

EVALUATING HISTORY LIBRARY BOOKS FOR HIGH SCHOOL PUPILS AS TOOLS FOR RESOURCE-BASED LEARNING*

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At first glance delegates to a conference of History teachers might quizzically wonder why a *library* organization should want to present a workshop for teachers. Closer scrutiny, however, reveals that this is a History *teaching* (not solely teachers') conference and that the library organization involved is an *education* library service - more specifically the school library section of it (where the staff members are primarily experienced teachers rather than librarians). As teachers and as librarians and indeed as teacher-librarians and above all as part of an educational support service - the School library Section of the Cape Education Library Service - we are primarily concerned with resource-based learning. Let us at this point remind ourselves of the characteristics of resource-based learning:

RESOURCE-BASED LEARNING CHARACTERISTICS¹

- * Student centred
- * Students are **actively** involved in learning
- * Teachers must tract students' learning
- * Students use **resources** both within and outside the school
- * Students develop **information literacy**
- * Teacher is a **facilitator** of learning
- * Programmes are **structured**
- * **Process** is valued
- * Students take **responsibility** for their own learning
- * **Choice** and **negotiation** are important
- * Students develop **independence** and **life-long** learning skills

- * Caters for individual differences and learning styles
- * Students can learn from one another - fosters collaborative learning
- * Success orientated.

It is arguable that these characteristics pertain more closely to History as a school subject than to any other school subject. Concepts like 'process', 'choice', 'negotiation' and 'using resources both within and outside the school' have particular meaning for History teachers and their pupils.

Much has been said in recent times about reconstruction and development in our reborn country. Few can be unaware of the need for renewal and growth and of the vital and dynamic role of education in it! **In order to expunge the monovocal and ideologically coloured master narratives of the past in South Africa and, more importantly and more particularly, to prevent a repetition of supremacist histories and official versions used as political tools, multiperspectives should be nurtured.** Let us avoid what Professor Colin Bundy of UWC has called "anti-apartheid history" or "history by assertion" which runs the risk of manufacturing its own set of myths to counter those of white supremacist history and apartheid history.² This history by assertion propounds, for instance, that the precolonial past was wholly egalitarian and democratic - a state of Merrie Africa. Some of the booklets in the "Let us speak of freedom" series, produced by the Education Resource and Information Project (ERIP) at UWC, could be said to be on the brink of falling into this category. (Four booklets are available for participants in this workshop to peruse and discuss). Bundy quotes George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, and more particularly the insidious Ministry of Truth which had as its slogan "who controls the past controls the future: who controls the present controls the past" to combat the political hijacking of history.

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Therein lies part of the answer to the question as to why we South Africans seem suddenly to be obsessed with 'sources' and 'skills', whereas in Britain and the USA the great debate as to **what** should be taught (i.e. content) and **how** it should be taught (i.e. methodology/skill) raged most fiercely ten years ago in the aftermath of curriculum renewal.³ When one looks at the most recent History books published by reputable British and also Australian publishers, it is very evident that there is a preponderance of content (i.e. substantial texts), while 'sources' and 'skills' are complementary and ancillary to the text in the way that traditional captions to photographs and other illustrations are.

In the Hamlyn "See through history" series (1993) (represented here by a book ideal for Standard 6 pupils: *The Renaissance* by Tim Wood) there is an unabashed return to the conventional format of History library books. Instead of 'sources' or extracts set in colourful blocks, detailed and informative captions to a wealth of exquisite and colourful illustrations complement a very informative text. No sign here of 'activities', 'questions' and 'sources' of any kind! In the 1993 Longman "Sense of history" series one can see no trace of text laced with (interrupted by?) quotations, extracts and questions. Instead there is, skirting the text, a profusion of colourful reproductions of paintings accompanied by questions which relate specifically to the scenes depicted in the paintings and not directly to the main text.

In the 1994 Longman "History project" series (represented at this workshop by 4 titles) there is a subtle balance between text, sources and skills-oriented questions.

Jenkins and Brickley, writing in "From skillology to methodology" in *Teaching History* (October 1986) point out that "content and method are not alternatives but inseparable facets of the same phenomenon."

