Comments on the Draft Amended History Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements (Grades 4–12): The Case for Economic History

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1. Introduction

I welcome the opportunity to comment on the amended History Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statements for Grades 4 to 12. The revised curriculum represents a significant achievement. Its African-centred approach, its use of archaeology, oral tradition and material culture alongside written sources, and its commitment to developing procedural historical thinking in learners from an early age are all commendable. The decision to foreground the long African past, from the Stone Age through the rise of kingdoms like Mapungubwe, Great Zimbabwe and Mali to the modern era, is a welcome corrective to older curricula that treated African history as peripheral.

I write as a professor of economics at Stellenbosch University, where I hold the chair in Economics, History and Policy and direct the Laboratory for the Economics of Africa's Past (LEAP). I am also the author of *Our Long Walk to Economic Freedom: Why We Live Better Than Our Ancestors* (Tafelberg, 2nd edition, 2025), a 37-chapter account of the story of human prosperity from 70 000 BCE to the present, with extensive South African and African content. My comments draw on both the scholarly literature in economic history and on my experience making that literature accessible to a general South African audience.

The report that follows is motivated by a simple conviction. South Africa's defining national challenge is poverty, unemployment and inequality. More than half of all South Africans live below the poverty line. Youth unemployment exceeds 60 percent. The generation now entering South Africa's schools will inherit an economy that has not grown in per capita terms for over a decade, where inequality remains among the highest in the world. The Constitution's Preamble, which the curriculum itself quotes on its very first page, aspires to "improve the quality of life of all citizens and free the potential of each person." A History curriculum that does not systematically address how societies escape poverty, how humanity learned to generate prosperity, and why some nations succeeded while others stalled, misses a critical educational opportunity. Economic history, and the study of these questions, can be woven into the existing curriculum without displacing current content.

Here I make three arguments. First, I show that economic history content is largely absent from the amended curriculum, despite its relevance to the lives of South African learners. Second, I propose specific, grade-by-grade enrichments that would introduce economic concepts within the existing topics, not

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as additions requiring more teaching time but as reframings that deepen what is already there. Third, I note that economic history naturally introduces quantitative reasoning, the interpretation of graphs, data and numerical evidence, which would complement the curriculum's existing emphasis on source analysis.

2. What is economic history and why does it matter for South Africa?

For most of human history, everyone was poor. This is easy to forget in the twenty-first century, but it is perhaps the most important fact about the human past. For tens of thousands of years, our ancestors lived on the equivalent of one or two dollars a day per person. Life expectancy was short, infant mortality was high, and famine was never far away. Then, roughly 250 years ago, in parts of north-western Europe, and eventually in much of the rest of the world, living standards began to rise, slowly at first, then with breathtaking speed. Today, the average human is eighteen times richer than in 1800. Child mortality has fallen from 43 percent to under four percent. Extreme poverty, which afflicted nearly half the world's population as recently as 1980, has fallen below 10 percent.

Economic history is the study of this transformation: how humanity moved from universal poverty to widespread prosperity, and why some societies got there faster than others. It asks not "Why are some people poor?" (poverty is the historical default) but rather "Why are some people rich?" and, critically, "What can the rest learn from that?"

Two insights from this discipline are especially relevant for South African learners.

The first is that prosperity comes from productivity. Societies become rich when they learn to produce more with less, when they apply knowledge of nature to multiply human effort. Fire, agriculture, metallurgy, the printing press, the steam engine, electricity, the Green Revolution in crop science, the digital revolution: each of these was a step in humanity's long journey from scarcity to abundance. This is an optimistic story. It says that prosperity is not a fixed quantity to be fought over but something that can be created, and has been created, repeatedly, across different cultures and continents.

The second insight is that productivity alone is not enough. The surpluses that productivity generates must be shared broadly if a society is to prosper durably. When institutions (the rules, rights and norms that govern who gets what) concentrate wealth among a small elite, societies stagnate. When institutions are inclusive, spreading the gains of productivity to the many, societies thrive. This is the story of why feudal Europe stagnated for centuries while post-Reformation northern Europe surged ahead. It is the story of how certain institutions, like the system of apartheid, can entrench deep and enduring inequalities, despite spectacular wealth that otherwise might have created broad-based prosperity. These are empowering lessons. They teach young South Africans that poverty is not destiny, that there are identifiable historical processes by which societies have escaped it, and that the choices their generation makes about institutions, technology and inclusion will determine whether South Africa follows the path of the East Asian success stories or remains trapped in what economists call the middle-income trap.

