


## ARTICLE


# Land dispossession and reform: An optic into South African Grade 12 Geography textbooks

Zoleka Mkhabela<sup>1\*</sup> and Sadhana Manik<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Department of Social Science Education, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

<sup>2</sup>Department of Geography, University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

\*Corresponding author: Mkhabelaz@ukzn.ac.za  <https://orcid.org/0000-0003-1352-6629>

Sadhana Manik  <https://orcid.org/0000-0001-7687-0844>

**How to cite this article:** Mkhabela, Z. & Manik, S. (2024). Land dispossession and reform: An optic into South African Grade 12 Geography textbooks, *Journal of Geography Education in Africa*, 7, 62 – 77 <https://doi.org/10.46622/jogea.v7i1.5267>

**Article history:** Received 20 June 2024 | Accepted 19 August 2024 | Published 29 August 2024

## ABSTRACT

*Land dispossession and reform are volatile issues in contemporary South Africa. With the transition to democracy in 1994, the post-apartheid government considered the implementation of land reform as a vehicle to redress injustices and inequalities in South Africa. This article focuses on how two discourses (social and political) on land dispossession and land reform are framed in selected Grade 12 school Geography textbooks in South Africa, and their implications. Locating the research study within a paradigm of interpretivism and approaching the research from a qualitative perspective, this case study engaged in document analysis, specific to the section on land reform in five purposively-selected textbooks. The study leans on framing theory in addition to social constructivism to highlight the role of textbook authors in presenting the social reality around land dispossession and land reform. The social and political discourses were explored through content analysis. The findings of this study establish that the social and political discourses that emerge are not mutually exclusive categories but rather are tied to a specific neoliberal ideology. The findings also reveal land reform content knowledge gaps and an unease by textbook authors in presenting racialized content in the section on land reform. The study concludes that redressing past land injustices in South Africa is entangled by several complexities. As a recommendation, the description of land dispossession and reform in the Geography textbooks can potentially be explained through multiple perspectives rather just than a singular perspective framed to gloss over*



*the construct of South African racial categorisation and its connection to land reform and socio-economic development.*

**Keywords:** Land reform, Land redistribution, Historical injustice, Geography curriculum, Geography textbooks

## INTRODUCTION

The issue of land dispossession and reform occupies a deeply rooted place in the historical and geographic narrative of South Africa. Rooted in a history of colonialism and apartheid, land dispossession has resulted in stark disparities in land ownership and access, with profound socio-economic and geographic implications for the black population. The dispossession of indigenous peoples (including the San and Khoi) in South Africa by the Dutch and British settlers has been perceived to be one of Africa's most salient colonisation endeavours (Ayeb & Bush, 2014; El Nour, 2015; Hall, 2024). Between 1652 and 1990, South African citizens were geographically segregated, and their settlements were spatially arranged based on race. Post-apartheid South Africa now faces various challenges that emanate from these past inequalities and injustices. The implications of historical settlement arrangements during the colonial and apartheid regimes play a significant role in insecurity, landlessness, homelessness and poverty in South Africa (Dlamini & Ogunnubi, 2018; Mthembu, 2019; Laband, 2020). In response to redressing land dispossession, the South African government has developed and inserted land reform as a topic for study in the national Geography Grade 12 (final year at high school) school curriculum. The curriculum, delivered by teachers primarily through the use of instructional materials, namely textbooks which are perceived to be authoritative (Tabe, 2023), assumes a pivotal role in South Africa's school education. Within classroom settings, teachers wield considerable influence over the utilization of textbooks, shaping both the dissemination of knowledge and the extraction of content for learners (Fru & Wassermann, 2020; Manik & Malahlela, 2018). This study has a twofold aim: to firstly to establish the key discourses on land reform that are present in the textbooks, and secondly to present how land dispossession is framed in the approved Grade 12 Geography textbooks.

## REVIEW OF LITERATURE

In South Africa, the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) is a comprehensive document that serves as a guide for teachers in public schools across South Africa<sup>1</sup>. Developed by the Department of Basic Education (DoBE), the CAPS document provides a framework for teaching and learning across various subjects in the

---

1 Many private schools (Independent Examination Board, IEB) generally use the CAPS curriculum as a guide but grade 12 learners write an alternative matric examination that is administered by the IEB.

