

# THE VALUE (NECESSITY) OF INTEGRATION BETWEEN THE LEARNING AREAS ECONOMIC AND BUSINESS STUDIES AND SOCIAL SCIENCES

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## **Orientation**

South Africa has been undergoing various dynamic political, social, economic and other changes since the inauguration of the post-apartheid dispensation in 1994. In this transformation process History as a school subject has undergone some of the most radical changes, especially since it is widely regarded as one of the key elements in the evolution towards a new democracy<sup>1</sup>.

The process of drafting a new curriculum for schools commenced early in the 1990s. Curriculum 2005, with an Outcomes Based Education approach was adopted in 1996 and has been implemented in all South African schools progressively in different grades since 1998. The outcomes-based approach is based on a holistic, integrated programme. All Learning Areas should be integrated through Learning Programmes. The Learning Area Social Science consists mainly of History, Geography and Archaeology. The Learning Area Economics and Business Studies consists mainly of Economics, Business Economics and Accounting. This constitution of the Learning Areas in itself provides for an interdisciplinary approach. For the purpose of this paper, the focus will be on two subjects within the Learning Areas, namely, History and Economics.

Since 2003 the Revised National Curriculum Statement has been implemented. Thorough training of teachers and clear guidelines regarding the implementation of this Revised National Curriculum Statement<sup>2</sup> have been provided by the National Department of Education. According to the Revised National Curriculum Statement Grades R – 9, aspects to be considered when developing Learning programmes, Work Schedules and Lesson Plans, are the following:

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1 Van Eeden, 1999:1.

2 RNCS, Teacher's Guide, 2003:2.

1. Philosophy and policy
2. Principles underpinning the curriculum
3. Time allocating and weighting
4. Integration
5. Resources
6. Inclusivity and barriers to learning

The focus of this article regarding the development of Learning Programmes, work schedules and lesson plans, is *integration and more specifically the integration of the Learning Areas Economic and Business Studies and Social Sciences*. Integrated learning is central to Outcomes-Based Education. The historically fragmented nature of knowledge can be overcome if attention is paid to relevant integration both within Learning Areas and across Learning Areas. Teachers need to have a clear understanding of the role of integration within their Learning Programmes. The key, however, is the balance to be struck between integration and conceptual progression. That is, integration must support conceptual development rather than being introduced for its own sake<sup>3</sup>. Integration should also not be applied in a forced way.

Even though all the different issues to be considered when developing Learning Programmes, Work Schedules and Lesson Plans are explained clearly in the above-mentioned document, it is noteworthy that the important aspect of *integration* is not included in a diagram (figure 1) on the planning process.<sup>4</sup>

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3 RNCS, Teacher's Guide, 2003:6.

