

BOOK REVIEWS

In Search of Mapwork: A worthwhile book for the geography classroom
(Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 2008, ISBN: 978 0 19 598455 2,
pp. 104)

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The authors of this publication anticipated to address the demands of the National Curriculum Statements for Geography (in grades 10 to 12). The style is appropriate for these grades, although there are some errors in grammar and style which will be referred to later. I was quite impressed with the publication, which I felt was learner-friendly, as well as highly attractive. Even with the criticism I have about the language style and grammar, I would recommend the book as a useful resource for FET teachers.

Regarding the format of the *In Search of Mapwork: A worthwhile book for the geography classroom*, the contents page (p. 3) is accurate, as is the glossed index on p. 104. The book is divided into four major parts, namely mapwork skills, mapwork interpretation, working with aerial photographs and orthophoto maps, and working with topographical maps and photographs. The introduction "About this book" is commendable and very explanatory. A section on "Assessment of mapwork" is given on p. 5 and another on geographical information systems on pp. 6 and 7. A page on learning outcomes and assessment standards for the relevant grades is given on p. 8.

In Search of Mapwork... is also intended for inclusive education purposes, and no bias in terms of culture, etc has been detected. The exercises are of the highest quality and will achieve their stated purpose.

The focus area of the book is the mapwork curriculum of grades 10 to 12 as set out in the South African National Curriculum Statement of 2003. As such the aim of the book is to elucidate mapwork and geographically literacy concepts.

In Search of Mapwork... is laid out in a systematic manner as it progresses through all the mapwork skills stated in the curriculum, with applicable exercises and maps, plus photographs and diagrams. Model answers have been included at the end of the book.

Regarding the accuracy and thoroughness of the book, I have quite a number of recommendations. In terms of the National Curriculum Statement (2003), the following has not been covered in *In Search of Mapwork...*: atlas work (for grades 10-12) and map projections (for grades 10-12). It would have been a major benefit if these two major themes in the curriculum could have been incorporated.

Examples of grammar improvements are the following:

- “industrial” should read “industry” on p. 3 (the contents page). Here the other words are nouns, so the adjective “industrial” is misplaced.
- “gradient” on p. 26, a good idea would have been to include the difference between suitable gradients for a road and a railway.
- On p. 35 “TBVC” is mentioned - I recommend that this is written out in full, because the current generations will not likely know what the letters (Transkei, Bophuthatswana, Venda, and Ciskei) stand for, nor is it mentioned in the glossary or glossed index.
- Regarding Chapter 4 (“Working with topographical maps and photographs”), I would advise writing “topographical map” in full instead of just “map” (pp. 46, 50, 52, 56, 58, 62, 64, 68, 74, 76, 80). “Topographical map” is written in full on p. 70, however. This will avoid confusion with the orthophoto map.
- Question 2.3 on p. 62 is rather tenuous - it should focus more on the specified pump storage scheme instead of coal-burning stations. The issue of tenuousness can also be leveled against question 5.2 on p. 80. There is no evidence on the map to support the answer given on p. 98. The question is too speculative at present.
- On p. 64 “trigonometrical” should be written instead of “trig”, which is too informal for a textbook.
- On the same page, “the process” should be added after “during and afterwards” (see question 3.1.1), which is somewhat an incomplete sentence.

- Regarding question 4.5.2 on p. 64, “map” should be included after “orthophoto”. For question 4.5.3, the sentence should read “Use the orthophoto map to compare the settlements ‘Far East Bank’ and ‘Modderfontein Agricultural Holdings’. List the differences” instead of how it is written on the specified page.
- For question 2.1 on p. 68, better grammatical style would be achieved by writing “Give two climatic reasons...a different climate to those living in Cape Town” instead of how it is presently written.
- For question 5.4 on the same page, it is best to use “Give” instead of “Discuss” to elicit the desired answers. It is also preferable to write foreign words in italics, for example, “rioolwerke” on p. 70. For the sakes or continuity of tenses, “do” should be written as “did”, as after “took” on p. 74.
- For the English translation of ‘Aukoerebis’, it should be written as “Place of Great Noise” (p. 74, top).
- For question 1.3 on p. 76, I would include “showing that mining occurs” instead of the way it is presently written.
- Question 4 on p. 83, under “GIS revision” is not a question- it should correctly end with a full stop instead of a question mark, as it calls upon learners to “list” only.
- For question 3 (at bottom) on the same page, the sentence should correctly read “a block on it at roughly an A4 size” instead of the informal way it is presently written.

However, positive aspects are that a good range of map examples from both rural and urban / developed and developing contexts have been used. The examples used are very applicable in terms of teaching for equity.

The authors have vast experience in the authoring of writing educational resources, and all have good backgrounds in the stated school grades.