South African school system. All government-approved Geography textbooks mirror the curriculum topics in the order in which they appear in the Geography CAPS. Textbooks are regarded and frequently used because they enable teachers and learners to access specialized knowledge (Villaverde, 2003) and they serve as the primary source of information for learners. Many educators in South Africa rely solely on textbooks because they are either inadequately qualified or have no access to any other media or subject knowledge (Cocking et al., 2000; Huber & Moore, 2001; Chiponda & Wassermann, 2011; DoBE, 2011). This is described by Manik & Malahlela (2018, p.55) as the 'textbook teacher' because of Geography teachers' strong reliance on regurgitating content directly from the textbooks. Teachers are not only the transmitters of content knowledge but they are also supposed to guide learners in critically engaging with the subject matter, however Manik & Malahlela (2018) found this to be absent.

This present study on land reform holds significant implications for textbook authors and how teachers approach the topic in the classroom. Fairclough (1992) proposed that analysing texts can provide valuable insights into the context of production and the process of interpretation. Discourse, as elucidated by Fairclough (1992, 1993), plays a pivotal role in shaping the production and interpretation of texts, shedding light on the construction of social identities and understanding the dynamics of relationships. Additionally, Ball (1993) highlighted the importance of uncovering the ways in which relationships between individuals and groups are portrayed and how particular perspectives on curriculum content are formulated within power structures and prevailing discourses. Therefore, the study on land reform can inform authors on their selection of textbook content and it can guide teachers in facilitating discussions that critically examine power dynamics, social identities, and dominant discourses surrounding land ownership, dispossession and reform.

One of the fundamental principles stated in the Geography CAPS is the recognition and acknowledgement of historical inequalities and injustices that have plagued South African society (DoBE, 2011). The curriculum aims to address these past injustices by promoting inclusivity, social justice, and equality in education (Govender & Naidoo, 2023; Ngubeni, 2023). Through an historical lens, the curriculum seeks to provide learners with an understanding of the root causes of inequality and injustices that have affected different groups in South Africa. Land reform is only included in the component of the CAPS Geography curriculum and textbooks for Grade 12 entitled 'Social Justice Issues Associated with Rural Areas: Access to Resources and Land Reform'. In order to confront historical and social inequities in rural communities, the Geography curriculum has fundamentally employed land reform as a weapon to address these social issues. Rural and urban settlement is one of the seven components that make up the rural and urban settlement element of the Grade 12 Geography curriculum. The instruction time for the first section of the topic on the study of settlements is three hours. Several different topics are covered in this section, including concepts of settlement, site and situation, rural and urban settlements, and settlement classification based on size, complexity,

pattern, and function (DoBE, 2011). The instruction time for the second section on rural communities is five hours. This section covers multiple topics including how location and circumstance impact rural settlements, how they are categorized based on pattern and function, the rationale behind the various shapes of rural settlements, including circular, linear, T-shaped, and crossroads, and how these settlements are used (DoBE, 2011, p.45). The third section is devoted to rural settlement issues and is allocated six hours. Among the topics discussed are rural-urban migration, the effects of rural depopulation on people and the economy, a case study that illustrates the impact of rural depopulation and strategies for addressing them, and a discussion of rural social justice issues, including resource access and land reform (DoBE, 2011, p.45). Therefore, land reform in the curriculum is tied to the availability of resources and falls under the category of social justice issues (as this is where this case study is located). By it being in the segment on rural settlements only, land reform is thus implied through the curriculum as a rural issue and it only features in the textbooks within this theme.

## **SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIVISM AND FRAMING AS THEORETICAL FRAMEWORKS**

In the view of Vygotsky (1978), social constructivism emphasises the 'social' aspect of learning and acquiring knowledge, and the idea that culture, history, and politics are constructed mutually with others in the community (Shabani et al., 2010; Huang et al., 2021). According to Gallagher & Gallagher (2013), learning unfolds within a particular social context and knowledge that is imparted cannot be separated from a teacher's identity (culture, beliefs, language and experiences). This theory has relevance in the examination of land reform and dispossession by spotlighting on the intricate interplay of power dynamics, economic structures, political influences, and social factors in shaping collective perceptions and formal knowledge regarding societal constructs. Aligned with Vygotsky's (1978) conceptualisation, which underscores the significance of social interactions in the learning process, this framework posits that learners actively engage with their surroundings, drawing upon collaborative interactions to assimilate knowledge and hone their skills. Central to this perspective is the recognition that understanding and knowledge acquisition are not isolated phenomena but rather emergent through social engagements and cultural contexts. Entman (1993, p.53) explains that in framing there are particular aspects of 'perceived reality' that are highlighted to make them important in a text and, in this way, it can emphasize a challenge or establish an interpretation and provide a subsequent recommendation. Melkote (2009) argues that framing allows for specific aspects of a topic to be ignored or exaggerated as well as disregarding the analysis of an event. Chari (2013, p.292) explains that framing will affect how learners 'think about issues' and construct particular 'interpretations of information', and this has relevance for how grade 12 learners will understand the phenomenon of land reform. Thus, this theory elucidates how societal power dynamics, economic imperatives, political agendas, and social dynamics intersect to shape and present ideologies, and views about

land dispossession and land reform in the selected Geography textbooks.

