

EMPIRICAL RESEARCH

WHAT OUR PUPILS' THINK

In the May issue we gave you a brief survey from the empirical study of the HSRC on the views of history teachers in our different schools. In this issue we wish to give you some impression of how pupils in standard 7 and 9 view history as a school subject. As in the previous article this will only contain samples from a rather elaborated report. We will focus and comment on those parts of tables that have a direct bearing on the point we wish to emphasise. We once again took the liberty to introduce our own observations and comments intermixed with that in the official HSRC publication.¹ Numbers of tables refer to the original numbers in the HSRC report. Full details of the samples used in the investigation are to be found on pages 179 (std 7) and 198 (std 9).

1. How seriously do std 7 pupils consider continuing with history in the higher standards and to what extent did they enjoy history in the lower standards?

TABLE 6.3 SUBJECTS PUPILS INTEND TAKING IN STANDARD 8

Subjects	Population group							
	Black		White		Coloured		Indian	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
English	265	86,32	389	97,49	299	90,61	287	92,88
Afrikaans	243	79,15	387	96,99	303	91,82	284	91,91
African language	192	62,54	11	2,76	8	2,42	3	0,97
Another language	19	6,18	56	14,04	26	7,88	25	8,09
Mathematics	192	62,54	312	78,20	200	60,61	231	74,76
Physical science	156	50,81	226	56,64	126	38,18	153	49,51
Biology	207	67,43	226	56,64	256	77,58	226	73,14
Biblical science	70	22,80	39	9,77	68	20,61	11	3,56
History	166	54,07	137	34,34	180	54,55	88	28,48
Geography	146	47,56	143	35,84	101	30,61	125	40,45
Commercial subjects	42	13,68	251	62,91	139	42,12	153	49,51
Technical subjects	19	6,19	52	13,03	19	5,76	74	23,95
Manual skills subjects	36	11,73	48	12,03	52	15,76	26	8,41
Art	24	7,82	45	11,28	20	6,06	23	7,44
Music	59	19,22	14	3,51	25	7,58	9	2,91
Ballet	9	2,93	1	0,25	6	1,82	1	0,32
Drama	40	13,03	17	4,26	20	6,06	15	4,85

The respondents were asked to indicate which of the subjects taken in Standard 7 they had liked most (Table 6.4) and which they liked least. Table 6.5 is not included because of its length. Compared to the other subjects offered, the response to history was encouraging.

TABLE 6.4 SUBJECT PUPILS LIKE MOST

Subjects	Population group							
	Black		White		Coloured		Indian	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No response	9	2,93	9	2,26	3	0,91	-	-
Geography	22	7,17	29	7,27	25	7,58	38	12,30
History	79	25,73	59	14,79	81	24,55	56	18,12
Mathematics	58	18,89	70	17,54	59	17,88	48	15,53
Accountancy	11	3,58	36	9,02	19	5,76	44	14,24
Agriculture	3	0,98	-	-	1	0,30	-	-
English	30	9,77	14	3,51	17	5,15	15	4,85
Physical science	25	8,14	24	6,02	33	10,00	29	9,39
Biology	35	11,40	60	15,04	23	6,97	2	0,65
Afrikaans	4	1,30	12	3,01	21	6,36	8	2,59
Woodwork/Metalwork	-	-	5	1,25	5	1,52	4	1,29
Domestic Science	4	1,30	11	2,76	13	3,94	5	1,62
Business Economics	4	1,30	10	2,51	22	6,67	2	0,65
Art	-	-	20	5,01	2	0,61	10	3,24
Drama	-	-	-	-	1	0,30	-	-
Typing	-	-	20	5,01	4	1,21	16	5,18
Computer literacy	-	-	-	-	-	-	3	0,97
Technical drawing	-	-	5	1,25	-	-	19	6,15
Commercial subjects	1	0,33	-	-	-	-	4	1,29
Electronics	1	0,33	-	-	-	-	2	0,65
Music	3	0,98	3	0,75	-	-	2	0,65
Industrial Art	-	-	-	-	1	0,30	1	0,32
Bible Studies	9	2,93	1	0,25	-	-	-	-
Zulu	2	0,65	-	-	-	-	-	-
Arabic	-	0	-	-	-	-	1	0,32
Xhosa	3	0,98	-	-	-	-	-	-
Social Studies	1	0,33	-	-	-	-	-	-
Economics	1	0,33	-	-	-	-	-	-
Tsonga	1	0,33	-	-	-	-	-	-
Venda	1	0,33	-	-	-	-	-	-
German	-	-	11	2,76	-	-	-	-
TOTAL	307	100,00	399	100,00	330	100,00	309	100,00

Comment

1. There are some convincing statistics in these tables to indicate that there is no such a thing as a basic negative attitude toward history amongst all population groups in South Africa.
2. It is, as far as white and Indian schools in particular are concerned, not a negative approach that determines attitude but commercial or job related factors.

