

**SOUTH AFRICAN  
SOCIETY FOR  
HISTORY TEACHING**

**SUID-AFRIKAANSE  
VERENIGING VIR  
GESKIEDENIS-  
ONDERRIG**

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### **CURRICULUM 2005 AND HISTORY**

**1. REFLECTIONS ON THE  
PROCESS TOWARDS THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF CURRICULUM  
2005 IN GENERAL  
(Rob Siebörger (Chairman and  
representative of the SASHT on**

### **the Human and Social Sciences Learning Committee)**

As with so many facets of South Africa's transformation, the development of the new curriculum manifests a combination of very desirable aspects together with less desirable ones. Critics have been quick to point out and condemn the flaws while supporters have often

proclaimed the remedy to all curricular ills. My involvement in the curriculum development process has persuaded me that there are many creative tensions involved, each of which might have a significant influence on the future of education in South Africa. The following are some of the chief areas of tension, as I see them:

### **1.1 National and provincial**

Question: When is a national curriculum not a national curriculum? Answer: When it's a provincial curriculum developed at national level. There has been a constant tension throughout the process between the provinces, which have the constitutional right to make decisions about the school curriculum and the Department of Education, which has the authority to decide norms and standards in education. The process has operated thus far, on the principle, broadly, that the provinces express their opinions in the Curriculum Management Committee and when they have found consensus they request officials at national level to co ordinate the implementation of the decisions. This has resulted in numerous difficulties: the lack of someone (or a group) to drive the process forward; an inability to take crucial decisions when they need to be taken; a lack of trust by the provinces in some of the national structures and a similar distrust by national officials in the provinces; a lack of an overall vision for the curriculum as a whole (resulting in the present state of affairs, where it is all things to all people).

### **1.2 Democracy and representation**

The curriculum process began with a strong commitment to democracy and representation. Its early meetings were characterised by an eagerness to allow contributions and to broaden the base of participation. In contrast to this ethos, however, there has always been an unwillingness to allow the discussion of certain topics. The question of 'subjects' has always been forbidden in discussion, and teachers have never been asked whether they wanted subjects to disappear completely (as they have in General Education and Training) or whether they should be integrated within the learning areas. Likewise, 'content knowledge' has not been allowed to be considered in the framing of outcomes. Two further aspects which illustrate the tensions within of the process need to be noted. One is the strict adherence to stakeholder representation, and the other a progressive diminution of broad representivity as time has gone on. The stakeholder principle has operated at three levels: the primary stakeholders are the provinces and their representatives, the secondary stakeholders the teachers' organisations and in a third category are NGOs, associations and colleges, universities and technikons. At times this has meant that provincial representatives have had the

major say, and it has always meant that universities (contrary to their former curriculum role) have always had very little say the more so because all the universities have usually been represented by only one person (nominated by the Committee of University Principals) on any particular committee. The principle of broad representivity operated within the Learning Area Committees (LACs) established in 1996 and in the Phase committee meetings (nominated representatives from the LACs) held early in 1997, but the appointment of the Technical Committee in February 1997 (15 paid members who worked for four weeks to draft the discussion document on outcomes, assessment criteria and range statements for Curriculum 2005) ended this pattern. The Technical Committee interacted the Phase committees and with a small group of nominated people from the LACs (the Reference group), but took significant decisions without seeking endorsement from others ('We are responsible to the minister only', it was explained). It submitted its report at the end of March. Since then, there have been re constituted Phase committees which have represented the provinces and teacher organisations but not the other constituencies, and some meeting with Reference groups. To counter the accusation that the same people have been doing all the work (although a number of members of the Technical Committee have remained in management positions of the committees employed since then), there has been a conscious attempt to involve new people in the process, particularly teachers. This would have been laudable, had there been time to equip them properly before they were expected to participate actively,

### **1.3 The nature of the outcomes**

The model employed for the development of outcomes was non negotiable. It included the following features:

The outcomes should be developed on a clean slate no influence of other examples, or suggestions of what might be likely to work well. The only constraint imposed was that they had to reflect the SAQA critical outcomes. LACs were not even told how many to develop, a fatal flaw as it turned out, as if they had been told to restrict their outcomes to fewer than ten to start with, they would, arguably, have written better, more comprehensive outcomes than those later adapted from their work by the Technical Committee.

The outcomes should lead to the generation of further 'levels' of outcomes ('branching trees'). Learning area outcomes giving rise to specific outcomes, specific outcomes giving rise to sub outcomes and sub outcomes giving rise to teacher developed outcomes for use in their own classrooms. This feature was dispensed with by the

Technical Committee in the interests of simplicity and because it was believed that assessment criteria would be more useful. By doing this teachers were robbed of the opportunity to frame their own outcomes and South Africa elected to follow the example of countries which laid down a national set of outcomes for teachers and learners to 'achieve'.

The outcomes should not be content specific, but reflect the nature of the learning area, and the skills, values and attitudes associated with it. The tension apparent here is one with which all countries adopting OBE have had to wrestle. There does not appear to be a model which accommodates both aspects easily.

