

From Turning Point to Footnote: The 1976 Soweto Uprising in the CAPS History Curriculum

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Abstract

The 1976 Soweto Uprising is a significant turning point in South African history. This student-led revolt not only exposed the brutality of apartheid to the world, it also reshaped the trajectory of the liberation struggle, contributing profoundly to the system's eventual overthrow. However, 50 years later, its place within the school History curriculum remains surprisingly marginal. Under the current Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), the Soweto Uprising is briefly taught in Grade 9 Social Sciences, within the unit "Turning points in South African history: 1948, 1960, 1976 and 1990". It reappears in Grade 12 History under the theme "Civil Resistance in South Africa, 1970s–1980s", but again, receives even less attention. In both instances, the event is not explored in depth, raising important concerns about how such a pivotal moment in anti-apartheid resistance features in contemporary national education. I argue that this situation is untenable. The arguments align with three theories: Critical Curriculum Theory (CCT); Postcolonial Theory (PT); and Critical Pedagogy (CP). These theories help examine whose knowledge becomes included and excluded in the curriculum, how colonisation influences knowledge production even post-independence, and discuss how power, oppression, and liberation influence education. The current study proposes, amongst other things, that CAPS allocate more time and in-depth content to the Soweto Uprising; that the Soweto Uprising be taught as a stand-alone topic; that the History curriculum be reviewed for it to foreground Black youth agency, African epistemologies, and 'history from below'; and the inclusion of oral histories from the surviving participants of the Soweto Uprising. All proposals were made after consulting the CAPS documents and prescribed textbooks to investigate how the Soweto Uprising is featured in the school's History curriculum.

Keywords: Soweto Uprising; Curriculum; Postcolonial; Critical Pedagogy; African epistemologies; History from below

Introduction

2026 marks the 50th anniversary of the 1976 Soweto Uprising. As we commemorate the heroism of the young Black school children who took it upon themselves in their tender ages to challenge the colonial and racist apartheid regime, it is vital to evaluate how the 1976 Soweto Uprising is represented in the formal school History curriculum in post-apartheid South Africa. History education plays a vital role in shaping national identity and collective memory (Carretero et al., 2013; Bentrovato, 2017; Carretero, 2017; Wassermann, 2017; Cajani et al., 2019; Nkosi, 2025). The question of how historical events and figures feature in the school curriculum is therefore very significant. Sadly, this epochal event is given only marginal attention in the current History curriculum.

In this paper, I argue that the representation of the Soweto Uprising in the school History curriculum has reduced it to a footnote. The study proposes four major interventions to the curriculum to effectively feature the Soweto Uprising and ensure it receives the recognition it deserves as a watershed in South African history. I submit that, rather than being part of the broad topic on the challenge of Black Consciousness to the apartheid state in the Grade 12 History curriculum, the 1976 Soweto Uprising should be treated as a stand-alone topic to allow for a more in-depth critical examination of its causes, effects, and historical significance. The curriculum should also be revised to include African epistemologies¹ (See Adeate and Sewchurran, 2023), Black youth agency² (Jovino et al., 2023), and “history from below”³ (Rediker, 2022, p. 296). Oral histories from surviving participants should be incorporated to guarantee a more decolonised, participative, and critically grounded portrayal of 1976.

As 2026 marks the end of the fifth decade after the outbreak of the 1976 Soweto Uprising, it is necessary to interrogate the ideological and pedagogical role of the curriculum in framing this watershed moment. Curriculum is a site of struggle; there is an inevitable process of selection, emphasis, simplification, and omission (Apple, 2004). This is more so because of the enduring colonial-apartheid residues, transformations, and in light of the

¹ African epistemology refers to the study of knowledge from an African perspective with emphasis on unique cultural, historical, and social contexts of African societies. It challenges the individualistic nature of Western epistemology as it focuses on the importance of communal relations and interconnectedness in knowledge production

² Black youth agency refers to young Black people's capacity to think independently and make decisions of their own about their lives and their future.

