators working in a school with already poor matriculation results found this drain of learners to schools where academic results were even lower, hard to deal with. The history educator concerned expressed a feeling of despair about working in this situation which did not positively impact upon his perception of his role as an educator in general, let alone as a history educator.⁵⁹

6.3 Positive educator perceptions

Not all the perceptions held by history educators about history education were negative. Almost all surveyed educators perceived some value in teaching history as a school subject. It is clear that as educators' perceptions of the subject became more positive, learners responded with enthusiasm. A variety of teaching methods were reported to be employed to teach history, which is a hopeful indication of positive educator perceptions of the subject. It is clear that two factors strongly influence the development of positive perceptions on the part of educators toward the subject – leadership and ongoing training. Where these factors were present, educators related positive perceptions toward and experiences of history teaching.

Almost all surveyed history educators perceived history as having value as a present-day school subject. Job Mathunyane believes that OBE education has been successful in the black community when it comes to economics, science and practical subjects such as technology but that the cost of this is that learners are dying spiritually. They are, according to Mathunyane, losing their humanity. The computer is treated as the new god. The ethos behind education has become practical. If a thing has no economic value, it is seen as having no value at all. For Mathunyane, history education is a life skill. Knowing the meaning and history of one's name and heritage is a vital life skill needed at contemporary black secondary schools.⁶⁰ Other surveyed Nkangala educators provided mixed responses when it came to the question of what

⁵⁹ Interview, Mr D. Lukhele, Middelburg, 20 August 2008.

⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

they considered to be the value of history as a present-day secondary school subject. Some saw the potential of the subject to encourage thinking while others, largely because of what they perceived to be negative attitudes on the part of learners, did not see much value in the subject.

One Nkangala educator saw the value of history education in the way the subject was able to present learners with a realistic reflection of South Africa's history.⁶¹ Another saw the value of history education in helping learners find jobs in government and public service, especially in the Department of Justice.⁶² History education was also seen as educating citizens to be aware of their culture and heritage and political responsibilities.⁶³ Three Nkangala educators did however see little positive value in the subject. A dire social situation within the community of one educator in his view negated any positive influence of history education:

It [the value of history education] gradually diminishes as the learners are no longer motivated and some of them are demotivated by the rate of unemployment, lack of financial support – drugs, gansterism, etc.⁶⁴

A second Nkangala educator related that 'History is supposed to encourage a balanced approach to life but as nobody is prepared to read this it remains a pipedream'.⁶⁵ A further educator related that the over-politicising of the subject lessened its value.⁶⁶

Greater value in the subject was expressed by the respondents who had completed the UNISA Short Course. This could be attributed to the fact that these respondents had developed a clearer grasp of the methodology and content of the various secondary school history curricula. All of the UNISA respondents reflected the holding of a high value toward history education in their responses. Secondary school history education helped respondents' learners to broaden their thinking, understand the past and to build a future for themselves.⁶⁷ Studying history encouraged learners 'to talk, draw, act and write as they learn; encourages learners to connect social concepts with the real world; encourages learners in historical thinking...; invites learners to interpret the

⁶¹ Educator's questionnaire, Response 1.

⁶² Educator's questionnaire, Response 2.

⁶³ Educator's questionnaire, Response 3.

⁶⁴ Educator's questionnaire, Response 5.

⁶⁵ Educator's questionnaire, Response 7.

⁶⁶ Educator's questionnaire, Response 8.

⁶⁷ Short Course in School History Enrichment, Return 2.

past for themselves...; offers learners an opportunity to discover and explore interesting facts in the world around them'.⁶⁸

An interesting finding to emerge from the UNISA Short Course was that improved perceptions of their subject on the part of black secondary school educators directly led to positively altered learners perceptions of the history education which they were receiving. Twenty-seven educators, or 90 per cent of UNISA students who submitted course response questionnaires reported that their understanding of GET and FET method and syllabi had improved upon doing the course. Responding to a question about how the Short Course had helped their learners, 21 educators, or 70 per cent of respondents reported that their learners' involvement in and perception of history had also improved. One respondent noted that his learners no longer regarded history simply as a subject which needed memorization but that the subject was now understood through sources. Subsequent to his completion of the UNISA Short Course, learners were enjoying the practical side of history education as they debated and demonstrated historical issues.⁶⁹ Another respondent related that his learners now enjoyed another perspective on the subject and were able to work independently.⁷⁰ The acquisition of historical skills rather than the simple gaining of knowledge had enriched the following respondent's learners:

Learners know that they don't do history to gain knowledge only but to get skills, values and changed attitudes. They understand that they need to extract evidence from the text, to judge its usefulness and detect bias, perjury and reliability from the text. They further understand that they don't have to exam [learn] the book but have to use it as one of the sources in unraveling the historical reality. They understand that extraction of evidence and writing a piece of writing using the given texts is a skill and involves values and attitudes.⁷¹

Other Short Course respondents related how rote learning had been replaced by debate and discussion. Lessons had become learner, rather than teacher-centered. Learners had even begun to decide about the validity of sources on their own as they compared and contrasted them.⁷² Learners were effectively participating in lessons.⁷³ One respondent reported that he had noticed

⁶⁸ Short Course in School History Enrichment, Return 27.

⁶⁹ Short Course in School History Enrichment, Return 1.

⁷⁰ Short Course in School History Enrichment, Return 3.

⁷¹ Short Course in School History Enrichment, Return 4.

⁷² Short Course in School History Enrichment, Return 5.

⁷³ Short Course in School History Enrichment, Return 7.

that his learners had developed a love for history as their insights into the subject had deepened.⁷⁴ As learners exercised their creative cognitive abilities, history no longer stood back as a Cinderella subject as they had realised that it was indeed as important as other learning areas.⁷⁵ Improved examination performances were anticipated by one Short Course respondent as the interest toward history on the part of his learners had grown.⁷⁶

These responses (among so many others) clearly indicate that an improved understanding of and ability in implementing the GET and FET history courses led not only to more positive perceptions of the subject on the part of educators but also on the part of their learners. Responses obtained from both the Nkangala surveyed history educators as well as those who had completed the UNISA Short Course indicate that the Department of Education is just as clearly failing to provide adequate training to educators on National Curriculum Statement subjects including history and specifically the GET and FET history courses. Were the skills training offered to practising educators by universities such as UNISA provided on a widespread basis by the Department of Education it is likely that prevailing negative perceptions toward history education presently held by many black secondary school educators and learners might significantly change. Calvin Buthelezi agreed that more training of history educators in both method and content of their subject is urgently needed: ‘There is a serious need to do further training on the pedagogical approach and content especially on the case studies of different African countries’.⁷⁷

Further positive responses toward history education from Nkangala respondents mostly revolved around the efforts of the local Curriculum Implementer (CI), Ms Mosala.⁷⁸ This dedicated lady is personally known to me. The energy and enthusiasm which she displays toward the well-being of history and the history educators in the Nkangala region never fails to astound. Several of the Nkangala respondents related that her efforts had improved their performance and perceptions of

⁷⁴ Short Course in School History Enrichment, Return 8.

⁷⁵ Short Course in School History Enrichment, Return 9.

⁷⁶ Short Course in School History Enrichment, Return 12.

⁷⁷ C. Buthelezi, e-mail correspondence, 28 May 2009.

⁷⁸ A Curriculum Implementer is responsible for seeing that a subject or learning area curriculum is correctly implemented by educators in the region under his/her control. This involves providing ongoing on-the-job training, organising cluster meetings of educators and controlling their work. Curriculum Implementers do roughly the same kind of work that the School Inspector used to do.

history education. One respondent noted that: ‘The CI’s involvement is key to the teaching of history in schools however the department is not doing enough to popularize history for future careers’.⁷⁹ The CI is seen to organise workshops, provide extra information, facilitate school visits and provide close support and monitoring.⁸⁰ Another noted that the CI visits schools ‘to check if we are still on the right track’.⁸¹ The role of good leadership in developing positive perceptions of history education among educators is crucial and is demonstrated in the case of Ms Mosala. There are also other examples like the well attended workshops organised by Ms Cecilia Khoabane (until recently Chief Education Specialist for history in the Free State province), where the attending educators arrived on time and stayed to the end of the workshops.⁸² This again illustrates the fact that attitudes and perceptions of educators depend to a large degree upon the quality of leadership which is displayed by departmental officials.

Present-day black secondary school history educators appear to make use of several teaching methods when presenting their subject to learners. The OBE and NCS approach encourages varied approaches to teaching. Black secondary school history educators during the apartheid era were held to almost exclusively teach their subject in the narrative style.⁸³ It is therefore encouraging to note that almost all the educators surveyed for purposes of this dissertation employed a variety of teaching methods. Surveyed Nkangala educators reported many different approaches to history teaching:

I use NCS methods in which learners are assigned in developing critical thinking skills by allowing them an opportunity to make self-discovery on content at hand rather than making any attempt to pump knowledge into their minds. Learners are currently assessed on the basis of Learning Outcomes as contained in the NCS curriculum by exposing them more in handling a variety of questions.⁸⁴

Other Nkangala respondents noted that they made use of group work, peer assessment,

⁷⁹ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 2.

⁸⁰ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 5.

⁸¹ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 6.

⁸² Personal conversation with Ms H. Lubbe of the UNISA History Department, who co-presented the workshops during 2007.

⁸³ See Chapter 3 of this dissertation which investigates teaching methods employed by black secondary school history educators during the apartheid era. Most observers noted that the narrative method was almost exclusively used in black secondary schools during this time.

⁸⁴ Educator’s questionnaire, Response 1.

debates, case studies, research assignments, oral history projects, data analysis, cartoons, critical thinking, music, poetry and presentations in their history lessons.⁸⁵

One of the surveyed Nkangala history educators did complain that a shortage of library facilities hampered his implementation of new approaches to teaching:

I am trying to use the new OBE approach. The learners do not appreciate the use of sources, we have no library; the primary feeder schools also have no libraries. This makes the new approach to the study of history very challenging.⁸⁶

Black secondary school history educators who had completed the UNISA Short Course also reported that they employed varied methods of history teaching in their classrooms. All of the respondents reported using a wide variety of teaching methods after completing the course. One of the aspects of the UNISA Short Course which one respondent found most useful was that it had helped him to create 'activities that would help the class to keep them alive'.⁸⁷ This attitude summed up the feeling of almost all the respondents. On the negative side, the implication of this response is that these educators had not received the needed training from the Department of Education to equip them in the use of varied teaching approaches in implementing NCS history.

6.4 Educator abilities

Unfortunately, the level of qualifications and educational abilities of many history educators in black secondary schools remains low, a factor which can only negatively influence the perception and value which is attached to the subject.

My own history-teaching experience points to the existence of an alarming lack of historical and general knowledge among present-day history educators at black secondary schools in Mpumalanga. A good example of this was apparent at a Departmental history workshop held in Middelburg during 2007. The workshop was attended by this researcher and about 25 black male

⁸⁵ Educator's questionnaire, Response 8.

⁸⁶ Educator's questionnaire, Response 3.

⁸⁷ Short Course in School History Enrichment, Return 2.

history educators and one ‘coloured’ female educator from the Nkangala region. The agenda concerned familiarising educators with the new Grade 12 history syllabus, which was due to be implemented for the first time in 2008. Almost all of the male educators knew very little if anything at all about historical and general knowledge issues which would be assumed as common knowledge for most educated adults. On the section concerning the history of the Middle East since 1948, very few educators appeared to have heard of the Suez Canal, let alone its history. On a section of the syllabus dealing with Angola’s struggle for liberation, few educators had heard of liberation movements such as the FNLA, MPLA or UNITA, let alone what ideological leanings these movements displayed. Such educators are clearly entirely reliant upon the details found in textbooks.

