

# DEVELOPMENTS IN HISTORY TEACHING AT SECONDARY SCHOOL LEVEL IN SWAZILAND: LESSONS FROM CLASSROOM RESEARCH

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## **Abstract**

History is a complex subject and teaching history is even much more complex than people think. It is more propositional than procedural in nature and involves adductive reasoning, where historical evidence and facts are reconstructed through speculation, imagination and empathy (Nichol, 1984; Booth, 1983). The effective teaching of history is more than the transmission of knowledge, but rather it is a process where students and teachers interact in the classroom as they share ideas, reflect and engage in reasoning. It is through this interaction that thinking and understanding will occur. This paper is a reflection on the developments in the teaching of history at secondary and high school level in Swaziland. The paper is based on research on a new history curriculum introduced in Swaziland in January 2006. In particular, the paper will highlight the research on the implementation of the new history syllabus. The paper will highlight the major challenges facing history teaching in the context of the new curriculum. Implications for the preparation of history teachers in Swaziland will be identified.

## **Introduction**

The major objective of education in Swaziland is the improvement of the individual to make him/her a better citizen of Swaziland.<sup>1</sup> This document still serves as the basis for educational developments in the country. A better citizen is defined as one who is a participant citizen in the development of the country. The Imbokodvo National Movement stressed on the need to address the foreign content of education by scrutinizing the syllabi to ensure that the curriculum was in the best interest of the Swazis.

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1 M Dlamini, *The aims, objectives and philosophy of the Imbokodvo National Movement*. Mbabane: SPPC, 1972.

Of particular interest to this discussion was that the Movement advocated that throughout the primary and secondary school, civic education and history relating to Swaziland should be given emphasis and at higher levels of the education system, emphasis should be given to development studies relating to Swaziland.<sup>2</sup> However, despite the fact that Swaziland is a country that cherishes its customs and traditions as evident in the annual celebrations of the Incwala Ceremony (often regarded as the national prayer) and the annual Reed Dance amongst others, not much has been done to promote civic education and Development Studies, and to promote history teaching and in particular the history of Swaziland.<sup>3</sup> History teaching in secondary schools is under threat from other subjects that are vying for a place in the curriculum.

Research on history in Swaziland shows that the majority of history students in Swaziland do not like history and do not understand the importance of the subject in their lives outside school except becoming history teachers themselves.<sup>4</sup> The perception of history amongst students is that of a boring collection of facts about the past that they have to memorise and reproduce these in tests and examinations. This perception of history is one of the causes of the poor image of the subject in the curriculum not only in Swaziland but in other countries as reflected in the literature.

Traditionally, many schools taught history as one of the subjects in the curriculum; however in recent years the subject is offered as an optional subject in many schools. It is not uncommon to find that in some schools the subject does not even feature as one of the subjects on offer. Of the 14000 students who sat for the Year 12 public examination in 2006, only 4200 opted for history.<sup>5</sup> Amongst the reasons why the subject is not popular in some schools is that in many schools students find it hard to pass the subject and as a result students avoid choosing history at the senior level because of fear that they are likely to fail it.

However, in some schools, though not many, history is a prominent subject in the curriculum. In such schools, the subject is passed in good

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2 M Dlamini, *The aims, and philosophy of the Imbokodvo National Movement*, Mbabane: SPPC, 1972.

3 EZ Mazibuko, *The status of social studies in Swaziland: Challenges and prospects*. Trends and Issues – The Quarterly Publication of the Florida Council for the Social Studies. Volume XIV, 1, Spring 16 – 20, 2002.

4 EZ Mazibuko & P Godonoo, *History: Contemporary issues in teaching and learning*. Manzini: Blue Moon, 2002.

5 ECOS, *Examiner's Reports*. Mbabane, 2007.

grades by many students and as a result the subject is chosen by many students for the high possibility that they will achieve a good credit in it. The number of credits one achieves and the quality of the credits is important because the high number of credits one gets makes it possible for one to get university entry, where applicants are ranked according to their aggregate achieved in at least six subjects. In a recent study on history teaching participants were asked why they opted to study history and one student remarked:

nothing really special yah. Eh! of course some of my friends who studied history last year encouraged me, that if I want to increase the number of credits at the end of the year, I must consider studying history because many students pass the subject. I dropped history in Form 2 because our teacher made us read the textbook and it did not appeal to me.<sup>6</sup>

In schools where the subject is passed, it becomes a marketing strategy for attracting students to study it.