4 RNCS, Teacher's Guide, 2003:14.

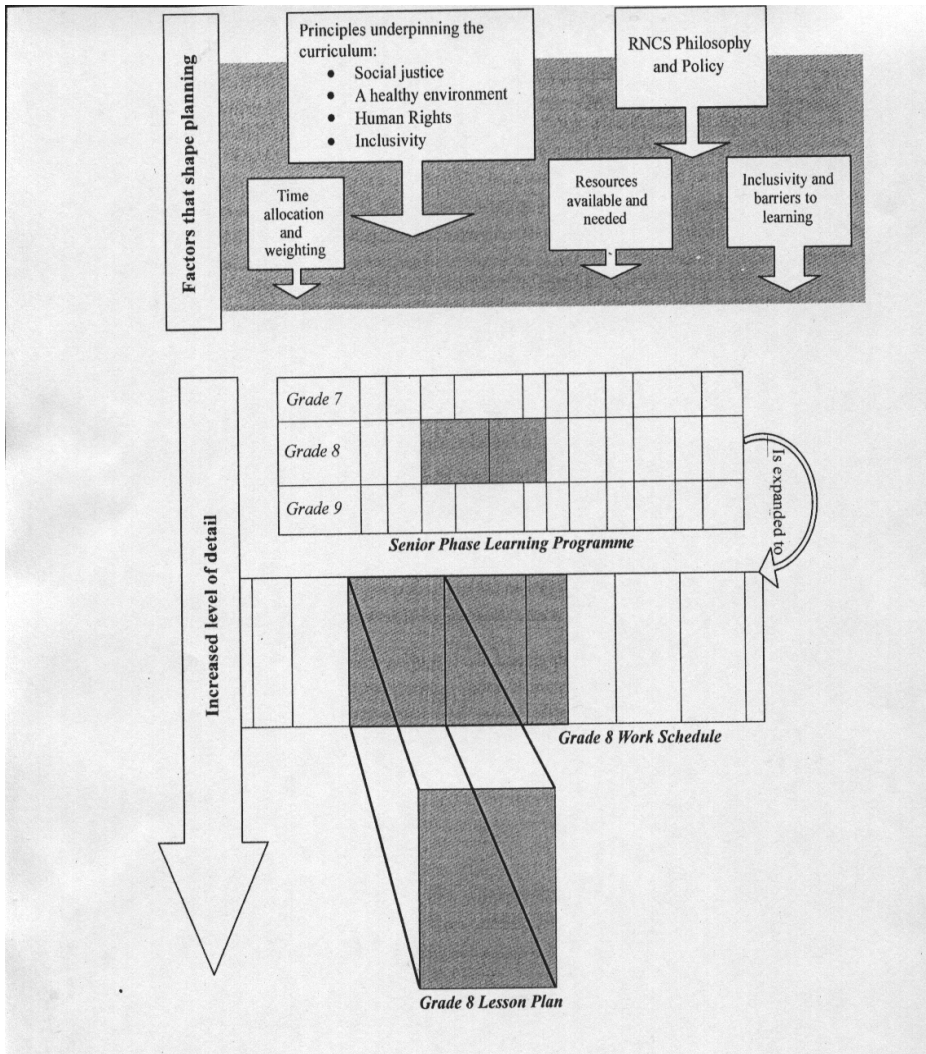


Figure 1

In the Revised National Curriculum Statement<sup>5</sup> it is further explained that “integrating Learning Areas should enhance the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values embedded in the Learning Outcomes of each Learning Area. Each Learning Area has its own concepts and knowledge domain, but achieving knowledge on its own without developing appropriate skills is not what we strive for in an outcomes-

<sup>5</sup> RNCS, Teacher’s Guide, 2003:44.

based curriculum. The integration of learning Areas into Learning Programmes will have implications for planning”.

The Revised National Curriculum Statement builds its Learning Outcomes for the General Education and Training Band for Grades R – 9 (for schools) on the critical and developmental outcomes that were inspired by the Constitution and developed in a democratic process<sup>6</sup>.

The critical outcomes envisage learners who are able to:

- identify and solve problems and make decisions using critical and creative thinking;
- work effectively with others as members of a team, group, organisation and community;
- organise and manage themselves and their activities responsibly and effectively;
- collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information;
- communicate effectively using visual, symbolic and/or language skills in various modes;
- using science and technology effectively and critically, showing responsibility towards the environment and the health of others;
- demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem solving contexts do not exist in isolation.

The developmental outcomes envisage learners who are also able to:

- reflect on and explore a variety of strategies to learn more affectively;
- participate as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities;
- be culturally and aesthetically sensitive across a range of social contexts;
- explore education and career opportunities;
- develop entrepreneurial opportunities.

Critical and developmental outcomes which are of specific importance for the topic under discussion are the following:

- collect, analyse, organise and critically evaluate information;

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<sup>6</sup> RNCS, Policy, Economic and Management Sciences, 2005:1.

- demonstrate an understanding of the world as a set of related systems by recognising that problem solving contexts do not exist in isolation;
- participate as responsible citizens in the life of local, national and global communities.

In the introduction to the Learning Area, Social Sciences, the following definition is provided:

The Social Sciences Learning Area studies relationships between people, and between people and the environment. These relationships vary over time and space. They are also influenced by social, political, economic and environment contexts, and by people's values, attitudes and beliefs.<sup>7</sup>

A definition to Economic and Business Studies reads that

the Economic and Business Studies Learning Area deals with the efficient and effective use of different types of private, public or collective resources in satisfying people's needs and wants, while reflecting critically on the impact of resource exploitation on the environment and on people.<sup>8</sup>

Key concepts appearing in both definitions are: economy, people and environment. These concepts link clearly with the craft of historical investigation which mainly involves the study of known actions and decisions of people within their society, and especially those actions and decisions that are of some significance to society.<sup>9</sup>

## **Problem Statement**

The problem (question) under investigation is whether content in any or both of the Learning Areas, Economic and Business Studies and Social Sciences are presented in a way that enhances integration between the two Learning Areas. This does not imply that integration between these two Learning Areas and the other six Learning Areas are less significant;

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7 RNCS Policy Social Sciences, 2003:4.