3. Pupils in std 7 should be made more aware of the essentially valuable nature of the knowledge and abilities developed in history.

2. A comparison of the attitude of std 7 and 9 pupils toward history as a subject.

Tables 6.7 and 6.8 reflects the views of std 7 pupils on General and South African history respectively.

TABLE 6.7 ATTITUDE TOWARD GENERAL HISTORY

Attitude	Population group							
	Black		White		Coloured		Indian	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No respons	13	4,23	2	0,50	4	1,21	4	1,29
Really enjoys it	104	33,88	103	25,81	122	36,97	110	35,60
Enjoy it to some extent	124	40,39	233	58,40	137	41,52	166	53,72
Do not really enjoy it	38	12,38	56	14,04	60	18,18	25	8,09
Do not enjoy it at al	28	9,12	5	1,25	7	2,12	4	1,29
TOTAL	307	100,00	399	100,00	330	100,00	309	100,00

TABLE 6.8 ATTITUDE TOWARD SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY

Attitude	Population group							
	Black		White		Coloured		Indian	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No response	12	3,91	2	0,50	3	0,91	2	0,65
Really enjoys it	175	57,00	59	14,79	108	32,73	98	31,72
Enjoy it to some extent	71	23,13	219	54,89	141	42,73	157	50,81
Do not really enjoy it	29	9,45	94	23,56	60	18,18	44	14,24
Do not enjoy it al all	20	6,51	25	6,27	18	5,45	8	2,59
TOTAL	307	100,00	399	100,00	330	100,00	309	100,00

The same questions were put to std 9 pupils and their response is reflected in tables 7.10 and 7.11

TABLE 7.10 OPINIONS ON GENERAL HISTORY

Attitude	Population group							
	Black		White		Coloured		Indian	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No response	1	0,32	2	0,51	3	0,90	2	0,68
Do not enjoy it at all	21	6,65	7	1,80	5	1,49	6	2,05
Do not really enjoy it	15	4,75	26	6,68	13	3,88	9	3,07
Enjoy it to some extent	112	35,44	151	38,82	140	41,79	176	60,07
Really enjoy it	167	52,85	203	52,19	174	51,94	100	34,13
TOTAL	316	100,00	389	100,00	335	100,00	293	100,00

TABLE 7.11 OPINIONS ON SOUTH AFRICAN HISTORY

Attitude	Population group							
	Black		White		Coloured		Indian	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No response	1	0,32	2	0,51	3	0,90	1	0,34
Do not enjoy it at all	34	10,76	32	8,23	25	7,46	21	7,17
Do not really enjoy it	30	9,49	95	24,42	67	20,00	51	17,41
Enjoy it to some extent	92	29,11	164	42,16	145	43,28	128	43,69
Really enjoy it	159	50,32	96	24,68	95	28,36	92	31,40
TOTAL	316	100,00	389	100,00	335	100,00	293	100,00

Comment

1. It is obvious from these tables that black pupils enjoy South African history much more than is popularly believed.
2. The disappointing reaction of white pupils to South African history at both std 7 and 9 levels requires serious attention. Teachers should discuss this with the scholars and try to establish why this is the case. Could it be too much familiarity with repetitive aspects of South African history? Could it be that too little of the current controversiality of South African history is reflected in school syllabuses? Or could it be that the white students are more keenly aware of or interested in wider world issues than their black counterparts?
3. **Correlation between history and certain other subjects in std 9.**

The main purpose of history teaching in high school is to lay the foundation for an historical consciousness which is a prerequisite for responsible citizenship in a modern developed society. This implies that all pupils really need a thorough history education. Is this possible

under the present curriculum situation? Does the present situation allow students with a particular interest in the natural sciences, commercial subjects and job related training to achieve this? Std 9 pupils were asked to list the subjects included in their curriculum. The question was only put to children already enrolled for history. The important thing to note in table 7.3 is the correlation with maths, physical science and commercial and technical subjects.