In Search of Mapwork... is copiously laid out with descriptions, definitions and concept outlines. The topographical and orthophoto maps selected are of the highest applicability. The diagrams and satellite photographs are also very commendable.

Regarding the formatting aspects of the book; the glossed index, as mentioned already, on p. 104 is accurate. There is no bibliography. All photographs have been correctly referenced (on p. 2).

In conclusion: *In Search of Mapwork...* content is satisfactory, and as such, it will be a worthwhile resource for secondary school teachers of Geography. The authors approach the topics in an interesting and innovative way, and there are plenty of highly enjoyable mapwork exercises for learners to complete. With some improved editing and careful proof-reading, plus the incorporation of sections on atlas work and projections, the book's content would have been more highly praised and adjudged by me.

Facing – Mapping – Bridging Diversity. Foundation of a European Discourse on History Education. Part 1.

(Wochen Schau Wissenschaft, ISBN: 978-3-89974731-7, pp. 401)

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Facing – Mapping – Bridging Diversity is a compilation of articles from 35 different authors, all of which share the theme of didactics of history as a scientific discipline. The main purpose of the book is to set out the discourse on history education in various European countries and lay the basis for a European discourse on the topic.

Each of the 24 articles explores history education in countries such as Austria, Cyprus, Estonia and Hungary, among others. A notable exclusion from the book is Switzerland, as it is not part of the European Union. The motivation for the book is derived from the belief, according to Erdmann and Hasberg, that none of the previous investigations into History education in Europe included the didactics of history. The editors postulate that the teaching of history in Europe follow three distinct routes, firstly that of the German model which focuses on historical consciousness in society, secondly, the idea in other European countries where History Didactics are part of the educational sciences, and lastly the French model that looks at History education as part of social studies and where the focus is on the transmission

of historical knowledge. By presenting the findings of 35 authors in this publication, the editors envisage to demonstrate the similarities concerning History didactics between the different European Union member states and to create a starting point for closer cooperation between the countries.

The aspirations of the authors as set out above, therefore define the audience at which the publication is aimed. Those in tertiary education institutions where History education forms part of an education degree may benefit from reading these case studies, especially if issues such as diversity and unity are to be addressed through the use of a multi-perspective approach to history education. In this sense, history educators in South Africa may also find some articles useful as the new Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) emphasises the concept of multi-perspective approach to the interpretation and analysis of historical events.¹ The only chapter that deals specifically with unity and diversity is Karl Filser's "*Unity and Diversity of our European identity*" *Recommendations of the European Council on History Learning and Teaching*, which is enlightening regarding the European context and the emphasis on the use of the multi-perspective method, a method which also significantly influenced CAPS. The remainder of the book is a collection of case studies on History education from various Europe countries. While these articles are interesting and informative, the relevance for South African educators is doubtful, as each chapter will have to be scrutinised in order to assess the extent to which European case studies may apply to the South African context. While the European Union countries and South Africa have a lot in common regarding unity and diversity, there are also unique aspects to the different countries. It is unlikely that many school educators will want to wade through an academic text such as this unless they are sure that it may offer information that will be useful in their classrooms.

The technical aspects of the publication require improvement. The book contains no index, which hampers its usefulness to researchers. It is also evident that the chapters have been translated into English by a non-native English translator. The impact of this is that the meaning of many sentences is obscured by academic language. In short, the publication may contribute towards an expansion of the pedagogical horizons of those involved in curriculum planning and design as well as the theoretical foundations of History education; however, for the school educators the book may be of limited value.

¹ Department: Basic Education, Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement; p. 12. (Available at: <http://www.education.gov.za>), as accessed on 19 January 2012.

Our world, our society – Social Sciences grade 8
(Vivlia, South Africa, 2006, ISBN: 978-1-77006-444-7)
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Introduction

Textbooks are frequently considered to be important informers of content knowledge to be explored in lessons. Textbooks provide a certain structure which often forms the basis of teachers' pedagogical practices and learners' academic development in particular Learning Areas or school subjects. *Our World, Our Society* would be no exception. This Social Sciences (SS)² textbook for grade 8 learners contains the necessary information from which content knowledge of Social Sciences can be derived and explored. However, as most textbooks have their fair bit of inaccuracies, so too does *Our World, Our Society*. For the purpose of a structured critique, three main categories have been devised: the scope (which considers content, reliability and accuracy); readability (including style); and activities included in the textbook.

Scope

This textbook religiously follows topics mentioned in the *National Curriculum Statement for Social Sciences* (DoE, 2002). The content topics in the textbook are structured according to the NCS Grade 8 framework (DoE, 2002, pp.91-92). This may be useful to teachers as it provides a point of departure for their Social Sciences lessons which are in keeping with the SS policy document they use when planning lessons and assessments.

