

CAPTURING PUBLIC COMMENTS ON HISTORY CAPS DOCUMENTS

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Phase: Intermediate Phase

Grade: 4-6

Subject: History

Section 2	Page Number	Issue	Challenge	Recommendation
	15-16	The Specific Aims of School History (Section 2.3, p. 15) list three aims: developing historical knowledge, developing procedural skills, and developing values. No aim addresses understanding how societies generate prosperity or escape poverty.	South Africa's defining national challenge is poverty, unemployment and inequality. More than half of all South Africans live below the poverty line. A History curriculum whose aims do not include understanding economic processes misses a critical educational opportunity, particularly for learners whose lived experience is dominated by economic hardship. The curriculum's own stated goal to 'improve the quality of life of all citizens' (quoting the Constitution's Preamble on p. 8) requires engagement with economic questions.	Add to the Specific Aims of School History (p. 15) an additional aim: 'Develop an understanding of how societies have generated prosperity and why some have succeeded while others have not.' This provides a mandate for teachers to incorporate economic reasoning into existing topics without requiring additional teaching time.
	31-36	Section 2.8.4 (Historical Sources and Evidence) and the enquiry process diagram (p. 32) list the types of sources learners should engage with: 'texts, histories, internet sites, archives, oral sources, interviews, images, archaeological collections, material culture, landscapes, structures, objects etc.' Numerical and quantitative sources (graphs, tables, data series) are absent from this list.	Economic history relies on quantitative evidence that is accessible even to primary school learners. A simple bar chart of how many people a farmer could feed in 3000 BCE versus today illustrates the story of productivity more efficiently than pages of text. These are the same analytical tools learners use in Mathematics. Omitting them from the list of historical sources means learners are not taught to interrogate numerical evidence critically -- how it was collected, what it measures, whose experience it captures and whose it leaves out.	Add 'numerical and statistical sources (graphs, tables, data series)' to the list of historical sources in Section 2.8.4. Note that interpreting a simple graph fits naturally within the existing cognitive levels framework: Level 1 (extract a data point), Level 2 (identify a trend), Level 3 (evaluate what the data reveals about causes and consequences).
	15-16	The introductory section does not mention the relationship between History and Economic Management Sciences (EMS),	EMS teaches concepts like markets, trade and opportunity cost. History covers the trans-Saharan trade, Mesopotamian	Add a note in the introductory section (near Section 2.3, p. 15) stating that economic concepts taught in Economic Management

		despite both subjects being compulsory in the Intermediate Phase and sharing overlapping content on trade, markets and resource allocation.	markets and surplus production. These are the same phenomena viewed from different disciplinary angles, yet no guidance is given to teachers to make these connections explicit. Learners miss the opportunity to reinforce learning across subjects.	Sciences have natural historical counterparts and that teachers should make these connections explicit where topics overlap.
Section 3	Page Number	Issue	Challenge	Recommendation
	50-51	Grade 5 Term 1 (Fire): The focus area 'how fire changed the lives of humans' (p. 51) lists: 'harnessing energy from fire -- show how humans use fire to create steam, smelt metals to make implements, electricity, power engines.' The assessment asks learners to 'describe some of the changes that the ability to make and control fire brought to societies' (p. 51). The underlying economic logic -- that fire was the first technology to multiply human productive capacity -- is not made explicit.	The topic already traces a chronological sequence from fire through steam to electricity, but presents it as a list of uses rather than a story with an underlying economic logic. Without the concept of productivity (getting more output from the same effort), learners see disconnected facts rather than a coherent narrative about why energy matters for human welfare.	Add to the focus areas under 'how fire changed the lives of humans' (p. 51): 'Discuss how each new energy source (from fire to steam to electricity) increased what humans could produce, introducing the idea that energy is the foundation of productivity -- the ability to produce more with less effort.' This reframes existing content without requiring additional teaching time.
	54-55	Grade 5 Term 3 (Food): The key questions are 'How do we know what people ate in the past? How did they prepare and eat their food?' (p. 54). The focus areas cover archaeological evidence of diet, farming methods, myths about food, and the global spread of food. The transition from hunting/gathering to farming is covered under 'Farming -- how people have farmed the land sustainably in the African past, indigenous land preparation and farming methods' (p. 54). The topic does not name the Neolithic Revolution or introduce the concepts of surplus or specialisation.	The shift from hunting and gathering to farming was the most consequential economic transformation in human history before the Industrial Revolution. The curriculum treats it as a story about what people ate, not as a revolution in productive capacity. The concept of surplus (producing more than you need to survive) is the foundation of all economic complexity -- towns, trade, writing, specialisation -- yet it does not appear until Grade 6 (Mesopotamia), and even there only in passing.	Add to the focus areas (p. 54): 'Explain how the shift from hunting and gathering to farming (the Neolithic Revolution) allowed people to produce more food than they needed. This surplus meant some people could stop farming and do other jobs (specialisation), laying the foundation for towns, trade and new occupations.' Name the Neolithic Revolution explicitly. This concept reappears in Grade 6 (Mesopotamia) and should be seeded here in age-appropriate language.
	60-61	Grade 6 Term 2 (Mesopotamia): The curriculum already contains strong economic content. The overview mentions 'develop surplus for exchange, and keep records... evidence for the rise of markets and the earliest recording of transactions on clay tablets' (p. 60). The focus areas mention 'craft specialisation, markets' (p. 60). The assessment asks learners to 'recognise the significance of economic surplus -- how some people become rich and claim to be more	The curriculum presents surplus and markets but does not explain why trade occurs and why it benefits both sides. This is a foundational economic insight that, once grasped, transforms how learners understand every subsequent trading relationship in the curriculum (Mali, Indian Ocean trade, trans-Atlantic trade). The curriculum already notes that writing arose from recording	Add to the focus areas (p. 60): 'Introduce the idea that trade benefits both parties -- when farmers traded grain for tools, both ended up with more than they could have produced alone. Discuss how the need to record "who owed what to whom" drove the invention of writing.' This deepens content already present in the curriculum.