Economics is about how societies organise production, distribute resources and create opportunity. An economic lens on history asks who benefits from a given arrangement and why, how incentives shape behaviour, and what happens when institutions change. The curriculum already teaches learners to think socially, politically and geographically about the past. Adding an economic dimension completes those perspectives.

The curriculum's stated aim is to prepare learners who can "identify and solve problems" and "demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems." Economic history treats prosperity as a systemic problem to be understood and solved. The existing Economic Management Sciences (EMS) curriculum already introduces concepts like markets, trade and opportunity cost. Linking these to the historical events

learners study in History would reinforce both subjects.

3. An audit of economic history in the amended curriculum

I have read all three amended CAPS documents (Grades 4–6, Grades 7–9 and Grades 10–12) in their entirety. What follows is an assessment of where economic history already appears, and where it is notably absent.

Grades 4–6 (Intermediate Phase)

Economic themes appear but are never named as such. In Grade 5, the topics on fire (Term 1), metals (Term 2), food (Term 3) and transport (Term 4) all have implicit economic content: fire enabled new technologies, metals became the basis for trade and currency, food production transformed human societies, and transport facilitated commerce. The Grade 6 topic on Mesopotamia (Term 2) comes closest to explicit economic content, mentioning "surplus production," "markets" and "the earliest recording of transactions on clay tablets." The Grade 6 topic on Mali and Timbuktu (Term 4) addresses the trans-Saharan gold and salt trade.

Yet in none of these topics is the underlying economic logic made explicit. The Neolithic Revolution, the shift from hunting and gathering to farming and the most important economic transformation in human history before the Industrial Revolution, is covered in Grade 5 Term 3 under the heading "Food," but it is treated as a story about what people ate, not as a revolution in human productive capacity. The word "productivity" does not appear in the Intermediate Phase curriculum. The concept of specialisation, that surplus production allows some people to stop farming and do other things, is gestured at in the Mesopotamia topic but never developed. Even where economic themes are present, they are treated incidentally rather than as part of a coherent economic narrative.

Grades 7–9 (Senior Phase)

The Senior Phase contains the richest economic content in the entire curriculum, but it is concentrated in Grades 7 and 8. Grade 7 addresses Indian Ocean trade (Term 1), pre-colonial economies (Term 2), Cape colonisation (Term 3) and African towns and cities (Term 4), all of which have substantial economic dimensions. Grade 8 includes the Industrial Revolution in Europe (Term 2) and South Africa's Mineral Revolution (Term 3), both explicitly economic topics.

However, the treatment of these topics privileges the political and social dimensions over the economic. The Industrial Revolution, the single most important economic event in human history, focuses primarily on the social consequences of industrialisation (child labour, urbanisation, working-class movements) and on the Industrial Revolution as a cause of European imperialism. The question "Why did the Industrial Revolution happen in Britain?" is not asked. This is a missed opportunity, because the answer to that question, which involves institutions, property rights, scientific culture and incentives for innovation, is relevant to understanding why South Africa has not yet achieved its own industrial transformation.

The Mineral Revolution topic is richer in economic content, covering mining, migrant labour and the emergence of racial capitalism. But it too is framed primarily through the lens of exploitation and racial hierarchy rather than as part of a broader story about how industrialisation transforms economies, shifting them from agriculture to mining to manufacturing to services, creating new opportunities even as it destroys old ones.

Grade 9 stands out for a different reason: while its four terms cover pseudo-scientific racism, segregationist education policy, women's protest movements and the Second World War, all important topics, the economic dimensions of these topics are rarely made explicit. The Term 3 programme on women's move-

ments, for example, is deeply concerned with land dispossession, the migrant labour system and women's labour, yet the curriculum frames these primarily as causes of political mobilisation rather than as economic phenomena worth understanding in their own right. Without a more explicit economic framing in the final year of compulsory History, learners who do not choose History in Grades 10–12 may leave school without having been asked to think systematically about how economies work or why some societies are richer than others.

Grades 10–12 (FET Phase)

In the FET Phase, History is a choice subject. The curriculum spans ancient civilisations (Grade 10), European expansion and the Atlantic world (Grade 11), and twentieth-century South African politics (Grade 12).