History educators at recent subject cluster meetings⁸⁸ in Middelburg complained that their knowledge of the Cold War (taught as part of the Grade 12 syllabus) was non-existent. One educator complained that he found himself unable to teach the topic to his learners because he himself knew nothing about it. It is clear that a lack of subject and general knowledge pertinent to history teaching is widespread among the history teaching corps in black secondary schools. No blame is attached to educators who themselves have suffered inadequate education. The point does however remain that such a lack of background knowledge cannot assist such educators (or their learners) in developing positive perceptions of history education. Calvin Buthelezi pointed out that the Mpumalanga Department of Education is attempting to remedy history educators’ apparent lack of subject knowledge: ‘We have workshops targeting content during holidays in order to strengthen their knowledge on the subject so that they can feel more comfortable in handling the new content.’⁸⁹

Ms K. Mosala (the Nkangala CI) despairingly complained to me that most history educators in black secondary schools show a great aversion to further study. She noted that especially in outlying, rural areas, few history educators are prepared to spend money on buying books or

⁸⁸ ‘Cluster meetings’ are held once or twice a school term by ‘cluster groups’ which are associations of subject teachers who meet to discuss curriculum and examination matters and in an attempt to conduct ongoing training among themselves. All secondary school subject educators in Mpumalanga are obliged to attend such meetings, which typically should have an attendance of between ten and thirty educators. In reality most cluster groups are poorly attended. The idea behind the establishment of cluster groups was to share expertise and experience between colleagues.

⁸⁹ C. Buthelezi, e-mail correspondence, 28 May 2009.

other materials which would enrich their own knowledge of the subject they teach.⁹⁰ Mdhuli, in his study of work-related attitudes and ethical responsibilities of educators in Mpumalanga, also noted that black secondary school educators were unwilling to improve their lives academically.⁹¹

During 2007, the Mpumalanga Department of Education was believed to be considering plans which would make it mandatory for Education Specialists (previously known as Heads of Departments) to possess a minimum of an Honours degree; Deputy Principals a minimum of a Masters degree; and Principals a minimum of a Doctoral degree. It is questionable whether such educational requirements would practically ever be able to be implemented. Nevertheless, the idea that at some time in the future they might, caused a great deal of unhappiness among the history teaching fraternity in the province.

It seems unfortunately clear that most history educators within black secondary schools, at least in Mpumalanga, do not attach a high value to their subject, if a general unwillingness to study it is used as a yardstick.

6.5 Professional and moral conduct of educators

The widespread existence of questionable educator professional and moral conduct is a regrettable factor which negatively impacts upon the teaching of all secondary school subjects, including history. Clearly, misconduct by educators is bound to impact negatively on the subjects they teach and will influence the way in which their learners perceive and value the subject. Malie, writing about the state of history teaching in black secondary schools in the Southern Transvaal region as early as 1967, noted that the ideal history educator should be a man of knowledge, wisdom and character. 'If the teacher intends inspiring his pupils to love beauty,

⁹⁰ Interview, Ms K. Mosala, Middelburg, 2 May 2008.

⁹¹ M.M. Mdhuli, 'A Psycho-Educational Model for Facilitation of Self Discipline for Educators in Rural Township Schools' (D.Ed. thesis, University of Johannesburg, 2004), p. iii.

truth and goodness, he must convince them that his own life is in accordance with the demands of these eternal values'.⁹²

Mazabow points to the work of Van Aswegen who notes that in late adolescence, learners become conscious of different moral codes. They are influenced more by what adults do, rather than what they say. The educator must help children to form their own hierarchy of values as moral character is formed. Instead of simply *prescribing* values to children, an educator must be a *living example* of values which he wishes an adolescent to live by.⁹³

It must be agreed that before and after 1994, there have been many black secondary school history educators who hold exemplary professional and moral attitudes. The very fact that since the advent of Bantu Education significant numbers of learners have been equipped to pass their matriculation exam is testimony to this. Nevertheless a lack of correct moral and professional conduct on the part of secondary school educators has been a long standing problem and remains a very real issue in many South African black secondary schools.⁹⁴

I have, over several years (since 2003) attended many departmental history workshops which have been held to equip educators to understand and better implement new curricula and history syllabuses, in the Nkangala area of Mpumalanga. My personal observations concerning the corps of history educators in the area has been that many do not bother to attend workshops at all, or attend for perhaps one day out of two or three. No departmental disciplinary action is taken against non-attenders. In fact, course presenters appear to be grateful that at least a portion of a training course has been attended. Workshops have seldom started on time and educators who do attend commonly arrive hours late. The presenters themselves seldom arrive on time. The same

⁹² Malie, 'Bantu Secondary High Schools', pp. 69–70.

⁹³ I.G. Van Aswegen, *Education: Guide to Empirical Education* (Pretoria, 1976), p. 27, as quoted by Mazabow, 'The Development of Historical Consciousness', p. 212.

⁹⁴ This is of course not to say that there are no such difficulties in other schools, be they historically 'white' secondary schools or private schools. The point made is that whatever the professional and moral conduct of other educators, this malady deeply affects all learning, history education included at many black secondary schools. The point must also be made that during the course of research, I encountered many dedicated black secondary school educators who are outstanding examples of exemplary moral and professional behaviour. The lack of professional conduct among educators is however widespread enough to have a negative impact upon the perceptions of the subjects they teach, on their own part or on the part of the learners they interact with.

pattern emerges at cluster meetings. I have attended cluster meetings where the only other attendee at the meeting was the cluster leader responsible for presenting it. Generally attendance is sporadic, making it difficult to achieve significant outcomes of value. Calvin Buthelezi informed me that he has been working with the 'Race and Values' section of the Mpumalanga Education Department to promote various competitions to encourage educators to 'see the value of being a good history teacher'.⁹⁵ Clearly the Mpumalanga Department of Education is aware that there is some degree of need to bolster good professional values among its educators. Buthelezi did however point out that most history educators 'still do the work and present themselves for moderation and help set out cluster tasks'.⁹⁶

Lekgoathi,⁹⁷ Hartshorne⁹⁸ and Murphy⁹⁹ all suggest that the trend toward non-professionalism among black educators began with the militant and radical attitudes which accompanied the anti-government inspired unrest from the mid 1980s. Professionalism was, according to these researchers, sacrificed at the expense of militant and radical attitudes. In my experience, the sobering findings of researchers such as Legodi¹⁰⁰ and Mdhuli¹⁰¹ are not without foundation. Legodi identified many examples of unprofessional conduct among educators in traditionally black only schools. Educators came late to school and left early; some came to school only once or twice a week; some were under the influence of liquor while at school; others stayed in the staff room for the whole day and only went to classes to give learners homework; educators did not mark learners' scripts; girls were promoted to higher classes for sexual favours; educators who were still studying were more committed to their studies than their school work and school managers stayed in their offices or were out on 'school matters' most of the time. Legodi further notes that in the 1999 'Yiso-Yiso' television series, which aimed to depict what was really happening in black secondary schools, black educators were depicted as being inclined to bunk classes and as being incompetent.¹⁰²

⁹⁵ C. Buthelezi, e-mail correspondence, 28 May 2009.

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*

⁹⁷ Lekgoathi, 'Teacher Militancy', p. 252.

⁹⁸ Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, pp. 322–324.

⁹⁹ J. T. Murphy, 'Apartheid Legacy to Black Children' *Phi Delta Kappa*, 73, 5 (1992), p. 370.

¹⁰⁰ Legodi, 'The Transformation of Education'.

¹⁰¹ Mdhuli, 'Facilitation of Self-Discipline for Educators'.

¹⁰² Legodi, 'The Transformation of Education', pp. 218–200.

Mdhluli's thesis (based on recent research observations in Mpumalanga) is that while a general assumption can, and often is made that educators are agents of facilitating self-discipline for learners at schools, they cannot do this task effectively because their own lives are not self-disciplined. Mdhluli discovered disturbing thinking and behaviour patterns which he found to be widespread among Mpumalanga black secondary school educators. These included educators needing and expecting to be, persistently and consistently, monitored or checked on by someone, in both their personal and professional lives. Educators could not be trusted or depended upon as responsible people who could carry out activities on their own initiative or follow instructions and achieve anticipated outcomes. Mdhluli found that educators were unable to demonstrate the discipline or ability to be focused on a task or responsibility and carry it out with dedication and distinction up to the end. They were quick to give up, lose focus on or interest in expected goals and provide a list of excuses explaining why achieving the outcome was impossible. They were unable to demonstrate self-disciplined maturity by accepting and appreciating responsibility and accountability of progress, and development in their lives. They always complained of being unfairly treated by other people or by some systems and looked for someone or something to accuse or blame for what was happening in their lives. This was clearly displayed through their inability or unwillingness to improve their lives academically or materially. Many of the educators whom Mdhluli observed did not show any esteem, respect for or pride in themselves, their profession, their learners or their community in general. This was displayed by their unacceptable patterns of multiple sexually active relationships and excessive alcohol abuse. They had no exemplary sense of respect or high regard for time, agreements, appointments, procedures or established guidelines. They took almost everything for granted in a way that did not show that they ever took anything seriously in life. In some instances their attitude and behaviour were plainly childish and embarrassing. Finally, Mdhluli found that educators failed to show ability or interest to live and control their own lives on their own – socially, financially and materially. The way in which they borrowed money and owed everybody around them and in which they socialised with anyone, irrespective of the implications, was disgraceful.¹⁰³

Of course, Mdhluli's observations about non-professional behaviour cannot be said to apply to every, or even most black secondary school educators in Mpumalanga. Indeed, highly non-

¹⁰³ Mdhluli, 'Facilitation of Self-Discipline for Educators', p. ii.

professional educators from other population groups are also to be found. The fact that he found enough material to inspire a doctoral thesis does however indicate that non-professionalism is enough of a problem to be a factor in creating and maintaining the perceptions which black secondary school educators in Mpumalanga hold about all teaching subjects, history included.

In his recent address to a convention of school principals from across South Africa at the Durban International Convention Centre, the President of the Republic of South Africa, Jacob Zuma strongly encouraged non-professional black educators to change their approach to their work:

We need to confront certain realities. For example, teachers in former whites-only schools teach in class for an average of 6.5 hours a day, while teachers in schools in disadvantaged communities teach for around 3.5 hours a day. The result is that the outcomes are unequal ... We should therefore not ask why matric results remain perpetually poor in black communities ... We must ask ourselves to what extent teachers in many historically disadvantaged schools unwittingly perpetuate the wishes of Hendrik Verwoerd if they decide to teach for about three hours a day.¹⁰⁴

6.6 Conclusion

Perceptions about history education are obviously different from educator to educator at black secondary schools, yet it is clear from the research which has been undertaken that some generalisations can be made. Many educators have been and still are confused by the many changes in the curriculum and history syllabus since 1994. In addition, many do not feel positive about the subject content or new methods involved in contemporary South African school history education. It is clear that many contemporary black secondary school history educators do not have a wide enough general knowledge or are sufficiently qualified to teach history effectively. Moreover, non-professional behaviour of some educators has had a negative influence on all secondary school teaching since 1994, history included. My research indicates that many contemporary black secondary school history educators have come to accept the prevailing view of many school managements that history is a subject to be reserved for the less able learner.

¹⁰⁴ J. Zuma, Address by the President of the Republic of South Africa at the President's National Interaction with School Principals, Durban International Convention Centre. 7 August 2009.

It is clear that positive perceptions of history education are created by the examples set by good leadership. One of the tasks of leaders such as Curriculum Implementers is to provide ongoing training to educators, especially with regard to the understanding and implementation of the OBE, GET and NCS conceptions of history. Surveyed history educators who had a good understanding of the new method of school history education enjoyed teaching history and were successful in inspiring their learners to achieve success in the subject.

CHAPTER SEVEN

LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS OF POST-APARTHEID HISTORY EDUCATION, 1994–2008

7.1 Introduction

The Human Sciences Research Council's (HSRC) extensive 1991 research programme which explored, among attenders at other types of secondary schools, the perceptions of black secondary school learners toward the history education which they received, indicated that by the early 1990s many of the negative perceptions which had accompanied apartheid school history education had shifted positively¹. Evidence which I accumulated would suggest that this shift in perception was temporary and may have been as a result of the weakening constrictions of apartheid rule encouraging and enabling a freer approach to history education at black secondary schools. It is as well to point out that the research conducted by the HSRC among learners focused on the perceptions of history-taking learners and did not investigate the perceptions of non-history-taking learners whose attitudes toward school history may well have been (and probably were) less favourable than those of the history-taking learners.