## METHODOLOGY

This paper draws from a study exploring the phenomenon of land reform as presented in Grade 12 school Geography textbooks in South Africa. The study explored the discourses present and how they are framed in selected commonly used Geography textbooks. The section of land reform in the CAPS document is mirrored in terms of the sub-topics in the Geography textbooks analysed in this study. The textbooks, which were purposively selected for the analysis, are available in the public domain. The study analysed the section on land dispossession and land reform within the sampled approved Geography textbooks, using qualitative document (content) analysis. According to Thorstenson (2020), document analysis involves gathering information used in an official text, studying and analysing the content, and then processing and understanding the content so that conclusions may be drawn. The textual data and visuals on land reform were purposely selected in the five Geography textbooks to unpack their discourses and consider how they were being framed. It has been asserted that the content in textbooks can influence learners' views because textbooks are perceived as authoritative documents within the classroom (Apple & Christian-Smith, 1991; Chiponda & Wassermann, 2011; Chiponda, 2014).

Purposive sampling was used here, which was deemed appropriate because of the small and intentionally selected sample (Table 1). Therefore, the primary concern is not to generalise research outcomes to the entire population but rather to provide detailed descriptions and an analysis within the confines of the selected textbooks analysed.

**Table 1: Details of the textbooks sampled in this study.**

Code used in this study	Textbook title	Author(s)	Date	Place of publication	Publisher
A	Via Afrika Geography Grade 12 Learner's Book	P.A.D. Beets, S. Gear, A.W. Hambly, J.A. Jacobs, K. Najjaar, G. Samaai, Z.P.L. Shabalala	2013	Cape Town	New Leaf Design and Baseline Publishing Services, Afrika Publishers
B	Shuters Top Class Geography Grade 12 Learner's Book	P. Esterhuysen, S. Thompson, D. Preston, C. Dibben, V. Masuku	2013	Pietermaritzburg	Shuter & Shooter Publishers (Pty) Ltd
C	Focus Geography Learner's Book Grade 12	L. Dilley, J. Earle, K. Euston-Brown, G. Keats, A. Nxele, G. Ravenscroft	2013	Cape Town	Pearson South Africa (Pty) Ltd

Code used in this study	Textbook title	Author(s)	Date	Place of publication	Publisher
D	Platinum Geography Learner's Book 12	S. Cohen, B. Fleming, P. Jay, L. Kroll, P. Ranby, J. Saunders, C.D. van de Merwe	2013	Cape Town	Pearson Marang (Pty) Ltd
E	Excel in Geography: A Learner Study Guide Grade 12 CAPS	M. Singh, V. Pillay, S. Chandrabhaon	2015	Durban	Tess Publishing CC

Table 1 describes the sampled textbooks, which are mostly used for the grade 12 learners in KwaZulu-Natal. The selection process was guided by earlier studies (Ngubeni, 2009; Manik & Malahlela, 2018) which identified four of these (A-D) textbooks as the most commonly used geography instructional materials in public schools in KwaZulu-Natal. The selection of specific pages of these textbooks was based on the understanding that international trends in textbook research frequently do not analyse the entire textbook and there is a focus on particular sections or themes in the textbooks which are viewed to be of relevance to a research topic (Fru & Wassermann, 2020), which here was the section on land reform only. The specific details of each textbook that were analysed are shown in Table 2.

**Table 2: Details of the pages that were analysed in each textbook in this study.**

Title	Location in the textbook and number of page(s)	Aspect to be analysed	Description of the nature of the visuals
Via Afrika Geography Grade 12 Learner's Book	p.210, 1 page	<i>Descriptive</i>	None present
Shuters Top Class Geography Grade 12 Learner's Book	pp.240–246, 6 pages	<i>Descriptive</i>	Figure 1: Map of homelands and independent states (p.240), Figure 3: Newspaper clipping taken from textbook B (land reform needs an act as forceful as War: ANCYL (p.244)
		<i>Visuals</i>	
Focus Geography Learner's Book Grade 12	pp.193–197, 4 pages	Descriptive	None present
Platinum Geography Learner's Book 12	pp.179–183, 4 pages	Descriptive	None present
Excel in Geography: A Learner Study Guide Grade 12 CAPS	pp.98–101, 4 pages	Descriptive	Figure 2: Rural Development Programmes to address social injustice issues (p.101)