This **balance** is essential for a library book, one that can, realistically, be used by the pupil in **self-directed learning** - and this is what resource-based learning is primarily about. As teachers we are often inclined to overlook this and assess the worth of a library book more on the strength of its value as a teacher's reference work and/or a book to be used in the top-down, teacher-controlled classroom situation.

Whereas the British, the Americans and the Australians seem to have outgrown the need for overt skills-based History library books, we South Africans are acutely aware of the need for intellectual restitution, creative methods, collaborative and less Eurocentric syllabus design and a search for previously suppressed truths. Indeed, learners and teachers of History in the new South Africa can now cast off their fears of People's

Education as a political gimmick and apply some of the methods which it has espoused. Kruss has described these as: creative learning, problemsolving throughout the active participation and **involvement of pupils in the learning process**, hands-on experience in the laboratory, **self-study in the library**, **questioning**, discussion and co-operative working together in groups; these are methods that substantiate dynamism and change.⁴

Paradoxically, while the History teacher and pupil in Britain have had access to a wealth of library books consciously and overtly using the skills and sources approach, their need for this approach appears to be less pressing than that of the History teacher and pupil in under-resourced South Africa. Probably the most exciting, stimulating and specifically 'skills-based' books to come out of South Africa are the Heinemann-Centaur "History in process" series (made up of **Diamonds and Gold: using sources in the classroom** by B. Johannesson and P. van Dyk (1992) and **George Grey and the Xhosa: fact and opinion** by G. Weldon (1992)). Using a format more reminiscent of the British skills-based books of the mid-1980s, the authors provide little formal text. Extracts from sources and questions on them, followed by revisionary sets of questions, are predominant. As library books these two titles provide excellent back-up as well as background material despite the lack of narrative text. Of particular value is the way in which the reader/pupil is introduced to schools of history writing or historiographies.

1. The Afrikaner nationalist (i.e. apartheid or segregationist) history.
2. The liberal and;
3. The revisionist or radical (Bundy would call this "history re-examination").⁵

Armed with an awareness of different ways of looking at history, pupils are likely to be more critical and analytical and more able to identify one-sided, biased and propagandist writing.

Let us at this point remind ourselves that our main focus in this workshop is on the multi-faceted concept **resource-based learning** and not only a narrow look at 'sources' in the context of skills-based History teaching and learning. True enough, there is a lack of suitable South African publications of reasonable standard which can be classed as specifically 'skills-based' and 'source-based' History books. It is the skills exercised in these books that are central to resource-based learning.

However, there is a good deal of general library material available for South African teachers and pupils to use in exercising their historical skills. For example, seven South African books, all published in 1993,

while fulfilling the criteria for a traditional library book (i.e. ideal for independent study on the part of the reader, and replete with content) could be used by the facilitator-teacher and the self-directed learner to analyse, communicate, empathise, synthesise and evaluate (five of the seven 'skills' propounded by Matthews in 1992 as constituting the skills matrix (vaardigheidswiel)).⁶

In **Maps of Southern Africa** by Oscar Norwich (Ad. Donker, 1993) far more than mere geography is reflected in the 30 antique maps depicting Portuguese, Dutch and English exploration and drawn by several famous cartographers working between 1470 and 1798. Political developments in the form of territorial expansion can be traced. Each cartouche provides a sub-text to be explored.

A wealth of social history emerges from **A Cape camera: the architectural beauty of the old Cape: photographs from the Arthur Elliott Collection in the Cape Archives** (Ad. Donker, 1993). Std 8 pupils could be led to think creatively about fashions, economics, cultural heritage and not only architecture per se. Pupils could be inspired to visit and specialise in the study of a particular building.

In Andrew Smith's **The Khoikhoi at the Cape of Good Hope: seventeenth-century drawings in the South African Library** (published by the South African Library in 1993) 27 colour drawings and sketches convey much about the interaction between the Dutch and the Khoikhoi. A detailed textual introduction as well as notes and Dutch-English annotations provide insight into the Cape environment, Khoi social life, dress, hunting patterns, music and food. There is no predistilled master interpretation by the author of the text. The reader is free to tease out the significance of the sketches for himself/herself.

