

CAPTURING PUBLIC COMMENTS ON HISTORY CAPS DOCUMENTS

Name and Surname: Prof Johan Fourie

Organization: Stellenbosch University / LEAP

Phase: FET Phase

Grade: 10-12

Subject: History

Section 2	Page Number	Issue	Challenge	Recommendation
	8-10	The essence of the curriculum (Section 2, pp. 8-10) states the intention 'to develop in the African child a strong foundational knowledge, understanding and appreciation of the continent' and aims to develop 'a global historical consciousness from the vantage point of Africa.' The curriculum emphasises oral, archaeological, written, visual and linguistic sources. No mention is made of understanding economic systems, comparative development, or why some societies became prosperous while others did not.	The FET curriculum prepares learners for higher education and the workplace. Without an explicit statement that learners should understand how societies organise production, trade and the distribution of surplus, the economic dimension of historical analysis remains optional rather than integral. The curriculum's own stated aim to produce learners who 'demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems' (Section 1, p. 5) naturally encompasses economic systems.	Add to Section 2 an explicit statement that learners should understand how different societies have organised production, trade and the distribution of surplus, and why some economic systems have generated broad-based prosperity while others have not. Note that economic questions (who benefits, why, and what happens when institutions change) complement rather than displace political, social and cultural analysis.
	25-27	Section 2.12 (Historical Sources and Evidence) lists source types but does not include numerical/quantitative sources (graphs, tables, data series).	FET learners are capable of sophisticated quantitative analysis. A graph of South African GDP per capita from 1994 to 2024 communicates the post-apartheid economic story more efficiently than pages of text and invites analytical questions about inflection points, policies and outcomes. Popular media routinely represent historical change as data over time; developing this form of literacy is essential for informed citizenship.	Under source analysis skills, add numerical sources (graphs, tables, data series) to the types of evidence learners should be able to interpret. Include the expectation that learners interrogate quantitative sources critically: How was this data collected? What is being measured? Whose experiences are captured and whose are left out?
Section 3	Page Number	Issue	Challenge	Recommendation

38-40	Grade 10 Term 1 (Societies of the Wider World): The key questions ask 'How did social, economic and political change shape the wider world in ancient times?' (p. 38). The assessment asks learners to 'write a paragraph of SIX lines to show how these divisions were influenced by economic development and prosperity' (p. 40). However, no economic framework is provided for comparing how different civilisations organised production and distribution.	The curriculum asks learners to compare civilisations across political, cultural and religious dimensions but provides no economic framework for comparison. The economist Robert Heilbroner identified three fundamental mechanisms for organising an economy -- custom (tradition determines production), command (a ruler decides), and markets (prices and exchange coordinate production) -- and every society uses some combination of the three. Without such a framework, economic comparison remains ad hoc.	Add to the focus areas (p. 38-39): 'Compare how each civilisation organised production, trade and the distribution of surplus. Introduce three fundamental economic mechanisms: custom (tradition determines production), command (a ruler decides), and markets (prices and exchange coordinate production). Every society uses some combination of these three. This gives learners a comparative tool that goes beyond political or cultural description.'
46	Grade 10 Term 3 (Great Zimbabwe): The focus areas include: 'The causes of the rise of Great Zimbabwe (4 hours)'; 'Ancient trade networks linking the southern African interior to the Indian Ocean (3 hours)'; 'The emergence of class-based systems/social stratification in Great Zimbabwe (4 hours)' (p. 46). The overview states: 'Over and above discussing about the importance of trade and control over trade routes in the rise of African kingdoms and empires, learners should explore the debates and contestations over Great Zimbabwe.' The topic treats Great Zimbabwe primarily as an archaeological and political case study.	The curriculum already has all the ingredients for an economic analysis -- trade, wealth, social stratification -- but does not connect them systematically. When teaching social stratification, the curriculum does not ask what economic institutions determined who benefited from trade, what happened when trade routes shifted, or what parallels exist with contemporary South Africa.	Add to the focus areas under social stratification (p. 46): 'When exploring class-based systems and social stratification, include economic questions: What institutions determined who benefited from trade? What happened when trade routes shifted? What parallels exist with contemporary South Africa, where mineral wealth has enriched a few while leaving many in poverty?'
57-58	Grade 11 Term 2 (Slavery and the Haitian Revolution): The key questions focus on the Haitian Revolution as an assertion of human rights (p. 57). The focus areas cover the Atlantic slave system, the French and Haitian Revolutions, and gendered experiences of slavery (p. 58). The overview notes that Haiti was 'the most profitable colony in the world' (p. 57). The curriculum treats the slave trade primarily as a moral and political catastrophe. The long-run economic consequences are absent.	The economic historian Nathan Nunn has shown that African countries from which more people were enslaved are significantly poorer today, not because of inherent disadvantage but because the slave trade destroyed social trust. Communities that had to fear enslavement by their own neighbours developed deep mistrust that reduced trade, investment and cooperation. This finding persists in measurable ways in contemporary survey data. Adding this economic dimension deepens rather than diminishes the moral case against slavery. Recent quantitative research on the Cape Colony (Bergemann on runaway advertisements, Ekama on manumission records) demonstrates how quantitative approaches to administrative records can	Add to the focus areas (p. 58): 'Include the long-run economic consequences of the slave trade -- research has shown that African countries from which more people were enslaved are significantly poorer today, because the slave trade destroyed social trust, reducing trade, investment and cooperation. This economic dimension deepens rather than diminishes the moral case against slavery. Note also how new quantitative research on the Cape Colony (studies of runaway advertisements and manumission records) reveals the economic agency of enslaved people within the system of coercion.'