This scenario for history is not uncommon. Many countries report that the subject is under pressure from new subjects that are now competing with the more traditional subjects like history. There is need for a marketing strategy in schools if we want our subject to remain in the curriculum.<sup>7</sup> This marketing strategy involves not only marketing campaigns in schools where history can be sold to students and parents, but it also means having a clear justification why it is worth studying by children. This campaign has implications for the teaching and assessment of the subject.

History teaching and learning should go beyond the accumulation of facts. Teaching should engage students in critical thinking and in exercising high level thinking and analytical skills that they would need in school and even in their adult life. This has implications for teaching and assessment of the subject and requires a paradigm shift from the traditional methods used in teaching the subject.

Historical thinking is a process that is adductive in nature. It is both cognitive and affective in orientation. Interpretation in the classroom is an attribute of understanding. In interpretation, the classroom teacher is able to understand historical concepts that need to be understood by the learners prior to any teaching engagement. Social constructivist

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6 EZ Mazibuko & S Gamedze, From Traditional to skills based history teaching. Paper presented at the 10<sup>th</sup> BOLESWANA Conference on Educational Research. Windhoek, University of Namibia, 2005.

7 R Brooks, M Aris; L Perry, *The effective teaching of history*. London: Longman, 1999.

theorists argue that interpretation is brought about by the interaction process in the classroom.<sup>8</sup>

### **The context**

The secondary education system in Swaziland is divided into two distinct sections. The first three years is referred to as the Junior Secondary school level (JC). The last two years are regarded as the senior secondary level or popularly known as high school level.

#### *Junior Secondary School level*

This level covers the first three years of secondary education, Forms 1 to 3. At the end of the first three years of schooling, pupils sit for the Junior Certificate public examinations. This examination is used for selecting pupils for senior secondary education. In Form 1 pupils are exposed to a wide curriculum and at the end of the year they are made to choose from the wide curriculum the subjects they would be pursuing up to the end of year 3. Schools use different methods for selecting pupils for the different subjects. In some schools students are organized by teachers into streams, whilst in some they make the choices themselves. It is common to find students in history classes who have been forced to do history because they may not be good in the sciences and hence they may be pushed into the social sciences stream.<sup>9</sup>

#### *Senior secondary school level*

During the colonial period, Swazi students at senior secondary school level sat for the South African Matriculation examinations. This arrangement continued up until 1962 when Swaziland joined the University of Cambridge public examinations for the GCE 'O' Level examinations at the end of year 12. The relationship with the Cambridge Examinations syndicate still exists. In this relationship, syllabuses and examinations were set and marked in the United Kingdom. It was

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8 J Brophy, *Social Constructivist teaching: Affordance and constraints*. *Advances on Research on Teaching*, 9, Amsterdam: JAI, 2002.

9 S Gamedze, *Perceptions of history students and teachers about the status of school history: towards an effective application of the constructivist approach*. Unpublished M.Ed. dissertation, University of Swaziland, 2003.

only in 1989 that means were made to localize the marking process of the examinations after the training of the first cohort of markers for the 'O' Level examinations. In 2006, Swaziland moved away from the traditional GCE 'O' Level examinations to the skills based Cambridge International General Certificate of Secondary Education (IGCSE). Different countries have approached this move in different ways with Botswana and Namibia opting for local control of the examining process by developing local syllabuses and establishing a locally based examination. However, Swaziland has opted for a gradual shift as she still relies on the Cambridge IGCSE syllabuses and examinations, maintaining external control of the examination process and monitoring by Cambridge International Examinations (CIE).<sup>10</sup>

### *Teacher Preparation*

History teachers in Swaziland are trained at William Pitcher College for a three year Secondary Teacher's Diploma. Teachers holding a diploma in education teach at the Junior Certificate level. The University of Swaziland prepares teachers that qualify to teach at the senior secondary school levels. Teachers preparing for this level are products of the four year Bachelor of Education (B.Ed) programme, an upgrading programme for experienced teachers holding the Diploma in Education qualification. The Post Graduate Certificate in Education (PGCE) is a one year teacher preparation programme for candidates with a Bachelor's degree subjects offered in schools. A graduate of the programme also qualifies to teach at all levels of the secondary school system. In recent years there are an increasing number of teachers who have acquired post graduate studies at master's level who also teach at the senior secondary school level.

