# YESTERDAY & TODAY

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# Editorial Policy: Yesterday & Today

## 1. Overview

*Yesterday & Today* is a peer-reviewed, scholarly journal focusing on History Education, History in Education, and the History of Education. The journal welcomes research contributions that advance understanding in these fields through empirical, theoretical, and pedagogical perspectives. The journal has been accredited since 2012 and is committed to academic excellence, scholarly integrity, and educational impact.

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# TABLE OF CONTENTS



## ARTICLES

## BOOK REVIEWS



## TEACHERS VOICE / HANDS-ON ARTICLES



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# EDITORIAL

***DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2223-0386/2025/n33a1***

History Education greetings,

Welcome to the July 2025 edition of *Yesterday & Today*. The July 2025 edition has implemented the new editorial policy pioneered by Scielo and ASSAF, which went through numerous scholarly engagements. The editorial board of *Yesterday & Today* itself discussed the suggested editorial policy on various platforms and is embracing it, especially in aspects related to the submission regarding AI and good governance. This is a new era for *Yesterday & Today* as it moves with the times.

Regarding contributions, the July 2025 edition of *Yesterday & Today* carries seven articles.

- In her article, Bronwyn Strydom engages with "*Archival Practice and the Historiography of Education in South Africa: An Overview of Government Collections on Education*".
- In turn, Laura Efron wrote on "Reflections on coloured identity in the Teacher's League of South Africa during the early 1940s. The introduction of the concept of non-European".
- Christopher Koekemoer tackled "Learning about World War Two: Group work discussions and literary engagement using Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*".
- Knysna Motumi and Elize van Eeden argued in their paper for *"Reconceptualising Africanising, and its positioning in history teaching and learning through regional and microspatial-planned programmes"*.
- In their contribution, Bongumenzi Mthethwa and Paul Maluleka challenged *"Peripheralisation of some histories in the school history curriculum in the post-apartheid South Africa: The case study of the 1950s Drum generation and their contributions to the liberation struggle."*
- Noel Ndumeya, in his article, engaged with "*'Greening History Teaching': Justifying the Inclusion of Socio-Environmental History in the South African Further Education and Training History Curriculum."*
- The final contribution is by Hedwick Chigwida, Manasa M. Madondo, and Hardy Chitate. It deals with "*Reading the African School Curriculum as a Historical Text: Educational Contexts, Policies and Practices in Zimbabwe."*

The July edition has, as per usual, a vibrant book review section in which five different publications are reviewed. Getting reviewers is not always easy. Therefore, I want to thank our review editor, Bafana Mpanza, for his work and all the reviewers who contributed to this essential aspect of our journal.

In the "hands-on" section, Wiebe de Groot and Gordon Brookbanks engaged with the ideas of international collaboration amongst prospective history teachers and how to strengthen the history curriculum by reimagining how we teach West Africa in the Grade 10 South African History Curriculum.

Finally, a big thank you to Stefan Meyer and his team, who have expertly put the July 2025 edition together in good time.

Happy reading.

Johan Wassermann

Editor-in-Chief

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# Archival Practice and the Historiography of Education in South Africa: An Overview of Government Collections on Education

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## Abstract

Archives provide a large part of the raw materials with which historians construct histories. How these repositories arrange this material, and what they consider as priorities for accessioning it, have a profound influence on what material is more within reach for historians. An investigation into the records available at the National Archives and Records Services of South Africa (NARSSA), for a collaborative project focused on researching and writing the histories of universities in South Africa, shed significant light on both the extremely fragmented nature of the record of education in South Africa, as well as on substantial challenges related to its accessibility. Before the historian of education can engage with the government's record on education in South Africa, the splintered timeline of education administration must be reconstructed. Furthermore, once the historians of education then enters the NARSSA space, they are confronted with the fact that only a small fragment of this record has been described in archival finding aids. After pondering this state of affairs, this article considers the historiography of education in South Africa, examining the sources that have been used to construct narratives of the history of education, as well as how trends in this historiography could be viewed as reflecting the state of the archives. The article also offers some thoughts on the potential pitfalls and insights which await the industrious historian of education in these unaccessioned collections of the NARSSA.

**Keywords:** Archives; history of education; historiography; National Archives and Records Services of South Africa; twentieth century; university histories

## Introduction and background

This article focuses on research conducted at the National Archives and Records Services of South Africa (NARSSA). This forms part of a collaborative project on the histories of universities in South Africa. The Research Project on the Histories of Universities in South Africa (RPHUSA), launched in 2022 by Prof Saleem Badat, is engaged with the writing of critical histories of South African universities. As part of the project, scholars expressed the need for a "Guide to the Archives for University Histories in South Africa". A first part of this proposed guide focused on collections housed in NARSSA, the purpose of which was to assist scholars in locating relevant collections for their research.

The focus of the latest workshop of RPHUSA was on 'Archiving South African Universities'. One of the focus questions was 'How, in what ways and to what extent does the development of South Africa's university system reflect and impact the economic, social and political priorities of the state during different historical periods?'[1] The government record is particularly pertinent to this question, since it documents government actions related to universities, which, for most of the twentieth century, consisted of only public state-aided institutions.

This article issues from this research, as the process of locating records became in itself a significant lens on the history of universities and education in South Africa and the methodology and historiography of histories of South African education. Grappling with the scope and inaccessibility of collections also raised questions regarding archives themselves, and their perceived value for historical enquiry.

I, the author, have a mixed bag of experience which I bring to this paper: my academic path has been as a university historian, however, my career path has mainly been as an archivist. Furthermore, I trained as a teacher and spent a few years on the lecturing staff of the Faculty of Education at the University of Pretoria teaching history education.

## Timeline of government structures in South African education

While the focus of this research was to assist scholars in locating records relevant to the study of universities, the survey of the archives' collections tells a wider story of education in South Africa, particularly in the twentieth century. The fragmented nature of the record,

[1] RPHUSA Programme: Archiving South African Universities, 18-19 March 2024, University of Johannesburg.

obscured both by the systematised segregation of the apartheid state and the lack of finding aids, is in itself a picture of the history of education in South Africa. To successfully navigate the archives, the historian of education must have a clear understanding of the state apparatus, which became progressively more complex and fractured as its organisational structure became more narrowly aligned with categories of race. In this sense, accessing the archives requires reconstructing the splintered timeline of South African educational history.

For this paper, the net was cast wider than just universities by giving a survey of the collections related to all types of formal education. This was a logical step to take as, until 2009, universities fell under government departments which were also responsible for primary and secondary education. This only changed in 2009 when a dedicated Department of Higher Education and Training was established.

The focus of this survey is on the twentieth-century archival record. Prior to 1910, South Africa consisted of four separate British colonies, two of which had recently been independent republics at war with Great Britain. Thus, the South African State only came into being with the Union of South Africa in 1910, and for the first time, the whole region fell under single administrative departments of the exclusively white government. This is confirmed by Behr, who expands on the educational context as follows: "In considering the development of the educational system of South Africa, one has to bear in mind that when the four self-governing colonies came together in 1910 to form the Union of South Africa, each had an established system of education concerned mainly with primary and secondary education and teacher training. University education was still in its infancy and vocational education was hardly known."[2]

The South Africa Act (1909) stated that provincial councils would be responsible for education other than higher education for five years. Accordingly, the central government would have been responsible for all post-secondary education, and provinces would take charge of the rest. The Act, however, did not define 'higher education', and it became an issue over succeeding ministries of education to wrestle with differentiating between the roles of the provinces and the roles of central government concerning education. Some consistent areas of trouble were those of teacher training and technical and vocational education.[3]

[2] AL Behr, *Education in South Africa: Origins, issues and trends, 1652-1988,* (Pretoria and Cape Town, Academics, 1988), p. 59.

[3] AL Behr, *Education in South Africa…*, (Pretoria and Cape Town, Academics, 1988), pp. 59-60.

A government report describes the context as follows: "Until the end of the nineteenth century compulsory education did not exist in Southern Africa and the education of Whites and non-Whites was not officially separated. Schools were established—by the church, by private enterprise and ultimately by the state—where the need arose, that is, where many families and their children lived in close proximity to each other."[4] Official government control over education expanded and was progressively cemented in the twentieth century.

There is a need to trace the government control and administration of education to be able to trace the official record. Before one can successfully navigate the collections of NARSSA, the historian of education must have a history of government administration of education to know which collections to consult. In the case of South Africa, tracing the system of state structures involved in education in the twentieth century is not a simple task.

At the time of the Union of South Africa, responsibility for education resided mainly with the provincial education departments of the country's four provinces. This included education for all of the racial and ethnic groups of the country, although the development of schools for various population groups differed. The newly formed and centralised Union Education Department was responsible for post-secondary education, although, as mentioned earlier, definitions of what this and 'higher education' encompassed, would become a source of conflict between this department and the provinces.[5] Black, coloured and Indian education, along with white education,[6] fell under provincial departments, although schools were mainly segregated by race, particularly following legislation like the 1905 School Board Act, which had been passed in the Cape Colony and the 1907 Education Act in the Transvaal Colony. Churches and missionary societies bore a large responsibility for black and coloured education. This responsibility would gradually pass to the state, as the government became increasingly involved in financing mission schools.[7]

[4] The Education Bureau, *Education for Life. The education of the Coloured population group in the Republic of South Africa,* (Cape Town, Department of Internal Affairs, 1981), p. 1.

[5] AL Behr, *Education in South Africa…,* (Pretoria and Cape Town, Academics, 1988), pp. 59-60.

[6] The reader is warned that because of the racial polarisation and systematic segregation in South Africa during the period under review, racial terms and designations will be used in this article in outlining developments in the past. Some racially insensitive terms and classifications may appear, but should be within the thematic context of the study. In South Africa, the term 'black' is used to refer to people of African descent. 'Coloured' refers to those of mixed ancestry, including people of Malay heritage. 'Indian' refers to those whose forebears moved to South Africa from India and Pakistan and 'white' refers to those of European descent.

[7] JJ Booyse, The provision of education during the first half of the 20th century, in JJ Booyse, CS Le Roux, J Seroto and CC Wolhuter (eds.), *A history of schooling in South Africa. Method and context,* (Pretoria, Van Schaik Publishers, 2011), pp. 201-203.

Education did not develop rapidly during the decade after 1910. Booyse points out that "[v]arious factors, such as World War I, the influenza epidemic, large-scale urbanisation and industrialisation following the discovery of gold and diamonds in the latter half of the 19th century and the economic depression, seriously hampered the development of education for all population groups".[8]

In this period before the advent of apartheid, the control and administration of education appeared to have been more fluid. More efforts were made to define 'higher education', which meant that the central government's Union Department of Education gradually took control of the schools of art, domestic science, music and technology, among others. In 1925, this expanded to include not only technical colleges and schools of home industries and housecraft, but also schools for learners with special needs. As one source explains, "… the central government gradually assumed responsibility for more and more of the country's educational obligations and the provinces lost control over one facet of education after another".[9]

In terms of segregation, while schools became increasingly segregated, the administration of education was not always divided by race. In many instances, how white children were educated was merely adapted to the educational needs of the various ethnic groups. For more than a century, the administration of coloured education, which mainly took the form of state-aided mission schools, was a part of the Cape Department of Education. White and coloured schools followed the same curricula and were visited by the same inspectors, and finances of coloured schools fell under the same departments as those of white schools.[10]

[8] JJ Booyse, The provision of education …, JJ Booyse et al., *A history of schooling in South Africa…*, (Pretoria, Van Schaik Publishers, 2011), p. 203.

[9] The Education Bureau, *Education for Life…*, (Cape Town, Department of Internal Affairs, 1981), p. 2.

[10] JJ Booyse, The provision of education …, JJ Booyse et al., *A history of schooling in South Africa…*, (Pretoria, Van Schaik Publishers, 2011), p. 199; JJ Booyse, Education provisioning during the period of National Party rule, in JJ Booyse, CS Le Roux, J Seroto and CC Wolhuter (eds.), *A history of schooling in South Africa: Method and context*, (Pretoria, Van Schaick Publishers, 2011), p. 234.

Behr sums up the situation during this period as follows: "The education at primary and secondary school level of various racial groups was at the time of Union, and for a half century thereafter, under provincial control. Black, Coloured, Indian and White children attended separate schools, but came under the same rules and regulations of the provincial authorities involved, and were under the supervision of the same inspectors of education in the geographical areas concerned."[11]

With the National Party coming to power after the 1948 elections, an era of more systematised and differentiated government control of education began to develop. White tertiary education was taken over by the Department of Education, Arts and Science in 1955. In 1967, the control of all white education in all the provinces was transferred to this department following the passing of the National Education Authority Act. The administration of education, however, remained the responsibility of the provincial departments of education.[12]

The status of black education very quickly became a matter for investigation by the new dispensation. The recommendations of the 1951 Eiselen Commission set up the framework for the passing of the Bantu Education Act of 1953 (Act 47 of 1953). This act transferred control of black education to the central government in the form of the Department of Native Affairs: Bantu Education Section, and later, in 1958, the Department of Bantu Education.[13]

Centralised control of Indian and coloured education followed suit. In 1966, the Department of Indian Affairs: Education Section took over education for Indians in Natal. Indian education in the Transvaal moved to this department in 1967 and likewise in the Cape in 1970.[14] Despite reports from the Schumann Commission (1960) regarding the expense of centralising control of coloured education, after the passing of the Coloured Persons Education Act, 1963 (Act 47 of 1963) "… the responsibility for the education of the Coloured community was transferred from the provincial administrations to the Department of Coloured Affairs of the Central Government in 1964".[15] Another official

[11] AL Behr, *Education in South Africa…,* (Pretoria and Cape Town, Academics, 1988), p. 60.

[12] AL Behr, *Education in South Africa…,* (Pretoria and Cape Town, Academics, 1988), p. 60; JJ Booyse, Education provisioning…, JJ Booyse et al., *A history of schooling in South Africa…,* (Pretoria, Van Schaik Publishers, 2011), p. 226.

[13] JJ Booyse, Educational provisioning…, JJ Booyse et al., *A history of schooling in South Africa…,* (Pretoria, Van Schaik Publishers, 2011), pp. 240-242.

[14] AL Behr, *Education in South Africa…,* (Pretoria and Cape Town, Academics, 1988), p. 61.

[15] AL Behr, *Education in South Africa…,* (Pretoria and Cape Town, Academics, 1988), p. 61; The Education Bureau, *Education for life…,* (Cape Town, Department of Internal Affairs, 1981), p. 2.

body that would exercise influence over coloured education was the Coloured Persons Representative Council. This council was formed in 1969 with the task of advising the Minister of Coloured Affairs on, amongst others, matters on education. Booyse points out that with the addition of the council to government systems, "the administration of coloured education became a very complicated affair."[16] Educational administration and control in South Africa were set to become even more complicated as the apartheid machinery gained momentum and expanded its reach.

From 1963, as the apartheid government's homeland policy began to be implemented, separate departments of education were established in the self-governing states and the later independent homelands. In 1967, the Department of National Education was formed to coordinate white education. In 1978, the Department of Education and Training took over responsibility for the education of black learners living in the urban areas, which were allocated for whites under the Group Areas Act. In 1980, the rationalisation of government departments led to the amalgamation of the Departments of Coloured Affairs, Indian Affairs and the Interior to form the Department of Internal Affairs. Education remained segregated, however, coloured education fell under the Minister of Internal Affairs, while Indian education fell under the South African Indian Council.[17]

The introduction of the 1983 Constitution was a final complication in the system of educational control and administration in South Africa. The new national constitution led to the creation of three houses of parliament, each representing the white, coloured and Indian electorate, respectively. Under these new houses of parliament, new departments of education were created in line with the view that education was an 'own' affair for each of these population groups. There was the Department of Education and Culture of the Administration House of Assembly (whites), Department of Education and Culture of the Administration House of Delegates (Indian) and Department of Education and Culture of the Administration House of Representatives (coloured). Coordinating these three departments from a policy framework perspective was the Department of National Education, which, according to Behr, "… in respect of certain important matters 'serves the country as a whole, and consequently all population groups'".[18] Due to the viewpoint that black representation and thus administration, resorted in the six self-governing states and

[16] JJ Booyse, Education provisioning…, JJ Booyse et al., *A history of schooling in South Africa…*, (Pretoria, Van Schaick Publishers, 2011), pp. 237-238.

[17] AL Behr, *Education in South Africa…*, (Pretoria and Cape Town, Academics, 1988), p. 61.

[18] AL Behr, *Education in South Africa…*, (Pretoria and Cape Town, Academics, 1988), p. 74; JJ Booyse, Education provisioning…, JJ Booyse et al., *A history of schooling in South Africa…*, (Pretoria, Van Schaick Publishers, 2011), p. 230.

four independent homelands, each with its education department; black education was not included in the constitutional changes.[19] The Department of Education and Training did, however, continue to administer black education in so-called white areas. All these developments meant that by 1986, eighteen different departments of education were operating in South Africa.

Booyse summarises government control of education during the apartheid period as follows:

*"Although during the four decades of NP rule, central control over all education in South Africa had been considerable, structural, political and resource constraints had prevented total control. During the same period, paradoxically, the national system of the country became excessively fragmented. It resulted in extensive white and black bureaucracies which aggravated the typical evils of bureaucratisation, namely poor communication, a wastage of resources, inefficiency, inflexibility and conservatism."*[20]

Following President FW de Klerk's speech to Parliament early in 1990, in which the then president announced the beginning of the transition to a democracy, the ending of apartheid and the unbanning of various organisations, education became an intense source of debate. In the few years leading up to the 1994 democratic elections, various organisations and the government led a range of commissions and investigations into educational policy and strategies. After 1994, educational policy, norms and standards became the responsibility of a single national Department of Education. The administration of education other than universities, however, remained in the hands of provincial departments of education, of which there were now nine under the new constitution of the country. In 2009, post-school education became the responsibility of the separate Department of Higher Education and Training, while schooling was placed under the Department of Basic Education.

In summary, the twentieth century saw the growth of mass education in South Africa with the introduction of compulsory education and the establishment of schools and universities. In terms of administration, this became more centralised as the state took control over all spheres of education, however, also more fragmented as the system of apartheid gained momentum and was implemented in increasing measure.

[19] J Booyse, Education provisioning…, JJ Booyse et al., *A history of schooling in South Africa…,* (Pretoria, Van Schaick Publishers, 2011), p. 230.

[20] J Booyse, Education provisioning…, JJ Booyse et al., *A history of schooling in South Africa…,* (Pretoria, Van Schaick Publishers, 2011), p. 264.

The post-apartheid government saw the unification of an extremely segmented government sector, also developing systems to streamline and merge the structures inherited from the previous regime.

## NARSSA situation

The NARSSA mainly houses records generated by governmental bodies in the course of carrying out their activities.[21] Thus, records held by NARSSA offer a window on the functioning of the South African government over time. As highlighted in the focus question of the RPHUSA, mentioned earlier, this archive offers the potential to uncover dimensions of the relationship between education and the economic, social and political priorities of the state, since it offers a record of state activities. Furthermore, there is also the prospect of engaging with an unpublished, and perhaps by extension unfiltered, record of these activities due to the predominance of primary government records held by the NARSSA.[22]

For the historian of South African education and university history, however, engaging with this record is not that simple for several reasons. At a fundamental level, the first constraint relates to the type of records kept by NARSSA. South African archival theorist Verne Harris has demonstrated how the system of appraisal and retention carried out traditionally by NARSSA in itself has already limited the type of records preserved by the National Archives: official bureaucratic records which reinforced power, race and gender relations were favoured rather than those capturing voices from grassroots levels and of interest to social and revisionist historians.[23] Harris argues powerfully that archives in general and the National Archives in particular "offer researchers a sliver of a sliver of a sliver".[24] Certainly, when I carried out a randomised perusal of files generated by different departments tasked with education, a large proportion of these dealt with rather mundane administrative matters. There was, for example, a whole archival box dedicated to purchases of curtaining for schools and technical colleges.[25] Other files consulted included inventories

[21] National Archives and Records Service of South Africa, "What records does the National Archives and Records Service keep?", February 2015, (available at https://www.nationalarchives.gov.za/node/1212, as accessed on 1 November 2024).

[22] The focus of this research is on collections housed in the Central Archives Depot of the NARSSA in Pretoria. The author is aware that other relevant collections may be found in the various Provincial Archives Depots and at other parastatal or private institutions.

[23] V Harris, "The archival sliver: Power, memory and archives in South Africa", *Archival Science*, 2, 2002, pp. 73-74.

[24] V Harris, "The Archival Sliver…", *Archival Science*, 2, 2002, p. 65.

[25] Central Archives Depot (SAB), Department of Higher Education (DHE) 205, D2/5/4/246.

of furniture and stationery, financial claims and expenses, and administrative documents dealing with promotions and travel allowances. While no record is without some kind of historical value, these bureaucratic documents offer limited voices and perspectives on critical educational questions.

The second difficulty is mainly one of relevance to the historian of universities. Until 2009, universities fell under the successive, and for most of the twentieth century, segregated government departments of education and were also included under the vague and rather broad term 'higher education'. This means that to find records related to government policies and actions regarding universities, researchers must wade through a large number of collections of education and higher education records. As the overview of South Africa's education administration demonstrates, these records emanated from a changing number of departments and subdivisions of departments, which became more and more fragmented with the passage of the twentieth century. The NARSSA List of Archivalia gives details of seven different education department collections for the period 1911 to 1990.[26]

For scholars of the history of education, the situation is little better, as only three out of the seven departments in question have finding aids. The rest of the collections, which represent almost seven decades of records, are without any kind of finding aids. This equates to roughly 658 running metres of documents produced by various departments of education with no finding aid of any sort. Only two education department collections have been described and are available on the NARSSA online database.[27] These departments are the Union Department of Education collection (UOD) which includes documents from 1911 to 1968, and the Department of Bantu Education (BO) with records from 1942 to 1976.[28] Archival theorist, Terry Cook highlights how archival records "are continually reappraised for their 'value' when the archivist decides … which records are to enjoy all or many of only some of numerous subsequent archival processes" which may affect the accessibility and visibility of records to potential researchers.[29] In short, there are records on education, however, as they lack processing, they are not very accessible and a researcher will need to work through entire collections in the hope of finding material.

[26] ME Olivier (ed.), *List of Archivalia in South African Depots. Central Archives Depot*, (Pretoria, State Archives Service, 1996).

[27] The other relevant collection with a finding aid is the Department of Native Administration (BAO) who were responsible for black education before the establishment of the Department of Bantu Education.

[28] See Table of NARSSA collections in Addendum.

[29] T. Cook, "The archive(s) is a foreign country: Historians, archivists, and the changing archival landscape", *The American Archivist* 74(2), Fall/Winter 2011, p. 606.

In addition, each time I have requested boxes from the unaccessioned collections, the reading room staff have struggled to locate them in the appropriate strong rooms of the archives. This situation creates a 'silence' in the archive, which while perhaps the "result of passive or unconscious decisions" stemming from "[l]imited resources and/or a lack of understanding", nonetheless has "great implications for the state of societal memory."[30]

Furthermore, not all the government departments mentioned in the above chronological overview appear to have collections in the National Archives. For example, the Department of Coloured Affairs does not appear as a collection and neither does the South African Indian Council feature in the List of Archivalia published by the NARSSA.[31]

Another complication related to the accessibility of education records is that the latest inventory of collections for the central government archives was published in 1996, thus, making it unclear how to access collections of records from the post-1994 period. Government records are subject to a twenty-year embargo, which means that one should be able to access records up to at least 2004 at the NARSSA—the first decade of democracy. A search on the electronic retrieval system of NARSSA is encouraging as it does yield references to records related to education for the late 1990s and early 2000s. These references, however, do not refer to Department of Education records, but to records found in other collections which relate to education. Efforts to locate some of these records, based on the database references were also fruitless, as archival staff were unsure where to locate them. The presence of these records from the post-apartheid era is heartening, however, they represent only a minority of records produced in the post-1994 period. Larger difficulties with NARSSA due to the lack of funding, space and staff has meant that the archives depot in Pretoria can no longer accommodate new records, and government departments have been tasked with storing their records with private service providers.[32] Concerns over the state of affairs at NARSSA have been raised in recent decades by the professional historical community and other stakeholders, highlighting the challenges and failures in the state's archival sector.[33] South African historian, Christopher Saunders, describes his experiences

[30] RG Carter, "Of things said and unsaid: Power, archival silences, and power in silence", *Archivaria,* 61, Spring 2006, p.219.

[31] References to a limited selection of records from the Department of Coloured Affairs do appear on the Cape Archives website and at the Archive for Contemporary Affairs and Special Collection at the University of the Free State. There also appears to be a collection of South African Indian Council documents at the Cape Archives and in the Ghandi-Luthuli Documentation Centre of the University of Kwazulu-Natal.

[32] R Munshi, Archives, In defence of memory, *Financial Mail*, 31 August 2017, p. 56; C Saunders, National archives are a national disgrace, *Business Day,* 15 August 2011.

[33] The Archival Platform, *State of the archives: An analysis of South Africa's national archival system, 2014*,

with NARSSA as follows, "That there is a dire shortage of staff and great disorganization in the archives is abundantly clear. There is a backlog in processing material of years, if not decades and no proper system to find what one is looking for."[34] In a country grappling with the legacies of the colonial past and apartheid, it is striking that the record itself is opaque on several levels.

## Histories of education

Despite the difficulties associated with accessing these collections efficiently and strategically, a range of scholarship and writing is available on the history of education in South Africa, although scholars also maintain that it is an underdeveloped field of study. An introduction to a handbook on South African educational history points to the "severely marginalised" place of history of education in teacher training programmes at South African universities resulting in the "immensely impoverished" state of the historiography of South African education.[35] One could argue that both the records and the narrative have been neglected. Kallaway laments the failure of historians from a range of schools of thought and paradigms to have "placed education at the centre of the historical picture".[36] The author argues that particularly the history of mass education systems of the twentieth century "has not fully taken its rightful place as a central aspect of mainstream history".[37]

Despite this negative assessment of the field, some work has been done to explain the course of South African education and the histories of South African universities have more recently been receiving fresh and critical attention. Considering the inaccessible condition of a large portion of official documents on South African education and the complications associated with locating these records, I was curious to understand which sources had been used by scholars in the writing of these histories of education.

An examination of South African university histories shows that these mainly rely on primary records housed in their institutional archives. As far as government records are concerned, some collections from provincial archives have been consulted. The only education collection from the central archives depot that appears in the source list of these

(Cape Town, The Archival Platform, 2015).

[34] C Saunders, National archives are a national disgrace, *Business Day,* 15 August 2011.

[35] CC Wolhuter, History of education as a field of scholarship and the historiography of South African education, JJ Booyse et al., *A history of schooling in South Africa…*, (Pretoria, Van Schaick Publishers, 2011), p. 1.

[36] P Kallaway, "The forgotten history of South African education", *South African Review of Education* 18(1), 2012, p. 15.

[37] P Kallaway, "The forgotten history…", *South African Review of Education*, 18, 2012, p. 9.

histories is the Union Education Department collection, one of the only ones which is included in the NARSSA computer list.[38]

A 1975 publication attempted to address the problem of "access to original materials"[39] for the historian of education by reproducing sections of significant documents in an edited volume. This publication by Rose and Tumner, entitled *Documents in South African Education,* is intentionally limited to official documents which are described as "Reports of Commissions, Acts of Parliament etc."[40] and to statements by influential groups. Unfortunately, for the sake of efficiency, in many cases, the authors reproduced selections from documents and not the entire documents. It is still a useful volume, covering important documents on education including landmark debates, speeches and legislation. It is also striking that this volume appears frequently on the source list of subsequent histories of education, thus, filling a gap in the need for primary material.[41]

One of the earliest histories of South African education is the 1934, *A History of Education in South Africa (1652-1932),* by ME McKerron. The pattern of sources used in this history represents a model of the methodology employed by later twentieth-century historians of education. The sources used by McKerron appear to mainly be secondary sources: other education histories, general histories, histories of Christian missionary societies and biographies. McKerron also consulted volumes of published primary sources.[42] Reference is made to "Reports and correspondence of the Superintendents in the four provinces",[43] however, there is no indication regarding where these sources may be located. Many of the sources in the bibliography are also government publications.

[38] M Boucher, "The University of the Cape of Good Hope and the University of South Africa, 1873-1946. A study in national and imperial perspective", *Archives Yearbook for South African History* 35(1), (Pretoria, The Government Printer, 1974); P Maylam, *Rhodes University, 1904-2016: An intellectual, political and cultural history,* (Rhodes University: Institute of Social and Economic Research, 2017); B Guest, *Stella Aurorae. The history of a South African University*, Vol 1-3, (Pietermaritzburg, The Natal Society Foundation, 2015); BK Murray, *Wits. The 'open' years,* (Johannesburg, University of the Witwatersrand, 1997).

[39] B Rose and R Tumner (eds.), *Documents in South African Education*, (Johannesburg, Ad. Donker Publisher, 1975), p. 7.

[40] B Rose and R Tumner (eds.), *Documents in South African Education*, (Johannesburg, Ad. Donker Publisher, 1975), p. 7.

[41] P Kallaway (ed.), *The history of education under apartheid, 1948-1994: the doors of learning shall be opened,* (New York, Peter Lang, 2002); JJ Booyse et al., *A history of schooling in South Africa…,* (Pretoria, Van Schaick Publishers, 2011).

[42] GW Eybers, *Select constitutional documents illustrating South African history, 1795-1910,* (London, George Routledge & Sons, 1918); Various volumes of published primary records by HCV Leibbrandt (includes journals of Van Riebeeck and Zacharias Wagenaar as well as volumes of letters); GM Theal, *Abstract of the Debates and Resolutions of the Council of Policy, 1651-1687,* (Cape Town, Saul Solomon and Co., 1881).

[43] ME McKerron, *A history of education in South Africa, 1652-1932,* (Pretoria, J.L. van Schaik, 1934), p. 182.

This book still falls into the Union Education Department era, which is an accessioned collection. McKerron, already in this early part of the twentieth-century comments, "As the texts in the history of education in this country are little known, and often beyond the reach of the student, I have of set purpose quoted extensively from them."[44]

A pioneering historian of twentieth-century South African education is without doubt EG Malherbe. The very detailed second volume of his study of South African education matters, covering the era 1923 to 1975, deals with a wide range of critical matters which make up the education landscape such as nationalism, language, technical and vocational training, school through-put, differentiated education, assessment policies and economic aspects of education.[45] A similarly groundbreaking study was that of AL Behr, *Education in South Africa. Origins, Issues and Trends: 1652-1988*.[46] These two authors structure their discussions of twentieth-century education quite differently, however, their source lists reveal many similarities. They both include very long lists of secondary sources as well as lengthy references to published government records. These include commission reports, bulletins, occasional publications, annual reports, white papers and parliamentary debates. Neither refer to primary material in their reference lists. In his acknowledgements, Malherbe thanks "the various education departments, provincial and national, the Department of Statistics and the Joint Matriculation Board for making available to me information not usually available in their publications."[47]

An active contributor to scholarship in the field of South African history of education is Peter Kallaway. Apart from editing two volumes focusing on apartheid-era education, Kallaway has also contributed to critical appraisals of the field.[48] Kallaway's writing also emphasises the difficulties of access to state documentation.[49] A helpful feature of Kallaway's edited volumes on South African history is the additions of bibliographies of education. The bibliography in the author's 1984 book on black education is detailed and varied. As far as state records are concerned, however, the references are mainly to publish government records, including parliamentary records and reports.

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[44] ME McKerron, Preface, in *A history of education in South Africa, 1652-1932,* (Pretoria, J.L. van Schaik, 1934), p. 7.

[45] EG Malherbe, *Education in South Africa, volume II: 1923-1975*, (Cape Town, Juta & Co Ltd, 1977).

[46] AL Behr, *Education in South Africa…,* (Pretoria and Cape Town, Academics, 1988).

[47] EG Malherbe, *Education in South Africa…,* (Cape Town, Juta & Co Ltd, 1977), p. xi.

[48] P Kallaway, "The forgotten history…", *South African Review of Education*, 18, 2012; R Swartz and P Kallaway, "Imperial, global and local in histories of colonial education", *History of Education* 47(3), 2018, pp. 362-367.

[49] P Kallaway, "The forgotten history…", *South African Review of Education,* 18, 2012, p. 17.

Kallaway also makes extensive use of the collection of published records by Rose and Tumner, referred to earlier. As far as collections of primary records are concerned, Kallaway lists a range of collections from both inside and outside South Africa: mission society newsletters; the South African Institute for Race Relations; Carnegie Corporation of New York files, New York; Booker T Washington Papers; Anson Phelps-Stokes Family Papers; the Rheinallt Jones Collection at the University of the Witwatersrand and the International Missionary Council Papers. This bibliography raises two matters: in the face of the wealth of sources gathered by Kallaway, one wonders whether it is still necessary to access and consult the records of NARSSA. On the other hand, the presence of primary records from other archival repositories also highlights the potential contribution that the state primary record could make and one wonders whether this record would have been used more if it were more accessible.[50] The only NARSSA collection which is referenced in Kallaway's second volume on the apartheid era is the Union Education Department which is on the Archives' computer list.[51]

From the above brief overview of histories of South African education, it is clear that these studies seem to be based mainly on sources beyond the primary material of NARSSA, relying on published government sources and contemporary secondary sources. The authors of Kallaway's more recent edited study, *The History of Education Under Apartheid, 1948-1994*[52] also make use of personal testimonies and alternate archives. This provides a rich and varied narrative regarding the history of education in South Africa during the apartheid era, giving voice to marginalised roleplayers and communities, and providing an alternate narrative to traditional triumphalist or apologetic narratives of South African history generated during the apartheid era. It is curious, however, that in the historiography of South African education, this official narrative is largely missing. In the sphere of archival methodology, the official record and archive usually precede the search for alternate archives.[53] In this case, the order seems reversed and the memories and voices of the alternate and counter archives can only engage with part of the official narrative, in the form of government publications.

[50] P Christie, C Collins and P Kallaway (eds.), *Apartheid and education. The education of black South Africans,* (Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1984)

[51] P Kallaway (ed.), *The history of education under apartheid...,* (New York, Peter Lang, 2002).

[52] P Kallaway (ed.), *The history of education under apartheid...*, (New York, Peter Lang, 2002).

[53] See for example, C McEwan, "Building a postcolonial archive? Gender, collective memory and citizenship in post-apartheid South Africa", *Journal of Southern African Studies,* 29(3), September 2003, pp. 739-757.

On the one hand, publications such as those mentioned above, demonstrate the possibilities of researching education beyond the confines of NARSSA collections. On the other hand, it does seem that there should be some engagement with official records to properly understand the functioning and purposes of government departments of education. More worrying is the lacuna of such records for the period from around the late 1980s. In a country still coming to terms with the effects of colonialism and apartheid, a strong argument can be made for the need for more historical research to properly understand these events and their impact on education. How can problematic legacies be uprooted if the past is obscured and the record inaccessible?

Kallaway comments on the lack of attention to the past and a kind of purposeful amnesia that has characterised thinking around educational policy in the post-apartheid era. He points out that, "the attempt to characterise the whole history of education as flawed on account of its association with apartheid led to the wholesale abandonment of educational traditions built up over two centuries."[54] He explains further, "We did not take the trouble to understand with care what was wrong with apartheid education before we set about attempting to remedy the problems through grand plans which included the reform of governance and curriculum."[55] This state of affairs is echoed by another author who describes "history of education as a grossly neglected field of study".[56] My own recent experience of engaging with colleagues at a nearby university on the prospects of postgraduate research in the history of education was similar—fields like comparative education and sociology of education were drawing more postgraduate students than the history of education, with little realisation that these fields themselves should reside on a historical understanding of contemporary issues. Kallaway similarly concludes by identifying "an unwillingness to see contemporary political culture through the lens of past experience."[57]

History of education certainly should have a role in informed debate on education and education reform. As Wolhuter further points out, on the practical side, the field may shed light on contemporary education issues and provide helpful insights for those tasked with future educational design. As far as the theoretical contribution of the field, it represents a kind of collective memory and a civic sense of the development of the nation-state with its

[54] P Kallaway, The forgotten history of South African education…, (New York, Peter Lang, 2002), p. 12.
[55] P Kallaway, The forgotten history of South African education…, (New York, Peter Lang, 2002), p. 12.
[56] JJ Booyse, CS Le Roux, J Serato and CC Wolhuter, Preface, JJ Booyse et al., *A history of schooling in South Africa…*, (Pretoria, Van Schaik Publishers, 2011), p. xii.
[57] P Kallaway, The forgotten history of South African education…, (New York, Peter Lang), p. 18.

national educational system. The latter two aspects could explain the neglect of discipline due to South Africa's problematic and controversial past and the role government systems played in education.[58]

Another characteristic of the histories considered above is that they tend to cover long periods. The absence of primary records is, therefore, not very surprising as these histories focus on the essence of events, policies and their consequences. For this, one could argue that a government report or published legislation is sufficient. I then considered a sample of dissertations and theses with topics related to South African history of education, reasoning that as these would probably focus on smaller periods, they may offer more depth and evidence of more focused archival research. What I found was that there was also little use of NARSSA records. A PhD on the Soweto Uprisings of 1976 makes use of legal records, legislation and newspapers, yet, it shows no reference to NARSSA collections.[59] Another doctoral thesis focusing on the transformation of black school education in South Africa does indeed use collections of NARSSA. These, however, are only collections which can be accessed through the computer finding aid: BO; UOD; Foreign Affairs (BTS); National Social Research Council (NRSN). The study also used the private collections of some members of former homeland administrations, for example, the collection of the former Minister of Education for Qwa Qwa. This dissertation also made use of a range of primary sources from other archival repositories mainly based at South African universities.[60] Another dissertation looking at the origin and development of the psychological and guidance service of the Transvaal Education Department, used a collection named after this department, but does not give any indication of where it is housed.[61] Thus, seemingly the unaccessioned education collections of the NARSSA remain unexamined.

## Archives and histories

After the above investigations, I started to question the value and necessity of the official records housed at NARSSA. If scholars have managed to construct the narrative of South

[58] CC Wolhuter, History of education as a field of scholarship, JJ Booyse et al., *A history of schooling in South Africa…,* (Pretoria, Van Schaick Publishers, 2011), pp. 2 & 8.

[59] AMS Majeke, "The 1976 Soweto uprisings: Education, law and the language issue in South Africa", (DPhil thesis, University of Iowa, 1994).

[60] MSP Rakometsi, "*Transformation of Black School Education in South Africa, 1950-1994. A historical perspective*", (PhD, University of the Free State, 2008).

[61] EM Coetzee, "*Die ontstaan en ontwikkeling van die sielkundige en voorligtingsdiens van die Transvaalse Onderwysdepartement, 1914-1981*" (*The origin and development of the psychological and counselling service of the Transvaal Department of Education, 1914-1981),* (Doctoral dissertation, University of Pretoria, 1984).

African education, in some cases in impressive detail, without these records, I began to wonder what was missing by their omission and whether it was important.

I also realised that as an archivist, I perhaps have too much of a fascination and potential preoccupation with the primary record. In compiling the research for this paper, I was impressed with the value of contemporary secondary sources and their potential to shed light on developments in and perspectives on education during their period and was also impressed with the range of organisations and repositories whose records also contribute to the story of education in the country.[62]

On the other hand, the predominance of certain secondary histories of education as almost seminal source texts in later studies, could be considered problematic. Works like those by Malherbe and Behr dominate the references of most other histories of education. The influence of these sources, in the absence of other voices, could potentially result in a single prevailing narrative. Although Cross points out the progressive aspects of the historiography of South African education, there is still a preponderance of certain sources which appear to form a base for subsequent histories of education.

With this background in mind, I carried out a random exploration of the unaccessioned education collections to get a sense of what type of records they contain and what 'missing' dimensions they may contribute to either reinforcing, countering or adding nuance to existing narratives. As expected, a large amount of the records are administrative and do not seem to offer very much to researchers: stocktaking; budgets; receipts and order forms. On the other hand, the brief exploration of the archives revealed some real gems. An Department of Eduation and Training (OEO) file from 1994 included the lengthy arrangements for the use of schools as polling stations for the first democratic elections. These documents give a sense of different school districts, regions and departments at the closing of the apartheid administration. The file also contains documents motivating the distribution of voter education materials in schools of the Department.[63] This box also contained a document showing the transfer of schools in the region to the Gauteng Department of Education, highlighting the new era in terms of structure and administration.

Another OEO file is a gem waiting to be mined—this covers the school boycotts of the 1980s, and in particular, unrest in schools on the East Rand in 1984 and 1985. The

[62] JE Holloway, *American Negroes and South African Bantu,* (Pretoria, Carnegie Corporation Visitors' Grants Committee, 1933); ME McKerron, *A history of education in South Africa,* (JL van Schaik, 1934); EH Brookes, *Native education in South Africa,* (Pretoria, JL van Schaik, 1930).

[63] SAB, Education and Training (OEO) 56, Schools policy, formulation, decisions and tasks.

file includes day-by-day reports of the situation at schools during the unrest, including attendance, school atmosphere and the number of matrics writing exams. There are also some intriguing documents showing opposition to apartheid education, criticism of the boycott and official recommendations on how to deal with the unrest and the boycott.[64] I also discovered a file where in 1982, the Department of Education and Training school inspectors were asked to motivate whether women should be appointed as school inspectors or not. Overwhelmingly the respondents answered in the negative, giving motivations.[65] A study of these motivations promises to be interesting, particularly as the context of this department was that of mainly white men administrating black urban education.

My brief exploration also revealed more recent documents in the archives, however, these do not appear to be in abundance. Files in the Certification Council for Technikon Education (CTO) collection cover the formation and work of the Council for Higher Education (CHE) and Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC)—both important bodies in the restructuring of higher education after apartheid. In addition to administrative records found regarding office furniture and stationery, the files include minutes, agendas and progress reports of the HEQC from 2000.[66]

The availability of these records is encouraging, however, one senses an uncomfortable crossing over from one archival era to another. The source codes for these more recent collections are not readily available, therefore it is not always clear what collection the records in the database form part of, and it seems that some of these more recent records have been added to existing series in the archives, however, not always successfully. For example, attempts to locate files in the State President's collection (SPT) for the mid-1990s dealing with Gauteng education, led to much discussion among the reading room staff and eventually the files which were retrieved, based on the codes given on the database, were files of the State President's speeches from the 1960s.

An interesting side effect of the varying degrees of accessibility of primary records can be detected in the topics or eras which have received the most attention from historians of education. In a survey of the historiography of South African education, Kallaway points to considerable attention which has been given to the period 1910 to 1948, which is the period of the Union Education Department. Kallaway also draws attention to the major focus on

[64] SAB, OEO 56, Skole Boikotte.

[65] SAB, OEO 20.

[66] SAB, Certification Council for Technikon Education (CTO) 771, Skakeling binnelandse: Higher Education Quality Committee (HEQC).

the history of black education and resistance to Bantu Education, stating that "[c]uriously, there is very little material on the period 1948-1994" and that what has been written on this era is not based on original archival research.[67] This is confirmed by Booyse who remarks, "The history of education in South Africa during NP rule has been dominated by a focus on the education of black people and resistance against the type of education provided to non-whites by the government."[68]

Based on what has been discovered in the current research about the accessibility of the archival collections on education, this state of affairs is not that surprising as it seems that the scholarship has developed in direct relation to the accessibility of the official record. This situation is also mirrored in the source lists of a range of education histories, where the only two NARSSA collections of primary records which are referenced are the UOD and BO collections, both of which are the only accessioned education collections. The only other state-generated sources which appear are in the form of government publications. Concerning black education, it is a curious paradox that some of the traditionally marginalised voices of the South African past have the most accessible records and have seemingly received the most attention.

Furthermore, the increasing use of electronic search engines and databases has also distorted understanding regarding the process of archival research. It was surprising to find that researchers in the RPHUSA project had not searched beyond the NARSSA database which only represents a fraction of records housed in the archives. As an archivist, I regularly meet with an assumption that all our material is available in a digital format. The digital information age creates an expectation of instant answers when in the case of South African history of education, a large amount of tedious labour is needed to access the record(s). Furthermore, the digital record often lacks the context which an engagement with the files and volumes of an entire collection can give.

The exploration of NARSSA did bring to light a more easily accessible set of records which should be of great interest to historians of education. These are the collections of the state's Commissions of Enquiry. They are of interest as they are based on specific enquiries made by the government, highlighting what the concerns and priorities of the state were. The chronology of these collections list in the NARSSA List of Archivalia is in itself a history of state intervention in education. One can trace the developing priorities of the state, particularly after the 1948 election and its extending reach into all groups and facets

[67] P Kallaway, "The forgotten history…", *South African Review of Education*, 18, 2012, p. 17.
[68] JJ Booyse, Education provisioning…, JJ Booyse et al., *A history of schooling in South Africa,* p. 264.

associated with education.[69] Many of the commissions' records also do not have finding aids, however, they are more easily accessible due to their limited scope and size. A sample of material kept in these collections shows that they vary in what kind of material was kept. Some collections merely contain a final report, whereas others include inputs from a wide range of stakeholders, highlighting the range of influences on educational matters and providing evidence of a range of perspectives regarding the matters under examination.

What the NARSSA documents also offer is the potential to not only engage with larger state decisions and actions related to education, but also to construct microhistories of events and developments within the sphere of education. Microhistories offer historians and policy-makers a window into the complexities of events and decisions as they often focus on individuals or events by placing them in a rich social and cultural context.[70] Further exploration of the Archive may offer historians and policy-makers a more nuanced and layered understanding of education and provide insights into aspects of education which have not yet been considered in an historical context.

## Conclusion

Based on what has been discussed above, there remains a vast region of unchartered records and material for historians of South African education. Buried in the shelves of NARSSA is a wealth of primary material waiting for scholars to retrieve and unlock. This will require some grit and determination as researchers navigate the fragmented record located in an assortment of collections, and scholars will also need long-term vision to wade through the unpromising files of administrative documents. These collections, however, offer the potential to uncover hidden histories and to shed new light on the history of South African education. A systematic study of these records will ensure that the role of government in setting the course for South African education, can be more thoroughly investigated. This will go a long way to understanding the legacy of twentieth-century educational practices and should add nuance and depth to existing narratives of education. An awareness of these seemingly untouched collections will hopefully cause more scholars to brave the archives and reclaim some of the missing voices and perspectives from educational histories and debates.

[69] See Table in Addendum.

[70] CA Brewer, "Historicizing in critical policy analysis: The production of cultural histories and microhistories", *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 27(3), 2014, p. 274.

