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# Analysing historical enquiry in school history textbooks

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## Abstract

*According to the South African curriculum, two of the aims of learning history are to learn the process of historical enquiry and to understand historical concepts such as the use of historical sources and examining evidence. This paper explores how a sample of seven social science South African textbooks uses historical sources to enable learners to learn the process of historical enquiry. The findings show that there were no primary sources presented in the Grade 3–6 textbooks, although there were many generic pictures and texts. There is an increase in the number and use of sources in the Grade 7 to Grade 9 textbooks, but issues of contextualisation and lack of provenance remain a challenge to the process of developing historical thinking. ‘Pseudo sources’ (a picture or text recreated to look like a primary source) and generic sources of information do not support historical thinking. The multi-perspective approach, which means understanding the diverse ways of interpreting the same event, is poorly developed in the lower grade textbooks but became more evident in the Grade 9 books. Thus, specialised procedural knowledge is only introduced to learners in Grade 9, suggesting that the primary school textbooks analysed in this study are not fully supporting the aims of the official history curriculum.*

**Keywords:** *Historical enquiry, historical thinking, history textbooks, South Africa, sources, multi-perspective approach*

## 1. Introduction

According to the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (DBE, 2011), school history in South Africa is a process of inquiry, which involves asking questions about the past. Learners should be able to undertake a process of historical enquiry, interpret historical sources and evidence and understand that there are many ways of interpreting past events. When learners develop an awareness of different views, they become sensitised to the methodology of the historian (Tosh & Lang, 2006). Parkes & Donnelly (2014: 113) identify this methodology as the complex process of historical enquiry, which requires the analysis and interrogation of individual sources of evidence so that meaning can be synthesised and new knowledge crafted and integrated into existing narratives. To “enquire historically” means that learners learn to engage in purposeful and reflective mental activities that focus on the strategic exploration of multiple perspectives through the evaluation of different perspectives to generate a range of interpretations and understandings (ibid).

The purpose of this paper is to describe how a sample of seven social science textbooks (one textbook from each grade, from grade 3 to grade 9) develop historical enquiry, with a specific focus on the use of historical sources and evidence. Since the history curriculum requires that learners gain an understanding of the past by interpreting historical sources and considering multiple perspectives, this study seeks to understand how selected South African textbooks use sources to help learners make sense of the past.

## **2. Literature review**

### **2.1 School history as historical thinking**

The traditional approach to the study of history focused on 'knowing' chronologically presented facts and history was presented as the uncontested version of 'what happened' in the past. An alternative approach emphasised the "doing" of history, which was epitomised in Britain by the 1970's constructivist model of history that centred on the development of historical skills and learners were taught to embrace historical ways of thinking (Bertram, 2012). Seixas (2006) describes historical thinking as having six structural and procedural benchmarks that are to establish historical significance, use primary source evidence, identify continuity and change, analyse cause and consequence, adopt an historical perspective and understand the moral dimension of historical interpretation. Thus, the ability to use primary source evidence is an essential component of historical thinking. If a curriculum aims to develop historical thinking, then learners should constructively learn how to use evidence to reach nuanced conclusions. Barton (2005) emphasises that engaging with historical sources enables learners to understand how historical knowledge is constructed. However, this is not always the case in practice. Stradling (2016) maintains that the design of some textbooks in Europe simply requires students to extract information from a source rather than analyse it for perspective and interpretation. He has found instances where students formulate interpretations based on the limited evidence presented in textbooks.

A multi-perspective approach entails the provision of a number of sources relating to the same event from different points of view to provide a basis for comparison. The historical sources enable the learner to make a judgement or adopt a position with regard to the historical event they are studying. As the process of investigating and analysing artefacts from the past is essential to constructing a reliable narrative or story, the artefacts constitute the evidence or contemporary proof of a time or event. Both primary and secondary historical sources are products from various times, people and spaces (contexts) which enable the construction of historical knowledge. Howell and Prevenier (2001) describe these "artefacts" left by the past, as testimonies of witness to the past.

Van Drie and Van Boxtel (2008) argue that many scholars have linked historical thinking and reasoning to historical consciousness or literacy. The sourcing, corroboration and contextualisation of these artefacts or evidence are vital components of the methodology employed by historians (VanSledright, 2004). The acquisition of these skills is necessary for learners to develop historical literacy. Sourcing refers to the evaluation of sources and other historical documents, requiring learners to evaluate and interrogate the origin, reliability and value of the sources while understanding their purpose. "Corroboration" requires learners to review, crosscheck and examine facts within the sources with other historical sources and documents and so develop multi-perspectives. Contextualisation locates the events in a larger context by dating the event and indicating who produced the source and for what purpose.

