

**N. Dlamini and J. de Villiers, *Effective History Grade 10 (OBE approach)***

Excellentia Publishers, Empangeni, 2004

126 pp

This is a much needed school textbook aimed at learners in KwaZulu-Natal in line with the current Grade 10 syllabus (NATED 550) as was approved by the Department of Education. The authors have used the outcomes-based education approach, methodology and style as a precursor to the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) to be implemented in 2006.

The content of the book comprises two sections (A and B), which are not categorized as South African and World History, but rather reflect these themes as they appear in NATED for Grade 10. The themes covered are the rise of the Zulu nation, the Mfecane, the Republic of Natalia, the creation of the Sotho nation, the diamond-field dispute and its social and economic effect on the Boer Republics, labour relations in nineteenth century South Africa and the role of the Indian community in the economy of South Africa. "World History" deals with transformation in Europe during the Age of Revolution: the French Revolution, the Age of Napoleon, the congress system and the Economic (Industrial) Revolution.

As mentioned, the themes are presented in keeping with OBE principles in respect of approach, assessment and methodology. Questions are posed, sources are provided, and assignments ("activities") are aimed at learners achieving each of the learning outcomes. The book is well-illustrated and contains photographs, maps and tables. Titles for further reading are provided, which will enable the keen learner and educator to access these at an early stage. At face value, the book meets the standards and requirements of OBE education in South Africa and the authors are to be congratulated on a fine product.

The question that comes to mind is whether OBE history teaching will have the desired effect, namely to improve on history teaching and historical "understanding" as we used to know it in the "old" South Africa. In 1974, Perskor published F.A. van Jaarsveld's *New Illustrated History for Standard 8*. This book of 238 pages more or less covers exactly the same themes as the Grade 10 history book by Dlamini and De Villiers, though in much greater detail. It is written in the narrative style, it is also well-illustrated and "exercises" are provided at the end of each chapter. Incidentally, many of the illustrations and tables used in Van Jaarsveld's textbook of 1974 also appear in the book by Dlamini and De Villiers (compare, for example, Van Jaarsveld, pp 4, 8, 11 and 18, with Dlamini and De Villiers, pp 74, 64, 71 and 74). A major difference is the approach – Van Jaarsveld's book being written from an

Afrikaner Nationalist point of view (see, for example, the section on the Difaqane / Mfecane), while the book of Dlamini and De Villiers is well-balanced, reflecting various perspectives. Despite this fact, the question may well be asked whether the OBE approach really will effect improvement on standards as we used to know it in the previous dispensation. The authors of school textbooks were provided with a syllabus, but had a free hand in the development of themes. Admittedly, the texts had to be politically “correct”. In the post-1994 South Africa however, authors receive detailed instructions on how to write and what to write (what has changed?). With no criticism directed at the authors (as they have no say in the matter) – are we as a result of OBE not dealing with diluted, condensed accounts of the past that lack the depth and quality of several decades ago? Are we not compromising on standards in order to meet the demands of the previously disadvantaged masses? Was everything wrong in the old educational system? Will OBE produce historians of a better quality? Only time will tell. OBE will yet have to prove its value and position within the new South Africa.

Albert van Jaarsveld  
Department of History  
University of Zululand