

EDITORIAL

History Education greetings,

Welcome to the December 2019 edition of *Yesterday & Today*. Unfortunately, this volume appeared a month late, at the end of January 2021. But one of the minor consequences of the COVID-19 pandemic. Minor indeed when considering the havoc, the COVID-19 pandemic has wrecked all over the world.

At the beginning of April 2020, just after the severity of COVID-19 pandemic hit home, it was decided to dedicate the bulk of the December 2020 edition (volume 24) of *Yesterday & Today* to the teaching and learning of history under COVID-19 conditions. Subsequently, a call-for-papers reading: “*Yesterday & Today*, an accredited open-access journal, with a focus on History Education, History in Education, History for Education and the History of Education, are calling for papers on the teaching and learning of History in the time of the coronavirus disease (COVID-19) pandemic”, were distributed. Numerous abstracts from across the world were received, but alas, many of the initial abstracts were not followed through on, simply because of the toll COVID-19 took on history educators and the institutions they work in. Others were, no doubt, lured in a different direction by the plethora of other scholarly journals also seeking to produce special editions on education and COVID-19. The academic articles finally accepted for publication were of a high academic standard and spoke directly to the call-for-papers. I will say more about this further down.

But first I want to dwell on several other matters related to history education and COVID-19. While COVID-19 served to lay bare numerous societal fault lines, it also did so in terms of matters relating to history education. Three examples in this regard will suffice. The first relates to the absence of history in the numerous “cloud schools” that sprang up in South Africa. One would have thought that, considering the zeitgeist we are in, the powers that be would include history in the “cloud schools” created on television and elsewhere, Alas, this did not happen and the standard privileged fare of Mathematics, English and so forth were dished up. The second deals with the absence of history educationalists and other social scientists in the mitigation policies created by many countries in the world. Such policies, by dint of their legal-ethical nature and societal impact, needs more than a bio-medical approach. Sadly, this was not how, generally speaking, the COVID-19 world was viewed. And finally, whatever curriculum reform is

planned in history education in future, planners would do well to consider the inclusion of the study of pandemics.

Back to the December 2020 edition. Volume 24 of *Yesterday & Today*, for the uninitiated the journal is attached to the South African Society for History Teaching (SASHT), consists of four sections. The first section contains the usual academic articles. The second contains academic articles related to COVID-19 and history education, and the third, “hands-on” or practical articles on COVID-19 and history education. The final section contains the three book reviews appearing in this edition of *Yesterday & Today*.

Section 1 consists of the usual academic articles related to history education. In the first Rosa Cabecinhas and Martins Mapera dealt with decolonisation and the liberation script in Mozambican history textbooks. In the second, Leonard Buhigiro engaged, by means of a career life story, with the complexity of teaching the genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda.

The second section carries the COVID-19 academic articles related to history education. In the first of these Karel Van Nieuwenhuysse, in a comparative study, interrogated postgraduate history education students’ perceptions and performances when using different modes of online studying. This is followed by an article by Brett Bennett and his team of co-authors who investigated the consequences of COVID-19 on international partnership between universities. In her article, Leevina Iyer turned the research lens inwards and studied her own educational practices as a history education lecturer during COVID-19. Sarah Godsell, in her contribution, asked critical questions about her history education practices during the pandemic by focussing on the challenges and problems brought about by Emergency Online Teaching. Mpilo Dube, in his article, focussed on higher education by honing in on the experiences of PGCE History students when teaching and learning moved online. A different research slant was brought to the special edition by Noor Davids in his article on the use of Bernstein’s Pedagogical Device to teach historical pandemics. The final academic paper related to COVID-19 and history education is by Siebörger and Firth. In it they ponder the teaching of dying and death with reference to the 1918 flu epidemic in South Africa.

In the third section, consisting of “hands-on” articles, Bronwynne Strydom continues with the 1918 flu epidemic theme by looking at how the University of Pretoria reacted to it at the time. This is followed by an autoethnographic piece by Tarryn Halsall, who started her career as

an academic in history education on the day when the lockdown was announced. The third “hands on” article is by Leah Nasson in which she asks critical questions about online teaching, history education and society. Marj Brown, in her article also adopts a critical stance in interrogating what she did as a history teacher at an affluent school during COVID-19. This is followed by an article by Kirsten Kukard and her experiences of teaching history for blended and online learning during the pandemic. In her article, Nonhlanhla Skosana, reflects on the dual process on teaching history during the pandemic at a township school while also pursuing her postgrad studies in history education. This is followed by a “hands-on” article by history education students of the University of the Witwatersrand in which they propose a decolonising teachers charter. The final two “hands-on” articles are from fellow African countries. In her contribution Rejoice Dlamini reflects on history education during the pandemic in Eswatini, while Ackson Kanduzza shines the light on COVID-19 in Zambia.

I am confident that the above contributions will not be the final word on history education under COVID-19 conditions and that the 2021 volumes of *Yesterday & Today* will carry further contributions in this regard.

I would like to conclude this editorial on a sobering note, one that would, in my view, serve to contextualise the devastating impact of COVID-19. In early January 2021, Dr Gengs Pillay, a leading light in history education at secondary school level in South Africa, and former member of the editorial board of *Yesterday & Today*, passed away of COVID-19 related complications. Dr Kate Angier, one of the assistant-editors for *Yesterday & Today*, who worked closely with Gengs, contributed the memorial piece on the next page.

Take care and stay safe!

Johan Wassermann (Editor-in-Chief)