³ History from below refers to the historiographical approach that focuses on the lives, experiences, contributions, and agency of ordinary people instead of ‘great men’ histories which focus only on the elites and major political events.

calls for decolonial approaches (Godsell & Maluleka, 2025). This article critically analyses how the Uprising is positioned and contextualised within the CAPS History curriculum, to illuminate the broader politics of memory and knowledge production in post-apartheid education. It also investigates whether the curriculum does justice to the radical agency, plurality of voices, and enduring significance of the 1976 generation.

The marginalisation of a turning point: 1976 Soweto Uprising in the CAPS curriculum

The Soweto Uprising marked a watershed in the South African liberation struggle (Brown, 2016; Heffernan et al., 2016; Seroto, 2018). What began as a student protest in the streets of Soweto on 16 June 1976 became a turning point that culminated in the overthrow of the oppressive and discriminatory apartheid regime (Brown, 2016). Offended by the imposition of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction in Black schools and many other challenges that affected and compromised Black education, such as overcrowded classrooms, unqualified educators, lack of resources, and poor infrastructure, the students in Soweto embarked on a peaceful march aimed at expressing their grievances to the authorities. After the confrontation with the police, the peaceful demonstration turned violent when the police opened fire and killed unarmed school children in full school uniform (Ndlovu, 2017). The unrest that began in Soweto spread across the country quickly, as students from different parts of the country joined in solidarity with those who took it upon themselves to challenge the imposition of Afrikaans as the medium of instruction, Bantu Education and ultimately, the apartheid government (Radebe, 2022). The protest became nationwide and caught the national and international attention as it exposed the brutality of apartheid to a larger audience. The 1976 Soweto Uprising became very instrumental in mobilising both local and international support against the apartheid regime (Mkhabela, 2001). The 1976 Soweto Uprising brought schoolchildren to the centre of the liberation struggle in South Africa (Brown, 2016).

The Soweto Uprising, due to its historical importance, is a crucial component of South African collective memory and national identity. However, it is disturbing that, 50 years later, the Soweto Uprising's place within the school History curriculum remains surprisingly on the periphery. In the current South African school curriculum prescribed by CAPS, the Soweto Uprising is taught only in two grades. Firstly, it is covered in Grade 9 Social Sciences within the unit *"Turning points in South African history: 1948, 1960, 1976 and 1990"* (Department of Basic Education, 2011a, p. 44) Secondly, it is also included in Grade

12 History under the theme “*Civil Resistance in South Africa, 1970s–1980s*” (Department of Basic Education, 2011b, p. 29). In both these Grades, the Soweto Uprising receives limited attention. In these grades, the event is not explored in depth, raising genuine concerns about its underrepresentation.

The Soweto Uprising not only exposed the brutality of the apartheid regime, it also revitalised the history of powerful youth in South African activism, community mobilisation, and international solidarity; therefore, one would reasonably expect it to be covered in depth within the formal school History curriculum. However, its presence remains comparatively marginal as it is situated within a wider narrative of resistance rather than being examined as a distinct and complex historical event. In the current school curriculum, both in Grades 9 and 12, the Soweto Uprising is allocated limited depth and scope, thereby constraining opportunities for thorough understanding and critical engagement. Although included under “turning points in South African history” (Department of Basic Education, 2011a, p. 44), in Grade 9 the Soweto Uprising is also not covered in depth. This marginalisation raises important concerns regarding historical representation, pedagogical emphasis, and the framing of transformative events within the post-apartheid educational discourse, as they remain in the footnotes of the curriculum. Moreover, the manner in which the Soweto Uprising is portrayed in the CAPS curriculum influences the students’ understanding of apartheid history and the broader struggle for justice.