This less than positive perception of history education among black secondary school learners was noted in 1999 by Sarah Dryden who observed history education in operation at four black secondary schools in the Cape Town area.² She focused her attention onto Grades 8 and 9 history learners largely because she believed that the less rigid nature of their history syllabuses might make for creative and interesting history teaching and learning. Dryden discovered largely negative perceptions on history education on the part of these learners, which appears to have been caused by a number of interrelated factors.

¹ Van der Merwe, *et al.*, *An Empirical Investigation into the Teaching of History*.

² S. Dryden, 'Mirror of a Nation'.

It is clear that the generally negative attitudes and perceptions of history educators in the black secondary schools which Dryden observed were partly responsible for the negative perceptions of the subject which were held by the learners. History educators felt that their subject had been marginalised at their schools. One educator related that ‘...There is so little attention to our subject’.³ Some of the observed history educators made very little effort in the classroom. Shocking statistics are presented which reveal that very few lessons were actually attended by the educators at the surveyed schools.⁴ Dryden relates that the teachers at one observed school ‘sat in the staffroom, talking and doing each other’s hair’ rather than engage in teaching.⁵ Aside from these unprofessional attitudes displayed by educators, Dryden notes that history educators at the observed black secondary schools appeared disheartened and unsure about what to do with history teaching.⁶ Each history educator was ‘trying to figure it out for him or herself’.⁷ Dryden points out that ‘The interim period between moving away from outdated and biased syllabuses and approaches to education and creating a system that meets the needs and aspirations of the new South Africa may be seen as ‘wasted’ time. No one really knows what or how to teach and uncertainty can prevail’.⁸ Very little progress through the syllabus was made at the observed schools and what teaching did take place appeared to be simple rote learning which took the form of notes scribbled on blackboards. The worst indictment of all is made by Dryden when she asserts that ‘... at many schools, teachers have lost their hope. They believe our children will fail...’⁹ The perceptions and behaviour of the educators whom Dryden observed cannot but have helped contribute to the negative perceptions which learners held of history education.

Most of the history learners whom Dryden surveyed in black secondary schools displayed a strong aversion to learning about South African history and sought to avoid the subject.¹⁰ Dryden noted of one of the black secondary schools she observed that ‘Despite having history infrequently, the students at Transkei High had strong opinions on what history teaching should or should not be. Many of them were passionate that history was a ‘wrong subject.’ All they

³ *Ibid.*, p. 18.

⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 47, 53.

⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 112.

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 111.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 106.

⁹ *Ibid.*, pp. 111–112.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 53.

learned in history, they said, was about fighting, usually between white people and black people, they told me. As such, they could not see why learning history could be helpful. They believed that it would be better to forget history and think instead of the present and the future'.¹¹ These perceptions strongly resemble the findings which this researcher made among learners at black secondary schools in Mpumalanga in 2008. The perception which Dryden discovered among black secondary school learners in 1999, that South African history is a painful story which is best avoided and that the interests of young black people lie in the future rather than the past, was also uncovered in 2008.¹²

Despite the varied nature of the surveyed schools, it is interesting to note that the responses obtained from history-studying learners at these schools did not seem to differ greatly from school to school and learner perceptions of history seemed to be similar. I had expected some significant differences, but to my surprise, there were few. Learners from Tsiki-Naledi, the most rural of the surveyed schools, displayed a significantly lower level of literacy when it came to the language quality of the learners' written responses. Learners from Middelburg Combined appeared to be the most enthusiastic about studying history. Nevertheless, the general tenor of responses was similar from all schools surveyed.

7.2 Negative learner perceptions

The three surveys which were conducted among black secondary school learners in the Nkangala region of Mpumalanga during 2008 revealed that learners held certain negative perceptions about history education.

Six Steelcrest High School Grade 9 and 10 learners (7 per cent) expressed the perception that people should be more interested in what the future holds, rather than in the past.¹³ The past is seen as having little relevance to the lives of present-day young people. This perception was repeated in all of the surveys conducted among black secondary school learners. The study of history was not seen as important in the 21st century. The perception was held that 'we as a

¹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 109.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp. 52–53, 62

¹³ Steelcrest, Responses 1, 19, 50, 61, 75, 80.

people should be more interested in the future'.¹⁴ Surveyed learners from black secondary schools displayed a general lack of interest in studying the past. This was especially evident among the group who had chosen not to study history after Grade 10. Forty-one learners (53 per cent) simply did not see the value of learning about past events, philosophies or people.¹⁵ 'Museums and learning about past wars and deaths'¹⁶ did not arouse the interest of one learner, while another related that he was 'not interested in things that happened a long time ago ... I just don't like it'.¹⁷

Some learners, especially from the non-history-taking group (nine, or 12 per cent), envision a scientific and technological future in which a subject like history does not feature.¹⁸ One female Grade 11 respondent provided a well reasoned answer, ironically based upon sound historical grounds:

Because in this country we live in we are told that science and life sciences are the most important subjects. As a young black woman I feel pressurised to do science studies simply because our parents did not have opportunities of subject choices. So it feels good that I'm making use of the opportunities the youth of 1976 fought and died for...¹⁹

While the maturity of thought evident in this response would make this non-history-taking learner a welcome addition to any history class, most responses were less considered. Learners wrote of belonging to 'the born free generation' which revolves 'around science rather than history'.²⁰ Science and biology were viewed as 'the way to go if you want to persue a successful career in this day and time'.²¹ These learner perceptions were supported by Calvin Buthelezi who noted that the perception among present-day secondary school learners that history study is not a part of an envisioned scientific or technological future is strong: 'I also think that history is struggling because of the emphasis on maths, science, IT and commerce ... I also feel that young

¹⁴ Steelcrest, Response 1.

¹⁵ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 85, 87, 89–96, 98, 100, 101, 105, 107, 109–114, 117, 118, 120, 126–128, 131, 133, 137–139, 141, 143–145, 150, 152, 159, 161, 162.

¹⁶ Learner's questionnaire, Response 100.

¹⁷ Learner's questionnaire, Response 162.

¹⁸ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 92, 101, 105, 106, 114, 115, 125, 157, 160.

¹⁹ Learner's questionnaire, Response 106.

²⁰ Learner's questionnaire, Response 101.

²¹ Learner's questionnaire, Response 92.

people do not see the immediate benefit of studying history whilst their friends can earn more money by doing maths and science ... the skills learned in the subject are not directly linked to a specific job situation and as a result learners need to study much further in order to find a well paying job.’²²

Only two of the surveyed Steelcrest learners (2 per cent) felt that studying history was an option for learners who could not manage mathematics or science.²³ This perception was found to be stronger among the senior staff at the surveyed black secondary schools, who channeled weaker learners to history if their mathematical or scientific skills proved to be low.

In schools some people struggle with maths and physical science etc. So they can take history at school so that they don't struggle to find jobs when they complete school. I would do history if I had no choice or maybe maths and science did not go well. Then I would take history. I wouldn't have a choice...²⁴

The idea that history education received at school will not help learners with their future careers was a powerful perception found to be widespread among all groups of learners surveyed and was also recognised by some of the surveyed history educators. The future world of work is perceived as being scientific and technological and history simply does not suit its requirements.

Most people think that history is a subject for dummies because it doesn't have many job opportunities...²⁵

School history does not have a huge impact in terms of career choices because nowadays more jobs need economical, scientific and technologically related [qualifications]... Young people of today are more interested in scientific knowledge and creating their own lifestyles...²⁶

The most popular response to the first question posed in the questionnaire issued to non-history-taking learners, namely, to state the reasons why they had not chosen to take history was that the subject did not suit their future career plans (30 learners, 38 per cent).²⁷ In every school

²² C. Buthelezi, e-mail correspondence, 28 May 2009.

²³ Steelcrest, Responses 5, 61.

²⁴ Steelcrest, Response 28.

²⁵ Steelcrest, Response 77.

²⁶ Steelcrest, Response 75.

²⁷ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 85–88, 92, 93, 95, 102, 103, 104, 107–111, 113, 119, 120–122, 124, 125,

surveyed, ‘The career I want does not need subjects like history’ was the common sentiment expressed by these learners.

When responding to the second question, namely, ‘What do you think might be good about taking history at secondary school?’, 11 non-history-taking learners (14 per cent) felt that the subject might have value as an introduction and entry requirement for legal studies.²⁸ In this respect there was little difference between them and the perceptions held by their history-studying counterparts:

It can be good because some people use it on the law side... there’s a lot of fields you can go [into] with the subject...²⁹

I think that for people who would like to do law or even designing, you need to do history...³⁰

History can give learners an opportunity to work in a good place, like being a lawyer or politician...³¹

It is notable that both surveyed history-taking and non-history-taking learners tend to see the value or otherwise of history education in a utilitarian way. History-taking learners see its value in equipping them to study law,³² while non-history-taking learners see little value in the subject as it does not appear to equip them for lucrative future careers (30 learners, 38 per cent).³³ The issue of history and contemporary utilitarianism is explored in more detail in Chapter 8 of this dissertation.

One factor for not choosing to take history as a subject for present-day non-history learners is the perceived inability of history qualifications to attract bursaries to assist with tertiary studies. Only two learners expressed this perception in this survey. One learner mentioned that he/she

²⁸ 127–129, 140, 141, 154, 160, 161.
²⁸ Learner’s questionnaire, Responses 85, 88, 97, 102, 104, 107, 116, 121, 124, 159, 160.
²⁹ Learner’s questionnaire, Response 85.
³⁰ Learner’s questionnaire, Response 97.
³¹ Learner’s questionnaire, Response 116.
³² Learner’s questionnaire, Responses 3, 4, 9, 10–14, 16, 22, 23, 25–28, 32–35, 40–42, 44–46, 54, 58, 61, 63–65, 67, 72, 75–77, 79, 80.
³³ Learner’s questionnaire, Responses 85–88, 92, 93, 95, 102–104, 107, 108–111, 113, 119–122, 124, 125, 127–129, 140, 141, 154, 160, 161.

had never heard about a bursary or scholarship in the field of history³⁴ while another noted that companies only gave bursaries to science learners.³⁵ It is my belief and experience that this perception that history study does not attract bursaries to assist with tertiary education in the same way that scientific, commercial or technological subjects do is far more widespread than was indicated in the surveys among learners which I conducted.

The idea that history is a do-it-yourself subject is a perception held by four learners (5 per cent) in the Steelcrest survey.³⁶ According to this perception, there is no need for formal history education since various resources such as television and the internet can replace history educators. One learner pointed out that ‘... there is no need to study history at school when you can travel and look at pictures’.³⁷ Another noted that studying history was not important since ‘nowadays it is found or written almost everywhere including museums, in books or through the internet’.³⁸

Three non-history-taking learners expressed the idea that history is a ‘do-it-yourself’ subject.³⁹ These learners expressed the notion that they could teach themselves about the subject in their own time with the resources such as the internet available to them. The idea that ‘if you can read it, you can do it’ is held. This is arguably true of the content of the subject, though it is clear that such learners have realised or been informed that learning the skills and disciplines involved in history education is another matter altogether. Despite the advances which have been made in the methodology of teaching history as a school subject, wherein the emphasis is more on the acquiring of skills as opposed to the rote learning of content, the perception that the subject simply involves the memorisation of dates and facts remains among the surveyed non-history-studying learners as it does among society at large.⁴⁰

³⁴ Learner’s questionnaire, Response 114.

³⁵ Learner’s questionnaire, Response 116.

³⁶ Steelcrest, Responses 20, 73, 75, 76.

³⁷ Steelcrest, Response 20.

³⁸ Steelcrest, Response 75.

³⁹ Learner’s questionnaire, Responses 116, 109, 137.

⁴⁰ Learner’s questionnaire, Responses 94, 95, 111, 112, 126, 128, 139.