These are vital details, which enable the reader to detect bias and evaluate the reliability of sources, and thus construct reliable narratives. Collectively, the process is referred to as the 'provenance of sources' (Havekes, Coppen, Boxtel & Imants, 2009). Tosh and Lang (2006) point out that the external and internal critique of sources is equally important. External criticism is directed at establishing a document's authenticity, who the author is, the place of publication and the date of writing (Is it a genuine source?). Internal criticism is levelled at the content of the document, which needs examination for consistency (Is it a reliable source?).

Primary sources are created at the time of the event, or close to it, while secondary sources are created a great deal of time away from the event or issue it describes or by people who were not participants in or eyewitnesses of the event (Howell & Prevenier, 2001). Both provide evidence, which learners can use to understand the past. They can appear as a document, interview transcript, photograph, painting, book, journal entry or some other format in the textbooks. Koeller (2015) argues that the classification of primary or secondary sources can be subjective and change depending on circumstances and new evidence. Therefore, the provenance of a source, which would include establishing the details regarding the context in which it was created, the evidence around the reasons for its production, such as who produced it, for what purpose and with what intention, remains the fundamental skill of the historian. Since schoolchildren are not able to establish provenance as historians can, it is vital that textbooks provide this information.

While the modern discipline of history rests on the constant and precise critical reassessment of the original sources (Tosh & Lang, 2006:58), we take note of the specialist structure or the nature of historical knowledge. Dean (2004) advances the view that historical knowledge is composed of two inter-linked strands called 'the process' (procedural knowledge) and "the content" (substantive knowledge). Procedural knowledge is the 'know-how', or methodology, of the historian while the substantive knowledge is the 'know-that', the statements of fact or concepts of history. Learners need to acquire both kinds of knowledge to be inducted into the discipline of history and to develop ways of thinking historically (Bertram, 2008). Sophisticated historical thinkers, according to Bertram (2012), are those who have successfully mastered both the substantive knowledge of the past and the procedures that are used to construct and develop an understanding of the concepts that make sense of that substantive knowledge.

## 2.2 Sources in history textbooks

Many studies focus on the use of sources in history textbooks. Havekes *et al.* (2009) describe how Dutch students were taught to acquire the heuristic skills of an historian (sourcing, corroboration and contextualisation). However, while they learnt 'tricks' of sourcing, they lacked the understanding of historical meta-concepts like time, change, cause, evidence and account. Dutch students, at that time, also did not learn much in the way of historical facts and chronology. American learners, by contrast, acquired many facts, but were not able to use the ways of the historian when analysing sources (Wineburg, 2001). Thus, in the 1990's, criticism levelled at Dutch history teaching focusing on the over-emphasis on skills. This resulted in curriculum change in 2007 that removed the thematic narratives focusing on skills and concentrated instead on a chronological frame of reference consisting of 49 characteristic developments of ten eras going back to pre-history.

Ramoroka and Engelbrecht (2015) emphasise the source-based approach used in the writing of history textbooks in South Africa. They emphasise "doing history" as one of the

critical elements of historical thinking and argue for the cognitive analysis of primary sources using the three heuristic skills of “sourcing”, “corroboration” and “contextualisation” to evaluate the authenticity and trustworthiness of sources as historical sources.

In South Africa, where access to classroom materials is limited, the history textbook remains a powerful tool for teaching and learning. The Minister of Basic Education, Angela Motshekga, maintains that a textbook is the most “effective tool to ensure consistency, coverage, appropriate pacing and better quality in terms of instruction and content” (Motshekga, 2009:1). According to Epstein (2012), some teachers consider history textbooks complete and authoritative because experts write them. However, the presentation of information in textbooks is sometimes without reference so learners come to see history as a closed story when the evidence of how the story was created is suppressed (Wineburg, 2001).