**Table 1:** Potential History of Education Collections of the NARSSA

| Code | Collection | Dates | Finding Aids | Details |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| **Departments of Education** | | | | |
| SAB UOD | Secretary of Union Education | 1911-1968 | Computer list | 377,10m<br>E1/1-14 |
| SAB OKW | Secretary of Education, Arts and Science | 1913-1974<br>1920-1973 | No finding aid<br>Computer list | 224,63m<br>E1/14-24, F3/39,41 |
| SAB OEK | Department of Education and Culture | 1968-1990 | No finding aid | 116,6m<br>F3/60-64 |
| SAB DEO | Department of Education and Training | 1939-1986 | No finding aid | 108,35m<br>F3/41, 44-46, 54 |
| SAB DNO | Department of National Education | 1954-1984 | No finding aid | 198,1m<br>F3/37-43, 50-58, G1/70 |
| SAB DHE (DHO) | Department of Higher Education | 1966-1974 | No finding aid | 10,9m<br>F3/39-40 |
| SAB BAO | Department of Bantu Administration | 1924-1976 | Computer list | 1289,68m<br>D2/49-D3/27 |
| SAB BO | Department of Bantu Education | 1942-1976 | Computer list | 4,3m<br>D3/29 |
| SAB IND | Indian Affairs | 1910-1983 | Computer list | 532,49m<br>D5/52-70 |
| **Related collections** | | | | |
| SAB NTS | Secretary of Native Affairs | 1880-1975 | Computer list | 1290,82m<br>D2/1-48 |
| SAB BNS | Interior | 1899-1989<br>1899-1973 | List 3.1.1.1<br>Computer list | 134,6m<br>D5/42-47 |
| SAB CIA | Commissioner of Immigration and Asiatic Affairs | 1900-1963<br>1903-1960 | Inventory S192 (*missing)<br>Computer list | 15,6m<br>D5/52 |
| SAB URU | Decisions of the Executive Council | 1910-1985 | Computer list | 15,6m<br>D5/52 |

| Code | Collection | Dates | Finding Aids | Details |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SAB KOH | Heads of Education | 1935-1995 | Inventory S448 | 53,3m<br>F2/63 |
| SAB MBN | Private Secretary, Minister of the Interior | 1948-1985 | Inventory S126<br>Computer list | 16,7m<br>E5/1 |
| SAB MOK | Private Secretary of the Minister of Education, Arts and Science | 1957-1962 | Inventory S125<br>Computer list | 0,4m<br>E5/11 |
| SAB ABN | Deputy Minister for the Interior | 1958-1966<br>1958-1984 | Inventory S116<br>Computer list | 5,2m<br>E5/35 |
| SAB MBI | Private Secretary of the Minister of Native Education and Indian Affairs | 1961-1963 | Inventory S115<br>Computer list | 0,1m<br>E5/20 |
| SAB MNO | Private Secretary of the Minister of National Education | 1961-1985<br>1961-1978 | Inventory S220<br>Computer list | 193,3m<br>E5/3-4 |
| SAB MOO | Private Secretary of the Minister of Education and Training | 1968-1972 | Inventory S256 | 58,46m<br>F4/50 |
| SAB MKR | Private Secretary of the Minister of Coloured Affairs and Rehoboth | 1969-1975 | Inventory S199 | 6,1m<br>E5/20 |
| SAB MOR | Private Secretary of the Minister of Education and Culture | 1983-1988 | No finding aid | 13,4m<br>F3/60 |
| **Transvaal Documents** | | | | |
| TAB OD | Superintendent of Education | 1866-1900 | T105A | 55,7m<br>A1/31-38 |
| TAB TOD | Transvaal Education Department | 1901-1950<br>1906-1957 | Inventory T247<br>Computer list<br>No finding aid | 26,4m<br>A3/26-27, C3/16-21, 24, 36-37, 48-160 |

| Code | Collection | Dates | Finding Aids | Details |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| TAB JCE | Johannesburg College of Education | 1934-1957 | No finding aid | 23,7m<br>A3/28-29 |
| TAB C57 | Transvaal Province Education Commission | 1937-38 | Inventory T310 | 0,8m |
| TAB OKW | Regional director of Bantu Education (Southern Transvaal) | 1943-1962 | No finding aid | 0,9m<br>E1/23 |
| TAB WOK | Education College of the Witwatersrand | 1949-1985 | No finding aid | 3,51m<br>A3/29 |
| TAB OWS | Education and Cultural Science | 1984-1990 | No finding aid | 1,92m<br>A3/28 |
| **Commissions of Enquiry** | | | | |
| SAB K46 | Education Administration | 1923-1924 | Inventory S279 | 0,6m |
| SAB K49 | Reorganisation of Unisa | 1927-1928 | No finding aid | 0,1m<br>E5/40 |
| SAB K87 | Training of Medical Students and Related Matters | 1949 | No finding aid | 0,02m<br>E5/40 |
| SAB K88 | University Finances | 1951-1953 | No finding aid | 0,03m<br>E5/40 |
| SAB K97 | University Facilities for Non-Europeans | 1953-1954 | No finding aid | 0,03m<br>E5/40 |
| SAB K125 | Financial Implications of Separate University Training | 1956 | No finding aid | 0,03m<br>E5/41 |
| SAB K213 | University Training for Engineers | 1957 | Inventory S337 | 19,1m<br>E5/45-46 |

| Code | Collection | Dates | Finding Aids | Details |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SAB K106 | Separate Universities Education Bill | 1958 | Inventory S324 | 0,06m<br>E5/40 |
| SAB K120 | Theological Studies at Bantu University Colleges | 1961-1962 | No finding aid | 0,05m<br>E5/41 |
| SAB K186 | Extension of University Training at Non-European University Colleges | 1963-1965 | No finding aid | 0,15m<br>E5/45 |
| SAB K225 | Dental Services and Training of Non-European Dentists | 1963-1966 | List 3.1.2.28 | 4,3m<br>E5/46 |
| SAB K186 | Establishment of Agriculture Faculty at Fort Hare University College | 1965 | No finding aid | 0,1m<br>E5/45 |
| SAB K186 | Non-European Medical Schools | 1965 | No finding aid | 0,2m<br>E5/45 |
| SAB K195 | Training of Teachers | 1968 | Inventory S334 | E5/45 |
| SAB K229 | Training of Whites as Teachers | 1968 | No finding aid | 0,4m<br>E5/46 |
| SAB K263 | Universities | 1968-1972 | Inventory S366 | 2,32m<br>E5/48 |
| SAB K296 | Medical Training | 1968-1969 | No finding aid | 0,2m<br>E5/49 |
| SAB K295 | Veterinary Training | 1968-1969 | No finding aid | 0,2m<br>E5/49 |
| SAB K299 | Engineering Training | 1968-1970 | No finding aid | 0,2m<br>E5/49 |

| Code | Collection | Dates | Finding Aids | Details |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| SAB K300 | Faculties of Agriculture and Veterinary Science | 1969-1970 | No finding aid | 0,8m<br>E5/49 |
| SAB K318 | University of the North Student Unrest | 1974 | Inventory S387 | 0,5m<br>E5/49 |
| SAB K359 | University and Related Training of Blacks in White Areas | 1979 | Inventory S404 | 2,1m<br>E5/52 |
| SAB K399 | Training of Black Engineers | 1980-1981 | No finding aid | 0,1m<br>E5/54 |
| SAB K393 | Violence on 29 October 1983 at University of Zululand | 1983-1985 | No finding aid | 0,8m<br>E5/54 |
| SAB K419 | Certain Aspects of Education and Training | 1988-1989 | No finding aid | 9,8m<br>E5/55-56 |

# Reflections on coloured identity in the Teacher's League of South Africa during the early 1940s. The introduction of the concept of non-European

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## Abstract

During the early years of World War Two (WWII), the Union of South Africa went through several political, economic and social changes that had profound effects on the creation of what a few years later would be the apartheid system. Racial tensions became stronger as the local political context was in crisis. At the same time, the impact of racial discrimination in WWII introduced further reflections on racial theories, concepts and definitions among South Africans.

This paper focuses specifically on debates and disputes about racial definitions among coloured teachers in the Cape. Taking into consideration the historical specificities of that racial definition and racial group in the Union of South Africa, the impact of the international context and the local context, racial adscriptions among coloured teachers changed from exclusivism to non-racialism. Younger teachers went from being proudly coloured to looking for new concepts to redefine a common identity and explicitly choosing the notion of non-Europeans for that. To understand how and why this took place, interviews with former members of the Teacher's League of South Africa (TLSA), the leading organisation among the coloured educational community, were conducted by the author and placed in dialogue with qualitative research in the Educational Journal and other publications from that teacher's organisation.

**Keywords:** TLSA; coloured identity; Non-racialism; Non-European; WWII; Education; Intergenerational disputes.

## Introduction

Some years ago, I was doing archival work at the National Library of South Africa, Cape Town Division. I was studying the *Educational Journal*, the leading publication of the Teacher's League of South Africa (TLSA), focusing on analysing the changes in that organisation with the rise of their younger leaders in 1944. While reading the journal, a particular event caught my attention. In the sixteenth volume of the journal, the issue for September 1941 was missing; it jumped from August to October and from number 1 to 3. I assumed that the library did not have that publication and looked for it at other libraries; it would be evident that the journal had a second number. However, as I continued reading, it was clear that the September issue (volume 16, number 2) had not been published. It had been written and edited, but the board members decided not to publish it. The resignation of editorial committee members, including a special section of letters, explanations and justifications given in the following issue (October 1941), led me to reflect on the conflict within the League before 1944.

The TLSA was created in 1913 by prominent members of the coloured community of the Cape Province[1]. It had the support of the African People's Organisation (APO), an exclusively coloured political organisation, which allowed it to expand throughout the province and increase its membership[2]. The initial aim of the TLSA was to bring coloured teachers together so that they could improve the quality of education in their community. However, during the early 1940s, with the changes in the government policies of the Union of South Africa, the TLSA became a space for the emergence of leaders with radical liberatory political and ideological perspectives.

The creation of the Union of South Africa in 1910, shortly after the South African War (1899-1902), led to the formation of an alliance between the northern Boer republicans and the white English colonial sectors. Thus, white domination reaffirmed its power over other (non-white) sectors of society. In this context, the coloured population began to suffer the effects of the expansion of discriminatory policies.[3]

[1] M Adhikari, *Let us live for our children: The Teacher's League of South Africa, 1913-1940* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1993).

[2] M Adhikari, *Let us live for our children…* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1993).

[3] The basis for future segregation was the 1913 Land Act and the deeper implementation of the pass system which set aside less than 10 per cent of the lands for the majority of non-white population and reaffirmed non-white migrant labour exploitation. Along with those measures, the State confined the duty of military service to whites only in 1912, implemented the Mines and Works Act of 1911 to protect white workers positions and imposed several School Board Acts that ensured the educational segregation of non-white population and restricted their intellectual and professional possibilities.

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Reactions within the coloured community were not homogeneous. It depended on its members' generational, ideological and political differences; hence, their interpretations of the changing present. By the 1940s, the generation of older TLSA leaders (also known as the Old Guard), whose youth was characterised by the possibility of integration and upward mobility, reacted to the adverse policy environment by trying to join the state as a way of maintaining or regaining the rights of a previous era.[4] These leaders were influenced by colonial evolutionary theories, and their social position was determined by racial distinctions. The leaders tended to see their future as aligned with assimilation with white privilege.[5]

Nevertheless, the new generation of teachers (known as the Young Turks) were trained in a context of increasing segregation measures. They suffered increased racial discrimination and its educational, labour, political, territorial, civil and social effects.[6] Their future promised no positive changes; the prospects of skilled artisanal work or clerical opportunities in the civil service work were not possible or were heavily restricted, and as teachers, they earned less than their white counterparts.[7] As teachers, they could not hold senior positions, their schools were poorly equipped, their living areas began to be differentiated, they were displaced from their old suburbs, their political participation was restricted and their relationships with other sectors of society began to be controlled by the state.[8] Marxist theories expanded in the region because of interwar European Jewish immigration and the spread of the influence of the Soviet Union.[9] The young teacher leaders in the TLSA came to understand the adoption of racial categorisation as a form of imperialistic domination that obscured class exploitation and prevented the dominated population from becoming aware of their condition.[10]

[4] In 1943 the APO supported the creation of the Coloured Advisory Council (CAC) as they believed it would give them direct access to government departments. Main old members of the TLSA were elected to participate in the CAC. The young members of the TLSA saw that action as collaboration with the state and that the Council opened the door for segregation among coloureds.

[5] G Lewis, *Between the wire and the wall. A history of South African 'Coloured' politics* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1987).

[6] As Mohamed Adhikari explains, coloured population lost political influence during the early 1930s, coloured students saw their subsidy diminished and could not find suitable jobs with fair salaries (M Adhikari, *Let us live for our children* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1993).

[7] M Adhikari, "Coloured identity and the politics of Coloured education: The origin of the Teachers' League of South Africa", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 27(1), 1994, pp. 101-126.

[8] M Adhikari, "Coloured identity and the politics of Coloured education…", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 27(1), 1994, pp. 101-126.

[9] A Drew, *Discordant comrades: Identities and loyalties on the South African left* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

[10] BM Kies, "'The background of segregation', Address delivered to the National Anti-CAD Conference, 29th May 1943", A Drew, *South Africa´s Radical Tradition. A documentary history, Vol. 2 (1943-1964)* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1997).

Given these differences between both generations, the aim of this article is to analyse the debates over racial categorisation that arose among members of the TLSA before its rupture in 1944, when the old leaders were challenged by the new leaders, leaving the TLSA and creating the Teachers´ Educational and Professional Association (TEPA).[11] During the previous years, in the context of the early years of World War II (1939-1943), these two groups were discussing racial definitions and linking them with their positions on the war and the local segregationist measures.[12] The racial debates were focused on how the leaders could redefine themselves. Should they continue to embrace the racial and cultural coloured concept or should they find other ways of identifying themselves? The meaning of being coloured for the TLSA members changed over time. It was determined by personal approaches and communitarian identities' definitions and socio/political changes in the Union of South Africa and internationally.

Claims based on racial identity and being coloured as a unique feature were based on the idea of exclusivism. By the end of the 1930s and early 1940s, another self-perception began to arise—based on a non-racialist perspective—that was not based on racial uniqueness, but on the idea of shared experiences of racial segregation and exploitation. The first notion tended to be challenged by the political changes in the Union of South Africa and by the effects over the South African territory triggered by the Nazi regime in Europe, giving space to the development of alternative perspectives. An analysis of the Educational Journal allows one to observe how positions—exclusivism and non-racialism—around the racial category of 'coloured' were built among the leaders of the coloured community.

## Literature review

The history of the TLSA has been studied from different perspectives over time. From a political perspective, the classic works of Richard van der Ross and Gavin Lewis[13] provided a historical overview of coloured political organisations. The latter underlined the importance of resistance movements against racial segregation among the coloured community. While Lewis' work is extremely valuable in opening the path to studying

[11] M Adhikari, *Let us live for our children…* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1993).

[12] L Chisholm, "Education, politics and organisation. The educational traditions and legacies of the Non-European Unity Movement, 1943-1986", *Transformation*, 15, 1991, pp. 1-23; C Sandwith, "Contesting a 'cult(ure) of respectability': The radical intellectual traditions of the Non-European Unity Movement, 1938-1960", *Current Writing: Text and Reception in Southern Africa*, 16(1), 2004, pp. 33-60.

[13] G Lewis, *Between the wire and the wall…* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1987); R van der Ross, *The rise and decline of apartheid: A study of political movements among the Coloured people of South Africa, 1880-1985* (Cape Town: Tafelberg, 1986).

the coloured community and its political organisations, it tends to reinforce conservative representations of the community by employing notions of morality, democracy and the naturalisation of the idea of a stable coloured identity.

Following the path laid out by Lewis, Mohamed Adhikari[14] renewed the political perspective by incorporating reflections on coloured identity within the study of political history. Adhikari's main aim has been to reconstruct the history of the TLSA from its inception to its fragmentation in the 1940s and to analyse the political positions adopted by moderate coloured leaders. By choosing the TLSA as his object of study, Adhikari opened a new space for reflection on the history of coloured identity. Politics and education cannot be understood as separate spheres, as for members of the community, better educational training was seen to ascend the social scale and thus, attain political and civil rights. In this sense, Adhikari deepened the study of the coloured community's history. His central claim is that the actions and positions taken by the TLSA and its intellectual leaders must be understood within a particular historical framework of profound changes in the state's social and racial distinctions, which shaped their strategies for community survival through adaptation.

Adhikari examines the TLSA to reflect on a broader issue: the formation of coloured identity. Understanding that this identity was historically constructed both by individuals themselves and through state racial categorisation, Adhikari defines it not in terms of racial differentiation, but as a cultural identity.[15] This perspective allows the author to identify continuities between the moderate essentialist and radical non-racialist sectors of the TLSA. According to Adhikari[16], the state's imposition of fixed racial classifications generated an identity crisis within the community, leading traditional elites to adapt to the discriminatory system to maintain certain rights and freedoms and thus resist imposed categorisations through everyday actions.

[14] M Adhikari, *Let us live for our children…* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1993); M Adhikari, *Not White enough, not Black enough: Racial identity in the South African Coloured community* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005).

[15] M Adhikari, *Let us live for our children…* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1993); M Adhikari, "Coloured identity and the politics of Coloured education…", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 27(1), 1994, pp. 101-126; M Adhikari, *Not White enough, not Black enough…* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005).

[16] M Adhikari, *Let us live for our children…* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1993); M Adhikari, *Not White enough, not Black enough: Racial identity in the South African Coloured community* (Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005).

Studies based on the political-institutional analysis perspective have focused primarily on two historical periods: the early years of the Union of South Africa (1910) and the resistance to Apartheid (from the 1970s onward). This focus is mainly due to the presence of organisations during these periods that were based on a cohesive coloured identity. When addressing the history of this community during the 1930s and 1940s, these studies tend to depict a sharp division: on the one hand, a moderate majority (understood as The Community) sought to integrate into the existing government system to reform it from within; on the other, a minority labelled as radical, which not only sought to resist new racist policies through violence, but also broke with the fundamental values that distinguished coloured identity from other non-white sectors—liberal values. Consequently, these so-called radicals are not seen by such researchers as representative members of the coloured population, but rather as part of leftist organisations. This conservative perspective seeks to avoid internal conflicts within the community regarding the meaning of being coloured, instead portraying a homogeneous image of it.

The first contributions to studying coloured community organisations during the 1930s and 1940s emerged from the history of leftist movements. To apply a Marxist analytical perspective to South African history, Roy Gentle[17] focused on the Non-European Unity Movement (NEUM), an organisation that sought to unite all sectors of society excluded from the privileged white sector. By centering his analysis on this organisation, Gentle explores the influences of Marxism and Trotskyism on its founders, who were primarily members of the coloured community. His work does not seek to trace identity conflicts in cultural and social terms, instead it examines the relationship between non-racialist projects and different branches of Marxism. As a result, Gentle does not delve into individual experiences, the author instead focuses on organisations, their relationships and ideological tendencies.

An emerging renewal within this analytical current, which involves studying organisations during the 1930s and 1940s and analysing individuals, their actions and their thoughts, can be found in the work of Allison Drew.[18] Drew portrays a diverse landscape in which members of the coloured community engage in dialogue and debate among themselves and with other communities and where the varied experiences of racial discrimination and exploitation within activist practices shape leftist organisations.

[17] R Gentle, *The NEUM in Perspective*, BA in Social Sciences dissertation (Cape Town: University of Cape Town, 1987).

[18] A Drew, *South Africa´s Radical Tradition. A documentary* history, *Vol. 2, 1943-1964* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1997); A Drew, *Discordant comrades…* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

Drew successfully captures the complexity of leftist-coloured individuals' ideas and beliefs, highlighting their struggles to reconcile Marxist theory with family and community traditions. While these studies shed light on different historical periods and processes, they tend to categorise individuals strictly within (Eurocentric) class identities. Even when such individuals challenge the representation of the coloured community as homogeneous, they often construct new rigid identities that divide individuals sharply, preventing an analysis of the complex relationships among them and their multiple, often conflicting, identity affiliations. Moreover, by focusing their research on political activism, researchers fail to capture individuals' life experiences, overlooking the connections formed in other everyday spaces, such as family and work relationships, which also influenced their identity positions.

Two key works that help to understand the mindset of TLSA intellectual leaders are those by Robert Edgar[19] and Alan Wieder.[20] Edgar's edition of Ralph J. Bunche's travel diary in South Africa (1937-1938) provides a glimpse into South African reality through the eyes of an African American observer. By detailing his daily experiences across different regions, Bunche brings us closer to the everyday lives and ideas of prominent coloured intellectuals, such as the Gool family (including Goolam, Jane and Cisie). Moreover, Wieder reconstructs the history of coloured teachers and their struggles against racial segregation. The author's work is based on interviews with key TLSA members, with significant contributions found in his biography of Richard Dudley, where Wieder presents excerpts from interviews, offering insights into one of the movement's most influential leaders and his core ideas.[21]

The most significant efforts to break away from the use of Western-imported categories in understanding the complexities of the South African coloured population have emerged from postcolonial perspectives in intellectual history. Crain Soudien[22] proposed a new approach by prioritising the study of coloured leaders, viewing them not only as political and community leaders, but also as intellectuals. The author seeks to recover these

[19] R Edgard, An *African American in South Africa. The travel notes of Ralph J. Bunche, 28 September 1937-1 January 1938* (Ohio: Ohio University Press, 1992)

[20] A Wieder, *Voices from Cape Town classrooms. Oral histories of teachers who fought Apartheid* (Cape Town: UWC Press, 2003); A Wieder, *Teacher and comrade. Richard Dudley and the fight for democracy in South Africa* (New York: SUNY Press, 2008).

[21] A Wieder, *Teacher and comrade. Richard Dudley and the fight for democracy in South Africa* (New York: SUNY Press, 2008).

[22] C Soudien, "The contribution of radical Western Cape intellectuals to an indigenous knowledge project in South Africa", *Transformation*, 76, 2011, pp. 44–66; C Soudien, *The Cape radicals: The intellectual and political thought of the new era fellowship* ( Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2019),

individuals' original and genuine ideas as knowledge developed from the Global South. By emphasising the historical figures who did not belong to the hegemonic Western academic world, Soudien invites reflection on the connections between knowledge production and lived experiences within a racist society. At the same time, by reviewing intellectual trajectories that were both anti-colonialist and non-racialist, Soudien recovers local experiences of non-Western ideas' production.

## Methodological framework

This article focuses primarily on analysing the publications of the TLSA, mainly the *Educational Journal*, specifically Vol. XIV to XIX (August 1939 – June 1945), available at the South African National Library, Cape Town Division.

The journal was founded in 1915 and was published quarterly until 1941 when it became a monthly publication. It averaged twelve pages and featured articles aimed at the teachers who were members of the League. In other words, the journal was an internal publication—funded by membership fees—that aimed to communicate news, foster debates and encourage reflection among teachers. By 1943, the League had approximately 1450 members, however, it was difficult to determine the number of readers, as the print run of the journals depended on membership. Nevertheless, it is known that the journals circulated within coloured schools among the students and among other teachers outside the coloured community.

Over time, the journal reduced its page count and became a space for heated debates among members of the TLSA itself. A clear indication of this can be seen, as previously mentioned, in September 1941, when it was decided not to publish the issue for that month due to internal problems. The explanation and justification for this decision are found in the issue that followed. In other words, the journal began to serve as a space for competition for leadership between the older and newer generations of teachers.

In this article, the analysis of the *Educational Journal* has been combined with revisiting other TLSA publications and a series of formal interviews and informal talks conducted with various members of the TLSA and scholars. Many of them were active participants in the leadership of the organisation during the 1940s. Others were students in the schools where these leaders taught, and they were able to describe teaching practices both in the classroom and in non-formal educational spaces. The interviews were generally held in the interviewee's home. They were sessions of approximately two to three hours each time, in which dialogues and reflections were promoted.

## Historical background

The Union of South Africa Act of 1910 consolidated four British-governed territories and gave them self-rule as a British Dominion. From that moment, the white groups agreed to vest themselves with full rights.[23] Tensions between Afrikaner nationalists and pro-British liberals dragged on. Tensions increased following the South African involvement in World War I, the 1930 economic crisis and the debates on the position to be adopted regarding participation in World War II.[24]

However, as Barbara Bush explains, both Afrikaner and British sectors agreed on a central element of the new government: the Union of South Africa was understood as a state in which the society would be organised along a racial hierarchy.[25] Thus, since its inception, segregationist measures began to be set up to reorganise society and define territories, activities and rights. All of these depended on the racial adscriptions that had been imposed from above. The racial hierarchy was sustained based on eugenicist, evolutionary and racist theories.[26]

The Laws developed prior to World War I, such as the Land Act of 1913, tended to be reaffirmed and deepened during the interwar period. As it is well known, the Land Act of 1913 designated the different rights of the various racial groups on land. Less than 10 per cent of the land territory was allocated to black the population.[27] This measure was inconsistent with previous histories of land occupation. Therefore, the impact of the rule was felt mainly among black people, who suffered the direct effects of land loss and displacement. By 1931, the Statute of Westminster gave the Union of South Africa greater legislative autonomy from the British Parliament. The effects of the Land Act plus the new statute generated general concerns, such as in the case of the coloured community, who feared future threats to their social status.[28]

The formation of the United Party government generated an alliance between the two sectors of the white population represented in the figures of Barry Hertzog as Prime Minister and Jan Smuts as Deputy Prime Minister.[29] During this period the statutes on

[23] LM Thompson, *A History of South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).
[24] B Nasson, *South Africa at War, 1939-1945* (Johannesburg: Jacana Media, 2012).
[25] B Bush, *Imperialism, Race and Resistance: Africa and Britain, 1919-1945* (London: Routledge, 1999).
[26] S Dubow, *A Commonwealth of Knowledge. Science, Sensibility and White South Africa, 1820-2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2006).
[27] LM Thompson, *A History of South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).
[28] G Lewis, *Between the wire and the wall…* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1987).
[29] B Freund, "South Africa: The union years, 1910-1948, political and economic foundations", R Ross, A

Industrial Conciliation (1924), Immorality (1927) and Native Representation (1936) were adopted. The Industrial Conciliation Act (1924) regulated labour ties between white employees and white bosses; non-whites lost their opportunities in the formal labour market. The Immorality Act (1927) prohibited sexual relations between people of different racial categories. The Native Representation Act (1936) revoked the right of the non-white population to have their own parliamentary representation in the Cape. Therefore, the political autonomy of the white population was based on the segregation of the rest of the non-white population and on the complicity of the British Government which benefited from the earnings of precious metal mining using cheap labour.[30]

Nevertheless, the advent of World War II would disrupt the balance of this system of domination. According to Allison Drew, the Afrikaner nationalists sought to maintain neutrality, however, refused to support the British government because of their historical ruling position.[31] Therefore, they were unwilling to sacrifice any further resources to help the British, hence, losing their achieved political and economic autonomy. At the same time, many identified with the nationalist and racist aspirations of the Nazi regime. Liberal groups understood the war as a struggle against authoritarian regimes and were inclined towards freedom and the expansion of democracy. Given such differences in worldviews, the flimsy stability of the white political parties broke apart. Hertzog resigned his post and was succeeded by Smuts, who declared South Africa's entry to the war alongside the Allies.[32]

The effects of this decision were soon felt in society. The Union of South Africa and its ports, set at the interconnection of the Atlantic and the Indian oceans, served the war effort. It supplied food and resources to the Allies, and its armies served in North Africa, Italy and Southwest Africa.[33] The broad economic recovery arising therefrom promoted the development of increased urbanisation. The non-white semi-skilled population began to fill the jobs of white males, who were active on several war fronts. At the same time, men who migrated for work to the cities began to settle there permanently, raising the percentage of the non-white population in urban areas.[34]

Kelk Mager and B Nasson (eds.), *The Cambridge history of South Africa*, *Vol. 2, 1885-1994* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[30] B Freund, "South Africa…", R Ross, A Kelk Mager and B Nasson (eds.), *The Cambridge history of South Africa*, *Vol. 2, 1885-1994* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[31] A Drew, *Discordant comrades…* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

[32] LM Thompson, *A History of South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

[33] LM Thompson, *A History of South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

[34] J Hyslop, "'Segregation has fallen on evil days': Smuts' South Africa, global war, and transnational politics, 1939–46", *Journal of Global History*, 7(3), 2012, pp. 438-460.

Therefore, during the early war years, segregationist measures faded somewhat about workers' broader urban needs.[35]

As mentioned before, the perceptions of non-white people on the war and the context of South African growth were filtered through generational, class and ideological-political differences. While for some sectors of the non-white population, this struggle opened the way towards democratisation, other groups understood the rise of Smuts and the participation in the war as part of the colonial logic that again subordinated the territory to the British capital.[36] Hence, the latter did not believe that fighting Nazism was more urgent than combating racial segregation in the Union of South Africa. These groups understood that the economic changes in people's lives were insufficient and would not lead to democracy.

## Discordant views about the present within the TLSA

Those two different perspectives can be traced within the TLSA. The older generation, the Old Guard, chose to support the government as their strategy to acquire rights and improve their socio-political and economic situation. They saw in Smuts' leadership, a light in the road for a more egalitarian future.[37] However, the younger generation, the Young Turks, marked by their own experiences of segregation, and influenced by leftist ideas and movements, understood the war and the Union government as part and parcel of imperialism and capitalist exploitation. They identified the South African white political leaders with European colonialism and, therefore, could not associate them with deliverance from historical subordination and inequality.[38]

To understand the positions taken by both groups over racial identification, one must first frame them in their own historical contexts. The founders of the TLSA in 1913 were part of the elites of the coloured community of Cape.[39] They had grown up in a context where their family's socio-economic conditions were in full swing. As descendants of the union of different populations and other community groups, the founders of the TLSA experienced a period of expansion of their rights and access to missionary education. This enabled them to enhance their education, thereby acquiring qualifications as lawyers,

[35] LM Thompson, *A History of South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).
[36] G Lewis, *Between the wire and the wall…* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1987).
[37] G Lewis, *Between the wire and the wall…* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1987).
[38] H Ahmed, "Against the CAD *for* full democratic rights", A Drew (ed.), *South Africa´s radical tradition. A documentary history, Vol. 2 (1943-1964)* (Cape Town: UCT Press, [1943] 2014).
[39] M Adhikari, *Let us live for our children…* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1993).

doctors and teachers.[40] Thus, these sectors had managed to enter colonial society as members of a small coloured middle class, making their racial identity something to be proud of.

Adhikari explains that early TLSA social integration strategies were based on the writings of Booker T. Washington (1856-1915).[41] Born into slavery in the United States, Washington became a prominent leader in the African American community. He encouraged African Americans to work hard, improve their educational qualification and observe the foundations of Christian morality so that they could demonstrate their broader skills to the white population, demonstrating their capacity as responsible future citizens. Members of the coloured community in the Cape adopted Washington's collaborationist strategies, demonstrating their aspiration to and capacity for European civilisation.[42] This position involved the acceptance of the evolutionary theories of the time such as Social Darwinism, implying no challenge to the construction of the racial hierarchy of society, but instead accepting it and claiming the accompanying advantages.

The formation of the Union of South Africa in 1910 threatened the social conditions of the Cape-coloured elite. It implied a territorial reorganisation; thus, the Cape Colony's liberalism was threatened.[43] It was no longer a colony, rather a province incorporated into a new domain comprising several other provinces under the direction of a central white government with its own agenda. Statutes passed under the rule of the British system of government regulated life in the Cape Colony; henceforth, in the newly formed Union, statutes were to be enacted by the local white government. The establishment of the APO, and subsequently of the TLSA, were attempts to protect the previously obtained political rights and improve the education of the coloured population.[44]

The early years of World War II witnessed profound changes in South Africa. Economic growth gave rise to non-white labour unions and increased segregationist measures, leading to radical left and ultra-right movements.[45] In that changing context, the social attitudes

[40] M Adhikari, *Let us live for our children…* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1993).

[41] M Adhikari, *Let us live for our children…* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1993).

[42] M Adhikari, "Coloured identity and the politics of Coloured education…", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 27(1), 1994, pp. 101-126.

[43] S Marks, "War and Union, 1899-1910", in R Ross, A Kelk Mager and B Nasson, B. (eds.), *The Cambridge history of South Africa, Vol. 2, 1885-1994* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[44] M Adhikari, "Coloured identity and the politics of Coloured education…", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies*, 27(1), 1994, pp. 101-126. S Marks, "War and Union, 1899-1910", in R Ross, A Kelk Mager and B Nasson, B. (eds.), *The Cambridge history of South Africa, Vol. 2, 1885-1994* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[45] LM Thompson, *A History of South Africa* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2001).

of the older generation of coloured elites were now *démodé*.[46] Thus, old strategies were no longer effective in these new circumstances. Although Smuts was shown as a political leader with greater tolerance over racial differences than Hertzog and DF Malan, it was clear that the sociopolitical conditions of the non-whites would not improve.[47] The old coloured leaders did not adapt to these changing circumstances.

In 1943, the collaboration strategy to secure future integration into the political system was used once more by the old coloured elite when they agreed to participate in the Cape Coloured Permanent Commission (CCPC).[48] The creation of this body generated a crisis that would subsequently lead to future tensions within the coloured community of the Cape. These members, who saw hope for a better future in this organisation, were heavily criticised by younger political leaders who understood this new body as a tool for deepening segregation.[49] The new generation of teachers also understood their presence against the decline of racist theories internationally. The Pan-Africanist movement developed across the Atlantic,[50] leftist organisations grew, and the expansion of Nazism showed the beginning of the decline of European modernity ideas.

Coming from relatively well-to-do coloured families, embedded with the old methods of political negotiation, the younger generation of teachers grew up in an environment of community activism. Many of the young leaders took their first steps in political activism in the APO with their parents and close relatives. However, they no longer shared the goals set by that organisation or their elders. While the APO proposed the slogan of seeking 'equal rights for civilised men', these young leaders were demanding full equality (economic, political and social) between 'European' and 'Non-Europeans'.[51] They questioned the racist evolutionary theories and opposed the idea of a distinctive identification for the coloured community from the rest of the segregated groups. The leitmotif of the leaders

[46] Personal interview with Ursula Fataar in her Wynberg, Cape Town home in March 2013.

[47] P Bonner, "South Africa society and culture, 1910-1948", R Ross, A Kelk Mager and B Nasson, *The Cambridge history of South Africa, vol. 2, 1885-1994* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); B Freund, "South Africa", R Ross, A Kelk Mager and B Nasson (eds.), *The Cambridge history of South Africa, Vol. 2, 1885-1994* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

[48] This body became the specific state mediator with the coloured population. Sectors critical of such participation understood involvement to be a form of support for the regime and a way of providing the state information about the community in exchange for keeping small spaces of residual power. A Drew, *Discordant comrades…* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2000).

[49] H Ahmed, "Against the CAD *for* full democratic rights", A Drew (ed.), *South Africa´s radical tradition. A documentary history, Vol. 2 (1943-1964)* (Cape Town: UCT Press, [1943] 2014).

[50] In the case of the Cape, Pan-African ideas arrived in early 1900 with Francis Zaccharius Santiago Peregrino. He was a journalist and public intellectual born in Accra that moved to Cape Town and lived in District Six. Since then, he created the *South African Spectator* and promoted gatherings and the emergence of coloured political organisations. For more information, read Saunders, 1978.

[51] G Lewis, *Between the wire and the wall…* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1987).

was no longer the search for acceptance into Western civilisation, but rather the rejection of colonial domination that still prevailed in the territory.[52]

This change in their political perspective was accompanied by changing behaviours and sets of values, which underlined and criticised the Old Guard's leadership and to a certain extent, Western colonial legacies and continuities. The most disputes with the conservative sector occurred between 1943 and 1944.[53] The events that unfolded at the organisation's Annual Conferences, held in Kimberley, show the rapid increase in conflict and the beginning of an explicit dispute over leadership in the TLSA and colonial subjectivities, values and ways of acting. The interview with Ursula Fataar[54] describes such conflicts around identities, representations and attitudes. In the words of the wife of the radical political leader:

*"…What became known as the Young Turks…The Young Turks… where Young teachers were now fed up with the ruling… the officials…of the old TLSA. Moreover, these old officials were straitlaced, collar and tie, well behaved, respectable, and did not put a step wrong… and did everything the government wanted them to do. So here comes this Gang of young men into the conference! Moreover, they invade the place! Moreover, they got uproar; they showed no respect to the older adults! Moreover, the old people do not know how to confront them! So they are sitting there, kicking their tables (Ursula knocks on the table, showing how they did it), knocking on their chairs, making noise, and not allowing any discussion to take place. Furthermore, I am certain my husband got a terrible reputation for being very rude in there…"*

These critical positions were forged through a complex process of formal academic learning and training (in high schools and universities, in political groups such as the Lenin Club, the Spartacus Club, the South African Communist Party and the Labour Party) as well as in informal study groups, called fellowships.[55] The latter offered theoretical and historical training that broke with the racist logic of society as in these places teachers, students and academics from different social strata and racial groups came together to discuss the South African reality in terms of the international context.[56] Here, young teacher leaders developed new critical perspectives and projects.

[52] G Lewis, *Between the wire and the wall…* (Cape Town: David Philip, 1987).

[53] M Adhikari, *Let us live for our children…* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1993).

[54] Personal interview with Ursula Fataar in her Wynberg, Cape Town home in March 2013.

[55] As Alan Wieder's interviews to TLSA members (see A Wieder, *Voices from Cape Town classrooms…* (Cape Town: UWC Press, 2003) and my own interviews to Polly Slingers, Richard Van der Horst, Jean Pease and Ursula Fataar during 2013 show, formal education was complemented with informal education which provided wider and more critical perspectives to teachers and students.

[56] C Soudien, *The Cape radicals…* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2019).

The main political study group was the New Era Fellowship (NEF). Founded in 1937 and initially led by Isaac Bongani Tabata, Goolam Gool, Cissie Gool and Dora Taylor among others, gathered weekly at the Stakesby Lewis Hotel, located in District Six.[57] Participants such as Richard Dudley and Ursula Fataar reported that their participation in the NEF allowed them to discover alternative ways to tackle their present situation, relate it to the international context and develop collective knowledge.[58] The high intellectual demands participants were exposed to were based on the belief that thinking was the primary tool to free the consciousness of the oppressed. They sought to transform the ways of thinking and acting of segregated groups. Given this mission, these meetings tended to include men and women of different ages, professions, socioeconomic conditions and racial groups. According to Polly Slinger,[59] the NEF promoted the formation of new social ties among the oppressed that were neither racialised nor class-based.

For the younger generation, these gatherings became spaces where the state's logic of social and racial control was denounced. These gatherings provided the younger generation with theoretical and practical tools to think critically about their reality and to formulate alternative projects.[60] Thus, the new generation of TLA teachers and their students challenged the imposed racial categorisation and looked for new ways to define their oppressive present.

## The concept of Non-European

From August (1940), Benjamin Kies became involved in the TLSA. He began writing critical articles about the features of the South African education system. Kies's first article in the *Journal* was published in October of that same year. Under the title "Comparative Education Series", Kies published three consecutive articles in which he compared the ideological and structural similarities of both the South African and the Nazi education systems.[61] While Kies focused on the similarities between the two systems, the author classified categories differently from those used by other authors of the *Educational Journal*.

[57] L Chisholm, "Education, politics and organisation…", *Transformation*, 15, 1991, pp. 1-23; C Soudien, *The Cape radicals…* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2019).

[58] A Wieder, *Voices from Cape Town classrooms…* (Cape Town: UWC Press, 2003).

[59] Personal interview with Polly Slingers in his Athlone, Cape Town home in March 2013.

[60] Personal interview with Ursula Fataar in her Wynberg, Cape Town home in March 2013; Personal interview with Polly Slingers in his Athlone, Cape Town home in March 2013.

[61] BM Kies, "Comparative education series. The Nazi education", *The Educational Journal*, XV(2), October 1940, pp. 12-13; BM Kies, "Comparative Education Series. The Nazi educational practice", *The Educational Journal*, XV(3), February 1941a, pp. 4-5; BM Kies, 'The results of Nazi education', *The Educational Journal*, XV(4), March 1941b, pp.3-4.

For the first time, existing racial classifications are set aside, and the concept of non-Europeans is used. Kies understands, by this term, all those segregated and subordinated sectors under white domination. His words are clear: 'It is not, and never has been, the object of our education system to train the *non-European groups* for anything but a subservient role in the life of the country'.[62]

Various aspects of the conflict between the two generations of teachers were condensed: positions about the war, views on the South African reality, and differences in identity adscriptions. Concerns about the Nazi expansion were part of a broader theoretical reflection on the effects of modernity and imperialism on various territories.[63] His articles opened a new phase in the *Journal,* where the perspectives of the older and younger generations of TLSA were constantly confronted until the TLSA split in 1944. The introduction of international issues about the South African reality was published along with those based on classroom practice.[64]

The choice of the comparison with Nazi Germany was not random. The concern of the young teachers in subsequent issues of the *Journal* focused on the idea that imperialism was the highest stage of capitalism, that it promoted the exacerbation of racial differences as a way of deepening the exploitation of workers, and that it was in Germany where exploitation had reached its highest levels.[65] The comparison allowed them to understand the policies of the South African state as part of a larger project, subordinated to international capital, whose population suffered from the effects of racial segregation. In Kies's words:

> *"... we find our educational system has been just as successful as that of the Nazis in the production of a defeatist attitude to the apparently overwhelming forces of oppression about them. (...) Nevertheless, still in South Africa, as in Nazi Germany, the hope of a decent and rational civilisation lies with that second product of their educational systems– those who are sufficiently educated to resent and eventually remove the forces militating against their entire growth by their abilities. And it will be left to the harsh school of life and circumstance to continue and correct the education which the little red-roofed schoolhouses began."*[66]

[62] BM Kies, "'The background of segregation'… 29th May 1943" p. 13, A Drew, *South Africa´s Radical Tradition. A documentary history, Vol.2 (1943-1964)* (Cape Town: UCT Press, 1997).

[63] BM Kies, "Comparative Education Series…", *The Educational Journal*, XV(3), February 1941a, pp. 4-5.

[64] Kies' articles were published as part of the main articles and thus, were followed by articles on special training, on specific school subjects, etc.

[65] BM Kies, "Comparative education series…", *The Educational Journal*, XV(2), October 1940, pp. 12-13.

[66] BM Kies, 'The results of Nazi education', *The Educational Journal*, XV(4), March 1941b, pp.3-4.

Thus, the strategies to resist racist measures should be part of a larger project of struggle against capitalist domination. In this sense, awareness on the part of the oppressed became imperative. That is why this younger generation of teachers proposed and incorporated changes in their everyday lives. By doing so they sought to live in ways that would help them to identify as worthy, independent persons and not as racially alienated men and women anymore.[67]

The new teachers, Kies among them, took a stand to challenge the dominant racial categories. They explicitly rejected the racist descriptions of population groups, hence, they stopped talking about 'Bantus', 'Indians' and 'Coloureds'.[68] In these contexts in which it was necessary to discuss these categories, the teachers tended to add an adjectival phrase before the noun: thus, 'the so-called "Bantus"', 'the so-called "Indians"' and 'the so-called "Coloureds"'.[69] They also questioned the Eurocentric idea of civilisation.[70] The use of the concepts of 'European' and 'Non-European' as identity adscriptions creates multiple resistances: resistance to the dominant mentality within the coloured community that persists in staying differentiated from the rest of the oppressed population; resistance to white domination by challenging its controlling theoretical foundations; resistance to the prevailing Eurocentric points of view, both in South African territory and the international community, which understand European societies as the engine of 'civilisation'.[71]

While it could be argued that the new identity label—'Non-European'—is composed of harmful elements (being not European, not white, and that the designated do not have equal rights), it implied at the same time the revaluation of their own worth.[72] Features and

[67] Informal chat during June 2014 with ex-students of the schools where those teachers used to work allowed me to recover everyday actions that those teachers tended to do inside and outside the schools. They stimulated their students and encouraged them to adopt solidarity as the main value and to think of futures with much more opportunities than the ones imposed by the State.

[68] In their perspective, "Bantu", "Indian", "Coloured" were categories imposed by the State to divide, control and exploit society. As the State began to consolidate the segregation measures, divisions within society tended to become rigid and compulsory, therefore, going against those categories was seen as a way of confronting domination.

[69] Extracted from interviews made during 2014 with ex-students of the schools (anonymous) where the teachers used to work. Most of them explained that teachers used to correct them whenever they used the State racial categories and suggested the use of the idea of "so called…"

[70] Personal interview with Polly Slingers in his Athlone, Cape Town home in March 2013; C Soudien, "The contribution of radical…", *Transformation*, 76, 2011, pp. 44–66; C Soudien, *The Cape radicals…* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2019).

[71] BM Kies, *The contribution of the non-European peoples to world civilisation* (Cape Town: Teacher's League of South Africa, 1953); Rev. ZR Mahabane *et al.,* "A declaration to the nations of the World", Statement of the non-European Unity Movement, July 1945; C Soudien, "The contribution of radical…", *Transformation*, 76, 2011, pp. 44–66.

[72] Personal interview with Polly Slingers in his Athlone, Cape Town home in March 2013.

elements that were viewed by the dominant sectors as unfavourable were regarded by these young teachers as positive aspects of their identities. Claiming they were neither white nor European allowed them to assert who they were.[73] First, they were part of complex societies that made their own contributions to the development of humanity. Their cultural and intellectual values had to be understood as an enrichment of civilisation.[74] Thus, the idea of civilisation should cease to be understood as European private property. It was transformed into a feature common to different societies. Civilisation, therefore, was universal and universalising at the same time.[75] Second, they were individuals with their own agency. For these young individuals, defining themselves implied a long process involving freeing consciousness, facing the condition of their oppression, and trying to reverse its consequences in their daily lives. To that end, their primary strategy was the non-cooperation with the segregation system and the establishment of places for alternative training.[76]

Avoiding racial categories was a strategy that went against the hegemonic logic of denomination and domination. It became almost impossible to name social groups without using historically constructed identification concepts. The resistance to arbitrary designations could not be carried out by using new concepts. Therefore, although debates about categories were important, the engine of change did not lie in the denominations as such, but in daily practice, in the actions of the persons who resisted state control and thereby gave new meaning to old concepts. In that sense, fellowships should be understood as spaces in which new thoughts, new ways of interacting and new communities begin to be created.[77] Even today, the effects of those experiences are still present among former fellowships' members and broadly in South African society.

As the younger teachers in the TLSA were appealing to non-racialism as a weapon to struggle, not only against state segregation, but also against capitalist class exploitation, the old members intended to reaffirm their exclusivism as a strategy to keep race solidarity.[78] Both strategies must be analysed historically when the country's future is uncertain.[79]

[73] Personal interview with Polly Slingers in his Athlone, Cape Town home in March 2013.

[74] BM Kies, *The contribution of the non-European peoples to world civilisation* (Cape Town: Teacher's League of South Africa, 1953); C Soudien, *The Cape radicals…* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2019).

[75] BM Kies, *The contribution of the non-European peoples to world civilisation* (Cape Town: Teacher's League of South Africa, 1953); C Soudien, "The contribution of radical…", *Transformation*, 76, 2011, pp. 44–66.

[76] BM Kies, *The contribution of the non-European peoples to world civilisation* (Cape Town: Teacher's League of South Africa, 1953.

[77] C Soudien, *The Cape radicals…* (Johannesburg: Wits University Press, 2019).

[78] M Adhikari, *Not White enough…*Athens: Ohio University Press, 2005).

[79] J Hyslop, "'Segregation has fallen on evil days'…", *Journal of Global History*, 7(3), 2012, pp. 438-460.

During the inter-war period, debates and discussions over both positions were held in the Educational Journal. However, these dialogues intensified, and teacher relations became more violent by 1944. The old teacher's denial of sharing the leadership and the younger's intransigence made the dialogue between them difficult and finally impossible. Nevertheless, those first exchanges of ideas and open discussions created the ground for new and more radical projects in the future. Recovering and re-evaluating them is a way of making the history of the TLSA more complex.

## Conclusion

In this paper, changes in the identity adscriptions within a sector of the coloured community, namely the intellectual leaders of the TLSA, have been tracked, as reflected in the contents and categories of *The Educational Journal*. Since World War II, the journal has been a space for disputes on the political and ideological perspectives of the older and younger generations of leaders. *The Educational Journal* allowed room for confrontation and critical reflection on international perspectives, the place they should (or should not) take in South African society, and the role of teachers in these matters.

The historical construction of coloured identity is strongly related to the various contexts in which it was framed. In the early years, the members of the TLSA claimed that coloured identity adscription was a way of strengthening the unity of a diverse community, maintaining ties of solidarity and cooperation. As time went by, different meanings arose. With the confirmation of the colonial state, identity nomenclature became a tool for social control, while community members used it to obtain rights.[80] The deepening of segregationist measures during the inter-war period and the symbolic effects of the expansion of Nazism led the new generation of TLSA leaders to reject that identity construction in favour of a new encompassing identity that included all the oppressed people, the 'Non-Europeans'.

While the older generation of teachers was interpreting reality from a colonial mindset, the younger generation of leaders were able to build a critical and thoughtful interpretation since they were raised in a context of deeper oppression while in response to Trotskyist ideas, Pan-Africanism and appreciation of difference were emerging. The Eurocentric racist and evolutionist theories encountered a turning point in South Africa during World War II,

[80] B Freund, "South Africa…", R Ross, A Kelk Mager and B Nasson (eds.), *The Cambridge history of South Africa, Vol. 2, 1885-1994* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011); S Marks, "War and Union, 1899-1910", in R Ross, A Kelk Mager and B Nasson, B. (eds.), *The Cambridge history of South Africa, Vol. 2, 1885-1994* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2011).

while new theoretical perspectives emerged. These leaders encouraged the re-evaluation of subordinated identities, resulting in the development of new social practices questioning the methods of control and state domination.

The theoretical reflections and new daily practices laid the foundations for a new community, no longer based on racial definitions. The solidarity developed among various oppressed groups generated hope for change. The beginning of the apartheid period (from 1948) put paid to such efforts, however, the main ideas of non-racialism remained alive and reemerged in new and more radical political programmes.

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# Learning about World War Two: Group work discussions and literary engagement using Markus Zusak's *The Book Thief*

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## Abstract

This article presents the findings of a generic qualitative research study that investigated 20 pre-service teachers' experiences and perspectives of a group worksheet discussion in a third-year English literary studies module that is part of a Bachelor of Education degree in Intermediate Phase teaching. The participants were interviewed, both individually and in focus groups, and their assessment tasks were analysed. The task was based on the novel, The Book Thief, by Markus Zusak. The academic essay is the dominant form of both formative and summative assessments in many academic disciplines, but especially in literary studies. This is problematic in some ways as most students who enter university do not speak English as their first language and generally struggle with expressing their ideas in academic writing. Additionally, many students do not have sufficient knowledge of history, and group work can supplement historical knowledge gaps that students may have. I argue that group work is underused in English literary studies modules. The findings of this research indicated that group work discussions can facilitate collaborative, inquiry-based and problem-based learning to advance knowledge of history that facilitates skills development in literary studies. These skills include close reading, textual analysis and disciplinary content knowledge.

**Keywords:** Assessments; collaborative learning; essays; disciplinary content knowledge; group work; history; inquiry-based learning; literary studies; problem-based learning; teacher education.