## QUALITATIVE CONTENT ANALYSIS

Qualitative content analysis (QCA) was adopted as the main form of data analysis in this study, while some elements of discourse analysis were incorporated when needed. According to Patton (2002, p.4) 'any qualitative data reduction and sense-making effort that takes a volume of qualitative material and attempts to identify core consistencies and meanings'. In the context of this study, we employed QCA through the systematic classification process of coding and identifying themes or patterns (Shava & Heystek, 2021). This analysis followed McMillan and Schumacher's (2010, p.369) four steps of qualitative content analysis. In scrutinizing the allocation of pages dedicated to the topic of land reform across the selected textbooks, some variations emerge. Notably, textbook A stands out for its minimal page allocation, encompassing only a single page addressing land reform. This prompts questions regarding the depth and breadth of coverage afforded. Most of the other four textbooks allocate less than five pages to land reform. This limited page count suggests a constraint on the authors' capacity to comprehensively explore the intricacies of such a multifaceted topic.

## RESULTS

The analysis revealed three discourses (social, economic and political); however, only two discourses are presented which are intricately interwoven: the social and the political. Within these two discourses, the nature of land reform as both a vehicle for social justice and a political instrument is evident. The social discourse foregrounds the pursuit of social justice through land reform, with South African racial identities assuming paramount significance. Here, land reform in democratic South Africa is construed as a mechanism for rectifying historical social injustices and addressing systemic inequalities, particularly along racial lines because land was expropriated from the black majority during colonisation and apartheid. Central to this is the recognition of land as a locus of socio-political contestation, emblematic of broader struggles for racial equality and land restitution. Conversely, the political discourse revolves around land reform and its intricate entanglements with the African National Congress (ANC) government's internal politics. Within this domain, land reform is framed as a social imperative housed within the political landscape. Here, the allocation and redistribution of land are wielded as instruments of political leverage, serving to galvanize support, appease constituencies, and consolidate political power.

### ***Social discourse***

One of the discourses on land reform that emerged centred on social justice. In the analysed textbooks the key narrative presented is of returning the land to the majority population. It links the purpose of land reform to specific South African constituted racial identities. The findings also reveal a social narrative which portrayed white people as

the enemy of black South Africans. This social discourse is discursively scaffolded in the textbooks by presentations of the injustice of white colonisers and their role in land dispossession.

### **a) Injustices resulting from colonial and apartheid land dispossession**

Findings in three of the five textbooks relate to land issues in South Africa as both a consequence and a cause of the colonial and apartheid regimes. The textbooks locate landlessness from these regimes which created inequalities and injustices for South Africans. Textbook B states that (p.241): *Many people in South Africa had their land taken away as a result of both colonialism and apartheid.* This suggests the underlying causes of the inequalities in South Africa, indicating that a significant number of individuals had their land expropriated and that both the colonial and apartheid regimes bear responsibility for this injustice. By incorporating this information, learners are provided with a perspective that highlights the role of the colonial and apartheid government at that time in perpetuating land dispossession. Here, the racial categorisation of the 'many people' is not stated in the textbook; we note that the authors reframe from the use of the word 'majority' of people, which would then reference the black population. This framing of the omission of racial categorisation has implications in an educational context, particularly in terms of Vygotsky's (1978) concept of mediated learning, because learners will not be able to clearly understand which particular racial categories of the population who were dispossessed of their land. The absence of racial categorisation in this textbook neglects the critical role that cultural diversity and identity play in shaping learners' learning experiences. By not specifying the racial composition of the individuals, the textbook fails to provide learners with an awareness of the South Africa designated racial groups who constitute the 'many' and, as such, teachers will have to fill in the content gaps.

In addition, textbook A states that (p.210): *Land restitution aims to restore land to victims of forced removals between 1913 and 1994.* This aligns with textbook B. By acknowledging the extensive duration and magnitude of dispossession, learners can gain a more comprehensive understanding of the complexities of the land issues. A central argument in textbook A is that land is 'a highly contested resource' with land ownership unfairly distributed along racial lines. Textbook A then states (p.210): *In South Africa, land is a highly contested resource. On the one hand, private ownership of productive land favours a racial minority, while on the other hand, there is a need to strike a balance between ownership and benefit from land use.* Under apartheid, a system of legal racial segregation was enforced by the South African government from 1948 to 1994, and the rights to land and property were heavily influenced by the then-ruling party's construction of race, which 30 years into democracy has still not been removed. These two textbooks recognize the contentious nature of land issues. However, their choice of nomenclature, such as 'racial minority' and 'strike a balance' ignores certain aspects (Melkote, 2009) about which racial group is the minority and how a balance can be achieved in terms



of land ownership. This highlights how the effects of colonialism and the apartheid era persist. The acknowledgement of land as a contested issue underscores its ongoing importance in contemporary society, particularly linked to race.