Research has shown that textbooks continue to exert a powerful influence on history teaching. In the American context, Romanowski (2014) argues that textbooks still have the power to shape the way that students see the world. He argues that textbooks are as universal as formal mass schooling and that textbooks the world over are not just pedagogical instruments but are intensely political documents reflecting the vision of people, their position in the world and their aspirations. Tanner (2017) suggests that most teachers continue to rely heavily on the textbook as their core teaching resource. He states that the single most important investment poor nations can make for improving the education of their children lies in increasing textbook availability and quality.

### **2.3 Curriculum changes in South Africa and the impact on school history**

Post-apartheid South Africa heralded a series of curriculum changes for all school subjects, including history and its textbooks. It is unsurprising that these textbooks have become increasingly scrutinised over the shape of its new history, its representation of race, gender, power and other issues. Apartheid-era textbooks promoted racist and sexist content by focussing on facts about Afrikaner heroes, Afrikaner nationalism and the ideology of apartheid (du Preez, 1983). The shift to democracy brought about Outcomes-based education (OBE) in the form of *Curriculum 2005*. This curriculum shift in 1997 resulted in the backgrounding of content knowledge while learning outcomes were foregrounded, together with strong knowledge integration and a focus on generic skills (Hoadley, 2018). History was removed as a separate subject in the Foundation and General Education phases and integrated with geography, as Human and Social Science (HSS). The comprehensive reliance on textbooks was also discouraged (Weldon, 2005).

A curriculum review in 2000 led to the adoption of the *Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R–9 and the National Curriculum Statement Grades 10–12 (2002)*. The teaching methods promoted by the RNCS and the NCS required a greater focus on content and textbooks. Outcomes were renamed as assessment standards and recommended content topics were included. Finally, in 2011, the *Curriculum and Assessment and Policy Statements (CAPS)* for all subjects, provided history with a clear specification of what content is to be taught on a term-by-term basis, also stipulating that each child should have access to a textbook in the classroom (DBE, 2011). There is a clear policy on the selection and financing of textbooks from a National Catalogue.

Most South African public schools cannot afford learning packs of historical sources for learners. Teachers find sources in the history textbook but may also use the internet,

newspapers and other Department of Education resources. Despite the social transformation alluded to in policy statements, the access to high-quality learning materials by all learners of history remains unequal, as many schools have no internet connectivity, or even computers, to make use of the extensive resources on the internet. Since Crawford (2000) argues that school textbooks are the dominant definition of the curriculum in schools, we expect these texts will select, structure and sequence learning experiences for learners, and so support historical inquiry. The focus of this study is to explore how the selected textbooks use sources to develop historical thinking and a multi-perspective approach to an understanding of the past.

### 3. Theoretical framework of the study

Dean (2009) describes the nature of historical knowledge as comprising both procedural and substantive knowledge. Together with Bernstein's (1971) distinctions between everyday knowledge and school knowledge, these concepts form the theoretical framework of the study (Bharath, 2016). The 'Domains of practice for school history' (Bertram, 2012) is used as an analytic tool to identify domain-specific knowledge and skills used in textbook sources. Bertram argues that historical thinking can be developed when both procedural and substantive knowledge is specialised with regard to the discipline of history.

Bernstein (1999) distinguishes between horizontal and vertical discourses. The "horizontal discourse" describes a set of strategies that are local, segmentally organised, context specific and dependent. It is likely to be oral, tacit and multi-layered. Conversely, his 'vertical discourse' refers to knowledge that is coherent, explicit, systematically principled and independent of its context. Bernstein (1971) further distinguishes between everyday knowledge and school knowledge, arguing that an emphasis on either of these two knowledge types in pedagogy or curricula can have different results in the classroom. He classifies school knowledge as formal and specialised, while everyday knowledge is more personal and localised, where the context of the home plays a significant role in developing what the learner knows before they come to school. Everyday knowledge is tacit, context-bound and is specific to particular contexts (Bernstein, 1999). School knowledge, conversely, is explicit and hierarchically organised with a systematically principled structure. School knowledge (categorised as a vertical discourse), and everyday knowledge (categorised as a horizontal discourse), are differently acquired and structured (Bernstein, 1996).