From resistance to representation: Scholarly perspectives on the Soweto Uprising and the politics of knowledge production in South African History education

Different scholars have written about the 1976 Soweto Uprising from different perspectives. The focal point for many is the debate about the actual causes and what transpired on 16 June 1976. As Ndlovu (2017), who is part of the 1976 generation, posits, the Uprising can be interpreted from different perspectives. Scholars such as Brown (2016), Heffernan et al., (2016), and Ndlovu (2017) have focused on many issues underpinning the Soweto Uprising. The aforementioned scholars focused on the role that Black Consciousness played as the popular philosophy among young Black people in the townships at the time of influencing students in Soweto and across the country. As Brown (2016) argues, Black Consciousness sowed the seeds of resistance that flowed during the Soweto Uprising. There has also been a focus on contextualising the Soweto Uprising within the broader,

long history of Black resistance, linking the Uprising to other protests that preceded it (See Brown, 2016). For example, Brown argues that the Soweto Uprising should be seen as the culmination of developments that had been unfolding for a decade; it was never a dramatic break. The author stated this while arguing against the myth of a “quiet decade” between the 1960s and 1970s (Brown, 2016, p. 89; Cole, 2017). Brown’s argument dispels the notion that there was a political vacuum after the banning of the African National Congress (ANC) and the Pan Africanist Congress (PAC) in 1960, following the Sharpeville Massacre and the earlier banning of the South African Communist Party (SACP). However, one can add that the Soweto Uprising was a continuation of the Black people’s struggle against colonialism that began long before 1976. The influence of racist and exploitative apartheid policies, including the Bantu Education Act of 1953, has also been looked at as a foreground for the explosion of the Uprising (See Mafeje, 1978).

While scholars have grappled with the 1976 Soweto Uprising, a prevailing limitation in the literature is its focus on the representation of the Uprising in the school curriculum. Studies focusing on the representation of the 1976 Soweto Uprising in the curriculum are comparatively few. Seroto (2018) examined the representation of the 1976 Soweto Uprising in Grade 9 History textbooks. Five different Grade 9 History textbooks were selected for Seroto’s study. When Seroto published his article in 2018, History was, as it continues to be, taught as a component of the Social Sciences subject in Grade 9 under the CAPS curriculum. Seroto (2018) found that in Grade 9 there is an omission of historical facts about the causes of the Soweto Uprising and this limits learners’ opportunity to make evidence-based and reasoned judgements about the topic; there is an inadequate use of primary and secondary sources to mediate the effective aspects of the Soweto Uprising; the content covered by the textbooks lacks multiple voices and perspective; and what the topic entails does not fully engage learners in complex and contested issues about the 1976 Soweto Uprising (Seroto, 2018). These are the interesting findings about the representation of the 1976 Soweto Uprising in the selected Grade 9 History textbooks; however, the limitation of Seroto’s study is that it focuses only on the representation of the 1976 Soweto Uprising in Grade 9, whereas the same topic is also covered in Grade 12 at the Further Education and Training (FET) phase.

It is, however, worth acknowledging that many scholars have discussed History textbooks across various curriculum reforms. According to Bertram and Wassermann (2015), studies analysing South African History textbooks date back to the 1940s. Many of these studies have analysed History textbooks in relation to curriculum changes or

reforms influenced by political shifts, especially during the transition from apartheid to the post-apartheid dispensation (Bertram & Wassermann, 2015). Scholars such as Auerbach (1965), Dean, Hartman, and Katzen (1983), and Du Preez (1983) analysed History textbooks in apartheid South Africa. These textbooks were largely influenced by Afrikaner nationalist historiography and the European point of view (Wassermann, 2011; Bertram & Wassermann, 2015). The History textbooks produced in apartheid South Africa represented a particular version of history that sought to legitimise and promote apartheid and colonial establishment (Bertram & Bharath, 2011; Wassermann, 2011; and Maposa, 2014). Bertram and Wassermann (2015) argue that the conception, production, and uses of textbooks are politically and educationally contentious.

Studies that analysed History textbooks found that apartheid-era textbooks were teeming with stereotypes, prejudices, and biases that served the ruling party, the National Party (NP) (See Engelbrecht, 2006; Chernis, 2010; Bertram & Wassermann, 2015). The content carried by these History textbooks and their complicity with apartheid raised some controversy as some of the writers such as Chisholm (1981) and Waller (2009) challenged the presence of apartheid ideology in the textbooks (also see Maposa, 2014). These studies also found that the textbooks were essential in promulgating the history that was taught in apartheid South Africa, which was full of indoctrination and promoted rote learning over critical thinking (Kallaway, 2012). Kallaway (2012) further states that the history curriculum has always been at the centre of the debate about the nature of education in South Africa, focusing mainly on what version of history is presented in the curriculum and textbooks. This is because, as Maluleka and Mathebula (2022) argue, history is a dynamic, contested discipline.