Textbook D provides additional evidence that land dispossession was a direct consequence of forced removals by virtue of racial categorisation. The textbook states (p.181): *Apartheid policy that forced millions of South Africans to move from their homes and re-settle into specific areas based on race*. This statement suggests that the government during apartheid used policies as ideological instruments to determine who had land access and ownership. Furthermore, similar to textbook B, textbook D indicates the extreme dimensions of racial inequality in terms of access to land. Textbook D mentions (p.181): *Before 1994 white commercial farmers controlled 80% of the agricultural land*. This highlights who had control of the agricultural productivity of the land based on racial divisions without acknowledging that land has sustenance value for all as it is integral to food security in South Africa. The textbook does not include any statistics on land ownership along racial lines in democratic South Africa. Thus, learners are not provided with a comprehensive understanding of both the historical and present state of land ownership, yet this textbook was written in 2013 (19 years into South Africa's democracy). By including such information, learners will be able to grasp any reform over time and gain insights into the current dynamics of land distribution.

### **b) To whom must the land be returned?**

The research findings shed light on the complexity of determining who should be involved in the process of land restitution and land redistribution. For instance, textbook C states: *The goals of land reform are to provide increased access to land for previously disadvantaged people through the redistribution of 30% of white-owned agricultural land*. The excerpt raises an important point regarding the framing of redistribution of white agricultural land. Textbook C does not mention which race should have their land returned and as such this content knowledge gap in the section is evident. The lack of clarity on redistributing the land to the recipients is poorly framed because there is no specification to whom the land must be returned, and as such it is difficult to understand who the recipients of land must be in South Africa. Without specifying to whom the land should be returned, it becomes difficult to understand the social justice dimension of the redistribution of land. Similarly, textbook D also states (p.180) that: *Government has been working to redress unfair distribution because white farmers control 80 percent of agricultural land.... the programme aimed to redistribute 30% of agricultural land to other race groups*.

Textbook C states that land redistribution is necessary, emphasizing that 30% of the land should be allocated to other race groups. This excerpt is also poorly framed, because it does not specify which racial groups are being referred to and this lack of clarity raises questions of whether the racial groups mentioned could be South Africans who are African, Coloured, or Indian.

The findings from the other two textbooks indicate that the authors do not discuss the topic of commercial white farmers returning the land or white farmers being killed which has been a significant topic in South African media for decades post-apartheid, and this could be an indication of a purposefully chosen neutral position. This absence raises questions about the authors' perspectives and the information they chose to include in their texts. The content omissions could leave a gap in learners' understanding of the land reform issue, not address current social discourses on commercial farms, and further raise concerns about the authors' approach to providing critical curriculum content.

Textbook A states that (p.210): *Land reform is to transfer land ownership to millions of South Africans who have been denied access to land.* The excerpt fails to provide any information on what land will be transferred and who will be the recipients of this land. It is crucial for learners to understand the context and background of this issue in order to fully comprehend the implications of the land transfer. Without this information, learners may be left with content knowledge gaps in understanding land reform if the teacher does not supplement the textbook's content with explanation. Textbook B states (p.242): *In South Africa, land reform is about giving people land.* This textbook frames restitution by avoiding mentioning who will be the recipients of the land and this may be an attempt to maintain a neutral stance. While textbooks A and B do not provide explicit information regarding the racial group to which the land should be returned, textbooks C and D acknowledged that white commercial farmers, who constitute a minority, are the primary owners of the land and therefore should be involved in the process of land restitution.

In addition, textbooks A and B present an ideology of neoliberalism that redistributing the land to black citizens will help to eliminate poverty because they must utilise their entrepreneurial skills to progress from subsistence farming to becoming commercial farmers. For example, textbook A states (p.210): *In order to alleviate rural poverty, the current government aims to develop viable cooperative businesses for small-scale farmers. The goal is to assist 50,000 Black subsistence producers in becoming small-scale commercial producers.* Textbook B states (p.240): *Current land ownership and land development patterns in South Africa reflect the country's political and economic history. White people own most commercial farms, and the current Government aims to alleviate poverty... by transferring land ownership to millions of South Africans who have been denied access to this economic resource.* The recurring theme in both textbooks is the belief that land reform plays a crucial role in alleviating poverty. The textbooks emphasize the importance of land ownership and access to empower individuals and communities, enabling them to escape the cycle of poverty and improve their socio-economic conditions.