These non-history-taking learners related that their parents felt that it was a waste of time to study history at school when all the resources needed to grasp the subject were at home.⁴¹ One learner mentioned that his/her parents believed that historical knowledge was good, evidenced by a father who hired movies to show the family in the belief that this kind of exposure would be enough to educate his family about what happened in the past.⁴² A further respondent was less tactful, stating that his/her father ‘thinks that knowing about history is a waste of time. Just by watching T.V. you learn enough about history to fill your knowledge’.⁴³

The perception that history education opened up old wounds and should because of this rather be left alone was expressed by eight learners (9 per cent) in the Steelcrest survey.⁴⁴ This perception was repeated in all of the surveys conducted among various black secondary school learners and educators. The conviction with which this perception was expressed surprised me. Apartheid brings back painful memories which many within the black community would rather avoid. Studying history awakens disturbing emotions. This creates a negative perception of the subject itself. One respondent related that studying history ‘can bring back bad memories and open forgotten wounds.’⁴⁵

Another respondent felt that South African history ‘focuses on blacks versus whites and their problems but only makes us aggressive and full of hatred’.⁴⁶ Angry emotions were expressed by some respondents:

I think that we should leave the past behind and forget, so that we can carry on with our lives. If everyday we hear how our grandparents and our family members struggled we will become more violent. Especially when we hear about apartheid then we begin to hate...⁴⁷

The level of hurt and anger in the following submission is great:

⁴¹ Learner’s questionnaire, Responses 116, 109, 137.

⁴² Learner’s questionnaire, Response 137.

⁴³ Learner’s questionnaire, Response 109.

⁴⁴ Steelcrest, Responses 23, 28, 48, 50, 62, 71, 82, 87.

⁴⁵ Steelcrest, Response 23.

⁴⁶ Steelcrest, Response 28.

⁴⁷ Steelcrest, Response 82.

History is a subject that is not so important in my opinion. Simply because specially for black kids learning or being told about history is like adding petrol to a fire. What I mean is teachers tell us about the most historic topic in South Africa, in my opinion 'apartheid'. Apartheid makes me sick. Watching clips and pics of how white people treated our grandmothers and grandfathers makes me want to drop an atom [bomb] on white people...⁴⁸

A particularly interesting finding among all the groups of surveyed learners, but especially among non-history-taking learners, was the fact that there is a reluctance to interact with the apartheid history of South Africa. In this survey 15 learners (19 per cent) expressed the view that the apartheid era was painful and evocative of bitter memories.⁴⁹ They fail to see any good in studying such a history and are quick to point out that the future is what interests them:

Since it is a thing from the past I don't think it is interesting. Because we as South Africans [have] had these painful moments. We are through the struggle, discrimination and poverty. So all we need to do is celebrate the victory and forget...⁵⁰

Other respondents related that thinking 'about the pain and suffering of our forefathers who died for freedom and peace'⁵¹ made them feel sad; that 'South African history is depressing and out-dated'⁵² and that apartheid times 'evokes emotions'.⁵³ One respondent expressed the desire that a very painful history should belong to and stay in the past.⁵⁴ Eight history-taking learners also expressed a reluctance to interact with the apartheid past.⁵⁵

Twelve history-taking respondents (14 per cent) did not find learning about racism in their history courses helpful or interesting.⁵⁶ Learning about racism was seen to engender hatred especially as racism was perceived as existing in the contemporary world.⁵⁷ One history-taking

⁴⁸ Steelcrest, Response 87.

⁴⁹ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 85, 89, 90, 94, 101, 110–112, 117, 118, 131, 133, 136, 159, 162.

⁵⁰ Learner's questionnaire, Response 131.

⁵¹ Learner's questionnaire, Response 118.

⁵² Learner's questionnaire, Response 94.

⁵³ Learner's questionnaire, Response 159.

⁵⁴ Learner's questionnaire, Response 101.

⁵⁵ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 13, 16, 22, 36, 55, 56, 75, 82.

⁵⁶ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 8, 13, 15, 36, 41, 55, 57, 65, 75, 79, 81, 82.

⁵⁷ Learner's questionnaire, Response 79.

learner related that studying racism led to feelings of pain.⁵⁸ Another history-taking learner believed that studying South Africa's difficult past might influence personal relationships:

Parts on apartheid and Eugenics tend to make me feel emotional at times. I feel our textbooks are biased; as a black sister I don't want to end up resenting my white friends which I get along so well with...⁵⁹

One of the responses from a poorer school demonstrates concerns about injustice which are keenly felt by most of these learners. This unedited response also vividly demonstrates a low level of written literacy for a Grade 12 learner:

What I like about the history of we learn about the things of today and about our economic more improve well, and I enjoy the subject. History make me as a learner always be active to think and know my right and be the place where I should use my rights...⁶⁰

Fifteen non-history-taking learners (19 per cent) felt that the subject involved too much work, or that the type of work involved did not suit them.⁶¹ Learners felt that the subject involved too many notes, too much work⁶² and too much research.⁶³

Eighteen history-taking learners (21 per cent) expressed that they dislike writing essays, possibly because it is clear that in most schools the written language abilities of learners is very low.⁶⁴ A major problem apparent in all the surveys conducted among black secondary school learners lies in the poor English language abilities. As was apparent in the quality of written responses received from surveyed learners, many learners simply cannot express themselves well in English. History educators at all of the surveyed schools complained that no matter how they try to teach the subject, the low language abilities of learners would continue to produce poor examination results. Eleven history-taking learners (13 per cent), when asked to outline the things they did not like about studying history, stated that history involved too much work.⁶⁵ It is

⁵⁸ Learner's questionnaire, Response 57.

⁵⁹ Learner's questionnaire, Response 75.

⁶⁰ Learner's questionnaire, Response 63.

⁶¹ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 112, 132–136, 135, 147–149, 153, 155, 156, 158, 159.

⁶² Learner's questionnaire, Response 155.

⁶³ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 146, 149.

⁶⁴ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 1, 24, 39, 45, 49, 50, 52, 63, 69, 70–73, 76, 78–80, 81.

⁶⁵ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 1, 3, 4, 20, 24, 31, 33, 44, 46, 47, 54, 63, 67, 69–72.

interesting to note that the history-taking learners at Middelburg Combined complained more than the learners at the other three surveyed schools about the essay writing and hard work involved in history study,⁶⁶ yet related that they enjoyed the subject to a far greater degree than learners at the other three surveyed schools.⁶⁷

Only two obstacles which learners regarded as hindering their learning were cited as a response to a question posed to history-taking learners, which required them to record any personal or contextual obstacles which they had experienced which might hinder their study of history. Five learners (6 per cent) mentioned that they had a poor relationship with their educator.⁶⁸ Nine learners (11 per cent) reported problems with learners' discipline and behaviour in class.⁶⁹ Learners related that other learners distracted them during lessons by making 'stupid comments towards the teacher',⁷⁰ that learners laughed in class when other learners attempted to answer questions⁷¹ and that some learners did not respect their educators.⁷² This general lack of classroom discipline must impact negatively upon the perceptions which learners develop toward history or any other field of education. Ironically, a negative factor influencing history education within black secondary schools during the apartheid era was the heavy-handed use of corporal punishment which stifled positive classroom interaction,⁷³ while the lack of classroom discipline in the post-apartheid era has led to the unruly conditions described above, which are just as damaging to the development of positive perceptions about subjects or learning areas which learners study.

Fifty-four history-taking learners (64 per cent) reported finding no contextual obstacles which hindered their history education at school.⁷⁴ I had in fact expected to discover otherwise, especially as most of the surveyed learners lived in economically depressed circumstances. This may be because some learners did not understand what was meant by the term 'contextual'.

⁶⁶ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 67, 69–73, 76, 78–81.

⁶⁷ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 68–79, 81.

⁶⁸ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 33, 39, 51, 53, 75.

⁶⁹ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 3, 4, 12, 25, 33, 44, 47, 54, 73.

⁷⁰ Learner's questionnaire, Response 12.

⁷¹ Learner's questionnaire, Response 33.

⁷² Learner's questionnaire, Response 54.

⁷³ Corporal punishment in apartheid-era classrooms is discussed in Chapter 3 of this dissertation.

⁷⁴ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 1, 2, 7–11, 13, 14, 16–24, 27–30, 32, 35–38, 41–43, 45, 46, 48–50, 52, 55–58, 60, 62, 64–67, 70–72, 74, 76–78, 81.

While none of the surveyed history-taking learners reported that they found history to be boring, nine of the surveyed non-history-taking learners (12 per cent) had perceived history to be a boring subject.⁷⁵

It is also not a very interesting subject. It is all about people that are gone and will never help me...⁷⁶

Several of the educators who were surveyed in this study pointed to the unsatisfactory nature of the GET social studies course (Grades 7–9), which may be a factor in the creation of the perception among learners that history is boring. These educators questioned the merits of the GET social studies syllabus as well as pointing out that the mix of history and geography it offered often led to history education being shortchanged in that it was often taught by unqualified, uninterested educators who were inclined to promote geography at the expense of history.⁷⁷ Two learners suggested that engaging in practical activities during history classes would make their history courses more interesting and helpful. Going out to see historical sites and seeing theatrical presentations of history were among the suggestions made.⁷⁸

Twelve of the surveyed non-history-taking learners (15 per cent) felt that there was nothing good whatsoever in studying history.⁷⁹ One respondent did however consider the livelihoods of history educators and academics, stating that ‘there is nothing good about it unless you want to teach it!’ This sentiment was not found among the surveyed Steelcrest High School group or among surveyed history-taking learners.

The third and final question posed to non-history-taking black secondary school learners concerned their perceptions of their parents’ attitudes toward the possibility of their taking history as a FET subject. Twenty learners (26 per cent) reported that their parents did not

⁷⁵ Learner’s questionnaire, Responses 90, 94, 100, 107, 109, 120, 128, 152, 157.

⁷⁶ Learner’s questionnaire, Response 109.

⁷⁷ Educators’ perceptions of GET history education are discussed in Chapter 6 of this dissertation.

⁷⁸ Learner’s questionnaire, Responses 59, 60.

⁷⁹ Learner’s questionnaire, Responses 87, 90, 91, 100, 101, 109, 131, 133, 136, 142, 144, 156.

approve of their children taking history.⁸⁰ The reasons for this negative attitude toward the subject are largely financial. Thirteen learners (17 per cent) reported that their parents do not see any future job prospects with history qualifications.⁸¹ One of the respondents from a less affluent school summed up the situation well when relating the attitude of his/her parents to history:

My parents feel that history was a good subject in their time, because each and everything they learnt was something that was happening throughout the country, something they could see and [experience] every day, but now [it] is not so simple to find a job...⁸²

One disgruntled learner felt that he/she should correct the positive perception which his/her parents held about history education:

They think history is good, because they don't have to do the explanation...⁸³

While 19 non-history-taking learners (24 per cent) reported that their parents felt that it was important to have a sense of the past,⁸⁴ 18 other learners (23 per cent) reported that their parents believed that history study was not for their own children.⁸⁵ Twenty-seven non-history-taking learners (35 per cent) did not have any idea how their parents felt about the study of history at school, which may indicate that the subject is seldom spoken about at home.⁸⁶

Most history-taking respondents did not answer the question which asked them to write down the things which they did not study in their history courses but which they felt should have been included (53 learners, or 63 per cent).⁸⁷ Among those who did, there is a desire to learn more about history which is relevant to their own lives, such as the personal history of present-day political and other topical figures, as well as local history. One respondent mentioned that he/she

⁸⁰ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 87, 90, 94–98, 101, 106, 108–110, 113, 115, 116, 124, 126, 127, 141, 159.

⁸¹ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 92, 94, 97, 98, 101, 106, 108, 110, 115, 116, 124, 126, 127.

⁸² Learner's questionnaire, Response 110.

⁸³ Learner's questionnaire, Response 135.

⁸⁴ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 86, 102, 104, 105, 117–120, 128, 130–132, 135, 137, 146, 148, 149, 155, 162.

⁸⁵ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 87, 90, 94, 96, 97, 101, 106, 108, 109, 110, 113, 115, 116, 124, 126, 127, 141, 159.

⁸⁶ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 89, 91, 99, 100, 105, 107, 111, 112, 114, 121, 133, 134, 136, 140, 142–145, 147, 151–154, 157, 158, 160, 161.