TABLE 7.3 SUBJECTS THAT PUPILS TAKE IN STANDARD 9

Subjects	Population group							
	Black		White		Coloured		Indian	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
English	285	90,19	379	97,43	313	93,43	287	97,95
Afrikaans	272	86,08	378	97,17	313	93,43	286	97,61
African language	216	68,35	5	1,29	-	-	-	-
Another language	4	1,27	27	6,94	5	1,49	6	2,05
Mathematics	6	1,90	227	58,35	86	25,67	168	57,34
Physical science	9	2,85	122	31,36	23	6,87	66	22,53
Biology	271	85,76	211	54,24	256	76,42	264	90,10
Biblical science	81	25,63	26	6,68	44	13,13	2	0,68
History	295	93,35	375	96,40	320	95,52	287	97,95
Geography	103	33,23	106	37,25	86	25,67	8	97,95
Commercial subjects	19	6,01	199	51,16	190	56,72	179	61,09
Technical subjects	3	0,95	34	8,74	16	4,78	13	4,44
Manual skills subjects	51	16,14	34	8,74	56	16,72	46	15,70
Art	-	-	33	8,48	2	0,60	5	1,71
Music	8	2,53	7	1,80	26	7,76	1	0,34
Drama	6	1,90	3	0,77	2	0,60	16	5,467

Comment

1. The correlation between maths and commercial subjects and history in the white schools is not sub-standard but the correlation with physical science is very disappointing. The correlation with job related skills is shocking.
2. Black and coloured pupils in history veer away from maths and physical science at an alarming rate. The high enrollment in biology in black, coloured and Indian schools is remarkable. Note the reasons given in tables 7.5 and 7.6: it teaches you more about actual daily life. Does it actually do so more than history? Remember biology is also a so-called swotting subject. Does it require more or less effort from the pupils than history?
4. **The most important reasons for choosing history.**

In the standard 7 group only those pupils who planned to take history in standards 8, 9 and 10 were asked why they opted for history. Table 6.10 reflects the results. The most popular reason why the black, coloured and Indian pupils chose History was because it gave them a better understanding of the politics of the day. The most popular reason that the white pupils gave was that history required little insight.

TABLE 6.10 REASONS FOR CHOOSING HISTORY AS A SUBJECT

Reasons	Population group							
	Black		White		Coloured		Indian	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
History requires little insight	13	4,23	23	5,76	17	5,15	9	2,91
Few other subjects available	4	1,30	3	0,75	13	3,94	1	0,32
To study History at tertiary level	23	7,49	15	3,76	20	6,06	11	3,56
Gives better understanding of politics	45	14,66	31	7,77	43	13,03	20	6,47
Likes the teacher who teaches History	7	2,28	4	1,00	1	0,30	2	0,65
Will be of help in the world of work	15	4,89	13	3,26	24	7,27	13	4,21
Persuaded by teacher	6	1,95	-	-	6	1,82	2	0,65
Persuaded by parents	2	0,65	-	-	-	-	-	-
All the friends chose History	10	3,26	3	0,75	5	1,52	4	1,29
Gets good marks in History	-	-	10	2,51	-	-	-	-

The pupils who did not wish to take history in the senior standards were also asked to explain their decision (Table 6.11). By far the most popular reason offered was that history would be of no help to them in the world of work.

TABLE 6.11 REASONS FOR NOT CHOOSING HISTORY AS A SUBJECT

Reasons	Population group							
	Black		White		Coloured		Indian	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
Will not be of any value in the world of work	57	18,57	153	38,35	52	15,76	104	33,66
Too much studying	17	5,54	24	6,02	48	14,55	45	14,56
Do not like the teacher	3	0,98	1	0,25	-	-	1	0,32
Persuaded by parents not to take History	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
None of friends plan to take History	1	0,33	1	0,25	-	-	1	0,32
Easier to get good marks in other subjects	6	1,95	6	1,50	3	0,91	9	2,91
History is boring	9	2,93	14	3,51	4	1,21	6	1,94
Clashes with other subjects	16	5,21	31	7,77	27	8,18	24	7,77
Good marks are not achieved	-	-	-	-	12	3,64	-	-