### *The International General Certificate for Secondary Education (IGCSE) Programme*

This programme was introduced by Cambridge to replace the 'O' Level Examinations. The IGCSE is a two year programme introduced at the beginning of 2006 in all schools in Swaziland. Very brief training workshops lasting three days were organized to orient teachers on the

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<sup>10</sup> G Nyakutse & EZ Mazibuko, Teaching and assessment skills of senior secondary school teachers: a study of geography, history and religious education teacher skills in Swaziland. Final Report of research funded by the UNISWA Research Board. Luyengo, 2007.

new curriculum. The IGCSE curriculum is different in orientation from the 'O' Level programme. The approach of the IGCSE is skills based as opposed to the traditional content based 'O' Level programme. Amongst the skills that are meant to be developed by the IGCSE are: the ability to assess own personal strengths and weaknesses so as to be able to choose appropriate careers or employment opportunities; tolerance towards others; problem solving and critical thinking; enquiry oriented minds; ability to work in teams; and ability to communicate effectively.<sup>11</sup>

### **Literature review**

Several studies have been conducted in Swaziland on the teaching and learning of school history. Some of these studies point a bleak picture for the subject. However, despite this scenario, history is still taught in many schools and in some schools the subject is well taught and many students study it and do well in it.

Writing on the crisis facing history in the United States in terms of declining enrolments, funding and prestige in university history departments, Professor Brophy lamented that the reason for the declining enrolments was a failure to adapt history teaching and learning to better reflect a changing discipline and a changing world.<sup>12</sup>

Several studies on teaching history in the Swazi classroom have consistently come to the conclusion that history lessons in the Swazi secondary school history classroom are dominated by traditional teaching methods such as lecturing, note giving, questioning and too much reliance on the textbook.<sup>13</sup> These methods allow little or no room for learner participation in the classroom. The teaching methods in history have contributed greatly to the negative perceptions that learners have towards the subject. A interview with 1074 Junior Certificate school leavers in Swaziland on matters relating to their school experiences and on the school leavers' support for certain attitudes towards nine secondary school subjects found that history was ranked sixth as the best taught subject; second as the worst taught subject, and first as the

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11 Ministry of Education, IGCSE Consultative Document. Mbabane. Swaziland, 2005.

12 J Brophy, Teaching and learning history. *Advances on Research on Teaching*, 6, 1996, pp. 115-182.

13 G Nyakutse & EZ Mazibuko, Teaching and assessment skills of senior secondary school teachers, 2007.

least interesting subject.<sup>14</sup>

A study on the need for reforms in history examinations at secondary school level in Swaziland, established that the way history was taught and assessed by teachers and examined at the Junior Certificate public examination level was contributing to the negative perceptions to the subject.<sup>15</sup> The studies made an analysis of the examination questions at the Junior Certificate Level and at the G.C.E 'O' Level over a ten year period. It was established that about 90 percent of the questions asked in the Junior Certificate examination were at the knowledge level. Very few questions required candidates to show comprehension and the higher levels of thinking. Similarly, about 80 percent of questions at the 'O' Level were at the knowledge level of the Bloom's Taxonomy. By extension, history teachers also used the same assessment methods used by the examiners to assess their teaching. The nature of the questions in exams was found to have had a profound impact on the choice of teaching methods used by teachers. Lecturing, note giving, handouts, examination spotting and many more, were found to be the predominant teaching strategies used by history teachers in order to meet the demands of the examinations. Though students passed the subject, they however lacked historical understanding because the reproduction of regurgitated facts became the focus for teaching and assessment in history classrooms. This scenario have not changed since the way the Junior Certificate and the O Level history examinations still assesses content mastery on the expense of deeper understanding.<sup>16</sup> Public examinations are having an influence not only on teaching but also on how teachers conceptualize curriculum.<sup>17</sup>

A study conducted in Scotland on improving the teaching of history in high school found that the traditional methods used by teachers in teaching history contributed to declining interest among students.<sup>18</sup> A study conducted in Swaziland investigating the barriers to the effective teaching and learning of school history at secondary school level in Swaziland revealed that some of the barriers were the traditional

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14 S Gamedze, Perceptions of history students and teachers, 2003.

15 EZ Mazibuko, Approaches to teaching history in secondary schools. In JCB Bigala & EZ Mazibuko (eds). A source book for teachers of social studies, history, geography and religious education, 2000, p. 87 – 122. Manzini: Ruswanda.