8 RNCS. Economic and Management Sciences, 2003:4.

9 Van Eeden, 1999:1.

the interrelatedness between history and language is a given and many examples can be provided, but the argument in this paper is that integration between the two Learning Areas under discussion should be regarded as a necessity where the opportunity exists. The relationship of economics to history is rather different from that of the other social sciences; curious as it may sound, this relationship comes close to that between history and literature. Economics, after all, is the science (in the broad meaning of the term) of something which people actually do; even if the science did not exist, people would still make economic decisions, economic predictions and participate in the various forms of economic organisations which, in part, is the economist's function to describe. The historian then is forced, whatever his period of study, to have some rudimentary knowledge of economics since so much of man's activity in societies is concerned with economic matters.

### **Learning Area Integration**

Although Learning Area integration is encouraged by the National Department of Education in their official documents as indicated earlier, it is ironic that, when the knowledge focus for the Intermediate Phase of the Learning Areas, Economic and Business Studies and Social Sciences is compared, it is clear that there is limited opportunity for integration<sup>10</sup>. The same applies to the Intermediate Phase. To substantiate this accusation, the knowledge focus for Grade 4 is presented on page 45:

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10 RNCS Policy, Economic and Management Sciences and Social Sciences, pp. 38-39.

Social Sciences	Economic and Business Sciences
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The history of the local area or district;</li> <li>• People, places, resources, beliefs linked to natural features, buildings, the school, sites, symbols, monuments and museums.</li> <li>• Oral histories and traditions: finding out about place names, names of rivers, mountains and other landmarks and indigenous environmental practices.</li> <li>• People as historical sources: interviewing members of the community.</li> <li>• Stories of families and communities which express human values of concern for others, triumph over obstacles, resistance against wrong, valuing human rights.</li> <li>• Learning from leaders in all spheres of life; what makes a good or great leader, stories from South Africa and around the world over time.</li> <li>• Broad historical overview of the origins of major world religions reflected in South Africa.</li> <li>• Democracy and human rights in the school and community.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The importance and use of production factors by households in the production of goods and services.</li> <li>• Households as consumers, producers and suppliers of factors of production.</li> <li>• The role of formal and informal business in society.</li> <li>• Differences in the standard of living between modern societies and self-sufficient economies.</li> <li>• The economic impact of the discovery of minerals in South Africa.</li> <li>• Different types of economic sectors and business.</li> <li>• Elements of management in a classroom project.</li> <li>• The importance of saving and a personal budget.</li> <li>• Entrepreneurial characteristics, skills, actions and practices.</li> </ul>

Aspects from the above-mentioned example which could be integrated, to supply only two obvious examples, are:

1. The history of the local area or district; the history of any town or city is linked with the economic growth and / or - decline of the place.
2. The economic impact of the discovery of minerals in South Africa. The discovery of minerals are historical events which are dealt with extensively in History and it should appear in the left column also in order to create a holistic picture and help the learners to understand it much better.

It is regarded as relevant for this paper to provide brief explanations of the nature of History and Economics as the two subjects under discussion in the Learning Areas Economic and Business Sciences and Social Sciences. Although both subjects imply much more, a few

examples are provided to demonstrate the tangency between the two:

Economics	History
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Economics is the study of mankind in the ordinary business of life. Alfred Marshall</li> <li>• Economics is the study of how individuals and groups of individuals respond to and deal with scarcity. James Kearl</li> <li>• Economics is the study of how individuals, firms, governments and other organisations within our society make choices and how those choices determine how the resources of society are used. (Fourie p. 50). Joseph Stiglitz</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The craft of historical investigation mainly involves the study of known actions and decisions of people within their society, and especially those actions and decisions that are of some significance to society. E van Eeden</li> <li>• History is the story of development, evolution and origin of our present environment. Burnston and Green.</li> <li>• History is the most dependent of all sciences, needing more than any other science continual help from all kinds of other fields of knowledge (Huizinga).</li> </ul>