Bertram (2012) builds on Bernstein's ideas of knowledge types and structures and focuses on the specialist nature of history knowledge in the field of history education. She argues that the discipline has both specialised substantive knowledge and specialised procedural knowledge and that when the discipline of history is recontextualised into the school curriculum, textbook writers and teachers vary the degree of specialisation of both substantive and procedural knowledge to make knowledge accessible to learners. Bertram (2012) develops a language of the description for the practice of school history as presented in Figure 1 below:

| <b>Substantive knowledge</b> | <b>Procedural knowledge</b>  |  |
|------------------------------|--|--|
|                              | <i>Specialised (I+)</i>  | <i>Generic (I-)</i>  |
| <i>Specialised (I+)</i>      | <b>Esoteric</b><br>(content clearly historical; language specialised, and specialised procedural knowledge that fosters historical thinking)   | <b>Expressive</b><br>(content clearly historical; language specialised but generic procedural knowledge)   |
| <i>Generic (I-)</i>          | <b>Descriptive</b><br>(content knowledge not specialised to history, perhaps located in the everyday; language unspecialised; specialised procedural knowledge that fosters historical thinking) | <b>Public</b><br>(content knowledge not specialised to history, perhaps located in the everyday; language unspecialised; generic procedural knowledge) |

**Figure 1:** Domains of practice for school history (Bertram, 2012:434)

In the public domain, a task or text would have neither specialised procedural knowledge nor specialised substantive knowledge. Here is often a good place for a teacher to start teaching new concepts, by drawing on more everyday and generic knowledge. However, knowledge needs to become more specialised in order to induct learners into historical thinking. This means that tasks or texts need to show both specialised procedural and specialised substantive knowledge, which would be located within the esoteric domain. Educators and textbook writers can use these domains of school history practice to make conscious decisions about how to move their learners into the specialised domain where they begin to develop an “historical gaze”, thus gaining epistemological access into powerful knowledge structures (Young, 2016). For learners to develop an “historical gaze”, mastery over substantive history content knowledge and procedural knowledge are required.

The study uses the domains in Figure 1 as an analytic tool to code sources and their accompanying activities in textbooks.

#### 4. Research design and methodology

The methodology is that of content analysis, using both qualitative and quantitative analysis to understand how sources support historical enquiry in textbooks. The unit of analysis is the source and its activity. Where the activity is absent, how the source is used in the text would signal procedural knowledge. The name of the textbook, the grade, the number of the source, the type of the source, the nature of the skill acquired, the development of a perspective in a moral sense or use of evidence were recorded for each task.

Information in the textbooks labelled as a “source” was analysed. The content of the source (its text or activity and how a source was being used) was coded according to the quadrants of the Esoteric, descriptive, expressive and public domains (see Figure 1). Strong “institutionalisation” (I++) refers to substantive and procedural knowledge being specialised

(content clearly historical, language specialised and procedures specialised) which is the gateway for developing specialised knowledge. Weak “institutionalisation” (I- -) would then refer to the converse. It is possible to gauge by the number of counts, how each source was categorised into the domains and to judge how well contextualised they were and whether provenance was adequate. Although the domains do not specifically describe provenance, the Esoteric Domain deals with procedures, language and content, which are specialised with regard to history. The specialised procedures mentioned require the use of primary sources that allow the construction of stories of the past. The information, which accompanies the sources, provides contextualisation and provenance. If the sources are well contextualised, it is expected that learners will be able to use this data to construct a story based on evidence. If not, then the source would not constitute historical ‘evidence’ and would not support the fostering of historical thinking. Since it was not possible to analyse the entire textbook, a chapter from each book was selected. Table 1 below lists the topics analysed on the history of a South African past, from its early inhabitants to democracy:

**Table 1:** The titles of the chapters that were analysed in each textbook

| Topic  | Grade |
|--|-------|
| 1. About me  | 3     |
| 2. Local History   | 4     |
| 3. Hunter-Gatherers and Herders in South Africa                | 5     |
| 4. An African Kingdom long ago in Southern Africa's Mapungubwe | 6     |
| 5. The Colonisation of the Cape in the 17th and 18th centuries | 7     |
| 6. The Mineral Revolution in South Africa                      | 8     |
| 7. Turning points in South African history 1960, 1976, 1994.   | 9     |

There are minimal ethical considerations since textbooks are already in the public domain. The national Department of Education in South Africa selects a range of textbooks from those submitted by publishers to appear on the list of approved textbooks entitled *Learning and Teaching Support Material. Textbooks catalogue for 2014 Academic Year. General education and Training (GET): Grades 4–7*. A separate catalogue for higher grades is also available. Teachers may choose any textbook from the catalogue. The seven textbooks were selected, as they are popular choices at a number of primary and secondary schools in Pietermaritzburg, KwaZulu-Natal. The popularity of the books was established by the first author’s attendance at teacher development workshops, meetings and networking.