## Introduction

It has been the norm in higher education to rely, often exclusively, on formal academic writing in the form of essays for both formative and summative assessments. Hindley and Clughen[1] note that academic writing, in the form of academic essays, is a "staple university practice required across disciplines to determine student success" including the humanities, social sciences,[2] and history.[3] Godsell et al.,[4] in the context of history assessments, argue that essays preclude "students from incorporating other ways of knowing" and question whether essay topics and their "false standard of objectivity" necessarily allow for students' "own knowledges to be included in meaningful ways". Gibson[5] argues against overusing essays, and contends that for students to write better essays, "we could do worse than, paradoxically, set fewer essays". Gibson[6] explains that this can be effected by deploying a "more varied range of assessment tasks" that may help students to work, "if not necessarily 'beyond the essay', then at least 'towards', 'through', and 'with' it". De Villiers[7] argues that lecturers are confronted with numerous essays of similar shapes and sizes, which results in "autopilot marking". The author[8] further argues that "regenred work", in other words, non-traditional assessments in higher education provide a "productive disorientation" that could lead to more engaged and responsive feedback to students' work. Additionally, generative artificial intelligence brings into question the continued use of traditional assessment practices and the impact it has on academic integrity.[9] This article presents the findings of a study that used an alternative, non-traditional assessment in the form of a group worksheet discussion in a third-year literary studies module that forms part of a Bachelor of Education degree at a South African university.

[1] D Hindley and L Clughen, "'Yay! Not another academic essay!' Blogging as an alternative academic genre", *Journal of Writing in Creative Practice*, 11(1), 2018, p. 83.

[2] I Bruce, "Constructing critical stance in university essays in English literature and sociology", *English for Specific Purposes*, 42, 2016, pp. 13-25; U Wingate, "'Argument!' Helping students understand what essay writing is about", *Journal of English for Academic Purposes*, 11(2), 2012, pp. 145-154.

[3] S Godsell, B Shabangu and G Primrose, "Against colonial residues, towards decolonising assessment: A case study of a university history course", *Cogent Education*, 11(1), 2024, p. 2. DOI:10.1080/2331186X.2024.2362552

[4] S Godsell et al., "Against colonial residues, towards decolonising assessment…", *Cogent Education*, 11, 2024.

[5] J Gibson, "Beyond the essay? Assessment and English literature", B Knight (ed), *Teaching literature: Text and dialogue in the English classroom,* (Middlesbrough, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 100.

[6] J Gibson, "Beyond the essay?", (Middlesbrough, UK: Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 100.

[7] R De Villiers, "Transgeneric assessment: Modernist affordances for the student essay", *Critical Arts*, 39(1-2), 2025, p. 15.

[8] R De Villiers, "Transgeneric assessment…", *Critical Arts*, 39, 2025, p. 15.

[9] JA Haddley and CG Ardito, "Generative AI in assessment: Towards understanding the student view", *MSOR Connections*, 23(1), 2024, pp. 4-14.

The task was based on the novel *The Book Thief* (originally published in 2005) by Markus Zusak,[10] which is narrated by Death personified and explores the childhood experiences of the novel's protagonist, Liesel Meminger. The narrator also explores important events of World War Two. Instead of taking the usual approach of the first lecture introducing the novel, students engaged in inquiry-based and collaborative learning to answer contextual questions about the novel, which the findings show contributed to their ability to understand the context of the novel and to integrate literary devices and textual analysis in their answers. Using literature to teach about history and social issues is a valuable way to extend teaching and learning beyond the discipline of literary studies. *The Book Thief* is an example of historical fiction, which makes it especially useful to teach aspects of world history, specifically about the Holocaust and World War Two. Historical fiction "not only takes its setting and some characters and events from history, but makes the historical events and issues crucial for the central characters".[11] It is essential that students understand the historical context of the novel to interpret the characters, the narrator and the overall themes and settings of the novel.

Critical historical thinking is required when reading historical fiction. Bladfors and Kokkola[12] note that drawing attention to "the fictional aspects of historical fiction may promote readers' capacities for identifying historical truth in fiction". Importantly, though Bladfors and Kokkola[13] caution against using fiction to support history education extensively because narrative elements, such as unreliable narration, "may distort understandings of the past, but may also provide the tools for thinking critically about historical evidence".[14] A solid foundation in historical facts must exist for students to separate what is true from what is fiction in a novel.[15] This is why it is important to provide informed lectures on the historical aspects of the novel. The fictionality and historicity of the novel can only be critically analysed if there is a solid understanding and grasp of historical facts and fictional elements;[16] although, this view underestimates the supplemental role that fiction can play

[10] M Zusak, *The Book Thief,* (Anniversary Edition. New York: Penguin Random House, 2016).

[11] MH Abrams and GG Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms,* (Wadsworth: Cengage Learner, 2009), p. 256.

[12] L Bladfors and L Kokkola, "Critical thinking about history: Swedish teenagers read holocaust fiction", *Nordic Journal of ChildLit Aesthetics,* 14(1), 2023, p. 2.

[13] L Bladfors and L Kokkola, "Critical thinking about history…", *NJCA,* 14, 2023, p. 9.

[14] L Bladfors and L Kokkola, "Critical thinking about history…", *NJCA,* 14, 2023, p. 2.

[15] L Bladfors and L Kokkola, "Critical thinking about history…", *NJCA,* 14, 2023.

[16] L Bladfors and L Kokkola, "Critical thinking about history…", *NJCA,* 14, 2023.

in addressing gaps in historical knowledge.[17] The fictional elements within a historical text can either illuminate or distort historical accuracies depending on the reader's prior knowledge of the historical context, which is why *The Book Thief* fosters critical historical thinking in relation to the historical context and the narrative perspective.[18]

## Literature review

Group work submissions can include two or more students working together to develop skills, knowledge and abilities in higher education.[19] Tumpa et al.[20] observed that group assessments can reduce the marking load, improve skills such as teamwork, leadership, problem-solving, collaborative learning and communication. The group assessment applied a collaborative learning approach, which is a pedagogy that entails students working together to solve an intellectual task.[21] An inquiry-based learning approach was used for the task, which involves building knowledge that actively engages students through generating answerable questions.[22] The assessment additionally allowed students to demonstrate and enhance their disciplinary content knowledge, which is the students' knowledge of the subject matter of a particular discipline.[23]

### *Group work: collaborative learning*

Collaborative learning emphasises students combined intellectual effort to solve a problem.[24] An important aspect of this assessment was that students could incorporate the knowledge from others in their answers. Collaborative learning caters to students' diverse social and intellectual abilities while also embracing differences in knowledge, skills and dispositions among students and these differences then become useful and

[17] G Genis, "Indigenous South African poetry as conduits of history: Epi-poetics – pedagogy of memory", *Yesterday and Today*, 22, 2019, pp. 60-87; S Godsell, "Poetry as method in the history classroom: Decolonising possibilities", *Yesterday and Today*, 21, 2019, pp. 1-28.

[18] L Bladfors and L Kokkola, "Critical thinking about history…", *NJCA,* 14, 2023.

[19] RJ Tumpa, S Skaik, M Ham and G Chaudhry, "A holistic overview of studies to improve group-based assessments in higher education: A systematic literature review", *Sustainability*, 14(15), 2022, 9638.

[20] RJ Tumpa et al., "A holistic overview of studies to improve group-based assessments in higher education…", *Sustainability*, 14, 2022.

[21] M Holt, *Collaborative learning as democratic practice: A history,* (NCTE: Urbana, Illinois, 2018).

[22] SKW Chu, RB Reynolds, NJ Tavares, M Notari and CWY Lee, *21st Century skills development through inquiry-based learning: From theory to practice,* (Singapore: Springer, 2017).

[23] T Kleickmann, D Richter, M Kunter, J Elsner, M Besser, S Krauss and J Baumert, "Teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge: The role of structural differences in teacher education", *Journal of Teacher Education*, 64(1), 2013, pp. 90-106.

[24] SKW Chu et al., *21st Century skills development through inquiry-based learning…,* (Singapore: Springer, 2017).

valuable resources.[25] Rosedale et al.[26] contend that students learn from each other while they develop their arguments in collaborative reasoning. The dialogue among participants goes "beyond adversarial and coalescent forms because they are embedded in activities in which positions are modified in light of the arguments".[27] This means that students come to new understandings of concepts and questions through discussion and arguments. The arguments are not necessarily adversarial, but allow students to modify their positions. Additionally, new knowledge is constructed through social interactions.[28] Group work is effective because it enables diverse responses and interpretations that emerge through discussion, debate, and argumentation. The diversity of responses that are generated among readers add depth and value to the discussion.[29] While there are benefits to group work, it is often associated with anxiety and uncertainty among teachers and students,[30] and students may feel that some group members do not contribute adequately, resulting in a perception of unfair mark distribution.[31] I maintain that group assessments are a rich assessment resource, as revealed in the findings of the current article, which is underutilised in literary studies.

### *Inquiry- and problem-based learning*

Inquiry-based learning enables students to "answer questions through the exploration and analysis of data"[32] by exploring topics collaboratively, using each other's perspectives and

[25] SKW Chu et al., *21st Century skills development through inquiry-based learning…,* (Singapore: Springer, 2017).

[26] N Rosedale, S McNaughton, R Jesson, T Zhu and J Oldehaver, "Online written argumentation: Internal dialogue features and classroom instruction", E Manalo (ed.), *Deeper learning, dialogic learning, and critical thinking: Research-based strategies for the classroom,* (Routledge/Taylor & Francis Group, 2020), pp. 263-278.

[27] N Rosedale et al., "Online written argumentation…", E Manalo (ed.), *Deeper learning…*, p. 266.

[28] H Hou and S Wu, "Analyzing the social knowledge construction behavioral patterns of an online synchronous collaborative discussion instructional activity using an instant messaging tool: A case study", *Computers and Education*, 57(2), 2011, pp. 1459-1468.

[29] B Hutchings and K O'Rourke, "Problem-based learning in literary studies", *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 1(1), 2002, pp. 73-83.

[30] RJ Tumpa et al., "A holistic overview of studies to improve group-based assessments in higher education…", *Sustainability*, 14, 2022.

[31] J Forsell, K Forslund Frykedal and E Hammar Chiriac, "Group work assessment: assessing social skills at group level", *Small Group Research*, 51(1), 2020, pp. 87-124; S Orr, "Collaborating or fighting for the marks? Students' experiences of group work assessment in the creative arts", *Assessment & Evaluation in Higher Education*, 35(3), 2010, pp. 301-313.

[32] BLM Levy, EE Thomas, K Drago and LA Rex, "Examining studies of inquiry-based learning in three fields of education: Sparking generative conversation", *Journal of Teacher Education*, 64(5), 2013, p. 387. DOI:10.1177/0022487113496430

knowledge of various domains.[33] Inquiry-based learning allows students to investigate authentic problems, which enhances their understanding of the topic under scrutiny.[34] Students need discipline specific knowledge, however, they should also be able to demonstrate knowledge and understanding within different fields and integrate and synthesise interdisciplinary knowledge,[35] such as linking literature with history. Problem-based learning is well-suited to literary studies, which relies on discussion and debate rather than on questions that require closed-ended yes/no answers.[36] This means that the answers to questions are often undetermined and open to the students' interpretation of literary devices, such as metaphors, symbols, themes, and other techniques.

### *Disciplinary content knowledge*

Shulman[37] influentially differentiated between different categories of a teacher's content knowledge, separating subject matter (disciplinary) or content knowledge from pedagogical content knowledge. Pedagogical content knowledge involves educators representing and formulating a particular subject to make the content comprehensible[38] and accessible to learners[39]. Shulman[40] argued that content knowledge is "the amount and organisation of knowledge in the minds of a teacher". Content knowledge is the teacher's in-depth knowledge of the subject matter that is taught.[41] Student teachers must, therefore, have the necessary content knowledge about the specific subject that they will teach. In literary studies, the concepts include the literary devices that students need to understand.

[33] JC Harste, "What education as inquiry is and isn't", S Boran and B Comber (eds.), *Critiquing whole language and classroom inquiry,* (National Council of Teachers of English: Urbana, Illinois, 2001).

[34] BLM Levy et al., "Examining studies of inquiry-based learning in three fields of education…", *Journal of Teacher Education*, 64, 2013.

[35] BLM Levy et al., "Examining studies of inquiry-based learning in three fields of education…", *Journal of Teacher Education*, 64, 2013.

[36] B Hutchings and K O'Rourke, "Problem-based learning…", *Arts and Humanities in Higher Education*, 1, 2002.

[37] LS Shulman, "Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching", *Journal of Education*, 193(3), 2013, pp. 1-11.

[38] LS Shulman, "Those who understand…", *Journal of Education*, 193, 2013.

[39] T Kleickmann et al., "Teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge…", *JTE*, 64, 2013.

[40] LS Shulman, "Those who understand: Knowledge growth in teaching", *Educational Researcher*, 15(2), 1986, p. 9. Doi:10.3102/0013189X015002004

[41] T Kleickmann et al., "Teachers' content knowledge and pedagogical content knowledge…", *JTE*, 64, 2013; LS Shulman, "Those who understand…", *Educational Researcher*, 15, 1986.

## Research design and methodology

### *Research design and paradigm*

The study used a generic qualitative research design to investigate Intermediate Phase student teachers' experiences and perspectives of a group worksheet discussion in an English literary studies module. A generic qualitative research design allows for greater flexibility in choosing data generation methods.[42] A generic qualitative study is concerned with individuals, in this case, third-year undergraduate students, and how they subjectively experience and reflect on a particular phenomenon.[43] This study follows a constructivist paradigm in which the researcher considers participants' subjective experiences and studies their views on a particular phenomenon.[44] The constructivist researcher believes that the nature of reality is constructed socially and that there is consequently no universal reality.[45] Instead, there are numerous truths and versions of a single phenomenon.[46] This research design approach was applied to determine how participants experienced doing an alternative assessment for the study of literature.

### *Sampling*

A purposive sample of 20 participants was selected, all of whom spoke English as an additional language and were third-year students studying towards a Bachelor of Education degree for teaching in the Intermediate Phase. A purposive sample of participants share relevant qualities that can potentially elucidate the focus of the research inquiry.[47] Participants were selected out of a cohort of approximately 200 students whose marks in their second-year English module were: adequate (50-59) (*n*=3); substantial (60-69) (*n*=13) and meritorious (70-79) (*n*=4) to allow for a variety of participants' experiences,

[42] KA Holley and MS Harris, *The qualitative dissertation in education: A guide for integrating research and practice,* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019).

[43] KA Holley and MS Harris, *The qualitative dissertation in education…,* (Abingdon, Oxon: Routledge, 2019).

[44] JW Creswell, *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choose among five approaches,* 2nd edition, (Thousand Oaks, California: Sage, 2007).

[45] SB Merriam, *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation,* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009).

[46] SB Merriam, *Qualitative research…,* (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2009).

[47] M Ahmad and S Wilkins, "Purposive sampling in qualitative research: A framework for the entire journey", *Quality & Quantity,* 59, 2024, pp. 1461-1479; BK Daniel and T Harland, *Higher education research methodology: A step-by-step guide to the research process,* (London: Routledge, 2018).

perspectives, and performance in the group assessment. The two tutors for the module were interviewed in a dyadic interview to gain their perspectives on how students experienced the task. The names used to refer to the participants are pseudonyms.

### *Data generation*

Data generation methods included conducting semi-structured individual interviews and focus group discussions with the participants of the study, a written reflection task, and an analysis of the students' assessments to answer the research question, "What are pre-service primary school teachers' experiences of, perspectives on, and demonstrable performance in, a group worksheet assessment in an undergraduate English literary studies module?" Data was generated from October 2022 to January 2023. The individual and focus group interviews elucidated participants' perspectives on, and experiences of the use of the group task. Additionally, participants' worksheets were analysed to determine to what extent students achieved the desired outcomes of the questions. The participants' written assessments were read several times to identify common ideas that were evident from their answers. Six codes were devised based on the expected answers and marked the participants who had evidenced the outcomes in their responses. The following codes with the number of participants who had achieved the outcomes were marked, as indicated in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Codes in relation to assessment outcomes

| Codes | Number of Participants |
|---|---|
| Responses demonstrated understanding/appreciation of the symbolism of weather (question 1) | 18 |
| Responses demonstrated an understanding of Aryan ideology/race purity (question 2) | 18 |
| Responses demonstrated the ability to analyse an extract in terms of the theme of childhood (question 3) | 18 |
| Responses demonstrated the ability to analyse an extract in terms of setting (question 4) | 14 |
| Responses demonstrated the ability to analyse an extract in terms of narrative perspective (question 4) | 6 |
| Responses demonstrated an understanding of WW2 | 18 |

The findings from the analysis of the group worksheet tasks revealed that participants' perceptions of, and their performance in the tasks were similar. The codes outlined in Table 1 indicate that most participants could demonstrate their understanding of symbolism, theme, setting and the historical context of World War Two.

### *Data analysis*

This study used thematic analysis, which is the search for meaning "across a data set – be that a number of interviews or focus groups, or a range of texts – to find repeated patterns of meanings".[48] When analysing the data, the researcher used the constant comparative method. This method of data analysis involves comparing data segments with each other to identify similarities and differences that are then grouped together in categories to identify patterns in the data.[49]

### *Ethical considerations*

As part of the initial phases of the research project, the researcher had to ensure that permission was given from the Research Ethics Committee of the relevant institution, which was received before conducting research. Each participant was subsequently approached via email. The participants' informed consent was requested. As part of the informed consent form, potential participants were provided with a background to the study, in which it was explained why the researcher requested their participation in the study. Additionally, the intention of the study and the procedures involved in the research were explained, should the participants agree to take part in the study. Further explanation was given to the participants, in that they would be asked to participate in an individual interview, be part of a focus group discussion and that their assessments would be part of the data used for the purposes of the current study. The potential risks and benefits were also explained in the informed consent form. The participants were informed that this was a low-risk study and that their identities would remain confidential and that they could withdraw from the study at any time without repercussions.

[48] V Braun and V Clarke, "Using thematic analysis in psychology", *Qualitative Research in Psychology*, 3(2), 2006, p. 86.

[49] SB Merriam and EJ Tisdell, *Qualitative research: A guide to design and implementation*, (San Francisco: Jossey-Bass, 2016).

It was ensured that the participants had a clear understanding that the researcher was aware that they may feel pressure to agree to participate, since the researcher of the current study was the lecturer for the module, and that their participation in the study would not impact on their marks for the module.

### *Group worksheet discussion*

The group worksheet assessment was completed by the participants during a lecture period and required students to write paragraphs in response to a set of questions. There were five questions based on extracts from the novel, which required small groups of two to five students to work collaboratively to answer the questions in paragraph form on the worksheet during the lecture period of 100 minutes. Students then wrote paragraphs as a group in response to the questions. The questions contained extracts from the novel that students discussed and analysed as a group. This task was informed by two approaches to active learning, namely inquiry-based and collaborative learning. An inquiry-based learning approach means that students continuously build and rebuild their understanding through reflection and experiencing by establishing connections between their prior knowledge and new information.[50] Collaborative learning was also an important aspect of this activity, and it underscored students' combined intellectual input[51] as they engaged with the task. An important aspect of this assessment was that students benefitted from the diversity of intellectual and social interactions, which became useful resources in the learning process.[52] Students worked together to answer the questions and collaborated to share and establish knowledge of the literary concepts and the novel's context. There were five questions in the worksheet, each accompanied by extracts from the novel:

### *Group worksheet questions*

1. The extract below gives the reader an idea of the historical context of the novel. What is significant about the narrator's description of Europe as "gray *(sic)*"? Do you notice more than one instance of the colour grey being implied? What does this suggest about Europe during this period?

[50] M Panasan and P Nuangchalerm, "Learning outcomes of project-based and inquiry-based learning activities", *Journal of Social Sciences*, 6(2), 2010, pp. 252-255.

[51] SKW Chu et al., *21st Century skills development through inquiry-based learning…,* (Singapore: Springer, 2017).

[52] SKW Chu et al., *21st Century skills development through inquiry-based learning…,* (Singapore: Springer, 2017).

2. In the following extract, the narrator describes Liesel's features. Explain what the narrator means by "German blond *(sic)*" and "dangerous eyes" in the novel's context.
3. Rudy innocently painted himself black because he wanted to be like the American Olympian Jesse Owens, whom he admired. The passage below includes various instances of Rudy not grasping prejudice. What does this reveal about children in the context of Nazi Germany?
4. The narrator (Death) provides a description of the events at the Death Camp in Auschwitz from his perspective. From this extract, (1) explain what the Holocaust is; (2) what happened at Auschwitz and (3) how does the narrator experience these events?
5. Consider the genre of the novel and the context. Why do you think the author uses Death as a narrator in this novel?

## Discussion of the findings

The main findings of the study are that students learnt about the historical context of the novel through the group worksheet and were able to integrate literary devices and textual analysis into their discussions. The group task departed from the usual lecturer approach of taking time in the first lecture to teach about the context of a particular text, for example, teaching about post-colonial Nigeria before teaching Chinua Achebe's novel *Things Fall Apart* (1958) or teaching about class and gender norms in eighteenth century England when introducing a Jane Austen novel. This approach is called genetic criticism and focuses on teaching about the author's life and social context.[53] Instead of taking this traditional approach, inquiry-based and collaborative learning approaches were employed for the purposes of the current study. In addition to learning from each other by discussing the questions, participants also used the Internet to fill in the knowledge gaps they had about the Holocaust and World War Two. Many students had no significant prior knowledge about World War Two prior to doing this group assessment, which is part of a broader challenge in South Africa where students have limited grasp of historical content.[54]

[53] SA Wolf, *Interpreting Literature with Children,* (Hoboken, New Jersey: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003).

[54] A Carolin and T Bennett, "Using a historical memoir to improve curriculum coherence in teacher education: The case of Trevor Noah's born a crime", *Yesterday and Today*, 27(1), 2022, pp. 13-42; B Roberts, G Houston, J Struwig S Gordon, "Survey shows ignorance about big moments in South Africa's history – Like the Sharpeville massacre", *The Conversation,* 19 March 2021 (Available at https://theconversation.com/survey-shows-ignoranceabout-big-moments-in-south-africas-history-like-the-sharpeville-massacre-157513, as accessed on 17 April 2024).

The group task also encouraged the critical skill that is used in literary studies, which is reading the text closely, analysing the implications and effects of the extracts, and understanding literary devices through the discussions. Students were not assessed according to language criteria, and they subsequently felt that this was beneficial since it allowed them to solely focus on the ideas that emerged from the discussion. The participants also noted that the task encouraged their interpersonal communication and debating skills.

### *Historical context and prior knowledge*

Literature can be employed to teach students about different periods, cultures, and historical events. Using historical fiction has the added benefit of teaching students about world history. Literary texts can also be used to support teaching in other disciplines. Bladfors and Kokkola[55] note that fiction is widely used to teach history, especially historical events like the Holocaust. Additionally, repeated encounters with historical fiction can support critical, historical and literary thinking.[56] Carolin and Bennett,[57] in their study of teaching Trevor Noah's *Born a Crime* at a South African university, argue that historical texts can be useful resources to create coherence between English and history modules. This would mean that students can master the necessary disciplinary skills in both learning areas.[58] Many students' knowledge of historical events is generally limited. Carolin and Bennett[59] note that many pre-service teachers in the Intermediate Phase lack content knowledge of history because it is not a prerequisite school subject to gain entrance into the programme. Genis[60] argues that incorporating indigenous South African poetry into history classrooms can enhance the teaching of history. Godsell[61] argues similarly that using poetry in teacher education is a way of decolonising the teaching of history and provides a point of entry to historical issues that can be enriched with additional texts that serve as evidence.

Students learnt about the historical context of the novel through discussion and online research, because most students did not have sufficient knowledge of World War Two prior to doing the group worksheet assessment. Loyiso said, for example, "*I didn't know much about the historical context before*". Sandile admitted that "*the Holocaust was a foreign concept to some of my group members, including me*". Thembi mentioned that she learnt about the

[55] L Bladfors and L Kokkola, "Critical thinking about history…", *NJCA,* 14, 2023.
[56] L Bladfors and L Kokkola, "Critical thinking about history…", *NJCA,* 14, 2023.
[57] A Carolin and T Bennett, "Using a historical memoir…", *Yesterday and Today*, 27, 2022.
[58] A Carolin and T Bennett, "Using a historical memoir…", *Yesterday and Today*, 27, 2022.
[59] A Carolin and T Bennett, "Using a historical memoir…", *Yesterday and Today*, 27, 2022.
[60] G Genis, "Indigenous South African poetry as conduits of history…", *Yesterday and Today*, 22, 2019.
[61] S Godsell, "Poetry as method in the history classroom…", *Yesterday and Today*, 21, 2019.

Holocaust during the group worksheet discussion, and she was then able to understand the narrator's perspective: "*I understood why Death felt that way during the Holocaust*". When I asked Joseph if he knew what the Holocaust was, he responded that "*even that word, I didn't know it at that time*". I asked Jan if he learnt anything new from the group discussion. He noted that he learnt about the historical context: "*we did not do that much of history in school. So, I didn't have any prior knowledge of that much history*". The Internet and group members were valuable sources of information for most participants. They used search engines to help them understand key concepts and events that were represented in the questions and extracts, such as the definition of the Holocaust and events at the Auschwitz concentration camp. Zanele said that "*we had to Google the history of the Holocaust*". Students synthesised historical information from the Internet to answer the focused questions about specific extracts from the novel for the group assessment. Sandile noted that her group looked at "*some of the pictures that were depicting on Google of what happened during the Holocaust*" and that they had a student in their group who "*explained to us what was happening during that time*". To answer question 3 about Liesel's 'dangerous eyes', Sarah mentioned that they searched the Internet to understand the question before answering it: "*We used what we found from the internet, the characteristics of the German people and the dangerous eyes aspect was because her eyes were not fitting to what Hitler would explain the relevant features to have by that time in Germany. So that's why the narrator actually used dangerous eyes to make an emphasis that that it was dangerous to have.*" Linda mentioned that her group also researched "*the characteristics of Germans*". Joyce revealed that they would "*search something that was related to the question and try to connect with what we already know from the book*". Thandi mentioned that "w*e wouldn't Google the answer exactly, just what we didn't understand, the certain parts that we didn't understand*". Students evaluated and synthesised the information that was available online with their reading and interpretations of the novel. Table 1 indicates that students' paragraphs largely demonstrated that they competently incorporated these sources into their answers.

In addition to using the Internet to help contextualise the extracts, some students also used the novel itself to find answers related to the questions. Loyiso said that his group "*would Google some answers because we didn't know how to approach some certain questions so we would refer to Google or use the book, the novel, to find those answers*". They would read through certain sections of the novel to help guide their answers. Cynthia mentioned that the "*assessment was a little bit difficult, but we did research during that assessment, so I think it also helped with answering the questions*". They could then organise and synthesise the various sources of information to write the answers in their own words. These skills can be

understood in relation to the higher levels of Bloom's taxonomy where students can model their comprehension and ability to synthesise information by comparing, contrasting and paraphrasing information.[62] Linda explained how her group had to synthesise information from the Internet to demonstrate their own understanding: "*we checked on what a Holocaust is, and then we tried to explain it in our own words, like instead of taking what was on Google and put it straight out there*". Christina confirmed that they used the information they researched to understand the questions rather than getting all the answers from the Internet: "*When we don't know the answer to the question, we tried our best not to copy. So, like if we didn't know the question we will try to Google it in a way that it does not give us answers, but it help us understand the question.*" Using inquiry-based and collaborative learning, students incorporated information from various sources, such as the Internet, each other and the novel when answering the questions. Students immersed themselves in known and new information[63] as they were authentically and meaningfully participating in their own leaning by building on their experiences.[64]

A recurring pattern that emerged from the interviews was that some group members did history in high school and were able to help other students answer some of the more contextual questions in the group worksheet, indicating the value of collaborative learning. Collaborative learning enables students to learn from each other's differences in knowledge and that these differences are useful resources.[65] Through the process of arguing with each other, not necessarily in an adversarial way, students are able to develop their positions and knowledge.[66] Participants recalled that some group members "*did history in high school*" (Bongi) and "*they explained what the Holocaust is*" (Zanele). Christina mentioned in the focus group that "*you had to use your knowledge of the Nazis, what was happening then, in order to try and make connections between what you know and what the book was saying*". Bladfors and Kokkola[67] mention that making connections "is a well-established aspect of critical thinking" and noted in their study on *The Book Thief* that their participants "could distinguish history from fiction, but only when their knowledge of history was grounded in

[62] NE Adams, "Bloom's taxonomy of cognitive learning objectives". *Journal of the Medical Library Association*, 103(3), 2015, pp. 152-153.

[63] SM Holloway, "The multiliteracies project: Preservice and inservice teachers learning by design in diverse content areas". *Pedagogies: An International Journal*, 16(3), 2021, pp. 307-325.

[64] S Rajendram MV Govindarajoo, "Responding to literature texts through films in English and the L1 within a multiliteracies pedagogy", *International Journal of Applied Linguistics and English Literature*, 5(2), 2016, pp. 56-63.

[65] SKW Chu et al., *21st Century skills development through inquiry-based learning…*, (Singapore: Springer, 2017).

[66] N Rosedale et al., "Online written argumentation…", E Manalo (ed.), *Deeper learning…*, pp. 263-278.

[67] L Bladfors and L Kokkola, "Critical thinking about history…", *NJCA*, 14, 2023, pp. 8-9.

specific, concrete 'facts'". The group assessment facilitated the participants' understanding of the historical context of the novel and they were then able to answer the questions. Sandile, for example, revealed that after they had learnt about the Holocaust, they were able to answer part three of question five, which asked students to describe how the narrator experienced the deaths at the concentration camps. Sandile explained:

*"…more than anything, it brought a lot of light into what Death was explaining. Because in that extract, Death explains basically what was happening at the concentration camps and how the Jews were being treated. So, it was directly linked to what Google was telling us about the Holocaust. So, it made it a bit easier for us, as a group, to actually write that question."*

This shows that once Sandile and her group understood the historical events and setting, they could discuss the narrator's perspective confidently. Table 1, however, reveals that fewer students were able to analyse the narrator's subjective experience, which meant that this aspect needed to be explicitly taught during lectures.

### *Textual analysis and disciplinary content knowledge*

The group worksheet discussion encouraged close reading of the text, analysis and understanding of literary concepts. Students were able to integrate close reading of the extracts into their responses. Close reading is a detailed analysis of "the language, form, and literary devices inherent to the work itself as a kind of self-contained, autonomous unified artistic production".[68] In addition, close reading promotes critical thinking,[69] comprehension[70] and analytical skills.[71] In this activity, students applied their understanding of symbolic meaning through close reading.

[68] P Jay, *The humanities "crisis" and the future of literary studies,* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2014), p. 133.

[69] KA McCarthy, "The split consciousness required to teach poetry to student teachers in a South African metropolitan university", V Nomlomo, Z Desai, M Mbelani, N Dlamini and J September (eds.), *Masixhase abantwana bakwazi ukufunda nokubhala: Let us enable our children to read and write,* (Cape Town: University of the Western Cape, Faculty of Education and British Council South Africa, 2020), pp. 205-218; SA Rahman NFA Manaf, "A critical analysis of Bloom's taxonomy in teaching creative and critical thinking skills in Malaysia through English literature", *English Language Teaching*, 10(9), 2017, pp. 245-256; NA Shukri and J Mukundan, "A review on developing critical thinking skills through literary texts", *Advances in Language and Literary Studies*, 6(2), 2015, pp. 4-9.

[70] A Carolin, "What literary studies can offer sexuality education: Pre-service teachers' responses to an animated film", *Transformation in Higher Education*, 7(1), 2022, p. 162; P Duck, "Making sense of close reading", *Changing English,* 25(1), 2018, pp. 14-28; I Lindell, "Embracing the risk of teaching literature", *Educational Theory*, 70(1), 2020, pp. 43-55.

[71] MH Abrams and GG Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms,* (Wadsworth: Cengage Learner, 2009).

Loyiso wrote in a reflection task how, "*during the group discussions, I learned more about some ideas which are central to the plot of the story told in The Book Thief. The discussions were really important to my analysis approach to different extracts that were featured in the task*". Loyisa further writes about different literary elements that he learnt about from the discussion: "*analysis included talking about how the colour grey is used as a symbol in the narration of the book and how the writer used Death to tell the story, with reasons for why this was significant*". Loyisa mentioned that the discussion included elements of fiction, such as the symbolic meaning of colours and the narrative perspective and why these elements were used in the novel. Linda revealed that "*I did learn a few things, and by that time I didn't understand Death's perspective of narration. But then after that, I was clear on how death was the narrator and its different perspectives*". Many participants also noted that the extracts themselves informed their answers to the questions: "*When I read the extracts, I got an insight into what was going on during that historical time*" (Sandile). Mpho felt that the extracts "*gave us an idea and answering the question and supporting our points*". The extracts were also found to explain the historical background of the novel: "*you get a historical background of what the novel is talking about*" (Thembi).

Discussing the questions in groups improved some participants' understanding of symbolism, thus, contributing to their disciplinary content knowledge. James said that the questions "*made it possible for me to symbolically understand the content*". The group assessment helped Christina with "*how to analyse the symbols [because] when you're reading, don't just look at the obvious. Look at the hidden themes or hidden symbols that were used there in order to interpret the book*". The lively discussion led Thembi to a new understanding of how different literary concepts work in the novel: "*after the fighting and arguing, I came to a new understanding, and I understood the story better than I did in the beginning. I got other views, new ways of looking at the story, new ways of how symbols, symbolism in the story was used*". By applying close reading and discussion, students' interpretation of the novel was enriched.

In addition to the literary element of symbolism, close reading of the extracts also helped students understand other elements, such as setting. The symbolism in the extracts, such as the colour grey and the red Nazi iconography, foregrounds the bleak and destructive setting and themes of the novel. When participants were asked if the extracts helped them with understanding the setting, Sarah said that it did and "*it created a picture in a way of how it looked like during that time, but more than how it looked like, it was the use of symbolism. I think on the atmosphere of how it felt like to be cause grey is not really like a bright*

*colour to present like a good time; it represents like dull moments*". Most participants were able to analyse the quotations in the questions and extract meaning about the symbolism in relation to the setting. This is significant because students used the extracts and contextual information together to enrich the understanding of both. Participants mentioned that the group worksheet discussion "*helped me understand the setting better*" (Loyiso) and Lucky used the extracts "*to figure out the setting*". For Linda, the extracts "*showed us the setting of the time as well*". Mpho noted that "*the extracts helped in understanding the historical context of the novel [and] it gave us insight of the spatial and time setting of the novel*". The group worksheet discussion, therefore, enabled students to learn about the history, which assisted them in analysing the literary techniques in the novel and what these techniques reveal about the characters, plot, and themes, as evidenced in their written assessments (Table 1).

Participants used textual evidence from the novel to settle disputes of what to write down for the group assessment. Participants were asked how they dealt with divergent opinions from their group members and Zanele noted that they would ask "*a person to explain their answer more and we'll find similarities in our answers then we'd use that*". In the focus group, Lucky remarked that they had to "*argue points where you have to give opinions. You had to judge [and] support your arguments*", revealing a particularly strident insight about the relationship between textual analysis and argumentation. Loyiso noted that when disagreements came up during the discussion, they would require group members to support their "*arguments with evidence from the book*" and "*to resolve the arguments, it meant us having to find evidence in the book*". The participants used Bloom's concept of evaluating, which involves making judgements about the text based on certain criteria[72] to settle the disputes they had about the correct answer to a question. Zanele revealed in the focus group that "*by evaluating, we got to maybe choose which idea is best*". Sandile mentioned that using the novel and extracts to substantiate arguments meant that "*whatever we include in our writing has weight*". Sandile emphasised the need to have sufficient textual evidence to support a position. James also stressed the importance of using extracts to add weight to an argument: "*we were able to see which of the points we said had weight. The kind of points that could be backed up by what happened in the story*". He also reflected on the group worksheet in the reflection task and wrote that the discussion "*helped to consolidate multiple perspectives, where I got to learn that one idea can be branched into multiple theories. Essentially, group discussions introduced the idea of understanding literature through different perspectives*". The

[72] G Fonseca Amorin, PP Balestrassi, R Sawhney, M De Oliveira-Abans and DL Ferreira da Silva, "Six sigma learning evaluation model using bloom's taxonomy", *International Journal of Lean Six Sigma*, 9(1), 2018, pp. 156-174.

collaborative nature of the group assessment facilitated learning about the novel's context, while also enhancing skills of textual analysis and developing students' disciplinary content knowledge.

The participants' written assessments demonstrated that most were able to identify the connection between the setting of the novel during World War Two and the symbolism of the colour grey, as is evident in the following quotation from a written response from Loyiso's, Sarah's and Jan's group to question 1:

> *"The idea of grey implies a morbid atmosphere. Europe is plagued by death and destruction at this time. Colours signify prosperity and joy, whereas the "grey air" symbolises decline and mourning in Europe. "The day was gray", this suggests this particular day was dark and unhappy. Something tragic happened on this particular day. Gray is a colour that is between black & white. This suggests that Europe is going through a transition phase between peace and war."*

Participants interpreted the symbolism of grey with the morbid and tragic atmosphere of Europe during World War Two.

### *Collaborative learning in literary studies*

By collaborating, participants focused on inquiry-based learning by doing research, reading, and discussing issues to solve the problem, which was the question based on literary elements such as plot, themes, setting, narrative perspective and characterisation in the novel. The absence of language and structure criteria in the group assessment encouraged a focus on students' ideas. Candice, one of the two tutors for the module, observed that this "*eased them from a lot of pressure*" and also mentioned the limitations of academic structure: *"I think it helped them not to worry about structure and everything else, but to just focus on the question itself. So, I think that that really took off some pressure from the students."* This idea was confirmed by Sandile who mentioned that "*it didn't put a lot of pressure on us*". Suzie stated that it "*was less stress*". Zanele provided two reasons why she experienced this as a good thing. Firstly, Zanele noted that "*it was fair because with the time that we're given, we wouldn't really have enough time to edit our work"*; and secondly, "*it was good not to have us assessed on language because it's different people writing the same thing, so it [the ideas] wouldn't really flow*". Loyiso felt that "*it might have helped us in a way of not being focused on the language and structure of that, just be focused on the idea and how we unpack it*". Linda also said that "*it's easier for one to express their ideas fully and not worry about the language*" because "*when we are assessed on language structures, it brings an anxiety*". Sam noted that

"*it was a relief; helped me express ideas more*". This sense of collaboration and learning from each other was felt strongly by the participants and having to focus on language structures would have distracted from the ideas that were being shared. Many university students arrive at university and do not have the requisite academic language competence to succeed at university.[73] This is because the vast majority of students at South African universities do not speak English as their first language,[74] which impacts their ability to read and process information at a tertiary level.[75] Most participants felt positively about not being assessed on language and structure, using sentiments such as "*freeing*", "*liberating*", "*relief*", "*positive*", "*helpful*", "*comfortable*" and "*made me happy*".

## Conclusion

Writing about group work in literary studies, Hutchings and O'Rourke[76] posit that such activities could "enable students to approach their individual reading and research with a clearer focus" about the issues they must investigate. The findings of this study indicated that the participants learnt about the historical context of *The Book Thief* through discussions, research, close reading, and argumentation. Participants were able to integrate the historical context of the novel into their textual analysis of the literary devices in their discussions. The assessment enabled collaborative learning where students learnt facts from each other during the discussions when answering the questions, while also advancing their close reading of the extracts. As an alternative assessment to traditional academic essays, I argue that group work discussions as assessments are underutilised in literary studies modules and enable collaborative, inquiry-based and problem-based learning. The dominant, and often exclusive, use of essays in higher education[77] limits the possibilities that alternative assessments, such as group work, can offer literary studies and history education.

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# Reconceptualising Africanising, and its positioning in history teaching and learning through regional and microspatial-planned programmes

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## Abstract

In the past 60 or more years, African scholarly debates on education touched on Africanising and decolonising teaching and learning. Africanised pedagogies should be cognisant of the necessity to sensitise twenty-first century students to diverse scholarly and community voices as they become more accessible as learning possibilities. Equally so, present-day complex contexts in which people live because of the past, requires a more intense regional conversation. With these realities in mind, the authors, both familiar with the field of regional history and seasoned in the teaching of history, engaged in a research project to concisely, yet deeply, reflect on the historiography of Africanising. Secondly, to determine whether regional, and microspatial history variations can be deployed as

facilitating agencies of Africanised educational, the authors felt that it is de-ontologised from its former politically attachment. While the historiography emanated mostly from qualitative desktop research, the study that covered the Vredefort Dome region's value for understanding some curricula topics by considering the histories 'around us' had been recently intensively researched for the completion of a PhD. The outcome of this research has been mostly applied as experiential examples in this revisited debate on Africanising in teaching history and the features related to it, form part of this discussion. In engaging with the literature and research conducted in an applied analytical way allows the authors to affirm the possibilities of 'Africanising' the teaching of history with the involvement of local communities in the recovery of their memories and for researchers to consider its possibilities in microspatial contexts as a steppingstone towards African-inspired educational thought and scholarship.

**Keywords:** Africanis(z)ing; Africanis(z)ation; Regional history; Microspatial history; Higher Education and Training (HET) history; Curriculum and assessment policy statement (CAPS) for history; Teaching; Vredefort Dome region.

## Introduction

Twenty-first century debates on transformation of education and intellectual thought in Southern Africa frequently associate with the concepts of decolonisation and Africanising/ Africanisation. What the difference is and which of these concepts as verbs in an African context may serve the continent best, is another debate. Whereas decolonising Higher Education and Training (HET) programmes or Further Education and Training (FET) curricula may imply a more diverse and inclusive agency of scholarly thought on any theme or phenomenon, a revitalised view on Africanisation, and its positioning in education, intends to combine these features with research principles as part of its methodology that may speak to the context and experience of African people.

In this discussion the authors first introduce historiography as context from which the "Africanisation" concept developed. Secondly, they investigate how it was perceived and perhaps should be perceived in history teaching on any level if more clearly defined as educational expectations for the 21st -century teaching and learning environment. In addition, the existing education policies such as, the exclusion of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS), an over-emphasis on the discourses of accountability, exam standards and testing are still familiar in South African schools.

To conclude this discussion, the suggested revitalised concept of Africanisation is applied to the rich microspatial history and tangible African and Eurocentric heritage of the Vredefort Dome region in the Free State province of South Africa. The discussion is intended to serve as an example that could be considered in teaching and be methodologically applied to other microspatial contexts to transform the historically engraved colonial-perceived approach as agency for teaching African histories.

## Debates on Africanising/Africanisation as a concept and future in higher education: A historian's perspective

A de-shackling of Africa's subordinance to the European colonial authorities after the 1940s was evident in leadership, the general politics and policies of the day. Intellectuals in Africa and elsewhere in the world embraced new waves, as observed in general research debates - 'Africanisation'", viewed by some as an ideology, being one of them. Its origin and future also require a discussion from a historical perspective yet also keeping a refreshed understanding for history education on an HET and lower educational level in mind.

### *Roots of the first debates on Africanisation in the 1960s*

In the early 1960s, educationalists like Williams of the Howard University (Washington DC, USA) remarked that the Africanisation debate was quite popular after African countries became independent. Williams visualised creating an Africa in which Africans become educated; politically replace Europeans in government positions and eventually gain freedom and independence of the mind. William's idea of Africanisation is testimony to the fact that originally, the concept was of a political and ideological nature.

Weinstein also suggested Africanisation as a way forward for French colonies in tropical Africa, and regard it as "a sense of human (African) autonomy from a sense of being an object … it is a sign of independence and social change, a key to nation-building". Weinstein suggests two changes, first, Africanisation will allow Africans (especially learners) to develop a sense of identity and belonging in their African environment. Second, it will instil a sense of pride among Africans in their cultures and traditions which will ultimately lead to greater self-esteem and a stronger sense of community.

An additional feature of the Africanisation concept in the 1960s was that the word (as a verb) can also mean "the process of becoming or making something African or have African features". This process includes all the calls for Africans to liberate themselves; to decolonise their minds and to emancipate themselves from mental slavery implanted in

them by European colonisation. The process is also a further call on Africans to develop their uniquely created frameworks, strategies and resources of implementation. Therefore, this process of creating and renewing African features was termed 'Africanisation.

From research it appears that the debate on Africanisation also thrived in the 1970s and 1980s and ironically, mostly practiced by white scholarship, sometimes outside the educational awareness of Africans. In South Africa, amongst others, the concept also developed to connect to political, social and cultural transformation during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, by the end of the twentieth century, the reality of educational transformation further encouraged the Africanisation debate.

It has only since early in the twenty-first century that African scholars appeared to take more interest in 'Africanising' as a concept and its existence and meaning in country specific environments. For example, to African scholars such as Assie-Lumumba, 2001; Maringe and Ojo, 2017 and Mbembe 2016, Africanisation is also understood as a process of re-centring indigenous knowledge, Africanising the curriculum and a project that acknowledges the contextual complexities of postcolonial Africa and its implications for decolonisation.

Most African intellectuals proposed Africanisation as an education system that would uphold an IKS. The sentiments of these intellectuals resonate with academics, especially as it contends that through education, societies in Africa will be uplifted if education reflects their local IKS. In African societies, acknowledgement of the indigenous way of life in essence, has the potential of making learners/students conscious of their own ways of thinking amidst their African traditions of living, doing and surviving which may add much value to Western forms of education.

As recently as 2023, however, Paulus Zulu rejected both the concepts of 'Africanisation' and 'decolonisation' as useful for transformation of knowledge. The author accentuates that both concepts remain dogmatic and opinionated and still wear "politico-ideological" jackets so to speak, and can hardly be useful in an academic discourse. Zulu adds: "… while both concepts [Africanisation and decolonisation] might appeal to sentiment, practically they are unimaginable …"

Nonetheless, the argument here is that past concepts of Africanisation were easily 'captured' for political purposes and that it should be reclaimed or de-ontologised in academic debates by disciplines in the humanities (and also featuring well in education (such as history)) to rather direct an academic discourse. The authors are also mindful of the reality that colonial Africa cannot be de-shackled from its deep-rooted colonial state

in a fortnight, however, the debates are promising. Following from the above discussion, the following features were observed: the need to seek out our commonalities; affirmation of African culture, tradition and value systems; fostering an understanding of African consciousness in a more diverse-inclusive twenty-first century society and finding ways of blending Western and African methodologies.

### *Africanising/Africanisation and historians*

Historians such as Ki-Zerbo, an editor of one of the UNESCO volumes of Africa's history, also joined the Africanisation debate during the 1960s and 1970s. The above observation is confirmed by Ki-Zerbo himself saying, Africanisation was popular among African nationalists in the sense of "retaining ownership and reclaiming colonial institutions". Ki-Zerbo also emphatically asserts that the political commitment by Africans to localise not only universities, but also other public institutions, was quite high in those years.

Educationally, Ki-Zerbo viewed traditional African education as "more pragmatic", global and task-oriented in comparison with the modern approach which is, discriminatory in nature and disconnected from the needs of society and its development. Minga further asserts that Ki-Zerbo was "supporting transformation of African pedagogy and change of perspectives and aims of education in general". More importantly, Ki-Zerbo embraced a multidisciplinary African history that is experiential through oral tradition alongside written sources, as introduced by colonial historians. From Falola's debate and reference to Ranger further on in this discussion, the multi- and interdisciplinary feature of African history is confirmed.

An African American voice, Molefi Asante, is acknowledged for his history on Afrocentrism which has more to do with an African consciousness in ideals and values towards a humanising motif. These ideas were originally partially embraced by African leaders such as Kwame Nkruma. Additionally, there is "Africanity" which mostly relates to being proud to be an African and with which Asante is also associated.

On the same note, studying their past, Asante and Mazama also found that the West had shattered the beautiful and well-ordered edifice of the African knowledge system, however, not to such an extent that it could not be revived. Basically, these historians had high hopes that Africans must reclaim their histories and traditions which were consciously and unconsciously taken away from them by colonial historians. In his *Theory of Social Change*, Asante posited: … "What, after all, is any more valuable for the African person than this attempt to throw off the shackles of white dominance?

The Nigerian historian, Toyin Falola was involved in a publication titled "*Africanising Knowledge: African studies across disciplines*" with Canadian scholar Christian Jennings. These authors made the following observation:

*"Nealy four decades ago, Terence Ranger questioned to what extent African history was African, and whether methods and concerns derived from Western historiography were sufficient tools for researching and narrating African history …. the effort to make African scholarship 'more Africa' is fundamentally interdisciplinary… 'Africanising African History' offers several diverse methods for bringing distinctly African modes of historical discourse to the foreground in academic historical research."*

What these authors convey and suggest is a shift in epistemology that accounts for, and centres African history, culture and context in our understanding of the continent and the world at large. In the discipline of history, for example, one may not always find the terms Africanising or Africanisation, however, one might observe a preoccupation with an autonomous African philosophy of history or with inscribing the African factor in African history.

There was also a discussion by the South American historian Esperanza Brizuela-Garcia on Africanisation of the African continent's historiography. First, Brizuela-Garcia, explaining its conceptual understanding in the contextual environment of decolonisation the "methods, questions, and sources used by historians in the writing of African history needed to be Africanised". Second, it was assumed that more of the personnel involved in the writing of African history and the institutions supporting this endeavour would be based in Africa, connected to African societies and their everyday problems.