In terms of content accuracy, several flaws can be identified. The authors have included two meanings of "Revolution". Although it is necessary for learners to understand that often there are no definite meanings to words, it may

² Presently Social Sciences has become separate Learning Areas within the Continuous Assessment and Policy Statement implemented in South African schools by the Department of Basic Education in January 2012.

at the same time result in a sense of conceptual confusion. *Our World, Our Society* introduces the idea of race by identifying the “white” race; however the authors refer to the native people of Africa as Zulus. This is politically incorrect as African native people consisted of several other tribal ethnicities besides the Zulus. The authors go on to state: “African people living in South Africa”, which – to learners – may not make sense because South Africans are inevitably Africans (people native to the African continent).

Additionally not all indentured labour entailed 5 year long contracts. Instead this could be replaced with “for a specific period of time”. The title of the map on page 60 of the textbook reads: “Map shows *modern day* South Africa in the *1860s*” (own italics). This title is highly ambiguous and could foster a sense of confusion in learners understanding. Therefore it is suggested that the map reads: “Map showing independent kingdoms of South Africa in 1860 before it was colonised”. Furthermore, lobola as mentioned in the section on Industrialisation in South Africa is not explained well enough and may appear to be unclear to learners as it does not make mention of the fact that lobola was a practice among native people and not among all inhabitants of South Africa. In essence it should be made clear to learners that Mahatma Gandhi fought for the rights of racially-marginalised people in South Africa, and not for Indian people only as stated in the textbook.

Despite the excellent coverage of topics in this textbook, *Our World, Our Society* lacks in the reliability of the information it provides to learners and teachers. Ambiguity and inaccuracy of information have to be addressed for the textbook to achieve the success in learners’ conceptual and pedagogical growth.

Readability

Our World, Our Society has a substantial amount of written information as compared to other textbooks. Additionally, the written text is accompanied by the considerable use and variety of visual aids such as graphs, maps, tables and pictorial sources. This has a two-fold advantage. Firstly, it captures learners’ interest as learners are presently more visually receptive than they were in the past. Secondly, it helps learners become accustomed to data-handling skills which are greatly needed in our globalised world where problem-solving is a necessity.

Units within each module are inter-linked to each other through the introductory topic sentences at the beginning of the unit. These are beneficial to learners as it helps them reflect on the content they have covered in previous lessons and make correlations with the current topic under discussion.

There are several guidelines which serve as cognitive support to learners. Firstly, textboxes can be found on several pages throughout the textbook which provide a simplistic explanation of what is considered of importance for learners to know. Uniform Resource Locators (URLs)³ and summaries have also been included at the end of each unit. Learners are also urged to seek information concerning topics in the Grade 8 textbook from the library, the internet or by speaking to elders. Additionally assessment rubrics for activities engaged with during the unit are incorporated for learners to assess themselves.

Despite the above positive remarks on the textbook, in some instances images used in the textbook appeared unclear and blurred due to the green fill. I would assume that if learners had difficulty in identifying particulars in the images, then they are certain to find it difficult to interpret and subsequently complete the activity which required use of the sources.

The style of the textbook was generally suited to the academic level of grade 8 classes. The additional assistance provided in the book catered for learners who had enquiring minds and who were more academically-inclined than others.

Activities

Unlike other textbooks, *Our World, Our Society* does not place more emphasis on activities and resources used to engage in Social Sciences topics. Yet the activities which are included, catered for the different cognitive levels of learners. Several activities which appear in the textbook allow for integration, not only of History and Geography, but also of the languages, Life Orientation and Mathematics. Hence resulting in a holistic interdisciplinary approach to knowledge and assessment.

Moreover, additional assistance to teachers is provided in the form of a Teachers' Guide. This contains possible answers and marking rubrics to activities in the learners' book, an introduction of the Social Sciences Learning

3 Internet addresses which identify and locate files in the World Wide Web.

Area as well as work schedules and assessment rubrics which Social Sciences teachers could derive their lessons from and plan their lessons around.

Recommendations

Despite the generous use of pictorial sources, it is recommended that reference to places where an event/s occurred, be accompanied with a map. This could physically contextualise the event being discussed. Also, authors should include the sources from which images have been extracted so that should learners or teachers wish to conduct further research on that particular image, they will find it easy to locate.

Conclusion

Our World, Our Society exhibits an unbiased approach in the composition of the contents. The layout of textbook allows for ease of reading and a flow of information. The pictorial images which accompany the typed text add variation in reading and create a meaningful yet comprehensive guide for learners and teachers. There are, however, areas which need rethinking and revising. Overall, this textbook offers a reasonable point of departure in terms of the content knowledge and skills which serve as the basis for Social Sciences.

In search of history: Grade 10 learner's book

(Oxford University Press, Cape Town, 2011, ISBN: 978 0 19 905725 2, pp. 223)

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In response to the recent changes in South African Education the Oxford publishers have unveiled their latest *In search of History* Grade 10 learners' book which tout as "the best source-based approach to studying History."