Textbooks A and B lean towards the hegemonic discourse of land reform as socio-economic justice. The textbooks highlight the significance of the government's involvement in facilitating land transfer to individuals who have been historically deprived of it. They assert that the government must take the necessary measures to rectify the situation, ensuring that land becomes accessible to those who have been denied access. Textbook A argues that transferring land to black South Africans is crucial in establishing a

more equitable society. Textbook B mentions 'millions of South Africans'. Both textbooks assert that this step is necessary to address historical injustices. They underscore the importance of addressing land ownership and poverty as interconnected issues related to sustainable livelihoods and economic growth related to access to resources. Textbook A introduces a hegemonic discourse on rural poverty in South Africa by asserting that by providing subsistence farmers with access to land resources, they can expand their farming activities and maximize their yields.

### ***Political discourse***

Textbooks articulated the role of the ANC-led government through the hegemony of their land reform policy which provides the foundation for the return of land to the Black population. In the selected textbooks, two discursive framings shift the narrative of land reform in a particular direction. These are (1) a portrayal of the government as a critical stakeholder in land reform, and (2) the role of violence to take back the land.

#### ***1. Government portrayed as a critical player in land reform***

Land reform is presented through a politicised discourse in textbooks A, B and C where land reform is described through the government's role to redress past social injustices. This role involves land restitution. The textbooks frame the government as the key player in implementing land reform as it was a core principle of the ANC party and government when it came to power in 1994, as a pro-poor strategy. Textbook A highlights the importance of the ANC government in facilitating access to land and land tenure. It states (p.241): *A key role of the government in post-apartheid South Africa is to address the fundamental human right of access to land and land tenure.* This excerpt emphasises the government's role in an ideological intent of fairness by ensuring equitable access to land through land tenure as is contained in the land reform policy. Similarly, textbook B states (p.210): *The current South African government aims to... transferring land ownership to the millions of South Africans who have been denied access to this economic resource.* This reveals a narrative that land redistribution can address the legacy of apartheid and colonialism. In addition, it suggests that the government hopes that by transferring land to these individuals, they will be able to access the economic benefits of land ownership. Although 'millions of South Africans' are the black population, the authors do not explicitly state that it was black people who were denied access to land.

#### ***2. Violent calls to 'take back the land'***

An ideology of 'violence for social justice' to achieve land reform emerged only in textbook B where it introduces a counter hegemonic discourse by the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL), a prominent youth organization of the ruling ANC, to address land reform. A case study in textbook B showcases the ANCYL's advocacy for violence

in pursuing expropriation of land without compensation. This perspective challenges conventional notions of peaceful negotiation and legal frameworks for addressing land reform. Textbook B presents this case study to prompt learners to analyse such an ideology's underlying motivations and consequences. The promotion of violence as a means to address inequality through land reform raises significant social and political concerns. While it is essential to acknowledge the historical context and the injustices that have fuelled the need for land reform, advocating violence can have severe repercussions. The title of the extract from textbook B gives significance to portraying violence:

***Land Reform Needs an Act as Forceful As War: ANCYL***

*It is an illusion that South Africans believe that they can get their land back peacefully, ANC Youth League deputy leader, Ronald Lomalo said in Durban on Tuesday. Lomola again called for expropriation of land without compensation. "We need an act as forceful as war to bring it back to Africans." (Newspaper clipping taken from textbook B, p.244)*

When exposed to such messages promoting violence, learners may internalize these ideas, perceiving violence as an acceptable strategy for social reform. This is because the classroom, as a social environment, plays a crucial role in shaping learners' attitudes and behaviours (Omolaro & Adebukola, 2015; Zajda, 2018). If textbooks include such extracts, they can influence learners who may adopt a distorted view of violence as a justified means to resolve social conflict. The selection of this extract for inclusion in textbook B raises concerns about its selection and the depiction of a contrary view by a wing of the ruling party. It also raises concerns on a portrayal that land reform is only achievable through violent means because this may influence how learners view or make sense of this issue. The inclusion of such content underscores the responsibility that textbook authors and teachers have in presenting complex issues in a balanced, nuanced way that fosters critical thinking and engagement.

Textbooks, regarded as authoritative sources of information, have considerable influence in moulding the views and beliefs of learners (Manik & Malahlela, 2018; Pavešić et al., 2022; Glassman et al., 2023). The inclusion of this excerpt in textbook B raises questions regarding its potential impacts on learners' perceptions. The quotation included, 'We need an act as forceful as war to bring it back to Africans', may steer learners towards viewing violence as legitimate. If left unchallenged in classroom discussion, this portrayal risks perpetuating misconceptions, stifling critical inquiry, and curtailing the exploration of alternative avenues for peaceful land reform.

