

The representation of women in a sample of post-1994 South African school History textbooks

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History curriculum revisions post 1994 were followed by a range of new History textbooks intended to meet the needs of teachers seeking to implement the revised curriculum. I sought to establish whether or not a sample of these textbooks had built upon the gender equality initiatives introduced after 1994. A qualitative intrinsic case study was conducted to determine the extent of the representation of women in three South African school History textbooks. The results demonstrated that, despite the introduction of gender equality initiatives, in the sample selected the role of men in history continued to receive emphasis. In South African history men have indeed been more prominent than women, and have been viewed as the decision-makers, yet there is room in standard South African History textbooks for the inclusion of the ordinary daily events in which women participated or through which they exercised an influence on decision-making by men. Shepherd's media literacy curriculum model, incorporating the Department of Education's approaches to critical media education, is proposed as a tool to empower in-service History teachers to teach learners to deconstruct patriarchal or hegemonic power relations in school History textbooks.

Keywords: gender; History; media literacy; media literacy curriculum mode, textbooks; women

Introduction, problem statement and purpose of the study

History curriculum revisions in South Africa post 1994 were soon followed by a range of new Further Education and Training (FET) History textbooks; published by commercial educational publishers, these were intended to meet the needs of hard-pressed teachers seeking to implement the revised History curriculum (Bam & Visser, 2002:45; 158; Chisholm, 2003:2; Fardon, 2007:8). In examining the representation of women in a sample of post-1994 South African school History textbooks, I seek to establish whether these textbooks did build on the gender equality initiatives introduced after 1994. In doing so, I seek to ascertain whether the rewriting of the meaning of the feminine in historical discourse in post-1994 History teaching and learning is necessary in the light of the fact that the women featured in the pre-1994 school History textbooks were mainly exceptional women, the heroines and notables, situated within a male-dominated context.

One of the requirements of History textbook content is that it must shed new light on history. Women did not play a significant role in all key historical events, but where they did contribute, their influence on the bigger historical picture deserves to be reflected. The problem reported on here arose from the inadequate representation of women in South African school History textbooks, and the study therefore sought to investigate the extent of gender

equality in a sample of school History textbooks, and the role of teachers and teacher educators as agents of change in the gender-in-education initiatives in South African classrooms post 1994. The opinions of teachers in township, rural and previously advantaged schools were sought, especially with reference to the role of teachers as agents of change in gender-in-education initiatives.

Fardon (2007:9) observes that despite making some recent superficial cosmetic changes in content, publishers of South African History textbooks continue overall to stress the part men have played in history and pay little more than lip service to the contributions of women; she therefore argues that there is a gap between democratic curriculum imperatives and praxis within schools (Fardon, 2007:10). Bam and Visser (2002:45-46) and Fardon (2007:10) warn that if no more than minor content changes are made in textbooks from one edition to the next, it will follow that when a History programme is textbook-driven the same attitudes regarding gender roles in history will be reinforced year after year. This is not something that each generation of History teachers consciously takes up; rather it is unconsciously passed on through the profession (Fardon, 2007:10). The Department of Education (2002b:vi), Bam and Visser (2002:48), and Bourdillon (1994:68) argue that to continue perpetuating gender stereotypes in this way is effectively to undermine the sense of worth of women within the classroom, school and broader society.

Unterhalter and Aikman (2003:2) emphasise the centrality of teachers and teacher educators to any curriculum transformation. During school visits in 2006 and 2007, however, it became apparent that, in most of the schools visited for the purposes of the present study, teachers who were using textbooks did not perceive any shortcomings with regard to gender representation in them; that they had never received any training in the analysis of textbooks for gender equality (some had been teaching for over 20 years); that they were not consulted in the selection of school textbooks; and that it was not always easy for them to supply appropriate material independently because sources dealing with women's activities and experiences are not readily available. Fardon (2007:264-312) cautions that without significant teacher empowerment, gender-fair History teaching will remain an illusion for a long time, and the curriculum revisions of the past decade will be mainly symbolic.

Against the backdrop of the preceding discussion, the following research questions were formulated:

- How do post-1994 school History textbooks build on the gender equality initiatives introduced since 1994?
- How can in-service History teachers be empowered to teach learners to deconstruct patriarchal or hegemonic power relations embedded in historical narratives, images and activities contained in school textbooks?