The question of who is writing a History textbook, and when, how, and why, is crucial (Ramoroka & Engelbrecht, 2015), especially in the South African context, where there is a long history of colonialism and apartheid. In the main, historians from different schools of thought have written books that have been crucial to the curriculum taught in schools. These schools included the British imperialist school, the settler or colonialist school, the Afrikaner nationalist school, the liberal school, the revisionist or radical school, and the African nationalist school (Visser, 2004). These different schools, especially the British imperialist school and the Afrikaner nationalist school, have determined what events and narratives are covered or omitted in the school curriculum (Nyathi & Nkosi, 2025). These schools have not been without criticism. In the main, the idea is that they have always written from the Eurocentric framework, and their positionality is questionable for being predominantly white settlers (Maluleka & Ledwaba, 2023).

The transition period to post-apartheid South Africa saw a rise in both new History textbooks aligned with the revised curriculum (Schoeman, 2009) and studies analysing History textbooks (Maposa, 2014). This was because of the realisation of the power and influence that History textbooks have in shaping society (Bertram & Wassermann, 2015). The post-apartheid period marked the emergence of curriculum changes and reforms that restructured content and pedagogical approaches in History textbooks (Bertram & Bharath, 2011). There was a shift from the teaching (and learning) of History that relied solely on a positivist model, which saw history as “objective, truthful History”, suppressing critical thinking and multiple perspectives in engaging with History (Wassermann, 2011:131). This marked the beginning of a trajectory to undo the teaching of History that focused on fact-learning tradition dependent on rote learning (Mthethwa & Maluleka, 2025) in post-apartheid South Africa, History curriculum and textbooks carried a responsibility of representing the new democratic values and social justice to be inclusive and balanced (Bertram & Bharath, 2011). However, the debate on whether the current History curriculum and textbooks have achieved these objectives remains ongoing.

There is a thriving body of scholarship on the representation of history from below in history textbooks. Some scholars use a gender lens and focus on the representations of women in the content of these textbooks (See Osler, 1994; Schoeman, 2009; Chiponda & Wassermann, 2011; Wills, 2016; and Nkosi, 2025). Nkosi (2025) argues that the South African History curriculum remains male-centric and underrepresents women’s experiences, despite the country’s rich and diverse history. Nkosi (2025) further states that although CAPS advocates for inclusivity and social justice, certain events remain underrepresented in History textbooks. Nkosi uses the 1976 Soweto Uprising as one of the examples, and posits that the role of young women is ignored in favour of male-dominated narratives.

Almost similar concerns about the underrepresentation of women in the South African History textbooks have also been raised by scholars such as Schoeman (2009), Chiponda and Wassermann (2011), and Wills (2016), who argue that there is a persistent marginalisation of women in the school History textbooks, which makes History taught and learnt in schools a ‘men’s history’. These studies bring to light the fact that women in post-apartheid South Africa are underrepresented. This underrepresentation of women goes a long way, both in distorting history and in perpetuating systemic gender biases.

Studies on the underrepresentation of some histories in the South African History textbooks have not only focused on gender biases. Some of these studies have focused on

broad aspects that scholars consider highly important, and they are worth considering in History textbooks to achieve the CAPS-set objective of an inclusive and representative curriculum. Mthethwa and Maluleka (2025), for example, have written about the underrepresentation of certain histories in the school History curriculum in post-apartheid South Africa, using the 1950s *Drum* generation as a case study. The article argues that the school History curriculum marginalises the contributions of the 1950s *Drum* generation to the liberation struggle (Mthethwa & Maluleka, 2025). Maluleka and Godsell (2024) have written about the continued absence of the LGBTIQA+ community in the History textbooks in post-apartheid South Africa. Their concern is that despite their contribution to the struggle for liberation, the LGBTIQA+ community continue to face exclusion in the school History curriculum (Maluleka & Godsell, 2024). These studies expose the limitations of current History textbooks, which do not adequately cover some significant historical events and figures.