			recover the agency and economic lives of enslaved people.	
	65-66	Grade 12 Term 1 (Politics and Economics of South Africa): This is the only topic in the entire FET curriculum with 'Economics' in its title. The focus areas cover: the mineral revolution, Pan-Africanism, trade unions, Afrikaner nationalism, state-owned enterprises (SARH, Eskom, ISCOR), job reservation, and 'The Great Depression and the "poor white" problem (2 hours)' (p. 66). The economic narrative ends in the 1930s. There is no content on the post-1994 economy despite the topic title covering 'the Late 19th and 20th Centuries.'	The curriculum's economic story of South Africa ends at the Great Depression and the 'poor white problem.' But the most relevant economic history for today's learners is what happened after democracy. Between 1994 and 2008, South Africa achieved significant growth, reduced its debt-to-GDP ratio from 50 to 27 percent, and cut the poverty rate from 37 to 28 percent. After 2008, growth stalled, corruption eroded state capacity, and poverty rose again. A History curriculum that does not tell this story leaves learners without the tools to understand the country they are inheriting.	Add to the focus areas (p. 66): 'Extend the economic narrative beyond the 1930s to include the post-1994 economy. Cover the growth period (1994-2008), when sound institutions reduced poverty and debt, and the subsequent stagnation as corruption eroded state capacity. Ask learners to consider what economic history teaches about the relationship between governance and prosperity. This could be accommodated within the existing 20-hour allocation by reducing overlap with content covered in other Grade 12 terms.'
Section 4	Page Number	Issue	Challenge	Recommendation
	80-86	The assessment framework (pp. 80-86) and all examples of source-based assessment involve written, visual, oral or archaeological sources. No examples involve interpreting graphs, data series or statistical evidence, despite FET learners' capacity for this type of analysis.	FET learners study Mathematics and many study Economics. They are capable of interpreting quantitative historical evidence. Without examples in the assessment framework, numerical sources will not be incorporated into examination papers or classroom assessment tasks.	Include quantitative source analysis in the FET assessment framework. For Grade 12: a graph of South African GDP per capita from 1994 to 2024 would invite analytical questions about inflection points, policies and outcomes. Learners could extract data points (Level 1), identify periods of growth and stagnation (Level 2), and evaluate what policy choices or institutional changes explain the inflection points (Level 3).

Summary of Recommendations & Comments:

This submission proposes that economic history be more prominently woven into the amended CAPS History curriculum for the FET Phase (Grades 10-12). The proposals enrich existing topics with economic dimensions: (1) introduce Heilbroner's three mechanisms (custom, command, markets) for comparing ancient civilisations; (2) frame

Great Zimbabwe as a case study in how trade creates both wealth and inequality; (3) add the long-run economic consequences of the slave trade and new quantitative research on the Cape Colony; (4) extend the Grade 12 economic narrative beyond the 1930s to include the post-1994 economy; (5) add numerical sources to the source analysis and assessment frameworks; and (6) note the links between History and Economics as an FET choice subject. A detailed report accompanies this submission.

Prof Johan Fourie

Date: 17 April 2026