## **DISCUSSION**

The selected textbooks provide valuable insights into the complexities of land reform in South Africa through its social and political discourses. The textbooks highlight the loss of land by black people during the colonial and apartheid eras, deemed to be an

injustice by the post-apartheid government, that can be addressed through restorative land reform. In this manner, it is articulated that social justice is initiated for social development. Textbooks play a crucial role in providing selected information to learners about certain discourses on land reform. Through textbook content learners are exposed to the historical context of land dispossession and ownership and the efforts made by the ANC government. Thus, selected perspectives and views are entrenched in the textbooks. Textbooks A, B and C state that land reform programmes were put in place as a way of addressing poverty in South Africa but also for the creation of black commercial farmers. The textbooks articulate an ideology of neoliberalism that promotes the entrepreneurship of black citizens to own their own land and establish commercial farms. Textbooks A, B and D state that the racial discrimination legally entrenched by the colonial and apartheid government contributed greatly to this pattern of racial inequalities.

The findings of this study have implications for learning in the classroom setting. According to Vygotsky (1978), learners acquire knowledge and skills through interactions with others and the cultural tools available in their environment. In the South African classroom, the history of racial tensions and inequalities can influence how learners from different racial backgrounds interact, collaborate and learn from one another. du Toit (2023) highlights that land reform is a controversial topic in South Africa, with the 'dispossessor' and 'dispossessed' having clashing views on the matter. The dispossessor may be constituted as white people, whereas most dispossessed black people are struggling to get 'their' land back. The newspaper article used in textbook B, if used without sufficient explanation, can create a hostile learning environment within the multi-racial classroom. The Grade 12 Geography textbooks are therefore political tools that are not neutral with respect to presentations of the historical and current land situation through selected narratives in social and political discourses. The inclusion of a newspaper excerpt in a textbook may shape learners' views on land reform.

## **CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS**

This study highlights that land reform in South Africa is a contested and complex topic, and its inclusion in the Grade 12 Geography curriculum is limited, but it can heighten contestation as revealed when unpacking its varied social and political discourses. In addition, the study highlights that the content in the section on land reform in the textbooks should not be perceived as authoritative voices nor should the information be construed as unquestionable, authentic, neutral knowledge. Classroom teaching activities may not sufficiently unpack the superficial and limited content on land reform presented in such textbooks. We recommend that for the section in the textbooks on land reform to achieve its intended pedagogical purpose, the complexity of land reform and race should be addressed from multiple perspectives.

---

## REFERENCES

- Apple, M. W., & Christian-Smith, L. K. (1991). *The politics of the textbook*. Routledge, London.
- Ayeb, H., & Bush, R. (2014). Small Farmer Uprisings and Rural Neglect in Egypt and Tunisia. *Middle East Report*, 272(44), 1-9.
- Ball, S. J. (1993). Education policy, power relations and teachers' work. *British Journal of Educational Studies*, 41(2), 106-121.
- Chiponda, A. F. (2014). *An analysis of the portrayal of women in junior secondary school history textbooks in Malawi*. Unpublished PhD Thesis, University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Chiponda, A., & Wassermann, J. (2011). Women in history textbooks: what message does this send to the youth? *Yesterday and Today*, 6, 13-25.
- Cocking, R. R., Mestre, J. P., & Brown, A. L. (2000). New developments in the science of learning: Using research to help students learn science and mathematics. *Journal of Applied Developmental Psychology*, 21(1), 1-11.
- Chari, T. (2013). Media Framing of Land Reform in Zimbabwe. In *Land and Agrarian Reform in Zimbabwe: Beyond White-Settler Capitalism*, 291-330. CODESRIA, Dakar.
- Department of Basic Education (DoBE) (2011). *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), Grade 10-12: Geography*. Pretoria, South Africa.
- Dlamini, S., & Ogunnubi, O. (2018). Land reform in South Africa: contending issues. *Journal of Public Administration*, 53(2), 339-360.
- du Toit, A. (2023). *The Land and Its People: The South African "Land Question" and the Post-Apartheid Political Order*. Working Paper 64, Institute for Poverty, Land and Agrarian Studies (PLAAS), University of the Western Cape.
- El Nour, S. (2015). Small farmers and the revolution in Egypt: the forgotten actors. *Contemporary Arab Affairs*, 8(2), 198-211.
- Entman, R. M. (1993). Framing: Toward clarification of a fractured paradigm. *Journal of Communication*, 43(4), 51-58.
- Fru, R. N., & Wassermann, J. (2020). Constructions of identity in Cameroonian history textbooks in relation to the reunification of Cameroon. *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society*, 12(2), 57-76.
- Fairclough, N. (1992). *Discourse and Social Change*. Polity Press, Cambridge.
- Fairclough, N. (1993). Critical Discourse Analysis and the Marketization of Public Discourse: The Universities. *Discourse & Society*, 4(2), 133-168.
- Gallagher, S. A., & Gallagher, J. J. (2013). Using problem-based learning to explore unseen academic potential. *The Interdisciplinary Journal of Problem-based Learning*, 7(1), 111-131.
- Glassman, M., Lin, T.-J., & Ha, S. Y. (2023). Concepts, collaboration, and a company of actors: A Vygotskian model for concept development in the 21st century. *Oxford Review of Education*, 49(2), 137-152.
- Govender, L., & Naidoo, D. (2023). Decolonial insights for transforming the higher education curriculum in South Africa. *Curriculum Perspectives*, 43(1), 59-71.
- Hall, R. (2024). The Constitution's Mandate for Transformation: From Expropriation