The following are examples of African historians' thoughts (excluding South Africa) in the noted schools; The Ibadan School in Nigeria which focuses on their region for a better understanding of their identity; The Dar-Es-Salaam School in Tanzania appears to be more multidisciplinary and collaborative with scholars' pro anti-colonialism and the Dakar School (Senegal and North-Western parts of Africa) emphasises debates about Afrocentrism and subaltern studies.

It can be said that South African historians entered the debate on Africanisation and Africanising later, but under the frequently used concept of decolonisation, or as part of it. The work of Ndlovu-Gatsheni is an excellent example. The author's view on Higher Education in 2013 was that curricula were still too Eurocentric, while "Africa-centred knowledges remain marginalised". Ndlovu-Gatsheni observed that Africanisation initiatives (thus as a first priority) "have not resulted in decolonisation" (seemingly an outcome

feature having complied to the first priority). However, scholars such as Mbembe argue, "decolonisation is not about closing the door to European or other traditions. Rather, it is about defining clearly what the centre is." In essence, Africa should be the centre alongside other traditions.

Attempting to fast-track the decolonisation process, in 2015, South African students and a small number of academics embarked on a campaign to decolonise the curriculum at universities. Heleta claims that these students wanted "to tackle and dismantle the epistemic violence and hegemony of Eurocentrism, completely rethink, reframe and reconstruct the curriculum and place South Africa, southern Africa and Africa at the centre of teaching, learning and research". Indeed, the proverbial 1960 "winds of change" were blowing again and were propelled by decolonisation projects that engulfed almost all institutions of Higher Education in South Africa.

On the same note, Ndlovu-Gatsheni further links Africanisation to the process of de-racialisation which would "include making the universities African in form and content; attempts to bring indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) into universities, as does the addition of African scholars and African philosophies into the curriculum". As for us, as part of the South African scholarship, we view that Africanising, the teaching and learning of history, requires deploying variations of regional as concept that accentuate a local to microspatial approach. To do so will require more in-depth research to be recorded and practically utilised from time to time. It further requires definite Africanised features viewed as part of the African way of considering Africanising knowledge and historical knowledge *per se.*

Therefore, Africanising/Africanisation is regarded as learning and teaching by experiencing the history around ones as pivotal guidelines to understand the array of histories that are combined in a curriculum. Again, history curricula must become more engaged with the regional and local histories to understand the distanced and unfamiliar curriculum themes. Historians are keen to show that Africa had a history worthy of scientific inquiry, and that Africans are conscious historical subjects that are active in shaping their history.

### *Reclaiming Africanising by de-ontologising it as concept for education and for history education?*

In the contemporary context, African historians aim to de-ontologise the European colonial historiography which "portrayed Africans as peoples without [a written or usable] history, coupled with [mainly stereotyped] 'vulgar notions of stagnation and barbarism'". Therefore, African historians should seek to Africanise history teaching and learning by illustrating and vindicating Africa's rich historical past. In so doing, it would centre African sources and African peoples as the elements that animated African history. In the same vein, microspatial history can be another Africanising feature which brings together an epistemological perspective of microhistory connected to a spatially sensitive methodology of working towards a global understanding of any theme or trend in a micro context, however, viewed trans-locally.

The concepts associated with Africanising or Africanisation that might, from an African perspective, be more accentuated as unique possibilities in method and approach in, for example, history education and scholarly history teaching on an HET and FET level, are:

## Acknowledge on a larger scale, local/regional community/ies and their IKS

Since the dawn of the twenty-first century, the debate on curriculum transformation and Africanisation have made it critical for scholars and students alike "to seriously consider Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) as a catalyst in education. IKS can empower communities to participate in their educational development since it respects diversity and acknowledges the challenge of hegemony of Western Eurocentric forms of universal knowledge". However, the revitalised field of African history registered a significant disciplinary contribution by enhancing the scientific merits of oral tradition as a legitimate scientific resource and historical archive. The main objective of an Africanising history teaching and learning is to challenge dominant narratives, acknowledge diverse knowledge systems and centre the voices and experiences of marginalised communities.

In this study the Africanising of history teaching and learning should be regarded as a process of restoring the original African "'living or people's science' because no one can deny that African philosophy has been negatively affected by colonialism", as stated by Msila. Therefore, when learners and their teachers create knowledge in their local milieu, this is bound to support lifelong learning initiatives. As indicated in the previous sections,

many scholars believe African's way of life creates an opportunity to develop an inclusive approach to education. In this context, the teaching and learning of African traditions and familiarise oneself with other micro-spatial narratives can become a viable tool in the Africanising of the curriculum.

Letseka is of a similar view. He suggests education must be made "relevant to the material, historical and social realities of the communities in which schools operate". Acknowledging the broader microspatial value of each community in understanding its broader translocal and transregional histories contributes also directly to accepting the value of engaging with each community's IKS. Continuing in curricula and modules, this will enhance the relevance and effectiveness of what is learnt since it also adheres to closer to home perspectives, experiences, language and customs. Furthermore, "the inclusion and interfacing of African indigenous knowledge and modern (Western) knowledge systems within the curricula, instructional materials, and textbooks will help to prepare students and learners for the greater world", says Kante, which is similarly articulated in the debate as offered by Shizha.

## Experiencing/observing the environment and the heritage experiences and associations of community/ies in their microspatial environments

Educationally, environmentally-based experiences answer the question of disconnect raised by Dewey in the late nineteenth century about the unrelatedness between children's schools and their home and neighbourhood lives. It is also known that the Annales historians have accentuated environmental time and trends as a valued consideration in thinking about human kind's history. Recently, most scholars generally suggest that worthwhile education should develop from the environment, and the teaching and learning process should be directly related to the pattern of life in the society concerned. Ndille's definition of Africanisation highlights the importance of experiencing and observing the environment, it "emanates from the premise that education is man's acquired experiences as (s)he interacts primarily with his/her environment". As a result, institutions of teaching and learning in the new Africa, must accept a call to firmly entrench their roots in their native soil, without neglecting the common heritage of other societies.

On the same note, Makhele also firmly believes that "an *ecological principle* can assist in the conceptual framework of the Africanization of the curriculum". This principle suggests the element of interdependence of different organisms or people in, and with, their

environment. In the educational circles, the ecological theory as suggested by Makhele can further be used to explain the relationship between home, school and community. The theory explains that people are involved in roles, relationships and patterns of daily activities that shape their cognitive, social, emotional, moral and spiritual development in their environment.

To emphasise the importance of experiencing the environment in Africanising education, Makgoba suggests that the African education should "draw its inspiration from its environment, as an indigenous tree growing from a seed that is planted and nurtured in African soil". African education, therefore, to be truly useful and relevant to Africa and the world, must be grounded in African communities, cultures and their experience with their local environment. The importance of the environment is reiterated by Naidoo recommending that the learner's experience of their environment should be the starting point of their education.

Like many other scholars before, Naidoo explains the "idea is that education will produce people who are not alienated from their communities and are sensitive to the environmental challenges facing Africa". It is, therefore, suggested that the teaching and learning of history, particularly local and regional history, is grounded on the local environment of the learners. Through this type of an Africanised teaching and learning of history approach, Africa will write her own history, and north and south of the Sahara, it will be a history of glory and dignity.

## Thinking and acting more consciously about scholarly inclusivity, diversity and multiversity and collaboration of knowledge in educational contexts

Inclusivity in knowledge content and in the accessibility and understanding of content through language, for example, remains an important ideal in Africanisation for country specific needs. This means a sensitivity to all languages in, for example, HET environments. The main objective of Africanising the teaching of history, is to integrate that which is originally African with that which is foreign and come up with an integrative knowledge and method that portrays an African outlook in the global context.

Makgoba's definition of Africanisation (see also Letsekha's reference) is used within this context as "a process of inclusion that stresses the importance of affirming African cultures and identities in a world community". In other words, Makgoba suggests African features and paraphernalia can and must co-exist with characteristic features from other

continents. Makgoba, like many other scholars, suggested that African knowledge should not replace Western knowledge, instead they must complement and enrich each other. The element of inclusivity as articulated by Makgoba, explains that Africanisation is "practically non-racial".

The inclusivity of Africanising is also emphasised by Blyden. With all the author's "Africanization ideology he did not dismiss the 'Western' type of schooling in favour of education and instruction along 'African' lines". Therefore, unlike the original aim of Africanisation in political terms which was to replace Europeans in government positions, and so creating a sense of human (African) autonomy, African scholars gradually acknowledged that in an Africanised the African value system should be at the epicentre, however, it still requires a complementary foreign content base through intercultural dialogue.

In its 2010 strategic plan, the University of South Africa (UNISA), also intended to contribute to a "multiplicity of voices, alternative canons, and diversity in thought" to serve the specific needs of Africa through its collaboration and research. In this context, Africanisation includes transnational knowledge that "recognizes global ethnic diversity and honours the diasporic and African-based experiences of Black people and privileges the flourishing of Black life in Africa without re-centring Western thought".

## Embracing more multi and transdisciplinary scholarly views in history curricula

Transdisciplinary research is aimed at contributing to the development of Africanised academic content that informs praxis and thereby, contributes to decolonisation and community development. Throughout this learning process between, across and beyond the disciplines, the voices of the people on grassroots level are also incorporated in the development of a new understanding. Nissani explains that through this approach "distinctive components of two or more disciplines are being integrated into… a single mind". Therefore, multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary approaches will help scholars to develop unique and integrated ways of gaining knowledge, understanding and skills.

The use of multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary approaches to decolonised pedagogy is supported by Razack who argues that different theories and understandings from "a variety of disciplines should be compared with each other as the manner in which they relate to the context". Therefore, transdisciplinary discussions, in particular, work towards unmasking those aspects that prevent Africanised knowledge and skills from developing, as well as

towards the exploration of indigenous knowledge and skills to build an empirically sound framework from which to develop history material.

The proposed transdisciplinary discussion above places emphasis on working from local and microspatial community development approaches when developing Africanised history curricula for schools. The transdisciplinary framework, therefore, requires that there is more of a sensitised approach to include South Africans and their making of histories micro spatially when the content needed to develop Africanised history curricula, are identified and emphasises that Africanised knowledge should lead to praxis that can create insight and other forms of applications in general.

## Engaging with the Vredefort Dome region in an Africanised epistemology

The application of the concept of Africanising/Africanisation as more structurally explained in the previous section will be illustrated in this section. To do so, a concise historical context of the region will be provided. Thereafter, only four of the de-ontologised, revitalised and renewed suggested concepts of Africanising the teaching and learning of history, and its features in this region, will be debated.

The Vredefort Dome region, situated in the Free State Province of the South African Highveld, is a UNESCO World heritage Site (2005), and is one of the oldest and largest meteorite impact sites in the world. The Vaal River remains a dominant natural feature of the Vredefort Dome landscape through which it passes, consisting of a confusing "series of parallel valleys, ridges, and woody islands, especially when it cuts right through the Dome region in the vicinity of Parys". Parys is a town in the Free State province and in proximity of the Vredefort Dome. Added to its geological significance is the cultural significance, with human interaction dating back to the Middle Stone Age, through the Late Iron Age to more recent historical periods such as the Anglo-Boer (South African) War, 1899-1902.

It is important to indicate that an in-depth study of the Vredefort Dome region was undertaken by KT Motumi: First at Masters' level in 1997 under the title, "*Black Education in Mokwallo: A historical perspective of the period 1920-1980*" and second at PhD level in 2020, with the title, "*Practicalising the significance of 'history-is-all-around-us' approach in, and outside the classroom*". The entire Chapter 3, namely, "Observing the "history-is-all-around-us" principle in the Fezile Dabi region, 1836-2019" is dedicated to the understanding of the histories of the different people of the Vredefort Dome region from a micro-spatial research approach .

In these two in-depth studies, the focus was placed on the histories of the descendants of the enslaved, displaced, colonised and racialised people. The aim was to proclaim loudly that they are human beings, their lives matter and they are born into valid and legitimate knowledge systems that can help humanity to transcend the current epistemic and systemic crises. This idea was influenced by African historians such as Bethwell Ogot who argued that, to "gain their confidence as a people, Africans need to…, 'give credit to their past', and take a positive look at their history as not having been a nightmare from which colonists rescued them".

In line with the above, it is argued that Africanised history education has its foundations in African philosophy which largely has to do with African experiences, concerns, aspirations and how Africans construct knowledge. For example, if history learners are familiar with the people, buildings, customs and traditions of their local village, town or township, the familiar background can be easily used to introduce new historical concepts such as 'cause and effect' to them.

In this study, the authors use the Vredefort Dome region to help learners realise that history is not simply a matter of pages in a textbook, but that, "history consists of events, and people once as real as learners themselves, and all that took place in and around them".

### *The community (all cultures in their diversity)*

The Africanising/Africanisation project has currently become a very important issue for people in search of unity, a sense of belonging and a sense of pride in who and what they are and what they stand for as Africans. The Africanised approach of teaching history will also help learners to see not only the political milestones of the Vredefort Dome region, but its economic, educational, military, multicultural/traditional and social legacies.

Along the hills of the Vredefort Dome region, there are ample footprints and remains of African Stone Age and Iron Age people, Dutch settler houses, British and Boer soldiers' graves and several monuments. All these cultural remains represent different cultural groups who inhabited this region before and are important historical sources for effective teaching and learning of South Africa's history. These different cultural remains mentioned above, represent 'historical heroes' of this region. As expressed by Ki-Zerbo, "Historical heroes are those who teach by example and the historian sees them as sources of edification for the public".

The region is also home to other well-preserved and outstanding cultural phenomena such as the Khoi-San rock art paintings, including objects, the remains of Sotho-Tswana hut structures, animal stone kraals and smelting-furnaces. For example, through the analysis of Khoi-San rock paintings, learners can determine the type of animals that were found and killed for consumption by the Khoi-San tribes in the Vredefort Dome region. The learners can use the landscape of this region as a picture of comprehensive histories of different cultures found here.

Other cultural historical sites also contain the remains of abandoned homesteads due to Difaqane wars, outbuildings and other structures such as water furrows, irrigated gardens, the orchards and graveyards of immigrant colonial farmers. The acknowledgement of these cultural remains resonate well with the view of Callinicos, who regards the Africanised teaching of local and regional history as a way of "recovering previously suppressed alternatives, and a means of returning people to a knowledge of their forgotten past". Africanising African history teaching using the Vredefort Dome region offers several diverse methods for focusing on distinctly African modes of historical discourse in academic historical research.

Through this approach, history learners are afforded an opportunity to appreciate and acknowledge that, besides its geological significance, the Vredefort Dome region is culturally significant. There is ample evidence that there was human interaction dating back to the Middle Stone Age, through the Late Iron Age to more recent historical periods such as the Anglo-Boer (South African) War (1899-1902) and Tumahole Township Rent boycotts 1984, to mention but a few.

### *Acknowledge, on a larger scale, local/regional community/ies and their IKS*

Recently, many scholars believed IKS provide for an opportunity to develop an inclusive approach in teaching and learning of history. In this context, its inclusion in the history classroom becomes a viable and relevant tool in the decolonisation and Africanisation of the curriculum. Battiste posits that students can through culture since IKS is "stored in various cultural forms, for example, folk stories (oral tradition), songs, folk drama, legends, proverbs, myths, etcetera".

Therefore, to rewrite the history of the marginalised African people of the Vredefort Dome region and correct the centuries old Eurocentric myths of Africa as a 'heart of darkness', the two studies of Motumi, mentioned in Section 4 of this discussion, heavily relied on oral history, (John Lofafa and Meisie Ranchu, Vredefort Native United School,

1927-1933).

For example, John Lofafa's oral history revealed that one of the pioneers of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) JB Marks was his teacher at Vredefort United Native School. However, in 1931 Marks was forced to resign as a teacher and was banned by the South African government from teaching in this country due to his political affiliation. The oral history as narrated by John Lofafa was corroborated with local and national written sources, in this case housed in the Free State Archive Depot (FAD). This approach is embraced by historians such as Ki-Zerbo who said, African history is multidisciplinary, experiential through oral tradition alongside written sources.

In this example, John Lofafa, who was a student at the time, experienced the event which correlated with the written source in the form of a dismissal letter banning JB Marks from teaching at Vredefort United Native School. Again, this example resonates with Ki-Zerbo, who suggested traditional African history education should be "more pragmatic". According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni, curricula were still too Eurocentric while "Africa-centred knowledge remained marginalised". However, with the Vredefort Dome region case, elders' oral testimonies, previously marginalised Africans are regaining their voice.

In addition, through the richness of the oral history as a tool, it was also revealed that AM Lembede, a co-founder of the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) of 1945 left his legacy in the classrooms of this region as the first principal of Parys United Native School in 1934. The oral testimonies discussed above were corroborated and combined with Eurocentric historical methods (written sources) regarding the political contribution of both JB Marks and AM Lembede in this country. In line with Makgoba's thinking with the Vredefort Dome region as an example, reclaiming Africanised history teaching is that the "African outlook merges what is originally African with what is foreign (European) and thus improves the African outlook which is not necessarily exclusive to the world".

Apart from investigating written accounts on local and regional history, oral history is another highly recommended and suitable historical method that was used to recover and uncover the unwritten histories of the Vredefort Dome region. Oral history allows the lives of ordinary people (Lofafa, Ranchu and others) who were formerly unrepresented in the historical annals of the community, to be given their proper space and place in the overall rewriting of the history of Vredefort Dome region. In the context of this paper, Africanising requires reforming curriculums to accommodate African oral traditions, … and teaching

methodologies, should also be enhanced to "ensure real life experiences are brought into the class and not just borrowed concepts". The integration of IKS, as demonstrated above, resonates with some authors calling for the need for an African centred critical education theory, and the need to reclaim lost African identity.

In the case of the Vredefort Dome region where there is a lack and absence of written accounts about African communities, the oral history project became a valuable exercise to record the stories of older members of the community while they are still alive. The envisaged "*Save our Stories*" history project in collaboration with the Fezile Dabi Education district, social sciences/history teachers is one example of recording and saving all the previously neglected (hi)stories of the people of this region. The oral history approach mentioned above is practically relevant to the study of the historically disenfranchised and marginalised African people of this region. Therefore, for the older people of the Vredefort Dome region, oral history has offered them a means of preserving not only their individual lives, but also many different African ways of life from vanishing into obscurity.

### *Experiencing/observing environment*

Community-centred and or environmentally-based education experiences answer the question of disconnect raised by Dewey in the late nineteenth century about the unrelatedness of children's school lives to their home and neighbourhood lives. To practically apply and practice Africanised pedagogy in the teaching and learning of history, it is argued that the child's physical environment is one of the core factors which determine the skills the child would need to acquire to "adapt to, survive and develop the environment in return".

For example, the Boer women who were kept at the Vredefort Road concentration camp during the South African War (1899-1902) used their knowledge of the local environment to occasionally supplement their food rations from the veld. Camp records reveal that "these women dug up a root, like a large, sweet potato, known locally as Gamma". Essentially, these women's knowledge and experience of their local environment assisted them to adapt and to survive the harsh daily conditions of inadequate food supply at the Vredefort Road camp.

In the same vein, the black women's experience of their local environment at the same Vredefort Road camp was also used to identify suitable land to grow their own food and produce enough surplus to sell, to offset the costs of camp administration. According to JK Derry, the minister of the Wesleyan Church for black congregants, "the natives were

very clever at selecting land for ploughing, perhaps some of the most experienced used to identify suitable ground". In this example, again the experience and observation of the environment becomes a determining factor for black women and their families to adapt and survive the inadequate food supply at the Vredefort Road concentration camp.

Furthermore, the Vredefort Dome region with its unique and hostile physical environment is testimony that every child in the pre-colonial society was supposed to learn to combat the dangers of their immediate environment like the Vaal River. Therefore, the contents of educating children would include the art of fishing, net making and mending, boat making and the art of fish preservation, to mention but a few. Scholars such as Mazonde agree that the Vredefort Dome region provides an excellent example of an Africanised education by the "indigenous people which can be structured in relation to the needs of the local community".

Another feature that can enhance an Africanised approach in the teaching and learning of history is the experiencing and observation of the social environment of the learners. Some scholars have identified that in the pre-colonial education system, "children were taught to respect elders, to appreciate their social obligations and responsibilities and, above all, to subordinate their individual interests to those of the wider community". This Africanised pedagogy is also about the attainment of self-determination and social justice, that is, seeking legitimacy for methodologies embedded in histories, experiences, ways of perceiving realities and value systems.

In essence, this practice of experiencing and observing the social environment using the Vredefort Dome region as a case study, is an indication that the knowledge in pre-colonial education was unique to the socio-cultural values of the local community. Pre-colonial observation and experiencing of the social environment, serves as "a reflection of the everyday social-cultural realities of the indigenous African people to the history learners".

Similarly, Falola and Fleming share the view that African societies could maintain "certain spiritual, social and economic structures over time, by transmitting their belief system, skills, and socio-cultural values from one generation to the other". Therefore, relating to experiencing the social environment by the learners in a deeper and spiritual way is one of the aspects that our formal Western education has omitted from the curriculum, by the subjugation of our African values.

The framework of experiencing and observing the environment centred the learners on the investigation of local events and situations of the Vredefort Dome region using the

surviving evidence and modes of explanation rooted in the concepts of change, causation and empathy. In line with Harmsworth's views, the importance of physical remains of the past as sources of historical evidence in the local environment, was central to this study, with a "visit to a historical site chosen by the learners". Indeed, for thousands of years, people all over the Vredefort Dome region have left signs of their existence, aspects of their every-day life and experiences on the landscape they occupied. As a result, everyone is surrounded and touched by the past, remnants of history, in the Vredefort Dome region of the Free State, South Africa.

Cajete posits that many indigenous cultures recognise Earth as a provider and a giver of life and, therefore, "it is the duty of the human beings to respect and honour that relationship". In the context of the Vredefort Dome region, the fertile land along the banks of the Vaal river provide for excellent grain and stock farming, while water from the same river gives life to people and livestock.

Through this debate on the experience and observation of the Vredefort Dome region environment (physical, social and spiritual), teachers and leaners all learnt how the Earth cares, provides and protects us. Therefore, when history learners are made aware of the importance of an ecologically maintained balance, the relationships in the system will be sustained, and history will continue.

Through the experience and observation of the environment history learners connect with and serve the community, demonstrate to "ordinary people that, their lives, and the place in which they live are also important". The approach provides learners with an opportunity to discover the history of the environment in which they and their families live, and to understand its effects on past lives and memory. For example, Tumahole township near the town of Parys, in the Free State province, South Africa, was previously known as *Diperekising* (place of peaches) due to the abundance of peaches and two jam canning factories which provided employment opportunities to the community.

However, what remains today, especially at Shoemansdrift, are only dry peach trees, while the two jam canning factory buildings at the industrial area between the town of Parys and Tumahole township, are abandoned. Later the name *Diperekising* was replaced with *Dikausing* (ladies' stockings) due to the establishment of the German owned ARWA Hosiery factory in the 1950s which created more employment opportunities for the inhabitants of the Vredefort Dome region. Again, what remains of ARWA today are empty buildings due to the global economic meltdown of the 1990s leading to the closure of the

business with the result of an increased unemployment rate especially in the township of *Tumahole*.

According to Van Eeden, the two examples above, clearly demonstrate to learners that the history of our local environment, towns and townships, can shed light on the "changes, movements and developments seen by society over time". It is suggested that, for African education to be truly useful and relevant to African children and the world, it must be grounded in African communities, cultures and their experience and observation of their local environment. Indeed, the notion that children learn more with their eyes (experience and observe first hand), than with their ears, and children listen more with their eyes than with their ears, has proven to be an educational reality.

## *Thinking about inclusivity, diversity and multiversity, collaboration and a decolonised sustainability*

The main objective of Africanising the teaching of history is to integrate that which is originally African with that which is foreign and produce something new that portrays an African outlook in the global context. As a result, Makgoba's definition of Africanisation is used within this context as "a process of inclusion that stresses the importance of affirming African cultures and identities in a world community". On the other hand, Masaka is also rejecting the "curriculum that deliberately excludes the philosophy paradigm of the indigenous people of Africa". Therefore, the education communities in Africa such as the Vredefort Dome region must accept that there diverse knowledge paradigms exist.

For practical purposes, for example, in the CAPS FET phase, learners are required to investigate the heritage of their Vredefort Dome region and are also expected to engage in critical and reflexive thinking about problem-solving issues. The Boer and black people's memories and the heritage of the South African War (1899-1902) as well as the hardships they experienced at the Vredefort Road concentration camp, encourage history learners to view history from multi-diverse perspectives.

History learners were engaged in critical and reflexive thinking regarding Pretorius' claims that the British did not keep "proper death records for the camps, in particular the deaths of Africans". History learners were also required to debate the issue about Africans who did not leave any traces of written records or memories in the form of gravestones at the Vredefort Road concentration camp and cemetery. The First World War (1914-1918) and the Second World War (1939-1945) monuments located in this region (Parys) provide opportunities for history learners to explore ideologies, and debate the influence of the colonial past, through their conversations and appreciation by the local inhabitants.

Where colonial teaching methods encouraged passivity and the acceptance of predefined knowledge, an Africanised history methodology as displayed above, offers opportunity for critical teaching approaches and alternative ways of presenting learning material to learners. Through the Africanised type of engagement between the teacher and learners, the pedagogy on the Vredefort Dome region's cultural remains becomes a collaborative process rather than a Eurocentric teacher-centred approach. The collaborative heritage teaching approach enables teachers to develop critical pedagogy and critical thinking among the learners—a multi-perspectival process.

Many scholars often complain that there is a disconnectedness between what they learn in the classroom and praxis. Therefore, the choice of the Vredefort Dome region's cultural heritage remains through a learner-centred approach, is specifically aimed at enabling students to use contextualised theories to engage in best-practice work. An Africanised and decolonised classroom using the Vredefort Dome region is to empower teachers and students to develop their own understanding of the African context and to enable them to deliver culturally sensitive debates.

Therefore, a collaboration of a bottom-up trans-disciplinary approach and contextualisation are key ingredients leading to an Africanised history classroom that will "empower students, include them in exploring solutions for societal problems and guide them to become effective facilitators of community development". Giving the students a voice was achieved by employing border pedagogy; a process that involves a multiplicity of voices that typify the cultural dynamics in our history classrooms today. Border pedagogy informs classroom activities by giving everyday culture back to its owners (learners) using cultural knowledge to offer possibilities for alternative symbolisation of the cultural experiences of different students' populations in this region.

## Conclusion

This discussion aimed to provide a past historiography of Africanise/Africanisation, contextualising its original understanding and to provide a way for de-ontologising and reconceptualising Africanising in education, but specifically engaging with its positioning in history teaching and learning on all levels. In debating some reconceptualising and de-ontologising features, it was accentuated that a scholarly emphasis on the regional and microspatial knowledge of all communities should require more considerations in the transformation of education in Africa. In doing so considerately, it is possible to progress towards a transformative education facilitating African features and African thought

alongside transnational and global perspectives.

The case of the Vredefort Dome region of South Africa demonstrates how in education an Africanised history teaching has the potential to be taught by departing from micro-spatial examples and experiences, while considering the suggested features of Africanising educationally.

# Peripheralisation of some histories in the school history curriculum in the post-apartheid South Africa: The case study of the 1950s Drum generation and their contributions to the liberation struggle

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## Abstract

Despite significant educational reforms by post-apartheid South Africa aimed at democratising and decolonising its education system, a concerning exclusion persists: Black intellectuals, particularly the 1950s Drum generation and their contributions to the liberation struggle, remain marginalised within the knowledge base of the post-apartheid school history curriculum. Using epistemic coloniality and epistemic disobedience as the first aspects of our theoretical framing, we investigated this peripheralisation. Additionally, we also used historical significance and epistemic pluriversality to frame our argument for

the inclusion of the 1950s Drum generation's contributions to the South African liberation struggle in the knowledge base of the school history curriculum, given the significant role they played. Methodologically, we employed a qualitative case study design underpinned by a critical paradigm, with critical discourse analysis as our tools of analysis. We conclude that since the 1950s were formative years for enacting and resisting colonial-apartheid policies, teaching about the 1950s Drum generation would enable both history educators and their learners to appreciate artistic, cultural, and literary contributions to the liberation struggle. This would also reveal to them that liberation was shaped not solely by political actors, but equally by cultural and literary figures who spoke truth to power.

**Keywords:** Drum Magazine; epistemic coloniality; epistemic disobedience; epistemic pluriversality; historical significance; HMTT; school history; South Africa.

## Introduction

The struggle against colonisation and apartheid in South Africa was not only an epistemic and sociopolitical endeavour,[1] it also included, amongst other undertakings, a deeply artistic, cultural, and literary approach.[2] Artists, journalists, writers, musicians, and cultural activists played a crucial role in challenging the oppressive regimes by nurturing the spirit of resistance among the oppressed and colonised through their work. Their contributions to the liberation struggle, however, continues to be peripheralised within the knowledge base of the post-apartheid school history curriculum. This study, therefore, investigates why artistic, cultural and literary contributions to the South African liberation struggle continue to endure in this periphery, with the 1950s Drum generation used as a case study. It also explores ways in which their contributions to the South African liberation struggle could form part of the post-apartheid school history curriculum to ensure that the curriculum reflects the diverse experiences and contributions of all South Africans to their struggle for freedom and democracy.

The article proceeds as follows: First, the theoretical frameworks are outlined, which include: epistemic coloniality; epistemic disobedience; epistemic pluriversality and historical significance. Second, literature on the development of the post-apartheid history curriculum from 1990 to 2018 is reviewed. The authors chose to focus on the period starting from 1990 to 2018, because it is critical to understand educational reforms

[1] S Gilbert, "Singing against apartheid: ANC cultural groups and the international anti-apartheid struggle", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 33(2), 2007, pp. 421-441.

[2] KG Tomaselli, "The power of books and their censorship in South Africa", *South African Journal of Science*, 115(7-8), 2019, p. 1.

concerning the country's (South Africa) post-apartheid school history curricula that were enacted from the transitional period to date—with the History Ministerial Task Team (HMTT) of 2015 symbolising the latest attempt to educational reform aimed at the school history curriculum. Third, the literature concerned with the role played by the 1950s Drum generation in the liberation struggle is reviewed. Fourth, the research design and methodological approach for the research is outlined. Lastly, the findings of the research are presented and discussed.

## Theoretical orientations

In this article, we use what is considered tension-based theories,[3] drawing on epistemic coloniality, epistemic disobedience, epistemic pluriversality and historical significance.

Epistemic coloniality refers to the continuous imposing of Euro-Western knowledge as the only knowledge tradition that is legitimate and should form the basis of knowledge found in the post-apartheid school history curriculum, because it can reach universality and objectivity.[4] This kind of thinking about knowledge usually results in the cognitive, epistemic, existential, ontological and social harm of those colonised,[5] because their ways of knowing, being and becoming are often subverted, especially within the knowledge base of the post-apartheid school history curriculum.[6] Therefore, epistemic coloniality is used as one aspect of the theoretical outlook to explore how the contributions of the 1950s Drum generation to the liberation struggle against colonial-apartheid continue to be othered and invisibilised in the knowledge base of the post-apartheid school history curricula despite the recent HMTT report[7] calling for a school history curriculum that is inclusive and Africanised (by extension, decolonised too—even though this is not the term that the HMTT uses).

[3] P Maluleka and S Godsell, "The continued absence of the LGBTIQA+ community in school history textbooks in post-apartheid South Africa", *Yesterday and Today*, 31(1), 2024, pp. 37-61.

[4] CA Diop, *The African origin of civilization: Myth or reality,* (New York: L. Hill, 1974); P Maluleka & LT Ledwaba, "Attempts to (re)capture the school history curriculum? Reflections on the history ministerial task team's report", *Yesterday and Today*, 29(1), 2023, pp. 72-99; A Quijano, "Coloniality of power, eurocentrism, and Latin America", *Nepantla: Views from South*, 1(3), 2000, pp. 533-580.

[5] P Maluleka and S Godsell, "The continued absence of the LGBTIQA+ …", *Yesterday and Today*, 31, 2024, pp. 37-61.

[6] P Maluleka and T Mathebula, "Trends in African philosophy and their implications for the Africanisation of the South African history CAPS curriculum: A case study of Odera Oruka philosophy", *Yesterday and Today,* 27(1), 2022, pp. 65-89.

[7] South Africa: Department of Basic Education (DBE), *Report of the history ministerial task team,* (Department of Basic Education: Pretoria, 2018).

Epistemic disobedience forms the second aspect of the current study's theoretical orientation. It refers to the rejection of the tyranny of what decolonial scholars call the 'zero point' or 'point zero'[8].[9] Epistemic disobedience can be considered a form of epistemic and ontological resistance that questions the legitimacy of established Euro-Western epistemologies (ways of knowing) and ontologies (ways of being) embedded in the post-apartheid school history curriculum, and seeks to create space for alternative, marginalised or suppressed forms of epistemologies and ontologies.[10] Therefore, epistemic disobedience is used in this article to justify the need to include the 1950s Drum generation's contributions to the liberation struggle in the South African liberation historiography that underpins the post-apartheid school history curriculum.

To strengthen this resolve for the need to be epistemically (and by extension, ontologically) disobedient in the reimagination of a new school history curriculum as proposed in the HMTT report;[11] we employ and enact the third aspect of the theoretical framing, which is epistemic pluriversality. Epistemic pluriversality is opposed to epistemic universality and objectivity as presented by Euro-Western knowledge traditions.[12] In other words, like mosaic epistemology and post-abyssal epistemology, epistemic pluriversality offers "a clear alternative to northern hegemony and global inequality, replacing the priority of one knowledge system with respectful relations among many".[13] Thus, epistemic pluriversality is used not only to justify and theorise about the need to be epistemically disobedient in the reimagination of a new school history curriculum in post-apartheid South Africa; but to also give grounds for the need to include and recentre the 1950s Drum generation's contributions to the liberation struggle in South Africa in knowledge base of the post-apartheid school history curriculum, and how this can be achieved.

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[8] 'Zero point' and 'point zero' are concepts used by decolonial scholars to critique the dominant Euro-Western paradigm of knowledge production, which is seen as rooted in a specific historical and geopolitical perspective that claims universality and objectivity.

[9] WD Mignolo, "Epistemic disobedience, independent thought and decolonial freedom", *Theory, Culture and Society*, 26(7-8), 2009, pp. 159-181; SJ Ndlovu-Gatsheni, "The emergence and trajectories of struggles for an 'African University': The case of unfinished business of African epistemic decolonisation", *Kronos*, 43(1), 2017, pp. 51-77.

[10] WD Mignolo, "Geopolitics of sensing and knowing: On (de)coloniality, border thinking and epistemic disobedience", *Postcolonial Studies*, 14(3), 2011, pp. 273-283.

[11] DBE, *Report of the history ministerial task team,* (Department of Basic Education: Pretoria, 2018).

[12] R Grosfoguel, "The structure of knowledge in westernized universities: Epistemic racism/sexism and the four genocides/epistemicides of the long 16th century", *Human Architecture: Journal of the Sociology of Self-knowledge,* 11(1), 2013, pp. 73-90.

[13] R Connell, "Decolonizing sociology", *Contemporary Sociology*, 47(4), 2018, p. 404.

In addition to this, Partington's[14] theory on historical significance is utilised as another aspect of theoretical framing. Historical significance is concerned with exploring and understanding why certain historical events, people or artifacts are considered important enough by historians to study and remember today,[15] and why others are not.[16]

Partington[17] further argues that those who judge the historical significance of historical events, people or artifacts do not necessarily base their judgment on the inherent quality of historical events, people or artifacts. Rather, their judgement is informed and shaped by their present realities (how they construct and view the world), as well as a criterion that takes into account the *importance* of those historical events, people or artifacts to people at the time, their *profundity* (depth of change), the *scale or quantity* of people affected by those historical events, people or artifacts, the *durability* of those historical events, people or artifacts as well as their *relevance* (resonance) to present concerns.[18]

Historical significance was therefore used to do two things: first, to make sense of the continued peripheralisation of the 1950s Drum generation's contributions in the post-apartheid school history curriculum, since they might have been deemed as historically insignificant to include. Second, to reflect on and theorise about the historical significance of their contributions to the liberation struggle and why it is important for their contributions to form part of the post-apartheid school history curriculum.

## Post-apartheid school history curricula: 1990s to 2018

Colonial and apartheid regimes used education as a tool to perpetuate and re-enforce racial segregation and inequality, by justifying the dispossession of Black people of their ancestral lands, and the undermining of their indigenous ways of knowing, being and becoming.[19]

[14] G Partington, "What history should we teach?", *Oxford Review of Education*, 6(2), 1980, pp. 157-176.

[15] M Bradshaw, "Creating controversy in the classroom: Making progress with historical significance", *Teaching History*, 125, 2006, pp. 18-25; R Phillips, "Historical significance: The forgotten key element?" *Teaching History,* 106*,* 2002, pp. 14-19.

[16] S Lévesque, "The importance of 'historical significance'", *Canadian Social Studies*, 39(2), 2005; LS Levstik, "Articulating the silences: Teachers' and adolescents' conceptions of historical significance", PN Stearns, P Seixas & S Wineburg (eds.), *Historical thinking and other unnatural acts: Chartering the future of teaching the past,* (Temple University Press, 2000).

[17] G Partington, "What history…?", *Oxford Review of Education*, 6, 1980, pp. 157-176.

[18] MC Kgari-Masondo, "Historical significance in the South African History curriculum: An un-silencing approach", *Yesterday and Today*, (22), 2019, pp. 119-136; J Wassermann, "Learning about controversial issues in school history: The experiences of learners in KwaZulu-Natal schools", *Journal of Natal and Zulu History*, 29(1), 2011, pp. 131-157.

[19] P Maluleka, "Teaching and learning sensitive and controversial topics in history through and with decolonial love", *Yesterday and Today*, 29(1), 2023a, pp. 30-51.

Hence, the knowledge base of their school history curricula was underpinned by Eurocentric and Afrikaner nationalist perspectives.[20] This content was then taught through a traditional fact-learning tradition, which was informed and shaped by rote learning of propositional knowledge.[21]

When the democratic government took power in 1994, measures were put in place to create a single education system that was reflective of the country's newfound democratic values.[22] It was hoped that a "new national identity" would be forged,[23] and this identity would be underpinned by principles of reconstruction, redress and reconciliation as enshrined in the democratic constitution.[24] Out of this, the Interim Core Syllabus (ICS) document of 1996 was adopted and "was presented as an attempt to alter in the short term the most glaring racist, sexist, and outdated content inherited from the apartheid syllabi, which were still widely used in the aftermath of the first post-apartheid elections in April of the same year".[25] For Maluleka,[26] this signalled the first phase of *ukuhlambulula*[27] of the school history curriculum from its colonial-apartheid past that the democratic state embarked on. Despite this, the contributions of the 1950s Drum generation to the liberation struggle and their experiences of living under apartheid did not form part of the knowledge base of the ICS document. Some reasons for the exclusion could be attributed

[20] JM Du Preez, & H Du Preez, *Africana Afrikaner: Master symbols in South African school textbooks,* (Librarius: Johannesburg, 1983).

[21] C Bertram, "Remaking history: The pedagogic device and shifting discourses in the South African school history curriculum", *Yesterday and Today*, 23, 2020, pp. 1-29.

[22] C Bertram, "Knowledge, pedagogy and assessment in the old and new further education and training history curriculum documents", *Education as Change*, 10(2), 2006, pp. 33-51; P Maluleka and NLL Ramoupi, "Towards a decolonized school history curriculum in post-apartheid South Africa through enacting legitimation code theory" NM Hlatshwayo, H Adendorff, M Blackie, A Fataar, and P Maluleka (eds), *Decolonising Knowledge and Knowers: Struggles for University transformation in South Africa* (London: Routledge, 2022), pp. 65-82.

[23] R Siebörger, "History and the emerging nation: The South African experience", *International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research*, 1(1), 2000, pp. 39-48.

[24] R Siebörger, "History and the emerging nation…", *International Journal of Historical Learning, Teaching and Research*, 1, 2000, pp. 39-48.

[25] J Jansen, "Rethinking education policy making in South Africa: Symbols of change, signals of conflict", A Kraak and M Young (eds), *Education in retrospect: policy and implantation 1990-2000,* (Pretoria: HRSC Press, 2001), pp. 40-57.

[26] P Maluleka, "Fallism as decoloniality: Towards a decolonised school history curriculum in post-colonial-apartheid South Africa", *Yesterday and Today*, 26, 2021, pp. 68-91.

[27] Ukuhlambulula loosely translates to cleansing. However, in many African traditions found in southern Africa, the concept is deeper than this. Tisani explains it as Tisani explains ukuhlambulula as a process of cleansing, "touching inside and out, the seen and the unseen, screening the conscious and unconscious" (N Tisani, "Of definitions and naming: "I am the earth itself. God made me a chief on the very first day of creation", J Bam, L Ntsebeza and A Zinn (eds), *Whose history counts? Decolonising African pre-colonial historiography* (Cape Town: AFRICAN SUN MeDIA, 2018), p. 18).

to the presence of an epistemic coloniality that continued in the air, as well as the fact that the 1950s Drum generation might have been considered historically insignificant, at the time, to include the ICS document. Other reasons could include the fact that the ICS document was simply an interim measure put in place whilst the country was planning for a more extensive curriculum reform.[28]

Another reason could be that the ICS document was also, in itself, fragmented when it came to its knowledge base,[29] and like the colonial-apartheid curricula, it centred and emphasised the teaching of the history of the elites rather than social history where the 1950s Drum generation could be classified under.[30]

In the second phase of *ukuhlambulula*, the school history curriculum took place when an outcomes-based curriculum called Curriculum 2005 (C2005) was adopted in 1997.[31] C2005 was presented as 'inclusive', because it was hoped that a school history curriculum based on alternative interpretations of the past that differed from colonial and apartheid interpretations was to be realised.[32] However, what was gained, was a curriculum that was strongly informed and shaped by the markets and labour—who sought a competence-based curriculum that prioritised and foregrounded a market fundamentalist outlook.[33] History was combined with Geography into a learning area called Human and Social Sciences (HSS). The history component of this new learning consisted of broad sets of concepts which were labelled 'range statements' that indicated to educators what to teach, as well as 'performance indicators' which described what learners should be able to do.[34] This meant that there were no clear lists of content topics provided in the C2005 documents. Because of this lack of clarity, the contributions and the experiences of the 1950s Drum generation were yet again considered historically insignificant and thus, excluded from the knowledge base of this new curriculum—C2005. This lack of clarity also meant that "these concepts

[28] C Bertram, "Remaking history…", *Yesterday and Today*, 23, 2020, pp. 1-29.

[29] C Kros, *Trusting to the process – reflections on the flaws in the negotiating of the history curriculum in South Africa* (Report No. 1. University of Witwatersrand, Johannesburg: The History Curriculum Research Project of Cambridge University Press and History Workshop, 1996).

[30] Y Seleti, "*From history to human and social sciences: The new curriculum framework and the end of history for the general education and training level*" (Education Policy Unit Working Paper, 14. University of Natal, 1997).

[31] South Africa: Department of Education (DoE), *Curriculum 2005 Lifelong learning for the 21st century,* (Pretoria: Department of Education, 1997).

[32] ES Van Eeden, and LM Vermeulen, "Christian national education and people's education: Historical perspectives on some common grounds", *New Contree*, 50, 2005, pp. 177-205.

[33] P Christie, "Global trends in local contexts: A South African perspective on competence debates", *Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education,* 18(1), 1997, pp. 55-69.

[34] DoE, *Curriculum 2005 Lifelong learning for the 21st century,* (Pretoria: Department of Education, 1997).

were not sequenced in a conceptually coherent way that created a logical narrative which could be easily learned"[35] and most of the time, educators and their learners did not know how to engage and make sense of them—which could have meant that under a theme where the contributions and experiences the 1950s Drum generation could have been taught, this did not take place.

Another reason for the peripheralisation of the 1950s Drum generation and their contributions to the liberation struggle in South Africa in the knowledge base of C2005 could be explained by the persistence of epistemic coloniality because "epistemic and recontextualization logics [of C2005] were still very much dominated and controlled by government officials, academics, policymakers, curriculum developers and so on, who were still very much aligned with colonial-apartheid".[36]

C2005 was short lived when the then Minister of Education, Kader Asmal, enacted the third phase of *ukuhlambulula* the school history curriculum, when he appointed a Ministerial Review Committee (MRC) in 2000 to investigate C2005. On top of the appointment of the MRC, the minister also appointed a Working Group consisting of diverse thinkers that was tasked with assisting the work of the MRC.[37] The MRC released a report that argued that part of the shortcomings of C2005 were because of poor teacher education offerings across the country, lack of resources, a curriculum that was not neatly aligned with its own assessment policy as well as that the C2005 was under-specified in terms of content and progression.[38] The MRC also recommended a revised curriculum that streamlined and promoted integration and conceptual coherence.[39] The Working Group, on the other hand, came up with a report entitled *Values, education and democracy*,[40] which stressed the need for the establishment of a panel of historians and archaeologists that would advise the Ministry on how best to strengthen the teaching of history in South African schools.[41]

[35] C Bertram, "Remaking history…", *Yesterday and Today*, 23, 2020, pp. 9.

[36] P Maluleka, "Fallism as decoloniality…", *Yesterday and Today*, 26, 2021, pp. 68-91.

[37] C Bertram, "Remaking history…", *Yesterday and Today*, 23, 2020.

[38] DoE, *Report of the History and Archaeology Panel to the Minister of Education.* (Department of Education: Pretoria, 2000a).

[39] DoE, *Report of the History and Archaeology Panel to the Minister of Education.* (Department of Education: Pretoria, 2000a).

[40] DoE. *A South African curriculum for the twenty-first century: Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005*. (Department of Education: Pretoria, 2000b).

[41] L Chisholm, "The history curriculum in the (revised) national curriculum statement: An introduction", S Jeppie (ed.), *Toward new histories for South Africa: On the place of our past in our present,* (Lansdowne: Juta: Cape Town, 2005); P Maluleka, "*The construction, interpretation, and presentation of King Shaka: A case study of four in-service history educators in four Gauteng schools"* (Unpublished Master's dissertation.

Responding to both reports, the minister moved to appoint what was to be known as the History/Archaeology panel on the 12th of September 2000. This panel was tasked with investigating and critically analysing the teaching of history and evolution in schools, as well as how history teachers are trained and then make recommendations.[42] The panel recommended that the subjects of history and geography should be taught separately within the social sciences learning area. This was in line with what the MRC and Working Group had previously recommended.[43] In addition, the panel report also argued that the content underpinning the school history curriculum needed to be clearly specified for history educators, especially since many educators went back to teaching from the colonial and apartheid script, since that was what they had access to.[44]

Out of all these processes, and others that were not discussed, was the adoption of the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) in 2002.[45] RNCS separated history and geography into two separate subjects that had their own learning outcomes and content, although they still formed part of the social science learning area.[46] RNCS also continued to be outcomes-based, "in that it set the outcomes and assessment standards to be achieved and encouraged a learner-centred and activity-based approach to education".[47] This is because in terms of history, RNCS promoted "enquiry skills to investigate the past and present, historical knowledge and understanding and historical interpretation skills".[48] RNCS also "included a chapter which outlined the 'knowledge focus' for history for each grade".[49] Regardless of this, peripheralisation of the contributions of the 1950s Drum generation to the liberation struggle in South Africa within the knowledge base of the school history curriculum continued. One the reasons for this could be the level of the

Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 2018).

42 C Bertram, "Remaking history…", *Yesterday and Today*, 23, 2020, pp. 1-29.

43 DoE. *A South African curriculum for the twenty-first century: Report of the Review Committee on Curriculum 2005*. (Department of Education: Pretoria, 2000b).

44 L Chisholm, "The history curriculum …", S Jeppie (ed.), *Toward new histories for South Africa…,* (2005); P Maluleka, "*Towards a decolonized and Africanized school history curriculum in post-apartheid South Africa*" (Unpublished PhD, Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 2023b); J Wassermann, "The state and volving of teaching about apartheid in school history in South Africa, circa 1994-2016", T Epstein and CL Peck (eds.), *Teaching and learning difficult histories in international contexts. A critical socio-cultural approach,* (Routledge: London and New York, 2017).

45 South Africa: Department of Education (DoE), *C2005, Revised national curriculum statement Grades R-9 (Schools) Policy: Social sciences,* (Department of Education: Pretoria, 2002).

46 DoE, *C2005, Revised national curriculum statement Grades R-9…,* (Department of Education: Pretoria, 2002).

47 C Bertram, "Remaking history…", *Yesterday and Today*, 23, 2020, p. 13.

48 DoE, *C2005, Revised national curriculum statement Grades R-9…,* (Department of Education: Pretoria, 2002), p. 5.

49 C Bertram, "Remaking history…", *Yesterday and Today*, 23, 2020, p. 13.

entrenchment of epistemic coloniality within the knowledge frames of school history. This embeddedness comes because of the continued dominance and control of the epistemic and recontextualisation logics of RNCS, despite there being "of transformation (inclusion of some individuals from the previously colonized groupings) taking place in both logics".[50]

Another reason could be that the people who were tasked with writing the RNCS, did not consider the 1950 Drum generation historically significant to include in the new curriculum.