16 EZ Mazibuko & S Gamedze, From traditional to skills based history teaching, 2005.

17 EZ Mazibuko, The mediation of teaching through central curriculum controls, 1996.

18 Hillis Keller, 1997.

methods used in teaching the subject, the negative perceptions of teachers and students towards history, the inadequate teaching and learning resources, the language barrier; subject selection process in schools where the students are in most cases forced to study history; the unclear vocational value of the subject to the students and the nature of the history curriculum which is Eurocentric and lacks local and national flavour.<sup>19</sup>

An investigation on the perception of students and teachers regarding the status of history in school found that the attitude of history teachers was an important factor that contributed to the negative attitude.<sup>20</sup> Many history teachers present themselves as less enthusiastic and interested in the subject they teach and this affects the perceptions and attitudes of the pupils they teach with regard to the usefulness of the subject. The study also established that learners were much more interested in learning history through the use approaches such as visits to historical sites, research, using guest visitors, using newspapers, magazines, audio and visual aids as opposed to lecturing that is common in history teaching. The study concluded that the status of the subject was not so much affected by the location of the school but by the attitudes and ways in which it is taught.

The constructivist approach is based on the notion that the learner is an autonomous creator of knowledge and that the teacher is merely a facilitator of knowledge environments. A knowledge environment refers to the learning conditions prepared by the teacher which stimulate learner thinking. This presupposes that once the learner is motivated to think, then it is easy to participate effectively in the process of knowledge construction.<sup>21</sup> A good teacher is one who thinks systematically about how to integrate interesting content and methodology according to the experiential levels, abilities and interests of learners. Learner involvement means that learners are actively involved in learning and the role of the teacher is that which fosters an environment that gives rise to appropriate opportunities that lead to thinking, experience and growth of the learners.<sup>22</sup>

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19 S Gamedze & EZ Mazibuko, 2001.

20 S Gamedze, 2003.

21 I Moll, Clarifying constructivism in a context of curriculum change. *Journal of Education*, 2, 5 – 27, 2002.

22 F Drake & L McBride, The summative teaching portfolio and the reflective practitioner of history. *The History Teacher* 34 (1), pp. 41–60, 2000.

A study that investigated university students' perceived characteristics of effective instruction established that students perceived effective instruction as the ability of the teacher to make students learn through motivation and instilling in them the confidence to acquire the desired competence.<sup>23</sup> Teaching history should not only provide cognitive knowledge, but also should develop the capabilities, values, skills, dispositions and sensitivities through which individuals conceive their participations in the world.<sup>24</sup>

## **The study**

### *Context on research on teachers, texts and curriculum change*

The literature suggests that curriculum support materials, particularly textbooks are highly influential in moulding the nature and effectiveness of curriculum change.<sup>25</sup> This section reports on the findings of a research project concerned with identifying the role played by teachers, textbooks and resources related to issues in the implementation of the IGCSE in senior secondary school history. The IGCSE curriculum was launched in 2005 for implementation in 2006 in all high schools in Swaziland. The nature of this change is of special interest, in that its orientation, content, and structure represent a major departure from the former curriculum offerings.

The IGCSE history curriculum is the focus of this study. The syllabus is inquiry driven. This is reflected in the structuring of the mandatory and optional content around key focus questions or areas to which student learning should be directed. However, the syllabus prescribes neither specific content sequence nor approaches, although strong emphasis is placed on student-centred modes of teaching and learning, the utilization of a wide variety of source materials, the connecting of past and present circumstances and on the investigation of contemporary issues.

Optional topics are intended to build on the skills and understandings of the mandatory core through the provision of an expansive range of inquiry topics. Whereas once resources like textbooks formed the

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23 JD Jakede, University students' perceived characteristics of effective instruction. *BOLESWA Educational Research Journal*, 12, 1995, pp. 56-63.

24 T Popkewitz, Dewey, Vygotsky and Social administration of the individual. Constructivist pedagogy as systems of ideas in historical spaces. *American Educational Research in Education*, 35 (4), 1998, pp. 535-570.

25 M Fullan, *The meaning of educational change*. Columbia: Teachers College, 1991.

basis or structure of a course of study, the new syllabus reflected up to date approaches to curriculum planning and teaching and encouraged teachers to interpret the curriculum for the students in the school and develop teaching resources to meet their learning needs. A single resource like a textbook could not adequately resource the course. This study sought to gather data on curriculum change by analysing resource acquisition and allocation during curriculum change.