Economic content appears in several places. The Grade 10 topics on ancient Egypt, the Ming Dynasty and the Mali Empire all discuss trade and economic organisation. The Grade 11 topics on the Atlantic world and slavery address mercantilism, the plantation economy and the slave trade. Grade 12 Term 1, "Politics and Economics of South Africa (Late 19th–20th Centuries)," is the only topic in the entire curriculum with "Economics" in its title. It covers the mineral revolution, industrialisation, the "civilised labour" policy, the Great Depression and the "poor white problem."

Yet even here, the treatment is fragmented. The curriculum presents economic events without a unifying framework for understanding them. The concept of institutions as rules that determine who benefits from economic activity is absent. There is no discussion of GDP, living standards or how economists measure prosperity. Most strikingly, the curriculum's economic story of South Africa ends at the Great Depression and the "poor white problem" of the 1930s. There is no content on the post-1994 economy, no discussion of why growth has been slow, why unemployment remains above 30 percent, or what lessons economic history might offer for South Africa's future.

Summary

Across the entire Grades 4–12 curriculum, economic history content accounts for roughly 14 to 18 percent of total instructional hours. Nearly all of this treats economic themes incidentally, as context for political or social narratives. There is no sustained thread connecting economic events across grades. No learner who completes the full curriculum will encounter a coherent account of how humanity became prosperous, why some societies succeeded and others did not, or what South Africa can learn from that global story.

4. Proposed enrichments: weaving economic history into the existing curriculum

I am not proposing new topics that would require additional teaching time. I am proposing that existing topics be enriched with an economic dimension, that teachers be encouraged to ask economic questions about the events and processes they are already teaching. In each case, I draw on content from *Our Long Walk to Economic Freedom* and the scholarly literature it synthesises.

Grades 4–6: Laying the foundations

Grade 5 Term 1 (Fire). The curriculum already traces the use of fire from early hominids through to "the creation of electricity, steam and combustion engines." This is, in fact, a story about energy and productivity. Fire was the first technology that multiplied human effort. It cooked food (making nutrients more accessible), hardened tools, cleared land, and eventually powered smelting and engines. Introducing the concept

of *energy as the foundation of human productivity* would give learners a framework for understanding why each new energy source (wood, coal, oil, electricity, nuclear) represents a step in economic development.

Grade 5 Term 3 (Food). The curriculum asks "How do we know what people ate in the past?" This topic covers the transition from hunting and gathering to farming, but it does not name this as the *Neolithic Revolution*, the single most consequential economic event before the Industrial Revolution. When people began to grow crops, they could produce more food than they needed to survive. This *surplus* meant that some people could stop farming and become potters, weavers, priests, soldiers, builders. This is *specialisation*, and it is the foundation of all economic complexity. The curriculum already gestures at this in Grade 6's Mesopotamia topic, but the concept could be introduced earlier, in age-appropriate language: "When farmers grew more food than they needed, other people could do other jobs."

Grade 6 Term 2 (Mesopotamia). The curriculum mentions "surplus production," "markets" and "the earliest recording of transactions." This is excellent. It could be deepened by introducing the idea that *trade makes both sides better off*, a foundational economic insight. When Mesopotamian farmers traded grain for tools, both the farmer and the toolmaker ended up with more than they could have produced alone. The invention of writing, as the curriculum notes, arose partly from the need to keep track of economic transactions. Learners could be asked: Why did people start writing things down? The answer, to record who owed what to whom, is an economic one.

Grade 6 Term 4 (Mali and Timbuktu). The curriculum covers the trans-Saharan trade in gold, salt, cotton cloth and cowrie shells. This is an ideal place to ask: *What made Mali rich?* The answer involves what economists call *comparative advantage*: Mali had gold, the Saharan oases had salt, and both benefited enormously from exchange. Mansa Musa's legendary wealth was not plundered; it was generated by trade. This is a powerful corrective to the assumption that wealth must come from exploitation, and it speaks directly to the curriculum's commitment to foregrounding African achievement.

Grades 7–9: Building the framework

Grade 7 Term 1 (Indian Ocean Trade). The curriculum asks how southern Africa was connected to global trade networks. To the extent that the curriculum already assesses learners' ability to explain the consequences of those trade links (ideas, beliefs, languages, and so on), this could be enriched by including the *economic* consequences of that trade. Why did trade make Mapungubwe and Great Zimbabwe prosperous? The answer involves *institutions*, the rules about who controlled trade, who received the profits and how wealth was distributed. At Mapungubwe, trade in gold and ivory with the Swahili coast created a wealthy elite whose hilltop residence physically separated them from commoners below. Trade created wealth, but institutions determined who benefited. This remains true today.