⁸⁷ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 3–5, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14, 16, 18, 19, 21–27, 29–31, 33, 35–38, 41, 42, 44, 46–50, 52, 55, 58, 59, 64–66, 68–70, 71, 73–80.

wished to know more about topical black leaders such as Thabo Mbeki, Jacob Zuma and Patrice Motsepe,⁸⁸ while another noted that he/she wished to know more about his own residential area.⁸⁹

7.3 Positive learner perceptions

Despite several negative perceptions, the three surveys conducted within four black secondary schools in the Nkangala region of Mpumalanga in 2008 revealed that positive perceptions about history education were held by learners.

Forty (47 per cent) of the 86 surveyed Steelcrest learners felt that history could enable them to know more about the apartheid past.⁹⁰ Fifty-two of the surveyed history-taking learners (62 per cent) believed that studying history might help one understand the past better.⁹¹ The idea that history could help people learn from the mistakes of the past and give guidance for the future was expressed:

Lately we are facing tragedies such as Global Warming, Load Shedding and AIDS. If the history of our forefathers was passed to us in a very good way and a clear way I think we would find ways to make these tragedies disappear. Since we don't have a full knowledge of the past we won't go further which means we will be stuck in the dark and have no other way to get out...⁹²

It was perceived that it was necessary to study the past in order to understand it. History was also seen as a vehicle which could help people attain a better future, therefore not repeating the mistakes others had made in the past. History education was seen by one learner as something that 'helps us to heal ... to accept and forgive'.⁹³ Another learner felt that knowledge of history

⁸⁸ Learner's questionnaire, Response 54.

⁸⁹ Learner's questionnaire, Response 60.

⁹⁰ Steelcrest, Responses 1–4, 6, 8–15, 17, 21, 24, 25, 29, 31, 36, 39, 43, 46, 49, 52, 54, 57–59, 63, 65, 68, 70, 73, 74, 79, 80, 83, 86, 88.

⁹¹ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 2, 5–8, 13, 16, 18, 19, 20, 22, 24, 25, 27–29, 31, 32, 33, 36, 37, 39, 42–45, 47, 49, 50, 52, 53, 56–65, 67, 69–73, 76–78, 81, 82.

⁹² Steelcrest, Response 22.

⁹³ Learner's questionnaire, Response 54.

might help ‘avoid past political mistakes that led countries to depression’.⁹⁴ These insights all show evidence of thought and an awareness of what history is about.

Asked to outline the things which history-studying learners liked about studying history, an interest emerged in finding out about the past, especially South Africa’s past. Sixty history-taking learners (71 per cent) expressed an interest in learning about the past.⁹⁵ Nine of these learners (11 per cent) stated that they enjoy having the freedom to assert their own opinions.⁹⁶ The topic which history-taking learners enjoyed the most was the slave trade (nine learners, 11 per cent).⁹⁷ Five learners (6 per cent) expressed an interest in heritage issues.⁹⁸ History-taking learners from the two poorer schools which were surveyed showed a greater interest in learning about the struggle for freedom in South Africa (8 learners, or 10 per cent).⁹⁹

Fifty-four history-taking learners (64 per cent) described how their choice of the subject history as a subject was linked to assisting a future career and 38 (45 per cent) felt that history studies were a valuable aid in helping to prepare for a legal career.¹⁰⁰ The methods of studying history were perceived by one learner as being similar to the methods involved in legal investigations.¹⁰¹ History study was seen as necessary to ‘build strong and healthy lawyers for our country’.¹⁰² Another learner noted that history ‘is very important when you want to be a lawyer’.¹⁰³ Few seem to be aware of exactly how history might assist a legal career. It could be that educators have told them that history is linked to law, without really explaining how.

⁹⁴ Learner’s questionnaire, Response 51.

⁹⁵ Learner’s questionnaire, Responses 1, 3, 5, 7–9, 11, 12, 14, 15, 17–19, 22, 23, 26–29, 31–33, 35–38, 42, 43, 45–47, 50, 52–62, 64, 66–79, 81.

⁹⁶ Learner’s questionnaire, Responses 15, 16, 19, 24, 38, 63, 69, 72, 74.

⁹⁷ Learner’s questionnaire, Responses 2, 7, 8, 9, 13, 18, 22, 25, 26.

⁹⁸ Learner’s questionnaire, Responses 2, 9, 23, 33, 52.

⁹⁹ Learner’s questionnaire, Responses 7, 14, 31, 33, 53, 54, 55, 59.

¹⁰⁰ Learner’s Responses 3, 4, 9, 10–14, 16, 22, 23, 25–28, 32–35, 40–42, 44–46, 54, 58, 61, 63–65, 67, 72, 75–77, 79, 80.

¹⁰¹ Steelcrest, Response 23.

¹⁰² Steelcrest, Response 33.

¹⁰³ Learner’s questionnaire, Response 65.

Three main responses emerged from the question which probed the ways in which history-taking learners perceived that their school history studies might help them in their future adult lives or careers. Three history-taking learners expressed an interest in following a career in journalism.¹⁰⁴ Fifteen learners (18 per cent) mentioned that a knowledge of history would help them gain useful general knowledge.¹⁰⁵ Sixteen learners (19 per cent) felt that knowledge of history would develop their logical thought.¹⁰⁶ In answering question two, 16 respondents (19 per cent) felt that knowledge of history would help them with proposed legal studies,¹⁰⁷ while fifteen (18 per cent) saw history as an aid to a successful political career.¹⁰⁸ Interestingly, many of those who mentioned that they might wish to follow a career in politics attended the two poorest schools surveyed, namely Tshwenyane and Tsiki-Naledi.

Fifty-one of the 86 surveyed Steelcrest High School learners (59 per cent) expressed the idea that history study might help them to know about their personal cultural roots and background.¹⁰⁹

The following reason is why I say it's worthwhile to know about our history... Wouldn't you feel left out when you don't know your roots, where you came from? I think it's a horrible feeling...¹¹⁰

Historically a person is at an advantage in knowing about his / her upbringing. It is important to know not only about history itself, but practice it. I strongly believe that without knowing your roots, how can you grow or even say you are a proudly South African and how can you say so because you don't practise your own culture...¹¹¹

One respondent provided an interesting perception of why history education was important to her:

People who know nothing of the past are like people who have lost their memories. They are missing out on the opportunity to know who they are, where they came from, what their world means and how it got to be the way it is.

¹⁰⁴ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 29, 30, 34, 70, 76.

¹⁰⁵ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 4, 11, 21, 28, 29, 31, 32, 42, 45, 52, 70, 72, 75, 79, 80.

¹⁰⁶ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 1, 15, 21, 31, 34, 35, 39, 40, 43, 46, 47, 49, 59, 61, 67, 74.

¹⁰⁷ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 3, 10, 13, 14, 16, 22, 23, 26–28, 34, 45, 53, 66, 77, 79.

¹⁰⁸ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 5, 10, 17, 20, 25, 28, 32, 33, 37, 49, 53, 55, 59, 61, 72.

¹⁰⁹ Steelcrest, Responses 4, 5, 7, 12, 13, 15, 17, 21, 22, 24, 26, 28, 29, 31–33, 35, 36, 39, 40, 43, 45, 46, 50–59, 62–68, 70, 72, 73, 77–79, 81, 85, 86, 88, 89.

¹¹⁰ Steelcrest, Response 67.

¹¹¹ Steelcrest, Response 78.

Imagine you wake up one morning to discover you have lost your memory. You cannot remember the names of the people in the house. Never mind their names, you cannot remember ever seeing them before. History is the story of human society and that is us...¹¹²

Sadly, this perceptive Grade 10 learner has not been able to study history at Steelcrest High School as a choice FET subject as this would clash with science and mathematics studies, to which all gifted learners are channeled in all of the surveyed black secondary schools. Such learners are not provided with the option of also studying history.

Twenty of the Steelcrest learners (23 per cent) described their concern about black people being in danger of losing touch with their indigenous culture.¹¹³ Respondents in all three surveys expressed a strong need to know where they came from. African traditional culture, belief and practices are not formally studied in the new FET curriculum, although such topics might be studied under the compulsory heritage component of the curriculum. Seven of the non-history-taking learners (9 per cent)¹¹⁴ and 37 history-taking learners (44 per cent)¹¹⁵ also felt that studying history might help you to know your roots. One respondent noted that knowing your origins ‘tells us how we came to be today – as a teenager that’s very important’.¹¹⁶

One Steelcrest learner felt that history education might help to end South Africa’s endemic corruption:

South Africa is becoming a corrupt country and so we need children who will study history to stop fraud. Fraud is becoming a big issue in South Africa today and we need people who will lead our country to success and so children should do history at school so that they can become lawyers and put an end to this corruption...¹¹⁷

¹¹² Steelcrest, Response 85.

¹¹³ Steelcrest, Responses 12, 13, 15, 16, 17, 22, 24, 26, 28, 33, 36, 38, 40, 43, 46, 51, 55, 72, 77, 86.

¹¹⁴ Learner’s questionnaire, Responses 89, 95, 103, 111, 119, 125, 152.

¹¹⁵ Learner’s questionnaire, Responses 3, 7, 9, 15–17, 20, 22–24, 26, 27, 30–33, 36, 39, 44, 45, 52–54, 56–58, 67, 70, 71, 73–77, 78, 81, 82.

¹¹⁶ Learner’s questionnaire, Response 74.

¹¹⁷ Steelcrest, Response 15.

Fifteen Steelcrest learners (17 per cent) felt that history education could be good for its own sake:¹¹⁸

It is good because you learn interesting things that you don't know about like slavery, specific empires, racism and more. If there was no history in schools children wouldn't know anything about the past...¹¹⁹

This as opposed to the 18 Steelcrest learners (21 per cent) who perceived that the main benefit of history education was as a needed stepping stone on route to acquiring a legal qualification.¹²⁰

Middelburg Combined was the only school where a significant number of learners claimed that they had opted to study history because they loved the subject (13 out of 18 responses, or 72 per cent). This response is extraordinary and may be linked to the presence of an enthusiastic educator who clearly inspires the learners, as was evident by their responses throughout the questionnaire. A total of 41 history-taking learners (49 per cent) from other schools also noted that they found the subject interesting, which is a hopeful statistic.

When asked to describe how history was taught at their schools, the overall impression of the survey was that almost all surveyed history-taking learners enjoyed the subject. No negative comments whatsoever were received. Responding to a question as to what was found least helpful in their history course, 43 respondents (51 per cent) left the question unanswered, or replied that there was in fact nothing that they did not find helpful or interesting in their history courses.¹²¹ This is a hopeful statistic.

The question which asked learners to forward their opinions as to why it was necessary to study the past replicated a question posed by Mazabow in his doctoral thesis on the development of historical consciousness among South African history studying learners in 2003.¹²² The responses from surveyed history learners in the present study were encouraging. Most answers

¹¹⁸ Steelcrest, Responses 2, 14, 16, 22, 32, 37, 40, 42, 44, 47, 50, 53, 54, 60, 88.

¹¹⁹ Steelcrest, Response 14.

¹²⁰ Steelcrest, Responses 6, 12, 15, 17, 20, 21, 23, 25, 32–34, 40, 46, 47, 68, 69, 80, 81.

¹²¹ Learner's questionnaires, Responses 1, 2, 4, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12, 16–20, 24–29, 32, 37–40, 43, 46–50, 53, 56, 62–64, 66, 67–72, 76.

¹²² Mazabow, 'The Development of Historical Consciousness', p. 231.

showed insight and an appreciation of what value there might be in studying history. Only one history-taking learner responded negatively to the question, stating that he/she did not see how history could help one understand the past.