On the basis of these research questions, a study was conducted to provide History teachers and teacher educators with an outline of scholars' views of gender challenges and school History textbooks; to report on the outcomes of

a survey of the extent of the representation of women in a sample of post-1994 South African school History textbooks; and to make recommendations for the empowerment of in-service History teachers to teach learners to deconstruct patriarchal or hegemonic power relations in school textbooks using Shepherd's media literacy curriculum model (Shepherd 1992:35-38). This model incorporates the Department of Education's prescribed "layers of meaning" teaching approach (Department of Education, 2002a:22-24). Owing to the crucial role of the constitutive nature of discourse within language in the gender debate, the concepts of feminist post-structuralism, critical media education, and gender are clarified below.

Feminist post-structuralism, critical media education, and gender

Fardon (2007:1-2) notes that feminist post-structuralism is based on the argument that arbitrary gender constructs originate within discourse and offer limited subject identities to individuals. In terms of post-structuralism, theories have been constructed in relation to the arbitrary positioning of subjects within patriarchal or hegemonic discourse. According to Fardon (2007:2), Masterman (1992:51) and Weedon (1997:34), patriarchal discourse relates to the relationship of language to society, identity positioning and power relations. Hegemonic discourse, a form of patriarchal meaning-making using language as a vehicle, refers to how dominant definitions come to constitute, by consent, the lived reality of subordinate classes. Feminist post-structuralism argues the need for theory which explains how identities are constructed within societal discourses, and develops the idea of a feminist agency which resists hegemonic discursive positioning (Davidoff, McClelland & Varikas, 2000:87; Weedon, 1997:3). Branston and Stafford (2001:27) and Fardon (2007:6-7) indicate that feminist post-structuralism requires, among other things, subversion of patriarchal language structures such as binary oppositions (male/female) in realist or hegemonic discourse; therefore, the post-structuralist emphasis on agency and context offers possibilities for an agenda of change. Weedon (1997:40) argues as follows in this regard:

Feminist Post-Structuralism, then, is a mode of knowledge production which uses Post-Structuralist theories of language, subjectivity, social processes and institutions to understand existing power relations and to identify areas and strategies for change.

Hegemonic discourses permeate education and other texts, and in this context the usefulness of the critical possibilities offered by critical media education is acknowledged (Deacon & Parker, 1995:111). In this regard, Collins (1991:57) proposes that critical media education can help challenge the school's closed knowledge system as it connects with readings outside the classroom. All media forms use a variety of devices related to narrative and discursive strategies to manipulate subjectivity socially, economically, politically and culturally (Alvarado, Gutch & Wollen, 1992:258; Branston & Stafford, 2001:23). The six key aspects of critical media education, namely, agencies, categories, languages, technologies, audiences, and representations,

aim to demystify and tackle dominant ideology inscribed in discourses of media texts (Bazalgette, 1992:209-214). The insights which emerge from these aspects can be profitably applied in the analysis of educational texts (Fardon, 2007:7).

Todd and Fisher (s.a.:1-6) explain the concept of gender as a principle which organises the everyday experiences of people. Their argument is based on the view that gender is acquired through the medium of language in relation to interaction, and they suggest that binary language, for example “man or woman”, in which the male or masculine is privileged, creates fictitious oppositions that require deconstructing. For Eckert and McConnell-Ginet (2003:13-14), the concept of gender is based on arbitrary sex-class assignments relating to rights and obligations, freedoms and constraints, possibilities and limitations, power and powerlessness. They argue that the gender order is supported and maintained by societal structures of convention, ideology, emotion and desire, and that gender does not flow naturally from the human body. These authors suggest that children get gender from everywhere; that the connection between this concept and stereotypical behaviours appears seamless because of dichotomous language at the centre of the social order; that the dominant ideology insists that male and female are different and that these differences are unchanging and essential; and that gender representations are omnipresent within media in society and underpinned by powerful discursive oppositions (Eckert & McConnell-Ginet, 2003:33-36).