Grade 7 Term 2 (Pre-colonial economies). This topic already has strong economic content. It could be further enriched by introducing the concept of the *land-to-labour ratio*. In pre-colonial southern Africa, land was abundant but people were scarce. This single fact, the opposite of what prevailed in densely populated Europe, shaped everything from marriage customs (lobola as compensation for a family's lost labour) to political organisation (chiefs competed for followers, not territory) to the vulnerability of African societies to the slave trade. In my book, I trace how this fundamental ratio explains institutional differences between Africa and Eurasia that persist to this day.

Grade 8 Term 2 (Industrial Revolution). This is the most critical intervention point. The curriculum asks "What factors gave rise to the Industrial Revolution?" but focuses on inventions and their social consequences. I would urge that two additional questions be added. First: *Why did it happen in Britain and not in China, India or Africa?* China had the printing press, gunpowder and the compass centuries before Europe. India had a textile industry that outcompeted British cloth well into the eighteenth century. What

was different about Britain? The answer, which involves secure property rights, a culture of scientific experimentation and institutions that rewarded innovation, is one of the most important questions in all of history. Second: *What actually changed?* The Industrial Revolution was not primarily about inventions. It was about the systematic application of scientific knowledge to production, a *productivity revolution* that meant one worker could suddenly produce what had previously required ten. The curriculum already asks learners to "explain how the Industrial Revolution changed the way in which humans live to this day." More can be done to frame the Industrial Revolution as a process whose causes and consequences are relevant to us today not just because of individual technologies, but because they help us understand how technology and institutions can create prosperity. This framing connects the Industrial Revolution to both the Neolithic Revolution (another productivity leap) and to South Africa's contemporary challenge of raising productivity to create jobs.

Grade 8 Term 3 (Mineral Revolution). The curriculum's treatment of the Mineral Revolution focuses, rightly, on migrant labour, racial hierarchy and exploitation. I would suggest adding a dimension that the curriculum currently lacks: the concept of *structural transformation*, the shift from an agricultural economy to a mining and industrial one. The discovery of diamonds at Kimberley in 1867 and gold on the Witwatersrand in 1886 did not merely enrich mine owners. It transformed the economic geography of southern Africa. Railways, built to service the mines, reshaped which regions prospered and which declined. Black farmers in Basutoland (now Lesotho), who had profitably supplied grain to Kimberley by ox-wagon, found themselves undercut when railways made it cheaper to transport Australian wheat halfway around the world. This story of how infrastructure creates winners and losers speaks to contemporary debates about transport, logistics and regional inequality in South Africa.

Grade 9. Grade 9 is the last year of compulsory History. While its topics are primarily framed through social and political lenses, several have significant economic dimensions that could be made more explicit.

The Grade 9 Term 2 topic on segregationist education policy is an ideal candidate. Bantu Education was not only a moral atrocity; it was an economic one. By deliberately preparing black South Africans for unskilled labour, the apartheid government destroyed *human capital* on a massive scale. The consequences are still visible: South Africa's education system remains one of the weakest in the developing world, and this is a direct cause of unemployment. Framing Bantu Education as an attack on human capital would help learners understand why education policy matters for economic development, a lesson that bears on their own job prospects.

The Grade 9 Term 3 topic on women's protest movements is deeply concerned with economic questions, even if the curriculum's emphasis falls on women's politicisation. The topic traces how land dispossession and the migrant labour system forced African women to shoulder the full burden of rural production, and how economic decline eventually drove them into urban areas where they were excluded from formal employment. Many took on domestic work, washing, beer brewing and factory jobs at wages far below those paid to men. These are economic stories about *labour markets, structural exclusion and the gendered distribution of work*. Given that domestic work remains a defining feature of black women's labour in South Africa today, and that migrant labour continues to shape household economies, greater emphasis on the economic forces that shaped the kinds of work women were performing, alongside the existing emphasis on women's politicisation, would give learners a richer understanding of how economic structures produce social and political responses.