Theorising curriculum marginalisation in post-apartheid South Africa

The arguments made in the current article resonate with three theories, namely Critical Curriculum Theory (CCT), Postcolonial Theory (PT), and Critical Pedagogy (CP). CCT, for instance, posits that the social, political, and economic dynamics of society shape the school curriculum. This makes the curriculum vulnerable to capture by powerful, dominant groups in society (Apple, 2004; Giroux, 2010). PT provides critical lenses for analysing how the political, social, cultural, and epistemic legacies of colonialism and imperialism persist in the postcolonial era in formerly colonised societies (Said, 1978; Wa Thiong'o, 1986). In the South African context, this theory offers a framework to examine the enduring residues of apartheid in the post-apartheid period. CP, rooted primarily in the works of Paulo Freire (1970), understands education as inherently political and is underpinned by broader culture, ideology, and power relations. It opposes the idea of neutral education. According to this theory, education can be used either to reproduce or to contest social inequalities (Freire, 1970).

These theories are useful in supporting the current analysis and discussion on the underrepresentation of the 1976 Soweto Uprising in the CAPS History curriculum. They are also useful in supporting the lens employed in the current study when offering the proposals in this article. When using these lenses, it becomes clear why significant historical events such as the 1976 Soweto Uprising are in the margins of the school's History

curriculum prescribed by CAPS. The curriculum remains Eurocentric and reproduces the status quo, where histories of Black people remain poorly written and excluded from mainstream History. The inclusion of a well-written, broad history of the 1976 Soweto Uprising would enable the History curriculum to play a significant role in emancipation and social transformation in post-apartheid South Africa.

Document analysis of CAPS and textbook representations of the 1976 Soweto Uprising

For the purposes of the current article, the CAPS History Curriculum (Grades 10-12) and CAPS Social Sciences Curriculum (Grades 07-09) documents were used, as well as the prescribed History textbooks for Grades 9 and 12, to analyse and interpret the portrayal of the 1976 Soweto Uprising in the CAPS History curriculum. Both CAPS documents and prescribed textbooks were analysed using the Qualitative Document Analysis (QDA) design to examine how the Soweto Uprising is represented in the school History curriculum and textbooks (Bowen, 2009; Lichtman, 2023). I purposively chose two textbooks that are among the prescribed CAPS-aligned learner textbooks: *New Generation History Grade 12 Learner's Book* (2013), edited by Dr Gengs Pillay, Lindiwe Sikhakhane, and Niny West, for Grade 12 and *Oxford Successful, Social Sciences Learner's Book* (2013), edited by J. Bottaro, S. Cohen, L. Dilley, D. Duffett, and P. Visser, for Grade 9. I examined how content about the 1976 Soweto Uprising is selected, structured, and presented in the official curriculum documents and prescribed textbooks. Focus was particularly placed on the sections dealing with resistance, liberation struggle and the Soweto Uprising. The documents analysed and interpreted are significant, because they are the authoritative texts used by the state to transmit historical knowledge to learners.

In the above-mentioned documents, the depth and breadth of the content covered by the textbooks on the 1976 Soweto Uprising in post-apartheid South Africa was examined, and second, whether the 1976 Soweto Uprising is treated in the curriculum as a vital watershed or marginalised as a minor event. Thirdly, the patterns of inclusion and exclusion (what is included in the curriculum and what is excluded) were analysed. Lastly, the ideological assumptions underpinning the representation of the 1976 Soweto Uprising were examined.