Whether the past was able to teach people anything meaningful was a further question which Mazabow used to determine the maturity of his target learners' historical consciousness.¹²³ History-taking learners at the surveyed black secondary schools displayed a considerable degree of maturity and insight when responding to this question. Six history-taking learners (7 per cent) felt that studying history at school helped them to see both sides of a situation. Twenty-nine learners (35 per cent) pointed out that studying history at school helps them to see a broader picture. History was seen by one learner as helping people to appreciate what they enjoy at the present time.¹²⁴

One Steelcrest learner felt that history provided direction in life. Fifteen history-taking learners (17 per cent) felt that a study of history could be instrumental in developing a solid set of personal values:

School history helps develop values such as tolerance. It develops personal and social memory. It helps us understand the world around us and improves writing and research. School history helps unlock the power of knowledge and provides skills for life. That makes me more equipped than any other learner...¹²⁵

Responses to the question concerning what these learners believed the value or benefit of studying history at school today varied from those which were pragmatic and career orientated to those which expressed values of a more personal nature. Thirteen history-taking learners (15 per cent) again expressed the belief that the chief value of history study was to assist them in future law studies. Twenty-four history-taking learners (29 per cent) saw the main value of history education as personal enrichment:

¹²³ *Ibid.*, p. 231.

¹²⁴ Learner's questionnaire, Response 17.

¹²⁵ Steelcrest, Response 47.

The value of studying history is that it also builds you as a person, makes you think for other people not only for yourself and not to be judgmental before hearing the other person's story...¹²⁶

One learner felt that studying history met his/her cerebral needs, claiming that 'history is a study for intellectuals (which I happen to be)'.¹²⁷ Another respondent displayed an almost Gnostic view of the meaningful teachings of history as he/she related that 'we are taught the real truth behind the general truth. We know things that other people don't know'.¹²⁸ It is clear that history learners in black secondary schools have developed some thoughtful and sophisticated ideas on the question as to whether history education can provide them with meaningful lessons in life.

Six Steelcrest learners (7 per cent) felt that studying history could help them to develop various academic skills.¹²⁹ One learner noted that 'studying history also helps you to develop research skills, the ability to find and evaluate sources of information. Work in history also improves basic writing and speaking skills and these can be applied to information encountered in everyday life'.¹³⁰ Another mentioned that 'history can also teach young people how to communicate well in speech by analysing some ideas and materials and also in writing, history will teach them how and what to do. It will help young people to think logically and even critically'.¹³¹ Only five history-taking respondents (6 per cent) mentioned that what had helped them in their history courses at school was acquiring skills such as learning research methods, writing skills or work methods.¹³² Four of these five respondents were from Steelcrest High School.¹³³ This may indicate that too little emphasis is placed by educators on helping learners to sharpen writing or historical skills.

¹²⁶ Learner's questionnaire, Response 44.

¹²⁷ Learner's questionnaire, Response 72.

¹²⁸ Learner's questionnaire, Response 79.

¹²⁹ Steelcrest, Responses 41, 43, 49, 50, 56, 72.

¹³⁰ Steelcrest, Response 50.

¹³¹ Steelcrest, Response 72.

¹³² Learner's questionnaire, Responses 10, 14, 21, 36, 58.

¹³³ Learner's questionnaire, Responses 10, 14, 21, 36.

One history-taking learner felt that history study could help to build a more cohesive nation:

History opens the doors to a civilized nation, because we are a family in South Africa, we have to laugh and cry together as a unit. Although hatred will always bark at our doors me and you we always have to smile at each other...¹³⁴

Another history-taking learner felt that studying history at secondary school might provide her with education which was not provided at home:

Some parents don't tell their children about history, so children have to study at school, because of understanding and looking into the past...¹³⁵

Six Steelcrest learners (7 per cent) believed that history should be made a compulsory subject at secondary school:¹³⁶

School history is an important subject that should be studied by young South Africans. Why I say this is because history has given people their values and direction in life...¹³⁷

History is the backbone for the youths' bright future. History should be taught to us as the youth of South Africa so that we can be able to understand our background...¹³⁸

As for all the positive perceptions about history education garnered from the learners in this section of the survey, none of the Grade 9 learners expressing them will be able to study the subject any further anyway since Steelcrest High School, like Middelburg Combined, will not be offering history as a FET subject in Grade 10 from 2009.

7.4 Conclusion

The learner surveys conducted within the four black secondary schools in the Nkangala area of Mpumalanga reveal that in 2008, some of the perceptions which learners hold about history

¹³⁴ Steelcrest, Response 56.

¹³⁵ Steelcrest, Response 57.

¹³⁶ Steelcrest, Responses 25, 46, 50, 56, 86, 88.

¹³⁷ Steelcrest, Response 86.

¹³⁸ Steelcrest, Response 88.

education are related to the perceptions of the educators who teach them the subject. Issues like curriculum and syllabus design and textbooks which were contentious issues among learners during the apartheid era were never even mentioned by any of the surveyed learners. Present-day political matters were hardly mentioned and most references to past political matters were mentioned in the context of learners not wanting to learn about them.

Although some learners, especially history-taking learners expressed positive perceptions of the subject, many contemporary black secondary school learners appear to be most interested in a scientific and technological future in which there is little place for study of the humanities, history included. History largely appears to be judged by secondary school learners for its usefulness or otherwise in preparing them for the market-driven world of work. Many of the history-taking black secondary school learners perceived value in history study in terms of preparation for a legal career while many of the non-history-taking learners tended to see little value in a subject which did not suit their future career plans. Changes in syllabus will not in themselves revive a flagging interest in historical study among learners at black secondary schools. A drastic change in the worldview of learners – away from a utilitarian, materialistic approach to life – is needed if history is to attain a position of significance in the school curriculum or in the minds of learners.

CHAPTER EIGHT

CONCLUSION

It is clear that the lot of a black secondary school educator after the introduction of Bantu Education was not a happy one. These educators were forced to make difficult choices whether or not to give their support to the new philosophies which supported apartheid education. Secondary school history education, whether for white or black learners, was perceived by those in power to be a very important component in terms of implementing apartheid ideology. In Chapter 3 it was clear that many black educators, often for nothing other than reasons of pragmatic survival opted to stay within the new education system. Statistics presented in Chapter 3 indicated that black secondary school educators were generally very poorly qualified to teach secondary school history. Research further indicates that throughout the apartheid era, black secondary school educators taught history mainly with an eye to examination success.¹ History educators in black secondary schools were aware, especially from the 1970s that their teaching did not enjoy the support of their learners or from the wider black community.² Some researchers have indicated that the teaching of the subject within black secondary schools was generally lacklustre.³ During the 1980s and the era of social unrest and student boycotts, little teaching of any kind took place at many black secondary schools.⁴ When teaching did take place, educators were under extreme pressure from the Department of Education, school authorities, parents and learners to adopt conflicting political stands. All these factors contributed to a generally negative perception of school history being held by black secondary school educators during the apartheid era.

¹ See Smith, 'New Lessons', p. 6; Nuxumalo, 'Sociological Significance of the Teaching of History', p. 198 and Malie, 'Bantu Secondary High Schools', p. 27.

² See Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, p. 79; Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', pp. 84, 87 and Lekgoathi, 'Teacher Militancy', p. 241.

³ These include Maree, 'The Hearts and Minds of the People' pp.152,155; Nuxumalo, 'Sociological Significance of the Teaching of History', p. 176; Zwane, 'An Examination of the Position and Role of History', pp. 44, 63; Lekgoathi, 'Teacher Militancy', p. 239; Legodi, 'The Transformation of Education', pp.77-80 and Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, p. 79.

⁴ Hartshorne, *Crisis and Challenge*, p. 80.

My field research, undertaken in the Nkangala region of Mpumalanga among black secondary school history educators, indicates that from the late 1980s, when it was obvious to all that the power of the apartheid government was in decline, educators were able to teach their subject with more freedom of expression and less fear of reprisal on the part of the Department of Education or the security police.⁵

It is clear that during the apartheid era learners within black secondary schools began to become increasingly politically aware of the political situation in South Africa and increasingly more critical of it. By the 1970s black secondary school history learners were seriously questioning the integrity of the history education which they received at school. It is clear that many of these learners were in the habit of regurgitating the facts demanded by the syllabus simply in order to pass their examinations but were very aware of the shortcomings of their history education. Increasingly, learners developed critical and negative perceptions of the subject. Research conducted by the HSRC does however indicate that by the 1990s the perceptions toward history of at least some black secondary school learners had become more positive as a freer social and political environment began to emerge in South Africa.⁶

From about the middle of the 1980s it was obvious that the history education offered in all South African secondary schools would have to radically change in order to keep up with a rapidly changing social and political environment. A series of new syllabi and approaches toward history education were introduced which held out the promise of a vastly improved secondary school history education which could at least begin to reverse the largely negative perceptions of the subject which had been created among both educators and learners. It is the contention of this dissertation that this improved history education which emerged by the turn of the twenty-first century has not been enough to reverse the impact of a negative materialistic and utilitarian social trend which has created seriously negative perceptions of history education, especially among South Africa's young people.

⁵ Educator's questionnaires, Responses 1, 3, 6, 7.

⁶ Van der Merwe, *et al.*, *An Empirical Investigation into the Teaching of History*.

Vakalisa and others have noted that a revival in the fortunes of secondary school history education took place during the time of the Government of National Unity (GNU).⁷ Research conducted by the Human Sciences Research Council in 1991, although finalised some three years before the advent of the GNU, supports this claim.⁸ Many changes to the structure of education were made during the time of the GNU, including the introduction of OBE and Curriculum 2005. The introduction of these new educational approaches was considered by many to be haphazard. Manifold changes were made which served to confuse educational administrators and educators alike. Nevertheless, there is no doubt that during these years the history syllabus improved and the methods and motivation for teaching the subject were placed on a sounder footing than had been the case under apartheid education.

Secondary school history syllabi and the new OBE teaching methodology, while not immune from criticism were a clear improvement upon the school history offered by apartheid Departments of Education. Secondary school history education is no longer widely perceived as an apology for government ideology although a bias toward the new political order can be discerned within it. Contemporary GET and FET school history is primarily concerned with imparting the methodology of history education rather than content, which is viewed as a vehicle toward understanding historical concepts.

Despite receiving an improved history education it is clear that history is a struggling subject in most South African secondary schools, black secondary schools included. It is rare to find a black secondary school where history education thrives. Increasingly, history is being phased out of black secondary schools as a FET subject. In two of the four Nkangala secondary schools which were surveyed, FET history is in the process of being phased out as a choice subject for learners. In fact, the two schools in the process of phasing out the subject have enjoyed far better Grade 12 examination results in history than the two schools which presently retain it.

Research into secondary school history education in South Africa which has been conducted since 1994 indicates that learners look forward to a technological, scientific or commercial future

⁷ Vakalisa, 'Construction of a School Curriculum', p. 12, as quoted by Legodi, 'The Transformation of Education', p. 186.

⁸ Van der Merwe, *et al.*, *An Empirical Investigation into the Teaching of History*.

in which there is little place for the study of the humanities, including history. My own research, (outlined in Chapter 7) conducted for the purposes of this dissertation in Nkangala in 2008 among black secondary school learners strongly confirmed this finding. Many contemporary black secondary school learners see little value in history study as it is not perceived to lead to the acquisition of bursaries for tertiary education or to lead to the gaining of future lucrative jobs. This perception is also shared by many learners' parents.

The findings of this study strongly confirm research conducted from the 1980s through to the early 2000s which demonstrates that young South African people have been overwhelmed by a philosophy of pragmatic materialism.⁹ History education is perceived as having little utility in a commercially orientated world in which people are valued more highly for material success than academic achievement. This approach to life has had a detrimental effect on school history education which does not offer financial reward among its diverse benefits.

Mazabow correctly notes that over the years there has been a general decline in the importance which society as a whole assigns to historic scholarship. History has come to be judged as being generally irrelevant and meaningless to the collective aspirations of present-day society.¹⁰ It is my observation, after many years of teaching history to black secondary school learners that Mazabow's assertions are correct. When asked about the possibility of studying history, the response of many secondary school learners is to ask 'Why?' Young people today do not appreciate the relevance of the subject. Very few appear to have any interest in the past, even in the history of the South African liberation struggle which won for them so many opportunities which their parents and grandparents never enjoyed.