Research methodology

Literature review

In 1996 the Council of Europe (1996:1) conducted a survey that involved the examination of 900 textbooks in use in Europe, and concluded that gender partiality and bias were generally unconscious. The Council recommended that teachers and textbook writers correct these by considering the use of language and vocabulary, and a review of teaching methods. An earlier report by Osler (1994:221-222) on a History textbook study in Britain revealed, among other things, that the most balanced textbook contained twice as many images of men as of women. Contemporary reconstructions were heavily biased, yet Osler independently found material relating to interesting aspects of women’s lives during the periods being considered. She therefore suggests that textbook illustrators and publishers receive guidance in terms of gender representation, that separating and isolating tendencies hinder learner appreciation of the experiences of women and men within the same context, and that initiatives toward gender-fair resource material is an urgent responsibility (Osler, 1994:223-224). Delaney (2008:54) suggests that if, after careful consideration, an editor finds it desirable to use selections that contain sexist attitudes, History teachers should discuss these attitudes in accompanying descriptive material or discussion questions. If this is not done, the text will give the reader the impression that sexism is socially acceptable, rather than a form of prejudice or a lack of sensitivity.

Turnbull, Pollock and Bruley (1983:155-158) state that non-sexist History teaching cannot be developed unless learners are given access to information about the role of women. They outline six approaches for putting women back into the History curriculum: the remedial approach, the great women approach, the oppression approach, the women in ... (art, science, politics, etc.) approach, the social history approach, and the political movements approach. Each has advantages and disadvantages, but provides a useful framework according to which teachers can measure their own awareness and responses to the challenge of gender-fair History teaching. However, the History Curriculum Working Group (1991:18) warns with regard to the "separating and isolating" approach that whatever weight is given to gender, it should be treated broadly, as one of the many ways in which societies define and divide people. It is helpful to consider the implications of historical events for both men and women and to avoid paying lip service to the history of women.

Marshall (1997:21), writing about History textbooks in France, notes that despite government legislation, sexism remains evident in much of the material. She suggests three categories to assess the extent of sexism in History textbooks, namely, "the good" (textbooks in this category treat women and men equally), "the dangerous" (in textbooks in this category, women are degraded), and "the old-fashioned" (textbooks that stereotype the sexes according to patriarchal ideology). Marshall views publisher competition and school budgets as constraints on transformation in this regard, and recommends that woman educators be trained to put an end to sexual inequity in education.

Baldwin and Baldwin (1992:110) examined the role of textbooks in fostering gender-biased portrayals of women in Canadian History classrooms and reported that written texts are potent transmitters of sexual and other stereotypes, and that learners mime stereotypical behaviour in media products. These authors argue that since textbooks are often the only books referred to in classroom teaching, and may be regarded as "truth" by some, they do wield considerable influence. They suggest that young learners will read such gender-biased material in the preferred manner intended, and recommend teacher education with regard to appropriate resource selection on the basis of gender fairness, among other factors. They note that what is at stake is the development of learner skills which counteract bias (Baldwin & Baldwin, 1992:110-114).

Fardon (2007:v-vi) analysed nine textual samples taken from South African school History textbooks. She found that all of the samples were of the conforming type, and recommended feminist post-structuralist strategies to promote gender-fair History teaching and learning in South African public schools. The gender equality imperative as set out in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa and the national curriculum policy focuses on multi-perspectives and open interpretation which can open up space for female voices of the past and present, and the reconstruction of realist historical narratives.

With the information from a review of the literature as theoretical framework, an empirical study to evaluate the extent of the representation of women in a sample of South African school History textbooks was planned.

Empirical study

Sampling

A qualitative intrinsic case study was conducted to determine the extent of the representation of women in a sample of South African school History textbooks published post 1994. The non-probability purposive sampling technique was used to identify the sample. A focus group interview session was held to identify the textbook and chapter sample from the working population. The session was scheduled for the first 45 minutes of the annual day seminar for the Subject Didactics History students enrolled for the BEd (Senior Phase and FET) and PGCE (Senior Phase and FET) programmes. The group comprised seven multi-ethnic students from four geographical areas: Gauteng, Northern Cape, Mpumalanga, and KwaZulu-Natal. Four male students and three female students participated. According to De Vos, Strydom, Fouché and Delpont (2005:305), “focus groups usually include six to ten participants. Groups this size allow everyone to participate, while still eliciting a range of responses”. None of the participants had obtained a professional qualification, but all had passed History III as a major for the bachelor’s degree. One was a full-time student and the rest in-service, non-qualified, History teachers. Their teaching experience varied from two months to fifteen years. The schools at which the participants taught ranged from township and rural to previously advantaged schools.

The following open-ended questions were discussed during the interview session:

- To which grades at your school are you teaching History?
- What are the titles of the History textbooks that you use in your school?
- Why did your school opt for these textbooks?
- In your opinion and that of your colleagues, what is/are the “most popular” History topic(s) in the textbooks?