Placement on the Department catalogue may suggest that the books are compliant with the official curriculum. However, only content analysis can reveal to what extent these textbooks support the development of historical enquiry. This study cannot claim generalisability to all history textbooks available but it is a well-defined sample, purposefully selected because of their current use in many schools. Studies that are more extensive would have to be done in order to generalise to all Social Science textbooks.

## 5. Findings

While there is an increase in the number of sources and levels of engagement with sources in specialised ways in the higher grades, the table below shows that there is no engagement with sources in the lower grades. The key findings of the analysis are shown in Table 2:

**Table 2:** Number of sources institutionalised in the four domains in each textbook

|                                | Gr. 3     | Gr. 4     | Gr. 5     | Gr. 6       | Gr. 7       | Gr. 8        | Gr. 9        |
|--------------------------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-------------|-------------|--------------|--------------|
| <b>Esoteric Domain</b>         | 0<br>(0%) | 0<br>(0%) | 0<br>(0%) | 0<br>(0%)   | 1<br>(20%)  | 2<br>(9%)    | 13<br>(72%)  |
| <b>Expressive Domain</b>       | 0<br>(0%) | 0<br>(0%) | 0<br>(0%) | 1<br>(100%) | 4<br>(80%)  | 15<br>(68%)  | 5<br>(28%)   |
| <b>Descriptive Domain</b>      | 0<br>(0%) | 0<br>(0%) | 0<br>(0%) | 0<br>(0%)   | 0<br>(0%)   | 0<br>(0%)    | 0<br>(0%)    |
| <b>Public Domain</b>           | 0<br>(0%) | 0<br>(0%) | 0<br>(0%) | 0<br>(0%)   | 0<br>(0%)   | 5<br>(23%)   | 0<br>(0%)    |
| <b>Total Number of Sources</b> | 0<br>(0%) | 0<br>(0%) | 0<br>(0%) | 1<br>(100%) | 5<br>(100%) | 22<br>(100%) | 18<br>(100%) |

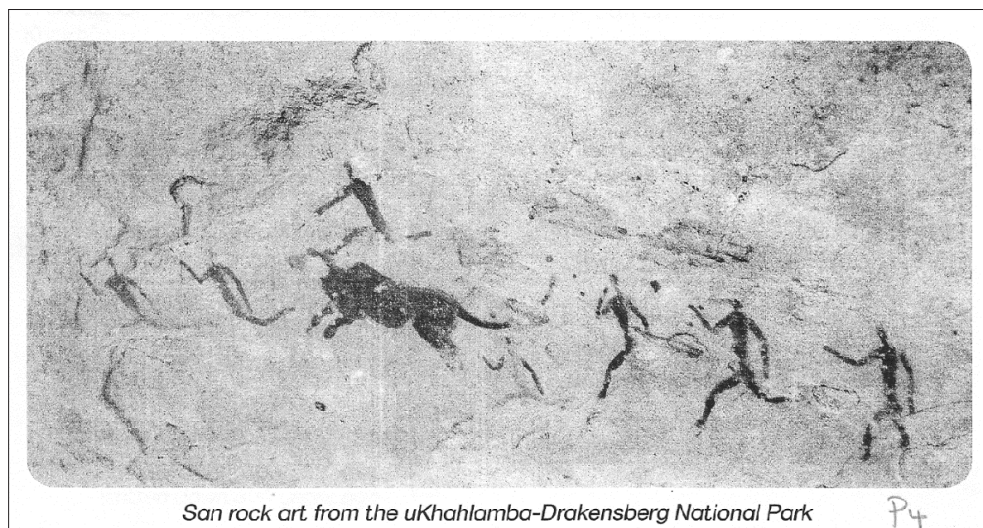
The table shows that there are no sources provided in the topics analysed in the Grade 3, 4 and 5 textbooks, only one in Grade 6 and five in Grade 7. It is only in high school, which is Grade 8 and 9 that learners start to engage with sources in textbooks. The findings are presented under the following themes:

### 5.1 Examples of sources and provenance

The word ‘source’ is first used in the grade 6 textbook in the intermediate phase. This does not imply that there is not any material in the lower grades that could assist in the understanding of how information from the past can be known. These ideas are presented to the learner in the lower grades in different ways in the textbooks, but they are not labelled as sources. The following example shows the San rock art from the UKhahlamba-Drakensberg National Park, which is an important existing historical source. It is a primary source, but is not labelled as a “source” in the textbook. The activity asks what animal is depicted in the painting and why people in the painting are running. Learners are also requested to identify materials that the San could have used to paint and to provide reasons as to why parts of the animal’s body was missing, linking the reasons with the passing of time and paint quality. Thus, the learners are engaging with how one interprets information from an important primary source that teaches them about the lifestyle of the San.

