

# THE TEACHING OF HISTORY IN SCHOOLS, COLLEGES AND UNIVERSITIES

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The Department of History of the University of Bophuthatswana recognises that there are many grave problems inherent in the teaching of history in schools, colleges and universities in Southern Africa. Professional historians and history teachers have isolated a number of these problems for serious consideration and possible remedial action.

Our work with history students at under-graduate and post-graduate level has high-lighted a number of areas of concerns:

## 1. Text Books

- 1.1 There is little or no evidence of a more objective and creative approach to history. Books, especially for schools tend either to be copies of copies or to be so specialised as to be beyond the range of the target audience.
- 1.2 Many texts prescribed for South African schools are manipulative. Topics are dealt with in a politically and ideologically slanted way.
- 1.3 Frequently the texts imply that there is an inevitable pattern in history and that there is a

single correct version to be accepted without question.

- 1.4 The style and lay-out of many history text books are unimaginative and promote rote learning rather than creative thought and problem solving.

## 2. First Year Unibo students' reaction to school history as presently taught

- 2.1 History is politically dangerous at school level, because although the text-books are manifestly biased and often inaccurate, any disagreement will label the school pupil as a rabble rouser.
  - Become increasingly aware of the variety of interpretations of an historical event.
  - Carry out research projects and written assignments as independently and critically as possible.
  - Approach the teaching of history in a competent and creative manner.

## 4. The Special Project

- 4.1 Each student carries out one special research

project per year. Three of these projects focus on the teaching of a specific historical topic and one at senior level is first-hand research.

#### 4.2 **Scope of the topic includes:**

- Lesson plans suitable for a specific level of secondary class.
- Use of evidence, written, oral, etc.
- Selection of texts and criticism of available prescribed material.
- Separate reading list for pupils and teachers.
- Analysis of problems involved in teaching the topic in respect of school texts, availability of material, level of pupil ability, etc.
- Advice to a teacher who either does not have a good knowledge of the topic or whose approach is stereotyped.

- Preparation and use of audio-visual aids.
- Setting of examination paper to include questions at varying levels of complexity.

#### 4.3 **Oral and Local History**

For their final year students must present a project involving first-hand research, ideally in their own home area. This is done mainly during the vacation periods. The supervision is shared by all staff members and the finished projects are kept for future development at post-graduate level.

This project encourages students to put into practice the historical skills they have acquired. It also exposes them to the variety of evidence even in a micro-project, and it makes them aware of the many problems involved in historical research and writing.