As an orientation to the proceedings, the purpose of the interview session was explained, and the participants were encouraged to share information about their schools with the group. The participants were informed that they should not feel under any obligation to participate, and that they could withdraw from the interview session at any time. Their anonymity and confidentiality were also assured. Each of the interview questions was elaborated on. The participants were also given the opportunity to ask for further explanation. It was explained that there were no right or wrong answers, and that all contributions were valued. Finally, appreciation for the student teachers’ participation was expressed. Detailed notes were taken of the discussion that ensued.

Document study

An examination of the interview notes revealed that all the student teachers

were responsible for teaching History to Grade 10s. Three textbooks and knowledge focus areas were used in most of the participants' schools: the first was by J Bottaro, P Visser and N Worden, entitled *In search of History. Grade 10. Learner's book*, and published in 2005 in Cape Town by Oxford University Press. Chapter 4: The quest for liberty was the most popular knowledge focus area. The second textbook was by EA Horner, L Hattingh, D van Schalkwyk and B Sello, entitled *Viva History. Learner's book. Grade 10*, and published in 2005 in Florida by Vivlia. Chapter 4: The quest for liberty was the most popular knowledge focus area. The third textbook was by E Brink, K Gibbs, M Thotse and J Verner, entitled *History for all. Grade 10. Learner's book*, and published in 2005 in Northlands by Macmillan. Chapter 5: The quest for freedom was the most popular knowledge focus area. The student teachers' responses to the question why their respective schools opted for using these particular textbooks included: "*I am not sure ... the headmaster decided*"; "*the subject advisor got money at the district office and bought it for us*"; and "*our subject head got the title and ... some free books at a conference in Johannesburg*". Reasons for the participants' choice of the particular knowledge focus area(s) included: "*freedom means everything ... to be free ... to think for yourself ... to have rights ... such as to elect the government, enjoy human rights ... to be different ...*" and "*the pupils and I like the French Revolution, the struggle for bread ... and equality ... it being relevant to South Africa*".

Information obtained from Osler's *Still hidden from history?* research project (1994:225-226) and the Department of Education's *Draft: methodology booklet for GET educators "Doing History with GET"* (2002a:2) was used to identify and count the instances of gender representation in the chapters in the three textbooks cited, and a summary relating to the images (both historical and contemporary source material), texts and activities with relating page referencing was made. The data were filed under the following categories: the images: those showing both males and females, those showing only males or females, and those showing no people or in which it was difficult to determine whether the people represented were males or females; and the texts: references to females and references to males, and references to occupations and activities associated with females and those associated with males. The categories used to count and file the gender representation in the images were also used to count and file the gender representation in the activities. Categories pertaining to the gender of the authors and sections devoted to women were also included.

Results

The data count, which broadly reflects the gender representation in the sample, is offered in the following tables, and should be viewed within the framework of Stitt and Erikson's six forms of bias considered problematic within the context of History textbooks, namely, isolation (Table 1), stereotyping (Table 2) and selectivity and imbalance (Table 3) (Stitt & Erikson, 1988:101-110).

Table 1 summarises the data count relating to gender representation in the three Grade 10 school History textbooks surveyed with regard to images, sections on women and authorship.

In the textbook entitled *In search of History*, published by Oxford in 2005, Chapter 4: The quest for liberty was surveyed. The chapter contained a total of 40 images which were sub-divided into two main categories, namely, historical source material and contemporary source material. In the historical source material category, the data count revealed that 6 images showed both males and females, 12 images showed males only, 9 images showed females only, and 3 images showed no persons or it was difficult to determine whether the persons represented were male or female. In the contemporary source material category, the data count revealed that 1 image showed both males and females, 5 images showed males only, 3 images showed females only, and 1 image showed no persons or it was difficult to determine whether the persons represented were male or female. The textbook was written by one male author and two female authors. A section on women was included.

In the textbook entitled *Viva History*, published by Vivlia in 2005, Chapter 4: The quest for liberty was surveyed. The chapter contained a total of 25 images which were sub-divided into two main categories, namely, historical source material and contemporary source material. In the historical source material category, the data count revealed that 2 images showed both males and females, 12 images showed males only and 6 images showed females only. There were no images that showed no persons or in which it was difficult to determine whether the persons represented were male or female. In the contemporary source material category, the data count revealed that 1 image showed both males and females, 3 images showed males only, no images showed females only, and 1 image showed no persons or it was difficult to determine whether the persons represented were male or female. The gender of the four authors of the textbook was not indicated. A section on women was included.