In 2009, the fourth phase of *ukuhlambulula* the school history curriculum, took place under a new Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Matsie Angelina 'Angie' Motshekga. The minister appointed a Ministerial Review Committee that was tasked with reviewing and implementing the National Curriculum Statements to make recommendations that would see the strengthening of the implementation of the curriculum.[51] The review committee discovered that there was multiple "curriculum documents at local, provincial, and national level that were fragmented, and often contradictory, which was confusing for teachers".[52] They also uncovered that some educators continued to use textbooks and other teaching and learning materials that were produced for C2005 and should have been discarded.[53] Thus, the review committee recommended that a single curriculum document be developed alongside a set of teaching and learning materials such as textbooks that could be used by all educators and their learners. This single curriculum document was to be underpinned by "knowledge (content, concepts, and skills) to be learnt, recommended texts, recommended pedagogical approaches, and assessment requirements",[54] that were not ambiguous.

As a result, the rewriting of a new streamlined curriculum, CAPS, started in 2010. The rewriting process was characterised by tensions, especially around who was included in the process and who was not, as well as how those rewriting processes were to be reconfigured.[55] In instances where those rewriting processes were aligned, and drawing from the

[50] P Maluleka, "Teaching and learning…", *Yesterday and Today*, 29, 2023a, p. 108.

[51] South Africa: Department of Education (DoE), *Report of the task team for the review of the implementation of the national curriculum statement. Final Report, October 2009. Presented to the Minister of Education, Ms. Angela Motshekg*a, (Department of Education: Pretoria, 2009).

[52] C Bertram, "Remaking history…", *Yesterday and Today*, 23, 2020, p. 17.

[53] C Bertram, "Remaking history…", *Yesterday and Today*, 23, 2020.

[54] DoE, *Report of the task team for the review of the implementation of…*, (Department of Education: Pretoria, 2009), p. 45.

[55] U Hoadley, *Pedagogy in poverty: Lessons from twenty years of curriculum reform in South Africa,* (Routledge: London and New York, 2018).

Ministerial Review Report,[56] there was emphasis on the notion 'powerful knowledge',[57] and why this notion needed to underpin the CAPS school history curriculum. Because of this, CAPS advocated for a "greater emphasis on narrative, historical concepts, interpretation, argumentation, and justification",[58] as well as the importance of teaching the past in a multi-perspective manner[59]—something that aligns with the epistemic pluriversality as suggested in this study. Regarding its knowledge base, CAPS sought to strike a balance between South African, African, and world history.[60] However, peripheralisation of the 1950s Drum generation's contributions to the South African liberation struggle persists. One of the reasons for this, as suggested by Wassermann,[61] might be because of the creation of "a new official master narrative and hence a new official memory, based on an imagined new nationalism and identities. This was achieved by downplaying the true horrors of apartheid, attributing a messianic status to Mandela, foregrounding how South Africa became a democracy in 1994 under the African National Congress (ANC) and presenting a neat history without any real villains, but clear heroes". If what Wassermann suggests is anything to go by; this signals the power of a rooted epistemic coloniality "hellbent on preserving the status quo that is characterized by epistemicides, culturecides, and linguicides",[62] as well as the consideration of the 1950s Drum generation as historically insignificant.

To disrupt and transcend the rooted epistemic coloniality that continues to characterise the post-apartheid school history curriculum, the Ministry of Basic Education initiated what we also see as the fifth process of ukuhlambulula related to the school history curriculum.[63] On the 4th of June 2015, Mrs Motshekga appointed the HMTT.[64] This appointment came after the Xenophobic/Afrophobic attacks of 2008 and 2012 and continued in 2016 and 2017 which exposed the shortcomings of the 'rainbow nation',[65] as well as the transitioning

[56] DoE, *Report of the task team for the review of the implementation of…*, (Department of Education: Pretoria, 2009).

[57] MFD Young, *Bringing knowledge back in: From social constructivism to social realism in the sociology of education,* (Routledge: London and New York, 2008).

[58] L Chisholm, "Curriculum transition in Germany and South Africa: 1990-2010". *Comparative Education*, 51(3), 2015, p. 410.

[59] C Bertram, "Remaking history…", *Yesterday and Today*, 23, 2020.

[60] DoE. *Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement Grades 10-12. History*. (Department of Basic Education: Pretoria, 2011).

[61] J Wassermann, "The state and volving of teaching…", T Epstein and CL Peck (eds.), *Teaching and learning…,* (Routledge: London and New York, 2017), p. 64.

[62] P Maluleka, "Fallism as decoloniality…", *Yesterday and Today*, 26, 2021, p. 80.

[63] P Maluleka, "Fallism as decoloniality…", *Yesterday and Today*, 26, 2021.

[64] South Africa: Department of Basic Education (DBE), *Establishment of the history ministerial task team,* 2015 (available at www.gpwonline.co.za, As accessed on 22 February 2025).

[65] MN Davids, "'Making History compulsory': Politically inspired or pedagogically justifiable?" *Yesterday*

of the then State President, Mr Rolihlahla Nelson Mandela, to the world of the living dead.[66] Additionally, the appointment of the HMTT also happened, when in 2014 a call was made by the largest teacher union in South Africa, the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU), for school history to be made a compulsory subject up to Grade 12. SADTU argued that school history must be compulsory so that it can be used to produce patriotic young South Africans, who can appreciate the "road we've travelled as a nation" and who are willing to contribute to building the "developmental state we envisage" especially after the Xenophobic/Afrophobic attacks that took place;.[67] Lastly, the appointment of the HMTT also coincided with student protests at South African public universities that were calling for the decolonisation of education and curriculum under many banners such as #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall.[68]

The appointment of the HMTT provoked reactions that were both for and against it. For instance, the then official opposition party in the Parliament of South Africa, a white liberal political party known as the Democratic Alliance (DA), argued that there was a possibility that the school history curriculum could be used as some sort of an ideological tool to advance a particular version of the South African past that suggested that only the ANC fought for the liberation of South Africa from colonial-apartheid.[69] The South African Society for History Teaching (SASHT), however, responded to the appointment of the HMTT in a more balanced and comprehensive manner than the DA.[70] This is because "the SASHT generally adopts a vigilant but engaging and cooperative approach towards the proposal".[71]

The HMTT was then tasked with investigating how other countries that introduced school history as a compulsory subject in their basic education systems did it, why they did it and what lessons can South Africa draw from those experiences to also introduce school

*and Today*, 15, 2016, pp. 84-102.

[66] C Bertram, "Remaking history…", *Yesterday and Today*, 23, 2020.

[67] Saturday Star, 2014, as cited in MN Davids, "'Making History compulsory': Politically inspired or pedagogically justifiable?" *Yesterday and Today*, 15, 2016, pp. 84-102.; B Maravanyika, Xenophobia: Making history compulsory in South African schools, 2015 (available at http://nehandaradio.com/2015/04/23/xenophobia-make-historycompulsory-in-south-african-schools/, As accessed on 22 February 2025).

[68] P Maluleka, "*Towards a decolonized…*" (Unpublished PhD, Johannesburg: University of the Witwatersrand, 2023b).

[69] A Makinana, "Motshekga looks to history to fix SA's pride", *Mail & Guardian*, 16 July 2014 (available at http:/mg.co.za/article/2014-07-16-education-dept-looks-to-history-to-fix-sas-pride, As accessed on 24 February 2025).

[70] South African Society for History Teaching (SASHT) 2015. *Statement issued by SASHT*.

[71] MN Davids, "'Making History compulsory'…?" *Yesterday and Today*, 15, 2016, p. 86.

history as a compulsory subject in its own education system up to Grade 12.[72] The entire process was to be guided by set terms of references that included the need to investigate how the knowledge base of the Further Education and Training (FET) band could be 'strengthened', and the review of the General Education and Training (GET) band and the implications of all of this to curriculum implementation.[73] In 2018, the HMTT released their report,[74] in which, several suggestions, which included and were not limited to, the need to "strengthen" the CAPS school history curriculum in the interim with the hope "that a complete overhaul of the CAPS syllabus and content will be carried out by the DBE in future", and "that this will depend, among other issues, on whether history will be a compulsory, fundamental subject at FET phase".[75]

Based on the authors of the current study's reading of the HMTT report, the 1950s Drum generation will suffer the same fate of being considered historically insignificant and thus, not worthy of being included in the new curriculum because the HMTT report does not, in any way, make provision for their inclusion. However, Maluleka and Ledwaba's[76] reading of the HMTT report led the authors to conclude that the HMTT was, in fact, in a space in which an epistemic disobedient and a pluriversal approach to knowledge were to be embraced and encouraged. Given this reading, we therefore rely on Maluleka and Ledwaba's[77] reading of the HMTT report to submit our case concerning the importance of including the experiences and contributions of the 1950s Drum generation into the knowledge base of the proposed school history curriculum.

[72] DBE, *Establishment of the history ministerial task team,* 2015.

[73] MN Davids, "'Making History compulsory'…?" *Yesterday and Today*, 15, 2016; DBE, *Establishment of the history ministerial task team,* 2015

[74] DBE, *Report of the history ministerial task team,* (Department of Basic Education: Pretoria, 2018).

[75] DBE, *Report of the history ministerial task team,* (Department of Basic Education: Pretoria, 2018), p. 84.

[76] P Maluleka and LT Ledwaba, "Attempts to (re)capture the school history curriculum?", *Yesterday and Today*, 29(1), 2023.

[77] P Maluleka and LT Ledwaba, "Attempts to (re)capture the school history curriculum?", *Yesterday and Today*, 29(1), 2023.

## The 1950s Drum generation: A literature review

The history of South Africa is marred by the systemic subjugation and marginalisation of Black people, as Melanie Deist[78] posits. The 1950s Drum generation was no exception in this subjugation and marginalisation. It is for this reason that Jane Grant[79] referred to it as the silenced generation. Grant[80] states that when, in 1977, she asked what influence the 1950s Drum generation had on young Black South Africans, she was repeatedly told "none at all". Unfortunately, it is the same response one would get if the same question was asked in post-apartheid South Africa. The 1950s Drum generation has suffered marginalisation in the South African historical literature because of their being Black in a white-dominated society,[81] such that their recognition is far less than their contribution in South African literature and in the Black liberation struggle. This is the generation of Black writers that has been silenced both in pre- and post-1994 South Africa. Not enough attention has been channelled towards learning more about the contributions of this generation in the world of literature and in the struggle for Black liberation through their works and lived experiences. In this literature review, we are looking specifically at the three significant aspects that constituted the 1950s Drum generation, which are their journalistic work at *Drum* Magazine, their literary work beyond *Drum* Magazine as they were formidable writers, and their silencing by the colonial-apartheid regime.

The 1950s Drum generation, also known as the 'Drum boys', was a group of Black and vibrant writers and journalists who worked for *Drum* Magazine in the 1950s.[82] They shared many similarities, most notably the use of the pen and paper to wage a struggle for the liberation of Black people in South Africa. This is not an attempt to assert that they were a homogeneous group with no differences in some respects, something that has concerned

[78] M Deist, "Intent vs reality: Dehumanization in the South African corporate landscape", *Peace Review*, 36(4), 2024, pp. 738-753.

[79] J Grant, "Silenced generation", *Index on Censorship*, 6(3), 1977, pp. 38-43.

[80] J Grant, "Silenced generation", *Index on Censorship*, 6, 1977.

[81] S Mahala, *Can Themba: The making and breaking of the intellectual tsotsi, a biography* (Wits University Press, 2002).

[82] *Drum* Magazine was established in 1951.

Mahala.[83] These writers were Henry Nxumalo,[84] Es'kia Mphahlele,[85] Bloke Modisane,[86] Can Themba,[87] Lewis Nkosi,[88] Nat Nakasa,[89] among others.[90]

They are all credited for transforming the *Drum* Magazine and making it a leading African magazine at the time. Their vibrancy and diligence brought a vitality to South African journalism that have never been seen before and their white contemporaries could not achieve.[91]

In its inception, the *Drum* Magazine was not doing well and thus, running at a loss.[92] Black people regarded it as a white man's magazine as it viewed Black people through the lens of white people.[93] Drastic changes had to be made, and perhaps a new approach had to be adopted. It was after the recruitment of these Black gifted writers that the *Drum* Magazine gained hegemony. This generation joined *Drum* Magazine at a time where it was rare to find Black writers working side by side with white contemporaries in the press.[94] In the magazine, the Black writers contributed news articles and short stories. After their arrival, the magazine began to appeal to many Black people as their experiences began to

[83] S Mahala, *Can Themba…*, (Wits University Press, 2002).

[84] Henry Nxumalo (1917-1957) was nicknamed "Mr. Drum". He was the first Black journalist to join *Drum* Magazine. He was murdered by unknown assailants.

[85] Es'kia Mphahlele (1919-2008) was nicknamed "Dean of letters". He was a qualified educator who left the profession because of Bantu Education. He was also a writer who has more than 30 short stories in his name. He's two autobiographies are *Down Second Avenue* and *Africa My Music*. He spent 20 years in exile studying and teaching in different universities. He was one of a few from his generation to return to post-apartheid South Africa and die a natural death in 2008.

[86] Bloke Modisane (1923-1986) was a writer and a journalist. He wrote numerous short stories. His also wrote his autobiography, *Blame Me on History*. He died in exile in Germany in 1986.

[87] Can Themba (1924-1967) was nicknamed the "intellectual tsotsi". He was a teacher and a writer. He wrote numerous short stories including, *The Will to Die*, *The World of Can Themba*, and *Requiem for Sophiatown*. His short story, *The Suit* is arguably the most successful short story by a South African writer. He died in exile in Eswatini where he was working as a teacher. His cause of death was due to his excessive drinking of alcohol.

[88] Lewis Nkosi (1936-2010) was a journalist and a writer. His writings include the following novels, *Mating Birds*, *Underground People*, and *Mandela's Ego.* He also wrote a collection of essays titled, *Home and Exile*. He spent 30 years in exile and worked in different universities abroad. He is one of these who returned from exile following the end of apartheid. He died a natural death in 2010.

[89] Nat Nakasa (1937-1965) was a writer and a journalist. His book is titled, *The World of Nat Nakasa*. He committed suicide while living in exile in New York in 1965.

[90] Other members of the *Drum* generation were Alax la Guma, Casey Motsisi, Todd Matshikaza, and Peter Clarke.

[91] L Nkosi, *Writing home: Lewis Nkosi on South African writing*, (University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2016).

[92] D Rabkin, "*Drum Magazine (1951-1961): And the works of black South African writers associated with it"* (PhD dissertation, University of Leeds, 1975).

[93] D Rabkin, "*Drum Magazine (1951-1961) …"* (PhD dissertation, University of Leeds, 1975).

[94] T Odhiambo, "Inventing Africa in the twentieth century: Cultural imagination, politics and transnationalism in Drum magazine", *African Studies*, 65(2), 2006, pp. 157-174.

reflect in its pages. These Black writers attracted attention from the wide Black population in South Africa and abroad.[95] According to Manganyi,[96] these writers excelled in this regard because they were Black South Africans whose writings resonated with most of the Black audience. These were writings about Black peoples' lived experiences, including that of oppression and suffering in apartheid South Africa. According to Mphahlele,[97] there was a collective consciousness between the writers and their audience.

Prior to the 1950s Drum generation, however, Black South Africans had suffered oppression for too long without a voice in the press.[98] With the emergence of this generation, Black South Africans felt represented, as this marked the emergence of writers who wrote about Black people and their stories informed and shaped by their own existential experiences. Additionally, for these writers, the motive was not just a salary at the end of the month and the selling of as many copies as they could, they were exposing the brutality of the oppressive apartheid government, while at the same time conscientising the Black population. For example, the picture by Bob Gosani[99] showing women dancing *Tauza*[100] in prison appeared in the *Drum* Magazine and exposed the humiliation Black prisoners went through in prison and the brutality of the apartheid regime. These Black writers also reported on the crucial political developments of the time. This was the period of the defiance campaign, protests against the Bantu Education Act of 1953, and other anti-apartheid campaigns by the anti-apartheid activists. *Drum* Magazine had first declared itself apolitical, and before these Black writers, it had been preoccupied with stories about sex and crime, which they had believed were more marketable. Some of the stories by this generation of writers sparked international interest.[101]

South Africa, being an anti-Black society, meant this generation never flourished without predicaments. Nkosi[102] states that as a generation they were frequently in trouble with the police because of their eagerness to record the events, they would sometimes risk their safety. He referred to Nxumalo, one of his contemporaries at *Drum* Magazine, as

[95] M Chapman, *The drum decade: Stories from the 1950s* (University of Natal Press, 1989).

[96] NC Manganyi, *Exiles and homecomings: A biography of Es' kia Mphahlele,* (Ravan Press, 1983).

[97] EK Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue* (Penguin, 2013).

[98] EK Mphahlele, *Down Second Avenue* (Penguin, 2013).

[99] Bob Gosani was a Black photographer in the *Drum* Magazine in the 1950s.

[100] Prisoners were forced to dance naked in front of their guards to prove that they had not stolen anything during their working hours. This dance was extremely embarrassing because it involved the showing of rectums.

[101] D Rabkin, "*Drum Magazine (1951-1961) …"* (PhD dissertation, University of Leeds, 1975).

[102] L Nkosi, *Writing home…,* (University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2016).

someone who could go down to hell to bring back a story.[103] Can Themba, for example, was once charged for trespassing. Some of the situations they experienced were within *Drum* Magazine itself. Issues of promotion and salary increment were issues of concern. Their being Black meant they always worked under white seniors such as Jim Bailey, Sylvester Stein, Antony Sampson, Tom Hopkinson and others, some of whom were inexperienced. Being Black in an anti-Black society kept most of these Black writers in junior positions, despite possessing university qualifications.[104]

The 1950s Drum generation was not just a group of writers and journalists; they were also intellectuals.[105] Grappling with the concept of intellectual, Edward Said[106] argued that intellectuals bore responsibility for speaking up in support of, and representing the ideas of the people of their nations. In addition, he contended that there were no private intellectuals. For Said, all intellectuals were public figures. He asserted that any intellectual, whether in academia, journalism or politics, was a highly specialised professional who ceased to be independent when they entered alliances with powerful institutions or governmental organisations. Said expected political participation from intellectuals; that they should speak truth to power. He also highlighted how they were products of their time and thus, needed to respond to the politics of their time and were placed in positions to provide intellectual alternatives to turn the status quo upside down.[107] This is exactly what the 1950s Drum generation became.

Some of the members of the *Drum* Magazine would grow to become academic intellectuals with their Masters and PhD degrees—teaching in different universities in Africa and overseas. These are the intellectuals who were compelled to leave their ancestral land because of the anti-Black apartheid conditions that made it hard for them to think, write and teach within the borders of the country. They had to seek refuge elsewhere. They became exiled and displaced intellectuals who spent decades away from home.

The 1950s Drum generation was a cohort of brilliant writers who wrote not only for the *Drum* Magazine, but also wrote some books, short stories, poems and essays. These writers contributed significantly to the South African literature landscape. According to Rabkin,[108] the 1950s Drum generation enriched Black literature in South Africa. Their books shared

[103] L Nkosi, *Writing home…,* (University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2016).
[104] NC Manganyi, *Exiles and homecomings…,* (Ravan Press, 1983).
[105] L Nkosi, *Writing home…,* (University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2016).
[106] EW Said, *Representations of the intellectual: The 1993 Reith lectures",* (Vintage, 1996).
[107] EW Said, *Representations of the intellectuall…",* (Vintage, 1996).
[108] D Rabkin, *"Drum Magazine (1951-1961) …"* (PhD dissertation, University of Leeds, 1975).

the experiences of Black people in a colonised country. In their short stories, the characters represented real Black people and their conditions. Their work became what Mabogo Percy More in a preface of a book by Molaodi wa Sekake[109] regarded as committed and engaged literature, as it grappled with the existential, epistemic, ontological, sociopolitical, and cultural dynamics. Similarly, Andre Brink[110] posits that the 1950s Drum generation introduced literature as a tool in the struggle. Their books inculcated consciousness among the oppressed, hence, it is not surprising that the apartheid government banned them. Their books are among over 26 000 books that were banned in apartheid South Africa between 1950 and 1990. They could not be published and quoted. The apartheid government silenced the 1950s Drum generation.[111] Mahala[112] argues that the apartheid government's attempts to suppress the 1950's Drum generation were aimed both at preventing the spread of their influence to their immediate audience, and at removing them from the face of history.

The 1950s Drum generation has been criticised for being apolitical and lacking political commitment in their writing. Mahala[113] dispels the notion that the 1950s Drum generation was apolitical. He argued that to be political, one does not have to carry a membership card of a political party. To be non-partisan should not be confused with being apolitical. The fact that these writers never used ideological systems to criticise the apartheid regime does not make them apolitical.[114] Some members of the 1950s Drum generation joined and participated in anti-apartheid political organisations. For example, at some point Mphahlele was a member of the ANC, and Modisane participated in both the ANC Youth League and the Pan Africanist Congress. Most of the 1950 Drum generation members resided in and wrote about Sophiatown and its surroundings—a politically vibrant township in Johannesburg at the time. Sophiatown was also home to leading anti-apartheid activists such as Don Mattera, Mariam Makeba, Hugh Masekela, Duma Nokwe and many others.

The colonial and racist apartheid destroyed the 1950s Drum generation. Towards the end of the fabulous decade—the fifties—it had become impossible for these Black writers to continue to write and live in South Africa. This led to the 1950s Drum generation

[109] M Wa Sekake, *Meditation from the gutter: Short stories, essays and poems.*
[110] A Brink, "Challenge and Response: The Changing Face of Theatre in South Africa." *Twentieth Century Literature* 43, no. 1997) 2): pp. 162–76.
[111] L Nkosi, *Writing home…,* (University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2016).
[112] S Mahala, *Can Themba…,* (Wits University Press, 2002).
[113] S Mahala, *Can Themba…,* (Wits University Press, 2002).
[114] S Mahala, *Can Themba…,* (Wits University Press, 2002).

leaving the country for exile to escape the oppression by the apartheid government.[115] These individuals left the country to seek refuge in countries such as Nigeria, Zambia, Eswatini, the United States of America, etcetera, where they continued to write books, pursue academic qualifications, and secure employment under less strict conditions than in apartheid South Africa. Nkosi[116] posits that being in exile meant being thrown away from your audience; however, he states that exile never discouraged them (Black writers) from criticising apartheid and mobilising international support against it. Most of the members of the 1950s Drum generation did not die a natural death. Their lives were cut short by the apartheid conditions, except for a few members like Mphahlele and Nkosi, who would spend 20 and 30 years respectively in exile to return alive to South Africa after 1994. Among others, Nxumalo was attacked and killed by unknown criminals, Nakasa committed suicide and Themba drank himself to death. Some of the members of the 1950's Drum generation died as outsiders, away from their homeland as exiled individuals.[117]

## Research design and methodology

In this research, a qualitative case study design approach was used to focus on the continued peripheralisation of the contributions by the 1950s Drum generation in South Africa's liberation struggle history in the country's post-apartheid school history curriculum. This design was chosen because it provided a focused approach to understand this continued marginalisation, whilst at the same time contextualising it to a broader understanding of marginalisation that continues to take place within the post-apartheid school history curriculum.[118] Additionally, it also enabled a deep dive into one specific case study to uncover rich insights about it.

To aid this research design, a critical paradigm (CP) was employed because of its activist approach to research.[119] A CP was chosen, rather than neutrally observing the continued peripheralisation of the 1950s Drum generation in the post-apartheid school history curriculum as merely an innocent act aimed at rendering their contributions to the South African liberation struggle as historically insignificant. A CP enabled us to intentionally interrogate this case to expose *how* power (i.e., epistemic coloniality) operates to produce and maintain the construction of their contributions as historically insignificant and thus, justify their marginalisation.

[115] NC Manganyi, *Exiles and homecomings…,* (Ravan Press, 1983).
[116] L Nkosi, *Writing home…,* (University of KwaZulu-Natal Press, 2016).
[117] S Mahala, *Can Themba…,* (Wits University Press, 2002).
[118] L Cohen, L Manion, and K Morrison, *Research methods in education* (seventh ed.). New York: Routledge.
[119] J Asghar, "Critical paradigm: A preamble for novice researchers", *Life Science Journal,* 10(4), 2013, pp. 3121-3127.

Furthermore, a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) was used to analyse post-apartheid school history curricula for the inclusion, or absence of, the 1950s Drum generation. We did this because any absence hard to read with CDA, would underscore the theoretical framework (i.e., epistemic coloniality and historical significance) that has been articulated above. While CDA typically involves precise textual analysis to uncover layered meanings,[120] our application specifically focused on reading for absence. This involved identifying what was missing and to some degree, envisioning potential inclusions. This approach allowed us to better understand how exclusionary, hegemonic historical narratives are situated, maintained, reproduced, and transmitted through the school history curriculum.

CDA was well-suited for this purpose because it fundamentally aims to analyse both overt and covert structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control that manifest in and through language.[121] It aligns with the study's theoretical framework, as both are concerned with hegemonic discourses, power relations and dominance, which reconstruct and reproduce cognitive, epistemic, ontological, political and social inequalities or harm.[122]

## Towards anti-peripheralisation of the 1950s Drum generation in the post-apartheid school history curriculum

Post-apartheid South Africa has been engaged in a protracted struggle to decolonise and Africanise its school history curriculum, with the view of making it inclusive. This is partly informed by the need to transcend the legacies of colonial-apartheid and a pervasive epistemic coloniality that continues to inform and shape its school history curriculum. It also has to do with the need to re-humanise the dehumanised within the historical literature[123]—so that they too, can *see themselves, and feel themselves* more in the work that was done in the classroom.[124]

[120] P Maluleka and S Godsell, "The continued absence of the LGBTIQA+ …", *Yesterday and Today*, 31, 2024, pp. 37-61.

[121] JR Martin, and R Wodak, *Re/reading the Past: Critical and functional perspectives on time and value* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins Publishing company, 2003).

[122] A Gramsci, *Selections from the prison notebooks of Antonio Gramsci,* (New York: International Publishers, 1971).

[123] M Lugones, "Heterosexualism and the colonial/modern gender system", *Hypatia*, 22(1), 2007, pp. 186-219.

[124] S Godsell, "Poetry as method in the history classroom: Decolonising possibilities", *Yesterday and Today*, 21, 2019, pp. 1-28.

Because of this, we (the authors) are convinced that a school history curriculum underpinned by both acts of epistemic disobedience, epistemic pluriversality and the strengthening of historical significance can achieve this. Because such a curriculum would be moving away from Eurocentric impressions of the past, knowledge traditions, ontological orientations, values and beliefs; while at the same time moving towards affirming and embracing multiplicity of impressions about the past, colonised knowledge canons, ontologies, values and beliefs.

For instance, an epistemic disobedient school history curriculum will not only challenge the epistemic coloniality that continues to characterise its knowledge base. However, by including the 1950s Drum generation in its knowledge base, such a curriculum would also be engaged in an act of defiance, because that act alone will be insisting that resistance against colonial-apartheid also manifested through artistic, cultural and literary mediums or expressions. Thus, making those artistic, cultural and literary expressions or mediums not peripheral to other forms of resistance against colonial-apartheid that already exist in the curriculum; but equally making part of the core to understand the South African liberation struggle. If this is achieved, it would ensure that the sacrifices of the 1950s Drum generation were not in vain. Furthermore, it would also emphasise the need for both history educators and their learners to understand and appreciate the full scope of South Africa's liberation struggle, whilst at the same time, honouring and commemorating those who fought for freedom through their creativity and intellect.

Secondly, an epistemic disobedient school history curriculum that is also for epistemic pluriversality would recognise that the inclusion of the 1950s Drum generation, in its knowledge base, is also an act of exposing history teachers and their learners to a distinct epistemology of South Africa's liberation struggle that is rooted in Black cultural assertion. This is because that generation sought not only to contribute to the rehumanisation of the dehumanised through their nuanced stories, satirical essays and arresting images; they also used their work to fight the colonial-apartheid regime in the process. Thus, including their contributions to the fight for freedom and democracy, they will challenge and broaden the often-oversimplified narrative of the South Africa liberation struggle.

Lastly, a school history curriculum that is not only epistemic disobedient and pluriversal, but also embracing historical significance to its full potential; would recognise and appreciate the significant role played by that generation and thus, the need to include it in its knowledge. This is because this generation can be regarded as intellectual and cultural vanguards of Black South Africans in the 1950s. They were able to articulate Black

consciousness ideals and principles before these were formalised by Bantu Biko and his comrades. Beyond this, their work also contributed to shining light on the daily struggles of the oppressed across the world, among other things. Thus, making their contributions to the liberation struggle historically significant and worthy to be included in the post-apartheid school history curriculum.

## Conclusion

In this article, we have investigated, through tension-based theories as our theoretical framings and a qualitative case study design underpinned by a CP, with CDA forming part of research design and methodology, to investigate the continued peripherisation of contributions of the 1950s Drum generation in the post-apartheid school history curriculum. Based on the above, it was concluded that the continued peripheralisation of the 1950s Drum generation from the post-apartheid school history curriculum contributes to the formalised and oversimplified narrative about the South African liberation struggle. This omission, we argue, not only distorts the liberation struggle's historical record; it also denies both history teachers and their learners the opportunity to fully understand and engage with the 'multifaceted-ness' struggle for freedom in South Africa.

Additionally, we also argue that addressing this peripheralisation is, therefore, essential. Not only for realising a school history curriculum that is inclusive, nuanced and democratised; but also important for broadening ones understanding of historical significance in pursuit of a school history curriculum that is reflective of the richness of South Africa's journey towards liberation and democracy.

# 'Greening History Teaching': Justifying the Inclusion of Socio-Environmental History in the South African Further Education and Training History Curriculum

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## Abstract

This position paper argues for including socio-environmental history in the South African Further Education and Training (FET) history curriculum. It is premised on the fact that planet Earth is in the age of the Anthropocene, within which humans have had a dominant effect on the planet and have contributed fundamentally to climate change, which is noticeable through extreme weather events, such as erratic rainfall, floods, droughts, heatwaves and wildfires. These have led to extreme hazards, including destruction of infrastructures, large-scale migrations and loss of lives. Climate change aside, humanity is also facing problems of air and water pollution, deforestation, desertification, famine and diseases; in fact, we still have traumatic memories of the COVID-19 pandemic, which destroyed livelihoods and to date, has left more than seven million people dead worldwide. This paper is based on a desktop qualitative research method and draws from secondary and primary literature on socio-environmental history. Furthermore, it analyses the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), focussing on the FET history curriculum. The study builds on the intersectionality and all-inclusive ecologies of knowledge approach to demonstrate that socio-environmental history intersects with other history topics already part of South Africa's CAPS FET history curriculum. The paper argues that, through the infusion of socio-environmental history content into this curriculum, history teaching will contribute more meaningfully toward learners' understanding of the socio-environmental

challenges confronting humanity in South Africa and beyond. This will provoke learners to raise questions regarding the nexus between people and nature, and interrogate how this shapes the local, regional and global environments and the results thereof, in the process, inculcating positive attitudes and values about stewardship of planet Earth.

**Keywords:** Anthropocene; Climate change; History teaching; Socio-Environmental history; Stewardship.

## Introduction

The planet is in the age of the Anthropocene. This is a new periodisation of the earth's history, which is strongly informed by the science of climate change and has demonstrated that human action is the key impetus behind climate change.[1] Since 1990, the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) and other sources have been publishing scientific and socio-economic reports on climate change, its impact, future risks and options for reducing the rate at which climate change is taking place. The IPCC has noted that the main contributor to climate change has been humans, whose activities have contributed to increased atmospheric gas concentrations, leading to significant global warming, altered precipitation regimes, increased frequency of weather events, oxygen depletion and modifications to aquatic life.[2] This has been manifested through increasing erratic rainfall and floods, which have destroyed infrastructure and killed humans. More recently, the outbreak of the COVID-19 pandemic, which has led to more than 7 million deaths by the end of February 2024.[3]

This paper is primarily conceptual. It is based on policy papers that were accessed primarily online, with most of these papers being generated by various agencies of the United Nations (UN). Furthermore, the paper benefited from secondary sources, such as academic books and journal articles as well as an in-depth analysis of South Africa's CAPS FET history curriculum, which has been in use since 2012. The study also consulted South African newspapers, thereby gaining insights into topical environmental and climate emergency matters. A point of note is that there is a thin line between the terms 'environmental history' and 'socio-environmental history'. Therefore, the study uses these terms interchangeably throughout the paper.

[1] S Swart, "At the edge of the Anthropocene: Crossing borders in Southern African environmental history", *South African Historical Journal*, 73(1), 2021, p. 2.

[2] IPCC, "Intergovernmental panel on climate change", (available at www.ipcc.ch, as accessed on 27 January 2024).

[3] Worldometer, "Coronavirus death toll", no date (available at https://www.worldometers.info/coronavirus/coronavirus-death-toll, as accessed on 28 February 2024).

The physical and natural sciences domains, including climate science, chemistry, physics and geography, have played dominant roles in generating and disseminating knowledge about the environment and natural processes of the planet. It is also evident that contemporary environmental challenges are primarily a result of the nexus between humans and the environment. Therefore, history teaching should come on board and help save the planet by teaching histories of communities, in this instance, socio-environmental narratives and processes, to reveal how people's interactions with the environment have, over time, transformed the face of the earth, the atmosphere, climate and weather patterns.

A mere glance at the current curriculum shows the pervasiveness of the theme of colonial domination and resistance focussing on the political, ideological, economic, social and military histories of South Africa and other regions. Hence, this paper uses intersectionality and an all-inclusive ecology of knowledge, based on a trans-modern universal view, as a theoretical lens to demonstrate how socio-environmental histories intersect with other histories that are already part of the CAPS FET history curriculum. Furthermore, it explores how socio-environmental history concepts and content can be infused into existing history topics or integrated as stand-alone socio-environmental history topics. In this process, history teaching will complement the efforts of natural sciences by disseminating knowledge of the environmental and societal processes using the social, political and cultural lens, which the natural sciences are less inclined to do. This will enable learners to acquire content on human-environment relations and explore how these have shaped local, regional and global environments. The learners would acquire positive attitudes and values about stewardship of the planet and its resources.

There has been a growing body of work on modern society's environmental crises. Jared Diamond is among the scholars who have taken a historical analysis of the interplay between societies and the environment.[4] Examining the rise and fall of 13 past and present societies in different parts of the world, Diamond argued that a critical determinant of these societies' fates was how they managed their environments. He noted that three of the five factors that explain the collapse of societies relate to the environment: human-induced ecological damages, climate change and societal responses to environmental decline.[5] He demonstrated how environmental factors such as deforestation, biodiversity loss, soil erosion and natural resource depletion contributed to the collapse of Easter Island, the Maya and the Norse colony civilisations. The case of Easter Island is intriguing since it was

[4] J Diamond, *Collapse: How societies choose to fail or succeed* (New York, Penguin, 2005).

[5] T Jeyaretnam, AR Magalhaes and AM Szmant, J Diamond, Collapse: How societies choose to fail or succeed, *Sustainability: Science, Practice and Policy,* 2(1), 2012, p.42.

a rainforest island when humans first inhabited it, yet, following the occupation, humans started cutting the forest, leading to a "complete environmental disaster" characterised by deforestation, soil erosion, loss of biodiversity and "reduced capacity to sustain life and, finally, collapse". Diamond asked, "What went on in the mind of the person who cut the last tree [on this Island]?[6]

Notably, the study also examines the histories of states that conserved their forest resources and avoided possible collapse. Diamond's work teaches that societies should interact with their environments more sustainably. This history genre, which is currently not part of history CAPS, should be infused into the history curriculum, as this would spread environmental thinking among South African learners and help them develop a caring attitude towards the environment. That way, teaching history would contribute to saving the planet.

Richard Foltz, an environmental ethics and animal rights historian, has lamented that most history research and writing has focussed almost exclusively on the interactions and connections between people.[7] This is consistent with Donald Worster's observation that "…there is little nature in the study of history".[8] Foltz goes on to say that focussing on human-to-human interactions only is based on a false perception that human activities are dis-embedded from the physical context and this produces fragmented histories, which leads to fragmented thinking. Therefore, history writing and teaching "must include all actors", and historians must be "conversing with botanists and zoologists, geologists and meteorologists, geographers, anthropologists, and many others".[9]

In South Africa, MC Kgari-Masondo has demonstrated how the Apartheid-era forced relocations of the majority Sotho-Tswana community from Lady Selborne to Ga-Rankuwa contributed to environmental degradation, characterised by pollution, erosion and the creation of *dongas* (a dry gully, formed by the eroding action of running water).[10] While most community members were generally environmentally conscious, some residents adopted passive resistance, characterised by "non-participation in environmental issues, because

[6] T Jeyaretnam, et al., J Diamond …, *Sustainability…*, 2006, pp. 42-43.

[7] RC Foltz, "Does mature have historical agency? World history, environmental history, and how historians can help save the planet", *The History Teacher*, 37(1), 2003, p. 10.

[8] D Worster, "History as natural history: An essay on theory and method", *Pacific Historical Review,* 53(1), 1984, p. 1.

[9] RC Foltz, "Does nature have historical agency...", *The History Teacher,* 2003, p. 25.

[10] MC Kgari-Masondo, "The usable past and socio-environmental justice: From Lady Selborne to Ga-Rankuwa", *New Contree*, 66, 2013, p. 90.

they felt aggrieved by the displacement".[11] This reveals that environmental degradation may emanate from human decisions, and arguably, teaching social-environmental history promotes ecologically sound and socially just practices.

The paper begins with developments of the 1960s when lobby groups started raising questions about human activities and how these impacted the environment. It moves into the 1970s and presents an overview of international meetings that aimed to mitigate climate change. The paper traces the rise of environmental history as an academic discipline, its origins in the United States of America (USA), its spread to Europe and Africa and the subsequent efforts to disseminate knowledge about the subject. The paper then explores the South African environmental history landscape, selected scholarship, politics and climate change matters. It analyses the South African CAPS FET history curriculum, which has been in use since 2012. It also identifies environmental history content that can be included in this curriculum while suggesting strategies for incorporating it.

## Efforts to curb environmental challenges since the 1960s

The Anthropocene has generally been traced to the Industrial Revolution, around the 1800s, which created the world's first fossil fuel economy. Organic fossil fuels drove the growth of mines, factories and mills and raised the demand for coal, along with a rise in carbon dioxide emissions, to the detriment of the environment.[12] Further impetus to climate change must be understood within the context of the vast tons of bombs dropped during the Second World War. Worst among them were the August 1945 Hiroshima and Nagasaki nuclear bombings in Japan.[13] The resulting radioactive particles of these bombings made their way into rocks, trees and atmospheric acid. Over the past 60 years, the human impacts have unfolded at an unprecedented scale.[14] Yet, to date, the world continues experiencing widespread natural resource extraction, high carbon dioxide emissions, toxic pollution of water and the atmosphere, global warming, species extinction and habitat loss, all of which contribute significantly to the modification of the planet.[15]

[11] MC Kgari-Masondo, "The usable past and socio-environmental justice…", *New Contree,* 2013, p. 91.

[12] K Pavid, "What is the Anthropocene and why does it matter?", (available at https://www.nhm.ac.uk/discover/what-is-the-anthropocene.html#:~:text=We%20are%20living%20in%20a,water%2C%20organisms%20and%20the%20atmosphere, as accessed on 16 January 2023), pp. 1-7.

[13] K Pavid, "What is the Anthropocene…", pp. 1-7.

[14] K Pavid, "What is the Anthropocene…", pp. 1-7.

[15] S Swart, "At the edge of the Anthropocene…", *South African Historical Journal*, 2021, p. 2.

Concerns with environmental challenges started mounting in the 1960s. Rachel Carson's book, *Silent Spring*,[16] highlights the fatal impact of agricultural chemicals on North America's birdlife, contributing a wake-up call to the adverse environmental effects of human activities. Therefore, the 1960s were characterised by growing environmental awareness, manifested through the increasing number of conferences and agreements, written warnings, legislative actions and media attention, which began in Western countries and later encompassed other parts of the world. These include the Stockholm Conference, an early UN conference focussed on international environmental issues. Held in Stockholm, Sweden, in June 1972 and attended by delegates from 114 governments, the conference laid the foundation for global environmental governance.[17] It also led to the creation of the UN Environment Programme in December 1972, whose mandate was to coordinate activities to promote natural environments and sustainable livelihoods. Furthermore, this conference further produced what became known as a "Framework for Environmental Action", comprising 109 human settlements, natural resource management, pollution, education and environmental management recommendations.[18]

The second significant conference was held in Tbilisi, Georgia, in October 1977. Organised by the UN Education, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO), it resulted in the Tbilisi Declaration of 1977, a unanimous accord among more than 66 delegates on the need for environmental education.[19] Then, in June 1992, Brazil hosted the Earth Summit in Rio de Janeiro, bringing political leaders, diplomats, scientists, media representatives and non-governmental organisations from 179 countries. Among the results of this summit was the adoption of the 27 principles of the Rio Declaration, the formation of the UN Framework Convention on Climate Change, the Convention on Biological Diversity and the Declaration on the Principles of Forest Management.[20]

[16] R Carson, *Silent Spring*, (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1962).

[17] P Boudes, United Nations conference on the human environment. *Encyclopaedia Britannica*, 15 September 2014, (available at, https://www.britannica.com/topic/United-Nations-Conference-on-the-Human-Environment, as accessed on 21 January 2023).

[18] P Boudes, "United Nations Conference…", Encyclopaedia Britannica, 2014.

[19] AH Hoffmann, "The intergovernmental conference on environmental education" held in Tbilisi 14 – 26 October 1977", *Environmental Conservation,* 5(2), 1978, pp. 153-154, doi:10.1017/S0376892900005701.

[20] United Nations, "United Nations conference on environment and development, Rio de Janeiro, Brazil, 3-14 June 1992", (available at https://www.un.org/en/conferences/environment/rio1992, as accessed on 16 January 2023).

The fourth was the Kyoto Protocol, another international treaty adopted in Kyoto, Japan, in December 1997.[21] Since 2005, it has aimed to reduce the emission of six greenhouse gases in 41 countries, including the European Union. Its target is greenhouse gases, since they contribute to global warming, which results in the melting of glaciers, sea ice and Arctic permafrost. This, in turn, leads to a rise in sea levels, the inundation of low-lying coastal areas and a possible disappearance of others.[22] Global warming further results in extreme weather events, such as floods and droughts, changes in their distribution and an increased risk of extinction for 20 to 30 per cent of all plant and animal species.[23] Unsurprisingly, despite its shortcomings, the Kyoto Protocol is widely hailed as the most significant environmental treaty ever negotiated.

Leaders who attended the fifth UN Climate Change Conference of December 2015 focussed solely on tackling climate change. This conference led to the Paris Agreement, which came into force on 4 November 2016 and was signed by 192 countries plus the European Union.[24] The agreement included a commitment to reduce greenhouse emissions and to cooperate in adapting to the impacts of climate change. Furthermore, the developed nations agreed to assist developing countries towards meeting their climate mitigation and adaptation targets. Each country must submit a report on its action plan every five years.[25]

Since 1995, world leaders have been meeting annually under the Conference of the Parties (COP), a series of UN conferences that review the progress in limiting climate change. Up to December 2023, there have been 28 COP meetings, three of which were held on the African continent, namely COP12 of December 2011, held in Nairobi, Kenya, COP17 of December 2015, held in Durban, South Africa and COP27 of December 2022, held in Sharm El Shaik, Egypt. Notably, the previous three meetings held in Glasgow, Sharm El Shaik and Dubai have focussed on the shift from fossil fuels-based energies, primarily coal, oil and gas, to renewable energy sources. While this has brought intense debate about the economic and social costs of transitioning from fossil fuels to renewables, it has given investors direction that long-term and profitable investments are in renewables, as opposed to fossil fuels. Arguably, teaching socio-environmental history would be a means to complement these global efforts, which are meant to curb climate change and related

[21] J Layton and S Dion, "Kyoto Protocol international treaty", Britannica, 1997, (available at https://www.britannica.com/event/Kyoto-Protocol, as accessed on 16 January 2023).

[22] J Layton and S Dion, "Kyoto Protocol…", Britannica, 1997.

[23] J Layton and S Dion, "Kyoto Protocol…", Britannica, 1997.

[24] United Nations, "The Paris greement", (available at https://www.un.org/en/climatechange/paris-agreement, as accessed 20 January 2023).

[25] United Nations, "The Paris greement". …

environmental degradation processes. The paper now turns to the rise and development of environmental history as an academic discipline.

## Origins and development of environmental history

Alongside these climate change challenges was the emergence of environmental history as an academic discipline. Scholars agree that the field originated from the USA, where it planted its roots in the 1960s. This discipline,

> *… deals with the history of human impacts on nature and the interactions between humans and nature. It asks how nature influences humans, how humans intervene in nature and how nature and humans interact. It also investigates natural changes not caused by human action to understand these processes.*[26]

This definition does not capture the fact that environmental history is distinctively interdisciplinary. It borrows from natural sciences and humanities, including biology, geography, politics and history. Secondly, it has a global outlook. It transcends national borders since it encompasses natural phenomena like weather, climate, rainfall and rivers, which cut across artificial borders.[27]

Markedly, environmental history rose at a time when history was dominated by intellectual and political history.[28] The rise of environmental history is credited to Roderick Nash, who advocated for writing history "from the bottom up", beginning with what is ignored, scorned, and is not endowed with speech.[29] Donald Worcester argued that environmental history deserved a rightful place in history books for it can demonstrate this "… long-running human dialogue with the earth".[30] August 1972, recognised as the birth of environmental history, is associated with a special publication in the *Pacific Historical Review* and a famous article by Roderick Nash, in which he coined the expression "Environmental History".[31]

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[26] FJ Bruggemeier, "Environmental history", *International encyclopaedia of the social and behavioural sciences*, 2001, p. 4621.

[27] T Myllyntaus, "Environment in explaining history, restoring humans as part of nature", T Myllyntaus and M Saikka, (eds.), *Encountering the past in nature, essays in environmental history*, (Athens, Ohio University Press, 2001), p. 146; See also D Worster, "World without borders: The internationalizing of environmental history", *Environmental Review*, 6, 1982, pp. 8-13.

[28] F Locher, G Quenet and W Bishop, "The origins, stakes, and perspectives of a new site for research", *Revue D'Histoire Moderne & Contemporaine (Review of Modern & Contemporary History)*, 564(4), 2009, pp. 7-38.

[29] R Nash, "American environmental history: A new teaching frontier", *Pacific Historical Review,* 41(3) 1972, pp. 362-372.

[30] D Worcester, "History and Natural History: …", *Pacific Historical Review,* 1984, p.1.

[31] R Nash, "American Environmental History…" *Pacific Historical Review,* 1972, pp. 362-372; S Sörlin and P

After a firm establishment in the USA, environmental history spread to Europe. It received significant attention in the 1980s, as new interpretations were published in countries like the Netherlands, West Germany and Britain.[32] While, in the USA, the focus was on the "wilderness" and "problems of primary occupations", it took new dimensions in Western Europe, where it focussed on specific local peculiarities, such as the history of water management in the Netherlands, struggles over nuclear power in Germany and forestry histories in Nordic countries.[33] It was also concerned with epidemics, cultural landscapes and environmental pollution in urban areas.[34]

Alongside this was the rise of environmental history societies. The American Society for Environmental History (ASEH), established in the USA in 1977, aims "to increase understanding of current environmental issues by analysing their historical background".[35] It sought to encourage research, publication and teaching of environmental history. The ASEH utilised a quarterly journal called *Environmental History* and the ASEH newsletter.[36] Notably, its membership is "markedly interdisciplinary and international".[37]

Alongside the ASEH, the European Society for Environmental History (ESEH) was also formed in 1999. Like the ASEH, it seeks to promote research in environmental history, foster communication among environmental historians and strengthen links between environmental historians and policymakers. Interestingly, the ESEH also aims to promote the teaching of ecological history in tertiary institutions and secondary schools.[38] The ESEH publishes a quarterly newsletter and hosts a biannual conference where scholars meet to showcase their research.[39]

The need to promote and disseminate environmental history research led to the rise of publishers that target environmental history works. The White Horse Press has been strategic in this area. Founded in 1991, the White Horse Press publishes five journals: *Environment Values; Environment and History; Global Environment; Nomadic Peoples* and

Warde, "The problem of the problem of environmental history: A re-reading of the field", *Environmental History,* 12(1), 2007, p. 107-130.

[32] T Myllyntaus and M Saikku, Environment in Explaining History…, *Encountering the past…*, 2001, p. 14.

[33] S Sörlin and P Warde, "The problem of the problem…, *Environmental History,* 2007, p. 110.

[34] T Myllyntaus and M Saikku, Environment in Explaining History…, *Encountering the past…*, 2001, p. 18.

[35] American Historical Association, "American Society for Environmental History" (available at https://www.historians.org/about-aha-and-membership/affiliated-societies/american-society-for-environmental-history, as accessed on 25 January 2023).

[36] American Historical Association, "American Society for…"

[37] N Jacobs, "Welcome to ASEH", American Society of Environmental History, (available at https://aseh.org/, as accessed on 25 January 2023).