Retrieved from *Social Sciences. Solutions for all*. Grade 5. Learner’s Book, p. 28





**Figure 2:** An example of information that is not labelled as a source

In contrast to this, there are examples of texts or pictures being labelled as a source, but there is no, or very little provenance provided. Figure 3 shows a picture of a slave working in a field that is labelled as a 'source'. Since learners are not provided with any information as to the date when the picture was drawn, by whom it was drawn, and for what purpose, it is not possible to engage with it as an historical source. The task required is generic: to simply "notice" some things of interest.

Retrieved from *Social Sciences. Solutions for all*. Grade 7. Learner's Book, p. 129

**Classroom activity 6.5**

Work with a partner.

Look at the picture of the slave working in the field in **Source B**. Tell your partner what you notice about the picture.

**Source B**

*This picture shows a slave working in the field. He is watched by a farmer or a company official.*

**Figure 3:** An example of a "generic source of information"

Another example of a source that is presented with incomplete information is seen in the topic dealing with the Sharpeville Massacre. There is insufficient information with regard to the origins of the source, which is vital when attempting to establish the credibility of the source, in order to use the information provided by it as evidence the construction of an interpretation

of the event. Figure 4 shows why a source (Source C) with incomplete provenance challenges the development of learners' procedural knowledge.

Retrieved from *Social Sciences. Solutions for all*. Grade 9. Learner's Book, pp. 207–209.

**Classroom activity 8.5**


Work in a small group. Study Sources C–G. Copy and fill in this table:

|  | Source C | Source D | Source E | Source F | Source G |
|--|----------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| What does it tell you about the mood of the crowd?                   |          |          |          |          |          |
| What does it tell you about the reasons the police started shooting? |          |          |          |          |          |
| What does it tell you about whether the crowd was armed?             |          |          |          |          |          |
| Is this source reliable? Give reasons.                               |          |          |          |          |          |

**Source C**

*This photo was taken as the police fired on the crowds.*



**Figure 4:** Source C with incomplete information coded in the expressive domain

Source C is part of an activity involving four other sources. Only Source C is shown and described here. Source C above is a photo taken of the crowd at Sharpeville, 21 March 1960, where police fired on and killed 69 people at what was supposed to be a peaceful demonstration. The learner is required to study the picture and then describe the mood of the people, the reasons for the police shooting, and to indicate, from observation of the photo, whether the crowd was armed. They are then to determine, with reasons, whether the source is reliable.

Information about the identity of the photographer and the purpose for which it was taken is fundamental to establishing the authenticity of the photo. However, this information is not provided. If it was a reporter, then the name of the publication should have appeared. The lack of detail around the photo makes it difficult to judge its reliability. The source is therefore coded in the Expressive Domain. While it has historical content, provenance is incomplete.

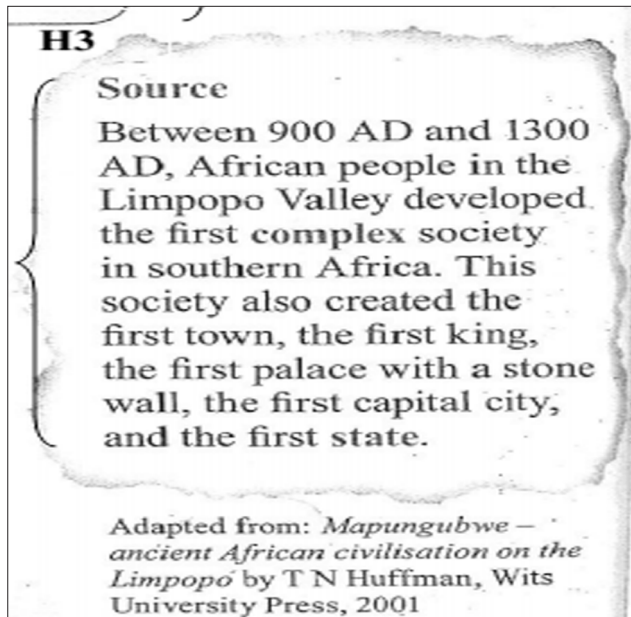
### 5.2 Use of historical sources in the grade 3–7 textbooks

Findings indicate that learners in lower grades are not required to interrogate sources for credibility nor write explanations about their reliability. Tasks are generic, which does not support the development of multi-perspectivity and the process of historical enquiry.