Reducing a watershed to a debate: The framing of the 1976 Soweto Uprising in Grade 12

In Grade 12, CAPS is clear from the outset: “The events of 1976 should not be covered in-depth, but as part of the debates around the influence of the Black Consciousness Movement on pupils in schools and in particular, on the Soweto Uprising” (History CAPS document Grades 10-12, p.29). CAPS further states that “The Soweto Uprising is not studied in full here, because it was covered in Grade 9” (Department of Basic Education, 2011b, p. 29). Therefore, anyone who engages with the Grade 12 History book knows that there is little to expect about the significant event that became a watershed in South African history and led to the overthrow of the apartheid regime. In Grade 12 History, learners are told that they have already learnt about the Soweto Uprising years back when they were doing Social Sciences in Grade 9 in the General Education and Training (GET). CAPS suggests that in Grade 12 History, students should focus only on debates about whether the Soweto Uprising was influenced by Black Consciousness ideology.

The *New Generation History Grade 12 Learner's Book*, edited by Dr Gengs Pillay, Lindiwe Sikhakhane, and Niny West, is widely used for its detailed content. In this book, the Soweto Uprising appears under “Topic 4: Civil Resistance in South Africa, 1970s to 1980s: What was the Nature of the Civil Society Resistance after the 1960s?” It is covered only in three pages (pages 243-246). As prescribed by CAPS, this textbook focuses mainly on the debates surrounding whether learners in 1976 were influenced by Black Consciousness thinking. Anything else mentioned about the Soweto Uprising is not explored thoroughly; it is mentioned in passing to focus on the targeted debate. The debate itself is necessary, because the section focuses on the challenge of Black Consciousness to the apartheid state, this includes the outbreak of the Soweto Uprising, particularly the influence of Black Consciousness on the uprising.

The section on the 1976 Soweto Uprising begins with the following line: “Now let us briefly review the events of June 1976 which you learnt about in Grade 11 (Stephenson et al., 2013, p. 243). This line is misleading, because the Grade 11 content does not cover the 1976 Soweto uprising. The only topic more closely related to the Soweto Uprising is Topic 5: Apartheid in South Africa, 1940s to 1960s. This topic covers events that predated and can be linked to the Soweto Uprising for their influence, including the Sharpeville Massacre; however, it does not cover the 1976 Soweto Uprising. The content itself covered in the brief review in Grade 12 is vague; for example, it is mentioned in the textbook that “the

police then fired on the crowd with live ammunition, killing Hector Pieterse and Hastings Ndlovu. Hundreds more were injured” (Stephenson et al., 2013, p. 243). Mentioning only Pieterse and Ndlovu, whereas many students were killed on 16 June 1976, including in the following days, is problematic. The sentence quoted from the textbook suggests only Pieterse and Ndlovu were killed, whereas Cummings (2016) wrote that by the end of 16 June 1976, police had killed 176 students and injured thousands.

Regarding the debate about the Soweto Uprising itself and political influence, the youth were indeed influenced not only by the Black Conscious Movement, but also by ANC members, as the textbook suggests. This is true, because some students were influenced by their parents, family, and community members who were affiliated with the banned organisations, including the ANC and the PAC (see Ndlovu, 2017). However, it is worrisome that nothing is mentioned about the PAC’s influence. Zeph Mothopeng of the PAC is one of the people who were influential in the 1976 generation (Hlongwane, 2021; Ndlovu, 2017). In 1976, Mothopeng was a teacher and a resident in Soweto. He and other PAC-linked teachers, such as Sithembele Khala and Dan Mofokeng, are credited for their underground operations in Soweto during the Soweto Uprising (Ndlovu, 2017).

The Grade 12 History curriculum reduces the Soweto Uprising to just another event in South African history. The curriculum misses the opportunity to share the rich, detailed history of the Soweto Uprising. This would help learners understand how significant this event was in the struggle for Black liberation. The current History curriculum misses many other opportunities. Firstly, it should have focused on the Soweto Uprising as a watershed moment and its influence on the collapse of the apartheid regime. This would include the short and long-term achievements of the uprising, including the international support that South Africa gained following the Soweto Uprising and the widespread distribution of the iconic picture of the shot Hector Pieterse carried by Mbuyisa Makhuba, who was running together with Antonette Sithole trying to rush the young boy to the nearest Phefeni clinic. Astonishingly, even that iconic picture is not included in some History textbooks, including the widely used *New Generation History Grade 12 Learner’s Book*. Secondly, the curriculum does not link the Soweto Uprising with other events that created the space for it to happen. For example, since March 1976, some schools in Soweto had already been protesting the imposition of Afrikaans as a medium of instruction (Ndlovu, 2017). This makes the Soweto Uprising not a dramatic break, but a culmination of smaller activist moments (See Cole, 2017).