[38] European Society for Environmental History Mission, "Mission", (available at http://eseh.org/about-us/mission/, as accessed on 25 January 2023).

[39] European Society for Environmental History Mission, "Mission".

the *Journal of Population and Sustainability*.[40] The *Global Environment* publishes three issues annually, focussing on the environment and world history, particularly on modern contemporary topics. The *Environment and History*, founded in 1995, focusses on the nexus between environmental science and history, bringing scholars in humanities and natural sciences closer together.[41] Remarkably, all the journals accept papers from across the globe.

## An overview of environmental history in Africa

African environmental history has been dominated by colonial experiences and their legacies, with histories of soil erosion and conservation forming part of this legacy. Eurocentric historians blamed soil erosion and other forms of environmental degradation on "African ignorance" of conservation methods.[42] However, colonial efforts to redress these challenges were less effective than anticipated, since most were drawn from "European scientific models", inapplicable primarily to the African contexts.[43] Thus, revisionist historians have criticised Western environmental historiography on Africa, arguing that it lacks appreciation of African conservation norms. This takes us to the theme of Indigenous Knowledge Systems. This has become popular in post-colonial Africa because it explores subtle environmental ideas and practices embedded in community-based rules, beliefs, superstitions, and taboos about flora and fauna, mountains, pools, snakes and large trees.[44]

The resource-based conflict theme, which deals with contestation over access to natural resources, also dominates African environmental history. While during the colonial period, these contestations contributed to African nationalism, especially in settler states like Kenya, Zimbabwe and South Africa, they have remained contested spaces in post-colonial Africa.[45] This conflict applies equally to access to minerals, exemplified by a proliferation of 'illegal' artisanal gold and diamond mining, the environmental effects, and the bloody conflicts among the miners and between miners and the state.[46]

[40] The White Horse Press, "About WHP" (available at https://www.whpress.co.uk/publications/about-us/, as accessed on 25 January 2023).

[41] The White Horse Press, About WHP.

[42] JR Mcneill, "Observation on the nature and culture of environmental history", *History and Theory*, 42(4), 2003, p. 26.

[43] W Beinart, "African history and environmental history", *African Affairs*, 99(395), 2000, p. 275.

[44] V Kwashirai, "World environmental history – Environmental history of Africa", Encyclopedia of Life Support Systems, (available at, https://www.eolss.net/Sample-Chapters/C09/E6-156-35.pdf , as accessed on 14 March 2023).

[45] See, for instance, N Ndumeya, "Nature, conservation and conflict in Eastern Zimbabwe: Chirinda Forest, 1980–2000", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 45(2), 2019, 253-271.

[46] See, for instance T Madimu, "'Illegal' gold mining and the everyday in post-apartheid South Africa", *Review of African Political Economy*, 49(2), 2022, pp. 1-16; M Thabane, "Liphokojoe of Kao: A study

Environmental historians also investigate Africa's climatic history and its impact on the communities. McCann states that concerns over Africa's climate history emerged in response to the 1968-1972 drought in the Sahel, Ethiopia's twin famines in 1972-1974 and 1984-1986.[47] These had implications for Africa's food security. Hence, environmental historians sought to investigate the relationship between drought, humanity and livelihoods. Other themes of African environmental history include disease and public health, livestock and wildlife diseases, deforestation, and afforestation programmes.

## Socio-environmental history and climate change in South Africa

South Africa is exceptionally rich in socio-environmental history literature. It has a wide range of books, book chapters, journal articles and postgraduate theses that cover various socio-environmental history themes, implying that the country has a solid base on which to 'green' the FET history curriculum. In 1980, Jeff Guy published work on ecologies and the Zulu Kingdom, in which he established a link between the environment, population, war, and state building. He pointed to the ecological factors in the rise of Shaka and the Zulu Kingdom in the early nineteenth century. Guy demonstrated how major kingdoms then were linked to areas of specific vegetation types and that the Mfecane wars were predominantly struggles over natural resources.[48] Equally significant is a collection edited by Beinart, Delius and Trapido.[49] While the thrust of the collection is on agriculture, the theme of socio-environment is conspicuous, indicating the relationship between nature on the one hand, and agriculture and history on the other.

In another study, Colin Bundy demonstrated that land, pasture degradation, soil erosion, water shortages and the subsequent imposition of top-down rural betterment programmes prompted contestations in rural South Africa.[50] This is also true with colonial

of a diamond digger rebel group in the Lesotho highlands", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 26(1), 2000, pp. 105-121; W Mwatwara, J Mujere and G Mkodzongi, "Between violence and negotiation: Gold rushes, gang violence, and negotiated access in artisanal gold mining along Zimbabwe's Great Dyke", *The Extractive Industry and Society*, 11, 2022, pp. 1-9.

[47] JC McCann, "Climate and causation in African history", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies,* 32(2/3), 1999, pp. 261-279.

[48] J Guy, "Ecological factors in the rise of Shaka and the Zulu Kingdom", in S Marks and A Atmore (eds.), *Economy and society in pre-industrial South Africa* (London: Longman, 1980), pp. 102-119.

[49] W Beinart, P Delius and S Trapido, *Putting a plough to the ground: Accumulation and dispossession in rural South Africa 1850 – 1930* ( Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1986).

[50] C Bundy, "We don't want your rain, we won't dip: Widespread opposition, collaboration and social control in the anti-dipping movement, 1908 – 1916", W Beinart and C Bundy, *Hidden struggles in rural South Africa: Politics and popular movements in the Transkei and Eastern Cape 1890 – 1930* ( Johannesburg, Ravan Press, 1987), pp. 222-269.

Zimbabwe and Kenya, where inequitable ownership and access to resources like land, flora and fauna prompted nationalist struggles. Africans began challenging colonial laws that barred them from accessing these resources on equal terms with the white communities.[51]

On this basis, Sandra Swart notes that, unlike the environmental history of the Global North, which has focussed on the wilderness and urban history, the ecological history of South Africa has focussed on rural struggles over resources.[52]

Jane Carruthers has produced several articles, monographs, and a vast edited collection of case studies on the environmental history of South Africa. Her inspirational works have focussed on creating and managing national parks, which sheds light on biology, local ecologies and histories, the nexus between parks and nationalism, and facets of people–parks conflict.[53] Fittingly, she has been hailed as a pioneer of the environmental history of South Africa. Related to this, Shirley Brooks has written various pieces on the historical geography of KwaZulu-Natal province, South Africa. Brooks has focussed on the creation of game reserves and the subsequent contestations emanating from the contradictory interests of game and cattle farmers, as well as the Africans who, in the process, were evicted from their ancestral land.[54] Sandra Swart, who works on the relationship between humans and animals, has produced a monograph on horses and several other works on dogs, lions and kudu hunting in the Eastern Cape, bringing an otherwise under-researched field into the spotlight.[55] In the same vein, Nancy Jacobs' classic work on the donkey massacre in Bophuthatswana is a helpful lens through which to view socio-political and economic relations, including status, gender and religion, in the then Bophuthatswana. Other notable works include F. Khan,[56] J. Tropp[57] and T. Hoffmann.[58]

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[51] See, for instance VEM Machingaidze, "Agrarian change from above: The southern Rhodesia native land husbandry act and African response", *International Journal of African Historical Studies,* 1991, pp. 557-588.

[52] S Swart, "South African environmental history, A historiography", SR Rajan and L Sedrez (eds.), *The great convergence: Environmental histories of BRICS* (Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018), p. 326.

[53] See, for example, J Carruthers, Towards an environmental history of South Africa: Some perspectives, *South African Historical Journal*, 23(1) 1990, pp. 184-195.; J Carruthers, "Police boys" and poachers: Africans, wildlife protection and national parks, The Transvaal, 1902 – 1950, *Koedoe*, 36(2) 1993, pp. 11-22.

[54] See, S Brooks, "Ropes of sand: Soldier-settlers and nagana in Zululand", A Reeves, JS Crush and J Crush, *White farms, Black labour: The State and agrarian change in Southern Africa, 1910 – 1950* (Portsmouth, Heinemann, 1997).

[55] E Duvenage, "Professor Sandra Swart makes (her own) history", February 2022,
(Available at http://www.sun.ac.za/english/Lists/news/DispForm.aspx?ID=8926, as accessed on 1 April 2023).

[56] F Khan, "Soil wars: The role of the African National Soil Conservation Association in South Africa, 1953 – 1959", *Environmental History*, 2(4), October 1997, pp. 439-59.

[57] J Tropp, *Natures of colonial change: Environmental relations in the making of the Transkei* (Athens, Ohio University Press, 2006).

[58] MT Hoffman, "Changing patterns of rural land use and land cover in South Africa and their implications

Another notable development has been the entry of environmental history and climate change courses at South African universities. In a recent study, Sandra Swart noted an increase in the number of postgraduate students pursuing environmental history at honours, master's and PhD levels.[59] Equally significant has been an increase in socio-environmental history papers presented at academic conferences, with some published in scholarly journals.[60] The first issue of volume 73 of the 2021 edition of the *South African Historical Journal* was devoted to the Anthropocene, a significant contribution to knowledge on this theme.[61] Related to this, some South African universities have lately been offering mandatory climate change-related courses, taking a multi-disciplinary approach to their studies.[62] Therefore, including socio-environmental history in South Africa's FET history curriculum would be another way of equipping learners with skills and knowledge that prepare them for university education.

Academics aside, matters of environment and climate change have become topical among politicians, media houses, artists, and the youth. The current paper uses four illustrations. First, in April 2023, the South African president, Cyril Ramaphosa, lamented that sub-Saharan Africa is experiencing temperature changes "well above the global average" and further bemoaned that climate change-induced natural disasters, like droughts and floods, were affecting South Africa badly.[63] This ties in with an earlier concern, where, in April 2022, the then minister of Cooperative Governance and Traditional Affairs, Dr Nkosazana Dlamini Zuma, regretted the disastrous floods that had hit parts of KwaZulu-Natal province in April 2022, which left more than 435 people dead, 80 missing and affected 19 113 households, a total of 128 743 people.[64] The then minister described these floods as "… the worst we have seen in our living memory", adding that flooding in this province had worsened over the preceding five years, stating: "This tells us that climate change is

for land reform", *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 40(4) 2014, pp. 705-725.

59 S Swart, "At the edge of the Anthropocene…", *South African Historical Journal*, 2021, p. 343.

60 S Swart, "At the edge of the Anthropocene…", *South African Historical Journal*, 2021, p. 344.

61 See S Swart, "At the edge of the Anthropocene…", *South African Historical Journal*, 2021, p. 345

62 University of the Witwatersrand, "Climate change and me marks Wits' largest first-year course in its history", November 2022 (Available at https://www.wits.ac.za/news/latest-news/general-news/2022/2022-02/climate-change-and-me-marks-wits-largest-first-year-course-in-its-history.html, as accessed on17 March 2023).

63 South African Government, "From the desk of the President" October 2021 (accessed at https://www.gov.za/blog/desk-president-88, as accessed on 7 April 2023).

64 Reliefweb, "South Africa: KwaZulu-Natal floods – Emergency appeal No. MDRZA012 – Operational strategy", June 2022 (available at https://reliefweb.int/report/south-africa/south-africa-kwazulu-natal-floods-emergency-appeal-no-mdrza012-operational-strategy, as accessed 7 April 2023).

here with us".[65] While this paper does not estimate the extent to which climate change contributed to the KZN floods, the fact that the earth is experiencing global warming is not in doubt, and "… as the earth warms, it will generate longer droughts, more intense downpours, more frequent heatwaves and more severe storms".[66] This is consistent with the Kwa-Zulu-Natal floods and other climate and weather hazards within South Africa and the rest of the region.

Second, the South African media has also raised concerns about climate change. Since November 2018, the *Daily Maverick* newspaper has published a climate change series entitled 'Our Burning Planet', critically examining South Africa's response to climate change. The inaugural editorial column of November 2018 focussed on 'Day Zero'; the water crisis that hit Cape Town in 2017, and it queried the city's failure to plan for this, despite 30 years of evidence that the Western Cape "had been drying and heating up".[67] The second was an interview with a renowned South African meteorologist, Professor Francois Engelbrecht, which sheds light on the negative impact of global warming on health, livelihoods, food security, water supply and the economy in general.[68] What came from this interview is that climate change affects everyday lives and livelihoods. Hence, this is a theme that deserves studying in schools.

Third, artists have also been coming on board. A case in point is the modification of Barry McGuire's song, '*Eve of Destruction*', the number one USA protest song produced in the 1960s against the Vietnam War, into a climate anthem, with the purpose of "articulating all the grief and rage of living in our fossil-fuelled world".[69] Anneli Kamfer sang about the world on the eve of destruction in the adapted song, where she laments how oil-powered cars are smoking and burning the world and bemoans climate change, which is leading to the drying of rivers. She worries that when the threshold is reached, the world will go aflame and at that point, there will be nothing left to save, "…this would mark the end of the world".[70] The lyrics are accompanied by 55 horrendous video clips of natural and artificial disasters: factory pollution in the United Kingdom, car pollution in India, dead animals in

[65] T Monana, "Climate change is here, warns Dlamini Zuma", *News24,* 19 April 2022.

[66] T Jeyaretnam, et. Al, Jared Diamond, *Collapse*…, p. 43.

[67] Editorial, "Our burning planet, The Earth is on fire, it is time to start worrying", *The Daily Maverick*, 6 November 2018.

[68] K Bloom, "Our burning planet" Interview: South Africa, Climate change 'hot spot', *The Daily Maverick*, 7 November 2018.

[69] T Walters and B Brkic, "A short history of a new climate anthem, 20Twenties: Eve of destruction – how it came into being", *Daily Maverick*, 4 October 2022.

[70] Daily Maverick, "20Twenties: Eve of destruction", Anneli Kampher, (available at https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=REeWvTRUpMk, as accessed on 17 February 2023).

the drying Ngami lake in Botswana, destructive Durban floods in South Africa, disastrous forest/ bush fires in the USA and Australia, hurricane Florence of North Carolina, massive destructions of the Ukraine war, Covid-19 induced mass burials in Indonesia, among others.[71] A glimpse at the audience's comments is informative,

> *"This hit to the core", "eye-opening", "hugely powerful", "Heartbreaking call… we have tried being polite protestors, tried everything within legal parameters to get our governments to stop getting into bed with the fossil fuel criminals."*[72]

This demonstrates the extent of humanity's worries about climate change, to which history teaching can play a role, too.

The fourth example relates to the South African youth. In March 2019, for instance, hundreds of students in Cape Town joined the global students strike against governments inaction on climate change. The youth partnered with various organisations, schools and university groups across South Africa and drafted a climate change action document titled, "*South African Youth Climate Plan*".[73] The draft raised five issues, including environmental sustainability, which called for sustainability over profit, and the need to address concerns over water scarcity, biodiversity and ecosystems, agriculture and the infamous fossil fuel industry and pollution.

The preceding demonstrates that the world is facing an environmental emergency dominated by climate change. This has become a concern among various stakeholders, including the UN and some of its agencies. As noted earlier, as many stakeholders engage with this topic, climate change has become part of South Africa's public discourse. This takes us to Diamond's argument that humans can curtail environmental damage in the same way that they have contributed to it.[74] History teaching can play a role in this endeavour by including socio-environmental history in the FET history curriculum. This would conscientious learners on how human's past interactions with the planet have contributed to the Anthropocene and in that process, instil skills, attitudes, and values of environmentalism among the country's young citizens. The following section focusses on the strategies for infusing socio-environmental history into South Africa's FET history curriculum.

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[71] Daily Maverick, "20Twenties: Eve of destruction", Anneli Kampher …, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=REeWvTRUpMk

[72] Daily Maverick, "20Twenties: Eve of destruction", Anneli Kampher …, https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=REeWvTRUpMk

[73] O Ngcuka, "Pillars of an action plan: South Africa's youth step up to the climate challenge", *Daily Maverick*, 3 October 2021.

[74] J Diamond, *Collapse: How societies choose to fail…*, 2011, p. 521.

## Opportunities for 'greening' the South African FET history curriculum

The current CAPS FET history curriculum came into use in 2012. It has six topics for Grade 10, five topics for Grade 11 and another six topics for Grade 12, totalling 17 topics.[75] This section builds on intersectionality and all-inclusive ecologies of knowledge approach. While Crenshaw first used the concept to give voice to the marginalised women in the USA,[76] this section of the study uses intersectionality to understand interconnections and demonstrate that socio-environmental history intersects with other history topics already part of South Africa's FET history curriculum. This section analyses these topics in detail and assesses how much socio-environment history content they carry. Where missing, the section suggests how this can be infused. Towards the end, the section suggests stand-alone environmental history topics that can be included in the FET history curriculum. Table 1 shows the Grade 10 topics of the FET history curriculum.

**Table 1:** Grade 10 topics

| Topic | Title | Comment |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | The world around 1600 | World history |
| 2 | European expansion and conquest during the 15th-18th centuries | Political and war history |
| 3 | The French Revolution | Political, military and social history |
| 4 | Transformations in Southern Africa after 1750 | Political, economic and social history |
| 5 | Colonial expansion after 1750 | Political and military history |
| 6 | The South African War and Union | Military and political history |

As shown in Table 1, the first three of the six Grade 10 history curriculum topics, namely, the World around 1600, European expansion and conquest during the fifteenth and eighteenth centuries and the French Revolution, deal with various aspects of world political and economic histories. The first topic can be 'greened' by infusing content relating to climate science, navigation and shipping history. Similarly, the topic covering European conquests of South America can include aspects of migration and disease and

[75] For detailed study, please see, Department of Basic Education, *National Curriculum and assessment policy statement: Further education and training phase,* Grades 10-12 History, 2011.

[76] K Crenshaw, "Demarginalizing the intersection of race and sex: A black feminist critique of antidiscrimination doctrine, feminist theory, and antiracist politics", *University of Chicago Legal Forum*, 1(8), 1997, pp. 139-167.

the demographic tragedies that accompanied European settlement in Latin America, popularly known as the "Columbian Exchange".[77] This would enlighten learners about migrations, the spread of disease and immunities. The topic of the French Revolution could be enriched by an in-depth coverage of the drought and natural disasters of 1788 and how these contributed to the French Revolution, demonstrating the nexus between nature, economies and politics.[78]

The remainder of the Grade 10 topics focus on the political, economic and military histories of South Africa. These are, firstly, transformations in Southern Africa after 1750; secondly, colonial expansion after 1750 and thirdly, the South African War and the Union of South Africa. It is possible to 'green' a topic, such as transformation in Southern Africa after 1750, by infusing environmental factors that contributed to the Mfecane upheavals, as has been explored by Jeff Guy.[79] In the process, learners can be educated about the correlation between societies, land and carrying capacities. Hence, learners can be made aware of how overpopulation can drive resource conflict, war and death, which resonates with the Malthusian crisis.[80] The topic of colonial expansion after 1750 offers an opportunity to draw links between the environment, human settlement and livelihood options, including the repercussions of unregulated exploitation of natural resources. This is illustrated by over-hunting in South Africa, which led to the extinction of the quagga by the late nineteenth century.[81] On the other hand, a detailed study of the mid- to late nineteenth century encounters between the Boer communities of the then Orange Free State with King Moshoeshoe of the Kingdom of Lesotho, demonstrates the significance of the Thaba Bosiu mountain in the defence of that kingdom against Boer encroachment. This shows the relationship between war, landscapes and national defence.[82] Lastly, the South African War of 1899-1902 can be taught not just as war history, but also to demonstrate how war can negatively interfere with human-environment relations. While it saved a war objective of starving the Boer commandos, the scorched earth policy and introduction of

[77] See, for example, N Nunn and N Qian, "The Columbian exchange: A history of disease, food and ideas", *Journal of Economic Perspectives, and Ideas*, 24(2), 2010, pp. 163-188.

[78] N Plack, "Environmental issues during the French Revolution: Peasants, politics and village common land", *Australian Journal of French Studies*, 47(3), 2010, pp. 290-303.

[79] J Guy, *Ecological factors in the rise of Shaka…*

[80] See TR Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population (1798).* The works of Thomas Robert Malthus, London, Pickering & Chatto Publishers, 1, pp. 1-139.

[81] See R de Vos, Stripes faded, barking silenced: Remembering Quagga, *Animal Studies Journal*, 3(1) 2014, pp. 29-45.

[82] See, EA Eldredge, *A South African Kingdom: The pursuit of security in nineteenth century Lesotho*, (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1993).

concentration camps led to food insecurity, the rampant spread of disease and the death of approximately 45 000 individuals who had been forced into the concentration camps.[83]

**Table 2:** Grade 11 topics

| Topic | Title | Comment |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Communism in Russia from 1900 to 1950 | Political and economic history |
| 2 | Capitalism in the USA from 1900 to 1940 | Political and economic history |
| 3 | Ideas of race in the late 19th and 20th centuries | Ideological and social history |
| 4 | Nationalism: South Africa, Middle East and Africa | Political and military history |
| 5 | Apartheid in South Africa 1940s to 1960s | Political and military history |

Table 2 shows the five topics that are offered in Grade 11. The first two topics focus on the ideologies that dominated twentieth-century politics and economies, namely, communism and capitalism. There is room to infuse socio-environmental history content when teaching Stalin's agricultural collectivisation and industrialisation programmes in Russia. These include short- and long-term environmental effects of large-scale mining of coal and iron, industrialisation programmes, large-scale construction of dams and reservoirs along the major rivers, land clearances and irrigation systems across arid and semi-arid parts of central Asia, among other issues. The same is true of the capitalist boom of the 1920s in the USA and Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal of the 1930s. To revive the USA's economy after the Great Depression, Roosevelt passed several public work programmes that dealt with soil erosion control, water conservation, the prevention of wildfires and other environmental protection measures.[84] These demonstrate how political imperatives and economic needs of societies can, on the one hand, lead to environmental damage and disruption of ecologies while on the other hand, it shows that humans can repair the damages caused.

The other three Grade 11 topics focus on power, domination and resistance. One topic focusses on ideas of race, domination and resistance in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries in the USA, Australia, Namibia, South Africa and Germany. A similar theme underlies topics 4 and 5, which deal with nationalism, segregation and resistance in South Africa, the Middle East and Ghana. Arguably, there is minimal socio-environmental history content contained in these topics.

[83] J de Reuck, "Social suffering and the politics of pain: Observations on the concentration camps in the Anglo-Boer War of 1899-1902", *English in Africa*, 26(2), 1999, p. 80.

[84] NM Maher, "A New Deal body politic: Landscape, labor and the civilian conservation corps", *Environmental History*, 7(3) 2002, pp. 435-461.

**Table 3:** Grade 12 topics

| Topic | Title | Comment |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Cold War | Political and diplomatic history |
| 2 | Independent Africa | Political history |
| 3 | Civil Society protests 1950s to 1990s | Social and political history |
| 4 | Civil resistance 1970s to 1980s in South Africa | Social and political history |
| 5 | The coming of democracy in South Africa | Political and diplomatic history |
| 6 | The end of the Cold War and the new global order in 1989 | Political and economic history |

Grade 12 begins with a topic on the Cold War, which encompasses diplomatic and political contestations, primarily between the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) and her allies and the USA and Western Europe. This links with topic 6 of the same grade, which is about the 1989 events which led to the collapse of the USSR and thereafter, the end of the Cold War. Nevertheless, topic 2 is interesting in that it focusses on the political, economic and social challenges experienced by Tanzania and the Democratic Republic of Congo in the context of the Cold War. It further requires studying the manifestation of the Cold War, using the case study of Angola, which was embroiled in a civil war involving the governing party's Popular Movement for the Liberation of Angola (MPLA) and an opposition National Union for the Total Independence of Angola (UNITA), which were supported by Socialist and Capitalist blocks respectively. There is an opportunity to infuse the socio-environmental effects of war on the environment, such as planting landmines and its impact on civilians, including displacement, disabilities and death.[85]

Once more, the rest of the Grade 12 topics deal with domination and resistance. While topic 3 is about civil society protests in the USA from the 1950s to 1990s, topic 4 is about civil resistance in South Africa from the 1970s to 1990s. The significant difference is that the former focusses on African Americans who resisted racism in the USA, while the latter focusses on Blacks who opposed Apartheid in South Africa. There is room to expand this topic by incorporating resistance against environmental injustices and forced removals in South Africa, as demonstrated by Kgari-Masondo's case study on the forced removals from

[85] S Roberts and J William, *After the guns fall silent: The enduring legacy of landmines*, (Washington, Vietnam Veterans of American Foundation, 1995).

Lady Shelborne to Ga-Rankuwa highlighted earlier.[86] Topic 5 is on diplomatic history and focusses on negotiations that led to the attainment of South African democracy in 1994.

From the preceding, the existing CAPS FET history topics have been analysed. The missing socio-environmental history concepts and content have been explored and suggestions made on how these could be infused into existing issues. Hereafter, the study suggests possible standalone socio-environmental history topics that can be taught in the FET history curriculum.

**Table 4:** Standalone socio-environmental history topics

| Topic | Comment |
|---|---|
| **Topic 1: Africa: The continent, its people and the environment**<br>• North Africa: the Sahara Desert, the Nile River and water conflicts since 1900.<br>• West Africa: oil conflict and war in Nigeria since the 1950s.<br>• Diamond mining, the Angolan civil war and the socio-environmental issues, 1975 – 2002.<br>• Central Africa: Copper mining, socio-environmental degradation and pollution in post-colonial Zambia.<br>• Southern Africa: Tobacco farming, profits and environmental degradation on the Zimbabwean Highveld since the 1950s.<br>• Impact of colonisation on the socio-environmental history of Africa. | The topics give an overview of Africa's natural heritage: climates, soils, water, minerals, pastures, forests, etcetera. Covering the period since 1900, it begins with a general outline of these themes. It later takes a case study approach to examine the history of the commercial exploitation of these natural resources. This includes the history of water in North Africa, oil in Nigeria, diamonds in Angola, copper in Zambia and tobacco production in Zimbabwe. It seeks to examine how these natural resources' exploitation and use have shaped these regions' social, environmental and political histories. |

[86] See MC Kgari-Masondo, "The usable past and socio-environmental justice…", *New Contree,* 2013, p.120.

| Topic | Comment |
|---|---|
| **Topic 2: Socio-environmental history of South Africa**<br>• The Minerals Revolution and socio-environmental impacts since the 1870s.<br>• Commercial agriculture and its effects on societies and the environment.<br>• Socio-environmental history of South Africa's 'Homelands' from 1951 to 1993.<br>• Industrialisation and the South African societies and the environment.<br>• The Lesotho Highland Water Project and South African societies since the 1980s. | The topic deals with various aspects of the South African socio-environmental history since the 1870s. These include the history of mining, especially gold mining, the history of land and commercial agriculture and that of industrialisation. The focus will be on the socio-environmental effects of these processes, including water and air pollution and their impact on communities, land degradation and disease as well as an assessment of measures to curb these adverse effects. The socio-environmental history of 'Homelands' and environmental issues associated with this subject. The problems of water scarcity in urban and rural South Africa, as well as water imports from Lesotho and the impacts on South African economies and society. |

Socio-environmental history content can be infused into South Africa's existing FET history curriculum. It can also be included in this curriculum on a standalone basis. This has the potential to equip learners with a sound knowledge and an appreciation of natural and artificial processes that have informed the socio-environmental histories at local, regional and continental platforms and in the process, inculcate skills, attitudes and values about caring for the planet.

## Conclusion

Therefore, prompted by the environmental and climate crisis confronting planet Earth, also known as the Anthropocene, this paper has argued for including socio-environmental history in the South African FET history curriculum. The paper has shown that since the 1960s, planet Earth has been experiencing various forms of environmental deterioration, including climate change and its effects, such as global warming and frequent natural hazards like destructive floods, diseases and unusual droughts, all contributing to the disastrous impacts on livelihoods. It has traced the origins and development of environmental history as an academic subject and analysed some measures adopted by world leaders, various UN agencies, and other stakeholders towards dealing with this ecological crisis and its effects.

The paper has demonstrated that this environmental crisis is also a South African one. It requires the efforts of various stakeholders, including politicians, academics, the media and lobby groups, to work towards mitigating this emergency. This leads to the current paper's argument that teaching history can contribute to environmental sustainability by educating learners about how humanity has contributed to the Anthropocene. To do this, the FET history curriculum, which has been in use since 2012 and is dominated by political, military, social, economic and diplomatic histories, should be revised to include appropriate socio-environmental history, demonstrating that history and nature are intertwined. This will educate learners on human-environment interactions and their results. The young citizens will learn that as humans work to eke out a living from the land, carrying out mining operations, cultivating and growing plants and manufacturing commodities in factories and industries, they variously interfere with the natural world, in the process interfering with the physical and non-physical components of the planet. This 'all-inclusive ecologies of knowledge approach' will inculcate, amongst the young citizens, the skills, attitudes and values that promote stewardship of the earth and its resources.

# Reading the African School Curriculum as an Historical Text: Educational Contexts, Policies and Practices in Zimbabwe

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## Abstract

The current research is a critical rendition of the history of the African school curriculum in Zimbabwe. The paper explores how this curriculum manifested itself from colonial times to the present post-colonial dispensation. Methodologically, we adopt a Kliebardian historical approach to an understanding of the purpose and changing nature of education through a study of the history of education. The study posits that a curriculum may be read through a vertical analysis of changes over time as shaped by varying contexts, policies and practices associated with its development. Thus, the curriculum under review is an historical text. The main conclusions drawn from the study are that in Rhodesia, curriculum goals, content, methods and assessment strategies were crafted to serve the needs of the dominant European group, while African education was perennially under-funded. The post-colonial curriculum was, and is still expected to exorcise the erstwhile colonial elitist educational jinx to serve the needs of the African majority. Regrettably, however, it has been saddled with challenges such as policy and ideological inconsistencies, as well as inadequate financial resources to support change and innovation. We (the authors), therefore, see the study as providing a basis for a critical scrutiny and understanding of the history and purpose of education in Zimbabwe and ipso facto, its possible improvement.

**Keywords:** African school curriculum; educational policy making; history of education; Kliebardian historical approach; post-colonial; vertical analysis of changes.

## Introduction

The history of the African school curriculum in Rhodesia, now Zimbabwe, is best understood within the economic, social, political and cultural contexts created, and perspectives held by successive British minority settler governments on Africans in general.[1] The same contextualisation is true for the post-colonial era, albeit there was now majority rule. Therefore, our discussion covers the period of missionary education before 1890 to the present. To that end, we make a retrospective analysis of the history of African education in Zimbabwe.

[1] E Shizha and MT Kariwo, *Education and development in Zimbabwe: A social, political and economic analysis,* (Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, 2011).

The authors' critique of how the African school curriculum has been positioned within the various contexts is informed by Freire's[2] view that all education is always-already political. Hamilton and Weiner[3] further explicates that a curriculum that gestures particular forms of social order may equally work to change social order that may be actual, imagined or anticipated. This way of looking at how the Zimbabwean African school curriculum was framed is not intended to raise a nostalgic argument through mere reference to past trends and practices, but to give it a historicity,[4] which Jansen[5] claims was non-existent. We dispense with the idea of a curriculum as a mere learning package handed down to schools for implementation. Instead, we adopt the concept of curriculum as a historical, social intervention programme that is more than what schools teach.[6] This enables us to view the subject of our investigation within the broader intellectual and ideological climate of the periods under review.

## Literature review

Educational systems are beholden to history for many aspects of their curricular aims, content, teaching methods, forms of assessment and other areas of educational endeavour. This article traces the main signposts in the provision of African education in Zimbabwe from colonial to post-colonial times. To a certain extent, this article is essentially an analysis of extant literature on the history of that education and its potential impact on contemporary educational provisions. The importance of history of education to curriculum practice is well documented.[7] Most of this literature is a narrative of what transpired. This study finds a lacuna among writings on Zimbabwean education by seeking focus on forces at play at any moment in history.

[2] P Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed,* (New York: Continuum, 2000).

[3] D Hamilton, D. and Weiner, G. 2003. Subject not Subjects: Curriculum Pathways, Pedagogies and Practices in the United Kingdom in W. F. Pinar. International Handbook of Curriculum Research p. 632-636. Mahwah: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

[4] ZA Casey and MJ McCanless, "Looking backward to go forward: Toward a Kliebardian approach to curriculum theory", Berkeley Review of Education, 8(1), 2018, pp. 23-38; KK Kumashiro, Against common sense: Teaching and learning toward social justice, (New York: Routledge, 2003).

[5] JD Jansen, "What education scholars write about curriculum in Namibia and Zimbabwe", WF Pinar, *International handbook of curriculum research,* (Hillsdale, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates, 2003), pp. 78-84.

[6] S Triche, "Reconceiving curriculum: An historical approach", PhD, Louisiana State University, 2002).

[7] N Atkinson, "Racial integration in Zimbabwean schools, 1979-1980", *Comparative Education,* 18(1), 1982, pp. 77-89; W Jonga, *An Assessment of Teachers and Parents' Views on Part-Time Continuing Educational Classes (PTEC'S) in Mashonaland Central Region,* (Ethiopian Civil Service University, 2012); HM Kliebard, Why history of education? (The Journal of Educational Research, 1995). 88, 194–199.

It has Kliebard's[8] observation as its point of departure: "Ideas and practices that seem so normal and natural in a contemporary setting often take a certain strangeness when viewed in historical setting, and that strangeness often permits us to see those ideas and practices in a different light."

Informed by views gleaned from the related literature, we, the authors in this study of the history of Zimbabwean African education, contend that research is a chance for deliberative inquiry in, and critical scrutiny of, contemporary curricular practices.

## Research questions

The British settlers grappled continuously with the issue of education that they deemed suitable for Africans. In their broad scheme of things, such an educational offering had to shape a specific subordinate role and create a segregated society.[9] Thus, to engage critically with the history of African education in Zimbabwe, the following guiding research questions are posed:

1. What socio-political context framed the school curriculum at any given historical moment?
2. What curricular critiques can be extracted from this curriculum history?

An interrogation of questions such as these will aid in scrutinising what seems automatic or common sense[10] and to contextualise and understand the present moment better.

[8] HM Kliebard, "Why history of education?" The Journal of Educational Research, 1995). 88, 194–199.

[9] C Summers, "Educational controversies: African activism and educational strategies in Southern Rhodesia", *Journal of Southern African Studies,* 20(1), 1994, pp. 3-25.

[10] ZA Casey and MJ McCanless, "Looking backward to go forward: Toward a Kliebardian approach to curriculum theory", *Berkeley Review of Education,* 8(1), 2018, pp. 23-38; KK Kumashiro, *Against common sense: Teaching and learning toward social justice,* (New York: Routledge, 2003).

## Research methodology

The Kliebardian historical approach to studying education that was adopted in this study is illustrated below in Figure 1.

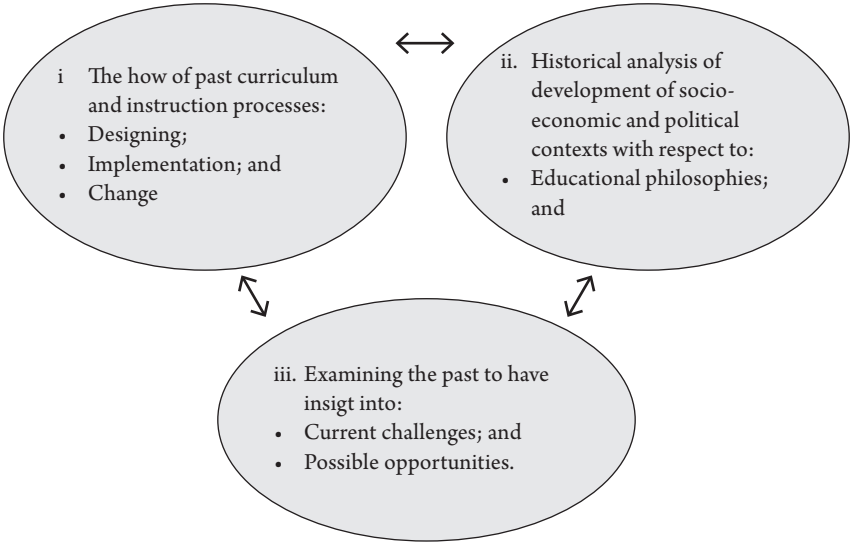


**Figure1:** The Kliebardian approach to understanding education

The Kliebardian approach involves three interlinked processes as depicted in Fig 1. In general, each phase necessitates a critical study of past curricular initiatives to proffer possible solutions to contemporary societal challenges. Documents that were subjected to close examination in this study included journal articles, books, government documents, official reports and policy-related publications.

## Education in colonial Zimbabwe

The leading providers of formal education in pre-independent Zimbabwe were the various missionary groups that operated in the country and the central colonial government. While the former initially advocated for basic literacy, the latter insisted on basic manual skills training to provide the public service with low-level functionaries. Nevertheless, these two leading education providers generally agreed that Africans had to access only inferior education. An inferior education would not undermine European dominance in whichever sector of the Rhodesian economy. On their part, Africans consistently preferred

an academic education to basic literacy and quasi-vocational education, as holders of academic qualifications were thought to stand a better chance of securing high-earning 'white-collar' jobs.[11] Further, academic education would enable them to "...escape from the rural treadmill of communal agricultural life".[12]

### *Missionary education*

Before the advent of colonial rule in Southern Rhodesia in 1890, missionaries had already started providing formal education to Africans. The first school was established by the London Missionary Society at Inyathi, Hwange district in 1859. The form of education that the missionary society promoted was guided by the philosophy of spreading 'civilisation'. Even though Africans had their own established religion and non-formal educational systems, Christian missionaries believed that the spread of Christianity and the development of legitimate commerce would expose Africans to 'civilisation'. The latter was a substitute for the infamous, illegitimate trans-Atlantic Slave Trade that had ravaged the African continent for many centuries.[13] The missionaries perceived indigenous peoples as inherently inferior beings; wild, barbaric and uncivilised.[14] Hence, schooling was intended to make Africans adopt 'civilised' Christian practices. To that end, the core curriculum for Africans focused on elementary literacy skills and religious instruction.

Cecil John Rhodes, the architect of British Imperialism in Southern Africa encouraged missionary activities in the country. In his thinking, "...the transition of Africans from barbarism to civilisation must be gradual".[15] For Rhodes, Christianity would pacify Africans in that "...missionaries are better than policemen and cheaper".[16]

[11] NJ Atkinson, *Teaching Rhodesians: History of education policy in Rhodesia,* (London: Longman, 1972); DA Mungazi, "A strategy for Power: Commissions of inquiry into education and government control in Colonial Zimbabwe", *The International Journal of African Historical Studies,* 22(2), 1989, pp. 267-285.

[12] SJ Berridge (Father), ESAP & *education for the poor,* (Harare: Mambo Press in association with Silveira House, 1993).

[13] GY Abraham, "A post-colonial perspective on African education systems", *African Journal of Education and Practice, 6*(5), 2020, pp. 40-54; JR Chepyator-Thomson, "Public policy, physical education and sport in English-speaking Africa", *Physical Education and Sport Pedagogy,* 19(5), 2014, pp. 512-521.

[14] E Shizha and MT Kariwo, *Education and development in Zimbabwe…,* (Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, 2011).

[15] RJ Challis, "The foundation of the racially segregated education system in Southern Rhodesia, 1890-1923, with specific reference to the education of Africans", (PhD, Harare: University of Zimbabwe, 1982).

[16] RJ Challis, "The foundation of the racially segregated education…", (PhD, Harare: University of Zimbabwe, 1982).

Christian missionary values tended to teach docility and submissiveness, which blended well with the idea of getting cheap labour with minimal or no resistance. In such a way, there would be no need for policemen to maintain law and order as chances of a rebellion would be minimal. Thus, the early mission stations, including Inyathi, Hope Fountain and Empandeni, were centres of such education. Shizha and Kariwo,[17] concur with these views. Mission stations were established primarily as centres of evangelism, hence, more mission boarding schools were built by different missionaries after 1890. The idea was allegedly to wean Africans from the corrupt influences of the villages and homes and to free them from the evils within their communities. Consequently, missionary education foregrounded imperialism and colonialism and the school curriculum was attendant to the imposition of colonial rule.[18] However, it is noteworthy that the nationalists, who spearheaded the call for self-rule, were products of mission schools.

The missionary provision of education to Africans was also driven by the need to enable Africans to read the Bible on their own, especially in areas which were not easily accessible to missionaries. Through schooling, it was hoped that those converted to Christianity would translate the Bible and preach the Word to others. Such missionary views on education provided the context within which the curriculum that the Africans experienced in the mission-run schools developed. The curriculum fostered literacy, numeracy and basic economic skills.

### *Secular education*

Consecutive European minority governments of Southern Rhodesia had a clear position on African education. It was to be parochial and for the consumption of a few learners, for which, it would be problematical to deal with a burgeoning class of Africans with a high-level of consciousness. Hence, the political establishment kept missionaries in check so that they would not 'over educate' Africans.[19] For the British settlers, the indigenous people were not to be educated in a way that would make them compete with the Europeans. The form of education that Africans received was designed to serve the interests of the settler colonial regime. To maintain this resolve, successive colonial governments used various strategies to control and limit the education of Africans, whom they derogatively referred

[17] E Shizha and MT Kariwo, *Education and development in Zimbabwe…,* (Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, 2011).

[18] E Shizha and MT Kariwo, *Education and development in Zimbabwe…,* (Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, 2011).

[19] C Nherera, "The role of emerging universities in Zimbabwe". *The Zimbabwe Educational Research* 12(3), 2000, pp. 38-61.

to as 'natives'. Commissions of inquiry into education and the promulgation of ordinances were the major instruments for achieving the Rhodesian government's intentions.[20] These formal strategies reflected the ideological and attitudinal orientations of the Europeans based on their self-proclaimed superiority over the Africans.

Both missionary and colonial government school curricula for Africans were explicitly and overtly designed to marginalise Africans as expressed by their discriminatory policies.[21] By adopting a supremacist attitude towards the Africans, the missionaries and the colonial governments truncated erstwhile forms of African education, some of whose tenets contemporary educationists argue should be restored as part of making post-colonial education viable.[22]

## *Competing views on African education*

Throughout the colonial era, Africans were generally viewed as inferior people. It was against this background that colonial governments in the then Rhodesia devised strategies that saw Africans play the role of servants and providing mainly a plentiful supply of cheap manual labour. Resultantly, there was very little finance for African education, which was not meant to be academic, but quasi-vocational in nature. For example, in June 1899, the administrator of Southern Rhodesia, Earl Grey, in introducing the Education Ordinance Bill, argued that it was cheap labour that they wanted, and it was yet to be proved that Africans, who could read or write were good labourers.[23] Subsequent amendments of the Ordinance in 1903 and 1907 required that practical training and manual labour be the core of the African curriculum.

[20] DA Mungazi, "A strategy for Power…", *IJAHS,* 22, 1989.

[21] RJ Zvobgo, *Transforming education: The Zimbabwean experience,* (Harare: College Press, 1986).

[22] GY Abraham, "A post-colonial perspective…", *AJEP,* 6, 2020; N Makuvaza, "Celebrating the ministry of primary and secondary education curriculum framework for Zimbabwe (2015- 2022)", *Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research,* 30(1), 2018; N Makuvaza and O Hapanyengwi, "Towards a *Huhuist/ Ubuntuist* philosophy of education in post-colonial Zimbabwe." In MM Madondo, G Museka and M Phiri (eds.). *The presidential commission of inquiry into education and training (Nziramansanga Commission): Implementation successes, challenges and opportunities*, (Human Resources Research Centre, University of Zimbabwe, 2014), Volume 1, pp. 43-52; G Museka and MM Madondo, "The quest for a relevant environmental pedagogy in the African context: Insights from unhu/ubuntu philosophy", *Journal of Ecology and the Natural Environment,* 4(10), 2012, pp. 258-265.

[23] DA Mungazi, "A strategy for Power…", *IJAHS,* 22, 1989.

These ordinances were further buttressed by the 1919 Graham Commission, which favoured an African education that did not go higher than manual training, as was earlier recommended by Earl Grey. Parker[24] cites one colonial official, who wrote to the editor of the Rhodesian Herald newspaper in 1912 expressing similar sentiments in support of the government: "I do not think it is right that we should educate the native in any way that will unfit him for service… The native is and should always be a hewer of wood and a drawer of water for his white master." Thus, practical training and manual labour constituted the core of African education, thereby ensuring that Africans would be kept out of economic competition with Europeans.

Educational policies soon sparked controversies between missionaries and the colonial government. The main bone of contention between them was on the purpose of African education.[25] Missionaries were against the government's idea that if Africans learnt to read and write, they would no longer be useful as servants. To them, education was critical in getting Christian converts.[26] Other government officials began to support missionary views, however, for different reasons. For example, Duthie, then Inspector of Schools in the early 1900s, argued that continued provision of education to Africans that translated to underdevelopment was increasing tension between races and discouraging better understanding between them. For expressing such sentiments, Duthie was forced to leave office.[27] The idea of educating Africans to function as a pool of cheap labour was taken enthusiastically by Keigwin, who in 1920, was appointed director of Native Development. Keigwin's views further entrenched the government's position by advocating for a vocational type of curriculum for Africans. His focus was on industrial schools, which treated "...learners as workers, who had to be trained for disciplined subordination".[28]

Keigwin's view of education for Africans was one of agricultural and industrial instruction. This would enable them to develop a more satisfying and productive way of life in the tribal reserves in which they lived. For Keigwin, as cited in Zvobgo,[29] "... what was wanted among the backward natives [was] something of his old-fashioned craftsmanship of 50 or 100 years ago". From one perspective this point of view promoted indigenous technology, however, it smacked of retrogressive conservatism.

[24] F Parker, *African development and education in Southern Rhodesia,* (Westport: Greenwood, 1960).

[25] DA Mungazi, "A strategy for Power…", *IJAHS,* 22, 1989.
[26] DA Mungazi, "A strategy for Power…", *IJAHS,* 22, 1989.
[27] DA Mungazi, "A strategy for Power…", *IJAHS,* 22, 1989.
[28] C Summers, "Educational controversies…", *JSAS,* 20, 1994.
[29] RJ Zvobgo, *Transforming education…,* (Harare: College Press, 1986).

For, it was part of the Europeans exclusionary approach to African education. It seemed that the colonial government did not want Africans to get educated and thereby, join the world of machine-based technologies. Even where Africans could fill white-collar job posts, they were often denied the opportunity if they competed with Europeans. The colonialists hoped to retain African 'primitive ways' of producing goods manually for their mine and factory masters.[30]

Following recommendations of the Keigwin report of 1919, two industrial schools were established for Africans, namely Domboshawa in 1920 and Tsholotsho in 1921.[31] The two industrial schools were founded as part of the 'Keigwin Scheme'. This was an early native development initiative, which sought to teach young African males how to get the most out of their land, revive old crafts, and extract a living from their increasingly overpopulated and overused lands, termed reserves. Missionaries found the industrial subjects, namely carpentry, building and agriculture difficult to teach and sometimes neglected them.[32] Challiss,[33] however, comments that Africans were more interested in technical skills of western industrialism, than the traditional craftsmanship that they were expected to focus on.

By the 1920s, however, Africans had developed their own specific educational expectations. They would evaluate mission and government schools according to the curriculum offered and conditions in each school type. When the conditions and the curriculum were considered inadequate, they would either complain, leave the schools, or even go on school strikes.[34] By 1925, the two government schools of Domboshawa and Tsholotsho were all that remained of Keigwin's original outreach programme, and both had experienced clashes over African conception of what constituted a good education.

In the period between 1920 and the mid-1930s, the government recognised five types of schools for Africans, which were to be funded under three main categories.[35] These were *kraal* (traditional African village) schools, central mission boarding schools, central mission day schools, government schools and special schools for the blind, deaf or lepers.

[30] E Shizha and MT Kariwo, *Education and development in Zimbabwe…,* (Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, 2011).

[31] E Shizha and MT Kariwo, *Education and development in Zimbabwe…,* (Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, 2011).

[32] C Summers, "Educational controversies…", *JSAS,* 20, 1994.

[33] RJ Challiss, "Education planning for Zimbabwe: The problem of unreliable historical perspectives", *Zambezia,* 7(2), 1979.

[34] C Summers, "Educational controversies…", *JSAS,* 20, 1994.

[35] C Summers, "Educational controversies…", *JSAS,* 20, 1994.

Missionaries did not have enough personnel or resources; hence, they utilised class three schools (kraal schools, which were also known as Out-Schools or third-class schools). Enrolments in these schools ranged in size from 10 to 12 pupils, with some up to 200 pupils. Summers[36] describes teaching staff qualifications in these schools to have been as low as a pass in Standard 1. Missionaries were not willing to engage trained teachers, with higher qualifications on the grounds that they were scarce, expensive and not always as evangelical as the lowly qualified older ones. These schools were not subjected to government inspection. The curriculum consisted of a modicum of literacy in the vernacular and pupils were rarely taught beyond Sub A, Sub B and Standard 1.

Grants for kraal schools depended upon the requirement for teaching classes for at least two hours per school day during the school year. Post 1931 it was further required that these schools teach classes for three hours, including at least an hour of industrial or manual work. The government further made half of a school's grant contingent upon success in teaching aspects of the hidden curriculum intended for moulding character; probably punctuality, cleanliness, orderliness, self-control, respect for authority and service to the community.[37] Schools were not officially subjected to any academic standards of achievement during the 1920s or early 1930s.