Comment

1. The results repudiate the popular belief that history is a fall back for the intellectually weaker scholar who believes that he can obtain grades by merely persistent swotting. History is correctly identified as a subject that in fact requires insight and understanding.
2. The generally low rating of better understanding of the politics of the day must provide some indication of how little attention to issues of the day is given by the teacher in the classroom.
3. Encouraging is the fact that history is not regarded as a boring subject nor is too much work given as an important factor. The job application as the dominant factor is to be expected and reflects on the type of society we are developing in South Africa.

The results of these tables must be compared with corresponding ones put to std 9 pupils and represented in tables 7.4 and 7.5.

TABLE 7.4 THE MOST IMPORTANT REASON FOR CHOOSING HISTORY

Reasons	Population group							
	Black		White		Coloured		Indian	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No response	15	4,75	33	8,48	5	1,49	16	5,46
History Requires little insight	6	1,90	18	4,63	23	6,87	7	2,39
Few other subjects available	8	2,53	38	9,77	35	10,45	31	10,58
Interested in History	81	25,63	161	41,39	94	28,06	104	35,49
Knowledge of History will increase political literacy	138	43,67	63	16,20	99	29,55	73	24,92
Influenced by parents to take History	-	-	2	0,51	-	-	1	0,34
Encourage by teacher to continue with the subject	6	1,90	20	5,14	11	3,28	11	3,75
Intend to continue with History at tertiary level	52	16,46	16	4,11	28	8,36	25	8,53
Obtain good marks in History	10	3,16	38	9,77	40	11,94	25	8,53
TOTAL	316	100,00	389	100,00	335	100,00	293	100,00

In response to the question of whether they would choose an alternative to history in Standards 8 to 10 should the opportunity arise, only a small percentage from each group of respondents answered in the affirmative. As can be deduced from Tables 7.5 and 7.6 the majority of the black respondents said that they would have taken biology because the subject teaches them more about living things. Few of the white pupils who indicated that they would have chosen a different subject, indicated what other subject they would have chosen or gave reasons for their dissatisfaction with history. The majority of the coloured pupils in this category wanted to take a commercial subject instead of history because it offered more job opportunities. The Indian pupils seemed to favour geography because they did not have to write so many essays and they would learn more about their physical environment.

TABLE 7.5 CHOOSING A DIFFERENT SUBJECT

	Population group							
	Black		White		Coloured		Indian	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
No response	2	0,63	3	0,77	3	0,90	1	0,34
Yes	36	11,39	48	12,34	47	14,03	54	18,43
No	278	87,97	338	86,89	285	85,07	238	81,23
TOTAL	316	100,00	389	100,00	335	100,00	293	100,00

Comment

1. Table 7.5 would indicate that there is not nearly as a widespread disillusionment with history as a school subject as is popularly believed, at least amongst those enrolled at present. One would surely have liked to hear the views of those who missed out on the opportunity of taking history because it was not available to them.
2. One could introduce a number of interesting remarks on the observation of adults who took history as a school subject and now admits that they did not enjoy it only to discover its real value later in life. You do need some maturity to appreciate history's real significance. It is the teachers responsibility to kindle that sort of maturity.

5. The merits of the subject history.

The pupils were questioned on the value that history had for them. This information for std 7 is reflected in Table 6.9. All agreed with the statements that history helps to bring about a better understanding of the values and ideals of other groups of people, that it establishes the history of a group as part of the history of South Africa and provides a good general knowledge. There was reasonable consensus on the statements that the subject history improves one's memory, that it aids in understanding current political issues, that it teaches respect for other people's lives, that it improves knowledge of one's own cultural group and that it promotes appreciation of different perspectives. The white respondents were more positive on the last statement than were the other groups. Statements that the respondents did not feel too strongly about were that history enables pupils to examine situations more critically and that it improves good reasoning abilities. The respondents from the black, white and Indian groups tended to agree with the statement that history will be of value in the world of work. The white respondents did not share this belief.