Similarly, the Grade 9 Term 4 topic on the Second World War already covers the failure of the Weimar Republic and the rise of Nazi Germany. The economic causes (hyperinflation in the 1920s, the Great Depression of the 1930s, mass unemployment) are already implicit in the curriculum. Making them explicit would show learners how economic crises can destroy democratic institutions, a lesson with obvious force in a country where economic exclusion fuels political instability.

Grades 10–12: Deepening the analysis

Grade 10 Term 1 (Societies of the Wider World). The curriculum compares ancient Egypt, China, India, Greece and the Americas. An economic dimension would ask: How did each civilisation organise production, trade and the distribution of surplus? The economist Robert Heilbroner identified three fundamental mechanisms: *custom* (tradition determines who produces what), *command* (a ruler decides) and *markets* (prices and voluntary exchange coordinate production). Every society in history has used some combination of these three. Introducing this framework would give learners a tool for comparing civilisations that goes beyond political or cultural description.

Grade 10 Term 3 (Great Zimbabwe). The curriculum overview treats Great Zimbabwe as an archaeological and political case study in how ancient societies are interpreted. Great Zimbabwe can also serve as a case study in how *trade creates both wealth and inequality*. The curriculum's focus areas already include "the causes of the rise of Great Zimbabwe," "ancient trade networks linking the southern African interior to the Indian Ocean" and "the emergence of class-based systems/social stratification in Great Zimbabwe." To the extent that teachers are asked to address social stratification, this could include questions around: What institutions determined this stratification? What happened when the trade routes shifted? And what parallels can we draw with contemporary South Africa, where mineral wealth has enriched a few while leaving many in poverty?

Grade 11 Term 2 (Slavery and the Haitian Revolution). The curriculum treats the slave trade primarily as a moral and political catastrophe, which it was. But it was also an economic system with long-run economic consequences that persist to this day. The economic historian Nathan Nunn has shown that African countries from which more enslaved people were taken are significantly poorer today, not because of some inherent disadvantage but because the slave trade destroyed social trust. Communities that had to fear enslavement by their own neighbours developed deep mistrust of others. That mistrust reduced trade, investment and cooperation, and it persists in measurable ways in contemporary survey data. Adding this economic dimension does not diminish the moral horror of slavery. It deepens it, by showing that the damage extended far beyond the millions of lives directly destroyed.

Recent quantitative research on the Cape Colony shows how new methods can illuminate these histories of coercion. Karl Bergemann's study of runaway advertisements in the *Zuid Afrikaan* and the *Government Gazette* has shown how enslaved and indentured people in the 1830s exploited employment opportunities, willing harbourers and identity subterfuge to carve out new lives within the Colony's socio-economic frameworks. Kate Ekama's research on manumission records in Cape Town between 1825 and 1834 has revealed that enslaved people were not merely passive recipients of freedom; the most common reason for manumission was purchase, constituting 38 percent of cases, shifting the focus from slaveowners granting manumission to enslaved people achieving it through wages, inheritance and loans. These studies, published in *Slavery & Abolition*, demonstrate how quantitative approaches to administrative records can recover the agency and economic lives of people whom conventional archives have long rendered invisible.

Grade 12 Term 1 (Politics and Economics of South Africa). This is the curriculum's richest economic topic, covering the mineral revolution, industrialisation and the "poor white problem." I would urge a crucial addition: the post-1994 economy. The curriculum's economic narrative of South Africa currently ends in the 1930s. But the most relevant economic history for today's learners is what happened after democracy. Between 1994 and 2008, South Africa achieved significant economic 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 began to rise again. This is a story of tremendous importance for young South Africans, and it is a story that economic history can illuminate: sound institutions and competent governance create growth; corruption and state capture reverse it. A History curriculum that does not tell

this story leaves learners without the tools to understand the country they are inheriting.

5. Quantitative evidence as a historical source

The curriculum places strong emphasis on *source analysis*, teaching learners to evaluate written documents, images, oral testimonies and archaeological evidence. I would suggest that this emphasis be extended to include *numerical sources*: graphs, tables and data series.

Economic history naturally introduces quantitative evidence. If the curriculum is an attempt to introduce learners to a broader, more inclusive source base, incorporating quantitative evidence can be seen as part of that effort. A graph of GDP per capita over two thousand years reveals, in a way that written accounts cannot, the astonishing acceleration of prosperity that began with the Industrial Revolution. Quantitative evidence illustrates change over time. It is a complement to oral or archaeological evidence that is necessarily tied to a specific time and place. A chart of South African heights over the twentieth century (heights being a proxy for childhood nutrition and health) shows the devastating impact of the 1913 Natives Land Act, which can be read alongside recorded accounts like those of Sol Plaatje.