Whereas the three books mentioned above are examples of history through the medium of cartography, architecture and pictorial illustration respectively, David Hammond-Tooke's **The roots of black South Africa** (Ball, 1993) is an anthropological study of dispute settlement, witchcraft, culture, chieftainship and rites of passage. This study, devoid of political agendas, sees a people "reclaim their past, their identity and their wholeness" (as Bundy would say). White South Africans can now see how absurd it was for pre-

conquest Africans to be relegated to an appendix (as in C.F.J. Muller's 1969 edition of **Five Hundred Years**).⁷

Through the case-studies, J.C. Kotze's disturbing but valuable book **In their shoes: understanding black South Africans through their experiences of life** (Juta, 1993) explores how abject living conditions have shaped the perceptions of black people, and how a 'collective consciousness' has developed. Here the reader has an 'empathy' exercise through debating, examining and researching.

In **Editors under fire** by Harvey Tyson (Random House, 1993) we are given, through the hurly-burly of newspaper reporting and editorials, an in-depth insight into the recent political history of our country and a refutation of accusations from President Mandela that the English-language newspapers as a corpus collaborated with the apartheid regime. Here is a cornucopia of source material for creative and analytical history-as-process rather than history-as-product. Using the newspaper as an educational tool is nothing new.

An autobiographical work in which we can trace elements of the liberal approach to history writing is Helen Suzman's **In no uncertain terms: memoirs** (Ball, 1993). This is not only a modern interpretation of our history, it is also a setting straight of the record when proponents of 'the struggle' try to downplay the contribution of South African liberals, over a long period, to the pursuit of justice and good governance. Readers will appreciate this vivid human and even "bottom-up" approach in a book that was not consciously written to be 'useful' or student-centred.

In conclusion and in recapitulation - while source-based and skills-based library books are of particular value in meeting the criteria for resource-based learning, we can apply the historical 'skills' when using books (and, of course, non-book material) of all kinds. In South Africa today there are enough books available in the school library for pupils to balance content with skills. Rob Siebörger of the Education Faculty at UCT reminds us that skills come out of content, and that we should avoid meta-history and disembodied skills.⁸ Dr Marits Broodryk of UPE makes this gentle rejoinder: doen die een, maar moet nie die ander nalaat nie.⁹

ENDNOTES

1. Styles, Judy: **Resource-based learning: information literacy training and deve-**

lopment package, p.62. (Australian School Library Association, Melbourne, 1993).

2. Bundy, Colin: Once the doors are opened: education for a democratic South Africa. In J. Polley (ed): **The Freedom Charter and the future.** pp. 100-102. (IDASA, Mowbray, 1990).
 3. Broodryk, Marits: Die verwerwing van historiese vaardighede: 'n kurrikulum-ontwikkelingsperspektief, p.1. Ongepubliseerde Referaat gelewer op Tweejaarlikse konferensie van die Historiese Genootskap van Suid-Afrika 1994. (Stellenbosch, 19-21 Januarie 1994).
 4. Kruss, G.: Report no. 1. **People's Education: an examination of the concept,** p. 19. (CACE University of the Western Cape, 1988).
 5. Johannesson, Barbara and Van Dyk, Pamela: **Diamonds and gold: using sources in the classroom.** p.10. (Heinemann-Centaur, Pietermaritzburg, 1992).
 6. Matthews, J.: Skills-based teaching. **Yesterday and Today:** No 23, May 1992, pp. 23-24.
 7. Bundy, Colin: **Op. cit.,** p. 101.
 8. Siebörger, Rob: Unpublished Paper read at the Conference of the South African Historical Association. (Stellenbosch, 19-21 January 1994).
 9. Broodryk, Marits: **Op. cit.,** p. 9.
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"Writing history is an old and honourable profession with distinctive standards and purposes. The historian's goals are accuracy, analysis, and objectivity in the reconstruction of the past. But history is more than an academic discipline up there in the stratosphere. It also has its own role in the future of nations.

For history is to the nation rather as memory is to the individual. As an individual deprived of memory becomes disoriented and lost, not knowing where he has been or where he is going, so a nation denied a conception of its past will be disabled in dealing with its present and its future".

Arthur M. Schlesinger jr: *The Disuniting of America*, pp. 45-46. (W.W. Norton & Company, New York, 1992)

Vaclav Havel, Czech President and playwright:

"He who fears facing his own past, must necessarily fear what lies before him ... Lying can never save us from the lies. Falsifiers of history do not safeguard freedom but imperil it ... Truth liberates man from fear".