In the textbook entitled *History for all*, published by Macmillan in 2005, Chapter 4: The quest for freedom was surveyed. The chapter contained a total of 11 images which were sub-divided into two main categories, namely, historical source material and contemporary source material. In the historical source material category, the data count revealed that 1 image showed both males and females and 6 images showed males only. There were no images that showed females only and no images that showed no persons or from which it was difficult to determine whether the persons represented were male or female. In the contemporary source material category, the data count revealed that no images showed both males and females and 4 images showed males only. There were no images that showed females only and no images that showed no persons or from which it was difficult to determine whether the persons represented were male or female. The textbook was written by two male authors and two female authors. A section on women was not included.

Table 2 Data count relating to gender representation in three selected Grade 10 school History textbooks: text

Textbook	No. for identification	Gender representation	Total No. of incidences
<i>In search of History</i>	1	Incidence of females (F)	F = 3
	1	Incidence of males (M)	M = 22
	2	Incidence of occupations and activities associated with females (F)	F = 1 (D ¹ 1+C ² 0)
	2	Incidence of occupations and activities associated with males (M)	M = 24 (D21+C3)
<i>Viva History</i>	1	Incidence of females (F)	F = 3
	1	Incidence of males (M)	M = 11
	2	Incidence of occupations and activities associated with females (F)	F = 5 (D3+C2)
	2	Incidence of occupations and activities associated with males (M)	M = 15 (D10+C5)
<i>History for all</i>	1	Incidence of females (F)	F = 3
	1	Incidence of males (M)	M = 23
	2	Incidence of occupations and activities associated with females (F)	F = 7 (D4+C3)
	2	Incidence of occupations and activities associated with males (M)	M = 31 (D15+C16)

Table 2 summarises the data count relating to the gender representation in the text of the three Grade 10 school History textbooks surveyed. In the textbook entitled *In search of History*, a denotative (D) analysis of the text of Chapter 4: The quest for liberty revealed that the incidence of female subjects was 3 and that of male subjects was 22 (Total = (F₁)3 (M₁)22). With regard to the incidence of occupations and activities associated with females and males, a denotative (D) analysis of the text of Chapter 4 revealed that the incidence of occupations and activities associated with females was 1 and with males was 21 (Total = (F₂)1 (M₂)21). A connotative (C) analysis of the text of Chapter 4 revealed that the incidence of occupations and activities associated with females was 0 and with males was 3 (Total = (F₂)0 (M₂)3). The total of the data count of gender representation with regard to the incidence of occupations and activities associated with females and males was: (Total = (F₂)1 (M₂) 24).

In the textbook entitled *Viva History*, a denotative (D) analysis of the text of Chapter 4: The quest for liberty revealed that the incidence of female sub-

jects was 3 and that of male subjects was 11 (Total = (F₁)3 (M₁)11). With regard to the incidence of occupations and activities associated with females and males, a denotative analysis of the text of Chapter 4 revealed that the incidence of occupations and activities associated with females was 3 and with males was 10 (Total = (F₂)3 (M₂)10). A connotative analysis of the text of Chapter 4 revealed that the incidence of occupations and activities associated with females was 2 and with males was 5 (Total = (F₂)2 (M₂)5). The total of the data count of gender representation with regard to the incidence of occupations and activities associated with females and males was: (Total = (F₂)5 (M₂)15).

In the textbook entitled *History for all*, a denotative (D) analysis of the text of Chapter 5: The quest for freedom revealed that the incidence of female subjects was 3 and that of male subjects was 23 (Total = (F₁)3 (M₁)23). With regard to the incidence of occupations and activities associated with females and with males, a denotative (D) analysis of the text of Chapter 5 revealed that the incidence of occupations and activities associated with females was 4 and males was 15 (Total = (F₂)4 (M₂)15). A connotative (C) analysis of the text of Chapter 5 revealed that the incidence of occupations and activities associated with females was 3 and with males was 16 (Total = (F₂)3 (M₂)16). The total of the data count of gender representation with regard to the incidence of occupations and activities associated with females and males was: (Total = (F₂)7 (M₂)31).