The outcomes should be clustered in order to identify 'focuses', 'topics', 'curriculum organisers' or 'learning programmes', as the need arises. The (non content specific) outcomes should be integrated with other outcomes within or outside a learning area, and, it is held, should in this way provide examples of the content to be taught and learned. This has probably been the most contentious feature of the model, and one which has been very difficult achieve in practice.

## 1.4 Learning programmes

Learning programmes are intended to describe the outcomes which learners are expected to achieve, the means by which and the contexts in which they should do so. From the start of the curriculum process there has been a tension between the development of outcomes and the development of learning programmes. Developing outcomes without any idea of what the learning programmes might be like has led to much undirected and wasted effort. Initially participants were told that the Phase committees would decide on the structure of the learning programmes. When these committees met in January 1997 it was decided that it was more important to decide on assessment criteria for the outcomes first, so the Technical Committee was given the responsibility of clustering the outcomes for learning programmes. This it failed to do because it had spent most of its time defining the specific outcomes, assessment criteria and range statements. It was then decided that new Phase committees would construct the learning programmes, but they, likewise, did not have enough time and spent most of it developing performance indicators and activities for the assessment criteria (with no sense of context). The result is that the pilot phase for Curriculum 2005 will begin with very poorly defined learning programmes.

## 1.5 Learning materials

This phrase has been adopted to denote the move from textbook dependency to a more flexible, creative use of available materials. The inherent tension is, however, that most people recognise that, realistically, there will still be not much more available to many teachers and learners than textbooks as resources. The difficulty facing the producers of learning materials is how to respond to the seemingly contradictory requirements of Curriculum 2005: on one hand to produce materials which can be used flexibly as exemplars for learning programmes and clusters of specific outcomes, and, on the other, to demonstrate how learners can achieve set assessment criteria according to specified performance indicators. The two objectives appear contradictory. Strongly specified assessment criteria and performance outcomes require strong learning programmes (with limited flexibility) for the development of learning material.

## 1.6 Concluding comments

For those involved in developing Curriculum 2005, the process has been a very exciting, albeit at times frustrating, one. It has enabled participants to try to capture the essence of what General Education and Training, in particular, in South African schools should be, and I would be surprised to find someone who had not enjoyed meeting and working with educators across the whole spectrum of school education. The opportunity presented to design a curriculum horizontally (in phases) and vertically (in learning areas) at the same time has been most interesting and rewarding.

Against these positive sentiments must, however, be balanced the tensions which have been, and still are, inherent in the process.

## 2. QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FUTURE OF HISTORY IN CURRICULUM 2005

Rob Siebörger (Chairman and representative of the SASHT on the Human and Social Sciences Learning Committee) It is very difficult to write at present about the future of history in the curriculum as so many things are still unclear. I have wanted to report on progress at many different times during the year but have always found that the situation was too fluid to do so. As soon as I thought there was something concrete to write circumstances changed and I was glad that I had not written it, as it would have been out of date by the time it had been circulated. The best way I can think of to represent the future of history as it stands at present is by attempting to answer some questions.

## **2.1 What aspects favour history in Curriculum 2005?**

At present the development of the curriculum has been restricted to General Education and Training (up to Grade 9). By its nature the curriculum for these first three phases is meant to be general. I hope that the curriculum for Further Education and Training will be more specific and that it will be possible to study history in greater depth and as a discipline in Grades 10, 11 and 12. The best news for history is that there is one specific outcome amongst the 66 which requires detailed study of history (amongst other aspects). It is "Demonstrate a critical understanding of how South African Society has changed and developed". The assessment criteria require historical content and understanding if they are to be achieved. As all outcomes must be achieved in all phases, this means that there will be some history in each phase. The outcome: "Demonstrate the ability to use a range of skills and techniques in the Human and Social Sciences context" is also very useful for the study of history and contains all of the basic methods and skills associated with history. It is clear that, in whatever way Learning Programmes are constructed, history lends itself to integration with other areas of learning. Historical topics can include a very wide range of themes, and other topics can include a wide range of historical themes.

## **2.2 What aspects do not favour history in Curriculum 2005?**

A central concern is in the way in which learning programmes may be constructed. It will be possible to do very little history, it will certainly be possible to do history out of context, it will be possible to ignore anything "unpleasant" in the past, it will be possible to ignore world history and there is a very real fear that there will be greater repetition of historical themes, phase by phase, than there was even in the old syllabuses. The main complaint against Curriculum 2005 at present is, however, that it does not make it possible to study history for its own sake. The understanding that history is not what we know about the past but what we DO with what we know about the past is crucial. History needs to be approached in a systematic way if one is to achieve the insights and skills which it can convey. These matters lie at the heart of history teaching and it is difficult to see how they can be achieved unless learning programmes are carefully constructed to contain detailed historical topics. A further aspect of concern is that learning programmes might be so flexible and fragmented that it is impossible to write useful textbooks and other published learning material for them. This is a special concern in history which depends on a coherent content and specific context in order to

achieve skills, attitudes and values. Over the past three or four years there have been a substantial number of innovative and well-researched history textbooks published. It would be regrettable if there was no place for this kind of book in Curriculum 2005.