The main reason for this attitude among the youth may well be related to what the concerns and ideals of present-day society are. Mazabow points to a 'market-driven, materialistic world', in which the study of history is viewed as promising little in the way of career advancement or

⁹ This philosophy of pragmatic materialism has been described by Mulholland, 'The Evolution of History Teaching'; Kallaway, 'History Education as a Popular Version of the TRC', p.1, as quoted by Siebörger, 'History and the Emerging Nation', pages unnumbered; and Mazabow, 'The Development of Historical Consciousness'.

¹⁰ Mazabow, 'The Development of Historical Consciousness', p. 25.

financial inducement. It is therefore seen to be lacking in utilitarian purpose.¹¹ Mulholland posits that in an increasingly utilitarian-orientated age, history has become increasingly unpopular. She notes that utilitarians ask the question ‘Will my knowledge enable me to manipulate the world of things and people’, or ‘How much monetary value will it have?’ ‘Worth’ has become associated to and interchangeable with ‘monetary value’. A study of history is seen as best left to propagandists or enthusiasts to follow.¹² The History/Archaeological Panel states in its report that ‘... There is also an influential perception among parents ... that studying history is ‘not relevant’ for serving the future careers of children, unlike commerce or mathematics’.¹³

Kallaway suggests that previous concerns for society, citizenship, culture and values espoused until as recently as the 1990s, have been overtaken by the world of work, the market and competition. Faced with a need to globalise and modernise so as to survive in a world economy, ‘history has been uncritically abandoned, along with much else in a ruthless economic and social transformation’.¹⁴ Mazabow also notes that the imperative of economic austerity has badly impacted upon the position of history teaching in South African schools. Rationalisation and redeployment policies have had negative effects on secondary school history education. Chronic shortages of facilities still exist in many secondary schools. A lack of essential facilities such as libraries, textbooks, photocopiers and even paper continue to handicap the subject.¹⁵

History as a secondary school subject has further been marginalised by the negative attitudes of school administrators who have come to regard it as a subject for the less intellectually able learner. Some secondary schools have removed it from the curriculum altogether and in other schools, history is used as a ‘dumping subject’ reserved for those learners who do not perform well in mathematics or science. In consequence, history enrolments at schools and universities have taken a drop.¹⁶ A disturbing present-day perception of history secondary school education

¹¹ *Ibid.*, pp. 25–26.

¹² Mulholland, ‘The Evolution of History Teaching’, p. 60.

¹³ Department of National Education, *Report of the History/Archaeology Panel* (Pretoria, 2000), p. 13, as quoted by Mazabow, ‘The Development of Historical Consciousness’, p. 26.

¹⁴ Kallaway, ‘History Education as a Popular Version of the TRC’ *Notes for the Values in Education History Panel* (2000), p. 1, as quoted by Siebörger, ‘History and the Emerging Nation’, pages unnumbered.

¹⁵ Mazabow, ‘The Development of Historical Consciousness’, pp. 26–27.

¹⁶ Department of National Education, *Report of the History/Archaeology Panel*, p. 7 as quoted by Mazabow, ‘The Development of Historical Consciousness’, p. 23.

to emerge from my research was that the vast majority of school SMTs (School Management Teams)¹⁷ strongly disapprove of history education. Where history education is offered by secondary schools, it is usually offered as a so-called ‘dustbin subject’ for the benefit of less capable learners who struggle with mathematics and science. Learners who are allowed to take mathematics or science are seldom if ever allowed to take history as a FET subject. This negative perception of secondary school history held by SMTs tends to filter down to history educators whose self-image and personal perceptions of history education are diminished with the knowledge that they are teaching a subject regarded as less important and reserved for learners of low ability. Naturally history-taking learners themselves are also aware that their subject is perceived by the school as an easy one which is the preserve of low ability learners. It is difficult to quantify the educational and personal effects of this negative and pernicious perception upon the individuals involved in secondary school history education. In my experience, contemporary secondary school history educators and learners do in fact suffer from a diminished sense of educational self-esteem as a result of the perceived low value of the subject they teach or study. These assertions strongly emerged in the surveys which I conducted among black secondary school educators and learners. At Steelcrest High School, tourism has been used to replace history because it is seen as being an even easier subject than history for the less able learner to pass.¹⁸ At Middelburg Combined, history has been phased out in favour of technical subjects.¹⁹

An interesting perception to emerge from my own research was the extreme reluctance of many black secondary school learners to study South Africa’s apartheid past. Chapter 7 cites references to the painful struggle against apartheid which evoked negative and at times angry emotions among learners. One of the responses which was received was that learners did not want to study South Africa’s history and that it was seen as better to focus upon the future instead. This may mean that young black South Africans want to forget the past and move on. It could also mean that young black South Africans are still struggling with unresolved and painful issues which they want to repress. Further speculation upon these painful perceptions of the apartheid past, or

¹⁷ A School Management Team is normally composed of the school Principal, Deputy Principal and various Heads of Department. It is usually composed of about five or six people whose function is to administer the school. The SMT decides on policy matters which concern the school. One such policy matter is the choice of subjects which the school offers to its learners.

¹⁸ Interview, Mr G.H.E. Romijn, Middelburg, 2 December 2008.

¹⁹ Interview, Ms R. Maroos, Middelburg, 2 December 2008.

indeed their remedy is beyond the scope of this dissertation and rather lie within the ambit of disciplines such as sociology and psychology. This widespread desire to avoid contact with a difficult past on the part of young black South Africans may also be shared by young white South Africans and may justify the making of history a compulsory subject within all secondary schools. It may be better for the long-term happiness of South Africa to encourage actively secondary school learners to come to terms with their shared past as opposed to allowing the subject of history to become obsolete. Again, this decision is outside the scope of this dissertation and lies within the realm of South Africa's educational policy makers.

A common and positive perception of secondary school history education which is described in Chapter 7 of this study was that almost all learners see history as having a high value for those who wish to follow legal studies at university. Few respondents were able to identify quite how history study would help a legal career. Nevertheless, the perception that this is the primary value of school history education is a powerful one.

The perceived value of history as a subject has been declining for some time in all types of South African schools, including traditionally black secondary schools. Many reasons can be speculated upon to account for this disturbing trend. During the days of National Party rule, history fulfilled a clear role as a vehicle of propaganda for the policies of the government and so enjoyed an important status in black and white schools alike. Very few would today question the fact that the school subject of history was abused in this way. This may explain why the subject lost popularity among black youth from at least the 1970s onward. Taylor notes that '... The utilization of history by South Africa's previous government as an ideological tool over its citizens, has likewise impinged the legitimacy of history in the school curriculum.'²⁰ Despite a series of well intentioned attempts to reform both the content and method of the subject from the mid 1980s, history as a school subject has never been able to recapture its preeminent role in the school curriculum.

²⁰ N. Taylor, ed., *Inventing Knowledge: Contests in Curriculum Construction* (Cape Town, 1993), p. 92, as quoted by Mazabow, 'The Development of Historical Consciousness', p. 26.

Present-day history education within South African black secondary schools and certainly within the surveyed region of Mpumalanga is in a dire condition. Perceptions of the subject are generally not positive among educators or learners. Unless this perilous situation can be quickly turned around, the subject 'history' may only survive within those universities which offer a full selection of academic subjects as opposed to those which specialise in technology, science or commerce.

Good reasons need to be found to justify the continued study of history within all South African secondary schools. This is especially the case within black secondary schools. South African young people need to retain their unique African identity and diverse cultures. History education has a significant role to play in this regard. The well worn wisdom which states that a nation which forgets its history is doomed to repeat it rings dangerously true in the context of post-apartheid South Africa. Any contemporary secondary school educator will confirm the fact that the average learner has an extremely scant general knowledge and little idea of South Africa's past history or for that matter, world history. This educational situation needs to be rectified if South Africa is to produce knowledgeable and informed citizens.

Should history be made a compulsory FET subject at secondary schools? This question has often been raised. The danger of school history again becoming as prescriptive as that which was offered to learners during the apartheid era is a real one. The conviction with which a compulsory subject would be taught by necessity by mostly unqualified educators would be open to question. Were the subject to be compulsory but not examinable, the conviction with which it would be approached by learners would be open to question. Were the subject made both compulsory and examinable what would be made of the claims of other school subjects with competing and justifiable claims to become compulsory parts of the school curriculum? Then again, might the freedom of choice which the South African constitution so proudly proclaims not be threatened by making history a compulsory subject at school level? It is clear that making history a compulsory FET subject may create more problems than solutions.

It was seen in Chapter 5 that social sciences (SS) is already a compulsory component of the Grade 7–9 GET school curriculum. Half of the content of the social sciences courses are already

geared toward history education. It is however clear that the history component of social sciences is less than adequate. In Chapter 6 it was evident that black secondary school history educators surveyed for the purposes of this dissertation held very negative perceptions about social sciences. Almost all felt that as a half subject it was not taught with enthusiasm or ability by most educators and as such did little to promote history at FET level. In fact, many educators felt that the GET history as presently offered has a negative effect upon later history education at secondary school. Simply retaining social sciences in the GET curriculum is clearly not all that is needed to ensure the continued good health of secondary school history education in South Africa.

A professional body of committed, qualified history educators needs to be built up within black secondary schools. Although there are many shining examples of capable and dedicated black secondary school history educators, there are still far too many examples of poorly qualified and uncommitted educators at these schools. So far as the Mpumalanga Education Department is concerned, the impression which I have gained is that some Curriculum Implementers and other departmental officials seem to be content to manage a dying secondary school subject. Little action is taken to revive the fortunes of the subject by creating an interest in it or by promoting it at secondary schools.

There is little promotion of the humanities by tertiary institutions at secondary schools. Tertiary institutions do visit secondary schools but most of them are universities of technology which offer courses geared to science or commerce. The National Department of Education could be involved in promoting the study of history at secondary schools but unfortunately the present-day education department favours the promotion of science and technology. Bursaries are constantly on offer for science, technology and commercial avenues of tertiary study but there are few (if any) available for the undergraduate study of history. It is obvious that within black secondary schools, especially where learners may find it difficult to raise sufficient funds to pay for tertiary education, the lack of financial support for further history study is a severe impediment to the study of the subject. In the interest of their own long term survival history departments at universities should consider becoming more involved in promoting their subject at secondary school level.

Finally, it is clear that the most needed component in the revival of school history within black secondary schools is the most nebulous and difficult to achieve. Only a moral reorientation within South African society which steers it away from an all consuming utilitarian materialistic approach to life toward a mindset which is more geared to an interest in and concern for the welfare of others will bring about the conditions which are needed for a revival of interest in subjects like history.