Table 3 Data count relating to gender representation in three selected Grade 10 school History textbooks: activities

Textbook	Both M and F	M	F	Neither M nor F	Total No. of activities
<i>In search of History</i>	1	56	8	9	74
<i>Viva History</i>	2	12	6	1	21
<i>History for all</i>	0	2	0	11	13

Table 3 summarises the data count relating to the gender representation in the activities of the three Grade 10 school History textbooks surveyed. The survey of Chapter 4: The quest for liberty in the textbook *In search of History* revealed that the chapter contained a total of 74 activities. The data count revealed that 1 activity included both males and females, 56 activities included males only, 8 activities included females only and 9 activities included no persons (neither males nor females). A survey of Chapter 4: The quest for liberty in the textbook *Viva History* revealed that the chapter contained a total of 21 activities. The data count revealed that 2 activities included both males and females, 12 activities included males only, 6 activities included females only and 1 activity included no persons (neither males nor females). The

survey of Chapter 5: The quest for freedom in the textbook *History for all* revealed that the chapter contained a total of 13 activities. The data count revealed that no activities included both males and females, 2 activities included males only, no activities included females only and 11 activities included no persons (neither males nor females).

Discussion

In the chapters surveyed, the number of images of men exceeded those of women, although there was variation among the textbooks. The most gender-fair chapter was from *In search of History* (Oxford), which nevertheless featured five more images of men than of women. The second most gender-fair chapter was from *Viva History* (Vivlia), which featured almost twice as many images of men as of women. The least equitable chapter was from *History for all* (Macmillan), which featured ten images of men and none of women. Gender imbalance was also observable in the number of images showing both males and females — the proportion for the three textbooks was 7:3:1. In terms of Marshall's categories (1997:21) for assessing the extent of sexism in the History textbooks surveyed, the textbooks fall within "the old-fashioned" category, because the sexes in the textbooks were stereotyped according to patriarchal ideology. Males were portrayed as active, assertive and curious, whereas females were portrayed as dependable, conforming and obedient.

One could accept the argument put forward by Osler (1994:221-222) that publishers and authors may have greater control over the images in contemporary source material than in historical source material, since these can be specifically commissioned, permitting publishers and authors to express their own values. Consequently, one may expect the gender representation to be more equitable in these images. In fact the reverse proves to be the case. The ratio of men to women was more balanced in the historical source material (12:9 in *In search of History*, 12:6 in *Viva History*, 6:0 in *History for all*) than in the contemporary source material (5:3 in *In search of History*, 3:0 in *Viva History*, 4:0 in *History for all*). In the chapters from *Viva History* and *History for all* the contemporary source material contained no images of women, whilst in *In search of History* the ratio of images of males to females in the contemporary source material was 5:3. A close analysis of the images in the chapters surveyed revealed that the conception of women as domestically oriented continued to predominate. One of the textbooks, *In search of History*, was more successful in representing women's wider experiences during the periods covered.

Closer scrutiny of the text of the three chapters revealed a style reflective of a male perspective, in which male subjects and occupations and activities associated with males predominated. The representation of male and female subjects is reflected in the following ratios: 22:3 in *In search of History*, 11:3 in *Viva History*, and 23:3 in *History for all*. The incidence of occupations and activities associated with males and females is reflected in the following ratios: 24:1 in *In search of History*, 15:5 in *Viva History*, and 31:7 in *History for all*.

With regard to the activities included in the three chapters surveyed, the ratio of men to women was 56:8 in *In search of History*, 12:6 in *Viva History* and 2:0 in *History for all*. However, the activities in *In search of History* and *Viva History* encouraged the learners to investigate and consider the contributions, occupations and activities of women in the context of the historical events covered; and the sections on women learners are presented with a range of sources about women's lives, written from a range of perspectives, including those of women. Learners are thus invited to reflect on the gender balance of the activities. Activities of this nature enable learners to identify gaps and omissions in the textbooks as they relate to women.

The gender of the authors of two of the three textbooks surveyed, namely, *In search of History* and *Viva History*, is indicated: four female authors contributed to the writing of these two textbooks, whereas the gender of the authors of *History for all* is not indicated.

Osler (1994:230) is of the opinion that it is difficult to establish more gender-balanced History teaching while women remain unrepresented on the covers of school History textbooks. *In search of History* and *Viva History* have allocated sections to women, and, consequently, have improved the proportion of images, texts and activities devoted to women. However, this information is not included on the contents page. Although including a section on women is a small step towards achieving more gender-fair History teaching, the History Curriculum Working Group (1991:18-19) argues that if women's experiences are isolated in this way, there is a continued danger of presenting an unfair gender view of the past, since women are portrayed within the context of a dominant perspective that acknowledges them merely as a subordinate group, and that denies gender as a dynamic of history.