Additionally, introducing quantitative sources would encourage learners to engage with the ways history is routinely communicated in the public sphere, outside heritage and cultural spaces. Popular media, newspapers and reports routinely represent historical change visually, as data over time. Developing this form of literacy will encourage learners to grapple with the merits and limitations of such representations.

These are not arcane tools. They are the same skills that learners use in Mathematics and in Economic Management Sciences. The curriculum already employs a cognitive framework that moves from extraction (Level 1) to interpretation (Level 2) to evaluation (Level 3). Interpreting a graph of living standards fits naturally within this framework: learners extract data points, interpret trends and evaluate what the data reveals about causes and consequences.

Learning to read quantitative evidence also means learning to question it. Learners should be encouraged to ask: How was this data collected? What is being measured, and what is not? Whose experiences are captured in these numbers, and whose are left out? A graph of GDP per capita, for example, tells us nothing about how income is distributed, or about the unpaid labour of women in households. Heights recorded on military attestation forms capture only the men who enlisted, not those who were too sick or too poor to do so. Teaching learners to interrogate numerical sources with the same critical eye they bring to written documents would deepen their analytical skills and guard against the uncritical acceptance of data as objective truth. In my chapter "Quantitative History in Practice," published in *Quantitative History and Uncharted People: Case Studies from the South African Past* (Bloomsbury, 2023), I discuss how South African historians are beginning to use such methods to recover the stories of people whom conventional archives have overlooked, from enslaved women who purchased their own freedom to black voters disenfranchised under colonial rule.

To be concrete: in Grade 8 Term 2, when studying the Industrial Revolution, learners could be presented with a graph of British GDP per capita from 1700 to 1900. They would observe the long, flat line of pre-industrial stagnation, the tentative upturn around 1780 and the steep acceleration after 1830. This single graph encodes the central story of the Industrial Revolution more efficiently than pages of text. In Grade 12, a graph of South African GDP per capita from 1994 to 2024 would tell the story of post-apartheid economic performance (the steady growth of the Mandela–Mbeki years, the plateau after 2008, the decline during the years of state capture) in a way that invites analytical questions: What caused the inflection points? What policies were in place during the growth years? What changed?

Introducing numerical evidence into the History classroom would not require significant additional train-

ing. It would, however, signal that History is a discipline that engages with all forms of evidence, including quantitative evidence, and it would equip learners with analytical skills valued well beyond the History classroom.

6. Conclusion

South Africa is a country of extraordinary historical richness and extraordinary present-day economic challenges. The amended History curriculum does justice to the richness. My comments are intended to strengthen its engagement with the challenges.

My argument is not that the curriculum should become an economics course. It is that economic questions (How did societies become prosperous? Why are some richer than others? What institutions and technologies made the difference?) are historical questions, and among the most important ones that South African learners can engage with. These questions already lurk beneath the surface of many topics the curriculum covers. Bringing them to the surface would not require more teaching time. It would require a shift in framing: from primarily emphasising the political and social narratives of history to also including the economic dimensions of the past and their consequences in the present.

Historical education has always been important, but it is especially important today. The generation now entering South Africa's schools will inherit an economy that has not grown in per capita terms for over a decade, where unemployment stands above 30 percent and where inequality remains among the highest in the world. These are economic outcomes, and they have historical causes. A History curriculum that equips learners to understand those causes, and to imagine how they might be overcome, is a necessity. It goes to the heart of History as a discipline: to help us understand why the present looks the way it does, and illustrate how we might build a more equitable, more prosperous future.

Economic history offers something that pure political history cannot: an optimistic, evidence-based account of how poverty can be overcome. It shows that human societies have repeatedly found ways to generate prosperity, and that they have done so through identifiable processes: innovation, trade, inclusive institutions and investment in human capital. South Africa's learners deserve to know this story. It is, after all, their story too. To that end, the ten chapters of *Our Long Walk to Economic Freedom* that deal with South Africa's economic history are currently being adapted into a graphic novel, aimed at a high school audience and due for publication in January 2027. Both the book and the graphic novel will be freely available. I offer them as resources for teachers and curriculum developers seeking to bring economic history into the classroom in an accessible way.

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