TABLE 6.9 VALUE OF HISTORY AS A SUBJECT

Opinion on value of History as a subject	Resp.	Population group							
		Black		White		Coloured		Indian	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
a) Improves ability to remember facts accurately	1	229	78,42	282	70,85	236	78,15	223	72,88
	2	63	21,58	116	29,15	66	21,84	83	27,12
b) Helps the pupil to understand political issues	1	230	77,18	284	71,54	258	84,04	247	79,94
	2	68	22,82	113	28,46	49	15,96	62	20,06
c) Teaches critical thinking skills	1	159	55,99	231	58,63	166	56,66	168	54,72
	2	125	44,01	163	41,37	127	43,34	139	45,28
d) Teaches the pupil to acknowledge the possibility of more than one viewpoint	1	174	61,05	325	81,66	229	76,59	241	78,50
	2	111	38,95	73	18,34	70	23,41	66	21,50
e) Teaches the pupil to appreciate other peoples' values and ideals	1	271	89,74	327	82,16	270	88,52	279	90,88
	2	31	10,26	71	17,84	35	11,48	28	9,12
f) Convinces pupils that the history of their people is part of South African history	1	227	78,82	329	82,87	221	73,42	264	85,99
	2	61	21,18	68	17,13	80	26,58	43	14,01
g) Teaches good reasoning skills	1	196	69,01	231	58,63	177	59,80	204	66,89
	2	88	30,99	163	41,37	119	40,20	101	33,11
h) Provides good general knowledge	1	243	83,79	357	89,92	276	89,61	265	86,04
	2	47	16,21	40	10,08	32	10,39	43	13,96
i) Teaches pupils to respect others	1	204	69,39	279	70,81	198	68,28	241	78,76
	2	90	30,61	115	29,19	92	31,72	65	21,24
j) Teaches a love for South Africa	1	187	63,82	270	68,18	174	59,39	146	48,03
	2	106	36,18	126	31,82	119	40,61	158	51,97
k) Of high value in the world of work	1	187	65,16	118	29,95	163	54,33	166	54,07
	2	100	34,84	276	70,05	137	45,67	141	45,93
l) Teaches an appreciation for environmental history	1	219	75,26	261	65,74	187	61,92	210	68,85
	2	72	24,74	136	34,26	115	38,08	95	31,15

Response code:

- 1 True
2 False

The response of std 9 pupils is reflected in table 7.12.

TABLE 7.12 THE MERITS OF THE SUBJECT HISTORY

	Resp.	Population group							
		Black		White		Coloured		Indian	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
a) Improves ability to remember facts accurately	1	238	80,95	307	79,12	263	80,92	208	71,97
	2	56	19,05	81	20,88	62	19,08	81	28,03
b) Helps the pupil to understand political matters	1	266	87,21	325	83,55	277	84,71	233	80,34
	2	39	12,79	64	16,45	50	15,29	57	19,66
c) Teaches critical thinking skills	1	183	61,00	290	74,74	222	68,94	217	74,83
	2	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	1	219	73,99	362	93,06	290	88,41	252	86,30
	2	77	26,01	27	6,94	38	11,59	40	13,70
e) Teaches the pupil to appreciate the values and ideals of other groups of people	1	256	84,49	288	74,42	256	78,05	250	85,91
	2	47	15,51	99	25,58	72	21,95	41	14,09
f) Convinces pupils that the history of their own people is part of South African history	1	186	62,63	301	77,58	216	67,08	229	78,42
	2	111	37,37	87	22,42	106	32,92	63	21,58
g) Teaches good reasoning skills	1	247	81,79	289	74,29	228	70,37	220	75,86
	2	55	18,21	100	25,71	96	29,63	70	24,14
h) Provides good general knowledge	1	268	88,74	356	91,75	299	91,44	253	86,94
	2	34	11,26	32	8,25	28	8,56	38	13,06
i) Teaches the pupil to respect others	1	174	58,00	250	64,43	242	74,92	220	75,34
	2	126	42,00	138	35,57	81	25,08	72	24,66
j) Teaches a love for South Africa	1	164	55,41	215	55,27	134	41,49	110	37,93
	2	132	44,59	174	44,73	189	58,51	180	62,07
k) Of high value in the world of work	1	184	63,01	189	48,71	192	58,90	172	60,56
	2	108	36,99	199	51,29	134	41,10	112	39,44
l) Teaches history of own people	1	194	65,10	311	80,57	205	62,69	155	53,08
	2	104	34,90	75	19,34	122	37,31	137	46,92
m) Teaches environmental history	1	198	65,13	184	47,55	138	42,33	117	40,07
	2	106	34,87	203	52,45	188	57,67	175	59,93