## **Research methodology**

### *Mixing methods*

A mixed method approach was adopted, utilizing questionnaires, interviews, focus group discussions and a book room study. Questionnaires were sent to about 100 history teachers from all the four regions in Swaziland to determine preparation for the new curriculum. Interviews of approximately one hour duration were conducted with 20 heads of history departments drawn from the four regions, to determine readiness and types of resources available to support the curriculum change. Focus group discussions were also conducted with eight groups of students drawn from a variety of schools with different characteristics to determine how the students experienced the new curriculum in terms of resources, teacher preparedness and enjoyment of the study of history. The instruments further sought to locate specific concerns and coping behaviours. The book room study was carried out to determine the range, age and titles of texts and other resources being used to assist the teaching and learning of history at IGCSE.

### *Selecting research participants*

Effort was made to include teachers and pupils from a wide range of schools from rural, semi urban and urban settings. The research was carried out in government schools, mission schools. Private schools were deliberately omitted in the study because most of these schools had different arrangements. Some had introduced the curriculum several years before it was introduced in the government schools. Hence, the schools and teachers involved in this study are representative of diverse educational environments; co-educational and single sex, with students from varying socio-economic backgrounds. A balance was also

established in the sample between established and new schools. The age of the school, its context, and as a consequence its resources were seen as important factors in the resource focus of the study.

Amongst the established schools were Catholic, Anglican single sex schools; Evangelical and Methodist co- educational schools and two very large national schools. Of the 20 participating schools, several had history departments and some had collapsed History, Geography and religious education into one social science department.

### ***Data collection***

Research questions were developed to ascertain the part played by text resources in implementation by eliciting specific data on:

- Teachers responses to the new syllabus
- New and existing resources to support curriculum change
- The range and number of new resources purchased by history departments
- The nature and extent of resource materials developed to support implementation
- Student responses to implementation of new curriculum

An important component of the research is the book room study. This aspect of the research involved a quantitative analysis of the resource stock held in the History Department in each of the 20 sample schools. A database was compiled on teaching materials, audio-visual, supplementary materials used to resource the new course. Publication details and numbers of titles and some patterns of use were also recorded.

### **Research outcomes**

#### ***Placement of History***

In the majority of schools surveyed, history was offered as a subject in 14 of the schools in Forms 1-3. In all the 20 schools history was offered in Forms 4-5. However, the number of students opting for history varied from school to school. In one urban high school with the enrolment of about 865, only 15 students from a class of 80 opted for history in Form IV. Similarly, in another semi-urban school with an enrolment of 786,

only 10 in a class of 74 opted for history. In another large school with enrolment of about 1200 students, 80 students opted for history from a class of 200 in Form IV. In some of the schools studied, the head teachers decided on placement of students to different subjects. Whilst in some schools, students were allowed to choose though the final decision even in this case was with the head teachers. These decisions appear to have been grounded in matters connected with subject combinations and groupings, timetabling and availability of rooms. Teachers seemed to be unaware of the prior knowledge or historical leanings of their incoming students, particularly in Form IV. Placement in history at this level was not based on students' prior knowledge of the subject, unlike in other subjects.

#### *Programming for curriculum change*

There is documented evidence from the literature that successful implementation at school level is contingent upon planning and organization in the initial phases of change.<sup>26</sup> It was found that the time spent on curriculum planning varied across the sample. Sixteen months after initial implementation of the IGCSE curriculum, some history departments are still struggling with decisions related to choice of textbooks and resources. The amount of time allocated to planning of change was also a major concern amongst teachers. Training was organized for three days before the curriculum was implemented. After that some schools made their own arrangements to empower teachers with teaching skills whilst many others relied on the training offered by CIE.

In these early days of implementation of the syllabus, interpretation tended to vary from teacher to teacher and from school to school. Frequently the old was melded with the new, resulting to hybrid interpretations – old syllabus/new syllabus. A series of problems associated with change were alluded to by the interviewees. These involved; inadequate consultation before implementation of curriculum, time, training, resource shortfalls, staff expertise, inadequate classrooms, large classes and many more. A number of interviewees indicated difficulties stemming from old mindsets about history and its teaching and recognised the need to rethink their discipline.

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<sup>26</sup> M Fullan, *The new meaning of educational change*. Columbia: Teachers College Press, 1991.