Central mission schools were categorised as first class (boarding) schools or second class (day schools). In some instances, a central mission school would have both boarding and day pupils, thus, falling into both grant categories. They had a resident European head or principal and preferably or partly European teaching staff. To qualify for full grants-in-aid, the curriculum had to include English, habits of discipline and cleanliness, with at least four hours of instruction a day during the school year. The curriculum for class 2 schools included two hours of instruction, but no requirement for industrial training. Religious education was taught in all the school categories. As Africans pressed for more education, missionaries became reluctant to accept government stipulations and/ or conditions attached to these grants.

To minimise the friction between the two entities, the Hadfield Commission of 1927 recommended that future native education was to be based on Christianity. The socio-political context of the time was charged with fear of the church and Africans uniting to exert pressure on the political order should there be any relaxation of control. Thus, the 1929 Tate and 1936 Fox Commission reports were preoccupied with maintaining 'white'

[36] C Summers, "Educational controversies…", *JSAS,* 20, 1994.
[37] C Summers, "Educational controversies…", *JSAS,* 20, 1994.

supremacy in the Colony. The former reported: Southern Rhodesia [is] ...[a] small but growing community of Good European stock … and [has] a native population … composed of a people who are for the most part, docile enough and intelligent enough to afford a large supply of labour… It is [, therefore,] essential to maintain … the way of life of the civilized man of Western Europe.[38]

The latter read: "If government relaxes its control of education, Western civilisation will sink into barbarism".[39] In this context, a dual education system, thus, prevailed during the colonial times; one for European children, which was fully funded and one for African children that was inadequately funded and inferior. For African education, the school curriculum had to be strategically designed to provide a pool of cheap labour.[40]

The socio-political order that prevailed after World War 2 changed British attitudes towards African education in the British colonies. With the British and French attaining world supremacy in the aftermath of World War 2 and the United States of America (USA) and the Union of Soviet Socialist Republics (USSR) the status of superpowers, former European colonisers' stance against their subjects was challenged.[41] The USA and USSR at least had an overtly anti-colonial stance and used their dominant positions in the United Nations (UN) to exert pressure on colonial powers to prepare Africans for self-government.[42] According to, the UN forced Britain and France to: "...promote the political, economic, social and educational advancement of the inhabitants of trust territories, and their progressive development towards self-government or independence as may be appropriate to the particular circumstance of each people."[43]

[38] F Tate, *The report on the commission of inquiry into White Education*, (Southern Rhodesia, 1929), p. 120.

[39] F Tate, *The report on the commission of inquiry into White Education*, (Southern Rhodesia, 1929), p. 12.

[40] E Shizha and MT Kariwo, Education and development in Zimbabwe…, (Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, 2011).

[41] CA Babou, "Decolonization or national liberation: Debating the end of British colonial rule in Africa", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* 632, 2010, pp. 41-54; J Flint, "Planned decolonization and its failure in British Africa", *African Affairs,* 82(328), 1983, pp. 389-411; AO Nwauwa, "The British establishment of universities in tropical Africa 1920-1948: A reaction against the spread of American 'radical' influence", *Cahiers d'Etudes africaines (The African Studies Companions),* 33(130), 1993, pp. 247-274.

[42] CA Babou, "Decolonization or national liberation…", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* 632, 2010; J Flint, "Planned decolonization…", *African Affairs,* 82, 1983.

[43] CA Babou, "Decolonization or national liberation…", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* 632, 2010, p. 43.

Given the external pressure, which was necessitated by a shortage of labour during World War 2, the government of Rhodesia focused on advancing Africans for political and economic reasons. The education and training that Africans were to receive was meant to benefit the Europeans in the development of the economy that protected their investment.[44] Zvobgo[45] further argues that the school curriculum in Rhodesia after World War 2 was, therefore, framed to match these political and economic views that the British settler government held about the country and its inhabitants at that historical time.

## Government involvement in African secondary education

Government expression of interest in African secondary education was shown by the construction of its first school, Goromonzi, in 1946 and the second school, Fletcher, in Gwelo, which at that time, was a name for Gweru, in 1957. Yet, the first European government school had been established as early as 1902 at Plumtree. In the 1940s African education and curriculum were structured as follows: Fifty per cent of the secondary school pupils entered academic schools; 10 per cent specialised in technical courses, while others followed the general course. By 1952, 100 per cent of European pupils, who entered academic secondary schools enrolled for Cambridge School Certificate.[46]

When Godfrey Huggins assumed premiership of Southern Rhodesia during the period 1933 to 1953, the Tate and Fox commissions became the basis of his educational policy. Huggins claimed: "Our children must keep the positions of power in society and prevent the emergence of poor whites".[47] Sir Godfrey Huggins, in a Parliamentary speech delivered in 1937, went on to underscore the purpose colonial education was to serve for Europeans: "...it is only by allowing our race the very best education and bringing out the latent talents there may be that will enable our race to survive in Africa. [Our youth] ... will not be able to preserve their white brain and if they are to survive, it will be nothing but superior education."[48] Consequently, the Europeans accessed academic education and advanced vocational (polytechnical) training to suit them for leadership positions in the country's economy.

[44] E Shizha and MT Kariwo, *Education and development in Zimbabwe…,* (Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, 2011); RJ Zvobgo, *Transforming education…,* (Harare: College Press, 1986).

[45] RJ Zvobgo, *The post-colonial state and educational reform-Zimbabwe, Zambia and Botswana,* (Harare: Zimbabwe Publishing House, 1999).

[46] RJ Zvobgo, *Transforming education…,* (Harare: College Press, 1986).

[47] DA Mungazi, "A strategy for Power…", *IJAHS,* 22, 1989; E Shizha and MT Kariwo, *Education and development in Zimbabwe…,* (Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, 2011).

[48] As cited by RJ Zvobgo, *Transforming education…,* (Harare: College Press, 1986).

With such an ideological view point, Huggins, therefore, advocated for the infamous 'horse and rider relationship' between Africans and Europeans; which received criticism from the likes of Garfield Todd. Todd argued that whilst educated Africans can be governed, they could not be enslaved forever.[49] In response to Todd's concern, Huggins appointed the 1951 Kerr Commission to inquire into African education. The Kerr Commission recommended the elimination of class 2 and 3 schools, the expansion of teacher education and a broad-based primary education system, with five years of education. In Mungazi's[50] view, the curriculum for Africans, up to the time of the Kerr Commission, was a mere exercise in manual labour.

In 1953, Southern Rhodesia (Zimbabwe), Northern Rhodesia (Zambia) and Nyasaland (Malawi) amalgamated into a political union that became known as the Central African Federation (1953-1963). The federal socio-political context entrenched unequal relations between Africans and the British settler government. Africans in Northern Rhodesia and Nyasaland resented this union, fearing the spread of harsh racial laws from Southern Rhodesia.[51] Godfrey Huggins wanted the Federation to promote a 'horse and a rider' multi-racial partnership whereby the African was the horse and the European the rider.[52] Eventually, economic and cultural subjugation of Africans foregrounded the Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland.[53] For African nationalists, the Federation was created to strengthen settler dominance by giving Europeans even greater power in administrative and economic spheres of the three countries. Furthermore, it was meant to exploit the entrepreneurial skills of the white settlers in Southern Rhodesia, the rich mineral wealth of Southern and Northern Rhodesia and the labour reserve of Nyasaland.[54] For Kliebard[55] the Federation was also meant to stem the tide of self-governance, which was gaining momentum in West Africa from spreading to Southern Africa.

[49] DA Mungazi, "A strategy for Power…", *IJAHS,* 22, 1989.

[50] DA Mungazi, "A strategy for Power…", *IJAHS,* 22, 1989.

[51] RJ Zvobgo, *Transforming education…,* (Harare: College Press, 1986).

[52] DA Mungazi, "A strategy for Power…", *IJAHS,* 22, 1989; RJ Zvobgo, *Transforming education…,* (Harare: College Press, 1986); RJ Zvobgo, *Colonialism and education in Zimbabwe,* (Harare: Sapes books, 1994).

[53] R Austin, *Racism and apartheid in Southern Africa: Rhodesia; A book of data,* (Paris: The UNESCO Press, 1975).

[54] CA Babou, "Decolonization or national liberation …", *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science,* 632, 2010; J Flint, "Planned decolonization …", *African Affairs,* 82, 1983.

[55] JD Hargreaves, "The idea of a colonial university", *African Affairs,* 72(286), 1973, pp. 26-36.

During the federal decade, non-African education was placed under the federal government, which had more financial benefits. That of African children remained under territorial governments, which had scarce resources. For example, between 1954 and 1956, there were 50 000 European and 6 000 Asian and Coloured children in the federal states. In such schools, children were educated at a cost of £126 per pupil. In contrast, 800 000 African pupils were being educated at £6 per head. European education was also declared free and compulsory for persons between the ages of 6 and 16.[56] However, African nationalists advocated for better education and greater participation of Africans in their country's political, administrative and economic lives.[57] In Rhodesia, the first nationalist movement was the Southern Rhodesia African National Congress (SRANC), which was formed in 1957. From then on, pressure was exerted on the colonial government as direct racial confrontation was looming with African nationalists and trade unionists agitating for political rights, better education and employment opportunities.

In 1965, the Rhodesian Front (RF) government of Ian Douglas Smith declared independence from the British government through an act commonly referred to as the Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI). The political atmosphere around the UDI engendered fear in the country. In 1966, a liberation war movement was formed to wage an armed struggle against the settler government of Ian Smith. This armed struggle for independence came to be known as the *Second Chimurenga/Umvukela*, meaning an uprising.[58]

Arguably, the commission that brought about radical changes in the education system during the colonial era was the 1962 Judges Commission. Following its recommendations, an Education Plan, drawn-up in 1966, made an impactful decision regarding the school curriculum that Africans were to receive. The new Education Plan recommended that 12.5 per cent of all African children completing primary education each year were to proceed to academic secondary schools which were known as F1 schools, to pursue an academic curriculum. In F1 schools, learners would complete a four-year educational programme (Form 1 to Form 4) culminating in the writing of ordinary level (O-Level) examinations. A further 37.5 per cent were to be admitted into vocational secondary schools (F2 schools) from Grade 8 up to Grade 11. The curriculum in these F2 schools comprised vocational

[56] RJ Zvobgo, *Colonialism and education in Zimbabwe,* (1994).

[57] KO Morgan, "Imperialists at bay: British labour and decolonisation", *The Journal of Imperial and Commonwealth History,* 27(2), 2008, pp. 233-254, (available at https://doi.org/10.1080/03086539908583066, as accessed on 20 January 2023).

[58] RJ Zvobgo, *Colonialism and education in Zimbabwe,* (1994).

subjects. Consistent with the colonial government aim of creating a pool of cheap labour, the remaining 50 per cent were left with no provision in the formal education system. These students had to find their way into either correspondence colleges or had to join the pool of unskilled labour in the market. It was evident that the RF government wanted to discourage an academic curriculum for Africans. The RF government further changed its financial policy by reducing expenditure on African education from 8.6 per cent to 2 per cent of the Gross Domestic Product (GDP) in 1967. On the other hand, as argued by Mungazi,[59] the education for white learners was structured in a way that strengthened their political position to curb the rise of African consciousness.

The 1966 Education Plan faced criticism from African nationalists and missionaries. Students who took the F2 curriculum were stigmatised. Most products of junior schools were destined for menial jobs in the home where they would "...repair domestic appliances such as door handles, locks, mending clothes and bicycles and similar small domestic chores".[60] Few of these learners would look for employment opportunities in their immediate cultural environment. According to Atkinson, in Challiss,[61] the F2 schools had a "pre-vocational flavour, strongly linked to the agricultural or industrial needs of particular communities". This was an 'anglicised form of Apartheid' implemented under the guise of 'community development'.[62] Hence, the curriculum of these schools was described as ecological.

The government forbade missionaries to establish more secondary schools for Africans, thereby, limiting education access for Africans. Smith in Zvobgo[63] defended the dual form of education introduced by the colonial government:

*"[W]hen the white man came into this country; African people could not read or write even in their own language. They had never been literate so we had no basis for common ground, and there was no basis for racial integration. We had to provide for whites the kind of education available at home in Britain, in Europe, and in South Africa. Our standards had to be the same as in those countries."*

[59] DA Mungazi, "A strategy for Power…", *IJAHS,* 22, 1989.

[60] Chitate, H. Innovation in the high-school academic subject of history. The ordinary level history curriculum of Zimbabwe from 1990 to 2015: A critical analysis. Unpublished D.Phil. Thesis. Harare: University of Zimbabwe, 2021.

[61] RJ Challiss, "Education planning for Zimbabwe…", *Zambezia,* 7, 1979, p. 228.

[62] G Cunningham, *Rhodesia: The last chance: Fabian tract 368,* (London: Fabian Society, 1966).

[63] RJ Zvobgo, *Colonialism and education in Zimbabwe,* (1994), p. 66.

Smith's view showed that African education was not a major priority for the colonial government. The 1979 Education Act, however, saw the abolition of racial discrimination in education and the introduction of the zoning system of schools. Schools were categorised into A, B and C schools. The category A schools were for Europeans, though in theory Africans could access these schools. Ironically, the zoning system, which required learners to attend schools within the proximity of their homes became the basis for discriminating against potential learners.

## Post-colonial Zimbabwe school curricula

The development of the African school curriculum in the post-colonial Zimbabwe entered upon five distinct phases, namely the Socialist era (1980-1990), the neo-liberal Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) period (1991-1995), the Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST) era (1996-2000), the reforms stemming from the 1998 to 1999 Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (CIET)- the Zimbabwe Curriculum Framework (ZCF) (2015-2022) and its successor, the current Heritage-based Curriculum (HBC) (2024-2030).

### *The socialist era 1980-1990*

Zimbabwe's attainment of political Independence on 18 April 1980, ushered in a period of radical changes. These changes were guided largely by socialism and a nationalist trajectory designed to address most, if not all, of the nation's ills that the new African-majority government had inherited from the previous colonial regime. For instance, there was an overhaul of the educational structure, which made academic education accessible to all races.

However, this pro-socialist stance weighed heavily on education and in the first five years of political independence, instructional resources became fewer because of the great number of school enrolments. Teaching and learning standards fell as classes became over-crowded with teacher-to-pupil ratios of over 1:45 being common. Classroom furniture was poor and inadequate. The situation was exacerbated by an acute shortage of library and reading materials for effective curriculum implementation.[64]

[64] RJ Zvobgo, "The impact of the economic structural adjustment programme on education in Zimbabwe", *The Zimbabwe Bulletin of Teacher Education,* 12(2), 2003, pp. 65-101.

Table 1 gives a synopsis of some of the educational changes and processes in the first decade of political independence (1980-1990). The table juxtaposes the educational changes and processes *vis-à-vis* fate and their possible enduring impact on contemporary educational practices.

**Table 1:** School curricular changes in Zimbabwe from 1980 to 1990

| Educational Phase/ Issue and its Characteristics | Relative Merits and Demerits | Possible Impact on Educational Practice |
|---|---|---|
| 1. Education for All (EFA) drive and the introduction of 'mass education', including 'increased access to and participation' in science educational programmes such as the Zimbabwe Science (ZIMSCI) project. | • 'Massification' of education seemed to have been a correct political response to addressing educational inequities inherited from the previous colonial regime.[65]<br>• The mass education policy increased phenomenally enrolments in both primary and secondary schools. [66]<br>• The ZIMSCI project was a "...dynamic methodology of teaching science [, which] utilis[ed]...low-cost and high-local content science kits suited for the impoverished rural secondary schools". | • Colonial-like inequalities have persisted and at times intensified, following the establishment of new private, elite, high fee-paying schools.<br>• Established mission schools have enjoyed a head-start over day schools in the rural areas.<br>• Emphasis was placed on western science as a channel through which education would contribute to industrial development and modernisation.<br>• However, community-biased ZIMSCI was viewed as 'second-rate science'.<br>• Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) were despised and were under threat of 'withering away' eventually. |

[65] Chitate, H. Innovation in the high-school academic subject of history. The ordinary level history curriculum of Zimbabwe from 1990 to 2015: A critical analysis. Unpublished D.Phil. Thesis. Harare: University of Zimbabwe, 2021.

[66] H Chitate, "Change and innovation in curriculum enterprise: An analysis of the ordinary level history syllabus 2166, with reference to the problems of its implementation in the Mashonaland East province of Zimbabwe", (M.Ed., Harare: University of Zimbabwe, 1988), p. 27.

| Educational Phase/ Issue and its Characteristics | Relative Merits and Demerits | Possible Impact on Educational Practice |
|---|---|---|
| 2. Demise of the F2 (technical-vocational) pathway. | F2 schools required pupils to:<br>• Do two practical subjects from the following list: (for boys) woodwork, metalwork, building and agriculture and (for girls) agriculture, needlework and housecraft; the latter included laundry, hygiene, vegetable gardening and the raising of small stock.[67]<br>• Have minimal competency of the English language, mathematics, science, environmental studies, Ndebele or Shona language and religion.[68] | • The independent state found the F2 system objectionable, owing to its colonial origins, it was thought to be inferior to the F1 academic pathway.<br>• This epistemological bias and paralysis need to be resolved in the Zimbabwean context. It is not enough to clamour for 'a hands-on' practice form of education. |

[67] SM Hadebe, The Approach of the F (2) Secondary School, (Ref. 0.4., no date), p. 1.

[68] RJ Zvobgo, Transforming education …, (Harare: College Press, 1986).

| Educational Phase/ Issue and its Characteristics | Relative Merits and Demerits | Possible Impact on Educational Practice |
|---|---|---|
| 3. Socialist ideology, polytechnical education and Education with Production (EWP). | • Socialism provided the theoretical basis for EWP.<br>• Attempts were made to 'vocationalise' the school curriculum and promote hands-on learning, with a view to encouraging school leavers to produce goods and services.<br>• By the mid-1980s, EWP-related changes had failed to place education in a position to spearhead socialist transformation. | • EWP met with little success, owing mainly to incongruence with dominant social values and expectations of parents. Many scholars concur that parents favoured the traditional academic education offered under colonialism than EWP, which they perceived to have been aligned to the despised colonial F2 system.[69]<br>• The preference for, and domination of, academic knowledge in the Zimbabwean school curriculum illustrates the pervasive influence of Western academism on the curriculum, which must be addressed. |

[69] J Jansen, "The state and the curriculum in the transition to socialism: The Zimbabwean experience", Comparative Education Review, 35(1), 1991; E Shizha and MT Kariwo, Education and development in Zimbabwe…, (Sense Publishers: Rotterdam, 2011.

| Educational Phase/ Issue and its Characteristics | Relative Merits and Demerits | Possible Impact on Educational Practice |
|---|---|---|
| 4. Political of Economy Zimbabwe (PEZ) 1988-1990. | • PEZ was a politically inspired subject meant to reconstruct the colonial base of the curriculum on the belief that successful curriculum reconstruction is contingent on broad societal transformation.[70]<br>• PEZ provided an epistemic and intellectual basis for socialism and EWP as guiding philosophies for society and education.<br>• More specifically, the PEZ syllabus had been crafted, with a view to "...study[ing] and analys[ing]... (among other issues), the socio-economic relations that emerge between people in the process of production".<br>• PEZ collapsed in a space of two years, mainly due to opposition from churches and established capitalist interests. | • The failure of PEZ underscores the primacy of interest groups, in this case, the church, in leveraging their influence on determining the fate of a placed innovation.<br>• Curriculum development and implementation, among other processes, must be guided by genuine inputs from stakeholders. The socio-economic and political milieu must be congruent to envisaged curriculum change. |

[70] J Jansen, "The state and the curriculum in the transition to socialism …", Comparative Education Review, 35, 1991.

| Educational Phase/ Issue and its Characteristics | Relative Merits and Demerits | Possible Impact on Educational Practice |
|---|---|---|
| | • The men of God, most particularly the Zimbabwe Catholic Bishops Conference (ZCBC) "...bitterly resented (PEZ) ...because of its anti-God and anti-religion stance". [71]<br>• "...Leading publishers of the accompanying textbooks stalled on the...development and production of materials, creating a major obstacle to the implementation [...of PEZ]".[72] | |
| 5. Two compulsory technical-vocational (Tec-Voc) subjects at Form 2 from 1988 onwards. | • This was introduced to increase the uptake of technical vocational subjects. | • The initiative faced problems of funding the establishment of a diversified technical-vocational curriculum due to high costs. Hence, cheaper options like agriculture tended to dominate. |

The foregoing comparative tabular display is a basis for analysing past curriculum to gain valuable insights into the fundamental purposes and values of education. This may highlight historical practices, changes and issues that may be replicated or avoided in contemporary times. The above table is, therefore, an analytical framework for enhanced understanding of the Zimbabwean school curricula that were implemented in the first decade of the country's political independence.

[71] H Chitate, "Change and innovation in curriculum enterprise …", (M.Ed., Harare: University of Zimbabwe, 1988), p. 25.

[72] J Jansen, "The state and the curriculum in the transition to socialism...", *Comparative Education Review*, 35, 1991, p.88

In the second decade of Zimbabwe's political independence, 1990-2000, government focus shifted from enhancing quantitative access to education to improving the quality of education.[73] As the economic situation continued to deteriorate, the government gradually and quietly conceded to the non-viability of the socialist ideological stance and opted to pursue a free market route.[74] Resultantly, an Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (better known as ESAP) was implemented in October 1990 and lasted until 1995.

ESAP was a liberal capitalist prescription for the country's economic recovery.[75] This 'World Bank-style' economic 'stabilisation' programme had been:

*"...officially cast as a 'home grown' reform. ESAP had initially been more about expansion than contraction. However, the devastating drought in 1991-92 seriously affected Zimbabwe's ability to fulfil its goals, leading to greater control of the reform process by the International Monetary Fund and hence the introduction of more orthodox stabilisation measures after 1993, including a stronger focus on public sector reforms. (It also constrained official promotion of a one-party state.)."*[76]

## Neoliberal policies and the school curriculum

Under ESAP, the government allowed schools to supplement resources from treasury by levying parents. Non-core business at educational institutions such as catering, landscaping and security became privatised. Education during ESAP became unaffordable for many. Parents found it difficult to raise tuition fees for their children. The net effect was a high school drop-out rate targeting mainly disadvantaged groups like girls and learners from poor households.

The neoliberal interlude served to strengthen colonial vestiges in curricular provision, which the first decade of political independence had begun to dismantle successfully. The increasing costs of supplying materials for technical-vocational subjects hindered the provision of these subjects. This reinforced the curriculum, a reversion to pre-independence preference for an academic curriculum.

[73] Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education, *The curriculum framework for primary and secondary education 2015-2022: Enhancing Quality Education through the Curriculum*. The Zimbabwean Government, 2015

[74] RJ Zvobgo, "The impact of the economic structural…", *The Zimbabwe Bulletin of Teacher Education,* 12, 2003.

[75] P Balleis, *The social implications of ESAP in the light of the Bible and the social teaching of the Catholic Church; final statement,* (Harare: Silveira House, 1992);

[76] Hammar, A., Raftopoulos, B. and Jensen, *JD. Zimbabwe's Unfinished Business: Rethinking Land, State and Nation in the Context of Crisis*. Harare: Weaver Press, 2003.

Nevertheless, this was not without its problems. The shortcomings of the country's academic educational system in the post-ESAP period were revealing. Statistics of pupils' performances in O-level examinations before this period were hard to find. For, the sizeable ESAP-induced retrenchment of staff in parastatal organisations such as the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU), now Curriculum Development and Technical Services (CDTS) and the Examinations Branch, now Zimbabwe School Examinations Council (ZIMSEC), resulted in loss of written institutional memory.[77] Available data show that pupils' terminal performances in the 1998-2013 O-level examinations were poor. The pass-rates were nowhere near the traditional 25 per cent limit that had been set by the University of Cambridge Local Examinations Syndicate (UCLES) in 1946.[78] Table 2 below testifies to this perennial gap in desired pass rates.

**Table 2:** O-Level National Performance Statistics (1998-2013)[79]

| Year | O-level Candidates | 5Cs or better | Pass Rates |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1998 | 244 083 | 35 593 | 14.58% |
| 1999 | 242 329 | 38 036 | 15.69% |
| 2000 | 264 056 | 36 659 | 13.88% |
| 2001 | 272 125 | 38 077 | 13.99% |
| 2002 | 274 772 | 37 804 | 13.8% |
| 2003 | 275 576 | 35 606 | 12.8% |
| 2004 | Figures missing | | 10.2% |
| 2005 | Figures missing | | 12.0% |
| 2006 | 154229 | 31 247 | 14.2% |
| 2007 | 179 274 | 25 673 | 9.85% |
| 2008 | 142 840 | 20 632 | 14.44% |
| 2009 | 87 201 | 16 853 | 19.00% |
| 2010 | 229 522 | 37 871 | 16.5% |
| 2011 | 241 512 | 45 887 | 19.5% |
| 2012 | 268 854 | 31 767 | 18.4% |
| 2013 | 285 260 | 36 031 | 20.0% |

[77] Chitate, H. Innovation in the high-school academic subject of history. The ordinary level history curriculum of Zimbabwe from 1990 to 2015: A critical analysis. Unpublished D.Phil. Thesis. Harare: University of Zimbabwe, 2021.

[78] Chitate, H. Innovation in the high-school academic subject of history. The ordinary level history curriculum of Zimbabwe from 1990 to 2015: A critical analysis. Unpublished D.Phil. Thesis. Harare: University of Zimbabwe, 2021.

[79] AS Chigwedere, *Part 1: Reform of the Zimbabwe education system, very overdue.* A paper written for the attention of the Minister and Permanent Secretary for Education: May, 2018.

The above statistics are a telling indictment of the way Zimbabwe's educational system has been run. In the period from 1998-2013, the country's average pass-rate at O-level was 14.93 per cent. Thus, 85.07 per cent of candidates, who took those examinations failed. This seemed to have been a scandalous waste of human resources. According to Chigwedere,[80] "...any system of education that dumps on the streets 50% of its products is a failure. [One]... that throws away 75% of its products is a DISASTER".

## *The Zimbabwe Programme for Economic and Social Transformation (ZIMPREST) 1996-2000*

ZIMPREST was introduced in 1996 to alleviate the devastating effects of ESAP. This signalled the government's admission of the failure of ESAP. Regarding education, ZIMPREST aimed at improving the relevance of education curricula to the economy, increase access to information technology at school level and improve employability of school leavers. It was introduced against the backdrop of a severe shortage of instructional resources. As inflation was rising, commodity prices also increased. Hence, the assessment of O and A-level examinations, which was done by Cambridge University faced problems. Owing to a shortage of foreign currency, payment of fees to Cambridge University became untenable.

In early 1998, a Presidential Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training (CIET) was set up under the chairmanship of a leading educationist, Dr Caiphas Nziramasanga. This became the first post-colonial Commission of Inquiry into Education. Its major findings highlighted the academic nature of the school curriculum, which did not respond to the needs of the learners and society in general. To that effect, the National Advisory Board (NEAB) of the then Ministry of Education, Sport and Culture, compiled the curriculum needs of the country in 2010. It recommended a comprehensive review of the school curriculum to address the needs of learners and the nation.[81] The review was needful given that a decade had passed without much being done to implement CIET findings.

[80] AS Chigwedere, *Part 1: Reform of the Zimbabwe education system…*, Minister and Permanent Secretary for Education: May, 2018, p. 6.

[81] Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. *The curriculum framework…*, The Zimbabwean Government, 2015.

Among the objectives of the new curriculum was its alignment to the needs of the country as highlighted in the Zimbabwe Agenda for Sustainable Socio-Economic Transformation (ZIM-ASSET) document (2013-2018). It was also expected to reflect the Zimbabwean context, while remaining consistent with international trends and standards).[82] The curriculum document that was crafted was a result of consultations with local stakeholders.

### *The Zimbabwe Curriculum Framework (ZCF) for primary and secondary education 2015-2022*

A new curriculum was introduced in the school system in 2017 after a curriculum review exercise had been done during the period 2014-2015. The reviewed curriculum considered local socio-economic imperatives and global changes. Continuing trends that had taken place in the country, especially after the publication of the 1998-1999 CIET report were most important. The ZCF 2015-2022 proposed several changes to the education system. Some of these proposals included the introduction of continuous assessment, which was implemented in 2022 at the tail end of the 2015-2022 curriculum cycle. This was called Continuous Assessment Learning Activities (CALA). A critical view of the ZCF (2015-2022) curriculum reform brought about an orientation towards a heritage-based curriculum (HBC).

The Zimbabwean Curriculum 2015-2022 and its successor, the HBC 2024-2030, were implemented within the purview of an economic blueprint entitled *Vision 2030,* whose aim is for the country to attain an upper-middle-class society by the year 2030. In this vision, the curriculum is expected to speak to the demands of industry and general socio-economic development. What is clear though is that the requirement for education to contribute to socio-economic development has been an omnipresent aspect of educational provision since time immemorial.

[82] Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education. *The curriculum framework…,* The Zimbabwean Government, 2015.

## Conclusion

In this paper, critical spaces that have been carved from which the Zimbabwean curriculum history may be read are mainly; the colonial period, post-colonial socialist era, the ESAP period, the historical moment of the ZCF (2015-2022) curriculum and the present HBC (2024-2030) epoch. Critiques that can be raised are that during the colonial era, the ideology of racial superiority was the dominant influence at work in the formulation of educational policies. Curriculum policies were, in their scope, content, pedagogy and general implementation, conceptualised and structured to guarantee 'white' privilege and promote limited and segregated development for Africans.[83] Education in Rhodesia was, therefore, designed to support a dual society philosophy based on one's race, which in turn, determined one's economic position.[84] To that end, Africans' access to an academic curriculum was limited, because keeping them under European domination and providing cheap labour as second-class citizens in their own country, was the settlers' top priority.

Upon the attainment of political independence in 1980, policies that defined the school curriculum were not only sustained by changed or desired economic, social and political changes and factors, but were also in response to, and a function of, historical antecedents.[85] The educational policies that the Zimbabwean government embarked on were meant to redress the imbalances that colonial educational policies had spawned.

Therefore, the history of African school curriculum in Zimbabwe during the post-1980 period may be read explicitly through the socio-economic and political lens as *mutatis mutandis*. This also applies to the preceding curriculum of the colonial era.[86] Thus, for example, the post-1980 policy of mass education was meant to enhance equal access to the curriculum. Also, neo-liberal influences of external interventions such as ESAP entrenched curriculum continuity in education through dominance of academic knowledge forms and buttressed colonial-like differential access that reduced educational participation by girls and children from poor households.[87] Currently, the school curriculum is ostensibly guided by the country's socio-economic needs and international trends.

[83] K Hungwe, "Educational policy in African colonial contexts: The case of instructional media in Southern Rhodesia 1930-1980", *African Study Monographs,* 15(1), 1994, pp. 1-36; DA Mungazi, "A strategy for Power…", *IJAHS,* 22, 1989.

[84] C Colclough, J-I Lŏfstedt, J Manduvi-Moyo, OE Maravanyika and W Ngwata, *Education in Zimbabwe. Issues of quality and quantity,* (Education Division Documents, 50, 1990).

[85] C Colclough et al., *Education in Zimbabwe…,* (Education Division Documents, 50, 1990).

[86] P Freire, *Pedagogy of the oppressed,* (New York: Continuum, 2000).

[87] P Balleis, *A critical guide to ESAP: Seven questions about the economic structural adjustment programme in Zimbabwe,* (Gweru: Mambo Press, 1993).

The current study underscores the importance of historical trends, discontinuities and continuities as contexts of understanding present day practices. For this reason, in the post-colonial times the expectation that education is exorcised of its erstwhile colonial elitist function has been vitiated by interrelated variables, least of which is the socio-economic, political and ideological stasis from the late 1990s. The challenge of availing needed financial resources for curriculum provision persists, common in the pre-1980 colonial period, *albeit* for different reasons. This continues to be an albatross to the realisation of intended curricular goals.

In highlighting the stakeholder desired curriculum, policy-makers' intended curriculum and the actual performance of transacted curriculum in colonial and post-colonial times, this study may be a springboard for deliberative enquiry and critical scrutiny in contemporary curricular practices, with the potential for improving such curricular practices. Current educational policies need to address challenges of relevant policy-making and implementation, ideological inconsistencies and inadequate financial resources head on, to ensure successful curriculum

# BOOK REVIEWS

## Going Dutch

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## Introduction

It was at the Grahamstown Art Festival in 1995 that I first encountered Obie Oberholzer's photography. It was a solo exhibition which left me in awe—the extra-large colourful images were exquisitely printed and complemented his subject matter. This was during the analogue era, and I found out that the superior clarity and colour saturation were enhanced by Oberholzer's use of Agfa 50 ISO Ultra film and a medium format Pentax 6x7 SLR camera. A year later, I left psychology to become a full-time photographer.[1] One of our photographic business's first investments was copying Obie Oberholzer by buying a similar Pentax and using Agfa Ultra for landscape work.

At a striking 300 x 500 mm (unfolded), 444 pages and weighing 3.7kg, Obie Oberholzer's *Going Dutch* (2024) is as physically imposing as it is conceptually ambitious—a fitting 16th addition to his acclaimed corpus of coffee table pictorial books. The work juxtaposes nine South African towns (among them Utrecht, Haarlem and Rotterdam) with their Dutch namesakes, contrasting landscapes, architectures, and communities to interrogate colonial histories embedded in shared nomenclature and divergent modern identities. Oberholzer, former professor and head of photography at Rhodes University, weaves personal anecdotes into this visual dialogue, probing the fraught cultural and historical ties between

[1] As an Afrikaner, like Oberholzer, raised on a farm, I share his political awakening through Freirean ***conscientização*** and the liminality of 'insider-outsiders'. My path diverges: psychology gave way to photography (1996–2013) before I returned to therapy, integrating artistic sensibilities. This duality—of vocation and vision—shapes my perspective as reader-viewer of ***Going Dutch***'s interplay of image and text, its excavation of identity, memory and belonging's fragile tessellations.

South Africa and the Netherlands. Yet, *Going Dutch* transcends mere documentation: its physical heft mirrors the weight of history it interrogates, transforming colonial guilt into a tactile reckoning. The book's materiality—its 3.7 kg mass and sprawling pages—becomes a metaphor for the burden of colonial legacies and Oberholzer's sublimated 'white guilt', redirected through his lens into a collective challenge. Readers must physically grapple with its scale, the act of lifting its pages paralleling the emotional labour of unpacking colonialism's afterlife. Here, sublimation is not just psychological, but embodied, as the book's imposing form forces engagement with unresolved tensions, echoing Oberholzer's journey from complicity to generative critique. Beyond passive consumption, *Going Dutch* demands active accountability, its imagery and infrastructure alike weaponised against historical erasure.

## Analysis and critique

Oberholzer's *Going Dutch* opens with unflinching introspection, grounding its critique of colonialism in the author's formative experiences under Afrikaner nationalism. His recollections of a childhood education steeped in mythic historiography—where divine providence and colonial heroism coalesced into a distorted origin story—reveal the epistemic violence of insular nationalism. His teacher's punctuation of the start of South Africa's history *…in the very beginning of absolutely everything there was just God and that Jan van Riebeeck, when he landed in the Cape in 1652, was the first person in South Africa…"* and the directive to pray for "*our Nationalist Government, the Afrikaner nation and its heritage* (p. 18) underscores how apartheid-era pedagogy weaponised spirituality to sanctify racial hierarchy. By foregrounding this upbringing, Oberholzer positions his work as both a product of, and rebellion against the ideological frameworks that shaped him, creating a dialectical tension between inherited identity and ethical reckoning.

Central to this reckoning is Oberholzer's conceptualisation of South Africa as a "*happysadland*"—a term crystallising the nation's unresolved contradictions. The author's photography oscillates between the sublime beauty of its landscapes and the visceral decay of postcolonial disillusionment, framing democracy not as a triumphant endpoint, but as an ongoing negotiation between aspiration and historical inertia. This duality is amplified through the author's technical mastery: images meticulously constructed to mimic serendipitous snapshots, saturated colours that hyperbolise reality and maximal depth of field that "reveals everything in full technicolour".[2] Such aesthetic choices

[2] This stands in stark contrast to the style of another acclaimed South African photographer, Guy Tillim, whose book *Departure* features black-and-white images often characterised by deliberate soft focus.

transform photography into a metaphor for accountability—a refusal to look away from the granular complexities of post-apartheid society. As a master-craftsman, Oberholzer can craft photographs that *appear* casual, spontaneous, or accidentally meaningful—as if they were captured in a fleeting, unplanned moment—while in reality, they are meticulously composed, lit, and edited.

This deliberate illusion of spontaneity serves multiple purposes: it cultivates aesthetic authenticity by avoiding overt staging, creating relatable immediacy akin to stumbling upon a raw, candid moment; it critically subverts expectations by juxtaposing the 'snapshot' aesthetics ordinariness with weighty historical themes, rendering complex critiques of power disarmingly accessible; it showcases technical mastery, where Oberholzer's jazz-like balance of chaos and control—honed through graphic design training and German photography studies—masks meticulous craft behind apparent effortlessness; and it injects ethical ambiguity, blurring lines between observer and participant to interrogate photography's subjectivity, mirroring Oberholzer's conflicted role as a privileged Afrikaner chronicling marginalised communities.

The book's titular exploration of Dutch-South African parallels transcends mere geographic comparison, instead excavating colonialism's *Vergangenheit*—a German term denoting a past that persists as an unresolved spectre. Unlike the English 'past', which implies chronological distance, *Vergangenheit* evokes a legacy demanding active ethical engagement, akin to Germany's *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* (reckoning with historical guilt). Oberholzer materialises this concept through stark juxtapositions: Rotterdam, South Africa—a marginalised rural enclave—against Rotterdam, Netherlands, a gleaming European port; derelict Boer homesteads, versus pristine Dutch towns. These contrasts expose colonialism's asymmetric afterlife: the metropole's prosperity built on extracted wealth, the colony inheriting infrastructural debris and systemic rot. The book's physical heft (3.7 kg) literalizes this burden, insisting that history cannot be archived, but must be carried.

This thematic weight is counterbalanced by Oberholzer's irreverent, deeply personal narrative voice. Rejecting conventional captions, the author employs stream-of-consciousness commentary that intertwines irony, self-deprecation, and existential musing. A photograph of a crumbling Ermelo swimming pool is annotated with, *"This is the once popular municipal swimming pool…Now it's a stinking cesspool of floating turds, broken bottles and fallen debris, abandoned, and left to vandals and vagrants. My eyes are too dry for tears, as I stand with sadness, with thoughts of what has become of our liberation party"* (p. 215),

merging documentary observation with visceral indictment of post-apartheid governance. Similarly, Oberholzer's meta-reflections on photography— *"I am a window peeper, a toucher of reflections, a watcher, an outsider"* (p. 59)—foreground the medium's dual insider-outsider role. This narrative approach mirrors Oberholzer's photographic technique of "subtraction": paring chaotic scenes to their evocative essence, using absence to amplify the viewer's complicity in constructing meaning.

Autobiography permeates every frame. Oberholzer's confessed 'white guilt' *"I am still ashamed of my privileged white past, sorry for the poor Pedi man and his peoples, and that in the historic past the Boers and the British stole his land."* (p. 364)

*"This damned Apartheid with its racial humiliation was what I lived through as a boy, at school and at university, only briefly rebelling against it. Till the end of my days, it will remain a dark tattoo in my head, a burden that has dispersed over the years but still persists."* (p. 365)—transforms the work into a sublimation of complicity. Through gritty, yet empathetic portraits of marginalised subjects, Oberholzer channels guilt into a reparative act, elevating those 'historically erased' into focal points of dignity. A 72-year-old Lettie Groeners, photographed in a home dwarfed by the value of his camera, *"I am cool with a camera while there's a shame in my head. Here I am, momentarily, without invitation in Berg Street. My cameras are worth a lot more than her house and the food she buys in a year."* (p. 69). The author becomes both subject and mirror, reflecting the artist's uneasy position as privileged chronicler. Critics might question whether such gestures transcend symbolic atonement, however, Oberholzer pre-empts cynicism by embedding self-critique within the work itself, acknowledging photography's limitations as a tool for justice.

Oberholzer's persona—a blend of irreverence and rigor—mirrors the author's subject matter. Former students recount his dual nature: a mentor who hosted raucous parties, yet delivered piercing critiques. His self-deprecating anecdotes—like being demoted after a "debauched" celebration (p. 233)—underscore a life lived at the intersection of chaos and discipline.

This duality permeates *Going Dutch*. Images of Dutch precision clash with South African entropy; personal nostalgia collides with postcolonial critique. Oberholzer embraces these contradictions, framing them as inherent to the Afrikaner identity—a people simultaneously rooted in Africa and estranged from it.

The book's pedagogical potency lies in its interdisciplinary fusion of visual art, memoir, and historiography. Oberholzer's juxtapositions—e.g., Alkmaar's Dutch Reformed Church

pulpit cloth embroidered with *"Luister na My, my volk"* ("Listen to Me, my people") against Afrikaner nationalism's messianic complex (p. 325)—invite analysis of how iconography sustains collective memory. Similarly, the author's focus on decaying infrastructure (abandoned schools, defunct pools) offers case studies for tracing colonialism's material afterlife. These elements align with Bradford Keeney's postmodern assertion that *"the observer is always present in that which is observed"*, a framework Oberholzer embodies through deliberate subjectivity. His work resists didacticism, instead provoking viewers to interrogate their own positionality within systems of heritage and power.

Psychologically, *Going Dutch* resonates with Erik Erikson's concept of *ego integrity versus despair*—the late-life struggle to reconcile one's past (Oberholzer was born in 1947), oscillates between ambivalent longing (*"my heart bleeds from all the feeling"* [p. 233]) and self-reproach epitomises this developmental tension. Oberholzer's photographic practice becomes a mechanism for life review, with the camera serving as both scalpel and salve: dissecting complicity while suturing fractured identities. Even his technical choices—stark horizons, isolated figures—reflect a minimalist ethos that mirrors the stripping away of defensive mythologies to confront raw historical truth.

Ultimately, Oberholzer's work defies categorisation. It is a visual *Vergangenheitsbewältigung*, a sublimation of guilt into artistry, and a challenge to pedagogies that divorce emotion from historiography. By framing colonialism not as a closed chapter, but as a *Vergangenheit* haunting the present, *Going Dutch* compels viewers to grapple with a disquieting truth: that the 'post' in postcolonial and post-apartheid denotes not resolution, but perpetual negotiation.

## Recommendations and conclusion

Oberholzer's ability to "*find cohesion in the haphazard beauty of the imperfect*" (p. 59) transforms history into an accessible, emotionally resonant inquiry, one that bridges the intimate terrain of personal reckoning with the collective scaffolding of memory. The author's narrative serves as a microcosm of apartheid's psychosocial machinery, exposing how myth, religion, and state-sanctioned pedagogy converged to entrench white supremacy. Through his unflinching interrogation of self and society—a process that mirrors *Vergangenheitsbewältigung* in its insistence on ethical accountability—Oberholzer models a decolonial praxis, repurposing autobiography as a tool to dismantle oppressive narratives. By centring marginalised voices and reimagining histories through inclusivity, Oberholzer's work transcends mere documentation, becoming an act of restorative justice.

This approach not only revitalises academic and artistic discourse, it also illuminates pathways for South Africa's fraught journey toward reconciliation, where identity reformation demands confronting the spectral weight of an unresolved past.

*Going Dutch* exemplifies the potency of interdisciplinary scholarship, challenging historians and educators to integrate visual, emotional, and experiential dimensions into pedagogy. To foster critical engagement with colonialism's legacies, educators might adopt the following strategies:

- Integrate Intersectional Sources: Pair Oberholzer's photographs with Dutch colonial archives, Indigenous Khoisan oral histories and critical essays on Afrikaner nationalism. This juxtaposition invites students to dissect colonial mythmaking while amplifying marginalised counter-narratives, such as the dissonance between missionary rhetoric and land dispossession.
- Leverage Visual Dialogues: Use Oberholzer's images—which juxtapose decaying apartheid-era infrastructure with the Netherlands' curated modernity—to spark debates on heritage preservation, identity, and the ethics of memorialisation. For instance, Oberholzer's photograph of the Ermelo municipal pool (p. 215) could prompt discussions on postcolonial governance and the material afterlife of segregation.
- Embrace Creative Methodologies: Encourage students to adopt Oberholzer's subtractive lens by crafting photo essays that link local histories (e.g., contested monuments, family archives) to global themes like displacement or cultural erasure. Such projects mirror the author's technique of revealing everything in full technicolour, challenging learners to interrogate what—and who—is excluded from dominant historical frames.
- Propose collaborations between history, art and psychology departments to study the psychosocial impact of colonial iconography (e.g. statues, street names).

These strategies empower students to deconstruct hegemonic narratives while cultivating agency to reshape discourse through creative expression. Oberholzer's work underscores the transformative potential of art and education: by confronting the fragmented echoes of *Vergangenheit*, pathways are charted to more equitable futures. Oberholzer's lens transmutes personal guilt into a mechanism of visibility, positioning *Going Dutch* as both a psychological excavation and a cultural intervention in post-apartheid reckoning. Through its interdisciplinary fusion of memoir, historiography, and visual art, the text compels readers to confront urgent questions: *Who controls historical*

*memory? Whose pain is monumentalized, and whose is erased?*

Ultimately, *Going Dutch* bridges rigorous historical inquiry with the visceral immediacy of humanistic photography, offering a pedagogical blueprint for grappling with South Africa's colonial past and its enduring socio-political complexities. By refusing to disentangle the personal from the political, Oberholzer invites readers to engage with history as a living, contested terrain—one where intellectual rigor and emotional resonance coexist. The author's work challenges one to recognise that reconciliation is not a destination, but a process: an ongoing dialogue between the ghosts of the past and the possibilities of repair.

# The Bams of Grasslands Farm, A Family History

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ISBN: 9781991220578

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Below is Morrow's description of Grasslands and surrounds, the 'emotional heartland' of the Bam family. It reminds me of the opening lines of Alan Paton's *Cry the Beloved Country* (1948, p. 1).

*"The most dramatic approach to Grasslands Farm is from Tsolo village. Coming from the west, take the steep and stony road southwards through a rocky kloof covered in euphorbias and aloes, a terrain reminiscent of the Xhosa wars of resistance. At the summit of the pass a magnificent view opens of Goqwana, a wide grass covered valley. Grasslands farm occupies this valley, the home for nearly 140 years to the Bam family…?*

## Introduction

This book covers four generations of the Bam family, from 1880 to 2011. It is based on meticulous research and extensive interviews with the family and friends. Morrow seamlessly integrates the interviews into the narrative. What emerges is a nuanced, empathetic, non-judgmental and accessible history.

My review considers one aspect of the Bam family's history: education. It deals with not only formal education, but also with the educative aspects of their initiatives in challenging and improving society.

Before I begin with this review, I suggest that the book includes a Bam family tree. Considering that Lockington and Temperance had six children (including Brigalia and Fikile), the permutations in terms of wives, husbands, partners and children are seemingly endless. It is difficult to keep track of them in the main text.

The book also needs one or two illustrated maps. One could focus on the Transkei showing specific towns and villages such as Idutywa, Tsolo and Goqwana, a few well-known mission schools. Another could show the Transkei in relation to the rest of South Africa, highlighting Johannesburg (Sophiatown) and Pretoria (Atteridgeville).

## Interpreters and patriarchs

An Mpondomise interpreter, Edward Solomon Bam, aided the colonial and imperial forces on the Eastern Frontier in putting down the Mpondomise rebellion of 1880. In recognition of his services, Edward Bam was granted 500 morgens of land. This became Grasslands Farm.

Bam's son Chalmers turned it into a thriving enterprise. He was a benevolent patriarch, and a wealthy man by Transkei standards. Also, an interpreter, Bam was highly educated, and part of a small group of a Transkei elite. Concerns of this elite, including Bam's son Lockington, were voiced in the Bunga[3] and in African opposition movements, as members of the 1935 All-Africa Convention. Their main concern was the increasing harshness of segregation legislation embodied in the 'Hertzog Bills'.[4] Education was key to qualifying for the franchise, and the franchise was under threat.

## Missions and education

Education was crucial to the Bam family, whose members favoured the education of both boys and girls. Chalmers's daughter-in-law, Temperance Bam was the most passionate of all the family regarding education and sent her children to the best mission schools. This was possible because the extended Bam family took on the responsibility for nieces and nephews, grandchildren and so forth.

The Bam family were devout Christians, as well as staunch Anglicans. There have been many debates about the pros and cons of 'mission education'. Morrow points out aspects of what he calls 'structural racism' in the schools, such as lower salaries for black teachers and separation of the races in church and at meal times. The author argues that ex-pupils appreciated this education, but were critical of it. It has, however, been difficult to find ex-pupils who were critical of it. Perhaps one could argue that Mandela and others of his generation took from their education what they needed and were not merely empty vessels.

[3] United Transkeian Territories General Council. It was controlled by white officials, however, allowed its members to voice their concerns about the policy of segregation and other issues closer to home.