Response code:

- 1 True
2 False

The overall feelings were positive on the usefulness of history as it is currently taught (Table 7.12). The black pupils were positive that history helped them to understand current political issues, that it gave them a good general knowledge and that it gave them an appreciation of other people's values and ideals. The white pupils indicated that history helped them to realize that there were different perceptions, that it equipped them with a good general knowledge and that it enabled them to understand current political issues better. The coloured pupils felt that the subject gave them a good general knowledge, that it taught them that there were different perceptions and that it helped them to understand current political issues better. The Indian pupils also felt that they were able to appreciate different perceptions better, they had increased their general knowledge and understood the values and ideals of other people better.

Comment

1. The results seem to indicate that teachers do not seem to fare too badly in their efforts to convince pupils of the relevance of history. This does not imply that there is not a lot of scope for more creative and relevant teaching. The picture is however not as gloomy as is sometimes represented.

6. Skills teaching in history.

The teaching of skills is the fashionable thing in history teaching today. While it must be admitted that the understanding of what the teaching of skills really implies is still at a relatively low rate in South Africa, it was thought worthwhile to ascertain the pupils experience of skills development.

A list of skills that could possibly have been learnt through the study of history was given to the respondents. They were asked to indicate which of these skills they had in fact already acquired (Table 7.8). The black pupils felt that they were already well able to answer essay-type questions, remember facts, arrange gathered information logically and distinguish between different perceptions. The white pupils felt that they had learned to appreciate that there were different perceptions and to distinguish between these perceptions. They were also better able to remember facts and to arrange them logically. The coloured pupils could answer essay-type questions better than before, remember facts better and could appreciate the different perceptions people had. The Indian pupils judged that they had a better appreciation of people's perceptions, they were able to answer essay-type questions better and they could arrange gathered information logically.

TABLE 7.8 SKILLS ACQUIRED THROUGH HISTORY

	Resp.	Population group							
		Black		White		Coloured		Indian	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
a) To distinguish between true and slanted facts	1	163	64,94	178	47,98	159	57,58	139	53,05
	2	54	21,51	162	43,67	106	37,72	99	37,79
	3	34	13,55	31	8,36	16	5,69	24	9,16
b) To examine a historical document critically	1	81	34,47	113	30,79	84	30,77	131	50,38
	2	86	36,60	166	45,23	112	41,03	78	30,00
	3	68	28,94	88	23,98	77	28,21	51	19,62
c) To remember facts well	1	177	68,08	228	61,62	174	61,92	157	59,70
	2	57	21,92	109	29,46	91	32,38	79	30,04
	3	26	10,00	33	8,92	16	5,69	27	10,27
d) To realize that different people see the same thing differently	1	165	67,62	274	73,85	177	62,99	190	72,24
	2	46	18,85	82	22,10	76	27,05	45	17,11
	3	33	13,52	15	4,04	28	9,96	28	10,65
e) To distinguish between the different ways in which different people look at the same situation	1	134	54,69	239	64,42	150	54,15	164	62,12
	2	70	28,57	100	26,95	103	37,18	74	28,03
	3	41	16,73	32	8,63	24	8,66	26	9,85
f) To answer essay-type questions	1	177	71,08	195	53,13	184	64,79	200	75,47
	2	48	19,28	132	35,97	75	26,41	56	21,13
	3	24	9,64	40	10,90	25	8,80	9	3,40
g) To analyze historical documents	1	111	47,23	80	21,74	58	21,25	114	44,19
	2	71	30,21	174	47,28	137	50,18	96	37,21
	3	53	22,55	114	30,98	78	28,57	48	18,60
h) To gather information and arrange it logically	1	173	67,58	229	61,56	139	49,64	182	68,42
	2	56	21,88	117	31,45	110	39,29	70	26,32
	3	27	10,55	26	6,99	31	12,07	14	5,26

Response code:

- 1 Yes
- 2 To a lesser extent
- 3 No

7. Consumer reaction

Apart from the merits that scholars believed they found in history the standard 9 pupils were also provided with a consumer profile: what would they expect from a good history syllabus? The results in table 7.9 correlates with that given earlier in table 7.12 except for a slightly less positive reaction from white pupils on the relevance of history for understanding current events.