Mohr, Fourie and Associates<sup>11</sup> ask a number of questions in an attempt to explain what Economics is; most of these questions could just as well have been asked in a History class:

- Why has the Rand often depreciated sharply against the major international currencies such as the US Dollar and the Euro? Why did it depreciate so sharply in 2002?;
- What is the difference between capitalism and socialism? And between socialism and communism? Why did communism collapse in Eastern Europe towards the end of the 1980s?;
- Why are certain provinces in South Africa so much richer than others? Why are some South Africans richer than others?

### **An Inter-disciplinary Approach to History in General**

Concepts such as “political economy, economical history and company history“ give a clear indication of the interrelatedness of economics and history. Since the 1840s – the 1880s however, the economic interpretation of history is invariably associated with the name of Karl Marx. Marx held that the manner of production in economic life was

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<sup>11</sup> Mohr et. al., 2004:6

much the most important factor in determining every aspect of human existence. At any stage in history those who controlled the means of production were thereby in a position to dominate society as a whole. History was chiefly the effort of the masses to make a living. (Norling, 107)

According to Marwick<sup>12</sup> the relationships between history and economics take two rather different forms. First of all, there is the question of the borrowings which the general historian from time to time and the economic historian (of the traditional type) all the time will have to make from the economic sciences. The other form of involvement is that relating to “quantative history” and “econometric history “. In certain types of historical debate the mathematical formulations of the pure economist are indispensable.

French historians of the Annales school (1929) have had a great and stimulating effect on the study of history in the twentieth century. The three key figures in the founding and development of the Annales school – Marc Boch, Lucien Febre and Fernand Braudel – were in favour of an inter-disciplinary approach to history. Their work had a stimulating effect on historical studies everywhere. In his *La societe feodale* (Feudal Society) of 1939 – 1940 he employed the technique of comparative history to find similarities and contrasts between areas with regard to institutions, techniques and economic and social developments.<sup>13</sup>

Since 1994 the content of history teaching has changed dramatically to include more African as well as a different perspective on South African history than in the past. In the study of African history there has recently developed a greater interest in economic history, the study of social institutions, and cultural phenomena rather than in political history only. This has brought about a closer relationship between history and such disciplines as economics, sociology and anthropology.<sup>14</sup>

## **The Value of an Integrated Approach**

When attempting to evaluate an integrated approach between History and Economics, the advantages of history is a valid point of departure.

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12 Marwick, 1993:172.

13 Fick, 1996:88.

14 Fick, 1996:90.

One of the most important advantages of a study of history is that it develops critical skills. It obliges one to ask questions about the past and to think creatively in trying to answer these questions. The skills of interpretation, deduction, evaluation and synthesis, to name just a few, are essential for scholars of history. Everyone needs to know how to acquire information, how to assess material honestly, to distinguish between the important and the secondary and how to process and present conclusions in a readable form. The person who studies history is likely to be informed and responsible with a sound ability to judge people and events in a balanced way. Because History is the only social science studied at school, it introduces pupils to important aspects of sociology, psychology, politics and economics.<sup>15</sup> All of the above mentioned are important virtues in the studying of economics. The survival of a nation depends on the degree to which the youth is able to solve problems effectively and, to evaluate the solutions critically.<sup>16</sup>

One problem that many educationists still have with the teaching of some of the Learning Areas (or subjects within the Learning Areas) is that it is still offered in a fragmented way or in the form of loose standing modules.<sup>17</sup> An interdisciplinary approach, whether within the Learning Area or across Learning Areas, could offer the solution to this problem.

For teachers an effectively applied approach to integration lies on the phase - as well as the grade levels of planning. Perhaps that is exactly one of the reasons why it is not widely practiced; namely that it is a “new” approach and time consuming to set aside time to plan across Learning Areas. It is also possible that many teachers still regard their own subject or Learning Area as autonomous and even superior to other subjects or Learning Areas. To follow an integrated approach within Learning Areas could also be time consuming, especially if the teacher does not possess over the skills and/or background knowledge on how to do research. In many instances the necessary resources are not easily available. The reason could also be that many teachers, having been faced with many changes in the education system over the last 10 years, are battling to cope with these changes. It could also be, and hopefully it is not true, that many teachers are just too lazy to move out of their

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15 Schutte, 2001:38.