There is a general lack of provenance in the grade 3, 4, 5, 6 and 7 textbooks. For example, in the grade 6 textbook, only one segment of information (Figure 4) is identified as a source in

the chapter, and its categorization in the Expressive Domain indicates that the language and content of the text is historical while the source is used in generic ways.

Retrieved from *Social Sciences. Solutions for all. Grade 6. Learner's Book*, p. 24



**Figure 5:** A source coded within the expressive domain

This source does not play a specific learning role. Learners merely read the source without engaging in activity. The text is labelled a 'source', but the information is from a secondary source, a book entitled *Mapungubwe - ancient African civilisation on the Limpopo*, authored by T. N. Huffman, and published in 2001. It appears like some weathered primary source (the edges of the paper are depicted as frayed with age or somehow burnt), providing details on the earliest African society in southern Africa. The author creatively scaffolds the idea of history, age and the notion of time.

### 5.3 Use of sources in the grade 8 and 9 textbooks

There is an increase in the number of sources used in Grade 8 and Grade 9 compared to the earlier grades. Grade 8 and Grade 7 show that 68 percent and 80 percent, respectively, of the sources are coded in the expressive domain. Sources are utilised in very generic ways and the focus is on substantive knowledge rather than procedural knowledge. Grade 8 has more instances of coding in the Expressive Domain indicating an emphasis on the extraction of information, comprehension and other generic tasks.

In grade 9, 72 per cent of the tasks are in the Esoteric Domain, indicating that sources are used in specialised ways. It is the only grade where sources are interrogated for trustworthiness and where there are increased references to primary sources. Learners are required to compare primary sources, create explanations and question the credibility of sources.

Retrieved from *Social Sciences. Solutions for all. Grade 7. Learner's Book*, p. 125

**Source A**

Jan van Riebeeck wrote a journal about life at the Dutch settlement. In this extract from his journal, he writes about a meeting with the Khoikhoi leaders about the land.

They said, 'If you get many cattle, you come and take over our pasture with them, and then say the land is not wide enough for us both! What is more fair – for the natural owner of the land to leave, or the foreign invader?' They insisted on this point, but we told them that they had lost the land in war, so they could not expect to get it back. We were going to keep it.

(Source: Adapted from: *The Sahara is the biggest desert in the world. Africa One Continent Many Worlds.* California Academy of Sciences. Available from: <http://www.calacademy.org/exhibits/africa/exhibit/sahara/>)

**Classroom activity 6.3**

Work with a partner and read **Source A**. Look up any words you do not understand in the dictionary. When you understand the source well, answer these questions.

1. Who wrote this source?
2. What point were the Khoikhoi leaders making? Use your own words.
3. Van Riebeeck tells the Khoikhoi leaders that they have lost the land in war so they will not get it back. Do you think this is fair? (In your answer, you can also think about how the Khoikhoi got the land.)

**Figure 6:** A journal extract (Source A) coded within the esoteric domain

This extract from the journal of Jan van Riebeeck is coded in the esoteric domain. This is because the learner needs to identify the writer of the source, to interpret the agenda of the Khoikhoi and to judge the fairness of the claim made by Jan van Riebeeck (that the land belonged to the Dutch because of their victory in the war). The content is historical, the language specialised and the specialised procedural knowledge fosters historical thinking.

When the provenance (the origin, author and purpose) of a source is not provided, this restricts high level and historical questioning on the source. While the grade 8 and 9 textbooks provide more information on the source and allow for contestation, some of the details remain sketchy, which makes it difficult to determine whether they are primary sources. Figure 7 is an example of one of these challenges.

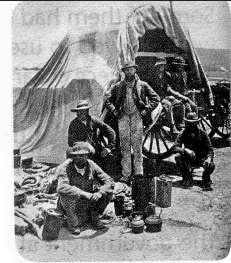
Retrieved from *Social Sciences. Solutions for all*. Grade 7. Learner's Book, p. 140

**Source E**

In this extract, a modern historian describes how difficult it was for the trekboers to travel.