[4] Proposed laws regarding land, urban areas and the franchise.

Morrow would agree with what a colleague of mine once said, that the difference between the mission education and Bantu education was that the former educated its pupils to transcend their circumstances, whereas the latter to accept them.

## Siblings

For the remainder of this review, I concentrate on Fikile and Brigalia, who had different experiences of education. Fikile went to stay with relatives in Sophiatown, completing both primary (St Cyprians) and high school (St Peters) there. He loved the jazzy bustle of Sophiatown, as well as participating in early morning mass with Father Huddleston.

Brigalia remained at Grasslands, attending high school as a boarder at Shawbury Methodist mission school and then Lovedale, where she came top of her class and qualified as a teacher. At Shawbury, Brigalia participated in a food strike against inedible food. Many of the pupils attended church not only to worship, but also to hear about the food strikes. While at Lovedale, Brigalia founded an ANC Women's group, after she heard about the 1952 Defiance Campaign. She graduated as a teacher the same year.

In 1950 Temperance Bam joined the Pholela Centre for community based primary health care. Brigalia visited her and was so impressed with the social workers there that she switched to studying social work. She did her final practical year at Pholela.

After some time working as a social worker, Brigalia joined the Young Women's Christian Association (YWCA), where she worked for nine years, setting up girls clubs in Natal. She made rapid progress up the ranks and made her first international contacts here.

In 1967 Brigalia took up a post in the World Council of Churches. Here she worked tirelessly to move the Council towards addressing both racism and sexism, inside and outside the Council, including Southern Africa. Brigalia was crucial to the development of the Council's Programme to Combat Racism (PCR), that underpinned the Council's stand on racism for the next 26 years. This included boycotts and disinvestment from racist businesses and the funding of liberation movements.

Brigalia found that while men generally supported the Council's stand on racism, they had a 'begrudging and tentative approach to women'. A born educator, Brigalia threw herself into running women only workshops, and set up women's meetings prior to major conferences. Her dream was to found a broad-based women's movement, with women from all parts of the world, particularly the Third World. Morrow sums up her achievements:

*During her time at the WCC, she shifted the organisation's thinking about the treatment of women in the Church and indeed outside it, she was central to moving the approach from theological, psychological and sociological to one that was more activist.*

The mark of a true educator is an ability to move a person or organisation to think differently and to confront issues in new ways. Brigalia certainly did this.

In all her endeavours, and despite her loyalties laying with the ANC, Brigalia was inclusive, encouraging and available. Her focus on women and inclusive approach earned the wrath of the ANC's Women's Section, who accused her of wanting to start a women's political party with funds from the WCC.

Brigalia left the Council in 1979, a casualty of a rule limiting members serving to nine years. She worked with the YWCA and trade unions until she returned to South Africa in 1988.

In the 21 years Brigalia was residing out of South Africa, she kept in touch with Temperance, who had retired to Grasslands and had turned it into a thriving farming community again.

On her return, Brigalia became Deputy Director of the South African Council of Churches (SACC). A few months later, a bomb planted by the apartheid forces, exploded at Khotso house, the head office of the SACC. Despite the destruction, Brigalia encouraged people to keep working and made sure that the Council kept in touch with its nationwide branches. In the turbulent years between 1990 and 1994, Brigalia kept the SACC on track.

In South Africa Brigalia is mostly well-known for her role in 1994, as Chairperson of the Independent Electoral Commission (IEC). She made use of many churchmen and women during her time at the IEC, later describing her approach as influenced by her 'pastoral theology'.

As Brigalia's horizons had broadened, those of Fikile shrank.

While Fikile was studying Law at UCT, he joined the Marxist Non-European Unity Movement, (NEUM) and its military wing, the National Liberation Front. There were several Unity Movement groups in the Eastern Cape, however, he was influenced mainly by one of the founders of the Movement, Neville Alexander. In 1962 Fikile and other members were arrested on the grounds of 'constructive sabotage', which meant that they had planned to carry out sabotage, but never implemented it. Fikile was sentenced to 10 years on Robben Island.

On the Island, Fikile and his fellow NEUM prisoners overcame their exclusive approach and worked with ANC prisoners in teaching and supporting one another. Many studied for undergraduate degrees, including Fikile

Fikile was released in 1974 and banished to the soon to be independent Transkei. Here he did his articles with the law practice of the Unity Movement's Richard Canca in Idutywa where he completed a BProc and LLB through UNISA. Despite Fikile's restrictions, he was able to visit Steve Biko in Ginsberg, where he became Biko's friend and advisor. In retrospect, Fikile said he enjoyed working at Idutywa, as the work was much more varied and interesting than that in mainstream law firms

Fikile visited Grasslands farm often and became familiar with basic agrarian problems. In 1975 he set up the Grasslands Development Project, which aimed to create a communal farm to benefit the peasants who worked there. This approach was based on the Kibbutz system in Israel. However, the many problems associated with the area's grinding poverty and the loss of funding put paid to the Project.

During the upheavals of 1980s Grasslands provided shelter for militants on the run from the apartheid regime. Temperance, who was permanently at Grasslands advised and protected them.

In 1986, after a disappointing time in mainstream law firms, Fikile joined the Legal Resources Centre (LRC) as its head office in Port Elizabeth. Here the law was used as an instrument of Justice, challenging the legal structures of apartheid. Fikile thrived in this environment, defending ordinary people as well as educating them about their rights.

As the political terrain changed, Fikile was in high demand. He left the LRC in 1992. Along with Brigalia, Fikile was asked to be on the Board of the SABC, as it changed from being an apartheid mouthpiece. He occupied many other prestigious positions.

In 1995 Fikile was made Judge President of the Land Claims Court (LCC). Even though he was now living in Johannesburg, he brought with him wide experience in agricultural issues, including the complexities of land and its control. Fikile was cautious to say that land restitution should go hand in hand with ensuring that people could make a living out of it.

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The court moved from place to place, with Fikile talking to all sides of a dispute on site. His style, as commented by a colleague, was interventionist rather than presiding and handing down judgements. Indeed, Fikile was responsible for a new kind of indigenous jurisprudence. He was altogether a humane and creative individual.

## Conclusion

Every time I read about the Bam family, I learn something new. The book tells a fascinating story, one that is full of surprises. A review cannot do it justice, hence, I urge readers to buy it and enjoy the journey it takes you on.

# Physical Education and Physical Culture in South Africa, 1837–1966

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## Summary and scope

Francois Johannes Cleophas's Physical Education (PE) and Physical Culture in South Africa, 1837–1966, offers a comprehensive historical account through which PE and physical culture emerged within South Africa. The book is an extensive exploration of the philosophical, sociological, and pedagogical underpinnings of PE, which analyses the relations of sport, politics, race and colonialism in particular contexts in the Cape Colony and subsequently, South Africa. The book aims to bridge traditional concepts of physical culture with contemporary educational practices. Through his research, Cleophas critically interrogates how European colonial powers, missionary education, and racial ideologies shaped physical culture in South Africa. The research spans historical evolutions of physical activity, the integration of PE into broader educational goals, and its role in fostering holistic development in learners. This study ranges across the early period of Dutch and British colonialism through the post-World War II era, foregrounding how both sport and physical training were employed as a means of oppression as well as empowerment. The author articulates the relevance of PE in modern societies, grounding their arguments in both Western and Indian perspectives.

## Critical evaluation

The book excels in providing a comprehensive overview that is both theoretically rich and practically grounded. The book's strengths lie in its ability to situate South African physical culture within global trends. Another lies in its interdisciplinary approach—drawing

from philosophy, psychology, sociology and education to present a multidimensional view of physical culture. Cleophas engages closely with international authors, noting, for instance, Andrew Morris's *Marrow of the Nation*, about the way physical culture was shaped by European forces as well as the way in which non-European societies accepted such practices. The inclusion of Indian thinkers and philosophies, such as references to Swami Vivekananda and Gandhian principles, offers a culturally contextualised narrative that is often missing in global discourses on PE. Integrating studies on Muscular Christianity, eugenics and nationalism, Cleophas convincingly shows how South African PE was part of wider ideological contests over race, fitness and morality.

The book is also valuable in its analysis of how PE was racialised. In Cleophas's view, PE curricula in South Africa were moulded by colonial authorities who wanted to discipline colonised populations through physical training. Using archival sources—government reports and records from the mission schools—Cleophas presents convincing evidence of how physical training was imposed on Black and Coloured students and presented as a civilising tool.

The book highlights the institutional and ideological influences without also foregrounding the students, teachers or community leaders involved in PE programmes. A bottom-up approach would shape a stronger story. The work sometimes leans heavily on descriptive content without sufficiently critiquing the implications of the discussed frameworks in real-world educational settings. Some sections could benefit from more critical engagement with current global challenges in PE.

## Methodological analysis

The methodological approach of the book is largely qualitative and conceptual and does not outline a specific research methodology, which is appropriate given its nature as an academic monograph, rather than an empirical study. Educators and scholars might find the lack of empirical evidence a limitation if seeking data-driven guidance for curriculum development or policy-making.

Cleophas's approach is interdisciplinary, drawing from history, sociology and political science. The author employs a narrative synthesis method, where he depends on archival research, going through primary sources like government reports, educational policies and periodicals. In particular, Cleophas draws on materials from the Lutcher Starke Centre at the University of Texas and the private archives of the Olympian Ron Eland, which lend the book historical richness. This is effective for the book's purpose of theoretical exploration,

however, limits its applicability to empirical educational research or policy implementation.

The book also challenges conventional narratives that consider PE as an apolitical, neutral field by tying together historiographical arguments. Previous South African historiography has been criticised by Cleophas for ignoring the social and political aspects of physical culture. The author argues that national identity, gender roles, and racial hierarchies were all significantly shaped by PE.

## Connections to other literature

The book builds upon foundational works in PE by figures like Pierre de Coubertin and integrates classical Indian literature, thus, offering a dual heritage approach. It aligns with contemporary texts that emphasise the importance of holistic education, such as works by Ken Robinson and Martha Nussbaum on educational philosophy. The book also forms part of a growing field focusing on the relationship between physical culture and colonialism. It occupies a unique and important space within a growing body of work that has, until now, examined the European and American contexts of physical training and conditioning. The author's analysis also connects with the study of sports and politics in South Africa during apartheid. It lines up with the research of scholars like Christopher Merrett and Peter Alegi, both of whom have examined how sports served as a site of both resistance to and control exerted by the apartheid state. Cleophas's work lays the basis for understanding how colonial-era physical culture policies influenced later apartheid sports policies.

This book is recommended for historians, sociologists and sports academics who are interested in South Africa's colonisation, education, and racial relations. It is a useful tool for anybody researching the connections between politics and physical culture because of its critical analysis and extensive archival research. Additionally, the philosophical framing resonates with books that discuss the ethics and values in education, making it a valuable companion text in interdisciplinary education programmes. The book's engagement with more general concerns of imperialism and social control makes it valuable to global sports studies as well, though South African history experts will find it especially pertinent. Overall, Cleophas's PE and Physical Culture in South Africa, 1837–1966, is a noteworthy addition to the field, since it provides a thorough analysis of the ways in which PE served as a tool for colonialism as well as a tool for community empowerment.

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# Critical Thinking Skills for Students: Curriculum and Practice in Higher Education

**Author**: Heather Goode
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In *Critical Thinking Skills for Students: Curriculum and Practice in Higher Education*, Heather Goode provides a practice-oriented study of how critical thinking is conceptualised and enacted in South African higher education. Grounded in her doctoral research, Goode uses a qualitative case study to examine the interplay between curriculum design, assessment and professional teaching practices in higher education institutions. Her focus is placed on first-year students entering higher education in a context where unequal pre-university education increasingly demands for greater academic support for students and transformation of the curriculum.

Goode does not analyse critical thinking as a decontextualised skill or universal cognitive outcome; however, her analysis is situated within the lived experiences of South African university lecturers. Through in-depth interviews, Goode highlights how lecturers from diverse disciplinary backgrounds interpret and implement critical thinking outcomes in their classrooms. Their reflections, often shaped by collaborative communities of practice, reveal both the opportunities and constraints presented by institutional imperatives, such as standardised learning management systems and policy-aligned assessment frameworks.

A significant portion of Goode's book addresses how tools like Bloom's Taxonomy are used to design assessments and structure cognitive demands. While Goode recognises the value of such frameworks, the author also cautions that their application is neither uniform nor straightforward. Instead, she reveals how contextual factors such as disciplinary norms, institutional cultures and student demographics mediate the interpretation and efficacy of these standardised frameworks and systems. Particularly valuable is the book's focus on the first-year curriculum as a transformative space. Goode argues that early exposure to critical thinking, when scaffolded effectively, can set the foundation for long-term academic engagement. The author makes a strong case for professional development that is not merely compliance-driven, but transformative and embedded within institutional culture.

For history teachers and teacher education lecturers, particularly those concerned with democratic citizenship, epistemic justice and curriculum decolonisation, this book offers both theoretical and practical insights. A limitation of the book is that the case study is drawn from a private higher education institution. However, the findings succeed to resonate more broadly and suggest fruitful areas for further research. These studies may include comparative analyses across public and private institutions and a deeper engagement with indigenous knowledge systems.

In summary, Goode's book is a valuable and timely contribution to the scholarship on teaching and learning in higher education. It will be of particular interest to researchers, curriculum designers, lecturers and teachers who are committed to fostering critical thinking and inclusive pedagogical practices. While rooted in the South African post-apartheid context, the book's insights resonate broadly in a global educational landscape which is increasingly challenged by a resurgence of conservative ideologies. Goode's work, thus, offers both a locally grounded and globally relevant framework for advancing critical and transformative teaching in higher education.

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# Teachers and the Epistemology of History

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This edited volume, *Teachers and the Epistemology of History*, begins with a striking observation: that understanding how we know what we know—the epistemology—is often seen as harder in history than in other school subjects. This challenge, argue the editors, is exacerbated by the multiple and often contradictory aims of history education—like promoting national cohesion and the ability to engage critically with historical evidence—each with different assumptions about what history is and for. The nineteen chapters of this book explore how history teachers respond to this tension, in ways both intentional and unintentional.

The book is divided into three parts, admittedly with significant overlap. Part 1 'Epistemology and Context' reflects on how different contexts might have implications for teachers' epistemologies. Part 2 'Professional Development and Reflections on Applied Epistemologies' looks at how various interventions might influence teachers' epistemological beliefs. Part 3 'Reflections on Measurements and Instruments' is an overview of research regarding how epistemological beliefs and epistemic cognition are measured. A range of contexts are discussed, including Sweden, South Africa, the Netherlands, Canada, Turkey, Czech Republic, Taiwan and Norway.

Many, if not most of the chapters in this edited volume refer to the three-level-model of copier, borrower, criterialist epistemic stances developed by Maggioni (2010), and which Maggioni herself reflects on in Chapter 13. Within this model, a person taking a copier stance believes that history provides a copy of the past and that history is, therefore, fixed. A person taking the borrower stance would consider history to be subjective and borrow sources that fit their own view of a valid narrative. Lastly, a person holding a criterialist stance would see history as interpretative and would use disciplinary criteria to establish

valid narratives. Implied within this model is 1) that the purpose of history education is to move students from a copier to a criterialist stance, and 2) that history teachers who themselves have a criterialist stance will be best positioned to do this.

However, while working with reference to Maggioni's model, the authors within this edited volume make different assumptions regarding how teachers—as historians and pedagogues—make sense of knowledge and knowledge claims. One of the most interesting differences in authors' assumptions is whether the frequently observed inconsistencies in teachers' epistemological beliefs are unintentional 'wobbles' or intentional 'codeswitching', and related to this, whether inconsistency is a problem we should be concerned with.

Maggioni, in Chapter 13 for example, argues that fostering a consistent criterialist stance among both teachers and students is important, even if this causes emotional distress and ruptures long-held beliefs or narratives. In contrast, in Chapter 2, Parkes sees inconsistency as a form of "*epistemic fluency*" (p.23), what the author describes as the ability to be flexible and adept with respect to different ways of knowing. Parkes makes a persuasive argument that epistemic reasoning—for example, one's causal beliefs—are shaped by our epistemic communities, and may thus change depending on the community an individual is in. Curricula themselves might constitute a form of epistemic community, which teachers reason in relation to. According to Parkes, teachers should be encouraged to develop epistemic fluency rather than consistency, "*so that the formal and practical epistemologies they adopt are not simply the artefacts of fate, but become resources with which to explore historical discourse in the classroom, with critical insight, and empathy, arising as a result of the historical (self) consciousness*" (p. 35). Indeed, if Parkes is taken seriously, the project of attempting to measure static epistemic stances or identities requires reconsideration. Nitsche attempts this reconsideration in Chapter 14.

Two chapters (4 and 5) of particular interest for readers of *Yesterday & Today* are those drawing on data from South Africa. Both chapters contribute to the question of whether a consistent criterialist stance is desirable. In Chapter 4 for example, Wassermann and Angier discuss the "*epistemic battleground*" (p. 65) of historically White institutions, which are training future history teachers in a time of acute historical revisionism. The history teacher trainees these authors interviewed largely rejected the cognitive, 'disciplinary', epistemological orientation of the school history curriculum they had been taught. The authors were instead motivated by a history education that would facilitate a personal connection with the past and promote African history and perspective. According to Maggioni's model, these teachers might be accused of adopting a borrower stance, which

selects sources to support a desired narrative. In the context of South Africa, however, where a 'settler grammar' posing as disciplinary history has justified a curriculum disconnected from most people's lives, an emphasis on narrative, rather than evidence is perhaps understandable.

In Chapter 5, Sarah Godsell similarly interviewed pre-service teachers and explored how their epistemic stances change according to context. Mostly, the pre-service teachers adopted a criterialist stance, however, when teaching about Apartheid they latched onto the phrase 'both sides of the story' as a good and necessary position for any history teacher. Within this 'both sides' approach, pre-service teachers favoured a narrative which claimed that not all Black people were victims during apartheid and not all White people were perpetrators. As Godsell points out, this narrative—while evidenced in small ways—is not representative of the larger evidentiary-based history, and renders both the present and the history nonsensical. Yet, for the pre-service teachers, the 'balanced', 'neutral' narrative (reflective of the borrower stance) provided them with some respite from the emotions and painful micro-social negotiations that are involved in teaching history in a South African context. As one of the pre-service teachers explained, "*we don't want to rile our students up because of the emotional nature of the work*" (p. 88).

The two chapters (4 and 5) from South Africa make a challenging and provocative contribution to this edited volume for two reasons: First, they suggest that a teachers' capacity for epistemic reasoning is not indicative of what a teacher *chooses* to do in a classroom. Second, they explore how epistemic stances are negotiated in history classrooms where multiple factors interact, including the relationship between students, the emotions of the teacher, and the political objectives of history education as a project. When considering these contributions, I particularly enjoyed Zanazanian's reflections in the concluding chapter of this edited volume. Zanazanian—himself a scholar of historical consciousness—challenges history education researchers to reflect on their own overreliance on history-as-discipline for viewing history and how it should be taught. Instead, he asks us to consider whether teachers' switching and wobbling epistemic stances could be better understood from the perspective of the overarching presence of their lived and embodied histories. In this regard, South Africa with its ever-present past, has much to offer the study of the epistemology of history.

# TEACHERS VOICE / HANDS-ON ARTICLES

The hands-on section in *Yesterday & Today* is dedicated to providing History teachers at different levels with practical, classroom-ready resources and ideas that bridge the gap between educational theory and day-to-day teaching practice. Designed to support immediate application, this section features, for example, step-by-step lesson plans, reproducible templates, and adaptable strategies that have been tested in real classroom settings. Whether it's through creative pedagogical approaches, low-cost teaching tools, or digital enhancements, the hands-on section offers innovative ideas that cater to diverse learning needs and environments. By equipping History teachers with tangible tools and actionable insights, this section aims to inspire confidence, foster creativity, and promote a collaborative professional History Education community.

## History Classrooms across the World: How does Discussing Controversial Issues add to Understanding the Importance of Perspective?

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### Positionality

As I am on the road to becoming a history teacher, I had the opportunity to take part in a very special project that I would like to share with you all: "*Teaching controversial issues in History classrooms – a case study of student-teachers in South Africa and the Netherlands*". Originating from a collaborative incentive between Utrecht University (through Prof. Bjorn Wansink and Dr. Saro Lozano-Parra), and the University of Pretoria (through Dr. Joyce Raanhuis, Prof. Johan Wassermann, and Dr. Pranitha Bharath), this project sought to engage history teachers in training in fruitful discussion. Students from either university would be paired with one another to discuss controversial issues, and *how* you can approach them within the context of a high school classroom.

With the world becoming increasingly polarised, tensions surrounding contentious topics rising ever-higher, and my own personal interest in discussing these issues with other people that find themselves in a similar boat, my interest was immediately piqued and I proceeded to apply to take part in this project. What followed were incredibly engaging conversations, interesting activities, all culminating in a student-led symposium to discuss our findings with other groups.

There were a total of three activities, with two of those being a recorded conversation between you and the student you matched with, where we would discuss a variety of topics related to controversial issues in the classroom. At first, these discussions were relatively broad, as we got to know one another, but soon we would delve into the cultural and practical similarities and differences that exist between the Netherlands and South Africa, and how this might impact our opinion and teaching methods. From the way we agreed on the inherent anxiety that is present for teachers-to-be having to control a classroom, to the way that something as simple as the massive difference in classroom sizes could make a huge difference (my partner was teaching classes of up to 56 children!), we had lots to discuss.

As for the controversial issues in question, the topics revolved around colonialism, apartheid, national identity, and even the contemporary Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We were both grappling with the simple question of *how* to approach these topics with children who might have very little knowledge of any of these issues. And that was not all; how, as a teacher with inherent bias that has to be acknowledged, could you still create a safe space for all opinions, even those you might disagree with yourself? To be able to do all this whilst still learning the ropes of the job itself would make for an arduous task to say the least.

The third and final activity revolved around the creation of a lesson plan surrounding one of the topics in question, to which we chose to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This was an exceedingly difficult task, given how this is already a challenge to discuss with adults, and now we had to make this work for children, within a single lesson hour! Naturally those were not the only issues we ran into, as my partner pointed out that something we take for granted in Dutch classrooms nowadays, the utilisation of media, was simply not a possibility for her. This simple note emphasized the point of this exercise: perspective, both from teacher and student, but also between the Netherlands and South Africa.

This perspective became the highlight of the student-led symposium which was the culmination of our efforts as a group. We finally got to see what everyone else had

accomplished, and what kind of topic they chose to focus on. It was an incredibly successful meeting, and showcased the great success of this project as a whole. I can only hope that Utrecht University will continue to pursue these collaborative efforts, given their value in a world where perspective is ever-more important.

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# Reimaging, from a decolonised perspective, the Grade 10 intended curriculum and the start of the era of modernity - Portugal covets the gold of West Africa, sugar, and the start of enslaving black bodies

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## Positionality

Ramose[1] (2016) argues the "construction of the education curriculum demands a specific vision of the kind of human being education is designed to deliver to society". While the Department of Basic Education has implemented a process for the 'Strengthening of the Curriculum', this paper contributes to the reimaging of the Grade 10 History curriculum with a topic which has the objective to address, and humanize, the vision of a value-based education.

Drawing on the work of Howard W French (2021. *Born in Blackness*. Liveright Publishing, New York), we have introduced a topic at the start of the Grade 10 academic year entitled '*Portugal covets the gold of West Africa and the start of enslaving black bodies*'. In the absence of text books available in South Africa which would unpack this explicit focus, we draw on the work of French.[2] While the implemented curriculum does introduce various civilisations which existed in 1450, it seemingly addresses them as distinct silos. We infuse the Ghana-, Mali-, and Songhai Empires as well as the Ming Dynasty, Ottoman Empire and Europe (as it emerged out of the Middle Ages) into the narrative.

[1] MB Ramose, "Teacher and student with a critical pan-epistemic orientation: An ethical necessity for Africanising the educational curriculum in Africa", *South African Journal of Philosophy*, 35(4), 2016, pp. 546-555 (available at DOI: 10.1080/02580136.2016.1247248)

[2] HW French, *Born in Blackness…* (Liveright Publishing, 2021).

French argues that the history of the early years of the era of modernity has been heavily skewed in favour of Spain, and its conquests in the Americas.[3] Portugal's acquisition to rights of Africa has been traditionally reduced to a mere footnote. Yet, of the two Iberian Catholic Monarchies, Portugal's colonial conquest of the islands off West Africa and its finding and controlling the source of gold, underpinned by a Papal Bull, became the more powerful engine of modernity, as Christendom took root. It was Portugal's far deeper connections with sub-Saharan Africa, first through gold and then enslaving black bodies, more than any other factors birthed the era of modernity. This topic serves to answer the question as to why, beginning in the first half of the fifteenth century, Europeans, led principally by the Portuguese, began to mount a determined push for trade opportunities and political relations with what had previously been regarded by Europeans as impossibly remote and inaccessible regions of specifically West Africa?

Because of Portugal's colonial conquest, and in the space of less than two hundred years, the course of world history would change in more lasting ways than it had during any comparable period in previous human experience. At the heart of this change lay the mass trafficking of human beings who were transported in chains from the continent of their birth, to new and unfamiliar places—first to Europe, and then to the Americas—with, for the first time, the idea of race as a principle for determining a person's 'enslavability'.

Portugal's 'discovery' of the source of gold in West Africa served as its first prize, superseded by a new lucrative trade in Black African slaves and a boom in Portuguese sugar production on islands located just off the African continent, fuelled Spain's obsession with finding its own source of gold and exploration into the westward extremities of the Atlantic Ocean.

## The premise from which the narrative of French (2021) unfolds

A Eurocentric historical narrative means people in the West have long been conditioned to believe that Africa has little pre-modern history, or at least little of it that matters to the big picture of the world. Western thinkers and politicians, from Hagel to Trump, have argued African societies have lived, as it were, outside of history.

[3] HW French, *Born in Blackness…* (Liveright Publishing, 2021).

French[4] argues it so dramatically miscasts the role of Africa, that it becomes a profound mis-telling. The author explains the first impetus for the so-termed 'Age of Discovery' was not Europe's yearning for ties with Asia, rather its centuries-old lust for gold and the desire to forge trading ties with legendary Black societies hidden away somewhere in the heart of West Africa.

French suggests that in developing an understanding of the emergence of modernity requires not only that we explore the early Afro-European contacts in depth and with greater patience, but that we ask ourselves: How is it that this story has gone for so long being so seldom examined or told?

The Iberian Catholic monarchy of Portugal's acquisition to rights of Africa has been traditionally reduced to a mere footnote. It only returns to narratives about Europe's irresistible rise over the rest of the world with its belated leap to Asia, under the command of mariners like Vasco da Gama who rounded Africa's Cape of Good Hope in 1488 and reached Calicut via the Indian Ocean in 1498. Portugal did not really lose out to Spain at all in the great bargains reached during a series of world-dividing treaties brokered by the Vatican at the end of the fifteenth century.

French[5] argues: Of the two Iberian Catholic monarchies, Portugal became the much more powerful engine of modernity. It was Portugal's far deeper connections with sub-Saharan Africa, first through gold and then through enslaving black bodies, which more than any other factors in this era, birthed to us our familiar world.

## West African civilisation: Trade and the source of gold

It has long been believed that people in sub-Saharan Africa were spurred to urbanise only by contact with Arabs, beginning sometime in the first millennium. The prevailing view has long been held that it was only contact with Europe, which would come centuries later, that dragged what is fancied as 'Black Africa' out of its supposed isolation and connect it to the big currents of change that began sweeping the rest of the world in the late Middle Ages and the start of the era of modernity.

[4] HW French, *Born in Blackness…* (Liveright Publishing, 2021).
[5] HW French, *Born in Blackness…* (Liveright Publishing, 2021).

French[6] explains Djenné is the most prominent of many ancient cities in Africa and does not substantiate the previous statement. Djenné had urbanised hundreds of years before Arabs first swept into North Africa in the seventeenth century. It thrived by trading fish, grains and copper and other metals with places hundreds of kilometres away, such as the cities of Timbuktu and Gao. Archaeological findings have uncovered artifacts that date to the city's very beginnings, including glass beads that came from Han China, when the dynasty itself (202BCE to 220CE) was scarcely a century old. Items like these bear witness to the fact that West Africa was never so cut off from the rest of the world or 'lost in time' as is commonly imagined.

Sometime during its first half millennium of existence, Djenné-jeno became an important southern terminus in a highly lucrative trans-Saharan trade in gold. This commerce became plentiful around the sixth century, as parts of what would later become the Ghana Empire, began to trade gold with Berbers from the north for salt, cloth and other goods. All of this was aided by the recent introduction into the region of the desert-hardy camel, which revolutionised transportation. The real power of Ghana's rulers was based on control of strategic chokepoints through which gold passed from south to north, and through which other essential goods like salt travelled in the opposite direction. By the eleventh century, Ghana's wealth and prestige allowed it to field impressively large armies.

Based on this trade, Ghana became known throughout North Africa, Mediterranean Europe and as far away as Yemen as the 'country of gold'. In time, Ghana would generate as much as two-thirds of the supply of metal to the inhabitants of medieval Western Eurasia. The gold that flowed out of the region played a crucial role in the Arab golden age, a period of explosive growth and political expansion that began around 750CE, and extended until the Mongol invasions of the thirteenth century. As a result of the trade in this precious metal, the hard currency of the Arab world, the gold Dinār, became prized everywhere it circulated. This included medieval Christendom, where Arab coins were often copied. The existence of a quasi-universal currency greatly facilitated the growth of Arab commerce from the Levant to Andalusia, the name given to the Muslim empire that flourished in what are now modern Spain and Portugal.

Ghana paid the ultimate price for its relative isolation and dependence on camel-driven traders from the north. Its power crumbled after 1076, when the Almoravid Berbers, fervent Muslim ascetics from North Africa, seized control from Ghana of Awdaghust, a critical

[6] HW French, *Born in Blackness…* (Liveright Publishing, 2021).

southern terminus of the trans-Saharan gold trade. The Almoravid Berbers soon went on to secure Islam's hitherto vulnerable presence in Europe for another four hundred years.

The question we ask in our history classrooms as we begin the Grade 10 History curriculum, is: Why, beginning in the first half of the fifteenth century, did Europeans, led principally by the Portuguese, begin to mount a determined push for trade opportunities and political relations with what had previously been regarded as impossibly remote and inaccessible regions of Africa?

## Abu Bakr 11, oceanic-explorative intent

Obscure though it may be to the world today, little known Dejenné constitutes an important piece of this story. Early centres of urbanisation like this one—city-states, in effect—became swept up in a process of empire formation in part of Africa, that would soon become outward looking as Portugal or Spain, only long before the oceanic explorations of the Iberians (in terms of what we refer to as the Era of Modernity). In fact, the most famous of these Sudanic empires, Mali, which succeeded Ghana in the thirteenth century, and gave the present-day country its name, was ruled at the turn of the fourteenth century by an emperor named Abu Bakr II. Abu Bakr II's personal obsession was reaching the limits of the Atlantic Ocean by boat. This was more than a century and a half before Columbus set out to cross the Atlantic from Andalusia (which we unpack in due course as a sub-topic in the Grade 10 curriculum). While surviving documentary record of Abu Bakr II is limited, there can be no doubt of his existence, nor any reason not to credit his fixation on maritime discovery. This is because his much more famous successor, Mansā Mūsā (and where Mansā Mūsā is covered, as a 'character' or 'topic' in the primary school history curriculum), gave the governor of Cairo a detailed account of Abu Bakr's life and attempts at oceanic discovery during a pilgrimage to Mecca in 1324-1325, and which was recorded comprehensively.

French[7] suggests the reason for no knowledge of Abu Bakr II's oceanic-explorative intent is two-fold: Firstly the near total lack of documentary or archaeological evidence and secondly, the deliberate and pervasive neglect and erasure of the role of Africa and of Africans in the creation of a modern Atlantic world. This is what Kris Manjapra[8] refers to as "ghost lining", an issue we drill deeper into as the Grade 10 curriculum unfolds.

[7] HW French, *Born in Blackness…* (Liveright Publishing, 2021).

[8] K Manjapra, *Black ghosts of empire: The long death of slavery and the failure of emancipation* (Simon and Schuster, 2022).

French[9] explains, that by Columbus spending time in the Canary Islands, off West Africa, we know he discovered the existence, at a fixed latitude, of powerful winds and ocean currents that circulate in a counterclockwise fashion and swiftly bear ships off to the west. The waters off the coastal region of West Africa controlled by Abu Bakr II's Mali are dominated by these very effects, helping make sense of a possible survivor's account of a big river effect flowing violently into the midst of an ocean. European mariners did have knowledge of a current just to the north of this large system, which in modern times has been known as the Canary Current, which was an equally large and power clockwise current that thrusts all in its path in an eastward direction—back to Europe. This system explains why Europeans had believed for centuries that sailing westward across the ocean was not only impractical, but also suicidal.

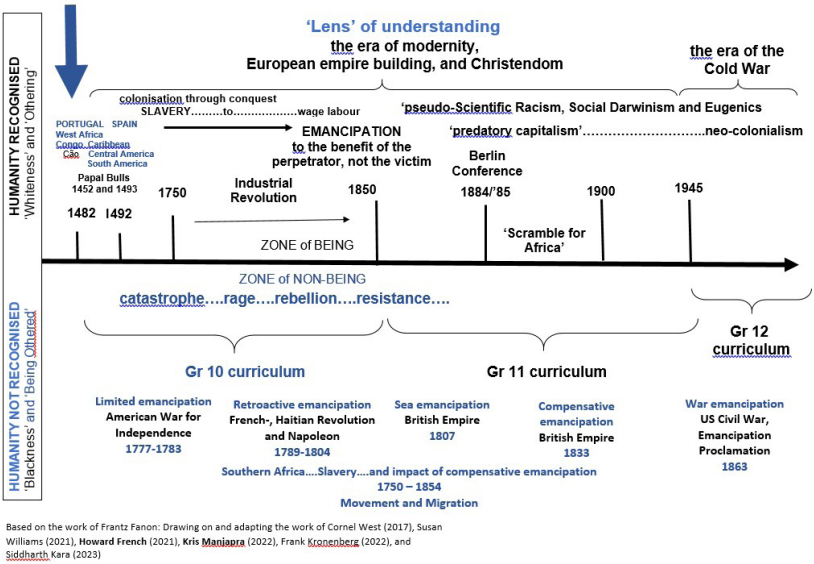
In addition to gold, each of the three Sudanic empires that succeeded one another in controlling the most important river valleys and the savannah to the south of the Sahara (Ghana-, Mali- and the Songhai Empire—with Songhai itself being a sub-topic at the start of the Grade 10 implemented curriculum) aggressively pursued a trade in slaves. As M'bokolo[10] argues: "The African continent was bled of its human resources via all possible routes. Across the Sahara, through the Red Sea, from the Indian Ocean ports and across the Atlantic."

In the space of less than two hundred years, from the early fourteenth century to the fifteenth century, the course of world history changed in more lasting ways than it had during any comparable period in previous human experience. Since that time, perhaps only the Industrial Revolution has changed human life more. More than anything else, mobility, on a scale never witnessed before in all of history became the new phenomenon. At the heart of this movement lay the mass trafficking of human beings who were transported in chains from the continent of their birth, Africa, to new and unfamiliar places, first to Europe, and then to the Americas. Giving birth to this process was the idea of race as a principle for determining a person's 'enslavability'.

[9] HW French, *Born in Blackness…* (Liveright Publishing, 2021).

[10] E M'Bokolo, *The Impact of the Slave Trade on Africa* (LA Monde Diplomatique, 1998, translated by Barry Smerin).

**Figure 1:** (This infographic, developed by the authors, is used in our history classrooms)




M'bokolo[11] reminds us: "…more than four centuries, from the end of the 15th- to the 19th Century, of a regular slave trade to build the Americas and the prosperity of the Christian states of Europe".

To make sense of the profound changes wrought in this era, it is necessary to address the question of how these transformations got under way. French[12] argues that more than any other cause or explanation for Europe's 'Age of Discovery', was the sensation stirred by news of Mansā Mūsā's 1324 trip to Cairo, which set the creation of an Atlantic world into motion. In 1346, maps fuelled dreams of a land of unlimited wealth in gold that was simply awaiting 'discovery' in Africa. This prompted a Genoa-born Majorcan named Jaume Ferrer to set out for a southward voyage hugging the West African coastline to explore beyond what had been considered a navigational point of no return, Cape Bojador, located on the coast of modern-day Mauritania. Ferrer was never heard of again after his departure.

A few years later finding the source of the gold was further boosted by news of a series of lectures by a Berber scholar, Ibn Battūtah, about his travels in the region known as Sudan,

[11] E M'Bokolo, *The Impact of the Slave Trade on Africa* (LA Monde Diplomatique, 1998, translated by Barry Smerin).

[12] HW French, *Born in Blackness…* (Liveright Publishing, 2021).

which he delivered in Granada, in 1355. Then in 1375, the so-called Catalan Atlas was made, which showed for the first time an extent of detail about the interior of the African continent, which identifies the Mali Empire and its emperor, Mansā Mūsā. The principal novelty is his unambiguous Blackness, and surrounding him in every direction are the great cities of his realm, Timbuktu, Gao and Mali itself. The Catalan Atlas did more than alert European royalty to the suspected location of the world's greatest source of the precious metal, it drove an explosion of mapmaking that had the mysteries of African geography as its focus.

The history of maritime exploration during the hundred years after the publication of the Catalan Atlas would be dominated not by thoughts of Asia, but by the emphatic desire to determine the source of West Africa's wealth in gold.

## Transitional moment in European history

The starting point for this expansion can be dated to the Battle of Aljubarrota in 1385, when the armies of an illegitimate prince, Joāu I, routed the forces of Castile and established the throne of a new imperial line, the Aviz dynasty. The production of the Catalan Atlas (1375) and the establishment of Aviz rule over Portugal (1385) arrived at a critical transitional moment in European history.

The second half of the fourteenth century was marked by the 'Black Death' (bubonic plague), killing between one-third and three-fifths of the Western European population, resulting in a dire labour shortage which fuelled interest in both Italy and Iberia for the acquisition of Black African slaves. Compounding this problem, and shortly before the end of the century, came a dramatic balance of payments crisis as output from Europe's silver mines and supplies of Sahelian gold declined, which was linked to political instability in Western Sudan amid succession crises in Mali.

In this European-wide crisis, the Portuguese monarch, Joāu, using his own six sons, hurriedly constructed a new elite, virtually from scratch. The most famous of his sons was Henry, born in 1394, who posthumously earned himself the title of *Henry the Navigator*. Henry, who was 21 at the time, did not direct the assault, but was involved on behalf of the Aviz, when they captured Ceuta in 1415—only 258 kilometres from Portugal—while Castile (the Spanish monarch) pushed into the Canary Islands.

The Portuguese soon realised control of Ceuta did not ensure control of the trade in African gold. It did, however, become an important site of early experimentation in

colonisation and empire building. Henry then had a further objective, the Canary Islands, which could replace Ceuta as the premier domain of imperial experimentation until the 1470s. The Canaries was the first European colony in the Atlantic, and where Portuguese, Spaniards and European polities deepened their taste for overseas empire. The Canarians were ruthlessly abducted and shipped off to Europe, where they fed a highly lucrative market in slaves; later they were traded as chattel on nearby islands in the Atlantic for work on new sugar plantations. Spanish and then Portuguese efforts to settle some of the Canary Islands were fiercely resisted by the indigenous population.

In 1424 indigenous militia routed the first large-scale attempt, the first of many, by men sent by Prince Henry to enforce his claim on the islands, which was disputed by Spain. Henry's motivation for control over Ceuta and then the Canary Islands was his undying dream of establishing a stranglehold on the trade in the gold of continental Africa. What the Portuguese sought was not a way around Africa, as has been frequently supposed, but a way into it that sidestepped the hostile Maghreb region.

Portugal's failed efforts to wrest control over the Canary Islands from Spain, would spur it to become the most successful explorer of the Atlantic world in the fifteenth century. First came Madeira in 1424, and shortly thereafter, the Azores. Henry came into ownership of what was probably the first sugar mill of the Atlantic world on the newly conquered island of Madeira. The Portuguese determined the only way to produce sugar in volume involved copious inputs of slave labour. Slaves were initially brought to Madeira from the Canaries, but as production soared, those rapidly depopulating islands provided inadequate sources, hence, the Portuguese mounted slave raids against the Imraugen, who inhabited the northwestern coast of Africa.

Henry retained a conviction that a mission to the 'River of Gold' or beyond would win him access to the mines of Mali and their untold wealth. Henry's costly search down the coast of Africa for gold had so far yielded little of the metal. As the expense underpinning the drive for gold piled up, other sources of income had to be found to justify the exploration. Gold had led the Portuguese to slaves, and slaves drove the expansion of a lucrative new industry, sugar, which would transform the world like few products have in history.

In this way, French[13] argues the notion that the Black peoples who inhabited this part of Africa and which was coming under exploration by Europeans for the first time, were uniquely wretched and lacking in the redeeming attributes of civilisation by virtue of the

[13] HW French, *Born in Blackness…* (Liveright Publishing, 2021).

colour of their skin, was first mobilised in the 1440s. The catastrophe for those in the zone of non-being, which would unfold over the next 600 years, had begun.

## Capitalisation of the Iberian monarchy – African gold, El Mina and a Portuguese monopoly

In 1448, Henry officially ordered a halt to the raiding and crusading that had generated African bodies for sale into the salve trade. The first Papal Bull, *Romanus Pontifex*, was decreed to King Afonso of Portugal by Pope Nicholas V in 1452. It was due to the critical contributions that Africa began to make to European wealth and prosperity in the second half of the fifteenth century, including driving big economic changes, such as the capitalisation of Iberian economies and the launching of a new gold coin, the *cruzado* in 1457.

An irony of history is that Portugal's big advances in Africa came only on the heels of Henry's death in November 1460. In 1469, King Afonso leased the rights of exploration to Fernão Gomes, which required Gomes's ships to advance at least 100 leagues (555.6 kilometres) annually along the African coast beyond Sierra Leone, charting new territory as he went. Gomes launched his first expedition in 1470, and he sent a second convoy of ships around the bulge of Africa in 1471, venturing past the lagoons of what is today the Ivory Coast and onwards into the waters of modern-day Ghana.

They proceeded eastward for another few miles until they reached a village called Shama, where they found safe anchor. Going ashore, the signs of gold were abundant; there was no need to search for it. Assuming the existence of a major mine nearby, the Portuguese adopted the name El Mina for this site of such long awaited good fortune, and secured it by building a fort at El Mina in 1482. Nearly sixty years of Portuguese efforts to win access to African gold had finally paid off.

While establishing regular trade with the Akan societies of Ghana, the newly rich Gomes's fleets pursued other African discoveries farther to the east, all the way to the Bight of Benin and the island of São Tomé. Under the terms of his contract with Afonso, Gomes was required to surrender one-fifth of his bounty in gold to the crown. Even this payment was enough to breathe life into Portugal's anemic currency. King Afonso, therefore, placed his son, Crown Prince João, in direct control over the booming new trade and its rich proceeds in bullion.

## The First Intra-European Colonial War and the Doctrine of Discovery

Word about Lisbon's immense windfall quickly spread and before long Spaniards, French, Genoese and others began arriving on what Europeans referred to as the Gold Coast, a stretch of West African coastline, between the town of Assinie in the west and the mouth of the River Volta in the east. To protect its discovery, in August 1474, Portugal proclaimed it illegal for 'foreigners' to trade with El Mina, promising the death penalty for all who were caught doing so and King Afonso decreed that what the Portuguese called the 'Mina trade' would become a royal monopoly at the end of 1474. Over the next five years an intense struggle unfolded over El Mina which would impact the destinies of the European Catholic monarchies. In 1475 Afonso unsuccessfully attacked Castile, which resulted in its new monarch, Isabella, and began targeting Lisbon's new holdings in West Africa, El Mina in particular. Some of the early Spanish Castilian convoys did return with rich yields of gold and pepper, and with hundreds of slaves as well. In 1478 the first intra-European colonial war at sea took place between Portuguese ships and a Castile convoy returning from the Gold Coast, and which led to the rival Iberian powers agreeing to peace negotiations mediated by the Catholic Church.

This set the stage for a papal-sanctioned division of the world with far reaching consequences for the early modern era and well beyond. It is this development; with the first Papal Bull issued by the Pope, that Christendom began to unfold in what was rationalised as the 'Doctrine of Discovery'. Mogobe Ramose[14] argues: "The Doctrine of Discovery (the international law of settler colonialism, the justification for its expansionist logic in conquering other lands and subjugating the indigenous people of those lands) was deployed to make war for conquest, as if the indigenous people did not exist, and were simply disposed of as nothing but surplus labour that fed the desires of the conquerors."

Under the Treaty of Alcáçovas of 1479, Portugal abandoned its claims to the Castilian crown, but would immediately enjoy rights to all the islands already discovered. Therefore, Portugal had won Church-sanctioned control of all sub-Saharan Africa, and Spain had finally won control over all the contested Canary Islands. In 1481, now King João, ordered the construction of a fort to protect Portugal's booming supply of gold from European rivals and pirates. King João placed the construction of the fort at El Mina under the leadership of

[14] MB Ramose, "Towards a post-conquest South Africa: Beyond the constitution of 1996", *South African Journal on Human Rights*, 34(3), 2018, pp. 326-341.

Diogo de Azambuja, which became known as São Jorge da Mina. It was São Jorge da Mina at El Mina, which was the essential pivot around which European fortunes turned with the bountiful gold it disgorged. One of Azambuja's crewmates was Bartolomeu Dias, the nobleman who seven years later would become the first European to reach the southern tip of Africa and sail from there into the Indian Ocean. Over the next few years, several other Portuguese would be enlisted in supplying or administering Portugal's first major outpost south of the Sahara, attesting to El Mina's role as a linchpin in Lisbon's budding global project. These included Afonso de Albuquerque, who later blazed a trail of imperial conquest in Asia, and Diogo Cão, who was the Portuguese who entered the Kingdom of Kongo (a sub-topic of the Grade 10 implemented curriculum).

The initial fort built by Azambjua was the first of 60 or so such outposts built over the next three centuries by a diverse assortment of European nations along the coast of modern-day Ghana. The first wave of these was created to procure gold. Only much later, beginning in the 1640s, did this region become a major source of slaves, long after such regions as Upper Guinea, Kongo and Luanda (Angola).

Within a decade, Portugal was obtaining 8 000 ounces of gold annually from El Mina, an amount that would triple by 1494, and continue to rise thereafter. From the time of the construction of the fort itself (1482), Lisbon typically received a caravel's shipment every month from this new prized outpost, with its ships usually spending about a month in transit. It was not long before these volumes grew so large that they transformed the economic life of this small nation-state. From 1482 to the mid-sixteenth century, Portugal's caravel runs back and forth to the Gold Coast averaged between 46 and 57 kilograms of the precious metal per month for deposit in royal coffers. The kingdom's treasury was even renamed Casa da Mina, reflecting the primary importance of trade with Black Africa.

## The template for plantation agriculture reliant on Black enslaved labour

Portugal's discovery of African gold would serve as its first prize in a series of dramatic pay-offs. It was superseded by a new lucrative trade in African slaves, thereafter, by a boom in Portuguese sugar production on islands located just off the African continent. Soon thereafter, the sugar boom, based entirely on African slave labour, began on the tiny island of São Tomé. Fernão Gomes's men discovered that island in 1471, and it became a Portuguese colony in 1485, creating the vastly profitable template for plantation agriculture reliant on Black enslaved labour in Brazil—sourced through Luanda (Angola).

Portugal's newfound wealth from West Africa fuelled Spain's obsession with finding its own sources of gold and push new exploration efforts into the westward extremities of the Atlantic Ocean. The Canary Islands would serve as a critical springboard for the Columbus voyages and Spain's Church-sanctioned control over the Americas (with the second Papal Bull of 1493). This then becomes the first official topic of the Grade 10 implemented curriculum, referred to as the 'Early Spanish Conquest of the Americas'. The geographic position of these islands, astride the Canary Current, all but assured Spain's success in this incomparably more well-known 'breakthrough' of its own.

## Conclusion

This understanding and grounding in the early Portuguese role in colonisation and conquest in Africa, is an important grounding, since we scaffold the curriculum to the Grade 12 implemented curriculum in the classroom. The 1975 independence of both Angola (Gr 12, P1Q2) and Mozambique, its impact on the mobilisation of youth in South Africa (Gr 12, P2Q4) and the seismic influence on Southern Africa of the ending of the Cold War in the latter part of the 1980s (Gr 12, P2Q1, P2Q6, and P2Q5).

## Postscript

The teaching of this topic is followed by the sub-topics of Spanish colonial conquest of firstly the Caribbean (Columbus), and the decree of the 2nd Papal Bull in 1493 (*Intex Caetra*), followed by Central America (Cortéz) and then South America (Pizarro). At the conclusion thereof, and having assessed Grade 10 classes, the documentary entitled "*Vatican rejects 500 year old doctrine of discovery*" is shown, which appeared on TRTWorld, to develop an understanding in the classroom that the past is not the past, but the present.