Conclusion and recommendations

The History textbooks surveyed have avoided some of the worst excesses of gender inequality which were a feature of many pre-1994 textbooks, but despite these changes, publishers and authors continued overall to emphasise the part men have played in history. The textbooks *Viva History* and *History for all* offer opportunities for History teaching from the conforming and reforming orientations, and *In search of History* from the affirming orientation. However, there is still a long way to go towards achieving a more gender-fair historical record and moving closer to a real understanding of the lives of women in the main course of history. The above need to be further developed as publishers and authors revise the textbooks. Ideally, any new textbooks should support and encourage History teaching that examines gender issues from the challenging orientation (Tunica, 1992:34-37).

Simply to legislate that women in history is an important component of school History will not change classroom practice. History teachers need support with regard to how, using the recently published school History textbooks, they can ensure that women's experiences, so long neglected in the historical record, can be incorporated effectively into their classroom teaching.

To this end, Shepherd's media literacy curriculum model (1992:35-38) is proposed. This model incorporates the basic areas that the Department of Education (2002a:22-24) advises teachers to consider when teaching "layers of meaning" within written and visual resources in the senior phase and FET classroom.

Shepherd's media literacy curriculum model rests on the notion that all discourse is a construct of the creator's view of reality. An understanding of this notion is the starting point for a critical evaluation of textbooks. Shepherd's model comprises three broad areas (text, audience, and production) within which History teachers can raise questions that will help learners to deconstruct History textbooks (Shepherd, 1992:36-37).

With regard to the text, Shepherd recommends that History teachers discuss with learners what type a particular text is and how it differs from other types of text, identify its denotative meaning and discuss features such as narrative structure, how meanings are communicated, values implicit in the text and connections with other texts.

With regard to audience, Shepherd argues that learners who receive a History textbook constitute members of an audience. It is important for learners to be able to identify the audience of a textbook, because textbooks are frequently designed to produce audiences, which are then sold to advertisers. Modern communication theory teaches that audiences "negotiate" meaning. Each individual learner, as a reader of a History textbook, will draw from its range of possible meanings a particular reading that reflects that learner's gender, race, cultural background, reading skill, age, and so on. Thus the "meaning" of images, texts and activities in textbooks is not something determined by History teachers or even authors, but is instead the outcome of a dynamic and changeable relationship between the learner and the textbook. The role of the History teacher should be to assist learners in developing skills which will allow them to negotiate active readings — readings that recognise the range of possible meanings in the History textbook and the values and biases implicit in those meanings, which involve conscious choices rather than the unconscious acceptance of "preferred" readings. Learners who are able to choose meaning are empowered.

Shepherd defines production as everything that goes into the making of a History textbook: the technology, the ownership and economics, the institutions involved, the legal issues, the use of common codes and practices, and the roles in the production process. It is important that the History teacher maintains a focus on the relationship between the various aspects of production and the text and audience, and discusses with learners the relationship between story content and commercial priorities, how values are related to ownership and control, how technology determines what the learners will see, and how the cost of technology determines who can publish textbooks (Shepherd, 1992:37).

Shepherd (1992:38) is of the opinion that teachers need help getting started, and suggests that a group of History teachers from various schools, selected by their principals, receive media literacy training and develop an

appropriate teaching-learning methodology. These History teachers should receive in-service training, with training sessions facilitated by a teacher educator who has specialised in media literacy and a number of other teacher educators. The training should involve the basic theoretical concepts of the media literacy curriculum model and discussion and modelling of the teaching/learning methodology. Teachers should receive peer support, which would allow them to share the successful approaches they have tried, as well as in-class support by a support team comprising the teacher educator of media literacy teamed with the support teacher educators.

In this article it has been demonstrated that it is difficult to apply blanket prescriptions or remedies to issues of gender inequality in History teaching, and recommendations for the empowerment of in-service History teachers to deconstruct patriarchal or hegemonic power relations in the post-1994 South African school History textbooks have been offered. It is hoped that the results of this study may encourage teacher educators and teachers to identify opportunities for “layers of meaning” teaching using post-1994 textbooks and to design appropriate leaning and teaching support materials to this end.

Notes

1. The letter D represents denotative meaning.
2. The letter C represents connotative meaning.

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