Travelling by ox wagon was slow, uncomfortable and tiring for the driver and passengers. Travellers averaged only six hours a day because it was difficult to cross rivers, the roads were rough, and they had to stop often.

All the passes over the mountains were very difficult to use. They could damage the wagons badly, breaking their wheels against the rocks or sinking them into the sand. The narrow pass was made worse by thick plants. On many occasions, travellers would have to unpack and take apart their wagons and then carry their goods and food through the kloof.



*These pictures show us what some parts of life were like for trekboers.*

(Source: Adapted from Giliomee, H. and Mbenga, B. (2007). *New History of South Africa*. Cape Town: Tafelberg. Page 66.)

**Classroom activity 6.12**

Work with a partner and answer these questions.

1. Look at the pictures in **Source D**. Discuss everything you see in each picture.
2. Read **Source E**. Make sure you understand all the words and what the source is about. Write a point-form summary of the source in your own words.

**Figure 7:** An extract (Source 5) coded within the expressive domain

This is a secondary source because an historian wrote it. It is unlikely that the photograph with the source was taken at the time of the Great Trek, in the 1840s. It is a re-created and photographed scene (from a later era). However, learners are not given this information. This source was coded in the Expressive Domain because the content knowledge is clearly historical, the language is specialised, but the procedural knowledge is generic. The learner simply must write a point-form summary. Précis writing involves general skills that are not specialised to history. As a specialised history task, learners could write a diary entry of a settler, describing the conditions under which they lived as they trekked, as well as a description of the hardships they faced on the way. Learners could cite the reasons for trekker unhappiness and dissatisfaction with their previous abodes. A point-form summary hardly engages the learner in understanding or empathising with the conditions of the trekkers. The task fails to develop an appreciation of the period nor any empathetic understanding in the learner.

## 6. Discussion

The findings show that sources begin appearing in the Grade 8 textbook but are only engaged with properly in Grade 9. Most sources are coded in the expressive domain, indicating their generic use. Learners merely need to describe or summarise information. This study shows that the opportunity to develop historical thinking skills is not fully embraced in this sample of textbooks.

Evidence has a very definite purpose in history and ought to be used in specialised ways. It is difficult to establish, in the lower grade textbooks, whether the sources are primary or secondary because the textbooks make no distinction. Insufficient contextualisation and lack of classification of sources means that learners in Grade 3 to 7 do not engage explicitly with concept and nature of sources. Barton (2005) argues that children are unlikely to encounter

evidence or understand the role of evidence if there is no engagement with sources. Children must understand why evidence is needed as it is an approach grounded in the process of historical enquiry (Barton, 2001).

Thus, we argue that historical enquiry is constrained in the lower grades due to textbooks which lack rich and diverse source material which is well contextualised. In South Africa, history is a compulsory subject up to Grade 9, thereafter only about 20% of learners choose to take it as a subject in their final years in high school (DBE, 2011). Thus, most learners are unlikely to be 'prepared move beyond their own perspective' or to 'take part in collaborative discourse about the common good' (Barton & Levstik, 2004:260) because they are not taking part in meaningful historical inquiries and considering multiple viewpoints until they reach grade 9.

The textbooks do not present a range of perspectives on the topics at hand. Information is often presented as bulleted points, or as a completed story, leaving little room for contestation and engagement. "Evidence" of the past, which is presented as manufactured drawings or pseudo-sources, creates doubt about its authenticity. The textbooks do not support the teachers in their task to teach the skills of enquiry. Lack of provenance and sufficient contextual information as well as incomplete information about sources limits learners' ability to work like historians. Thus, these textbooks do not seem to fulfil the vision of the curriculum (DBE, 2011:10), namely that learners will develop "the ability to undertake a process of historical enquiry based on skills; and an understanding of historical concepts, including historical sources and evidence".

## 7. Conclusion

This study concludes that if learners are to learn the process of historical enquiry, then textbooks need to present a range of different interpretations of events, so that multi-perspectivity is developed. Textbooks need to focus on the nature and classification of sources and explicitly show these help us to make sense of the past. Access to a diverse and rich bank of historical sources that are appropriately contextualised would support learners in developing their understanding of the process of historical enquiry.

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