### ***Resources used in syllabus implementation***

In general, some schools opted to purchase a whole set of books that were on offer. Patterns of acquisition varied from school to school. What was evident from the responses was the fact that most history books on offer were very expensive in the new programme compared to the old programme. Of the 20 schools, 8 had purchased a set of the textbooks recommended during the training. Some schools took a plunge and bought the first text on offer, whilst others waited, made do with existing materials and only purchased after close examination of those available. Most of the rural schools had difficulty in buying textbooks because of the high cost of books. Most purchased one copy for use by the teacher, whilst in the urban schools textbooks were purchased by the schools and a rented system was in operation in some schools where students paid a fee for the subject. The books were owned by the school. There were also a number of textbooks that were identified which were published by people who wanted to take advantage of this curriculum change. These textbooks were also common in the rural schools where they were seen to be cheaper. Most of these books were poorly written and relied on past examiner's reports. These textbooks also appealed to some teachers because they claimed to be written for the new curriculum. In a number of cases, teachers used a range of criteria derived from their own pedagogical content knowledge in evaluating the textbooks. There was a tendency with the rural schools to seek advice on textbooks from some of the well established schools in the urban areas on the choice of resources and textbooks. These schools were willing to help and offer advice to teachers. This seemed to be the only assistance available to schools. The criteria included knowledge of specific content areas, knowledge of the needs of the learners within a given teaching/learning context and knowledge of history pedagogy.

Teacher's commentaries on published texts indicated a keen awareness of the limitations of materials from a teaching perspective. Conceptual and language based difficulties were cited as matters of concern among interviewees. A number of schools surveyed had purchased the first new texts to be recommended soon after the introduction of the syllabus. Interviewees tended to have misgivings over this initial purchase, and explained their actions as a 'stop gap' in meeting the immediate pressure of teacher and student need. *'I like it at the outset'*, remarked another history teacher. At the outset teachers tend to buy whatever is available,

but then they develop a bit of insight into some of the textbooks that available. Staff wanted this as initial support, although the syllabus does not really encourage the use of one text.

*Resource difficulties and dilemmas, and response to change*

Twelve schools in the sample had difficulties in providing students with appropriate written support materials in history to cover the areas under study. Some of these schools relied on photocopying chapters from different texts from some schools. Teachers' responses to the new syllabus ranged from resigned acceptance to enthusiastic approval. One way of conceptualizing such responses suggest that teachers initially have personal concerns about innovation, such as their capacity to meet new and uncertain demands and their personal commitment to change. After participating in the training workshops, and planning at the school level, considerations of this nature gave way to management matters and the implications of change for students and the school. Reactions of the interviewees to the IGCSE history syllabus document the presence of personal and management concerns.

At the individual level, some teachers cited difficulties in reconciling the varied approaches of the GCE 'O' Level and the IGCSE history syllabuses to the study and representations of history. Some felt the real tension between their personal beliefs about the nature and purposes of the discipline and the orientation of the IGCSE history syllabus. Others found the syllabus daunting, unfriendly, and were uncertain of where to begin the process of making sense of change. A number of teachers expressed dissatisfaction with the syllabus's inquiry – based approaches to teaching and learning. Some teachers took issue with the syllabus's failure to respect chronology by pointing out that some topics were broad and lacked continuity and coherence. Similarly, some of the content, problems and issues suggested by the new syllabus were viewed as problematic rather than an opportunity to explore the 'new'.

On the more pragmatic level of planning for change, half of the schools surveyed reported encountering difficulties. Teachers spoke of 'stumbling', of being 'time pressured' of their efforts as 'disjointed', 'lacking continuity and resources' and of 'plans that just didn't work out'. These comments appear to emerge from dissatisfaction with the manner in

which the course was introduced. The teachers' association complained that the curriculum was imposed by the ministry of education. However, in schools where implementation had been well planned and organized, respondents reported that negativity or ambivalence had quickly given way to more positive perceptions, as teachers interacted with colleagues and became more acquainted with the syllabus.

An analysis of non history teachers' views of the syllabus, documents their concerns as resource rather than discipline based. Social science graduates teaching the course with no formal background or qualifications in history described it as 'not bad.' They assumed that the inquiry – based orientation of the syllabus reflected a 'generic approach' and that the strategies utilized in teaching geography and other social education subjects would compensate for poor subject matter knowledge. There was no recognition by the teachers involved of the subject specific pedagogy neither of history, nor of the fundamental role that subject matter knowledge play in effective teaching and learning.