- Without Compensation to Equitable Access to Land. In *Beyond Expropriation Without Compensation: Law Land Reform and Redistributive Justice in South Africa*, 143–164. Cambridge University Press, Cambridge.
- Huang, D., Tao, X., Gao, F., & Lu, J. (2021). Deep learning-based image semantic coding for semantic communications. In *2021 IEEE Global Communications Conference (GLOBECOM)*, 1–6. IEEE, Madrid.
- Huber, R. A., & Moore, C. J. (2001). A Model for extending hands-on science to be inquiry based. *School Science and Mathematics*, 101(1), 32–42
- Laband, J. (2020). *The land wars: The dispossession of the Khoisan and AmaXhosa in the Cape Colony*. Penguin Random House, Cape Town.
- Manik, S., & Malahlela, T. (2018). Through the Lens of Teachers: The Use of Geography CAPS Textbooks, Concomitant Challenges and a Reimagining of the Textbook. *Alternation*, 21(1), 37–67.
- McMillan, J. H., & Schumacher, S. (2010). *Research in Education: Evidence-based inquiry*, 7<sup>th</sup> Ed. Pearson, New Jersey.
- Melkote, S. R. (2009). News framing during a time of impending war: An examination of coverage in The New York Times prior to the 2003 Iraq War. *International Communication Gazette*, 71(7), 547–559.
- Mthembu, A. (2019). Reflections on expropriation-based land reform in Southern Africa. *Town and Regional Planning*, 75, 54–65.
- Ngubeni, T. D. (2009). *Knowledge analysis of grade 12 Geography textbooks used in South African schools*. Unpublished Masters dissertation, University of KwaZulu-Natal.
- Omolara, S. R., & Adebukola, O. R. (2015). Teachers' attitudes: a great influence on teaching and learning of social studies. *Journal of Law, Policy and Globalization*, 42, 131–137.
- Patton, M. Q. (2014). *Qualitative Research & Evaluation Methods: Integrating theory and practice*, 4<sup>th</sup> Ed. Sage, London.
- Pavešić, B. J., Radović, M., & Brese, F. (2022). Students' interests, motivation, and self-beliefs. In *Dinaric Perspectives on TIMSS 2019: Teaching and Learning Mathematics and Science in South-Eastern Europe*, 65–100. Springer, Cham.
- Shabani, K., Khatib, M., & Ebadi, S. (2010). Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development: Instructional Implications and Teachers' Professional Development. *English Language Teaching*, 3(4), 237–248.
- Shava, G., & Heystek, J. (2021). Managing teaching and learning: integrating instructional and transformational leadership in South African schools context. *International Journal of Educational Management*, 35(5), 1048–1062.
- Tabe, H. T. (2023). Teacher quality as a defining factor of student academic performance in schools: The case of a district in South Africa. *African Perspectives of Research in Teaching and Learning*, 7(3), 487–502.
- Thorstensson, E. (2020). *The Influence of Working from Home on Employees' Productivity: Comparative document analysis between the years 2000 and 2019–2020*. Unpublished Bachelor dissertation, Karlstad University.

Villaverde, L. E. (2003). *Secondary schools: A reference handbook*. ABC-CLIO, USA.

Vygotsky, L. S. (1978). Interaction between learning and development. In *Mind in Society*, 79–91. Harvard University Press, Cambridge, MA.

Zajda, J. (2018). Motivation in the classroom: Creating effective learning environments. *Educational Practice and Theory*, 40(2), 85–103.