The respondents were asked to indicate how they rated statements depicting the possible value of history as a school subject (Table 7.9). The black pupils rated as very important the statements that history should help in understanding current politics in the country, that it should be the instrument through which pupils are taught about different ideologies, and that skills i.e. the ability to reason and think critically should be stimulated. The white pupils apparently did not regard any of the statements as very important. The only two they regarded as important were firstly that the subject should stimulate skills such as the ability to reason and think critically and secondly that they should be kept in touch with contemporary world events. The coloured pupils also did not regard the statements as very important. They rated as most important the statements that History should help them understand current politics and that they should be taught everything they wanted to know about the rights of citizens. The Indian pupils rated the fact that history should stimulate skills such as reasoning ability and critical thinking as very important. They also regarded the statement that the subject should help them understand the current politics of the country, as quite important.

TABLE 7.9 STATEMENTS ON HISTORY EDUCATION

	Resp.	Population group							
		Black		White		Coloured		Indian	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
a) Should improve understanding of current politics	1	228	76,77	184	47,55	229	69,18	208	71,72
	2	45	15,15	161	41,60	84	25,38	64	22,07
	3	14	4,71	35	9,04	10	3,02	12	4,14
	4	10	3,37	7	1,18	8	2,42	6	2,07
b) History should convey how the modern world came into existence	1	190	62,91	154	39,90	155	46,97	153	52,58
	2	74	24,50	175	45,34	130	39,39	115	39,52
	3	26	8,61	51	13,21	35	10,61	17	5,84
	4	12	3,97	6	1,55	10	3,03	6	2,06
c) Should give information on other groups of people in South Africa	1	163	54,88	103	26,68	136	41,34	148	50,68
	2	74	24,92	162	41,97	123	37,39	105	35,96
	3	40	13,47	106	27,46	57	17,33	29	9,93
	4	20	6,73	15	3,89	13	3,95	10	3,42
d) The subject History should convey only South African history	1	48	16,16	28	7,25	34	10,46	34	11,64
	2	54	18,18	41	10,62	59	18,15	58	19,86
	3	70	23,57	80	20,73	90	27,69	67	22,95
	4	125	42,09	237	61,40	142	43,69	133	45,55
e) Should give information on different ideologies, e.g. capitalism, communism	1	231	76,74	195	50,39	173	52,74	149	51,03
	2	37	12,29	124	32,04	101	30,79	88	30,14
	3	19	6,31	52	13,44	41	12,50	39	13,36
	4	14	4,65	16	4,13	13	3,96	16	5,48
f) Syllabus should include environmental history	1	136	45,03	63	16,32	100	30,58	102	35,42
	2	55	18,21	68	17,62	76	23,24	73	25,35
	3	51	16,89	129	33,42	100	30,58	59	20,49
	4	60	19,87	126	32,64	51	15,60	54	18,75