These findings highlight research on the influence of teachers' disciplinary background on classroom teaching - that formal academic training in any given discipline predisposes the teacher to view other subject areas through the constricted lenses of their own discipline.<sup>27</sup> The implications of these findings in the social science subjects are startling.

#### *Access to resources*

Teachers utilized a number of strategies to locate support resources to support the syllabus. These included among others; active internet searching, networking, selecting from materials disseminated by publishers, booksellers, educational and curriculum authorities, subject inspectors, subject panels, and newspapers. The marketing of textbooks for the syllabus varied. Some schools had received visits from publishers such as MacMillan and Cambridge University Press. Most schools had visits from booksellers who brought samples of history books that could be purchased. The book inspection strategy allowed teachers to make informed choices on the suitability of resources for personal and student use. However, most respondents considered books suitable for the new

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<sup>27</sup> SM Wilson & SS Wineburg, Peering at history through different lenses: the role of disciplinary perspectives in teaching history. *Teacher's College Record*, 89, 4, 1958, pp. 24-37.

syllabus to be too expensive in an environment of competing resource demands. The other problem was that it took a long time to get the books delivered once ordered.

### *Contact with professional associations*

Professional associations offer teachers two potential avenues of support; involvement in professional development activities and access to teaching and learning materials. In-service is often the point of introduction to curriculum innovation and change. The Swaziland History Teachers Association played a key role in assisting teachers to implement the new curriculum, through the provision of in-service activities and curriculum materials. However, these activities were not sustained. There were no training sessions in the regions to familiarize teachers in the regions with the new syllabus.

One of the startling findings of the study was that in a significant number of schools there was a large number of teachers who had not participated in any professional development activity. The literature on curriculum innovation documents the importance of teacher to teacher contact in interpreting change and in promoting personal understanding. While this type of collegial behaviour may occur internally or on-site, the external facilitator or change agent can be crucial in any change.<sup>28</sup> About forty percent of the teachers in the study were not members of SHTA and their schools had not paid the subscriptions for the year. In some schools individual teachers were members of SHTA and their schools had not subscribed as required. Many respondents talked of lack of support from principals who often refused to allow teachers to attend SHTA meetings and to pay for the subscription fees which could be used to organize workshops for teachers. While professional associations' materials were viewed positively by some teachers, those who did not participate did not benefit. These findings duplicate earlier studies on teachers' content needs and professional association in-services as sources for either supplementing or renewing their subject base.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> R Hovelock, *The change agent's guide to innovation to education*, 1975.

<sup>29</sup> M Print, *"The content needs of history teachers in Australia: Cariberra"*, Curriculum Development Centre, 1989.

## **Conclusion**

Some generalizations can be drawn from the data regarding the nature of effective patterns of change. It is suggested that there are three dimensions involving the implementation of any new program or policy – the use of new curriculum materials, new teaching methodologies and alterations to belief systems. If innovation is to be effectively adopted, a significant refocusing of these dimensions needs to occur.<sup>30</sup> A crucial element in facilitating this refocusing lies in sound leadership and group ownership of change. Unfortunately, these seemed to be lacking in the Swaziland case. This view is borne out in the findings where heads of departments and principals had supported and involved all staff in the implementation process through the provision of time, resources and professional development, there was good progress made in terms of teaching the new history syllabus. Where levels of interaction between staff in the planning process were high, heads of department reported an increase in confidence, a willingness to try new teaching and learning approaches. It was maintained by most teachers and heads of department that history texts were not relied upon in the structuring of the lessons.

Responses to the syllabus were patchy. The data indicate that some initial negativity may be accounted for by teacher anxiety, resulting from changes to the traditional patterns of history placement in the secondary school curriculum and perceived resource dilemmas. Others commented favourably on the syllabus. One teacher talked of ‘a refreshing approach to history’. Whilst others thought it was not good and that students found it ‘Boring’. The polarity of these perceptions is not surprising when set against the backdrop of controversy which surrounded the introduction of the new syllabus.<sup>31</sup>

### ***Resources for implementation***

Schools pursued a range of strategies to resource the new syllabus. These included;

- The purchase of new produced texts specifically developed for the course

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<sup>30</sup> M Fullan, *The new meaning of educational change*. (Columbia, Teachers' College, 1991).

<sup>31</sup> C Young, *Change and innovation in history teaching: A perspective of the NSW experience*, 1993.