Thirdly, there is no focus on the debated accounts of what exactly transpired during the day of action (16 June 1976), what exactly turned a peaceful march into a violent confrontation that led to the loss of innocent children, whose only sin was to demand quality education. Fourthly, there is no attempt to link 16 June with the following days and weeks. What began as a march organised by schoolchildren on 16 June was, in the following days and weeks, joined by university students and workers. The protests spread from Soweto to different corners of the country. Workers were on strike, and students from Black universities marched in solidarity with school children (Radebe, 2022). At the University of Zululand, students went so far as to burn the university administration building (Radebe, 2022). The Grade 12 History textbook misses the opportunity to capture all these moments and show how influential the Soweto Uprising became.

The Grade 12 History textbook also omits the significant roles played by both supportive teachers and parents. The students who participated in the Soweto Uprising had radical teachers who became their mentors and role models (Ndlovu, 2017). The *New Generation Grade 12 History* textbook mentioned that several South African Student Organisation (SASO) members became teachers after graduating. They introduced Black Consciousness ideas to their students; this alone is not enough to explain the significant role played by some of the teachers, such as Abraham Onkgopotse Tiro, who taught at Morris Isaacson High School and mentored students such as Mashinini. Tiro had been expelled from the University of the North after delivering a controversial graduation speech (Brown, 2016). He was one of the leaders of SASO. Tiro's stay as a teacher in Soweto was short-lived; he was compelled to go into exile (Valela, 2022). The content on the Soweto Uprising in the textbook should have at least included Tiro's story to highlight the significant role of Black teachers associated with Black Consciousness.

On the other hand, some parents, community leaders, and political activists were very influential during the Soweto Uprising. This became clearer a few days after the Soweto Uprising as the Black Parents Association (BPA) was formed. All of the aforementioned, however, is not covered in the History curriculum. The role that these parents and activists, including Dr Ellen Khuzwayo, Winnie Madikizela-Mandela, Dr Nthato Motlana, and Professor Fatima Meer played is nowhere to be found in the textbook. Some of these activists worked closely with the students even before 16 June 1976. Madikizela-Mandela, for example, met with student leaders such as Tsietsi Mashinini and Dan Montsitsi almost daily (Meer, 2017).

The Grade 12 History textbook also missed the opportunity to discuss the consequences that the 1976 generation faced as a result of their involvement in the Soweto Uprising. The government used an iron fist in dealing with those who dared challenge its authority and legitimacy. Many students were killed during and after the Soweto Uprising; some were wounded, and they lived with permanent scars. Many were sent to prison. The Soweto 11 Trial⁴ is a significant historical episode that is omitted from the History textbooks. This is one of the most important and unique trials in the history of South Africa, as young children were sent to prison for demanding decent education. Some of these children were sent to maximum security prisons and served solitary confinement (Mkhabela, 2001). Their names are not even mentioned in the History textbooks. The curriculum is silent about how thousands of Black students were forced to flee the country and seek refuge in exile since the apartheid regime targeted them because of their involvement in the 1976 Soweto Uprising. Most of these students joined the exiled ANC and PAC. Within the ANC, they were referred to as 'The June 16 Detachment' and became an important group of soldiers in the camps of the ANC-linked *uMkhonto we Sizwe* Military Wing (Radebe, 2022). Surprisingly, History textbooks do not cover these experiences. The History textbooks treat the Soweto Uprising as an episode; it fails to link it with other events and the influence it had in producing young, vibrant leaders who contributed to the overthrow of apartheid.