16 Van Wyk in Carl, 1988:255.

17 De Wit, 2003:3.

“comfort zone” and in spite of changes still try to teach within the new system as close as possible to their old ways of doing.

A definite outcome for both teachers and learners of an integrated approach is that it could equip them to become better citizens. Kapp and Carl<sup>18</sup> formulates one of the “objectives” of history teaching as “preparation for responsible citizenship (patriotism, sense of duty, responsibility, appreciation and respect, loyalty, love and transparency).” A more holistic approach will enhance this preparation for responsible citizenship which is in line with the Education Policy Act of 1996.

The policy contemplated...shall be directed toward... enabling the education system to contribute to the full personal development of each student, and the moral, social, cultural, political and the economic development of the nation at large, including the advancement of democracy, human rights and the peaceful resolution of disputes.<sup>19</sup>

A question asked by Higgs,<sup>20</sup> namely what form education should take in the establishment of a critical civil society, is not only in line with the above mentioned but is also applicable to Learning Area integration as argued in this paper.

## **Empirical Research**

From the literature research it became clear that an interdisciplinary approach is widely accepted, used and promoted by historians. It is also clear that an integrated approach between Learning Areas is endorsed by the National Department of Education. In an attempt to determine the view of the youth who are, or will become, the products of this integrated approach, a small scale research study was done at the North-West University (Vaal Triangle Campus). The respondents were a group of 45 final year students with Economics as a major course for the B Com degree. The whole class consists of students from the former Vista University. A number of 13 students from this group indicated that they intend to do a post graduate certificate in Education once they have graduated. No sample selection was necessary as the whole class was targeted. Only five questions were asked. The questions, together

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18 In Carl, 1988:200.

19 Unterhalter, 2000:71.

20 Higgs, 1998:173.

with the results obtained, are as follows:

*Question 1*

Did you have Economics/ Business Economics at school?

Yes	No
33	12

*Question 2*

If you answered “yes” to question 1, indicate up to which grade/standard did you do the subject.

Twenty five of the respondents had one of the subjects up to grade 12 level.

*Question 3*

Up to which grade/standard did you do History at school?

Only three of the respondents did History up to grade 12 whereas the majority dropped the subject at the end of grade 9.

*Question 4*

Would you say it is important to have a good background knowledge of history in order to understand the economy better?

Definitely “yes”	Sometimes “yes”	Only in a few instances	Not at all
26	8	6	5

*Question 5*

Would you say it is important to have a good background knowledge of Economics in order to understand History better?

Definitely “yes”	Sometimes “yes”	Only in a few instances	Not at all
21	13	6	5

From the information gathered in this small scale study it is clear that the majority of the respondents agree that they could benefit from an

integrated or multi disciplinary approach.

### **Limitations of the Study**

Although the aim of this research has been addressed, the need for more in-depth research has been realised. The following aspects should be researched in order to obtain information across a wider range of people involved in education.

- Research among educators to determine to what extent they do apply integration between Learning Areas in general (across and in an interdisciplinary way) and between the two Learning Areas under discussion, namely, Economic and Business Studies and Social Sciences specifically.
- Research among learners who have been taught according to the outcomes-based approach in order to determine to what extent they have experienced Learning Area integration.
- A study of available teaching support material to determine to what extent integration is applied within the available material.

### **Conclusion**

In view of the fact that the majority of learners terminate their study of history at the end of the general education and training phase, (Grade 9), active steps should be taken to prevent it facing extinction in public schools. History is a multi-skilled discipline: The preface to any argument for giving history an important position in the curriculum of the 21<sup>st</sup> century must be an examination of the way in which history has developed into a multi-skilled discipline which has immense relevance to the general and vocational development of learners<sup>21</sup>.

In order to meet with the Critical Outcomes as formulated by the National Department of Education and which are in line with the Constitution and in the process creating citizenship among the leaders of tomorrow, a more integrated approach is regarded as a given, not as an incidental option.

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21 Schoeman, 2003:219.

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