- The reuse of existing resources in the schools that were seen as pertinent to the course
- The development of materials to meet content specific teaching and learning needs through collaboration between teachers and schools
- The purchase of non-text resources – audio visual, visual, etc

What was noticeable from the data was the fact that most history departments (70 percent) had limited budgets ranging from 1500 to 3000 Emalangenis for purchasing resources.<sup>32</sup> It was clear that for the head of departments interviewed, the purchase of a junior text was a capital expenditure, not a recurrent one. It was an investment to be considered in dire circumstances. History departments in most schools were neglected, characterized by limited budgets, ageing resources and students with disparate learning needs. In one school there were about 10 titles that were reported as being used. The majority were very old texts some dating back to the mid seventies. Most of the old texts used in the old syllabus were on the average very old. Many of the old texts contain inaccurate information and did not respond to the approach promoted by the new syllabus.

This study identified the resources in book rooms and staffrooms used to support the implementation of the new syllabus and placed their acquisition and allocation in the wider context of response to curriculum change. Publishers have played an influential role in shaping and defining the response to the curriculum change by the publication of whole course texts. These texts are based on the publishers' assumptions about the range, direction, level and orientation to the study of history. The new inquiry based syllabus and its associated pedagogy require access to a wide range of resources. Teachers and learners require access to a wide variety of teaching and learning materials drawn from the subject to meet the inquiry needs of the syllabus and the diverse learning needs of their students. To achieve these ends would require a significant increase in resources allocated to the introduction of the new syllabus.

Students voiced out their serious concerns regarding the new syllabus. Though the majority viewed the changes in approach as improving their perception towards the subject, they however commented about their teachers' lack of confidence in teaching the course. "*our teacher told us*

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<sup>32</sup> One Lilangeni is equivalent to one South African Rand.

*that the syllabus was imposed and it demands a lot of work. She tells us she there are no resources*", remarked one of the students. Several students raised their frustrations regarding the lack of teaching and learning resources and this affected their confidence for the coming examinations. *"We are not sure what we will write in the exams"*, remarked one student.

The research also shows that even though schools were dissatisfied with the costs of some of the texts recommended for the syllabus, they expended the majority of their very limited budgets on them to provide some core reference material for the course. Even so the limited funding for resources meant that the few class sets of texts that could be afforded and used were used heavily in the classroom. With little reference material on offer, commercial textbooks can become the defacto curriculum<sup>33</sup> and this is how publishers mediate curriculum change. Inadequate funding for the resources required for adequate curriculum implementation restricts access to a wider range of materials and resources for the needs of the learners. For this reason, many schools produced their own tailored texts not subject to the review and expertise of the publishing industry. The study shows a dysfunction between the industry producing resources and the schools that need them; and for the representation of the discipline in the secondary classroom.

These new changes were intended to change the teaching of history from the traditional modes to much more learner centred methods that engage the learners in the subject. This is a paradigm shift that has great potential for improving learner perceptions of the subject and improving the status of the subject in schools in Swaziland. Establishing value, relevance, meaning, connecting students emotionally to history, giving students the responsibility for their own learning, analysing, evaluating and synthesising information, are all powerful strategies for improving history teaching in schools. However, teachers who have operated for a long time under the traditional teaching methods need help by empowering them with appropriate teaching skills through continuous in-service workshops so that they can handle change positively. Good teaching leads students to display their own best qualities. However, this calls for change in attitudes and thinking and teaching. Teacher preparation courses should engage prospective teachers in these skills

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<sup>33</sup> C Marsh & M Huberman, "Disseminating curricula: A look from the top down," *Journal of Curriculum studies*, 16 (1), 1984, pp. 13-23.

as a teaching approach to familiarize the prospective teachers with the methods that will engage the learners in history classrooms. There is also need for continuous in- service teacher training for history teachers. History is a dynamic subject and there is always new information coming on best practices which can be used by teachers. The Swaziland scenario shows the seriousness of the problem when a new curriculum is introduced before adequately orienting teachers in it.<sup>34</sup> It also shows that introducing a new syllabus is costly and requires adequate financial resources to be used for acquiring the needed resources. Where there is lack of support, teachers will disown the curriculum. Their lack of content knowledge and pedagogical skills is likely to affect the quality of teaching and learning and subsequently students' attitude towards the subject.

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<sup>34</sup> G Nyakutse & EZ Mazibuko, Teaching and Assessment skills of senior secondary school teachers: A study of geography, history and religious education teacher skills in Swaziland, 2007.