## **2.3 Will we still talk about "history"?**

It is not yet clear what teachers will call what they are teaching. In the Foundation Phase, for example, one of the three learning programmes is Life Skills, which includes the Human and Social Sciences learning area, although all the outcomes can be studied in all of the learning programmes. It would be surprising if teachers referred to life skills only, and not music, art or physical education, for instance. In the same way there is no reason why they should not refer to history, when they are studying the past and outcomes related to it. We should make a point of maintaining the use of the word "history" when it is appropriate, though it will always refer to history being taught in an integrated way. Some provinces have kept History subject advisers, and it would seem to follow that in those provinces it will remain officially acceptable to talk about "history" as such. In provinces which have replaced subject advisers, we ought to request that there are at least some advisers/facilitators who have a special interest in history.

## **2.4 Will history teachers still be trained?**

It is not possible to answer this question properly until the design of the Further Education and Training certificate is known. It is clear that history teachers will need to have a much broader training than before, which could include environmental education, geography, politics, economics, sociology, archaeology, anthropology (etc.) rather than a straight history curriculum in a diploma or degree. Language will obviously remain a key component of their training.

## **2.5 What should we be doing NOW to prepare ourselves?**

Again, there are many possible answers. The most important is probably to get used to using the 66 outcomes and their assessment criteria: to explore the possibilities they present and to look in detail for ways in which one can use them to design learning programmes and lessons which are suitable for history purposes. The more we learn about how to teach by using these outcomes, the easier it will be to adapt and find the opportunities which there will always be to exploit for history (See advertisement of UGO Workshop in October 1997!). It is less important at this stage to be concerned with

how to make the change to the Human and Sciences learning area, as this will depend to a large extent on the kind of learning programmes developed in future in your province or school.

### **3. 1998-SASHT CONFERENCE/1998-SAVGO KONFERENSIE**

Good news. There will be a conference in 1998 on The teaching of history in Curriculum 2005. Dates and venue still to be finalised. We will let you know in due time. Goeie nuus! 'n Konferensie oor Die onderrig van Geskiedenis in Kurrikulum 2005 sal in 1998 gehou

word. Die datum en plek word nog gefinaliseer. 'n Ieder en elk sal betyds kennis hiérvan kry.

### **4. KOMMENTAAR/COMMENT**

Ons volgende Nuusbrief behoort u teen Februarie 1998 te bereik. Indien u kommentaar het, of enige anderbydraewilmaak,skryfgerusaandr.ElizeS.van Eeden,Bussie248,PUvirCHO,Potchefstroom2520 Our next Newsletter may reach you by February 1998. If you have some comment or want to make a contribution, please write to dr. Elize S. van Eeden, Box 248, PU for CHE, Potchefstroom 2520.

### **5. A PRACTICAL WORKSHOP ON OUTCOMES BASED EDUCATION BY THE POTCHEFSTROOM UNIVERSITY FOR CHE// 'N PRAKTIESE WERKSWINKEL OOR UITKOMSGBASEERDE ONDERWYS DEUR DIE POTCHEFSTROOMSE UNIVERSITEIT vir CHO**

IS U 'N ONDERWYSER, OUER, ONDERWYSBESTUURDER, DOMINEE, KERKLIDMAAT, IEMAND WAT BELANG STEL IN DIE ONDERWYS?

STEL U BELANG IN 'N OPLEIDINGSEMINAAR OOR UITKOMSGBASEERDE ONDERWYS - MET 'N VERSKIL?

KURRIKULUM 2005 EN UITKOMSGBASEERDE ONDERWYS (UGO) WORD VANAF 1998 INGEFASEER.

ONDERWYSERS, SKOOLHOOFDE EN ANDER BELANGSTELLENDEN WORD TANS DAARVOOR OPGELEI. DIE OPLEIDING IS TANS NOG BAIE TEGNIES VAN AARD EN KONSENTRER DAAROP OM ONDERWYSERS VERTROUD TE MAAK MET UGO

DIE FAKULTEIT OPVOEDKUNDE VAN DIE PU VIR CHO BIED U NOU 'N REEKS SEMINARE MET 'N VERSKIL



DIE UGO-SEMINARE WAT DIE PUK SE FAKULTEIT OPVOEDKUNDE U BIED IS ANDERS, OMDAT HULLE VANUIT 'N BYBELS-REFORMATORIESE HOEK AANGEBIED WORD. CHRISTEN-ONDERWYSERS, -OUERS, SKOOLHOOFDE ENSOVOORTS WORD GEHELP OM KURRIKULUM 2005 EN UGO VERANTWOORD VANUIT DIE CHRISTELIKE LEWENSBEKOUING TE BEMEESTER.

KYK APARTE INLIGTINGSBLAD VIR BESONDERHEDE