	Resp.	Population group							
		Black		White		Coloured		Indian	
		N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
g) Should emphasize culture and social history	1	49	16,50	73	18,86	56	17,18	45	15,46
	2	53	17,85	93	24,03	69	21,17	73	25,09
	3	76	25,59	131	33,85	120	36,81	87	29,90
	4	119	40,07	90	23,26	81	24,85	86	29,55
h) South African history should occupy important place in syllabus	1	153	51,17	76	19,64	119	36,50	123	42,27
	2	72	24,08	176	45,48	135	41,41	116	39,86
	3	51	17,06	110	28,42	53	16,26	40	13,75
	4	23	7,69	25	6,46	19	5,83	12	4,12
i) Should enable contact with environment to obtain historical information e.g. museums	1	206	68,44	161	41,82	177	54,29	197	67,47
	2	42	13,95	134	34,81	106	32,52	59	20,21
	3	25	8,31	80	20,78	33	10,12	28	9,59
	4	28	9,30	10	2,60	10	3,07	8	2,74
j) Performance marked rather on facts than on insight	1	165	55,00	109	28,24	152	46,63	132	45,21
	2	82	27,33	122	31,61	103	31,60	95	32,53
	3	29	9,67	96	24,87	48	14,72	34	11,64
	4	24	8,00	59	15,28	23	7,06	31	10,62
k) Development of skills in reasoning and critical thinking	1	219	73,00	252	6,12	206	63,19	251	85,96
	2	47	15,67	108	27,91	77	23,62	30	10,27
	3	20	6,67	23	5,94	35	10,74	6	2,05
	4	14	4,67	4	1,03	8	2,45	5	1,71
l) Should provide information on recent world event	1	186	62,84	249	64,51	201	61,66	208	71,23
	2	69	23,31	110	28,50	90	27,61	69	23,63
	3	29	9,80	26	6,74	30	9,20	9	3,08
	4	12	4,05	1	0,26	5	1,53	6	2,05
m) Possibility of choice on South African history themes	1	128	42,95	174	44,96	168	51,53	137	47,08
	2	84	28,19	112	28,94	88	26,99	102	35,05
	3	52	17,45	76	19,64	49	15,03	33	11,34
	4	34	11,41	25	6,46	21	6,44	19	6,53
n) Should deal with the rights of the citizens of a country	1	212	70,67	163	42,23	222	68,10	192	66,21
	2	49	16,33	142	36,79	76	23,31	67	23,10
	3	20	6,67	72	18,65	21	6,44	25	8,62
	4	19	6,33	9	2,33	7	2,15	6	2,07

Response code:

- 1 Very important
- 2 Fairly important
- 3 Less important
- 4 Unimportant

As part of the consumer profile both std 7 and 9 pupils were given the opportunity to suggest subject and topics they would like to see introduced in the syllabus. This did not produce any significant results. They obviously listed the sort of things and the names of people that they incidentally happened to be acquainted with - ranging from Cavour to Cromwell and from Chaka to Piet Retief. What is interesting is that all population groups listed more detail on black politics as an expanded topic. The interest was however much lower amongst whites and Indians than amongst blacks and coloureds. Most surprising was that all four groups included the Great Trek and the Anglo Boer War, both popularly regarded as overexposed subjects.

WE WOULD LIKE TO INVITE TEACHERS AND SCHOLARS TO RESPOND TO THESE EMPIRICAL FINDINGS. DO THEY ACTUALLY REFLECT YOUR BASIC VIEWS? THE BEST RESPONSES WILL BE PUBLISHED. PLEASE KEEP THEM SHORT - 500-750 WORDS.

FOOTNOTE

- 1 The full report entitled An empirical investigation into the teaching of History is obtainable from the HSRC Publishers, 134 Pretorius Street, Pretoria 0001. The Report by Andri van der Merwe, Amelia Vermaak and Susan Lombard is Report 19 in the HSRC Education Research Programme.

DIE ONMISBAARHEID VAN GESKIEDENIS

Die volgende uittreksel uit die verslag van die Departement Onderwys van die Ministerie van die Vlaamse Gemeenskap beklemtoon die aktualiteit inherent aan die onderrig van Geskiedenis. Die verslag is gelewer op die Raad van Europa se simposium oor Geskiedenisonderwys in die Nuwe Europa, wat van 9 tot 13 Desember 1991 in Brugge gehou is.

De geschiedenis van de Europese gedachte en eenmaking vormt in alle onderwijsnetten een verplicht thema waaraan minstens éénderde van het beschikbare aantal lestijden geschiedenis in de twee laatste jaren van het secundair onderwijs moet besteed worden.

De ontwikkelingen en gebeurtenissen in Oost-Europa en in de Sovjet-Unie hebben in ons geschiedenisonderwijs in de laatste twee jaren geleid tot een enorme vraag

naar informatie en naar historische verklaringen vanwege de jongeren. De nieuwe politieke en economische situatie heeft het bewustzijn bij de leerlingen van het nieuwe Europa enorm vergroot en het zijn de geschiedenislessen geweest die daartoe het meest hebben bijgedragen. De massamedia hebben de belangstelling uitgelokt en aangevuurd. Het geschiedenisonderwijs heeft deze ongemeen belangrijke fase uit de ontwikkelingsgeschiedenis van Europa voor onze jonge mensen verduidelijkt en verklaard. Op die manier hebben de meeste van onze leerkrachten de gelegenheid te baat genomen om aan te tonen dat hun vak onmisbaar is in een mens- en maatschappijgerichte vorming en opvoeding.