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3. Responses to Questionnaires

Educators' Written Responses

Anonymous, Empucukweni Secondary School, Witbank/Emalahleni

Anonymous, Kanhym Agricultural Secondary School, Nazareth township, Middelburg

Anonymous, Leonard Ntshuntshe Secondary School, Witbank/Emalahleni

Anonymous, Middelburg Combined School, Nazareth township, Middelburg

Anonymous, P. Ndimande Secondary School, Witbank/Emalahleni

Anonymous, Sozama Secondary School, Mhluzi township, Middelburg

Anonymous, Tshwenyane Combined School, Mhluzi township, Middelburg

Anonymous, Tsiki-Naledi Secondary School, Hendrina

Learners' Written Responses

History-taking learners

Steelcrest High School

Grade 10 learners: 30 responses (Numbered 1–30)

Grade 11 learners: 7 responses (Numbered 31–37)

Grade 12 learners: 15 responses (Numbered 38–52)

Tshwenyane Combined School

Grade 11 learners: 3 responses (Numbered 53–55)

Grade 12 learners: 5 responses (Numbered 56–60)

Tsiki-Naledi Secondary School

Grade 12 learners: 6 responses (Numbered 61–66)

Middelburg Combined School

Grade 11 learners: 6 responses (Numbered 67–72)

Grade 12 learners: 12 responses (Numbered 73–84)

Non-history-taking learnersSteelcrest High School

Grade 11: 25 responses (Numbered 85–109)

Tshwenyane Combined School

Grade 12: 10 responses (Numbered 110–119)

Tsiki-Naledi Secondary School

Grade 11: 10 responses (Numbered 120–129)

Grade 12: 1 response (Numbered 130)

Middelburg Combined School

Grade 11: 25 responses (Numbered 131–155)

Grade 12: 7 responses (Numbered 156–162)

Steelcrest learner written responses

| | | |
|---------------|----------------|----------------|
| 1 Sylvester | 31 Given | 61 Alex |
| 2 Kgabo | 32 Nonkuleleko | 62 Mthobisi |
| 3 Sizwe | 33 Rinah | 63 Mxolisi |
| 4 Mtunzi | 34 Grace | 64 Senzo |
| 5 Thulani | 35 Ferrin | 65 Bayethe |
| 6 Aya | 36 Queen | 66 Brian |
| 7 Thomas | 37 Dinyalo | 67 Kevin |
| 8 Anonymous | 38 Lindokuhle | 68 Sanele |
| 9 Emmanuel | 39 Nompumelelo | 69 Zweli |
| 10 Nkosinathi | 40 Precious | 70 Anley |
| 11 Kagiso | 41 Zakkiiya | 71 Jackson |
| 12 Bongane | 42 Innocentia | 72 Portia |
| 13 Marcus | 43 Nzwano | 73 Nolwazi |
| 14 Pearl | 44 Mathabo | 74 Shirlah |
| 15 Smangaliso | 45 Doreen | 75 Nosipho |
| 16 Nolwazi | 46 Noxolo | 76 Lucky |
| 17 Nashwin | 47 Zinhle | 77 Reuben |
| 18 Thami | 48 Brian | 78 Gloria |
| 19 Collen | 49 Collen | 79 Thandeka |
| 20 Promise | 50 Given | 80 Bridget |
| 21 Pearl | 51 Manqoba | 81 Lethabo |
| 22 Matsebe | 52 Tsofelo | 82 Koketso |
| 23 Francis | 53 Phumzile | 83 Lunga |
| 24 Pamela | 54 Prudence | 84 Evidence |
| 25 Elizabeth | 55 Sandile | 85 Melitta |
| 26 Luanda | 56 Thabiso | 86 Desmond |
| 27 Precoucia | 57 Dimakatzo | 87 Siyabonga |
| 28 Thulani | 58 Tracy | 88 Nompumelelo |
| 29 Tebogo | 59 Kyaletu | 89 Zinhle |
| 30 Kholofelo | 60 Percy | 90 Shannel |

4. Interviews

Mr Diliza Lukhele, History Educator, Middelburg, 20 August 2008.
 Ms Rachel Maroos, History Educator, Middelburg, 2 December 2008.
 Mr Job Mathunyane, Deputy Headmaster, Witbank/Emalahleni, 28 April 2008.
 Ms Daphne Mngomazulu, History Educator, Middelburg, 6 March 2008.
 Ms Kenielwe Mosala, Curriculum Implementer, Witbank/Emalahleni, 7 May 2008.
 Mr Moses Nkhlemo, School Principal, Middelburg, 2 May 2008.
 Mr Ghys Romijn, School Principal, Middelburg, 2 December 2008.

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 2008.

6. E-mail correspondence

Buthelezi, C., e-mail correspondence, 28 May 2009.

Siebörger, R., e-mail correspondence, 25 August 2009.

APPENDIX A

SECONDARY SCHOOL HISTORY RESEARCH PROJECT

Researcher: Mr D Black

2008

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR EDUCATORS

Thank you very much for your kind participation in this research project, which is being conducted as part of a Master's degree dissertation, under the auspices of the History Department of the University of South Africa.

The aim of the research is to gather information about the state of history education in secondary schools in Mpumalanga, so as to be able to compare and contrast how history education was valued and perceived during the apartheid era, and how it has, and is being valued and perceived during our new democratic dispensation.

Please be free to answer the questions as openly and honestly as you can. Your input is greatly valued. We all share the same vision of making history education in secondary schools the vibrant, positive subject it can be.

BIOGRAPHICAL INFORMATION

All information gathered will be treated in strict confidence, and will not be revealed to any person whatsoever.

If you cannot answer all the questions because you did not teach history so long ago, just ignore those questions and answer the questions which you can.

1. Year of Birth:
2. Education (Please write down your highest qualification):
3. How many years of post-school history education do you have?
4. How many years of teaching experience do you have?
5. How many years of history teaching experience do you have?
6. Name of the school you teach at:
7. In which circuit is your school located?
8. Name the nearest town to your school, or the town in which it is located:
9. When was the school established? (State year):
10. Is your school a combined, or secondary school?
11. How many learners presently attend your school?
12. Write down the Matriculation pass rate at your school over the past five years:
13. Write down the pass rate for Grade 12 history over the last five years:
14. For how many years has history been taught at your school?
15. Write a few sentences in which you describe the economic circumstances of learners attending your school:
16. Write down some reasons why you believe learners at your school study history as a choice subject (i.e. from Grade 10):
17. Write down some reasons why you believe learners at your school do not study history as a choice subject (i.e. from Grade 10):
18. Write down what you consider the attitude of senior staff at your school is toward the subject of history (e.g. the S.M.T. and Principal):
19. Write down what you consider the attitude of your learners' parents is toward the subject of history:
20. List the years when you taught history at secondary schools (e.g. 1966–1994):

21. Name of school/s:
22. Write down how you as a history educator felt about the history syllabi which were offered during the era of apartheid education:
23. Write down how you felt about the history textbooks which were available at this time. Were they easily available? Were they politically biased?
24. To what extent did you make use of textbooks in your history teaching?
25. Did you as a history teacher feel pressured or even intimidated by the government, and educational authorities of the time when it came to the presentation of your history lessons? If so, feel free to list examples. Try to provide dates (the year will do) so far as you can:
26. Did you as a history educator ever feel pressure from learners, when it came to the content of the syllabus, or the presentation of your history lessons? If so, feel free to list examples. Try to provide dates, so far as you can:
27. In your opinion how was the subject history taught in secondary schools before the Soweto Uprising of 1976? Try to refer to both content and presentation, if possible. Note: You may not have taught history before 1976. If so, you may ignore the question, or you may be able to relate the experiences of other educators you know of:
28. Did the teachings of the Black Consciousness Movement, as propounded by Steve Biko have any influence upon history teaching at your school/s?
29. What do you believe was the attitude of **most** history teachers before 1976 to:
 - a) the government:
 - b) the history syllabus:
 - c) the learners:
 - d) the educational authorities, e.g. the Bantu Education Department, the Department of Education and Training:
30. How did your history learners during the apartheid era react specifically to the sections of the syllabus which dealt with South African history?
31. Describe how you as an educator during the apartheid era taught the sections of the syllabus which dealt with South African history:
32. Describe the methods of teaching that you used to teach history during the apartheid era:

33. What language was used in your school/s as a medium of instruction for history?
34. Please outline the difficulties (if any) this may have presented to either yourself or to your learners:
35. Did you find any way of resisting apartheid history education in your school/s and classroom? If so, please outline what you were able to do:
36. Outline what your own situation at your school/s was during the apartheid years when it came to matters such as educational resources (e.g. libraries, availability of audio-visual equipment, availability of classrooms, etc.):
37. Describe the present situation of your school regarding educational resources such as libraries, availability of audio-visual equipment, availability of classrooms, etc.):
38. Did history learners in your school/s ever have opportunities for historical educational enrichment? (e.g. field trips, historical excursions, etc.) Outline what such activities were, or, if there were no such activities, outline why you believe they did not take place:
39. Describe the present situation at your school regarding opportunities for historical enrichment. (e.g. field trips, historical excursions, etc.) Outline what such activities are, or, if there are no such activities, outline why you believe they are not taking place:
40. Did the student (and community) unrest of the 1980s affect or change your approach to history teaching?
41. Did the student (and community) unrest of the 1980s in your opinion effect any changes in the learners' perception of and reaction to history education in secondary schools? If so, outline how you think things changed:
42. Did 'People's Education' have any influence upon the teaching offered at your school/s during the 1980s? If so, outline what impact it made:
43. Describe how you feel about the new GET (social sciences) history syllabi presently in use at secondary schools (Grades 7 to 9):
 - a) Strengths of the GET (SS) syllabi:
 - b) Weaknesses of the GET (SS) syllabi:
44. Do you think that the social science history component is better or

worse than that which was offered by human social sciences? If you do not know, please say so.

45. Describe how you feel about the new FET history syllabi presently in use at secondary schools (Grades 10–12):
 - a) Strengths of the FET syllabi:
 - b) Weaknesses of the FET syllabi:
46. Do you think that the GET and FET approach to history education has had a positive effect upon learners' and educators' perceptions toward and attitudes to the subject of history?:
47. Describe the teaching methods you use to teach history to your learners:
48. Do you believe that you as a history educator are receiving enough support from the Department of Education? Please support your answer:
49. Write down what you consider the value of history as a secondary school subject was during the apartheid era:
50. Write down what you consider to be the value of history as a secondary school subject today:
51. Please feel free to write down any other information about your own experiences of **teaching** history over the years that has not been covered by the above questions, or which you feel has not been covered in enough detail. Your recollections and memories are a living history which will help to bring light to the practice of history teaching in South Africa since 1948.

Write as much as you want to, because the material you write will have a high value when it comes to the findings of this study.

52. Please be so kind as to write down your own recollections of what it was like for **you** as a **learner** of history, especially during the apartheid years. How did you and your fellow learners react to apartheid history syllabuses? How did you react to the teaching of South African history during those times? How did you respond to your educators? Ignore this question if you didn't take history at school.

Thank you so much for your kind assistance in completing this questionnaire.

APPENDIX B

SECONDARY SCHOOL HISTORY RESEARCH PROJECT

Researcher: Mr D Black

2008

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR NON-HISTORY LEARNERS

Thank you for your kind assistance in completing this brief questionnaire.

Your responses will be used to help compile a Master's degree dissertation done under the auspices of the University of South Africa, about history teaching in Mpumalanga secondary schools. Please answer the questions as honestly as possible. **The answers that you give will be kept confidential.** Remember that there are no *right* or *wrong* answers in this survey.

1. Write down your year of birth:
2. Write down the name of the school which you are attending:
3. Write down the Grade which you are in:
4. Please write down the reasons why you are *not* taking History as a subject.
Be completely honest in your answer.
5. Write down what you think might be *good* about taking history as a subject at school. If you think that there is *nothing* good about the study of history, please say so:
6. Write down what you think your parents/guardians feel about the study of history at school. If you don't know, please say so:

Thank you so much for your kind assistance in completing this questionnaire.

APPENDIX C

SECONDARY SCHOOL HISTORY RESEARCH PROJECT

Researcher: Mr D Black

2008

QUESTIONNAIRE FOR HISTORY LEARNERS

Thank you for your kindness in completing this questionnaire. Your answers will be used to help compile a Master's degree dissertation, done under the auspices of the University of South Africa, about history teaching in Mpumalanga secondary schools.

What you write will be kept confidential. Please write down your real feelings and opinions. There are no *right* or *wrong* answers in this survey. Your assistance is very greatly appreciated and valued.

1. Write down your year of birth:
2. Write down the name of the school which you are attending:
3. Write down the Grade which you are in:
4. List the reasons why you chose to study history after Grade 9. Be completely honest in your answers:
5. Write down the ways in which you think that your history studies at school might help you in your adult life or in your career. If you can't think of any, do not write anything:
6. Describe how history is taught to you at your school:
7. Outline the things which you **like** about studying history:
8. Outline the things which you **don't like** about studying history:
9. Write down the things which you feel are **most** helpful or interesting in your history courses at school:

10. Write down the things which you feel are **not** helpful or interesting in your history courses at school:
11. Write down the things which you did not study, but which you feel should have been included in your history courses at school. If you can't think of any, do not write anything:
12. To what extent do you think it is necessary to study the past? Write down your views:
13. Does the past teach us anything meaningful? Write down your views:
14. Write down what you think the obstacles are in your study of history. These could be anything from having no electricity at home, to a poor relationship with your teacher, or other learners in class. If there are no real obstacles which hinder your history studies, do not write anything. Remember, all your answers are confidential.
15. Write down what you think the value or benefit is of studying history as a school subject today: