PERCEPTIONS OF HISTORY AND EXPERIENCES OF LEARNING AMONG AFRICAN
STUDENTS IN THE EARLY 1990S, IN THE DEPARTMENT OF HISTORICAL
STUDIES AT THE UNIVERSITY OF NATAL, PIETERMARITZBURG.

by

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CONTENTS

CHAPTER 3

AFRICAN STUDENTS AND THE UNIVERSITY CONTEXT: EXPLORING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR LEARNING

CHAPTER 4

CONCEPTIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF HISTORY AMONG AFRICAN STUDENTS IN THE DHS, UNP.

CHAPTER 5

STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF LEARNING IN THE DHS

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

ABSTRACT

In South Africa there has been very little systematic, in-depth research examining students' learning experiences and their perceptions of their discipline and academic environment. This thesis concentrates on perceptions of History and experiences of learning among African students in the early 1990s in the Department of Historical Studies at the Pietermaritzburg campus of the University of Natal. Studies of this kind are crucial in terms of conceptualising and designing the history curriculum at universities in the post-apartheid era.

The thesis is divided into three parts. The first part will address the nature of history education. Because a study of this kind is motivated by strong value orientation, I will first explain the salient features of what I regard as 'good' history education, in order to develop a set of reference points for the study as a whole. The second part analyses lecturers' perceptions of the discipline, their teaching and their students. Their insights, influences and paradigms will be compared and contrasted with those of the students. Then in the third part I will discuss students' perceptions of how history is defined and try to contrast the paradigms that they bring from school and those that they encounter at university. This section will also focus on the course content and the perceptions of this aspect by the students.

The third part will also deal specifically with students'

experiences of learning and teaching in the DHS. I will concentrate on the existing teaching methods and their implications for learning. This will include, amongst other things, students' perceptions of lecturers and tutorials; the nature and role of essay writing; and the nature of student-lecturer relationships.

This exploratory study indicates that when compared to lecturers, African students show an inability to discuss in detail the epistemological, methodological and ideological aspects of the discipline. Among many factors which may account for this inability is the failure of their schooling to prepare them for the transition to university. The second reason is that empiricism is the dominant approach in the department. This paradigm does not emphasise the prior issue of how we know the past through the teaching of historiography and methodology at undergraduate level. This idea is only really developed at Honours level. Although the nature and the purpose of history as a discipline are matters of debate, this study stresses the need to make the essentials of the discourse of history more accessible to students by teaching 'simplified' methodology and historiography at undergraduate level.

PREFACE

This study of perceptions of history and experiences of learning among African students offers the Department of Historical Studies (DHS) a means of better understanding these students' attitudes. The growing numbers of African students at formerly white universities give rise to a range of challenging educational questions and therefore there is a continuing need for detailed analysis of a changing student population. This is essential for enriching the DHS's understanding of the tasks of discipline-specific education development, reflecting this changing population and the diverse challenges facing tertiary institutions in South Africa. We need to take into account the differences in students' socialisation and educational preparedness on entering university, and the demands of higher education should be made more explicit.

My analysis of perceptions of history and experiences of learning among African students is itself an historical task which must be located in a particular context at a particular time in our history. Hence such a project has the particular potential to benefit both the teaching of history and the education development programme. In 1991-1992 I carried out a joint education development research with the Establishment Tutor in the DHS. This research concentrated on the following aspects: collating a substantial bibliography on the subject of history education; analysing student and staff perceptions of history, of the interface between 'school history' and 'university history', and of the content and approach of the two first-year courses. Data for this analysis was gathered through an extensive programme of questionnaires. The research findings were fed back to lecturers, and have influenced the way courses are taught in the DHS.

The methodology used here includes a variety of techniques. These techniques are participant-observation (by attending lectures), in-depth audio-tape interviews, questionnaires and written

responses. My informants were (undergraduate) students in the first, second and third years. I had a particular advantage and opportunities here, as one of the first African students to have gone on to a Masters degree after graduating through the DHS.

This brings us to the question of the conceptual and theoretical framework to be used in my study. African students will be analyzed not just as disaggregated individuals, but as a group subject to a range of 'external' societal influences, both in the broader community and in the university. I will also seek to portray learning from the learners' perspective, and explore the implications of that perspective for the department's teaching approach. The ultimate aim will be to narrow the gap between the requirements of the department and students' skills, knowledge and expectations.

A preliminary survey of the literature available at the UNP library has revealed that substantial research exists on 'the learning processes of students' in the United Kingdom, Scandinavia and Australia. Very little empirical research has examined the learning experiences of African students at predominantly white universities in South Africa. Most Academic Support Programmes have concentrated on offering practical support to "at risk" students, and have done only limited research into students' learning experiences, perceptions of their disciplines and their academic environment. However, there is an emerging literature written by academic historians addressing issues of history curriculum for the post-apartheid era. Also, from 1988 to March 1991 the HSRC (as an extension of the Education Research Programme) carried out a major investigation into " History Education". Using this literature as a reference point, my thesis will concentrate on systematically analysing students' perceptions on the learning and teaching of history as a discipline.

At the beginning there were questions from some lecturers and

students of who the study is for, what it will cover and how it will work. The problem was one of allaying suspicion, agreeing on a brief, and gaining cooperation and support. There were questions of validity, ownership of questionnaires and audio-cassettes used during interviews, of who may gain or who may lose, the exclusion of white students as a control group and of the study's prospective impact on institutional life. Overall the thesis will be divided into three major parts. The first part explores my reference points by defining what is history education. The second part consists of my analysis of lecturers and the third part focuses on my analysis of students.

This thesis is the unaided work of the candidate. It has not been, nor is submitted for any degree or examination at any other universities.

LISTS OF ABBREVIATIONS

1.   DHS-   Departmental of Historical Studies

2.   UNP-   University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

CHAPTER 1
WHAT IS HISTORY EDUCATION?

The central purpose of this chapter is to describe and analyze the conceptual and theoretical frameworks for this exploratory study, applying them to the nature of history education in South African schools and universities. This necessitates an explanation of concepts such as ideology, method, problem-solving and content in relation to history education. Attention will be given to the nature of skills and content, and to the educative value of history education. In the latter part of the chapter an assessment of school textbooks, syllabi and the types of history students produced by the various secondary education departments will be examined, thus exploring the broad context from which university students come. An attempt will be made to describe the nature of history education in African schools since the advent of Bantu education. This thesis is about African students and attention should be paid to their school background. The final (and conclusive part) of this chapter consolidates and synthesises the different viewpoints on history education. It is hoped that the theoretical and conceptual issues dealt with in this chapter will inform the analysis and arguments in later chapters, which are based on empirical research. This chapter will also reflect the growing literature on history education in South Africa.

1. History and ideology

When analyzing the various definitions of history education in the South African context, one notices the explicit role of ideology in each definition. This is because through history education, we are dealing with larger developments within society. These originate outside the classroom and inevitably affect the process of pupil socialisation and the transmission of traditions and values.[1] One

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1.   O. Van Der Berg, 'History teaching in the 1990s- will the doors of learning and culture be opened?', History News, 35, 1991, pp.4-8. See also J.A. Benyon et al., 'History and Society', History Project for South

must therefore acknowledge the relationship between history education (its content, method, problem-solving techniques) and ideology. Ideology is a difficult concept to define, but as used in this chapter it refers to the overall perception one has of what the world, especially the social world, consists of and how it works. This includes issues like political and moral views, attitudes and empirical beliefs.

This definition of ideology is a fairly general one and does not highlight the fact that ideals, ideas, beliefs and representations are models generated by material conditions, and which may only emerge in practical action. Miller and Tilley in their discussion of ideology represented by bourgeois practice are of the opinion that a given group in society attempts, in so far as it has the power to do so, firstly to understand and secondly to represent its interest in its creation of the cultural world. This representation also constitutes aims of transforming this world in the direction of those interests.[2]

> Such representations exhibit certain properties: they tend to represent as universal that which may be partial, as coherent that which may be in conflict, as permanent that which may be in flux, as natural that which may be cultural, to formalise that which might otherwise be subject to contradiction.[3]

The importance of history as an ideological weapon hardly needs stressing. It is a safe generalization that all political interest-

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African Historical Society (as yet unpublished),pp.23-32. Both these authors put forward the view that for history education to be meaningful it has to contemplate the future of our society and of educational institutions within it.

2.   D. Miller and C. Tilley (eds), Ideology, power and prehistory (New York, Cambridge University Press, 1984), p. 13. These authors also argue that as a form of power, ideology may supplement coercive means of maintaining social control, which can never of themselves be completely effective.

3.   ibid. p.14. Although most critical studies tend to focus on the ideology of the dominant group, the latter are always opposed by surbodinate groups, which can overcome both coercive and ideological controls.

groups, whether dominant or dominated, invariably seek to legitimize their particular policies and practices by seeking precedents for them in the past. In the process they will, if necessary, reshape and, if they can get away with it, invent the past to suit their purposes. At the same time they will be concerned to neutralize and, if possible, suppress or exorcise that knowledge of the past which informs the political projects of groups opposed to them.[4]

John is of the opinion that in addition to the subject matter of historical knowledge, the teaching of history is clearly affected by the belief systems held by each individual teacher. History teachers, as well as holding beliefs about the efficacy and wisdom of certain practices, also hold educational and other beliefs of a more ideological kind which affect the teacher's decision-making during the crucial stages of planning, teaching and evaluation. These ideologies can be split into three sections: beliefs, values and attitudes.[5]

As such history is the "representation of the past in the present". History is inextricably bound up with the historian's values, and these are influenced by one's political view of the world or ideology. The past is explained through an interpretation of the historical evidence but this is based on the individual interests of a particular historian. In this regard history has meanings in the present and hence ideological agendas. South Africa has many examples of this, in all spheres of history education: schools, universities, and the workplace.[6]

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4.   J. Wright, 'Popularizing the Precolonial Past: Politics and Problems', Perspectives in Education, 10, 2 (1988/9), p.47.

5.   P. John, 'The Professional Craft Knowledge of the History Teacher', Teaching History, July 1991, p.11.

6.   See the following articles and books, P. Kallaway, 'History and Historiography', in Research Methods for Higher Degrees, edited by M. Sternberg and S. Philcox (Cape Town, UCT Press, 1983); C. Saunders,

Because history serves ideological purposes, and is integral to social struggle, it is essential to examine ways in which historical knowledge is handed from one generation to the next. One of the key ways in which this is done is through school and university history education.

1.1 A working definition of History Education

It is important to highlight at the outset that I do not emphasize the differences between the 'history education' tasks of schools and universities. This is because I envisage the same goals and methods for both institutions but at different levels of sophistication.

In my own view, history education at schools and universities should facilitate and develop students' critical faculties because it is essential for them to learn habits of historical criticism. This could be done by encouraging students to make personal meaning of what they learn in class, to become 'deep' learners not 'surface' or rote learners who regurgitate what their teacher tells them. They should learn to question the source of information, and most important, learn that a historical narrative is a selection of events and facts. This implies a socially determined value judgement in which the roles of power, language and politics cannot be ignored. In short, it should be stated that despite claims of

'Towards Understanding South Africa's Past', South Africa International, 19, 2(1988), pp. 65-73; R. Davenport, 'History in South Africa in the 1980s: Why Bother About It?', South Africa International, 19, 2(1988), pp.96-104; The History Materials Development Group, 'What is History? A new approach to History for Students, Workers and Communities',Perspectives in Education, 10, 1(1988), pp.75-83; The History Commission, What is History? (Johannesburg, Skotaville, 1987); C. Hamilton, 'Academics and the Craft of Writing Popular History', Perspectives in Education, 12, 1(1990), pp.125-128; I. Vadi, 'Teaching the History of the Freedom Charter', Perspectives in Education, 12, 1(1990), pp83-96; L. Callinicos, 'Intellectuals, Popular History and Worker Education', Perspectives in Education, 11, 1(1989), pp.51-64.For further debates by academics in South Africa see J. Brown (ed), History from South Africa: Alternative Visions and Practices (Philadelphia, Temple University Press, 1991).

objectivity, all historical writing has some ideological component.[7] Students should also learn to consider historical problems from more than one perspective. A useful exercise is always to examine history from different points of view and then draw one's own logical conclusions.[8] They should learn to understand the past as a social construction and that historical knowledge is relative. It should be pointed out that the role of interpretation in historical analysis is very important , as the student is required to recreate a world that no longer exists. In this regard students should have the necessary skills to be able to pose the correct questions; to impose a rational order on conflicting, voluminous pieces of evidence; to understand why historical developments occur; to conceptualise the very important role of time and chronology in a historical narrative; to be made aware of the role of cause and effect in history; to be able to recognise the difference between fact and opinion; to identify bias in historical interpretations; and, most importantly, to be able to formulate their own arguments in a logical manner.[9] In every possible situation students should be encouraged to develop their skills of analysis, evaluation and synthesis.

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7.   For debates concerning the role of objectivity in history as a discipline, see Novick, P. That noble dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1988).

8.   A perfect example in this regard is the role of Columbus in history. See the following articles, 'The Trouble with Columbus', Time, 7 October 1991; F. Fernandes-Armesto, 'Columbus- Hero or Villain', History Today, May 1992 and G.P. Horse-Capture 'An American-Indian Perspective' from H. Viola, ed, Seeds of Change (Washington, The Smithsonian Institute, 1992). Comparing these texts provides the opportunity to discuss the importance of studying history, the concepts of history, and the ideological nature of all history writing.

9.   See I. Davies, and M. Marshall, 'Preparing to teach about causation', Teaching History, April 1991, pp.18-22. See also K. Jenkins and P.Brickley, 'A-Level History: On Historical Facts and Other Problems', Teaching History, July 1988, pp.19-24; R.B. Mulholland, 'The evolution of History Teaching in South Africa', unpublished M.Ed, WITS, 1982, especially Chapt. 4; R. Medley, 'Teaching and Learning an Understanding of the Concept of Cause in History', Teaching History, April 1988, pp.27-31.

History is specifically an explanatory discipline because it is important to account for what happened and why. This implies that communicative, literary and linguistic skills are important. These skills, and the cultural capital and reference points that the student brings to the classroom, should not be taken for granted. In African schools these skills are neither developed nor encouraged, as students have to regurgitate what they are taught for examination purposes and so they remain syllabus-bound.[10] But the increasing number of African students studying history after matriculation means that the above-mentioned skills are a necessity. This is because all information and arguments must be communicated if they are to be of value and students (in particular English second language speakers) must be made aware of the ambiguities of careless language construction.[11] Language carries evaluative meaning and therefore students should exercise caution concerning every word they use. History presents a proliferation of abstract terms and concepts, such as, 'revolution', 'democracy', 'justice', 'power', 'tolerance'.[12] History lacks a specialized vocabulary and relies on everyday language which leaves students dependent on the language they bring with them to the class. History uses everyday language in a specific sense and professional

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10. S. Ndlovu and T. Nuttall, 'Perceptions, Conceptions and Expectations of History 1 Students in mid 1991', EDP Research Report No. 1, Historical Studies Department, Pmb, December 1991, p.6.

11. For the discussion of language problems faced by African pupils at secondary school see B.M. Malefo, 'Some problems of using a foreign language as a medium of instruction with special reference to English in Bophuthatswana (Southern Africa)', unpublished M.A., Leeds University, 1981.

12. See R.C. Jamal, 'The teaching and Learning of Historical Concepts', History News, 34(1990),pp.20-22; J. Jenkins, 'Issues in the Teaching of History-Towards a Skills/Concepts Approach', Teaching History, July 1991, pp.17-23. M.J. Macrae, 'Some aspects of concept acquisition in History', M.Ed., Rhodes Univ., 1987. For a discussion concerning white students' perceptions of some of these concepts, see C. Kros 'The Making of a Class: A Preliminary Critique of the Presentation of History in South African Schools', Perspectives in Education, 10, 1(1988), pp. 87-99. Kros clearly demonstrates that first-language speakers do not understand some of these concepts, hence it is not only African students who have been the victims of the apartheid system.

historians use it naturally but students are not aware of this specific sense. Consequently, ambiguity and confusion can arise when the precise meaning of a word alters in its historical context. The use of generalisations, as explanatory devices, should also be encouraged as they greatly assist in formulating hypotheses (and to a lesser extent theories) and also in understanding historical concepts.[13] History does after all deal with concepts and understandings which are relevant to more than one society or period.

The aims and objectives of historical education at school and university should be to enhance everyday life skills such as vocabulary, reference, comprehension, translation, communication, extrapolation, and judgement, together with the ability to analyze, evaluate, categorize and synthesize a large amount of historical evidence.[14] History education should not be restricted only to the written word because maps, pictures, cartoons, drama and poetry can also be used to encourage students to empathise with people living in past eras.[15] The teacher, who should be open to critical questioning, should always strive to work together with the learner in assimilating indeterminate historical knowledge.

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13. R.B. Mulholland, 'The evolution of History Teaching in South Africa'.

14 M. Govender, 'A critical evaluation of aims and objectives in History teaching in the Secondary School with the classification of objectives' unpublished M.Ed, UNISA, 1989, pp.135-143; See also G. Hitchcock, 'Knowledge, Skills and Curriculum Change: Issues for Social Science Teaching in Higher Education', Teaching History, Jan. 1991, pp.19-23; J. Coltham and J. Fines, Educational objectives for the study of history (London, The Historical Association, 1971).

15. See B. Garvey and M. Krug, Models of History Teaching in the Secondary School (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1977), Part 1; R.C. Jamal, 'A Diagnostic Analysis Model for Testing in History', History News, 31 (1988), pp.35-37 and K. Hodgkison, 'Standing the World on its Head: A Review of Eurocentrism in Humanities Maps and Atlases', Teaching History, Jan. 1991, pp.19-23; N.S. Kekana, 'Empathy and the teaching of History in Secondary Schools for blacks', D.Phil., RAU, 1990.

History is a problem-solving discipline of a specific kind.[16] As a form of knowledge, history is differentiated from a number of disciplines because of its prime concern with understanding how things came about (as outcomes are often known) rather than of producing solutions to the problems. Wineburg, in his interesting article on historical problem-solving, asserts that historical enquiry differs considerably from problem-solving in well structured domains. For example, in disciplines such as physics or geometry, goals are given to individuals, who then transform problems to arrive at solutions. But in history, goals remain vague and indefinite, open to a great deal of personal interpretation.[17]

Thus my view is that the 'historic sense' is not one of certainties, with clear cut and unambiguous solutions to given problems, which can be arrived at in a prescribed manner. The production of history is a process of constant negotiation between evidence and interpretation where many questions remain unanswered or capable of a wide variety of conclusions. History is an argument, an explanation and a viewpoint, drawing on selected facts. It is a representation of the past in the present, hence our present concerns influence what interests us about the past. As such, history is open to continuous reassessment and reappraisal, revision and re-examination, construction and reconstruction. But the historian's methods are rooted in evidence, rather than abstract or complex theories. History is a matter for debate and refinement of perceptions, and is seldom 'right' or 'wrong'. It is

16. S. Ndlovu and T. Nuttall, Historical Studies department's Education Development Programme (EDP) first quarterly report, August 1991, p.2.

17. S. Wineburg, 'Historical problem solving: A study of the cognitive processes used in the evaluation of documentary and pictorial evidence', Journal of Education Psychology 83. No1, 1991, pp.73-79; S.Wineburg and S. Wilson,'Models of wisdom in the teaching of history', Phi Delta Kappan, 70, 1988, pp.50-58; See also J.A. Benyon et al., 'History in Society', pp.5-7 and P. Gray, 'Problem Solving in History', Teaching History, April 1988, pp.20-22; M. Stanford, The Nature of Historical Knowledge (Massachusetts, Basil Blackwell, 1990),in particular Chapters 1-5.

more often either 'convincing' or 'poorly argued'.

The historical content offered in schools and universities should not avoid areas of conflict facing our divided society. It should be used as a vehicle to promote democracy through the inclusion of topical and relevant themes at matriculation level.[18] The development of historical skills should be based on ordinary events in the learner's life. In other words, use should be made of existing knowledge and experience in order to facilitate a smooth transition from what is known to what has to be learnt. The major goal in this regard is to empower students to gain control of their own learning situation.[19]

In most cases themes such as class and gender are left out of the content provided by the syllabi at schools and universities. The

18. See J. Rusen, 'Historical education in a multi-cultural society', (RAU, SASHT, 1990), pp.1-14; See also R. Van Der Heever, 'Restructuring the History Curriculum', History News, 31(1988), pp.37-41; R.E. Van Der Ross, 'The role of History as a School Subject in a Multicultural Society', History News, 31(1988), pp.25-30; C. Kros, 'History for Democracy', Lengwitch, 4, 1(1987), pp.5-23. HSRC, An empirical investigation into the teaching of History in the RSA (Pretoria, HSRC Publishers, 1991), pp.24. According to this report the following themes seem to be the most favoured by history teachers for further elaboration; History of Africa, ideologies, the History of the black man in South Africa, contemporary history, the trade unions, the liberation movements, apartheid and capitalism. The precolonial history of South Africa and an introduction to Archaeology seem to be the least popular with most of the respondents with the exception of 56% of black respondents who felt that the precolonial history should be expanded; C.B.N. Gobe, 'History teaching in Ciskeian secondary classes: some current problems identified and a suggested new syllabus for STD 10', unpublished M.Ed., Fort Hare University, 1991, Chapter 6.

19. J. Rees and S. Lowry, 'History for a New South Africa-An Integrated Curriculum', Perspectives in Education, 12, 1(1990), pp.73-76. See also M. Graham-Jolly, 'The Ingredients for a Relevant Syllabus for South African Schools', History News, 35(1991), p.9; V. Bickford-Smith, 'Rethinking First-Year History at UCT', Perspectives in Education, 12, 1(1990), pp.109-116 and M. Fuller et al., 'Transforming the Cutting Edge: Peoples' History Programme, University of the Western Cape, 1987-1989', Perspectives in Education, 12, 1 (1990), pp.103-108; W.R.L. Gebhard, 'Black Perceptions of South African History', unpublished M.A., Pretoria Univ., 1989. On the cognitive issues concerning underprepared students and their existing knowledge and experiences see A.P. Craig, 'The Conflict Between the Familiar and Unfamiliar', South African Journal of Higher Education, 3, 1(1989), pp.166-172.

content should place Africans, women and workers as subjects, not objects, of analysis in order to democratise historical knowledge and build a democratic South Africa against a background of political repression and resistance. The content should foster equality and diminish the pervasive belief that Africans and women are inferior, by placing them at the centre of the analysis which should be informed by the concept of fundamental human rights. Themes in "pre-colonial history" should also be included so as to undermine the prevailing myth that history in South Africa begins with the arrival of whites. By using a multi-disciplinary approach which includes archaeology, students will learn of the early civilisation of South Africa.[20]

Although proper knowledge of our past remains absolutely central, we should not only focus on South Africa's problems. History will benefit us if it keeps us aware of other societies that can be contrasted with our own. In terms of history education this means that we should analyze the nature of history teaching (and education) in post-independence Africa so as to avoid the mistakes that have been made in curriculum development. In Zimbabwe for instance, history syllabus planners found it easier to replace colonial histories with African nationalist ones and largely ignored the methodological advances in history education,[21] made by both the Curriculum movement and the School History Project in

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20.   See N. Southey,'Making Southern Africa's early past accessible; alternative histories for schools', South African Historical Journal 23, 1990, pp.168-183. See also the following chapters by P.V. Tobias, 'The dawn of the human family in Africa' and 'The last million years in Southern Africa' in T. Cameron and B. Spies (eds.), A new illustrated history of South Africa 2nd edition, Chapters 1 and 2. For the politics and problems in the teaching of "pre-colonial" history, see C. Hamilton and E. Webster, 'The Struggle for Control over the Voices of the Past and the Socialising Role of Precolonial History: Perspectives on the Production of Precolonial Education Materials', Perspectives in Education, 10, 2 (1988/9), pp.53-60 and J. Wright, 'Popularizing the Precolonial Past: Politics and Problems'.

21.   A. Proctor, 'Towards a New History Curriculum: Some Observations on the African and Zimbabwean Experiences', Perspectives in Education, 12, 1(1990), pp.78-80; See also A. Temu and B. Swai Historians and Africanist History: A critique (London, Zed Press, 1981).

Britain in the 1970s. Thus a critical approach to the nature of the discipline was not encouraged.

The controversial and problematic issues facing us should be part of the syllabus content that is offered in schools and universities and the main aim should be to teach students, through their life experiences, how to use intellectual and social skills in order to become more effective learners. Therefore emphasis should be placed on both historical content and on the skills of writing history in order to inculcate the ability to analyze, categorize and synthesize a great deal of historical evidence. In the light of this conceptual framework, we need to examine educational practices. This will be focused on African schooling, in order to gain a clearer idea of the educational background of students entering the DHS.

2.   African Schools and History Education

The coming to power of the Nationalist Party in early 1948 saw, for the first time, the implementation of a coherently formulated state policy on African education in the form of the 1953 Bantu Education Act. This led to a situation whereby control of African schools was removed from church and other non-state bodies and given to the government. The effects were far reaching. Of 7000 schools, over 5000 had been missionary-run prior to the introduction of Bantu Education. By 1959, virtually all black schools except for 700 Catholic schools had been brought under the central control of the Native Affairs Department.[22] It was also inevitable that syllabus revision would be centralised and it became illegal to operate a school not registered with the department of Bantu Education. Molteno asserts that the Bantu Education school syllabuses, which were finally enforced in 1956, stressed obedience, communal

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22.   P. Christie and C. Collins,'Bantu Education: apartheid ideology or labour reproduction?', Comparative Education, 18, 1(1982), p.61; K. Hartshorne, Crisis and Challenge: Black education 1910-1990 (Cape Town, OUP, 1992).

loyalty, ethnic and national diversity, acceptance of allocated social roles, piety, and identification with rural culture.[23] Ideologically, Bantu Education clearly envisaged the separation of whites and blacks into distinct political, cultural and economic structures.[24]

From the late 1950s to the early 1970s the education policy of the Nationalist government placed great emphasis upon using history in African schools as a vehicle for perpetuating apartheid ideology. History education was defined in terms of the basic tenets of Christian National Education (CNE) and white domination. Ashley defines CNE as the official ideological position of the Afrikaner Nationalists on education and he notes that it has been the educational expression of apartheid and the state's belief in the need for racial segregation.[25] Therefore the history syllabus in schools placed whites at the centre of the narrative, emphasising the history of great events and the exercise of power by white men. Also, this ignored critical analysis and was largely descriptive rather than explanatory.[26] In terms of problem-solving, history

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23. F. Molteno, 'The historical foundation of the schooling of black South Africans', in P. Kallaway (ed.) Apartheid and Education (Johannesburg, Ravan Press,1984), pp.45-107.

24. See the following publication on Bantu Education and Apartheid. K. Hartshorne, Crisis and Challenge:black education 1910-1990 (Cape Town, Oxford University Press, 1992); E. Mathonsi, Black Matriculation Results (Johannesburg, Skotaville, 1988); E. Unterhalter et al (eds.), Apartheid Education and Popular Struggles (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1991); P. Christie, The Right to Learn: The Struggle for Education in South Africa (Johannesburg, Ravan/Sached, 1988) and P. Kallaway (ed.) Apartheid and Education: The Education of Black South Africans ; M. Nkomo, ed., Pedagogy of domination: towards a democraticed education in South Africa (New Jersey, Africa World Press, 1990).

25. M. Ashley, Ideologies and schooling (Cape Town, S.A.T.A., 1989), Chapt.2; and also E. Mathonsi, Black Matriculation Results , Chapt.3.

26. C. Kros,'The Making of a Class', p.99. Here she describes a conversation with one of her black students who told her that "Bantu (including history) education arrested our development. It deprived us of the techniques". She further argues that it is not that Bantu Education tried to teach people to despise their own history that is so terrible, but that it prevented them from knowing how to go about exposing myths and

education offered in most state schools tended to regard the historical record as established and unchanging, with no further need for revision and re-interpretation. In essence such history was (and still is) uncritical of the existing status quo. It did not provide its pupils with skills, insights or historical knowledge, it provided them only with an ability to absorb 'facts' and so they were unable to appreciate different historical perspectives.

During the same period (the late 1950s to the early 1970s), the teaching and learning methods were underpinned by the philosophical assumptions of CNE and fundamental pedagogics. Enslin asserts that fundamental pedagogics, a more recent development than CNE (1960s), purports to be an approach to educational theory and follows the 'scientific method', said to be the only authentic method of studying education.[27] According to this model, history is descriptive, becoming everything that happened in the past and is made up of non-negotiable, pre-existent and "objective" facts. These facts are considered to be free of value judgement and therefore "scientific".[28] History education in this respect

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fallacies which they knew to be there. See also W. Carstens, 'History in Black High Schools', Perspectives in Education, 2, 1(1977), pp.22-24 and also O. Van Der Berg and P. Buckland, 'History as a subject in South African Schools', Teaching History, 34 (1982), pp.22-25, R. Chernis, 'The past in service of the present: a study of South African school history syllabuses and textbooks 1839-1990' unpublished Ph.D, University of Pretoria, 1990.

27. P. Enslin, 'The role of Fundamental Pedagogics in the Formulation of Educational Policy in South Africa', in P. Kallaway (ed), Apartheid and Education in South Africa, p.141. See also P. Randall, 'Historico-Pedagogics and Teacher Education in South Africa, 1948-1985', Perspectives in Education, 11, 2(1990), pp.37-46.

28. See P. Novick, That noble dream: The 'Objectivity Question' and the American Historical Profession on the fallacies of objectivity in history as a discipline. For a discussion of Afrikaner nationalist historians who dominate teacher and history education programmes at the black universities and colleges see A. Grundlingh, 'Politics, Principles and Problems of a Profession: Afrikaner Historians and their Discipline, c.1920-c.1965', Perspectives in Education, 12, 1 (1990), pp.1-19 and J. Bergh, 'The Afrikaans Historian and his Work', South Africa International, 19, 2(1988), pp. 81-89; M. Cornevin, Apartheid power and historical

regards knowledge as an entity which can be acquired by rote
learning. The teacher carries the burden of imparting this
knowledge to the student whose mind is regarded as a blank slate.
The passive student, in turn, crams great quantities of information
he receives about the past, without trying, nor being encouraged,
to make personal meaning out of it. He reproduces the teacher's
version as closely as possible in tests, examinations and other
techniques of assessment. Hence memory retention is the only skill
really being developed and assessed. The questions that are asked
in the classrooms are purely for purposes of clarification, not for
contesting the validity of what is offered. Therefore in terms of
method the teacher is above questioning and this does not equip
students with a range of intellectual and study skills. Students
are kept away from the problematic and controversial issues as
schools are simply thought of as "educational institutions" cut off
from political, economic and social structures.[29] One becomes
aware of these aims and objectives playing a major role in the
history section of the subject Ubuntu-Botho introduced, by the Kwa-
Zulu government in the late 1970s.[30] The history which is projected
is uncritical and is directly related to Inkatha as a political

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falsification (Paris, Unesco,1980).

29. M. Walker,'History and History Teaching in Apartheid South Africa',
Radical History Review, 46/7, 1990, pp.300-303. Walker asserts that most
teachers schooled and trained in apartheid institutions lack the technical
and theoretical tools to transform history teaching even though they may
recognize the problematic content of the syllabus, This point has been
collaborated by one of my postgraduate colleagues who has been teaching
history in African schools for the past ten years (after obtaining her
degree at Fort Hare). See also HSRC An empirical investigation, p.13.
Here history teachers who responded to the questionnaire indicated that
shortcomings in their training were in respect of South African history;
N.M. Vena, 'An Investigation into the problems underlying the teaching of
History as a school subject in Transkei Secondary Schools', unpublished
M.Ed., UNITRA,1988; W.M. Sobahle, 'The lack of resources as a contributory
factor to the high failure rate in STD 10 History examination in the Alice
circuit', unpublished M.Ed.1988, Rhodes University; C.B.N. Gobe, 'History
teaching in Ciskeian secondary classes'.

30. See O.E.H.M. Nxumalo, 'The sociological significance of the teaching of
history as a variable in the socialization of African Secondary School
pupils (in Kwa-Zulu)', unpublished MA thesis, Department of Sociology,
UNISA, 1980.

structure (like CNE which is related to the National Party).

Attempts were made by some educational authorities (Natal Education Department) in the late 1970s and 1980s to revise syllabi in order to be on a par with the new trends in history education as espoused by the School Council in Britain.[31] This was essentially a new emphasis on skills. As far as African schools were concerned, these 'new trends' were never implemented. The method, content and interpretation was still dominated by Afrikaner nationalist historiography.

Kallaway is of the opinion that the construction of a new political agenda by the state in the late 1980s and the early 1990s carries the inevitable implication of a unitary education administration being formed.[32] This impetus to change has left previous policy assumptions regarding history education as an embarrassment to the government. Therefore a range of new assumptions are beginning to inform future planning and most of these can be found in the HSRC investigation into History Education in South Africa in the RSA from 1988 to 1991 which was commissioned by the government. The new "philosophy" that is coming to dominate the official revision of history education is based on the concept of nation-building, and is multi-cultural in character and inspiration, with optional sections allocated for

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31. See the following articles on the S.C.H.P., N. Williams, 'The Schools Council History Project: History 13-16- The First Ten Years of Examination', Teaching History, Oct. 1986, pp.8-12; School Council Project, A New Look at History: Schools Council History 13-16-Project (Edinburgh, Holmes McDougall, 1976) and M. Booth, 'Survival or Training?', Teaching History, Jan 1988, pp.16-20.

32. This paragraph is largely based on P. Kallaway unpublished paper, 'Education and nation-building in South Africa in the 1990s: reforming history education for the post-apartheid era', University of Cape Town, 28 May 1991. See also C. Kros and I. Vadi, 'Towards a new history curriculum: reform or reconceptualisation?' in N. Taylor (ed.) Inventing Knowledge: Contests in Curriculum Construction (Cape Town, 1993), pp.92-110; The History Education Group, History Matters: Debates about a new history curriculum for South Africa (Houghton, Heinemann-Centaur, 1993)

each ethnic group.[33]

Alternative non-state educational institutions like Sacred Heart College, Protec, Khanya College and Turret Correspondence College are offering alternative models in school history education. By overtly recognising the highly political nature of history education, Khanya college seeks to challenge relations in the classroom and the society at large. Rassool and Witz claim that the oral history project for first-years at Khanya consciously integrates the development of historical skills and understanding into a first-year course, encourages new forms of assessment and challenges an educational and historical practice that is often professionalised, elitist and removed from the reality of struggles.[34] There are also concerned academics like those belonging to the History Workshop based at Wits University and to bodies like the South African Historical Society. The latter have commissioned research on the state of tertiary and school history education in South Africa.[35] The findings of this project are yet unpublished.

In an illuminating paper on history education Cuthbertson and Grundlingh correctly point out that , in terms of the syllabus, history has become more sophisticated in order to keep up with the

33. See M.H Trumpelmann, 'n Alternatiewe Geskiedeniskurrikulum vir n multikulturele RSA', History teaching in a multi-cultural society (RAU, 1990), pp. 89-113. For an alternative view (which is not segregationist) on the role of multi-culturalism in history education see, R.E. Van Der Ross, 'The Role of History as a school subject in a Multicultural Society', 'History News, 31(1988), pp.25-30; J. Rusen, 'Historical education in a multicultural society'.

34. See C. Rassool and L. Witz, 'Creators and shapers of the past: Some reflections on the experiences of the Khanya College oral history projects', Perspectives in Education 12, No 1, 1990, pp.97-102

35. See Benyon et al., 'History and Society", and also J. Horton, 'The relationship between School and University in the Development of Historical Studies', S.A.H.J. 14, 1982, pp.1-7; J.Brown (ed), History from South Africa; C. Saunders 'Radical History-the Wits Workshop Version-Reviewed', S.A.H.J. 24, 1991, pp.160-165.

constitutional manoeuvres of the government since the advent of tricameralism.[36] In the Department of Education and Training (DET) syllabus, for instance, provisions were made in the 1980s for the history of some extra-parliamentary activity and resistance by Africans against apartheid legislation. However this syllabus still presents the same South Africa as the one which emerged from the politics of 1948.[37] This is maintained through the establishment of the new ethnic idyll in which black heroic figures are invoked to legitimate separate development. Thus Shaka, instead of Verwoerd, is depicted as the original 'creator' of the 'homelands'. Similarly, the exploitation and resistance of the 'Coloureds' is glossed over in favour of an approach which emphasises their 'positive' contribution to white South Africa, an interpretation which is congruent with their envisaged role as junior partners in government.[38] To support Cuthbertson and Grundlingh, Kallaway has revealed that the government advisers are proposing a shift away from an official apartheid version of the past towards a 'new' history which aims specifically at furthering the interest of nation-building through the deconstruction of apartheid. This is,

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36. G. Cuthbertson and A. Grundlingh, 'Distortions of discourse: Problematical issues in the restructuring of history education in South African schools', unpublished paper, UNISA, 1992, pp.4-5.

37. See the core Syllabus for History Stardard 10, Higher Grade, 1988, South African History, Section B, 1.5 which reads as follows: The almagation of the South African Party and the Unionist Party; the Labour Party; the political implications of the 1922 strike on the Witwatersrand; the growth of extra-parliamentary activity. The time-line of this section is from 1910-1970 hence the very important post 1970 era is excluded delibarately from the syllabus. This includes the re-emergence of black nationalism and workers' and students' resistence. One can argue that the changes in the syllabus in African schools are cosmetic as the content defined in the syllabus does not go beyond 1948, even though the syllabus officially desribes the time-line as from 1910 to 1970. Also comparatively, the present syllabus does not reflect an analyis of the external relations of South Africa with the international and neighbouring countries, a theme which students will be confronted with at University.

38. Cuthbertson and Grundlingh, 'Distortion of Discourse', pp.4-5.

according to the HSRC report, best achieved by a common core syllabus (60%) and an optional section which can be selected in terms of the interests of specific 'groups'(40%).[39] This suggested syllabus for the post-apartheid era by the government advisers (amongst them professional historians) proves the point that apartheid history has become more sophisticated and reflects continuity with past syllabuses through optional sections reserved for each ethnic group. It is this particular kind of 'static nation building' that Kallaway is objecting to. But this syllabus has not yet been implemented in African schools as the syllabus was last changed between 1986 and 1988. The changing political climate has necessitated a moratorium on syllabus revision and implementation.[40]

Walker points out that in the mid-1980s a core history syllabus was drawn up for all education authorities, black and white alike, by a central body comprising the heads of "White" education in the four provinces and the Director-General of National Education. This implies a continuity with the concept of Bantu Education as decision-making rests with the white establishment and more specifically with the Afrikaner Nationalist power elite. Consequently the school curriculum and the history syllabus reflects specific ideologies of the ruling elite. History is a compulsory school subject from Standard 2 to Standard 7 (the ninth year of schooling). For the final three years of schooling it is an optional subject. The content is divided equally each year between general history and South African History. The general history is heavily Eurocentric and overall there is very little history on Africa. The South African history syllabus overwhelmingly presents a history made by whites, from Van Riebeck to the Randlords. The oppressed are not entirely absent from

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39. Kallaway, 'Education and nation-building' pp.31-46.

40. See Review Education, Vol 2, No 2, Weekly Mail, March 12-18, 1993.

school history, but make their appearance as objects, not subjects of discussion.[41] Therefore the fact that black South African matriculants now study the same basic history syllabus as whites is not significant. This is because this syllabus still reflects apartheid ideology in its content and form of assessment, especially in the DET matriculation examination. It provides African students with encyclopedic factual knowledge rather than study skills, qualitative insights and understandings. In order to understand the negative effects of the existing syllabus upon the average school-going African pupil, a discussion based on prescribed history textbooks will follow. This is because textbooks might be even more powerful in influencing pupils as they are the most important vehicle for the effective transmission of the syllabus.

2.1 The production of school history textbooks

The production of school history textbooks in African schools is dominated by people who are supporters of the ruling Afrikaner Nationalist government. During the past few years there have been many scandals that have rocked departments like the DET because some monopolies operating in this lucrative market are controlled by DET officials through nepotism. The situation is exacerbated by the requirement that schools use textbooks approved by the education authorities and African schools do not choose their own books. They are simply asked to indicate how many books are required and must take whatever the DET supplies. Refusal to do so could mean pupils sitting without textbooks for a further two years as the DET is notoriously slow in supplying its schools with textbooks.[42]

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41. M. Walker,'History and history teaching in Apartheid South Africa', p.303.

42. M. Walker, 'History and History Teaching in Apartheid South Africa', p.304. See also the HSRC, An empirical investigation, p.34, in the table reflecting the extent to which teachers felt they had a say in the choice of textbooks, it would seem black teachers did not have the same degree of freedom in their choice as white teachers. The black and Indian respondents also did not have as much opportunity to view the textbooks

Most of the textbooks produced by these monopolies are descriptive rather than analytical and ignore the latest historical findings and research.[43] The basic belief which is impressed upon students is that Afrikaners belong to a superior nation. Such notions as equality among nations and peoples, or that civilization can derive from an interaction of different cultures, are not found in these textbooks. Superiority is always relative, and requires that the other party be discredited. To enhance the claims of the Afrikaner 'nation', or whites in general, the past, the ancestry and the character of Africans are proclaimed as backward, barbarian, and inferior in a subtle, patronising manner. In addition the African past is left out and past events are fabricated, or exaggerated, or evaluated by dated standards, without any historical context or understanding.[44] These textbooks have not yet responded to the proposals put forward by the government advisers in connection with the " new-history" syllabus.

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beforehand; R. Chernis, 'The past in service of the present: a study of South African school history syallabuses and textbooks'; unpublished D.Phil., Pretoria Univ., 1990; E. Motsabi, 'The use of the textbook in the teaching of history in Bantu high schools', unpublished D.ed. Fort-Hare University, 1973; M. Monteth, 'The making of school's history textbook in Natal', Paper presented at a conference on the history of Natal an Zululand, University of Natal, Durban; M. Apples et al., The politics of the textbook (New York, Routledge, 1991).

43. The following are some of the history textbooks (most are reprints) which have found their way into African schools, A.N. Boyce, The Modern World and South Africa (Swaziland, Macmillan Boleswa, 1990); S.P. Jordaan et al., Exploring History (Pretoria, Via Afrika, 1991); F.A van Jaarsveld and T. van Wijk, New Illustrated History (Johannesburg, Perskor, 1976); C.J. Joubert and J.J. Britz, History for STD 10: According to the new core syllabus (Johannesburg, Perskor, 1986); A.P.J. van Rensburg and J. Schwema, Active History (Pretoria, De Jager-HAUM, 1981); S.F. Malan, New History to the Point (Johannesburg, Educum, 1986); M.C. van Schoor et al., Senior History (Cape Town, Nasou LTD, 1981). See also the table on textbooks used by teachers in the HSRC, An empirical investigation, p.33.

44. See E. Dean et al., History in Black and White: An analysis of South African History textbooks (Paris, UNESCO, 1983), and Chisolm, L. 'Ideology, Legitimation of the status quo, and history textbooks in South Africa', Perspectives in Education 5 (1981), pp.134-151. For an international perspective see V.R. Berghahn and H. Schissler, Perceptions of History: An analysis of school textbooks (Oxford, Berg Publishers, 1987). See also the HSRC, An empirical investigation, p.27; N.S. Kekana, 'The history textbook in a multi-cultural South Africa', History Teaching in a multi-cultural society (RAU, 1990)

The bantustan government of Kwa-Zulu has also designed Inkatha history text-books which are part of the Ubuntu-Botho (good citizenship) subject in Kwa-Zulu controlled schools. Golan suggests that they are similar to the old Afrikaner textbooks that were translated into English and Zulu and used in the schools until the 1970s.[45] They are also strikingly confused and incoherent in terms of the message they convey to the students. For example, the action of the police during the Sharpeville anti-pass protest is explained as follows, 'There was a fence around the police station. Seeing huge crowds, the police opened fire'. Here a message is conveyed to the student that violence is the only thing the predominantly African crowd understands, and it must be controlled by the use of excessive force. This assertion, at some level, reinforces white fears of the 'black mob'. The similarity with Afrikaner texts is evident in the extensive use of adulatory adjectives to describe past leaders, whose biographies are presented as the only explanation of historical events. The absence of descriptions of industrial processes, which were a product of colonialism and the development of the capitalist state, is surprising since most students' parents in Kwa-Zulu are migrant workers.[46] The content of the history section of Ubuntu-Botho stresses good citizenship, obedience, communal loyalty and Zulu nationalism. Shaka and other members of the African elite in Natal like the Dhlomo brothers and Gatsha Buthelezi are used as unifying symbols. This content is not entirely different to that offered in DET textbooks in that it reflects the same basic approach, but with

45. D. Golan, 'Inkatha and the Zulu past', Journal of African History 18, 1991, p.122. See also City Press, January,31, 1993, p.2.

46. D. Golan, 'Inkatha and the Zulu past';Ubuntu-Botho, pp.13-21. In the section titled'African History', the history of the liberation and popular struggle in South Africa is explained in terms of political organizations and important male personalities within those organizations. Although this is different to the textbooks used in DET schools, labour organizations (like the ICU and MWU), migrant workers and women are not mentioned as part and parcel of this process. The History section of the Ibanga 7 (Stardard 7) Ubuntu- Botho textbook deals specifically with what we can term the African 'great men' thesis.

the appropriate ethnic content.

We must also take note that since the mid 1980s new history textbooks by Witz, Kallaway, Pampallis and Callinicos, amongst others, have been published outside the ambit of the official DET syllabus.[47] These textbooks include revisionist contributions to South African historiography. They also incorporate newly available historical research and recognise that history is a debate. They do not seek to manufacture a consensual past, and they challenge existing myths and stereotypes created by the official school textbooks. They are corrective and oppositional. They also include issues of conflict facing our society and the ordinary person is often the focal point in their analysis of historical events. Thus they provide a good base to build upon in terms of the production of school history textbooks in post-apartheid South Africa. At present only a few private schools and colleges have prescribed some of these textbooks for their students. It is also worth noting that some white education departments, unlike the DET, do prescribe path-breaking textbooks, like the History Alive series, for their students. Yet teachers find the series difficult to use, given syllabus and examination constraints and their own inadequate training.[48] And even where teachers' education may have

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47. L. Witz, Write your own history (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1988); P. Kallaway et al., History Alive (Pietermaritzburg, Shutter and Shooter, 1987); L. Callinicos, Gold and Workers, (Johannesburg, Ravan, 1981). For a discussion of the issues concerning the production of texts which oppose traditional South African history, see L. Witz and C. Hamilton, 'Reaping the Whirlwind: The Reader's Digest Illustrated History of South Africa and Changing Popular Perceptions of History', South African Historical Journal, 24(1991), 185-202; Reader's Digest Illustrated History of South Africa (Cape Town, The Reader's Digest, 1989); J. Pampallis, Foundations of the New South Africa (Cape Town, Maskew Miller-Longman, 1991); History Commission, What is History; B. Johannesson, Diamonds and Gold: Using sources in the classroom (Pietermaritzburg, Heinemann-Centaur, 1992); B. Johannesson et al., The land the Basotho lost: The dispossession of the Basotho Kingdom in the nineteenth century (Johannesburg, Sached Trust, 1992).

48. R. Morrell, 'History Textbooks and History Teaching in South Africa: Present and Future', p.4, unpublished paper, Department of Education, Natal University, Durban; R.B. Mulholland, 'What will happen to the past in the future: the dillemma and contradiction in teacher education',

exposed them to a variety of methodological approaches, the existing school culture makes it difficult to introduce and sustain innovation.[49]

In the end, one remains with the question: how does the use or abuse of textbooks, among other aspects, equip or not equip students for university study?

3. The type of History student produced by the schooling system in South Africa

Some of the patterns of South African school history education can be illustrated through the results of a 1991 survey conducted in the History I00 (first year) class on the University of Natal's Pietermaritzburg campus.[50] The survey concluded that the DET and especially the Departments of Education and Culture (DEC) students of the bantustans are the least prepared for university. When compared to white students the DET/DEC graduates are disadvantaged through the restricted content and approach of their matriculation history, their lack of literary and basic study skills and their relatively deprived socio-economic backgrounds. The African students are often first-generation university entrants and therefore, unlike their white counterparts, do not have academic and literary expertise in their home background, from which to draw information and reinforcement. An encouraging sign in the survey was that most of these students were aware of their lack of preparedness, and were eager to 'learn the ropes' of historical method, content and problem-solving skills. The DET students were found to be, in general, more politicized than students from the other departments. They were commonly conscious of the abuse of history education by the DET for political and ideological

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History teaching in a multi-cultural society (RAU, 1990), pp.68-88.

49. M. Walker, 'History and History Teaching', pp.305.

50. S. Ndlovu and T. Nuttall, 'Perceptions, Conceptions and Expectations of History 1 Students in mid 1991'.

purposes. They also had an immense 'appetite' for historical knowledge, for it would help them reclaim their identity and wholeness in this divided land.[51]

Amongst white students, the survey revealed, the Transvaal Education Department (TED) produced matric graduates who were notably uncommitted as historians and were poorly prepared and motivated for university study. The perceptions of TED students suggest that their matriculation syllabus, as well as the pedagogy and textbooks, were functional, uninspiring and politically conservative. These promoted the Afrikaner nationalist approach to history education in terms of method, problem-solving and content.[52] By contrast the Natal Education Department (NED) and the Joint Matriculation Board (JMB) approach appears to be impressive, providing students with a good grounding in historical content and problem-solving skills. Hence they are well prepared for university. But the South African content offered to them avoids controversial and problematic issues facing the country. The impression one gets is that we have students who know more about international and European history but who never learn how, as historians, to think about or cope with conflict on a national or personal level. These students have more or less the kind of history that they want which is pursued mainly by Afrikaner nationalists and English liberals. They are overcritical of the Radical and African nationalist approach to history, thus

51. See also HSRC, AN empirical investigation, p.201; p.209. In their response to a questionnaire depicting the possible value of History as a school subject (Table 7.9), the black pupils rated as very important the statements that history should help in understanding current politics in the country, that it should be the instrument through which pupils are taught about different ideologies and that skills, i.e. the ability to reason and think critically, should be stimulated;

52. See J. Farquhason, 'Whose Past? How the TED Learns You Our History', History News, 30(1987), pp.19-21 and C. Kros, 'The Making of Class', pp.75-83. There appears to be a lack of interest in history as a subject, from The Star newspaper, January 20, 1993, p.17, it was reported that the Johannesburg College of Education history department has been whittled down from 11 members about 3 years ago to only two. Next year trainee teachers will take geography and history as a combined subject.

undermining the fact that a multi-perspective approach is relevant in history as a discipline. Nor do they learn to respect the rights and differing opinions of the majority of the people in this country. In short, the majority of white students have good academic and study skills but without a broad understanding of the South African society. It is important to point out, however, that the latter depends on much more than the history syllabus.

4. Conclusion

This chapter tries to define the salient features of what I regard as 'good' history education. It reflects extensive reading and my experience as a post-graduate student in the DHS. It has been necessary for me first to outline my views and preferences in the process of defining what is history education, and so developing a set of reference points for the study as a whole.

I have chosen the themes of content, problem solving and method in order to define history education as a phenomenon. This chapter provides the reader with a detailed definition of History as a discipline and the nature of historical knowledge. By reviewing aspects of school history one develops understanding of how the use or abuse of textbooks, among other aspects, equips or fails to equip students for university. Other aspects of school history education have been analysed in order to provide the reader with a contextual framework and to understand where university students are 'coming from'. The major questions in this regard are: What preparation did matric history provide for studying history at university? What are the underlying values of the matric history course?

My main subjects of the study are African students and as I have explored the history and context of their schooling elsewhere in the chapter, I feel that it is necessary to reflect what this means for history education; and for students coming to the DHS. History education at school and university has the potential to offer

explanatory, analytical and interpretative skills. Ideally, students should learn to assess arguments and develop an ability to construct counter-arguments which should be combined with an historical narrative. They need to be aware of the nature of historical evidence, conflicting evidence and historical interpretations, and in the process they should develop a sense of historical perspective.[53] Any matric student who has attained a good pass in history should be able to communicate (in writing and verbally) the following study skills at university: recall of specific facts; selection of relevant information; a coherent organisation of content; chronological presentation; concept analysis; comparison of similar events; evaluation of historical problems; taking arguments to a logical conclusion; and completing an answer which includes a synthesis which is free of errors and contradictions. Furthermore the following social skills need to be promoted through history education: tolerance, leadership and self-conscious reflexivity. This necessitates an awareness of groups and their democratic rights within the community and society; participation in activities associated with different members of a multi-cultural society; the ability to transcend racial and ethnic barriers by recognizing the problem of prejudice and the problems that are facing a multi-cultural society. Overall the intended behaviour of the historian might be described as one of sympathetic and informed understanding for humanity and the human condition.

The majority of African students are poorly prepared for university education; they lack resources, good teachers and most of the important study (and survival) skills in history education. Therefore the responsibility rests with the DHS to inculcate in their African students these intellectual skills, in a sense

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53. See K. Jenkins and P. Brickeley, 'A-Level History: from "Skillology" to "Methodology", Teaching History, Oct 1986, pp.3-7; N.H. Brasher, The Young Historian (London, Oxford University Press, 1970); W.O. Simpson, Working with Sources: Case Studies in Twentieth Century History (Cheltenham, Stanley Thornes, 1988); J.S. Smith, A Questioning Approach to Study Skills in History (London, The Historical Association, 1990).

contributing and providing some answers to the education question in South Africa. In Chapter Two the focus will be on the department itself as a "receiving institution" for university entrants. Attempts will be made to analyze lecturers' conceptions of history education and their expectations of their students.

CHAPTER 2

LECTURERS' CONCEPTIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF HISTORY IN THE
DEPARTMENT OF HISTORICAL STUDIES, UNP.

1. Institutional overview and staff profile

The purpose of this chapter is to describe and analyze the
teaching and presentation of history in the DHS and also to
identify challenges experienced by lecturers in this respect.
The study focuses on the lecturers' conceptions of the meaning of
history and explores factors which may shape their views.
Attention will be directed to a brief history of the
department, to the courses offered since 1990, and to the changes
which have taken place since then. Efforts have also been made
to determine the perceptions of lecturers on such matters as the
preparedness of students and related difficulties. In the latter
part of the chapter the role of the department's tutor and the
educational development programme will be discussed. The data
used for this study included a directed questionnaire (see
Appendix A), interviews with lecturers (see Appendix B), analysis
of an evaluation report, and course leaflets and syllabi offered
by the department. We really do not know much about lecturers. In
the literature on education a great limiting factor has been the
autonomy and relative power of lecturers - researchers find it
easier to gain access to more disempowered groups. Therefore in
this chapter we have a privileged view.

When the University of Natal was founded in Pietermaritzburg in
1910, history was intended to be taught as part of a modern
languages degree by Professor Besselaar, but he refused.[1]
Consequently appointments to teach history were made of Messrs M.
Franks in February 1911, then H.H. Lund, and finally A.F.
Hattersley in 1916. In due course, in 1923, the lectureship in
History became a chair. Hattersley began a systematic study of

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1.   Brookes, A history of the University of Natal (Pietermaritzburg,
       University of Natal Press, 1987).

colonial Natal history and put students in touch with the archives. A few years later political science, in which he was interested, was added to his chair. During the early 1930s another lectureship in history was added at the Durban Campus, a newly established centre of the university. By the time Hattersley retired he had written more than twenty books, mainly on colonial Natal. His successor in 1954 was Professor Arthur Keppel-Jones, famous for writing his prophetic When Smuts Goes,[2] and who subsequently went to Queens University in Canada. Keppel-Jones was succeeded 1959 by Professor E. Brookes who was a Senator in the Union Parliament, appointed as a 'Natives' Representative'. With Colin Webb, a young dynamic researcher in the department, he wrote A History of Natal which was published in 1965. Professor M. Prestwich succeeded Brookes in 1965. By the time Webb became an Associate Professor he had been instrumental in bringing a new research emphasis into the department, focusing on African history in the region.[3] This was the beginning of a new era in curriculum emphasis in the department. Here one notices a change from colonial history dating back from Hattersely's time, towards an Africanist emphasis. This ideological change was influenced by the coming of independence in colonial Africa (including the discovery that Africa had a history), and also in the new development of liberal Africanist history in South Africa. This era was marked by the publication in 1969 and 1970 of the Oxford History of South Africa edited by the historian Leonard Thompson and the anthropologist Monica Wilson.

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2.   A. Keppel-Jones, When Smuts Goes: a history of South Africa from 1952 to 2010, first published in 2015 (Pietermaritzburg, Shuter and Shooter, 1950).

3.   See for example J. Wright, 'The mountain bushmen and their neighbours, 1840-1870', M.A. thesis, Pietermaritzburg, 1968. This thesis was supervised by Webb; J. Wright and C. Webb, The James Stuart archives of recorded oral evidence relating to the history of the Zulu and neighbouring peoples (Pietermaritzburg, University of Natal Press, 1976-1993) Volumes 1-4.

Professor J.A. Benyon took the chair of the renamed department
of Historical and Political Studies in 1977. In 1984 a separate
Department of Political Studies was created. There are presently
eight permanent academic posts in the DHS: seven lectureships and
one tutorship. The DHS remained under Professor Benyon until he
put the department on a non-permanent headship system. The first
non-permanent H.O.D. appointed in 1991 was Professor W.R. Guest.
In addition to the permanent staff, postgraduate students
(Masters level) are appointed as first-year tutors in the
department.

Table 1:   A profile of the lecturers in the DHS, UNP, in 1992.[4]

	Education qualificat ions	Place of graduation	Academic title	Number of years teaching History
Lecturer A	HED,BA.Hon Ph.D DLitt et Phil.	Rhodes, Oxford, Unisa	Professor	30 [15 at UNP]
Lecturer B	MA; Ph.D HED.	Natal UCT	Professor	28 [15yrs-6mths at UNP]
Lecturer C	MA; Ph.D	Virginia (USA)	Professor	27 [? at UNP]

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4.   Lecturer G was on a sabbatical leave and I was unable to interview him
      (except ask him to fill in a questionnaire). Therefore his views are not
      reflected in the discussion which follows. Lecturer C was uncooperative
      and so his views also do not gain expression in my text.

Lecturer D	MA. Ph.D	Natal Wits	Professor	21 [21 at UNP]
Lecturer E	MA;Ph.D	Natal	Professor	20 [20 at UNP]
Lecturer F	MA; UED, Ph.D.	Rhodes, Cambridge	Doctor	17 [13 at UNP]_
Lecturer G	MSc; Ph.D.	Nottingham London, CNNA	Professor	30 [9 at UNP]

From this profile one notices that the existing lecturers are well qualified and experienced. The majority of them stressed how their educational background has influenced their understanding of history as a discipline. They identified the first four years at university as the most crucial and formative. The department is dominated by the graduates of Natal and Rhodes, and two historians from these universities were highly influential during the 1950s and 1960s: Professors W. Maxwell and C. Webb. It is interesting to note that throughout the interviews conducted with the lecturers, both these mentors were referred to as teachers rather than lecturers. This has implications for the presentation of history in the department.

Lecturer A recalls:

> One cannot develop a view of history in vacuo, one must look to one's antecedents in early life... When I went to Rhodes the Professor there was also a remarkable person by the name of Winifred Maxwell. Her influence was so great on South African historians... a few years back every head of the (history) department in the so-called English speaking

universities was a product of Maxwell... She was British and consequently there was this emphasis on the syllabi... She was also very keen on South African history and subsequently published quite a number of works... I would say she was a major influence on me.[5]

Lecturer D has this to say about Webb:

[Professor Webb] was certainly the best teacher that I and many other students had at undergraduate level.[6]

Lecturer E recalls that:

One is really influenced by both the style and I suppose the philosophy of one's teacher ... I think teachers like Colin Webb who had a tremendously empathetic, liberal kind of approach was certainly influential in my life.[7]

The lecturers in this department have different research interests and these have changed over a given time period and there appears to be a strong regional (Natal) focus, but with comparative dimensions.[8] The following are the research interest of the lecturers: The history of Natal south of the Thukela River in the early 19th century and Ethnicity in Africa South of the Sahara; mining history and environmental history;[9] imperial impact upon South Africa and comparative study of the activities of British pro-consuls in other parts of the world; the political economy of Natal-Zululand (which includes coal mining), and the activities of the leading political figures in colonial Natal;

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5. Interview with Lecturer A, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 24/9/1992. See also W. Maxwell, Random reflections on the study of history in South Africa, Inaugural lecture, Rhodes University, 1956.

6. Interview with Lecturer D, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1/10/1992.

7. Interview with lecturer E, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 2/10/1992.

8. I will deal with teaching aspects in more detail later in this chapter.

9. From interview with Lecturer F, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 29/9/1992.

military history and white politics in colonial Natal-Zululand and Latin America's economic history.

2. Lecturers' conceptions of History

There are two identifiable approaches in the department: empiricism and relativism. Empiricism, the dominant approach in the DHS, aims to dig up the past as it actually was. The relativists revolted against objective history and argued that facts cannot alone speak for themselves but must be selected; once selected they have to be interpreted. According to them, this interpretation is necessarily subjective, taking into account historians as products of their times and culture. Therefore production of historical knowledge in any given society is very important to the relativists.[10] From the interviews I conducted it is apparent that these approaches rarely present themselves in pure manifestations. They do so mainly in complex correlations and hence are shifting and overlapping. For example, the influence of 'relativism' cannot be easily closed out and most lecturers live with an uneasy tension between the two approaches, that is, aspiring to be truly empiricist, but realising that this is unattainable. The different emphases within this zone of tension are multiple and here one finds that the majority of lecturers adopt eclectism in order to borrow from the above mentioned two historiographical paradigms. Hence the categories of analysis in this respect will be based on the following themes: the relationship between 'history' and the present; the nature of evidence and its use; and the meaning of 'critical'.

Eclectism is highlighted in the case of one lecturer, an empiricist, when he emphasizes the relation of the past to

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10. See R. Chernis, The role of sources and field studies in the teaching of history, pp. 9-10. See also J.H. Hexter, On Historians: A scrutiny on some modern practitioners, Chapter 1 (London, Collins, 1979).

present problems. He argues that knowledge of the past reflects the present interests of the historian. In other words, the production of history is conditioned by present preoccupations. "Naturally every generation rewrites its past in terms of its understanding of the world" he argues, "present-mindedness is <u>the</u> besetting sin of history". This refers to the practice by some historians of always judging the past in terms of present perspectives. The problem is to determine at what point present-mindedness conflicts with the historian's aspiration to be true to the past. He also asserts that

> History is a tremendously political subject. One can in terms of one's selection...distort the meaning of the past and in our country today it is a danger if one looks at the past simply as a kind of quarry to dig out ammunition rather than to try and understand the past very often in its own terms...I suppose in a way I (prefer) historicism, generic relationism or any of this sort of von Rankean kind of approach. I do believe that although historians cannot actually do it completely, historians have got to strive to understand the past in its own terms.[11]

Lecturer A acknowledges that 'presentism' is a feature of bad historians but then 'History rests upon the present, varies with the present, and in fact <u>is</u> the present'.[12]

Although most lecturers admit that the relationship between the past and present should be at the forefront of the courses offered by the department, they differ in their emphases regarding the teaching of this theme. One lecturer, a relativist, asserts that the teaching of methodology and theory in history which highlights the relationship between the past and the present is very important. He is also of the opinion that the

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11.   Interview with Lecturer E, 2/10/1992 and his questionnaire response,
       University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 31/1/1992.

12.   Lecturer A questionnaire response, 16/1/1992, p.2.

analysis of existing power relations and the production of historical knowledge should be a major focus. This includes the use and abuse of language, and the problems associated with representation in history as a discipline. But the majority of the lecturers tend to emphasise the teaching of (empirical) content as the most appropriate vehicle to be used to explain the existing relationship between the past and the present:

> Our perception of history, and what parts of it need to be studied, is inescapably influenced by present circumstances. We need to satisfy ourselves, and our students, that what we teach and how we approach [history] is appropriate to our present circumstances and future needs. This does not necessarily mean an increasing emphasis on African and South African history to the exclusion of other parts of the world. The urgent present need not imply increasing parochialism, provided we can justify what we teach. The imparting of history skills may initially be more effective by concentrating on foreign, less emotive content.[13]

and:

> The starting point for voyages in the past can be the asking of questions about the present. For example, why is there currently a world-wide campaign to promote the need to preserve biological diversity? What is threatening biological diversity? How did this problem come about?[14]

From another lecturer, a relativist, comes the view that historians should be rigorous users of evidence. This takes him on to common ground with the strong empiricist emphasis on evidence:

> History is not about the past, rather, it is about how we think about the past in the present. Of course there is

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13. Lecturer B questionnaire response, 5/2/1992.

14. Lecturer F questionnaire response, nd.

some 'past' that actually happened, but we can only know it through language or some kind of representation. This makes 'history' at once, and always subjective... We need to get firmly away from the common idea that history consists of fixed particles of knowledge called facts, which the historian digs out and combines into a narrative, and towards getting across the idea that 'facts' themselves are products of the way in which the historian looks at what we call 'evidence'.[15]

Again on the issue of evidence, most lecturers are of the opinion that historical evidence should be presented as involving a process of problem-solving, requiring sceptical analysis of evidence and interpretation. Therefore an independent judgement based on this evidence and an awareness that a range of (different) interpretations is possible when analysing any particular historical problem. But one lecturer noted that we should not over-emphasise this point at undergraduate level, because students:

can easily become disillusioned if one gets too complicated. Their tendency could be either to lurch the whole way into 'relativism'- and believe that no objective truth is possible in History; or they could become totally reactionary- back to the straight simplicities of the text-book approach- and so leave History for some 'factual' subjects like Psychology... So long as first years are made to see how historians have differed over some evidence in the past, they will be taking the first steps towards this concept of an elusive truth conditioned by present-day attitudes and perceptions. The historiographical

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15.   Interview with Lecturer D, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1/10/1992.

controversies studied need not be many.[16]

The majority of the lecturers discuss critical thinking in terms of problem-solving and again one notices the dominant emphasis on empirical content for the purpose of conveying 'factual' knowledge, hence the role of empathy and objectivity is seen as important. The material basis of the modern world, and its historical evolution is the focus of this content:

> The subject matter, or vehicle, for teaching the above qualities or patterns of critical thought should be chosen in order to achieve a better understanding of our present world. The emphasis should be placed on crucial factors that have gone into the shaping of the world as we know it today, and through comparisons between different parts of the world, including South Africa.[17]

The lecturers commonly see the development of the students' critical faculties as a principal objective. Thus:

> Some perception of what the difference between what is utopian and what is economically and politically practical should also be instilled [into the students' minds]. Thus a certain detachment and objectivity should be beginning to show itself. The idea that 'truth' is not easily found and is itself based on shifting sands should also be partly manifest. In other words, the powers of analysis and reasoning and synthesis should have progressed to a point where the student can exercise considerable personal initiative in academic work. [18]

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16. Lecturer A questionnaire response, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 16/1/1992.

17. Lecturer F questionnaire response, nd.

18. Lecturer A questionnaire response, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 24/9/1992.

Understanding the lecturers' conceptions of history becomes clearer when examining their answers to the questions of what constitutes a 'good' historian and a 'bad' historian.[19] In summary, the profile of the 'good' historian is exclusively that of a highly qualified academic or professional, with sympathetic and informed understanding for humanity and the human condition (human qualities), good teaching, methodological and conceptual skills (these overlap with research skills). This suggests the importance of professors of history in shaping the thinking of each student as the former are likely to possess most of these attributes. What is noteworthy about this profile is the equal weight given to teaching, human qualities, methodological and conceptual skills. From the combined views of all the lecturers, the following categories of a 'good' historian are listed under the category of teaching: articulation; scholarship, lucid expression; the ability to expose students to arguments that are contrary to one's own perspectives and ideological preferences; awareness that it is not possible to approach history with the proverbial 'open mind'; willingness to modify or even to abandon preconceived notions in the light of overwhelming evidence to the contrary; the literary skills to present findings in elegant, accessible prose; and the ability to develop clear and logical arguments. Methodological and conceptual skills include: ability to weigh evidence judiciously and synthesize relevant material; the possession of analytical and critical skills; and thorough research skills. For human skills the following are mentioned: a genuine effort at detachment, ignores bias as far as possible; objectivity; understands the dynamics, both personal and impersonal, that cause change; prepared to give consideration to other points of view.

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19. S.Ndlovu and T. Nuttall, 'Historians and Historical Knowledge: Students and Staff at the Learning interface in the History 100 Course at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 1991-2', Working Paper presented at the Durban History Department Seminar, 3 June 1992, University of Natal, Durban, p.5.

The lecturers' conceptions are also revealed by the responses to the question of what a 'bad' historian is.[20] Listed under the category of teaching are: verbosity; lack of ability to express any conclusion coherently; ruthless promotion of a particular interpretation without weighing and acknowledging other lines of argument; promoting the notion of history as propaganda instead of history as problem-solving and as argument in pursuit of what really happened. Methodological and conceptual skills cover the following attributes of a 'bad' historian: superficial research, haste and carelessness, and the inability to weave facts, argument and analysis together. For human skills the following are mentioned: an ideologue and propagandist who promotes prejudice; false pretensions and excessive partisanship.

This brief exploration of lecturers conceptions has highlighted the centrality of the teaching function, and it is this which the next section examines

3. Lecturers' perspectives on the teaching of history in the DHS.

In general terms, the lecturers view their teaching as an expression of their professional responsibility and their contribution to the education question in South Africa. The consensus of opinion in response to the question about the overall aims and objectives of the History and Economic History[21] courses at all levels can be summed up in three inter-linked categories, namely, knowledge, skills and attitudes.
The lecturers' responses to questions reveal that in terms of historical knowledge, the students should be introduced in broad terms to the major dynamics that have shaped the modern world

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20. Ibid, p.7.

21. There are two majors offered in the department, a three year history major and a two year economic history major.

both in its international and South African manifestations.[22]
This knowledge should highlight the relation of history to the
present. At the level of content, it should impart a sense of
historical perspective, an awareness of change over time, and a
better understanding of the students' time and place in history.

One lecturer is of the opinion that the department should be
teaching empirical content not so much for the purpose of
conveying knowledge as for the purpose of illustrating a critical
approach to understanding what 'history' is all about.[23]
According to him the historical knowledge produced by academic
historians is shaped by the numerous ways in which power is
exercised, and struggled for, in a society. Therefore, as argued
in chapter 1, it should be stated that despite claims of
objectivity, all history teaching has some ideological component.
Hence students should learn to consider historical problems from
more than one perspective, understand the past as a social
construction and learn that historical knowledge is relative.

In terms of the skills category, lecturers have different
preferences. For some lecturers history should be presented as a
process of problem-solving, requiring sceptical analysis of
evidence and interpretation, and construction of a well-argued
synthesis or a strongly supported argument of one's own.[24]
Students, in this view, should be encouraged to develop their
skills of analysis, evaluation and synthesis. The student should
be able to do this 'independently, from a limited number of
prescribed sources and also present short argumentative

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22.   Lecturer A response to questionnaire, University of Natal,
       Pietermaritzburg, 16/1/1992.

23.   Lecture D questionnaire response, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg,
       28/1/1992.

24.   Lecturer B questionnaire response, University of Natal,
       Pietermaritzburg, 5/2/1992.

assessments on solutions to historical problems posed during conversational tutorials'.[25] The student should also be aware that history is an explanatory, and not merely a descriptive discipline. This is done through examining sources, comparing them, considering different perspectives and empathising with people who lived in earlier ages.

Lecturer D believes that at present the department is still overwhelmingly concerned with conveying 'objective' factual knowledge, and is more concerned about what part of the past to teach, rather than the prior issue of how we know the past. According to him, students should be made more sensitive about how the past is constructed. The DHS should engender the process of critical thinking which has to do specifically with the connection between knowledge and power.[26] In this respect the notion of moving closer to the objective truth about the past must be challenged because the historians' role is not that of a detached, neutral, or disinterested, person. The idea is to come up to the present so that students can locate themselves and answer questions which are politically and socially important to them and their world.

The skill and attitude categories are closely related. Whereas the former concentrates upon techniques and methods, the latter is defined in terms of human qualities. Therefore under the attitude category, one lecturer hopes to inculcate a lasting interest in the discipline because:
>   [history] can contribute to producing a public personality
>   with broad understanding and approaches to [the manner in]

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25.   Lecturer A questionnaire response, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 16/1/1992.

26.   Lecturer D questionnaire response, University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 29/1/1992. The words were underlined in the original documents.

which society moves.[27]

The undergraduate history and economic history courses do introduce students to contrasting and conflicting interpretations of history, but there seems to be no consistent attempt to tackle historical method until the honours year. Most teaching at undergraduate level relies heavily on secondary sources or reprinted documents. Students' critical faculties are developed by assessing the relative merits of arguments expressed in these, rather than by deploying and analyzing primary material. This does not allow for the first-hand appreciation of the nature of information on which historians rely, or of the process by which historical hypotheses are developed and tested. Such aspects can only be effectively learned by actively engaging in the process of research itself. By amassing and analyzing primary material, students can become more aware of the structure, purpose, uses and limitations of historical evidence, and be more conscious of the nature of bias.[28] Nevertheless, through secondary material, students are given an opportunity to formulate their own hypotheses and to question assumptions which lie behind generalisations put forward in published works.

Within a societal and institutional context, lecturers serve as curricular gatekeepers. Their beliefs about the curriculum, how they plan, and how they teach, determine both the subject matter and the experiences to which students have access. How lecturers conceptualize history teaching, and how their conceptualizations are transformed in a lecture-room context, is central. Most lecturers see a university education as a 'development' of the mind, and as an expansion of horizons, which comes about through contact with scholarly and cultured companions.

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27.   Lecturer A questionnaire response.

28.   See Lecturer D questionnaire response, 28/1/1992.

From the lecturers responses I have divided their conceptions of history teaching into two categories, namely, what lecturers enjoy most about teaching history in South Africa and what they see as the major drawbacks. The following two statements sum up lecturers' views concerning the first category. As Lecturer D says:

> The teaching of a subject which has a close political relevance... enables one to relate the past to ones' own present right here and now in Africa and South Africa and to try and get it to relate to the students' own experience as well.[29]

And Lecturer F notes that:

> It has been a wonderful experience in the sense that I am getting students who are genuinely interested, who really want to know. It has been an exhilarating [but also quite difficult] experience in being involved in seeing how the university has changed in a changing South Africa, how the student composition of the class has changed.[30]

Because of the African students' 'appetite' for historical knowledge, the lecturers perceive a genuine student interest in the discipline.[31] This has provided new challenges to the lecturers. If students are to use history critically then historical information should provide personal meaning to all the students. This would enable most students to cope with the current situation in the country. This implies that the life experiences of African students should also be reflected in the history curriculum, presenting a challenge to the lecturing staff, the majority of whom are used to a 'white' frame of reference.

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29.   Interview with lecturer D, 1/10/1992.

30.   Interview with Lecturer F, 29/9/1992.

31.   See chapter 1.

From the interviews major problems are identified in the teaching of history in the current situation. As Lecturer B puts it:

> Certain topics in history are very sensitive, they have to be handled very carefully and delicately. In offering one's own interpretation one has to be careful that one is not giving the impression that one is trying to force students to think in any particular way - moving from history into propaganda. The past and the present are always interrelated, in the case of South Africa perhaps never more so than now, and so certain issues have to be handled very carefully, for example, the early history of the Zulu Kingdom, now it is something of a 'hot potato'. This also makes history interesting, it can also be a drawback.[32]

Lecturer D points out that:

> Probably the drawbacks have to do with the school background, the low education standards where it would be nice if one could take a much greater degree of book learning for granted {for both black and white students]. It would enable us to make faster progress and get further ahead asking probing questions about the present day society. But I suppose it also makes one rethink teaching methods. So in some ways it is a drawback, in other ways it is a challenge one needs to meet. Another drawback about teaching is the way inevitably it has to compete with research. Like many academics, particularly in this department, I always feel that I am not doing a proper teaching job because of the amount of research that I want to get on with and vice-versa.[33]

These responses highlight the educative role of history and the importance of historical perspectives in any given society. The

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32.   Interview with Lecturer B, nd.

33.   Interview with Lecturer D, 1/10/1992.

most common drawback highlighted by the lecturers is that history
is an extremely political subject which can be abused for
ideological purposes. Yet there is also a positive potential.
One lecturer puts it as follows:

> Maybe we will be challenged by our students to pose new
> questions. And what also interests me is the way in which
> white students have the possibility of responding to a new
> South Africa. I hope positively, it will be a very important
> part of our teaching to get them into thinking in positive
> terms. Obviously one does not worry that much about African
> students, they will, in a sense, be leading the class in
> excitement and one hopes that is the positive side. The
> possible problem is that as the old stereotype, the old
> orthodoxy, the old apartheid orthodoxy dies, it will to some
> extent be replaced by the new orthodoxy where there will be
> a strong push for an African nationalist viewpoint to start
> dominating. But I think it most certain that it has to be
> brought into the agenda far more than it ever has been, as
> it represents the aspiration of most people in the country.
> Again we have to be careful to maintain the critical
> balance, to teach our students, black students particularly,
> to think critically about the society which is emerging and
> about the black nationalist viewpoint.[34]

All the lecturers point out that the understanding of history, in
critical terms, by each generation is essential to a democratic
society's well being. Also in educational terms, there is still a
lot to be done particularly in areas concerning the training or
'retraining' of history teachers and curriculum development. This
includes the development of students to be able to deal with
educational, political and social problems. Implicit in the
lecturers' response is the teaching of universal human rights and
'tolerance'(as far as thinking critically and emphatically about

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34.   Ibid.

the past is concerned) as concepts in our divided society.[35] The politics of history teaching in post-apartheid South Africa is a major point of concern for all the lecturers. This is because history can be an important vehicle for inculcating a mythology which supports the ruling political order. It is therefore assumed that a new majority government is likely to make demands that will go well beyond altering the emphasis of the present system in redressing the inaccuracies and misinterpretations of the existing history curriculum.[36] It is also noticeable that this department is devoted to being relevant to the problems and challenges of South Africa.

The task of investigating lecturers' attitudes towards students goes further than looking at conceptions of history teaching. It includes perceptions of the students themselves.

4.   Lecturers' perceptions of history students

Lecturers' views of the attributes of a successful graduate and of the problems faced by under-achievers will be highlighted here. The importance of study and academic skills (and to a lesser extent, social skills) are heavily emphasized by the lecturers. The lecturers hope for students at the university who are able, scholarly, motivated, and who strive for academic excellence, and do not require 'spoon-feeding'. The lecturers perceive a successful student as one who is able to draw on various skills and these include the ability to think critically; to read, analyze and synthesize complex evidence; and to communicate clearly both orally and in writing. History graduates should be able to function as members of a society by

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35.   See J. Thorton, 'Will the teaching of History result in better citizens?', Educational Leadership, 48, 1990, p.25.

36.   See A. Duminy, 'The future of history at the universities', History News, No 35, March 1991, pp.10-11; J.A. Benyon, 'Some likely future trends', History News, No 35, March 1991, pp.12-13. See also J. Slater, The Politics of History Teaching: A humanity dehumanised (London, Institute of Education, 1989).

conceptualizing historical information into an overall picture through making personal meaning out of it, that is, by developing their own perspectives.[37] The majority of the lecturers also mentioned 'genuine interest' in the discipline as an attribute of an 'ideal student'. This category also includes enthusiasm and hard work.

The lecturers' perceptions of the problems facing history students were expressed in terms of the study and academic skills which students were expected to have acquired by the time they registered for tertiary education.[38] According to the lecturers, both the students' environmental and educational background are central issues which need to be considered. Hence lecturers are aware of the assumptions of some students about the discipline of history seen as being an 'unchanging body of knowledge'. This leads to confusion when they encounter different approaches and different versions of history. The school syllabus entrenches these poor assumptions.

Language problems amongst both first and second language speakers were mentioned by the lecturers as hampering student progress and understanding of the discipline. This includes the lack of common cultural reference points and so students often miss unfamiliar allusions. As pointed out in Chapter 1, history uses everyday language in specific senses and lecturers use it naturally; however students are not aware of the specific sense in which it is used. Other problems include the low level of literary culture in South Africa, and deficient reading skills. It is also noticeable that there are different levels of familiarity and skill amongst different groups of students.

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37.   See C. Hemson evaluation report of the Arts and Social Science Educational Development Programme, Department of Historical Studies, UNP, Nov. 1991, p.1. Also see the course or subject leaflet on History at the Pietermaritzburg campus.

38.   ibid., p.2.

The lecturers tend to emphasize a student-deficit model which argues that poor performance is the result of the students' backgrounds and abilities. According to the lecturers, the 'under-achieving' students have to move beyond the notion that history instruction requires the student to memorize a vast amount of information without regard to any kind of overall meaning. Although, in the DHS, books and lectures make up the bulk of history instruction in a 'piece-meal' fashion, this historical information should fit into some kind of total picture and have personal meaning for the student. Under-achieving students also lack study and academic skills. They have inadequate levels of English language competence and a limited grasp of historical concepts. It is crucial to note that non-academic material problems, such as accommodation, transport and financial issues, are not rated by lecturers as amongst the most influential difficulties facing 'under-achieving' students.[39] Having outlined lecturers' perceptions of teaching, and of the students they teach, we need to gain a sense of the courses taught in the department.

5.   Courses offered by the DHS since 1990.
The focus of the courses has changed dramatically in the last three years. The reasons for this are many. This is highlighted by Lecturer B:

> The courses are more related to students needs perhaps than they were before. The kind of history that was taught previously was more 'ivory-tower' history, not as closely related to students needs and expectations. Also the connection between teaching and research does help to improve notably the content of the courses, but also the enthusiasm and interest with which you teach these

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39.   These issues will be discussed broadly in the next chapter.

courses.[40]

Lecturers mention other causes of change such as the major restructuring in the university towards a semesterized system. They also perceive a growing need to contextualise the problems of the evolving 'new' South Africa by introducing a close study of the period from 1960 to 1990. The changing composition of the university's population is also significant because classes are becoming increasingly Africanised. Hence there is a need to move away from the traditional outline of Western civilisation at first-year level. There is also a need to develop courses in a specialised direction to overlap with research interests. The rising interest in ethnicity in Eastern Europe and in South Africa is also influential. Therefore, in support of democracy, controversial and problematical issues which face South Africa are included.

The department still has a strong commitment to introductory, survey courses at first-year level. These courses are still based on the making of the western world; but African and South African courses are now being given greater weight at this level. The first and second year economic history courses are more 'global-courses', as they deal with Latin America, Asia, North America, Australia and South Africa.

One does not fail to notice the eclectic nature of the whole package of the history and economic history courses offered in the DHS. Individual members of staff have a great deal of freedom to 'design' the courses they want to teach, as well as the freedom to teach a preferred area of study. The following are the titles of the undergraduate courses offered by the department in

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40.   Interview with Lecturer B, nd.

1992:[41]

History 100:
-    The making of the western world since the 15th century.
-    Southern Africa and the wider world.

History 200:
-    Great Britain and its empire/commonwealth.
-    Fascism and its context.

History 300:
-    Themes in South African history during the 19th and 20th century (compulsory).

Students are expected to take two of the following courses:
-    Natal/Zululand history.
-    American history.
-    African history.
-    Medieval history.

Economic History 100 (Economic history is a two year major):
-    The rise of the European Economy.
-    The transformation of the wider world.

Economic History 300:
-    South Africa in the industrial age (compulsory).

Students are expected to take three of the following courses:
-    The making of the Natal regional economy.
-    USA economic history.
-    The Latin American economies since independence.
-    Selective themes in comparative industrialisation.

In addition to changing the courses the department took the innovative step of pushing for the creation of a new post, a tutorship. This was necessary because of the shortcomings of the DET and DEC history education, and other problems faced by

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41.   See Faculty of Arts Handbook, 1992.

African students from a disadvantaged educational background.[42]
The aim was and still is to maximize the academic performance of
disadvantaged students at first-year. The obvious impact of this
move will be to increase the number of African graduates in the
department and the university as a whole. The next section will
focus on the role of the establishment tutor in the department.

6.   The Establishment tutor and the educational development
      programme (EDP) in the DHS.

Most of the lecturers in the DHS are aware of the 'struggle' by
African students from DET and DEC schools to 'get off the ground'
at first-year level. Because the department has reservations
about 'outsiders' or 'experts' who have not specialised in the
needs of history teaching, a post was created in the form of the
establishment tutor. Thus a specialised tutor, a trained
historian, was appointed in 1990 to act as the co-ordinator of
the first-year courses.

Since then the tutor has been responsible for developing a multi-
faceted and co-ordinated approach to history education in the
department's two first year courses for all students. He has done
this through an integrated programme of lectures about history
skills(at the beginning of each year) and essays and tutorials
(throughout the year). This has been supplemented with extensive
individual student consultations. He has had a particular brief
to assist disadvantaged students, within his overall programme.
During the past three years, the Establishment Tutor has
developed valuable sources of material and methodology, which
have had a direct impact on the nature of the first year
courses.[43] The Establishment Tutor also co-ordinates a tutors'

42.   See S. Ndlovu and T. Nuttall, 'Perceptions, Conceptions and Expectations
       of History 1 students' and see also Chapter 1.

43.   W.R. Guest and T. Nuttall, 'Project proposal for the Arts/Social Science
       Education Development Programme, Phase 3, 1993-1995', University of
       Natal, Pietermaritzburg, 7/8/1992, p.2

team of graduate historians who participate in both the tutorial programme (teaching) and in research activity.

The research activity is organised under the auspices of the Arts Faculty Education Development Programme (EDP). Two of the most important objectives of this programme are to engage in research in the field of education development, and to mount programmes that will assist students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Both the Establishment Tutor and the present author have carried out extensive research jointly since 1991. This research is an on-going process as there is a continuing need for detailed analysis of the perceptions of a changing student population. In this way the DHS can gain an informed sense of (under-prepared) student problems, expectations and experiences. Such information is essential for effective teaching and learning.[44] Through the integrated programme, through study groups and through individual consultation, the tutor has developed discipline- specific skills and basic study skills. These include general organisation and planning, time management, effective listening and note-taking, participation in tutorials (which is rewarded by giving marks), effective reading strategies, the organisation and structuring of essays, tests and examinations.

But this framework tends to emphasise the 'student-deficit' model as it views the poor performance of students in terms of educational background and abilities. This approach does not pay enough attention to problems which arise from a deficit in lecturers. The 'teacher-deficit' issue is highly sensitive. For staff and student development to be integrated, careful negotiations have to be initiated with the former. The establishment tutor administers questionnaires amongst students

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44. ibid., See also S.Ndlovu and T. Nuttall, 'Perceptions, Conceptions and Expectations of History 1 students'; 'Historians and Historical Knowledge'.

and then circulates the results amongsts the lecturing staff.
This is motivated by an attempt to address 'teacher deficit'.
However a systematic study of problems and deficiencies in the
teaching or lecturing environment needs to be undertaken, and a
support structure needs to be developed for the lecturers.

7. Conclusion

History teaching in the DHS continues to be defined primarily in
terms of a 'skills-based content' approach rather than on a more
explicitly historiographical approach. It is mainly carried out
in lectures and small tutorial groups. Assessment includes a
selection of written essays and tutorials, formal examinations
and a long essays project for third years.[45] The rationale
behind the dominant teaching approach is usually explained in
general terms, stressing a number of important skills or
abilities which the study of history requires and which have a
wider application beyond the discipline. The study of history, it
is argued, trains students to analyze large quantities of complex
evidence and to deploy it in the presentation of coherent
arguments. It teaches them to question sources and opinions; to
consider issues from more than one perspective; to distinguish
the significant from the trivial and to communicate clearly. The
fundamental objectives of the history curriculum have been to
broaden the range of skills which students acquire. This is
because the practical study of the past requires a critical
examination of the surviving evidence and a careful evaluation of
the conclusions that other historians have drawn from it. The
establishment tutor is also experimenting with introductory
courses on the nature of history at first-year level. This
includes interesting and digestible lectures on history essay
writing skills. One of the aims of these lectures is to inform
non-historians about the vital importance of history in a

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45.   See the course or subject leaflets for both Economic History and History
       supplied by the department of historical studies, nd.

changeable democratic society.

In terms of problem-solving and method, the majority of the
lecturers in the DHS are of the opinion that history differs with
the natural sciences and only partly overlaps with other human
sciences. This is because the phenomena being investigated are
not 'excisable' from the totality surrounding them. Therefore,
they are not amenable (except in minor respects) to 'laboratory'
investigation. Thus the conclusion reached in the historical
investigation of these phenomena cannot be drawn and detached
from an overarching combination of 'covering laws' or deductive
schema (and succeeding empirical verifications) by practical
experimentation.[46] As pointed out in Chapter 1, history is a
problem-solving discipline of a specific kind because of its
prime concern with understanding of how things came about rather
than the producing solutions to problems. In history, goals
remain vague but definite (that is, there are multiple
perspectives) and open to great deal of personal interpretation.

Lecturers' conceptions of history fall into two main paradigms,
empiricist and relativist. The empiricist method is similar to
the analytical positivistic approach favoured by the traditional
school. The emphasis here is on open-ended inquiry into
historical questions. It also places empathy at the centre of its
analysis. The relativists, who draw their influence from the new
history school, view history as contemporary thought about the
past and seek to help students relate the past to the present or
to current issues. Their orientation to the present places them
in the reflective inquiry tradition of history. One must note,
however, that these two major paradigms are not completely
distinct nor are they all inclusive. They are inter-linked as

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46.   J.A. Benyon's, 'History and Society', pp.5-7. The views expressed here
       collaborate with Lecturers' responses from both the taped interviews and
       questionnaires.

most of the lecturers exhibit some elements of more than one
paradigm, whilst nevertheless displaying a small 'dominant'
tendency. The commonalities expressed elsewhere in the text seem
to undermine the dichotomy between the different paradigms which
I have already discussed and thus one can safely generalise that
eclectism is central to the 'academic discourse' in the
department. It is eclectism with a broadly 'liberal' approach to
history which stresses: aspirations to objectivity; empathy;
evidence; interpretation and skills of presentation and argument
in a critical manner. This eclectic discourse represents a
pragmatic approach to teaching which reflects the borrowing of
ideas and theories from both empiricism and relativism.

One may also chart individual lecturer's paradigms along a
spectrum with the empiricists and relativists at opposite ends.
This (in an over-simplified manner) may serve as a visual means
of representing different emphases of what history really is.
Unlike research which treats the curriculum as a document which
is separate from what pupils experience, in this chapter we gain
insights into both the influence of teachers and of their
differing philosphies. The lecturers' conceptions of history are
profoundly influenced by their background, beliefs and knowledge.
Amongst the influencing factors mentioned by informants are
previous teachers, professors, and life experiences; though the
first four years at university seem to play an especially
important role in this respect.

Many of the insights that are still to be reported in later
chapters are based on interviews with students, a source of
information that is too often neglected. Students spend more time
observing lecturers than any existing 'expert' and deserve more
attention from researchers because they can provide a rich source
of information on lecture-room activities and invaluable insights
into any academic department's influences on them. These need to
be contextualised within the broader university environment. The

next chapter will provide an overview and analysis of the
educational implications of the growth in numbers of African
students at the University of Natal. African students will be
analyzed not just as disaggregated individuals but as a group
subject to a range of 'external' societal influences both in the
broader community and in the university.

CHAPTER 3

AFRICAN STUDENTS AND THE UNIVERSITY CONTEXT: EXPLORING THE ENVIRONMENT FOR LEARNING.

The aim of this chapter is to provide a brief overview of the experiences and preoccupations of African students at a predominantly white university and it will highlight the material, academic and socio-political factors that influence their lives. The chapter will assess how the problems faced by underprepared students affect their integration into the university community by illustrating the structures and procedures that confront them as 'new' students. This is crucial for understanding their academic performance, progress and needs. Because of the economic and socio-political circumstances of African students, non-academic problems are commonly rated by them as the most important influence on academic performance. As one student observed:

> I did not have the whole overview of the [learning] process because by then [at first-year] I had some problems, like financial problems. You have to look into these things and they are very destructive. You do not concentrate on your work but it was really a mission [challenge].

We need to understand that the analysis of students' conceptions and perceptions of history as a discipline is itself an historical task which must be located in a particular context at a particular point in time. Therefore we need to explore the environment and experiences of African students in a predominantly white university in the early 1990s. This will include both the non-academic and academic factors prevailing at the University of Natal in Pietermaritzburg. The collection of data was in the form of a questionnaire [See appendix C] which included both closed and open ended questions. This questionnaire covered the following broad areas: material problems, academic satisfaction, and social and

political experiences within the campus. The sample comprised 55 undergraduate African students from the DHS. Students' responses will be quoted verbatim.

The history of African students at the University of Natal dates back to 1936 when Mabel Palmer retired from her lectureship on the Durban campus and promptly launched into a second career. This involved initiating the establishment of tertiary education for Natal's African and Indian population. She was responsible for setting up a separate section of Natal University College for blacks. Classes were held at Sastri Indian College and at Adam's College, the leading African high school, teacher-training and theological college. The majority of the students were school teachers, anxious to upgrade their qualifications, regardless of the inequalities and humiliations of a separate, unequal educational system[1]. By 1945 approximately 30% of the classes at the Durban campus (including its satellite colleges) were "non-European".[2] Black students were not admitted at the Pietermaritzburg campus. In 1951 the Medical School was opened in Durban for black students. But in 1959 the Extension of the University Education Act, under which ethnic universities were to be established, removed the University's right to decide whom to admit to its courses. Nevertheless, the university was allowed to retain its medical school. In 1977 another threat by the state to remove Africans from the Medical school to the newly established Medical University of South Africa was averted.

In 1983 racial restrictions on admission of students were lifted.[3] Theoretically, African students were allowed to register for a degree in the Department of Historical and Political Studies

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1. S. Marks, Not either an experimental doll (London, Women Press, 1987) p.5.

2. University of Natal, Partners in Progress, nd.

3. ibid.

(Pietermaritzburg). But it was only in the late 1980s that the enrolment of African students in faculties other than the Faculty of Medicine rose significantly. This was because of socio-economic, educational and political reasons. For example, the 'white' Minister of Education had the sole right to determine the maximum number of African students who could enrol in each 'white' campus. Also the period from late 1970s to the mid-80s was characterised by students' protests and revolts. Therefore no effective learning took place in most African schools situated in urban areas, leading to a decrease in the number of African students with matric exemption. Having dealt with the short history of the African students at the University of Natal, I will now focus my attention on my 1992 survey of students in the DHS.

Table: Biographical profile of the 55 respondents.

Male	36
Females	19
Religion	Christians - (46) Independent - (1) Ancestral Worship- (1) Hindu/Christian/Ancestral Worship(1) Atheist - (6)

Home Language	Zulu - (35)
	Xhosa -(8)
	Swazi S.A-(3)
	Ndebele Zimbabwe-(2)
	Ndebele S.A-(1)
	Ronga Mozambique-(1)
	Shona Zimbabwe-(1)
	English+Xhosa-(1)
	Zulu+Xhosa- (1)
	Zulu+Swazi-(1)
Education Department in which matriculated	Department of Education and Training- (27)
	Joint Matriculation Board- (2)
	Departments of Education and Culture- (22)
	Correspondence- (1)
	Advance Levels- (3)
Occupation of Guardian/Parent	Teaching- (11)
	Nursing - (2)
	Administration-(2)
	Clerks-(2)
	Journalists-(1)
	Bank Manager-(1)
	Engineer-(1)
	Sales Manager-(1)
	Labourers-(7)
	Self-Employed-(4)
	Unemployed-(5)
	Pensioners-(11)

Education of Guardian or Parent	Tertiary:University-(7) Non-University-(11) Secondary(11) Primary (12) None (11)
No. of siblings at/or completed University Education	15

The above table gives rise to important sociological features among African students. One notices that they are not a homogeneous group as they differ in terms of class, language and religious backgrounds. All, except one, do not speak English as a home language, but use this language as a second or third language. This has far reaching implications educationally. Most of the students who come from 'educated' families have breadwinners in the public sector professions, in particular teachers. The students are often first-generation university students and less than a third of their siblings had received university education. Hence there are very few university graduates within the family who might act as role models. In addition the number of parents or guardians who have a relatively deprived socio-economic background is revealing. An issue that needs to be continually borne in mind by the teaching staff is that African students, unlike white middle-class students, have different cultural reference points. Because of the differential life experiences and social processes which exist between black and white students, African students are conscious of the poor quality of their pre-university education and this seems to support the 'student deficit' model pointed out by most lecturers in the last chapter.

1. Pre-University Education and planning for university
The experiences of university education and teaching methods in

both lectures and tutorials make African students more critical and perceptive of their secondary education. In most cases they use their white colleagues and lecturers as a standard to compare themselves against. The majority of the students are adamant that their secondary schooling has offered them little or no preparation for university education.[4] One student pointed out that:

> My matric certificate was issued by the department of Bantu Education which is now called the Department of Education and Training [DET], or if you like, Don't Educate Them [DET] department.

One can generalise that African students (as well as other students) bring their economic, social and political differences (when compared with white students) into the lecture and tutorial rooms. They cited the following reasons for being poorly prepared for university.[5]

1. Poor educational background (and lack of motivation) of most of their teachers and mentors; poor teaching strategies and methods including the promotion of rote learning, 'spoonfeeding' of students and unimaginative teaching at the expense of independent, critical thinking.

2. Lack of facilities and resources in their schools; overcrowding in classes and shortages of teaching staff whether qualified or not; lack of financial support and no vocational guidance offered at school.

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4. From Table 2, the high proportion of DET/DEC matriculants is apparent.

5. See K. Honikman, 'Processes and Problems: First-year students at a South African University', unpublished M.A.(Social Anthropology), UCT, 1982; Concerning the problems faced by African students in history education, See the following N.M. Vena, 'An Investigation into the problems underlying the teaching of History as a School subject in Transkei'; W.M. Sobahle, 'The lack of resources as a contributory factor to the high failure rate in STD 10 History examination in the Alice circuit'; C.B.N. Gobe, 'History teaching in Ciskean secondary classes'.

3.   Ineffective learning of English as a language of instruction;
      poor studying strategies which are difficult to discard at
      tertiary level.

All these factors make the integration of African students into the
university complex and stressful, as the following student noted:
            I feel that school did not prepare me very well for
            [this] tertiary institution because unlike
            university, one is spoonfed instead of being
            encouraged to be critical and thus developing the
            process of creativity and independent thinking.

But there are also students who are of the opinion that their
secondary education provides them with a good foundation for
university study. A sample of these students were from private,
boarding schools owned by the various churches in South Africa
(particularly the Catholic Church) and the non-state schools like
Protec and Phambili (but these schools are registered with DET).
This also includes the handful of foreign students who have studied
'A'Levels in countries like Zimbabwe. The facilities and resources
available in these schools are regarded as adequate. It is not
surprising to find out that career guidance is provided in most of
these schools. These students also praise the caring attitude,
motivation and effective teaching strategies of their teachers.
They are aware of the fact that all their teachers are
educationally well qualified in their respective fields.

When planning for university, a number of students from DET and DEC
schools regard the information (on pre-requisite courses, options
and various courses) from the university as inaccessible. They
identify the major problems as bad planning on their part as well
as the lack of vocational guidance and information centres in their
neighbourhood. This service would be crucial to them particularly
concerning subjects which are not taught at school. One student
commented that he 'encountered the names of subjects that were

unfamiliar ' and he had to make crucial decisions. Some students end up registering for courses which have no personal meaning for them but are necessary for the sake of finishing their degrees. Thus one student is of the opinion that

> For some it is not clearly explained [what the faculty requires] more especially the Arts student, one will find himself choosing courses for the sake of getting a degree.

However a number of students commend the role played by the university's support structures like the Preparation for University Programme (PFU) and the university's Student Counselling Centre. This role involves orientating new students to the university as an institution. Having dealt with students' planning for university, it is important to discuss the first-time impressions that these students have when entering the university.

2. Entry Experiences

The students have mixed feelings about their initial experiences upon entering the university. Most of the respondents attended PFU. This programme is designed specifically with black students in mind, a parallel to the 'Orientation Week'. PFU takes place during the two weeks prior to the official start of the academic term. Students are greatly impressed by this programme. It provides them with academic orientation, guidance and crucial information concerning university education in broad terms. One student asserted that

> According to my experience and feeling I can say the varsity had a good strategy ...PFU is reasonable. [When] I came to the university for the first time, I found it difficult to adapt myself, but through PFU I got to know other new students and found out exactly what is going on within the university.

To some the transition period from school to a predominantly white university is overwhelming, difficult and disturbing. One student describes his experience in terms of the following contradictory terms: 'I was excited, scared, proud, discovering, impressed, panicking'. To be taught by a white person for the first time in their lives is a novel experience for most students. Many students are also disturbed and overwhelmed by the discrepancy between black and white student numbers. They perceive the university system as socially stratified and as favouring white students in general. Those African students who cannot cope feel helpless, seeking refuge in the past by using the poor quality of their secondary education as a scapegoat. They soon develop an inferiority complex, low self-esteem and a lack of confidence. Their inability to communicate effectively in English compounds the problems further. One student commented that he felt dislocated, displaced and 'a little bit lost, as if trespassing in one of those ivory-towers you see in the {white} suburbs'.

The handful of students who attend the official Orientation Week, blame it for providing false impressions of what the university is all about. They are of the opinion that in terms of entertainment, the Orientation Week is well organised by the Orientation Committee (on behalf of the Students Representative Council) but academically it is a disaster. This is because it creates the impression that university life in general is about 'attending parties, picnics, concerts and drinking yourself to death' as well as the sexual abuse of female students. Some students complain that Orientation does not provide good social integration and exploits African students financially. This is because all students have to pay a 'cover-fee' for most of the events reflected in the programme. It focuses exclusively on the needs of the white students:

> The orientation week completely demoralised me. I was
> expecting good social integration but only to find that
> there was too much apartheid. Even the programme was

aimed for the Whites not Africans. Everything in the orientation week is Eurocentric.

Some students, however, are positive in their response as they regard the Orientation Week as the time to meet new people, make friends and attend social gatherings. They appreciate the friendship that they find. They are of the opinion that the orientation programme, just like PFU, is designed to make them feel at home and wanted. It is a platform to introduce them to their peers and to minimise the strain and awkwardness of the first few weeks at university.

After the orientation week, it is time for official university registration. Student opinion is divided concerning the academic registration procedure. Some find it tedious, disorganised and a time-consuming process, whilst others feel the opposite is true. Problems encountered include receiving conflicting messages from the lecturing staff and the administration, making course choices and experiencing difficulty in being accepted into certain courses. Having 'settled' most administrative issues during registration, students then have to contend with accommodation, transport and financial issues.

3. Accommodation, Transport and Finance.

The respondents are living in residence, student communes, or at home. Those living in the university's residences are either from "off-campus" residences or from those within the campus. The latter experience no problems at all in terms of available facilities and resources. They regard the existing study conditions as excellent. However, despite all the 'grand' facilities available to students at these residences, a great number of students have mixed feelings about them. Their major problem is inter-racial conflict and

tension prevalent in residences[6]. One student commented that 'the racial conflicts which arose in residence had affected some of us in many ways'. The basis of such conflicts is because of 'rules which applied to some people (African students) and not to others (white students)'. To older students, the age gap also contributes to a sense of difference between African and white students. This is because the majority of African students are relatively older than their white counterparts.

Since the late 1980s, the UNP authorities have taken upon themselves the responsibility of finding accommodation for as many of their African students as possible. Students are faced with ever escalating fees and with long waiting lists for places in the campus residences. Because of the urgency of the situation, temporary accommodation was set up in 1990 in a disused residence in one of Pietermaritzburg's former 'white' boarding schools. The problems experienced by the majority of the forty eight students who are at this "off-campus", self-catering residence are many. They range from unsatisfactory study and physical conditions to travelling and doing 'household' chores. But to some, this is accepted as part of their 'struggle' for better education. This suggests that students in this type of residence have to learn to compromise in order to cope with adversities. Some students are doing this better than others, but they are all affected in one way or another by their living arrangements. This, in turn, affects their emotional and social stability, as well as their academic progress. Some students question the university's ambivalent position concerning this residence. On the one hand, the authorities provide as much as is reasonable in terms of physical comforts; on the other-hand, they limit their responsibility by pointing out to students that this complex is being rented by the

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6.   See S.C. Jocelyn, 'Students attitudes towards inter-racial tension in residence at the University of Natal, Pietermaritzburg', unpublished M.Sc(Clinical Psychology), UNP, 1991.

university. The following epitomises the negative statements about the "off-campus" residence:

> We have to travel and cook before we peruse through our books. There is much inconvenience as we are sharing rooms, therefore conflicts of interests are very high.

The (sample of the) students who are living with families in the surrounding townships have similar problems with travelling long distances and with physical discomforts. This is further exacerbated by the lack of transport during peak hours and the existing political unrest in the Pietermaritzburg region. But for some students, living at home means that their accommodation expenses are curtailed. On the contrary this is not the case with a small number of students who already have families to support and are married (some of the married students are living within the campus). They have to 'double-up' as parents and students, that is, trying to satisfy the needs of their families and meeting the requirements of their studies simultaneously. The lack of study facilities and overcrowding at home is also another source of concern. One married student has this to say:

> One has to support the family, save for emergency and try
> to upgrade oneself. If you come from a poor financial
> background, yours is just to struggle for success.

In terms of financial support the majority of the respondents appear insecure. Only a handful of them are funded primarily and entirely by their parents or have bursaries. The majority of the students have to supplement parental or family support with university loans and the money they earn as 'Interns'.[7] The

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7.   The University established an internship programme in 1989. The major aim was to help 'needy' students financially and also academically as they were required to work as research assistants for various departments.

Financial Aid Office is seen, to some extent, as supportive as far as financial problems are concerned. Therefore one can safely generalise that for a great number of African students, non-academic issues like accommodation, transport and finance present them with difficulties. Having dealt with students' material problems the next section will deal with their social experiences on the campus.

4. African students' social life at UNP

The students' response to the questionnaire elicited different comments and shows that students have various interests. Most of the students spend their free time socialising with other student friends. The church also plays an important part in students' lives. For others, attending campus 'parties', watching television, playing sports, listening to the radio and visiting the local movie house is 'fashionable'. Some students deliberately ignore their social life because of the 'unusually' demanding academic schedule. Those students who are married and have families spend their free time paying attention to family issues. Others spend their time discussing problems encountered in specific courses by forming formal study groups and visiting the campus library, and these issues are also discussed informally in the common rooms. One student spends his time directing community oriented cultural activities, managing and promoting his drama group; another mobilises support for his political organisation during his free time. Those students who are socially 'conscious' spend their time visiting local street children. These activities illustrate the point I made earlier, that African students are not a homogeneous group. But at the same time one does notice that there is 'nothing special' about their social life as it is similar to that of other students on campus. Some students prefer to have 'fun' and parties all the time, but others have different values as they are deeply religious or more socially conscious.

None of the students feel socially isolated except by choice or

because of personal problems which need immediate attention. They all have friends with whom they spend time both on and off campus. For some, feeling isolated is a problem on arriving at the university for the first time, as they are still unfamiliar with their new environment. It is important to note that the African students, because of language issues and being in the minority, seek integration through friendships with other African students. These students are less integrated into the broader university community. Thus the integration which takes place in various student societies, lecture rooms and sports organisations is still demarcated on racial lines. They feel that racial differences at the level of integration are a reflection of the racial division of an apartheid society. The following student pinpointed the existing problem:

> I do not feel socially integrated because I find that most [student] organisations are technically non-racial but deep under there is fierce apartheid. Most of the things here are organised on racial lines.

The majority of the respondents feel that the university is not catering for their social needs. According to them it represents only the social interests of the white student body. They are of the opinion that they cannot identify themselves with the dominant 'European' culture as it alienates them. One has a feeling that African students perceive this culture as homogeneous. Thus a student points out that, in reaction, they have to develop their own sub-culture in order to survive. For example, they organise their own cultural events which also give a platform to people from the surrounding townships to express their talents. This sub-culture is strengthened by the belief that African students are confronted with more problems than white students, both academically and in the spheres of accommodation, finance and transport. They are highly conscious of the lack of confidence, motivation, and low self-esteem amongst African students in

general. Thus the following student is of the opinion that African students face more problems because of a combination of factors:

> Sometimes your English cannot really express your immediate feelings and you are constantly self-conscious amongst other races. The problems basically have to do with language, social background and education history.

The respondents also mention what they perceive as the domineering, arrogant attitude of some of their white counterparts in residences. Thus it is not surprising to find that the majority of them feel it is necessary to increase the number of African students and academics in the university. According to them the university population has to reflect the true demographic composition of our society for it to proclaim itself as an 'open' and democratic institution. They are also of the opinion that African students should be given the same life chances as students of other racially defined groups. They feel that unless this has been achieved, it will be difficult to build a just society. Two students expressed their views as follows:

> Firstly, this pseudo-liberal university of ours does not reflect the correct number of the population in the South African society. Moreover South Africa needs more black academics and other graduates in various disciplines if we hope to survive in the next century.

and

> Factually blacks constitute approximately 80% of the total population in S.A. What is important is not only black empowerment, but also the fact that any institution should be, or at least try to be representative and reflective of the population. I am however aware of the practical difficulties.

The above comment grapples with the difficulties of simply taking

in blacks as students and as academics just because they are black. This is because apartheid has not only oppressed black people but has also <u>deskilled</u> them. To alleviate this problem, establishment tutorships and foundation courses, such as the newly established Science Foundation[8] courses, need to be extended to faculties like Commerce and Agriculture. Also in terms of entry requirements the Teach, Test, Teach concept (designed for the Humanities and Social Sciences) needs to be developed further as some of my respondents were 'recruited' through this system. Some of these students do not possess the required entry points for university education. But as a (former) graduate tutor in the DHS, I am aware of highly capable students from this group who normally would not have had the chance to study at a university. Measures such as these will serve to increase the number of academically capable African students and this, in turn, will have a 'domino effect', resulting in the increase of African academics in the University and within the broader society. Having dealt with social issues as perceived by African students, I will now focus my attention on political life on campus.

5. <u>African students' political life at UNP</u>

There is a considerable overlap between the social and political experiences of student life on the campus with those in the wider society. The majority of students are politically conscious and active. The questionnaire section on the political affiliation of the students yielded interesting responses. Although these students are from different backgrounds and have different social values, political beliefs and affiliations, the common thread in their response is that they are all members of the oppressed group. The political aspect of their lives is important for them as oppressed people. Thus one can safely generalise that the struggle for liberation continues on campus. As such, African students cannot separate their political ideals and academic aspirations.

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8.   See <u>Sunday Star</u>, October 17, 1993, p.11.

Therefore it is not surprising that students are willing to support a stay-away call by the workers and fellow students if certain conditions are met. The following comment puts this support in context:

> It depends on the reason for the stay-away. If for instance, a student knowingly violates a reasonable, un-oppressive law, I would not support that. Also if a student is drunk and becomes a nuisance to other students, I would not protest if s/he is expelled. If it is against a lecturer who calls us kaffirs, I would join and be active.

This support is also viewed in the context of its political importance to the wider community. Students describe themselves in questionnaires as sympathetic to the liberation movements; progressive democrats who are against racism and sexism; ANC members and supporters; moderates; "passive realists"; radicals 'who seek roots of the social problems in order to eradicate them'; and Africanists. Two students regard themselves as politically neutral because of past experiences of political intolerance and intimidation. There are two students who proclaim themselves as 'apolitical' on religious grounds.

The university's political character (this includes, amongst others, lecturers and management) is perceived as reflecting the socio-political values of the dominant white group. Hence it is not congruent with those of African students. The political character and dominant ethos of this institution is liberal and this study shows that the majority of African students firmly agree with this assertion. Some students regard the university as conservative. This is because there are some members of staff (both academic and administration) who are regarded as pro-white and racist. Students believe that such individuals are working against

the mission statement of the institution.[9] The notion of UNP as a non-racial institution does not seem to enter the consciousness of such people. As one student notes, this is a 'democratic liberal institution, but this needed no apology during the process of democratisation', meaning that the university has to take a strong, decisive and 'transparent' action against white supremacists. One student thinks that the university's political affiliation is similar to that of the 'new' National Party. But two students believe that the institution supports left-wing parties, including the liberation movements. One can therefore conclude that students perceive the staff at UNP as diversified in approach, attitudes and ideological biases towards the African student. The majority of the respondents also feel that the university is not catering for African students' political demands. Politically (as was the case socially), they feel that the university needs to be transformed from the top to the lowest ranks, and Africanised. They are of the opinion that the small number of African academics in this institution is unacceptable. Furthermore they hold the view that both the University Senate and Council are unrepresentative. One student notes the following:

> Firstly, the highest decision making body at this university is undemocratic. The Senate needs to be democratized and be representative of the South African population, that is, black academics and other black leading figures in education circles must be included in the highest decision making body like in the other progressive tertiary institutions like UWC and Wits. In fact, giving leading black figures honorary degrees does not in anyway help in the transformation of this university to a democratic institution, but is just an

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9.   The following is an extract from the university's mission statement: The university of Natal rejects apartheid, and any form of discrimination based on race, colour, creed, sex or nationality, quoted in University of Natal, Partners in Progress, nd.

appeasing policy which should not go unchallenged. Secondly, some form of representation in the Senate for students must be found. This is because the Senate has got the power to decide our future... the university needs to increase the number of black students not in theory such as the so-called affirmative action...the university needs to be involved in the process of re-structuring the education system in South Africa.

Having dealt with students' perceptions of their socio-political environment at UNP, the next section will stress their academic problems.

6. <u>Study groups, lectures and tutorials: some general perceptions.</u>

Those students who are least satisfied with their performance and lacking in confidence about their academic ability criticize their secondary education (other groups may possibly be equally critical of their education system).[10] They feel that it does not prepare them adequately for university education. As mentioned earlier, these students identify the following problems; 'spoonfeeding', poor studying and learning strategies. Rote-learning is also mentioned because it hampers their academic progress. But these under-achieving students do not allow these issues to overwhelm them. In order to overcome subject-specific and communication difficulties they use the support structures provided by the university to their advantage. These structures include the various Education Development Programmes, mentors and tutors. Therefore the respondents who have problems in terms of academic work regard their lecturers, friends, tutors, post-graduate students and the Student Counselling Centre as helpful. Some students went a step further by forming their own study and discussion groups to

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10. Here I am providing a general overview. I will be discussing issues specific to the DHS in a later chapter.

complement both lectures and tutorials. One student gradually gained confidence through this learning process:

> I appreciated and understood certain educational values in small group discussions. You can do more talking, you can say what you think to your friends and you can ask questions for clarification. With the sharing of ideas, I valued the chance of listening to other viewpoints in any discussion.

Those students who have a sound secondary school background, and students in second and third year, are more confident about their academic ability. But the majority of students feel inhibited about raising questions in tutorials and lecture-rooms. The problem of communicative incompetence and lack of confidence amongst the majority of African students are cited as major reasons. Thus as one student remarked, 'we are afraid of making stupids of ourselves by asking stupid questions' in front of predominantly white counterparts and lecturers. The following is an experience of another student:

> I feel scared... if I make a grammatical mistake because English is my second language. What if the whole class sees my question as being foolish?

By contrast most African students are not shy to speak up outside the lecture room, when in the company of African peers. Because of the 'threatening' lecture-room environment, students prefer to ask questions immediately after the lecture or consult lecturers privately in their offices. This is also done in order to avoid 'boring their knowledgeable colleagues' who could keep track of the proceedings in the lecture room. But other students are of the opinion that lecturers become irritated by students raising questions whilst the lecture is in progress. One of the major reasons is that lecturers tend to 'rush' a great amount of content

in a given lecture session because of time constraints. Thus according to students, an unwritten law not to disturb the proceedings exists. Those students who are confident enough to ask questions in the lecture-room argue that the key is to go to each lecture well prepared, aware of the problematic themes or concepts which need further clarification. On the whole, the students find lecturers approachable and caring. However there are a few instances where certain academic departments are regarded as racist, ineffective and uncaring. But once again, these students appreciate the fact that academically, the institution as a whole is supportive. They mention various education development programmes which are provided by the university.

Departments such as Economics are seen as not being progressive enough in providing education development programmes. Such departments are regarded as having low estimates of their African students' abilities and worth. Even though the support programmes are commended by the students, one of them observes that there are deficiencies in the teaching methods pursued by some lecturers. These include poor teaching strategies and the lack of identification with the problems facing the African students, leading to a breakdown in communication. Thus the following educational problems need to be considered when the process of transforming the university has begun:

> Academically I have discovered that most of the work that
> is done favours whites students with better education.
> Even the style of teaching of some lecturers seems as if
> they do not know they should combine [what is best from]
> European white education with [what] the monstrous Bantu
> Education [has to offer]. It is true that the Africans do
> at least three things during the learning process and
> during writing [note-taking]...They first do a
> translation from an African language, then they do
> thinking,in seconds, in an African language and, lastly,

they put their ideas in English which cannot match that
of whites [as first language speakers].

Because many African students experience material problems which
serve to disrupt their academic studies, they have mixed feelings
about their experiences at this university. Academically, the
majority of the students are well satisfied with the kind of
education and knowledge offered by the institution. They are highly
appreciative of the high academic standards offered by the
university. But socially the disruptions caused by material
conditions are perceived as another instance of the structural
discrimination of the apartheid system. African students face the
same problems year after year. These overlap with the social and
political aspects of their lives at UNP. As one student put it:

Academically, I am indebted to commend the university
with its high standard of education. Socially, my
expectations were great and I fantasized an image of the
new South Africa only to find out that segregation was
very harsh. Especially in some of the residences, there
is segregation [and discrimination].

7. Conclusion

The majority of the respondents agree that UNP offers them an
excellent and outstanding academic environment. One senses the
feeling that, to some extent, they are proud of their institution.
But because of the 'deskilling' nature of apartheid education, they
still have general academic problems as mentioned elsewhere in this
chapter. They also feel that the limited resources, accommodation,
transport and poor educational background impact on their academic
success. They seem to be 'frustrated' by the fact that most
lecturers and other staff members, because they are white, do not
acknowledge these non-academic issues as problematic. To the
student, the disruptions caused by such material problems are

perceived as discriminatory and as part of the experience of Africans in apartheid South Africa. As such, African students cannot separate their political and academic aspirations. They are also conscious of the fact that their white counterparts appear, in general, not to experience material and academic problems which serve to disrupt their academic studies. The majority of African students regard UNP, despite following a non-racial policy, as representing the socio-cultural values of the dominant white group and reflecting divisions of the macro-society. Thus, given their oppression in the broader society, the majority of these students cannot afford to be apolitical, impartial and individualistic. This is because of the fact that despite some variations in terms of language, religion, education and socio-economic status, they all share the experience of being oppressed. In a study at the University of the Witwatersrand, Agar had this to say:

> Questionnaire surveys with [African] students on their perceptions of problems which most influence their academic progress indicate that non-academic problems are rated the most influential...On the other hand, surveys of staff perceptions of the problems which influence students academic success hardly rate the non-academic issues as problematic at all. [11]

Having dealt with the general academic factors and the broader material, non-academic conditions which influence African students' academic success, the next section will deal with students'perceptions and conceptions of history and how it is taught in the DHS. The issues dealt with will be basically academic and will include the nature of history as a discipline, and the teaching processes that take place in the history lecture and tutorial room.

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11. See D. Agar, 'Evaluating academic support programmes-what have we learnt in the past six years?',South African Journal of Education, 12, No.2, 1992, pp.94-95.

CHAPTER 4

CONCEPTIONS AND PERCEPTIONS OF HISTORY AMONG STUDENTS IN THE DHS, UNP.

1. Introduction

This chapter will describe and analyze conceptions and perceptions of history among students in the DHS. It will focus on students' beliefs and understandings of the nature of history as a discipline and it explores factors which may affect these views. Efforts have also been made to determine students' perceptions on matters such as the teaching of history in the DHS and their conception of history teaching in a changing South Africa.[1] The collection of data included a questionnaire (see Appendix D) and in-depth interviews with students, whose words will be quoted verbatim.

It was noted in the previous chapter that the majority of African students are dissatisfied with their high-school education. Many of the students who matriculate through the DET and the various DEC are disillusioned with matric history. In interviews these students commonly describe a typical matric history classroom as one in which they have to listen attentively to the teacher describing historical events. The teacher does this by using the poorly written, prescribed textbooks which are regarded as a facsimile of the past, containing the 'gospel-truth'. Students are required to memorise what the teacher tells them and write two-page assignments or exercises. Two students noted the following:

> What I can say about the secondary school history syllabus is that it is full of distortions...[the authorities] want us to see history from their own perceptions...I had to follow their policies just to pass matric. I had to sacrifice.

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1. The next chapter will look more specifically at students' learning experiences in the DHS.

and:

> I studied history from primary school and school history did
> not prepare me [for university] and I only realised this at
> university...I just learned everything from the textbook as it
> was and accepted everything that our teacher told us as the
> gospel truth.

Students are not required to do projects with their peers, use
original documents, write term essays, or discuss the significance
of what they are studying. Thus they regard matric history
education as placing too much emphasis on factual recall rather
than on the students' ability to think critically. Because of this
many students' (particularly those from DET/DEC schools)
construction of the meaning of history as a discipline is very
limited when they enter university. But one is aware that pre-
university scholars have gained conceptions of history from other
institutions like liberation movements, community and students
organisations, oral traditions and the media. Therefore school
graduates do have views about 'the past'; they are not blank slates
and some of these views are quite developed. It all depends,
amongst other things, on the type of matric education, whether one
is involved in community organisations, exposure to the various
media and whether students have access to resource centres within
their community.

2. Students' conceptions of history.
In response to the questions in the interview schedule, students
were able to identify three major conceptions of history. The first
and the most common view regards history as progress, the second
view defines history in nationalistic terms and the last view
conceptualises history in epistemological terms.

The first view is deterministic in nature as most students are of
the opinion that we can use history or look at the past for the
solutions of current problems, in order to effectively plan for the

future. For these students in the changing South Africa, the relevance of history to their lives often becomes a justification for studying history. The extent to which the ruling Nationalist Party has turned its back on institutionalised racial discrimination has offered ground for optimism about self-fulfilment in the future. By interpreting the past according to the idea of progress, the moral and material improvement of the community at large (the majority of whom are African) can be attained by identifying the mistakes of the past, so that we can avoid them in future.

Some students conceptualise history in nationalistic terms, whereby history is seen as the way people make sense of the past by making it theirs. Here history is of central importance in establishing collective and group identity, as one student noted in his interview:

> History is a study which deals with the past, which tells us who we are, where we come from and why we are what we are today. If you are a person or a nation, you have to have a past, you have to know where you come from, a nation without history is no nation.

This view recognises that history can be used to great effect to mould historical and national consciousness among Africans[2]. History has come to be seen as an important oppositional tool in the country's political culture. As an example, we have liberation movements emphasizing the resistance put up by African societies to colonisation. Achievements by Africans are greatly emphasized in order to inculcate national identification as well as pride in African culture and heritage.

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2.   See R. Rusen, 'Historical consciousness and historical education', in History teaching in South Africa (RAU, SASHT, 1990).

One respondent in a questionnaire is prepared to defend history as a discipline by referring to the above three categories and by adding a fourth one, namely 'equality':

> It is when a people <u>understand their past</u> that they can <u>render effective service to society today, avoid the mistakes of the past,</u> determine and <u>shape their</u> future with a better understanding of the dynamics of human <u>culture</u> and those <u>influences</u> on it by events in history. History is important as an agency of passing culture from one generation to another through written documents [and oral traditions]...stopping the teaching of history would amount to wiping out the memory on which society bases its action and with which it links to the past. In order to achieve equality [democracy] history offers a critique of unfair and unfounded claims.

These views represent a sophisticated portrayal of history by some of the students and prove the point that not all students' conceptions of history are poorly developed and vague. The last point from the above quote stresses the 'subversive' nature of history in any country's political culture. This is because history is an intrinsically political discourse and a site of constant struggle between dominant and dominated groups. The dominant group's appropriation of the past does not go unchallenged. The oppressed need the inspiration of a usable past when fighting for their democratic rights.

In the survey, only one student is able to perceive history in epistemological terms.[3] This student does so by exemplifying how knowledge is constructed and how inquiry is pursued in history as a discipline. Through interviews, she is of the opinion that

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3. This may be because of the fact that she was largely educated in private schools outside South Africa. Another important reason may be the fact that both historical method and historiography are not taught by the DHS at undergraduate level. As I have argued earlier in Chapter 1, historical method and historiography should be taught at undergraduate level so that students will be able to conceptualise history in epistemological terms.

history changes. It is always in a state of flux and that, epistemologically, you can never really know the past. Thus:

> History is the study of historical events worked out in a chronology by using the documents [as evidence]...there are always different interpretations, always so many points of view to consider...[history] is always evolving as there is always something new to learn, you cannot tell yourself that you are familiar with history.

One can safely generalise that many students are of the opinion that history is simply about the past, not about how we think about the past in the present. Some do highlight direct links between the past and the present through their conceptions of history as progress (and through the nationalist viewpoint). But one notices their inability to actually articulate in detail the important and fundamental issue concerning how historical knowledge is constructed, produced and acquired in a given society. The fact that the past moulds the present, and that present concerns shape the way we look at the past, is not given much explicit attention or critical consideration. This includes not only epistemological, but also methodological and ideological issues posed by the nature of the discipline. Without insights into the links between (historical) knowledge and power, students' conceptions seem rather limited and not detailed. Their school history backgrounds seem to have underdeveloped their critical faculties in this respect. During the interviews, one student noted that when at high school, history was taught as

> Something which dealt with only the past, nothing was specified about the present, all that was important were the events which happened in the past, the prominent leaders, a little bit about political changes, no economic, social and cultural changes were emphasized.

Conceptions of history are also revealed by the responses to the

questions of what 'good' and 'bad' history is. Students have varied conceptions of 'good history'. By defining it in educational terms, most are of the opinion that 'good history' is unbiased, characterised by a good argument, analytical skills and critical assessment. One student asserts that

> Good history is history which emphasises a lot of analysis of facts, views...It involves critical assessment than just rote learning which we use to do at school...It promotes skilful approach even in reading and questioning the text, not just accepting any information as proper and legitimate.

One student is of the opinion that it is difficult to define what 'good history' is on epistemological grounds. According to her history remains a personal construct which manifests the historian's viewpoint. Individuals determine what they make of historical materials. This implies that an approved consensus about a historical event is difficult to achieve as history is a contested and shifting discourse. Nevertheless, through hindsight, historians know more about the past and are in a position to translate the past into modern terms by using previously unavailable knowledge. Thus she is of the opinion that

> Good history is difficult to define because as years go by more people want to put across different views...you never know the motives for a historian or a writer writing whatever material they present...good history only comes with a hindsight as most written material at one point in time is bound to have so many discrepancies. Much later on when people look back they see what mistakes were made and they criticise these writings. It does not mean that what is criticised is necessarily bad.

There are also some students who perceive 'good history' as 'objective' in the positivist sense. To one student this is a 'history that is recorded as it happened, trying to eliminate

subjectivity or personal interpretation, trying to be objective'.
In answer to the question as to what constitutes `bad history', a
number of students stress the lack of analytical, critical and
other educational skills. The overwhelming majority of students
criticise the abuse of history for propaganda purposes as
essentially `bad history'. According to them this is the common
thread in school history in South Africa. One student noted in our
interview:

> South African history is so controversial ...the syllabus is
> so white South African that it is difficult for the [white]
> kids to adjust when they come to university as they look at
> South African history interpreted in a way they are never used
> to. It makes them uncomfortable. I know this because I have
> actually spoken to some of them.

Students' conceptions of a `good historian' and a `bad historian'
are illuminating and have some implications for the DHS. This is
because almost all the students describe `an historian' as an
academic or professional historian.[4] During interviews only one
student perceives students as historians. This student's response
makes it obvious that he is not just a passive processor of what
takes place in the lecture room. A `good historian' according to
him will adopt interactive learning processes. In this respect one
can argue that a historian can be defined in terms of a spectrum
whereby we have the person in the street at the peripheral end and
highly qualified academics (Professors) at the dominant end. Hence
the DHS should make more attempts to help students define
themselves as `historians' in order to promote interactive learning
processes.

Students' viewpoints are also revealed by their conceptions of
history teaching in a changing South Africa. One student calls for

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4.   See S. Ndlovu and T. Nuttall, `Historians and Historical Knowledge', p.6.

history to be abolished at school level because it has the potential for increasing polarisation within our divided society. Here is an extract of his response from the interview:

> History should not be learned in schools because it can irritate some other people like Africans because it can highlight the torture which was done to them and that can cause disruptions. Also [studying the history of] apartheid South Africa can cause the principle of non-racialism not to function.

According to this student, the historical content offered in schools and universities should avoid areas of conflict facing our divided society. This implies that categories of analysis should exclude, amongst other themes, race, gender, nationalism and ethnicity. Another student completely disagrees with this viewpoint, arguing that the reinterpretation of South African history by the revisionists is crucial in the changing South Africa precisely because they place the surbordinate groups in the centre of their analyses. This is necessary in order to democratise historical knowledge and build a democratic South Africa. According to her, African students have been very tolerant and 'comfortable' with divergent historical perspectives presented by the following two schools of history, the Afrikaner nationalists and English liberals, notwithstanding the fact that history is an extremely political subject which had been abused for political purposes by the dominant group. The problem, according to her, is the undemocratic and intolerant attitude of her white colleagues (during their debates outside the lecture-room) who find it difficult to accept the Revisionist inclined course on South African history. She has this to say:

> As much as we would like to do away with racial boundaries we cannot and I think that is what is so difficult about these subjects whether it is History or Legal Studies. As long as

apartheid or racial division is there somebody is bound to
feel intimidated. But I think black students are more
accepting. We do not exactly like to hear that we were
slaves... we had to live with that and accepted it. Why cannot
the white students become comfortable with the
reinterpretation because it is just a matter of accepting
history from another viewpoint. They are not as flexible as we
are.

Another student is against the use of history for propaganda
purposes, for example by replacing one stereotype with another, as
was evident in the Soviet Union, and elsewhere in Africa after the
coming of Independence. This student pointed out that in Russia
they had abused their history curriculum to such an extent that 'in
1990 they had to postpone history exams because they did not know
how to present it'. But the most representative view among the
students is the one which calls for the African nationalist
viewpoint to become acceptable, contributing to existing historical
interpretations and debates. This is necessary, as one student puts
it, because 'most of the history written by Africans is undermined'
and too much emphasis in African history is given to history
written by Europeans. These students believe that the experience of
being an African in the multi-cultural South Africa gives Africans
a special insight into their own history. Therefore professional
African historians are needed to rewrite the history of the country
as a whole.

One can draw the conclusion that students conceptualise history as
an argument and a debate that is reflected through different
perspectives. This becomes clear to most students after studying
the first year courses. They hold this viewpoint even more strongly
by the time they reach senior levels and argue that in historical
studies there is a diversity of viewpoints and this should serve as
a key to understanding the nature of the discipline.

3.   <u>Students' perceptions of the teaching of history in the DHS</u>

Students' perceptions on the teaching of history in the department will be divided into three categories, namely content, problem-solving and method. It is evident from students that the last two categories are determined by lecturers' conceptions of history. When considering content as a category, one notices that history teaching centres around empirical, 'factual' <u>content,</u> with the history of the modern world more familiar to the majority of the students.[5] This is because they have been dealing with the major themes and concepts of modern history since standard seven. In fact in terms of content, modern history, is defined by the students as the 'official' history, meaning that the content which predates this period is not regarded as such. The Ancient World and African history courses offered in 1990 and 1991, presented formidable difficulties for students as they were unfamiliar with most of this material. In relation to the history of the Ancient World (Classical and Western Civilisation: from 300-1500; offered to the first-years), one student asserted that it was 'totally unexpected and made one realise that history goes beyond the modern period'. As soon as he realised this, the 'old, ancient, unknown history was very interesting history'. Some students view the aims and objectives of this course in terms of their present concerns, particularly problems caused by racism in our society. Thus students have a feeling of being in history rather than standing apart from it. According to them, this course challenges the existing viewpoint that Europeans are inherently and historically 'civilised' and 'non-barbaric' people when compared to Africans. One student

> had this impression that barbarians basically were blacks
> before I came to this institution. But here [in this course]
> we were reading about whites, studying about their history and
> the very word barbarian [and vandal] was [originally] used to

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5.   See the course outline in chapter 2.

refer to whites. These are interesting points which made one to pay attention.

Students are also aware of the fact that by its very nature, history is linked to time and chronology. As one student puts it:

This course content is very boring because it happened a long time ago....but as soon as you understand that history is about change over a given time [chronology included], it makes sense.

The History 100 students face different problems concerning the African history course component (the course was on Africa-South of the Sahara and also included South African history). These are linked to broader societal problems in South Africa. Although the problem of time as a concept also features here as the course goes back as far as the Stone Age, there are two other pressing issues for the students. The first is that some students perceive African history as inferior, relatively speaking, to the history of the western world. This is because African history has been ignored in school history textbooks and syllabuses. The history of the western world is familiar and preferred by students because of the dominant group's appropriation of the past. The second most pressing issue for some is the racial origin of the lecturer who teaches African history. As one student observed:

He taught us about how the [Bantu-speaking] Africans came to South Africa, how they spread throughout the country. The problem is I could not believe it. I thought that it was something that was created by the whites.

But it is also noticeable that most of these apprehensive students change their sceptical views by the time they are in third year, especially after doing the Ethnicity in Africa and the regional Natal-Zululand courses. Students attribute their change of attitude to the fact that they no longer regard the racial origin of

lecturers as an important factor and to the development of their critical faculties. As an example, they acknowledge that in the first year course on South African history they are provided with alternative, revisionist interpretations debunking the 'empty land' thesis as a myth. But they are not 'sophisticated' enough to comprehend the major arguments. In fact by third year some students can make connections between ancient European world history and 'pre-colonial' African history. They point out that <u>migrations</u> are the sub-themes of both courses. These take place in different times and contexts. According to them most of the present day European states were founded by "settlers" who had 'defeated' indigenous people. But in South Africa the migration of the Bantu speaking African is abused for political purposes by those in power to push forward the myth of the 'empty-land'. The official history also does not highlight differences between Europeans. This is despite the fact that they have different cultural, linguistic, physical and historical backgrounds, just like the San and the amaXhosa.

In terms of content, students are also appreciative of Historiography as a course at second year level and almost all the students are of the opinion that it should be a permanent feature. This is because it addressed epistemological issues concerning history as a discipline. One student noted that historiography

> ... was a new stuff. It opened our minds to think critically. We then could feel that we are history students...we had to approach things in historical perspectives as historiography demands.

Like lecturer A, the second and third year students are of the opinion that the first-years are not 'sophisticated' enough to deal with complex historiographical issues. It is unfortunate that

historiography is no longer taught at second-year level.[6]

In terms of problem-solving, the following are mentioned (from questionnaires given to History 100 students) as the most important academic skills and approaches they are taught in lecture and tutorial rooms. They are taught how to use source materials and carry out effective historical research . This includes the use of the library, and the appreciation of footnotes and bibliography so as to avoid plagiarism and paraphrasing. Students are taught analytical, critical, verbal and reading skills in order to present logical historical arguments and effective essay writing skills. Other educational skills include effective note-taking, that is, being able to listen to a lecture and take notes simultaneously. This includes an ability to synthesize lots of readings and different arguments. Lastly, students are taught about freedom of thought as a concept because they are encouraged to express their own viewpoint in a historical manner.

According to students there is a definite link between problem-solving and method, and hence the following characteristics are mentioned by them; revisionism, the relationship between history and the present, empathy and argument. Revisionism poses challenges to both the liberal and Afrikaner interpretation of South African history, and to students' existing beliefs and conceptions. A student noted the following about this revisionist interpretation by one lecturer:

> His [revisionist] interpretation of the Mfecane was a bit
> puzzling but when I repeated first year I came to understand
> his interpretation as far as the Mfecane was concerned...In
> first year again I was disturbed by his interpretation of
> Shaka. When I came to University, I had the view that Shaka

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6.   This course was dropped in the reshuffling which occurred as the DHS semesterised its second and third level courses from the beginning of 1992.

> was our hero as he founded the Zulu nation [in the early 19th
> century]. He smashed this view but not completely because his
> interpretation was very different from what I have learnt in
> other history books...he saw the rise of Shaka as dependent on
> Dingiswayo...but I liked this interpretation anyway.

From this statement one notices that students learn in a 'hard
way' that recent revisionist historiography has produced
interpretations that differ from those presented by other
historians. This is because historiography always produces
'revisionists' who 'revise' previous historical orthodoxies.
Students are encouraged to find out about the process by which
history comes to be written, through the interpretations which
historians have made about the past. In this respect some
revisionist analysis allows students to understand more clearly the
role played by historical production in maintaining relations of
domination and subordination.[7] This is enunciated by first-year
students when discussing the merits of the South African history
course which they perceive as revisionist in its approach.

History's relationship with the present is implicit in the teaching
methods pursued by some Lecturers. The understanding of history is
fundamental to the way in which they capture the minds of their
students. For them history is more than just particular dates,
personalities or legislative acts. History centres around themes
such as democracy, freedom, tolerance and representation. These
themes bind the past to the present and are interlinked to the
concept of universal human rights. Although some students dismiss
British history as too distant one noted that it consisted of

> serious stuff which affects our lives even today. Take for
> instance the development of the political party system. At the
> moment we have the same problems here in South Africa where

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7.   See chapter 1 and chapter 2.

there are parties fighting amongst themselves. We look at how did this come about, how were the political parties formed in Britain, including the whole notion of opposition...and the development of the bureaucratic system.

In terms of problem-solving and method the courses demand qualities of empathy from students and most African students often point out the awkward position of having empathy for colonists. One student has this to say about his tutorial on 19th century British history (and subsequent tutorials in the third-year Natal-Zululand course):

> I had to go to the library and study material about somebody... what he was doing when he was alive. I had to go to my tutorial and try to make this person live again.

The teaching of empathy as practised by some lecturers is intrinsically linked to liberalism as a form of historical method. The general thrust of this method requires one to adjudicate and to reflect both sides of any given historical problem before reaching a logical conclusion. Therefore being rational, seeing other people's views, and balancing the options lies behind the requests to put oneself into another person's position (in the past). One should try to see things from their perspectives, to calculate rationally their options and to be 'open-minded'[8].

4. Conclusion

From the above discussions one is aware that not all students' conceptions and perceptions of history as a discipline are 'vague' and underdeveloped. But the fact remains that conceptions and perceptions of many students are limited due to their inability to respond adequately to the fundamental epistemological question of how we know the past. The baggage that they carry over from school is highly responsible for this state of affairs. The DHS should also take some of the blame because it does not provide a

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8.   See K. Jenkins, Rethinking History, pp.39-47.

systematic undergraduate programme dealing with epistemological issues. The fact that all students have a high regard for the now abolished historiography course implies that students are prepared to 'learn the ropes' of the discipline.

It is also evident that students, through problem-solving and method, are able to identify the relation of history to the present through what is taught by some lecturers. This is made possible by the following kinds of courses; South African history 100 course, comparative industrialisation, contemporary Latin America, modern issues like fascism viewed historically, an in-depth course that focuses on a period like the 18th-20th century British social and political history course, a topical survey course like Ethnicity in Africa South of the Sahara, and a course on local history like the Natal-Zululand course. These courses make students critical, independent, bold and vigorous in their thinking as they become more accustomed to giving and seeking explanations. This 'content' also cannot be taught or analyzed on something distinct from 'interpretation' as these are integrally linked in a historical narrative. In general, students are overwhelmingly in favour of seeing the relevance, in the present, of the history that they study. This takes us back to our concerns about relating the past to the present and the teaching implications are that lecturers should be always well informed about students problems, expectations and experiences.

We know very little about how interaction among students, lecturers and tutors affects the way in which history is learnt. The next chapter will focus on students' experiences of learning in the DHS and it will also include their approaches to studying.

CHAPTER 5

STUDENTS' EXPERIENCES OF LEARNING IN THE DHS

1. <u>Students' Perceptions of their learning environment.</u>
The aim of this chapter is to describe and analyze students'
learning experiences in the DHS. This chapter concentrates on
teaching methods and their implications for learning, unlike the
last chapter which focused on course content, interpretation of
this content and student perceptions of these aspects. The study
here will focus firstly on students' perceptions of their courses
in the department. The following categories of analysis will be
used to assess the 'learning' features of these courses: formal
teaching methods; good teaching; openness to students; clear
goals and standards; workload; social climate and vocational
relevance. Efforts will also be made to analyze students'
experiences of essay writing, tutorials and note-taking. The
collection of data consisted of questionnaires (See Appendices E
and F), participant observation and in-depth interviews.
Particular attention will be directed to the 'teacher deficit'
view as experienced by students.

It is not only how staff say they operate that is important, but
also how students perceive the courses and teaching. According to
students the formal teaching methods of the lecturers vary
considerably. Students are extremely conscious of lecturers
differing teaching methods and styles. One student had this to
say about two lecturers in the final year Economic History
course:

> The course is structured okay, but the two lecturers have
> got different styles. Take Prof. P, he will lecture on
> industrial South Africa, then he expects you to go and
> engage yourself in the relevant material in the library
> [reference and short loan-section] and give you an essay

based on this material whereas Prof. Q. will lecture you, let us say on Brazil for an essay, when you go to your tutorial, he will brief you on what he wants for his essay, therefore you can just jot down those notes as guidelines. When you prepare his essay sometimes you take his notes and do you own small reading, an essay will come out. It is different from Prof. P, [for whom] you should go to the library to compile some information on your own.

One can safely generalise from the above comment that it depends on a particular lecturer's style and approach whether students can rely almost entirely on the tutorial classes and lectures or whether they are expected to spend a lot of time studying on their own. Teaching methods also depend on broader issues like language and communication, which are multi-faceted processes.

Good teaching is seen by the students as involving pitching the material at the right level, presenting it at an appropriate pace and within a clear logical structure, providing an explanation which facilitates understanding, and demonstrating both enthusiasm and empathy.[1] Thus a student had this to say about one lecturer:

> The course was interesting because the old man was fluent. You could hear each and every word he was uttering and there was a logic in the set-up of the course itself, it was chronological and you could follow up issues very easily...with a clear understanding of what was happening even though the history he was teaching us was British,

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1. For an elaboration of some of the views commonly expressed by the students see N. Entwistle and P. Ramsden, 'Effects of academic departments on students' approaches to studying' British Journal of Educational Psychology, 51, 1981, pp. 368-383; N. Entwistle and H. Tait, 'Approaches to learning, evaluations of teaching, and preferences for contrasting academic environments', Higher Education, 19, 1990, pp.169-194.

which was unfamiliar.

Furthermore 'good teachers' provide students with resource materials, use the overhead projector, write on the board to explain difficult words and concepts, use photos and slides and provide students with hand-outs which have clear guidelines. One lecturer is commended for his efforts to ask questions during lectures, thus creating a participative environment. In this way teaching becomes a two way process and students feel that they also have an important role to play.

There are lecturers who have opposite attributes to the ones mentioned above, and these include some of those who acted as leave substitutes in the years 1990 and 1991. Thus the classes of one of the leave-substitute lecturers, described as a 'walking-textbook' by some students, are described in the following terms by a second-year student:

> This is where I got into problems. The clock went back [to DET years]...that was terrible, the accent, the set-up of her lectures, everything. It was confusing. I was damn confused, not that the content of her lectures was bad, it is the way she presented it, the way she pronounced words, it was all difficult. You could not deduce from what she was saying, I mean the important section to look at...when there is intonation, or stressing important points which might be examinable or might be important to a certain section of an essay.

This lecturer's sessions were regarded as dry, with no insights providing explanation and understanding of the course. Students prefer lecturers who show links between course material and the real world, and who show how they think about topics. The leave-substitute lecturer mentioned above relied heavily on the textbook and presented her lectures at a very fast, inappropriate

pace, in order to finish the syllabus in time. Unlike other
lecturers, she did not provide students with resource materials
and did not use teaching aids like the overheard-projector and
the board to explain or write difficult concepts and words. This
created an impression among students that she did not make a real
effort to understand the difficulties that they may be having
with their work. A third year-student , describing her
experiences in the lecture room, said:

> I did not like her as a person because she was like Lecturer
> Y [another leave substitute], dictating notes. She did not
> care about spelling [difficult words for English second or
> third language speakers]...if you asked her how do you spell
> these words [usually Portuguese or Spanish- on the Voyages
> of Discovery]...she would say, just as I have pronounced it.

The way English-first-language lecturers express themselves to
second or third language speakers is very crucial as this affects
their ability to take good notes. The following statement about
one lecturer is a common one:

> His course content was okay except with him per-se as an
> individual. His accent I do not know whether I would say it
> is bloody American or British whatever, we could not hear
> exactly the words he was uttering...All we did was to go to
> the library and recheck or read what we thought he was
> saying or what we thought his lecture was based on to help
> ourselves.

When analysing the 'Openness to Students" category in the
questionnaire, two contentious issues emerge. Generally,
lecturers do not consult students before making decisions about
how the courses are organised, and they may not be receptive to
suggestions from students for changes to their teaching methods.
There are many reasons for this, the most important being that

the University and the various departments would rarely attempt to curtail the academic freedom of a lecturer who is in charge of a particular course. Secondly, lecturers may feel that students are incompetent to judge the merits of a course or to evaluate their teaching methods. But at the first-year level the establishment tutor attempts to feed student perceptions back to the lecturers in the form of an annual report, based on student questionnaires. However the lecturers are not obliged to heed the establishment tutor's 'advices' about students' perceptions of a particular course and of lecturers' teaching styles and methods.

This issue of 'openness to students' also depends on the individual lecturer's personality and attitude towards students from different race groups. Most of the lecturers in the DHS really try hard to get to know their students and seem to go out of their way to be friendly to them. But on a different note here is a description of an 'ambivalent' relationship between Prof. R. and his students, as narrated by a final year Economic History student:

> The structure [physical appearance] of Prof.R. himself [is intimidating]...I am not saying he is not approachable but when you look at him he is such a horrific guy...I could not go to him and say Prof. this is a problem I am having, not that he did not allow us to do so...I will just leave things as they are and struggle just for 50% ...His voice has got its rough sort of sound and at the same time he is very serious in class. One would not even try to joke so that the class could laugh and have enjoyable lectures...But otherwise outside the classroom I have seen that what I have been thinking of Prof. R. is not exactly correct. For example what happened yesterday at a class party [for senior students]. I could see that he is an easy person. You can talk to him and all those things...we talked about social things and we moved to academic stuff and asked questions

> and he was so friendly...we talked about the courses, that
> is why now I am thinking that before I write my exam I have
> to go to him and talk about my essays and other things
> concerning the course.

This suggests that 'openness' is often assisted by informal
contact between student and staff. One can contextualise such
comments within the broader socio-political situation facing us
as South Africans. Hence it is not surprising to discover that at
first, Prof. R. intimidates the African students because of his
racial origins. As a white person he creates a negative image
among his African students (those who are being taught by whites
for the first time in their lives) as someone who is very
authoritarian. To them he is not different to a white policeman,
soldier or civil servant. He is seen as someone who is cold, very
strict and has no sense of humour to make students feel at ease
with him. Also his image as a very serious scholar overwhelms the
students, the majority of whom lack self-confidence. But with
time the students were able to change their perceptions of him as
a person and the first-years in 1992 did not find him
intimidating at all. In part, this is because of information fed
back to him by the establishment tutor. Because it is the first
time that the majority of African students have been taught by a
white person, one can safely generalize that it is both this
lecturer's whiteness and apparent authoritarianism that has a
dominant impact. In general an authoritarian black lecturer would
evoke a different response because African students have met such
characters before (as school teachers), during their primary and
secondary education.

There are some white lecturers whom students perceive as very
conservative, politically, and who openly display racist
attitudes towards them as Africans. To some students this is a
humiliating experience and it affects them. It is inevitable that
all the African students develop a negative and ambivalent

attitude towards these lecturers. They know how to tolerate such lecturers, follow all their instructions and be passive because they want to pass. But outside the lecture-room such issues remain topical. For example: 'this one is a racist, why does she has have to tell us that no, because you are black, you should answer this [essay] question and not the other one', because it is the easier of the two. In such cases students expect lecturers to explain to them what makes essay questions difficult and what the different methods and perspectives are that historians use to analyze such problems. But other students are prepared to be open-minded about such issues and accept negative comments from lecturers with humility. The following is a first-hand experience from one of the final year History students:

> Well I would not say she had a negative attitude towards black students, but sometimes I felt embarrassed when going to tutorials and she would ask, what am I doing to try and improve my English...she said this in front of the other [white] students...that question was not directed to me personally, it was directed to us as black students and of course in other [tutorial] groups as well. I heard similar complaints from the other students so I took it generally that she has that attitude towards black students.

Most African students regard such experiences as embarrassing and humiliating in front of their white colleagues because:

> [Language] was a macro problem, the education that we received was horrific. It never equipped us for a university education; even talking was a problem...You have to think of the words that you are going to utter and what the other white fellow is going to say...the best thing here is to shut up and listen to the other person [white] who is able to talk, who is fluent in a way.

Students want lecturers who encourage them and who interact with their problems and ideas. The lack of empathy that some of the staff have about the ability levels of some of the students demoralises them, leading to negative study strategies. For example, the attitude that some students have towards Prof. R. is detrimental to them, for they strive for a mere 50% pass mark. Some students also avoid consulting lecturers when faced with problems in the lecture room. Students are also conscious of the fact that lecturers enter their profession with pre-existing and widely different political viewpoints and that this shapes their attitudes towards African students. This implies that individual political differences can be important to the learning processes. The negative views of students towards individual lecturers are overshadowed by a generally positive perception of the department's commitment to the learning process.

In regard to clear goals and standards as set by the department, again there are differing responses from the students and these also depend on individual lecturer's teaching styles. But on the whole students have a good impression of the department and usually have a clear idea of where they are going and what is expected of them. They express the fact that it is always easy to know the standard of work expected from them, thus one student has this to say about the department:

> In history you learn the skills of debating and analysis and
> bearing in mind that I am in other departments, the history
> department is the one that executes this job very well...The
> history department really demands your best, the other
> departments do but the way in which the history department
> demands is just well and above the other departments.

The majority of History students feel that by the time they have finished their first-year, they are confident in writing an eight page assignment; they are able to use source materials from the

library more effectively; they can synthesize huge amounts of evidence in order to present a logical, coherent argument both in writing and in tutorials; they can acknowledge sources of historical evidence through footnoting and they are able to avoid plagiarising and paraphrasing.

The majority of the students are actually aware of the aims and objectives of the department as these are stated in the course pamphlet and various hand-outs. But some of these departmental handouts tend to be lost amidst the many other handouts received at the beginning of the year, including those of the university administration, student government and various societies and sporting codes. Students end up losing interest in these hand-outs including those issued by respective departments. In the end there are some students who claim that they are not aware of the DHS's aims and objectives of teaching a particular course. As a participant observer in some of the courses I was able to notice that lecturers explicitly expressed the aims and objectives of their specific courses, sections and sub-sections before they proceeded with each course component. One suggestion arising from this discussion is that the department should use its own available resources to compile an information booklet and send it to each prospective student together with the official application and registration forms. In this way students will have ample time to read the information in the booklet during the holidays.

Students perceive the workload in the department as too heavy and demanding. They become worried about their abilities to succeed in the department. They regard the following issues as crucial: verbal proficiency is necessary for successful tutorials, as a mark is awarded for oral participation; effective listening and note taking is crucial in a history lecture-room; and one has to read and synthesize material from more than one book in order to understand the subject matter. But many of these problems are

sorted out through a course called Learning, Language and Logic
(LLL) which is offered through the Department of Second Language
Studies as a credit to second or third language speakers. In fact
some of the 'high-flyers' in the group that I interviewed
attributed their success to this course, and to the commendable
efforts of the establishment tutor in the DHS. According to them
LLL offered skills on how to write academic essays, to take
effective notes in lectures, to read and analyze textbooks, and
to develop verbal proficiency in tutorials. The fact that the
history syllabus covers many topics, and requires extensive
written work, is soon regarded by DHS students as a norm.

The social climate existing in the department is regarded in
positive terms if one does not consider the apparent racial
division which exist between the students (these issues are
discussed in Chapter Three). The social relationships between the
students and the teaching staff are very limited and are greatly
influenced by the existing power relations between the two
groups. African students in the department often get together
socially and most friendships are formed through this
interaction. The department seems to foster a friendly atmosphere
and climate which helps these students to get to know each other
and thus they frequently discuss their work (and problems) with
each other. Therefore it is not surprising that some students
resort to forming study groups to facilitate understanding of the
course content. A History 100 student observed:

> The idea behind the study group was that during the first
> semester, the very first lectures of Prof. S, we experienced
> so many problems. We came to realise that it was impossible
> for us [to succeed]...so we needed someone to help us or
> even to form a study group, because individual studying was
> something which was inappropriate for us at that time. So it
> was inevitable for us to form a study group.

Although most students are sceptical about the career benefits of studying history, the vocational relevance of the courses is geared towards students' future employment in the following professions: law, teaching, academia, and in diplomatic and media work. These courses are seen as inculcating the 'right' professional attitudes by promoting sound educational practices such as efficiency and high organisational skills, and intellectual capabilities such as critical thinking, research and the ability to argue. Having dealt with students' perceptions of their learning environment and established that it does influence students' approaches to studying, the next section will analyze how students approach studying at an individual level.

2.   Students' approaches to studying: essays and tutorials.
The students' study orientations will be analysed in terms of essay-writing and tutorials. The following three categories of analysis, adopted from the Approaches to Learning questionnaire (See Appendix F), will be used as the basis of our analysis: meaning orientation; reproducing orientation and achieving (strategic) orientation. The meaning orientation is exhibited by students who use a deep approach by looking for meaning, interacting actively with the subject matter and linking it effectively with real life; by examining evidence critically and using it cautiously; and by relating ideas and new information to previous knowledge. The strategic orientation is exhibited by students who actively seek information about assessment requirements and to some extent systematically try to locate other evaluation cues during lectures. This is done in order to satisfy each department's requirements in examinations and other forms of assessments. Lastly, the reproducing orientation reflects the surface approach which relies on rote learning, conscious of exam demands; syllabus boundness; and ineffective study methods whereby a student is fact bound and is not prepared

to look for relationships between ideas.[2]

As a learning activity, essay- writing remains virtually an uncharted territory. This is because it seems an essentially private activity. There is evidently little discussion by Education researchers of the problems and processes it entails. This section discusses this issue. Students perceive essay-writing to be a distinctive and integral part of their history course. These undergraduate students produce four (eight- page) essays per-annum at first year level, and more in the senior years. There is a twenty page- long South African project in the final-year.

The context in which essay-writing takes place is exceptionally well organized. Essays are an integral part of the courses, topics are provided well in advance and allow some measure of choice; sources and other recommended books are made available in the short-loan section of the library; and the reference section is well-stocked with further relevant materials. Tutors and lecturers are available for consultations before a student hands in an essay. Most of the students from DET and DEC schools not only comment on what they perceive as a new experience, but also on the unfortunate consequences of their matric (history) education as far as preparedness for university (history) education is concerned:

> At school we were spoonfed and most of the questions were straight-forward...there was no need to give our view, we just had to narrate what we had learned, we were not analytic as our knowledge was not needed...we wrote about one or two pages, not more than two pages...the teacher was expecting similar answers...here in the university you are

2.   F. Marton et al., The experience of learning (Edinburgh, Scottish Academic Press, 1984) Chapters 3 and 9.

given about five to ten books as references, you then go to
the library to get the information on your own. I have never
even used the library before...time management is crucial,
unlike in high school where you just read the book today and
you submit your [two page essay] tomorrow.

Therefore students' conceptions of what a history essay is and
what essay writing involves differs markedly between school and
university. In the case of Historical Studies students three
interlinked conceptions are identified. These can be summed up as
argument, viewpoint and as an exercise which embraces facts and
ideas[3]. Here is an example of how an essay assignment is
perceived as a viewpoint and an argument:

[University] was a completely different world altogether
from a world where you were dealing with say Austeker,[4] as
the only textbook and the exam is going to be set from this
book...to a new world where you have to explore through the
information, go to the library, compare and contrast
different views on a given essay topic and come out with
something relevant [a coherent and logical argument].

In analysing individual approaches to essay writing one finds
evidence which highlights the well established distinctions
between deep, strategic and surface approaches to academic work.
Here is an experience of a student who moved from the reproducing
orientation to the meaning orientation:

The first essay question set by Prof. S. was quite clear but
what I really think where the problem was at that time is
that we did not have skills of sifting information and

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3.   ibid. Chapter 7.

4.   See the section on (official) school history textbook in chapter 1.

analysis, that actually affected my marks, they said I had packed in too much detail and very little analysis...[after receiving a constructive feedback from Prof. S] now I read through the material, after reading through it then I come back with the question in mind. I start to take the notes, sifting the information...plan the essay-the rough draft, then from this I write the essay [another rough draft], then I will read my notes again to see which important points I have left out...changing my rough draft again and overseeing what is not meant to be there and all that, after doing that I will have my final product.

This suggests that study orientations are not static, but dynamic as they change over a given time period. A number of students do move from the reproducing orientation to the strategic and the meaning orientations. It depends on the nature of matric education that the student had. Those who had a relatively better educational background are able move within the same year; the rest of the students take a longer time, that is, between years. The feedback on assignments from the lecturers plays a very important role in this respect, as long as it is viewed by students as a constructive additional component of the learning environment. Students also need to be helped to 'unlearn' the rote learning methods of the matric classes, especially in the DET/DEC schools. As one of the students interviewed, observed:

My first essay was about the Renaissance and I encountered problems there because I read the first book that I came across and I took some important points, and I read the second book and I found out it was totally different although it was dealing with the same issue. For example the years [chronology] were different, so I had to try and get this point clear by using what I had learnt at school [and discarding the book with the new information].

and:

> If I remember my days from my first year, that was
> saddening. I even felt like leaving the institution because
> the marks I got from all my essays were in the 40s with
> comments like this is not an academic essay, poor language,
> no logic...

The salient feature of the students' study orientations is that
teaching methods greatly influence them . The last student
mentioned above is now a senior student in the DHS. He improved
on his performance by adopting the strategic approach by
systematically locating cues, 'the important section, when there
is intonation or stressing (of) important points which are
examinable' during each lecture session.

The majority of students in the DHS commend the type of feedback
they receive from the lecturers. Prof. S. is specifically
praised in this regard. His feedback is perceived as an extra
lesson because (according to students) he addresses both
epistemological issues and difficulties relevant to the
assignment content. They refer to the type of feedback he gives
as a 'mini-essay' because it is detailed, thorough and
characterised by individual comments directed to each student
even though the essay has got a good pass. As a participant
observer I often heard compliments passed to lecturers like Prof.
S. who are regarded as caring. Also students can tell the
difference between a lecturer who puts much effort in his/her
evaluation of assignments and the one who does not. They will
anticipate the latter's assignment with dread, anxiety and
without interest. But they will exchange the comments from those
lecturers who are perceived as providing constructive feedback,
in order to gain further insights about each topic. In fact most
students attribute their progress to the willingness to accept
such constructive feedback and also their preparedness to accept
their limitations. But it takes highly experienced lecturers

like Prof. S. to be able to communicate effectively with their students. This is because it is difficult for some students to accept their limitations. They often blame the system for their shortcomings.

However this issue of students' perception of feedback from lecturers is open to debate. One of the highly capable students in the History 100 class is at pains to discuss the type of marks she is getting from assignments towards the end of the year (after passing her mid-year exam with a first class pass). She has done some introspection and is bold enough to appropriate some of the blame to herself

> Maybe I am not as attentive as I was when I first got here because - I mean like being a first year - I was very apprehensive about coming to university and I felt I must keep up with the work. I must go to the library at first instance, but as you go on you get used to [the social life at university], you leave things and you have little time to do [assignments] in the end.

But nevertheless this student feels that some of the (History 100) graduate tutors are inexperienced. She strongly criticises certain types of feedback, gained from one of these graduate tutors:

> Sometimes I feel that the marks are very unfair like the [marks I received for the] last essay I wrote. I thought that was very unfair because as far as I can see there is nothing wrong with the essay. Whoever marked just wrote [as comment] this has been a satisfactory essay. But I do not understand what is wrong with it as I got 55% [a low mark by her standards]. I am not satisfied with the feedback...I was upset then, I thought I was not doing well...I am not looking forward to the 4th essay.

From the above comment it is obvious that 'bad feedback' can

destroy a student's confidence and interest in the course. But this issue remains ambiguous as the student is also quick to blame herself for poor time-management.

Students' conceptions of essays and their study orientations are not different from those they adopt for tutorials. This is because they identify three qualitative conceptions of tutorials which are interlinked and relevant to the nature of the discipline as a whole. These can be summed up as viewpoint, debate and argument. Students are of the opinion that the ability to use available evidence and do effective research is an integral part of the discipline. This helps to inculcate the meaning orientation to academic work as students are required to use historical evidence by examining it critically and using it cautiously. This is clearly evident in the tutorial assignments for senior students. In some of these tutorials the students are presented with sets of documents, as historical evidence, which they are required to analyze. One of these tutorials are based on the Bhambatha rebellion which took place in the British colony of Natal in 1906 . On the one hand, students, as British loyalists, study a set of documents favourable to the 'imperial school' of historians which locates the conflict in the larger context of British imperial policy. The students who personify the rebels, on the other hand, base their arguments on documents that reflect the radical threads of South African historiography, which casts the rebellion as a reaction to the tyranny of the oppressive colonists. Through this activity, students learn about the actual circumstances of the Bhambatha rebellion, as they interpret and impute meaning to those circumstances. This, according to students, highlights epistemological representations that define history as a discipline[5]. As one student asserted:

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5.   See also S. Wineburg and S. Wilson, 'Models of wisdom in the teaching of history'.

I think they [tutorials] were good because they advocated or
promoted creativity as we had to debate some very
interesting points, some of them very nerve-wrecking...I
still remember another tutorial about Shaka-Zulu. There was
a serious debate and conflict [including racial division] in
the class. What I can say, there was a serious constructive
conflict in the class because some of our colleagues were
for and against [the notion that, amongst other things,
Shaka was a savage despot]...we also discovered that the
whole notion of the Mfecane was a myth [therefore the
epicentre of this violence lay neither with AmaZulu nor in
Zululand]...this was very convincing because of the
available evidence as we were trying to look at this issue
from all sorts of angles and perspectives...I think at the
end we came to a consensus that this point [about the
Mfecane] was correct because of the available evidence but
it is still open to constructive criticism.

Most African students, after they discard their 'pathological
fears' about speaking in tutorials (an issue which needs to be
further explored), are able to perceive the idea that history is
a view-point, an argument and a debate and that the historian's
method is rooted in evidence. As such, history is open to
continuous revision and re-examination. The tutorials provide the
students with the mechanisms to own the learning process because
every time they contribute in the debate and raise constructive
arguments, they begin to perceive themselves as 'historians in
training' or 'doing history'. Thus they are not just passive
processors of what they hear in lectures or read in books.
Lecturers and tutors also become role models of historical
thinking and problem-solving. They do this by identifying a
historical problem and then making explicit the methods by which
historical answers (including different perspectives) can be

constructed.[6]

Conclusion.

Students acknowledge that because of inadequate matric history education they lack the following basic, discipline specific, educational and learning skills at the point of entry: general organisation and effective use of the library, planning and time-management, research, essay and exam writing skills, and ability to express themselves in good English which greatly affects their participation in tutorials. That is why the university continues to maintain orientation programmes like PFU. The DHS has started to grapple with these issues with the help of the establishment tutor (whose role is highly recommended by the students) and the imaginative way some of the lecturers present their tutorials and lectures. But the establishment tutor's role is limited because it is specifically directed to problems that are faced by students. Because students' perceptions of the academic environment directly influence their approaches to learning and studying, they have been able to identify individual teachers' 'deficits'. These need to be read in conjunction with the broader, non-academic, societal issues mentioned in chapter three. The lecturers' deficits need to be fully addressed by the DHS in order to maintain and improve the efficient learning environment which already exists, as this environment does influence students' approaches to studying. But one is also aware of the fact that students tend to identify the most visible issues only, such as teaching technique, pronunciation, race. The more subtle and powerful issues include the question of how history is defined by each lecturer and how they, as students, construct a sense of the structure of history and the appropriate academic "game" they are meant to play when they are presented with models that have different emphases.

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6. ibid. Wineburg and Wilson suggest that although knowledge of subject matter by lecturers is central to teaching, it is not the sole determinant of good teaching.

CHAPTER 6

CONCLUSION

This exploratory study arises from a double concern. The first is to explore perceptions and conceptions of history among African students (this includes their learning experiences within the department); and the second is to examine lecturers' perceptions of the discipline. From these concerns several interrelated questions arise. What educational baggage do students bring with them to university? What are students' perceptions and conceptions of History in particular? What range of educational, cultural, social and political experiences are represented in undergraduate classes? What are students' expectations from the department? What are lecturers' perceptions of the discipline? What are students' experiences of learning and teaching in the DHS? What are lecturers' perceptions of teaching in a changing environment? In such an exploratory study various methods of exploiting data need to be considered. Hence I have attempted to answer these questions by using a variety of techniques, namely participant observation, questionnaires and written responses, and in-depth-audio-tape interviews.

When examining both students' and lecturers' perspectives of educational (matric) baggage, and the extent to which students feel equipped for university study, one finds that both these groups adhere to a 'student deficit model' of academic performance. This is not at all surprising because of the legacy of apartheid education which, amongst other things, has 'deskilled' African students. Their schooling does not equip them for the transition to university. In terms of history education, African students commonly lack analytical, literary, explanatory and interpretative skills. One feels that these students, by readily accepting their limitations and acknowledging that they are underprepared for academic study, are eager to 'learn the new ropes'.

In general, lecturers should not be preoccupied only with the

'student deficit model'. They should acknowledge that they are underprepared and ill-equipped to teach African students who are products of Bantu Education, and that their cultural capital and reference points, which are both Eurocentric and white South African in nature, further exacerbate the problems.[1] Lecturers need to reconsider their elitist view of university education and to stop putting emphasis only on 'the system and its victims' as they are also 'victims' of the 'system'. They should accept and acknowledge the existence of the 'teacher deficit model' and its implications as African students do with the 'student deficit model' and its consequences. Most African students do not readily attribute lack of progress to departmental inadequacies, but rather to their personal failings as products of Bantu Education. They also rate non-academic problems like transport, accommodation and finance as the most important influence on their academic performance. This view is absent amongst the lecturers as they regard academic problems as the only influential factors.

In a sense it becomes a major but very difficult task for African students to do away with a defeatist attitude and to try to adapt to the new environment, avoiding always laying the blame with the 'system'. This positive attitude towards education provides both the lecturers and the university with a foundation and building-blocks with which a culture of learning could be re-established within the African community. In this respect the university should provide the teaching staff with support programmes in order to address lecturers' 'deficits' and such programmes may be located within the various departments. One acknowledges that further research is needed in this field. From my research students appreciate the fact that departments like the DHS have a positive attitude towards the broader educational questions concerning South

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1.   See B. Freund, 'Reform and academic quality in South African Universities', Theoria, October 1993, pp.183-203; R. Klitgaard, 'Beginning at an end: An economic approach to university reform', Theoria, October 1993, pp.165-181.

African universities. Hence the majority of the students commended the department's commitment to effective teaching and to the learning process (this includes the role of the establishment tutor).

Analysing students' perceptions of the discipline and the environment for learning makes it easier for the DHS to gain an informed sense of students problems, expectations and experiences. Students' perceptions and conceptions of the discipline are informed by the following questions: What is history? What is the relationship of history to the present? What makes a good historian and what makes a bad historian? Although some students provide sophisticated answers, many have serious limitations and flaws in their understanding of the discipline. This is due to their inability to grapple effectively with the fundamental epistemological question of how we know the past, that is, what historical knowledge is and how it is constructed, produced and acquired in a given society. Students are unaware that they still have to grapple with the problems of 'presentism', representation, language and the relationships that exist between knowledge and power. Hence students' definitions of the nature of historical knowledge are not detailed enough whilst lecturers have very clear and different ideas about this epistemological issue, which is fundamental to history as a discipline. This unequal interface exists because the department is presently preoccupied with teaching 'objective', factual (historical) knowledge and obsessed with what part of empirical content to teach rather than the prior issue of how we know the past. This may arise from the fact that there exists a dominant paradigm in the DHS. This is empiricism with a broadly 'liberal' approach to history whereby the prior issue of how we know the past is not emphasised (this idea is only really developed at post-graduate level by the department).

From the students' learning experiences of essay writing, tutorials and note-taking, we find that students tackle their academic work

in three different ways, namely through deep, strategic and surface learning approaches. The students who adopt the deep learning approach expect lecturers to show links between course material and the immediate world and show how they, as lecturers, think about topics. These students regard learning as an interactive, two-way process involving both the lecturer and the student. They always strive to make personal meaning of what they learn in the lecture room. Students who adopt a strategic learning approach seem to, amongst other things, rely on cues from the lecturers and reproduce what they think are intellectual and study skills required by the department in essays, examinations and tutorials. Students who adopt a surface approach to learning are passive. They want lecturers who spoonfeed them by telling them what to put in their notes. They prefer tutorials in which tutors discuss lectures and clarify them. They also want courses which indicate exactly which books to read, and which topics are directly linked to essays, tutorials and exam requirements. But these study orientations are dynamic as they change over time. The reasons are that students adjust and 'learn the ropes' and that their perceptions of the academic environment directly influence their approaches to learning and studying.

Many students have difficulties identifying the appropriate academic 'game' they are meant to play when they are presented with models and philosophies that have different emphases, like empiricism and relativism. Also, when they discuss their experiences of the department, they tend to identify the most visible issues only, such as teaching techniques, pronunciation and race. The more subtle and powerful issues like the question of how history is defined by the empiricists and relativists, including what is appropriate history, seem to be ignored by students. This is because, as undergraduates, they do not possess the relevant tools that will enable them to understand the nature of the discipline and to identify the differing models and 'shifting' paradigms which exist within the department. One way of making the

nature and tools of history more explicit to students is by teaching 'simplified' historiography and methodology at undergraduate level. This may address important educational questions like how historical knowledge is produced and constructed in any given society (or history department), and how students' ideas of history are shaped by teaching approaches in the DHS.

In terms of content, method and problem-solving, a critical approach to history should be adopted.[2] In this approach the following four interrelated categories should be predominant: evidence, narrative, interpretation and construction. Evidence as a category should be made up of historical facts and its major aim should be to promote empirical research methods. The critical selection and collation of these facts should be our prime concern. This also includes the assessment of new evidence, and the organisation of meaningful chronology, with the time concept used as a tool to turn available information into historical knowledge. The narrative category should highlight the critical (and chronological) explanation of an historical story, in the light of historiographical debate and theory, with both the contextual and conceptual frameworks viewed as important. Interpretation should involve theory in history, debate and argument. This should include critical self-consciousness of the use of language; political agendas; power relations; the target audience; and the fact that content and interpretation are integrally linked in an historical narrative. Also in the narrative and interpretation categories one's literary style has an important role to play. The last category, that is, the construction of historical knowledge should be both a starting and an ending point which responds to the fundamental and prior question of how we know the past.

When defining 'an historian', both lecturers and students tend to

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2. See S. Ndlovu and T. Nuttall, 'Historians and Historical Knowledge'. pp.10-11.

restrict the term 'historian' to professional historians. But one feels a need for a broader, inclusive definition which charts different historians along a continuum, with the ordinary individual at the peripheral end and the professors at the dominant end. This is very important because students will be represented at the centre of this spectrum. The major goal in this regard is to empower students to gain control of their learning situation. Hence as historians they will start to own the learning process in the history lecture-room. The teaching and the learning of history will become a two-way process as students will be discouraged from being passive and crammers of great quantities of content about the past. As historians they will be encouraged to make personal meaning out of this information and adopt interactive learning processes. Both these attributes are highly regarded as qualities of a successful student by the teaching staff in the department.

This study does not - and cannot - claim that it addresses the whole spectrum of problems facing history education and the teaching of history in South Africa. But it does indicate that comparative, systematic, in-depth and empirical research into the perceptions and conceptions of History among the disempowered group (students) and the privileged group (academics) is very crucial in informing debates about the history curriculum at universities in the post-apartheid era.

APPENDIX A

1. How well do you think matric history has prepared students for History 1 and Economic History 1 ? (Please include perceptions on the extent to which different education departments provide a range of 'products' for our first-year courses.)

2. What, in your opinion, are (and should be) the overall aims and objectives of the History 1 and Economic History 1 courses?

3. In what ways could the lecturers/tutors make these aims and objectives more explicit, and to what extent do you think it necessary that we do this?

4. How does the present shape our understanding of history, and to what extent should we consider this question in relation to History 1/ Economic History 1?

5. How far should the emphasis in History 1 and Economic History 1 be on _teaching_ rather than _lecturing?_

6. What are the qualities of a good historian?

7. What are the qualities of a bad historian?

8. What are the points you would make if asked to justify why a student should choose to study History 1 and/or Economic History 1?

9. In what ways do you think that a training in History and/ or Economic History will benefit the careers of students after university?

Directed questions for interviews:

1.   What are your educational qualifications?

2.   How long have you been teaching history?

3.   Do you think that your educational background has influenced your understanding of history as a discipline? (that is, the universities you attended, the people who taught you etc.)

4.   What are your research interests and have these changed over time?

5.   Do you perceive any influence of your research work on your teaching ?

6.   Does your involvement in teaching influence your research work?

7.   What are the courses that you have taught since 1990?

8.   If you have changed your history courses in the last three years give reasons why?

10. What do you regard as the most positive features of your courses ?

11. Do you get any feedback about your courses from the students and what are your reactions if there is feedback?

12. Do you perceive any change of students' attitude towards history resulting from your course?

13. Please indicate any significant differences you perceive among the students your are teaching?

14. What do you like and dislike about your students?

15. What do you enjoy most about being a history teacher in South Africa and what are the drawbacks?

16. What are your views concerning history teaching in post - apartheid South Africa?

17. What are your thoughts on how education development issues can be integrated into the courses you teach?

Questionnaire: African students at UNP.

The questionnaire consists of the following sections:

1.   Biographical
2.   Pre-university
3.   Accommodation, transport and financial issues
4.   Entry experiences
5.   Education
6.   Social life
7.   Political

(Tick or Cross the appropriate boxes provided [ ])

1. Biographical

2.   Name:_____

3.   Gender: M/F_____

4.   Age:

17 or less	18-20	21-23	24-30	30 or more

5.   Home Language:_____

6.   Religion:_____

7.   Occupation of (leave blank those which do not apply):

        Father:_____

        Mother:_____

        Guardian:_____

8.   Highest educational level father/mother/guardian completed:
        (1) no formal education [ ]
        (2) primary school [ ]
        (3) high school [ ]
        (4) matric [ ]
        (5) college/technikon [ ]
        (6) university [ ]

9.   Do you have any brothers or sisters with any university education? (1) yes [ ] (2) no [ ]

10. What degree are you registered for (including year of study)?

11.   In what year did you matriculate?

12.   Education Department to which your school belonged?

_____

Pre-University :again put a cross/ tick the appropriate box [ ]

13.   Did you register at UNP immediately after finishing school? (1) yes [ ] (2) no [ ]
        If not, what did you do?
                (1) unemployed [ ]
                (2) employed [ ]
                (3) at college/technikon [ ]
                (4) at another university [ ]
                (5) other (specify)

14.   How do you feel school prepared you for university?
                (1) very well [ ]
                (2) adequately [ ]
                (3) moderately [ ]
                (4) minimally [ ]
                (5) not at all [ ] ,

Elaborate: _____

_____
_____
_____
_____

15.   How useful and accessible did you find university Information on how to apply for admission and
        how to select courses ?
                (1) helpful [ ]
                (2) reasonable [ ]
                (3) problematic [ ]
                (4) difficult [ ]

Elaborate: _____

_____
_____
_____
_____

16a.   Did you attend any supplementary school programmes? (e.g. winter school, pre-university
        school)
        (1) yes [ ] (2) no [ ]

16b. If "Yes", How useful did you find this?
         (1) very useful [ ]
         (2) moderately useful [ ]
         (3) minimally useful [ ]
         (4) not at all useful [ ]

Elaborate: _____

_____

_____

Accommodation. Transport and Financial Issues

17.   What type of accommodation do you have?
         (1) residence [ ]
         (2) boarding with a family [ ]
         (3) communal house, digs [ ]
         (4) hotel/flat [ ]
         (5) at home with family [ ]
         (6) other (specify)

Has this been a problem in any way?

_____

_____

_____

_____

8.   Do you have adequate time and study facilities where you live?   (1) yes [ ] (2) no [ ]

Elaborate: _____

_____

_____

_____

_____

19.   How do you travel to university?

_____

_____

20. How long does it takes you to get to the campus each day?

_____

21. Does transport present a problem for you? Please elaborate:

_____

22. What is' your main source of income whilst at university? (please indicate more than one of these if applicable)
    (1) bursary [ ]
    (2) university loan [ ]
    (3) bank loan [ ]
    (4) parents [ ]
    (5) other family members [ ]
    (6) vacation jobs [ ]
    (7) other (specify)

23a. Has money been a problem?

_____

23b. If "Yes" Elaborate:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Entry experiences

24. At what stage did you first enter the university?
    (1) PFU [ ]
    (2) orientation week [ ]
    (3) during academic registration week [ ]
    (4) first week of lectures [ ]
    (5) after first week of lectures [ ]

25. How would you summarise your experiences and feelings upon entering the university?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

26a. Did you attend orientation week? (1)yes [ ] (2) no [ ]

26b. If "Yes", state your impressions:

_____

_____

_____

_____

27.   State your impressions of the academic registration procedure?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Education

28.   How confident were you about your academic ability to study at this university when you first entered?
        (1) very confident [ ]
        (2) moderately confident [ ]
        (3) somewhat confident [ ]
        (4) lacking in confidence [ ]
        (5) seriously lacking in confidence [ ]

29.   How satisfied are you about your academic performance so far?
        (1) very satisfied [ ]
        (2) moderately satisfied [ ]
        (3) somewhat satisfied [ ]
        (4) somewhat dissatisfied [ ]
        (5) very dissatisfied [ ]

30.   How confident are you of succeeding in the courses you have chosen?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

31a.   Do/Did you attend any academic support/education development programme activities?
(1) yes [ ] (2) no [ ]
Specify:

_____

_____

31b.   If "Yes" how useful did/ do you find it?

_____

_____

_____

_____

32.   How comfortable do you feel about raising questions in class when you do not understand the material?

_____

_____

_____

_____

33.   In general, how approachable do you find lecturers?

_____

_____

_____

_____

Social life

34a.   How do you spend your free time?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

34b.   If with other students, where and how?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

35a.   Where would you seek advice or help for:
(1) academic problems:

_____

(2) personal. emotional problems?

_____

_____

35b.   Have you experienced any problem in this regard that you would like to mention?   1129

_____

_____

_____

_____

36.   How often do you feel socially isolated?
         (1) often
         (2) sometimes
         (3) rarely
         (4) never
Elaborate:

_____

_____

_____

_____

37.   To what extent do you feel socially integrated into this university?
         (1) very integrated
         (2) somewhat integrated
         (3) not integrated
         (4) alienated

Elaborate: (e.g. in terms of organizations, societies, sport)

_____

_____

_____

_____

38a.   Do you think that African students face more problems than whites on this campus?

        (1) yes [ ] (2) no [ ]

38b. If "Yes" what do you think the main problems are?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

38c.   If "No", what are your reasons?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

39. Would you favour
            (a) increasing, [ ]
            (b) decreasing [ ]
            (c) keeping the same number of African students on this campus [ ]?

Why?

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

40.   Could you please describe as fully as possible how UNP does or does not meet your needs in terms of expectations you first had. (e.g. academic, social, political values)

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

41.   Have you ever felt like dropping out of this university? (1) yes [ ] (2) no [ ]

       If "Yes", explain why:

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Political

42.   What do you think of the SRC?

_____

_____

_____

_____

43. How would you classify your own political affiliation?

_____

_____

44.   How would you classify the political affiliation/ orientation of this university administration?

_____

_____

45.   Would you, in principle, support any stay away call by the workers and students during the term?

_____

_____

_____

46.   In general do you feel UNP is supportive or non-supportive of African students on campus and residences?

_____

_____

_____

_____

47.   In general, how satisfied are you at UNP?

_____

_____

_____

_____

48. Are there any problems you think we did not touch on that should be explored? Please mention them.

THANK YOU

1. One sign of a good tutorial is that every student has the opportunity and inclination to say at least something? How would you advise tutors to encourage the participation of 'quite' students?

2. What procedure would you adopt to dissect an essay (or exam) question so that you were sure what direction your answer should take?

3. Assume the following situation: due to declining student numbers in history classes and due to limited educational funds, history teaching in schools and universities is to be stopped in the near future. Would you want to defend history as a discipline? If so, what are the four main points you would make?

4. What are the academic skills and approaches which you have learnt so far in History 1? To what extent do these skills and approaches differ from those of other courses you are studying this year?

SECTION β

Experiences of your Course

In this section, we should like you to relate your answers specifically to the department running that course.

PLEASE LEAVE BLANK

1—4

Department..						5—6
						7

		✓✓	✓	x	xx	?	
1.	A great deal of my time is taken up by timetabled classes (lectures, practicals, tutorials, etc).	4	3	1	0	2	8
2.	There is a real opportunity in this department for students to choose the particular areas they want to study.	4	3	1	0	2	9
3.	Lecturers here frequently give the impression that they haven't anything to learn from students.	4	3	1	0	2	10
4.	You usually have a clear idea of where you're going and what's expected of you in this department.	4	3	1	0	2	11
5.	A lot of the students in this department are friends of mine.	4	3	1	0	2	12
6.	The workload here is too heavy.	4	3	1	0	2	13
7.	Most of the staff here are receptive to suggestions from students for changes to their teaching methods.	4	3	1	0	2	14
8.	The courses in this department are geared to students' future employment.	4	3	1	0	2	15
9.	You can learn nearly everything you need to know from the classes and lectures; it isn't necessary to do much further reading.	4	3	1	0	2	16
10.	The department really seems to encourage us to develop our own academic interests as far as possible.	4	3	1	0	2	17
11.	Most of the staff here seem to prepare their teaching very thoroughly.	4	3	1	0	2	18

	✓✓	✓	x	xx	?	
12. It's always easy here to know the standard of work expected of you.	4	3	1	0	2	135¹⁹
13. Students from this department often get together socially.	4	3	1	0	2	20
14. It sometimes seems to me that the syllabus tries to cover too many topics.	4	3	1	0	2	21
15. Staff here generally consult students before making decisions about how the courses are organised.	4	3	1	0	2	22
16. Lecturers in this department are keen to point out that they are giving us a professional training.	4	3	1	0	2	23
17. In this department you're expected to spend a lot of time studying on your own.	4	3	1	0	2	24
18. We seem to be given a lot of choice here in the work we have to do.	4	3	1	0	2	25
19. Lecturers in this department seem to be good at pitching their teaching at the right level for us.	4	3	1	0	2	26
20. It's hard to know how well you're doing in the courses here.	4	3	1	0	2	27
21. This department seems to foster a friendly climate which helps students to get to know each other.	4	3	1	0	2	28
22. There is so much written work to be done that it is very difficult to get down to independent reading.	4	3	1	0	2	29
23. Most of the lecturers here really try hard to get to know students.	4	3	1	0	2	30
24. The courses here seem to be pretty well determined by vocational requirements.	4	3	1	0	2	31
25. Lectures in this department are basically a guide to reading.	4	3	1	0	2	32
26. This department gives you a chance to use methods of study which suit your own way of learning.	4	3	1	0	2	33
27. Staff here make a real effort to understand difficulties students may be having with their work.	4	3	1	0	2	34
28. Lecturers here usually tell students exactly what they are supposed to be learning.	4	3	1	0	2	35
29. This department organises meetings and talks which are usually well attended.	4	3	1	0	2	36

	√√	√	x	xx	?		

30. There seems to be too much work to get through in the courses here.

    4   3   1   0   2   **136** | 37 |

31. Lecturers in this department seem to go out of their way to be friendly towards students.

    4   3   1   0   2 | 38 |

32. The work I do here will definitely improve my future employment prospects.

    4   3   1   0   2 | 39 |

33. Lectures seem to be more important than tutorials or discussion groups in this department.

    4   3   1   0   2 | 40 |

34. Students have a great deal of choice over how they are going to learn in this department.

    4   3   1   0   2 | 41 |

35. The lecturers in this department always seem ready to give help and advice on approaches to studying.

    4   3   1   0   2 | 42 |

36. There's a lot of pressure on you as a student here.

    4   3   1   0   2 | 43 |

37. Students in this department frequently discuss their work with each other.

    4   3   1   0   2 | 44 |

38. Lecturers here generally make it clear right from the start what will be required of students.

    4   3   1   0   2 | 45 |

39. There seems to be considerable emphasis here on inculcating the 'right' professional attitudes.

    4   3   1   0   2 | 46 |

40. Lecturers in this department generally take students' ideas and interests seriously.

    4   3   1   0   2 | 47 |

48	49	50	51	52	53	54	55	56	57	58	59	60	61	62	63	64	65	66		2

80

We should like to thank you for sparing the time to fill in this rather long questionnaire. We recognise that it will have taken up a considerable amount of your time, but your responses will be valuable to us. If there are any aspects of studying we have not covered in the questionnaire, or any items you would like

to comment on, please use the space below.

SECTION ⸗ A   **Approaches to Studying**

In this section we would like you to show whether you agree or disagree with each of the statements listed below. We are concerned here with your approaches to studying in general. If your answer would be different for different subjects, however, you should reply in relation to your main course or subject. [HISTORY OR ECONOMIC HISTORY]

Please circle the number beside each statement which best conforms with your view.

    4   (✓✓)   means Definitely agree

    3   (✓)   means Agree with reservations

    1   (x)   means Disagree with reservations

    0   (xx)   means Definitely disagree

    2   (?)   is only to be used if the item doesn't apply to you or if you find it impossible to give a definite answer.

		✓✓	✓	x	xx	?	
1.	I find it difficult to organise my study time effectively.	4	3	1	0	2	16
2.	I try to relate ideas in one subject to those in others, whenever possible.	4	3	1	0	2	17
3.	Although I have a fairly good general idea of many things, my knowledge of the details is rather weak.	4	3	1	0	2	18
4.	I enjoy competition: I find it stimulating.	4	3	1	0	2	19
5.	I usually set out to understand thoroughly the meaning of what I am asked to read.	4	3	1	0	2	20
6.	Ideas in books often set me off on long chains of thought of my own, only tenuously related to what I was reading.	4	3	1	0	2	21
7.	I chose my present courses mainly to give me a chance of a really good job afterwards.	4	3	1	0	2	22
8.	Continuing my education was something which happened to me, rather than something I really wanted for myself.	4	3	1	0	2	23

	√√	√	x	xx	?		

9. I like to be told precisely what to do in essays or other assignments.
   4   3   1   0   2   139   **24**

10. I often find myself questioning things that I hear in lectures or read in books.
    4   3   1   0   2   **25**

11. I generally prefer to tackle each part of a topic or problem in order, working out one at a time.
    4   3   1   0   2   **26**

12. The continual pressure of work—assignments, deadlines and competition—often makes me tense and depressed.
    4   3   1   0   2   **27**

13. I find it difficult to "switch tracks" when working on a problem: I prefer to follow each line of thought as far as it will go.
    4   3   1   0   2   **28**

14. My habit of putting off work leaves me with far too much to do at the end of term.
    4   3   1   0   2   **29**

15. It's important to me to do really well in the courses here.
    4   3   1   0   2   **30**

16. Lecturers seem to delight in making the simple truth unnecessarily complicated.
    4   3   1   0   2   **31**

17. Distractions make it difficult for me to do much effective work in the evenings.
    4   3   1   0   2   **32**

18. When I'm doing a piece of work, I try to bear in mind exactly what that particular lecturer seems to want.
    4   3   1   0   2   **33**

19. I usually don't have time to think about the implications of what I have read.
    4   3   1   0   2   **34**

20. Lecturers sometimes give indications of what is likely to come up in exams, so I look out for what may be hints.
    4   3   1   0   2   **35**

21. In trying to understand a puzzling idea, I let my imagination wander freely to begin with, even if I don't seem to be much nearer a solution.
    4   3   1   0   2   **36**

22. My main reason for being here is that it will help me to get a better job.
    4   3   1   0   2   **37**

23. Often I find myself wondering whether the work I am doing here is really worthwhile.
    4   3   1   0   2   **38**

	✓✓	✓	x	xX	?	
24. I generally put a lot of effort into trying to understand things which initially seem difficult.	4	3	1	0	2	40 39
25. I prefer courses to be clearly structured and highly organised.	4	3	1	0	2	40
26. A poor first answer in an exam makes me panic.	4	3	1	0	2	41
27. I prefer to follow well tried approaches to problems rather than anything too adventurous.	4	3	1	0	2	42
28. I'm rather slow at starting work in the evenings.	4	3	1	0	2	43
29. In trying to understand new ideas, I often try to relate them to real life situations to which they might apply.	4	3	1	0	2	44
30. When I'm reading I try to memorise important facts which may come in useful later.	4	3	1	0	2	45
31. I like to play around with ideas of my own even if they don't get me very far.	4	3	1	0	2	46
32. I generally choose courses more from the way they fit in with career plans than from my own interests.	4	3	1	0	2	47
33. I am usually cautious in drawing conclusions unless they are well supported by evidence.	4	3	1	0	2	48
34. When I'm tackling a new topic, I often ask myself questions about it which the new information should answer.	4	3	1	0	2	49
35. I suppose I am more interested in the qualifications I'll get than in the courses I'm taking.	4	3	1	0	2	50
36. Often I find I have to read things without having a chance to really understand them.	4	3	1	0	2	51
37. If conditions aren't right for me to study, I generally manage to do something to change them.	4	3	1	0	2	52
38. Concerning my tutorials, I like to try to work out several alternative ways of interpreting the findings.	4	3	1	0	2	53

	√√	√	x	xx	?	
39. My main reason for being here is so that I can learn more about the subjects which really interest me.	4	3	1	0	2	54
40. In trying to understand new topics, I often explain them to myself in ways that other people don't seem to follow.	4	3	1	0	2	55
41. I find I have to concentrate on memorising a good deal of what we have to learn.	4	3	1	0	2	56
42. It is important to me to do things better than my friends, if I possibly can.	4	3	1	0	2	57
43. I find it better to start straight away with the details of a new topic and build up an overall picture in that way.	4	3	1	0	2	58
44. Often when I'm reading books, the ideas produce vivid images which sometimes take on a life of their own.	4	3	1	0	2	59
45. One way or another I manage to get hold of the books I need for studying.	4	3	1	0	2	60
46. I often get criticised for introducing irrelevant material into my essays or tutorials.	4	3	1	0	2	61
47. I find that studying academic topics can often be really exciting and gripping.	4	3	1	0	2	62
48. The best way for me to understand what technical terms mean is to remember the text-book definitions.	4	3	1	0	2	63
49. I certainly want to pass the next set of exams, but it doesn't really matter if I only just scrape through.	4	3	1	0	2	64
50. I need to read around a subject pretty widely before I'm ready to put my ideas down on paper.	4	3	1	0	2	65
51. Although I generally remember facts and details, I find it difficult to fit them together into an overall picture.	4	3	1	0	2	66
52. I tend to read very little beyond what's required for completing assignments.	4	3	1	0 .	2	67
53. Having to speak in tutorials is quite an ordeal for me.	4	3	1	0	2	68

141

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A. PRIMARY SOURCES

B. SECONDARY SOURCES

    1.NEWSPAPERS
    2.PRINTED BOOKS
    3.JOURNAL ARTICLES
    4.UNPUBLISHED SEMINARS, REPORTS AND PAPERS
    5.UNPUBLISHED THESIS

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