On the front cover is another seal of confidence declaring “National CAPS made easy.” Written by the same authors as its predecessors, this textbook retains old characteristics and matches them with new curriculum changes. The intended audience of the textbook are the school History learners. It therefore fits well in the field of History teaching and research as it is meant to be used in the classroom. Those who intend to read deeply on the topics covered in the textbook can use the textbook for background reading because moving on to other reference books.

With glossy colour covers that are the hallmark of textbook marketing, the textbook also has longer surface sheets, thus making it thinner and less intimidating. There is also use of blue highlighting colour inside the textbook to guide learners to important aspects of the issues under coverage. The presentation and format is to a larger extent appealing. In keeping with style in previous editions there is a balance between text and illustrations. There is enough text for the textbook user to follow a particular narrative and all illustrations have explanatory captions. Therefore the sources are not just there for cosmetic purposes. Although all the illustrations are in black and white, they are not all the same overused and reproduced images that textbook users tend to come across often. The illustrations include pictures, drawings, maps, tables, and statistical data. All these aspects are presented in a clear and logical manner not as jumbled up snippets of bit and pieces as was becoming a feature of South African History textbooks during the Outcomes Based Education period. The sources are acknowledged and there are suggested further reference books at the end. The index also makes the textbook user friendly.

Most of the content is as suggested in the CAPS document with the major themes being: The world around 1600; European expansion and conquest in the 15th to 18th centuries; the French revolution; Transformations in Southern Africa after 1750; Colonial expansion after 1750; and The South African war and Union. However, one Grade 10 theme as per the CAPS History document is missing – on Industrial Revolution and modern world economic system. The themes in the textbook are chronologically sequenced and create a narrative that learners can follow. There are a few cases of linking chapters such that the book follows an unbroken prose. The content in the textbook shows evidence of research by the authors to match the issues to contemporary research. There is reference to all types of historical research including archaeology and oral history especially regarding early South African History.

It is also contextualised, an example being the way slavery is presented within a context of Spanish conquest of America and Portugal and the destruction of the Indian Ocean trade. For controversial issues, such as the representation of Shaka, multi-perspectives are provided as recommended by the CAPS. There is an attempt to represent the ordinary people and women in key events such as the French revolution or the South African War. The themes are introduced through a key question, which is taken from the CAPS. The textbook also provides definitions of the major first order concepts such as revolution, propaganda and dictator. Conceptual understanding is essential and cases where slavery and slave trade are used almost interchangeably will confuse learners. The second order concepts are more implied than always obvious with the exception of empathy.

Another positive aspect of this textbook is the assessment activities. To start with, the presentation is not confusing, as the publishers do not throw activities in every little space available on the page. Instead the assessment is logically presented, coming after a sizeable amount of narrative and its supporting sources, meaning that learners can at least learn something before they are assessed. Different types of assessment activities are provided, such as, source based questions, matching, explanations, games, class discussions and newspaper articles. For most of these activities the textbook clearly explains if they are supposed to be individual work, pair work or group work. No time is provided though to guide the learners on how to answer the questions. Mark allocation is provided only for the major assessments at the end of each chapter. For the extended writing tasks, a generic rubric is provided at the end of the textbook. The questions come at various levels enabling all learners to think at a lower and higher order level. The textbook users are encouraged not to rely only on the textbook to answer some of the questions as they are asked to use their own knowledge. Unlike in the text, the second order concepts such as empathy and causation come up more explicitly in the assessment. An example is the empathy exercise on Shaka who in the text is presented as a contentious historical figure. More comprehensive assessment is provided towards the end of the textbook where the authors provide a sample end-of-year paper covering all the aspects the learners have to be aware of. In general the assessment is challenging but achievable.

Finally, the language is by and large appropriate for the grade. A glossary of new words and key words is presented, not at the back of the book, but exactly where they are used so that learners can make easy and quick reference.

Another feature that is useful for the textbook users is the skills support. Throughout the textbook, there are sections where the authors explain skills such as the use and study of sources and referencing. These are important skills which bridge the gap between school history and academic history. It would have been better though, if the skills support were put together in one section and learners would be referred to them throughout the textbook. The point is that referencing, for instance, is a vital aspect of studying and it should be referred to as early as possible and not only towards the end of the textbook. The way study skills and meanings of instruction words are explained together at the end of the textbook is a good example of how the skills support could also appear in the textbook.

Therefore the production of this new textbook is a welcome development. The textbook will be of great use to both learners and teacher as they apply the new CAPS system. It fulfils most of the roles a textbook should, such as providing appropriate and up-to-date information, develop historical skills and conceptual understanding. The book will be a valuable asset for South African schools.