In the introductory message, the editors of the *New Generation Grade 12 History Learner's Book* wrote, "This history textbook offers fresh perspectives, new approaches and covers various important historical skills" (Stephenson et al., 2013, p. ii). However, it is disappointing that this is not the case regarding the Soweto Uprising. There are no fresh perspectives or new approaches to the Uprising.

As mentioned earlier, the Soweto Uprising also appears in Grade 9 Social Sciences textbooks. However, just like in Grade 12, the Grade 9 content on the 1976 Soweto Uprising is very limited. As previously discussed, Seroto (2018) has focused on the limitations of the Grade 9 textbooks when it comes to the representation of the Soweto Uprising. In my discussion, I focused on Grade 12 History textbooks limitations. No study had been conducted to focus specifically on how the Soweto Uprising is represented in Grade 12. Social Sciences, as a subject that consists of both History and Geography components expected to be taught and learned equally, is likely to have Grade 9 content that is not in-depth. It is expected that the content covered in the GET will not be as broad and deep as

⁴ A trial where 11 leaders of the Soweto Uprising were charged with sedition.

in the FET. What is astonishing is the underrepresentation of the 1976 Soweto Uprising in Grade 12 and FET, because that is where History is a standalone subject.

Towards an inclusive History curriculum that cherishes the significance, complexity and distinctiveness of the 1976 Soweto Uprising.

In this study, I make the following recommendations, which I believe would help the school's History curriculum expose the learners to in-depth, complex, and contested accounts of the 1976 Soweto Uprising. These recommendations, if taken into account and incorporated into the curriculum, would enable learners to approach the Soweto Uprising from multiple critical perspectives. They would enhance various important historical skills such as critical thinking, historical interpretation, contextualisation, source analysis, and empathy.

The study argues that CAPS allocate more time and explicit depth to the 1976 Soweto Uprising in the curriculum, especially in Grade 12. This recommendation is against the current inclusion of the event, as it has been reduced to a debate about the influence of Black Consciousness thinking. Recommendation was made that, in Grade 12, the Soweto Uprising be studied as a standalone topic rather than a subsection within a broader unit. Reducing the event, as the current curriculum denies students the opportunity to learn thoroughly about how young people of their age were at the centre of the liberation struggle and shaped the political discourse in the 1970s. The current study advocates for the school History curriculum that would include the actual causes of the Soweto Uprising, the build-up of events that led to the march on 16 June 1976 to be as significant as it was, accounts of what exactly transpired during the day of the Uprising, what were the long- and short-term consequences of the Soweto Uprising (including, killings, imprisonment, exile, etc.), and include the role that was played by Black teachers, parents, and community leaders who became mentors to the young children. It is recommended that the History curriculum be arranged such that it foregrounds Black youth agency, African epistemologies, and 'history from below' from around 1976. This would include consideration of the voices of the actual participants in the Soweto Uprising and of some witnesses. The participants in the Soweto Uprising have written several books; they have been interviewed, and fortunately, 50 years later, some participants are still alive. The inclusion of their voices is vital. The last recommendation is including oral histories and testimonies from surviving participants in the Soweto Uprising.

Conclusion

The current study posits that 50 years after the 1976 Soweto Uprising, the event is poorly covered in the CAPS History curriculum. Despite the Soweto Uprising being a defining moment in South Africa's liberation history, its representation in the CAPS History curriculum does not fully reflect its significance. In this study, it is demonstrated how 32 years into democratic South Africa, the school History curriculum remains a site of power where some historical events and narratives are amplified, while others are marginalised. Reducing the scope of the Soweto Uprising in the curriculum has negative implications, including relegating one of the most important events in the history of Black youth resistance against apartheid to a footnote in the school curriculum. To ensure that the 1976 Soweto Uprising is well featured in the school's History curriculum, four major changes are proposed, including: allocating more time and providing explicit, in-depth content on the 1976 Soweto Uprising; having the Soweto Uprising as a stand-alone topic in Grade 12, for the History curriculum to foreground Black youth agency, African epistemologies; and 'history from below', the use of oral histories from the surviving participants of the Soweto Uprising.

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