		important than others' (p. 61). However, the concept that trade makes both parties better off is absent, and the connection between economic record-keeping and the invention of writing is not made explicit.	transactions, but this connection could be made more forcefully.	
	63	Grade 6 Term 4 (Mali and Timbuktu): The focus areas include: 'trade across the Sahara Desert by means of camels and the goods exchanged -- including salt brought from Europe and North Africa into Mali where it was exchanged for gold, slaves, ivory and ostrich feathers' (p. 63). The assessment asks learners to 'explain why Mali flourished between the 1200 CE and 1600 CE' (p. 63). But the concept of comparative advantage -- why trade made Mali rich -- is not explained.	The curriculum describes what was traded but does not explain why trade made Mali wealthy. The economic concept of comparative advantage (Mali had gold, the Saharan oases had salt, and both benefited from exchange) would give learners a framework for answering the curriculum's own assessment question about why Mali flourished. This also supports the curriculum's commitment to foregrounding African achievement by showing that African wealth was generated through productive economic activity.	Add to the focus areas or assessment (p. 63): 'Discuss what made Mali wealthy -- the concept of comparative advantage (Mali had gold, the Saharan oases had salt, and both benefited from exchange). Note that Mansa Musa's wealth was generated by trade, not conquest.' This directly supports the existing assessment criterion asking learners to explain why Mali flourished.
Section 4	Page Number	Issue	Challenge	Recommendation
	70-76	The cognitive levels framework (pp. 70-76) describes three levels of historical thinking: Level 1 (extraction of evidence from sources), Level 2 (interpretation), Level 3 (evaluation and engagement with sources). All examples involve textual, visual or archaeological sources. No examples involve interpreting graphs, tables or numerical data.	The cognitive levels framework is the backbone of History assessment. If quantitative sources are absent from the framework's examples, teachers will not include them in assessment tasks, even if numerical sources are added to the list of source types in Section 2. Learners already interpret graphs in Mathematics; applying the same skill to historical evidence reinforces both subjects.	Add examples of quantitative source interpretation to each cognitive level. Level 1: extract a data point from a simple graph (e.g., 'How many people could one farmer feed in 1800?'). Level 2: identify a trend in a data series (e.g., 'What happened to the number of people a farmer could feed between 1800 and 2000?'). Level 3: evaluate what the data reveals about causes and consequences (e.g., 'Why did the number increase? What does this tell us about changes in farming technology?').

Summary of Recommendations & Comments:

This submission proposes that economic history -- the study of how humanity became prosperous and why some societies got there faster than others -- be more prominently woven into the amended CAPS History curriculum for the Intermediate Phase (Grades 4-6). The proposals enrich existing topics with economic dimensions rather than adding new content requiring additional teaching time. Specifically: (1) frame fire as a story about energy and productivity; (2) name the Neolithic Revolution and introduce surplus and specialisation; (3) deepen Mesopotamia's existing economic content with the concept of mutually beneficial trade; (4) introduce comparative advantage through Mali's trans-Saharan trade; (5) add numerical sources (graphs, tables) to the source analysis framework; and (6) note the natural links between History and Economic Management Sciences. A detailed report accompanies this submission.

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