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History Education greetings,

Welcome to the November 2025 Special Edition of *Yesterday & Today*. This issue commemorates the 10th anniversary of the #Fallist Movement—a Black student-worker-led movement in post-apartheid South African public universities. It also affords History Educationalists to reflect on their responses to the Movement's demands by examining the challenges and successes they have encountered. Equally, it also allows those History Educationalists to theorise about the discipline's future direction in light of the Fallists' call for the decolonisation of education.

Brief background of the 2015 - 2016 Fallist Moment

The 2015-2016 Fallist Moment was a pivotal wave of Black student-worker protests in South African public universities that began with the #RhodesMustFall movement at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in March 2015 (Chikane, 2024). Fuelled by the demand to decolonise, and by extension, to Africanise higher education in South Africa, this initial movement successfully targeted symbols of colonialism, most notably the statue of Cecil John Rhodes at UCT's upper campus. The said statue was defaced by Chumani Maxwele with human excrement on March 9, 2015, sparking the widespread #RhodesMustFall movement. This action led to protracted protests led by both Black students (on the main) and workers on campus, and ultimately the statue's removal from campus in April 2015.

Building directly on this energy, the #FeesMustFall movement erupted first at the University, Witwatersrand in Johannesburg, in mid-October 2015, in response to proposed tuition hikes (Luescher, Wilson Fadiji, Morwe, Erasmus, Letsoalo, & Mokhema, 2022). This movement rapidly escalated into the largest student-worker protests since the end of apartheid, forcing the government to capitulate to a 0% fee increase for 2016. There were also victories that resulted in the insourcing of workers at some universities. Together, these interconnected movements fused the ideological struggle for a decolonised education with the material battle for affordable and accessible universities. They insourced workers (generally service staff who were outsourced) to grant them similar benefits as other employees. This created a powerful Fallist identity that resonated across the country and beyond.

The Fallist Moment and History Education

Although the core focus of the Fallist movement unfolded in the higher education arena, scholars such as Maluleka (2021) have since argued that those demands also extended to basic education as a whole and encompassed, particularly, school history, even though the movement did not make this explicit.

Interestingly, the emergence of the #Fallist Movement coincided with the state-led initiative of the History Ministerial Task Team (HMTT) (DBE, 2015), whose 2018 report proposed an exciting move towards an African-centered school history curriculum (DBE, 2018). However, a critical tension arises from the fact that most history teachers and scholars were excluded from this official process (van Eeden and Warnich, 2018), highlighting persistent power imbalances in educational policy. This Special Edition investigates these very power dynamics a decade after #Fallism. It asks, "Where are we now?" by featuring papers that engage with decolonial perspectives both within and beyond South Africa. These contributions not only bring the decolonial debate into the history classroom, they also address a key tenet of the movement by examining how to remedy the marginalisation of groups like women and queer people in historical content (Wills, 2016; Maluleka and Godsell, 2024).

Arrangements of the contributions

The papers are arranged in such a way that they reflect a case study of South Africa, and towards the end, other similar cases outside South Africa are reflected upon. This is important as it helped to locate the #Fallist movement in South Africa. The editorial team agreed that the decolonial and Africanisation of the history curriculum should not stop in South Africa. Instead, it is a phenomenon that expands beyond the country's borders and embraces a pan-African approach, which is important. Interestingly, this issue exposes that there is a lack of representation from other sections of society (through decolonisation), but expands to offer solutions and suggest other histories that are excluded from the basic education history curriculum and the classroom.

In total, the Special Edition carries ten papers arranged as follows:

- In his article, Mojuta Steven Motlhamme engages with "Black Historians, Historiography, and History Education in the Era of #RhodesMustFall"
- In turn, Paul Maluleka and Mohau Soldaat write on "Weaving Together a Tapestry of Historical Knowledge in the Post-apartheid School History Curriculum: The Case of Palesa Beverley Ditsie".

- Ntombikayise Nkosi also wrote on "Forgotten Footsteps: Reclaiming the Legacy of South Africa's Unsung Heroines in History Education".
- Patrick Alpheous Nyathi and Nokuthula Diborah Nkosi argued in their paper for "The Significance of Environmental History in South Africa's School History Curriculum within a VUCA Context".
- In their contribution, Bongani Shabangu, Kabelo Noosi, and Ogodiseng Joseph Mokakale argue for "Centring African Vocabularies & Terminologies in Representing the Past: Insights from South African School History Textbooks".
- Yvonne Malambo Kabombwe, Sarah Godsell, and Alfred Masinire, in their article, engage with the "Conceptualisation of Decolonisation by Secondary School Teachers of History in the Lusaka District of Zambia".
- In their article, Hlengiwe Ncube and Valencia Tshinompheni Mabalane argued for "Decolonising Pedagogies for Values Inculcation in Secondary School History Teaching in Zimbabwe".
- Tawanda Bvirindi and Calisto Chafadza engaged with "Decolonising and Africanising Curriculum Knowledge: The Utility of the Music of Bob Marley, Fela Kuti and Tupac Shakur in Teaching Decoloniality in African Universities".
- In her article, Nancy Rushohora tackled "By the Way, Who is Cranford Pratt? Questioning Active and Symbolic Monumentalisation of the University of Dar es Salaam".
- The final contribution is by Jackson Sebola, Hellen Nkosi, and Keown Peter who engaged with "The Lingering Coloniality of Knowledge: Challenges to Decolonising South African Universities".

In closing

A big thank you to Professor Johan Wassermann (Editor-in-Chief), the Journal's Editorial Board, Dominique Wnuczek-Lobaczewski, Heather Thuynsma, Stéfan Meyer, Tasleemah Hazarvi, Janine Ellis, and the contributors for bringing this Special Edition to life!

May we continue to find creative ways to contribute to the decolonisation Africanisation of History Education together!

With decolonial love and happy reading,

Associate Professor Paul Maluleka, College of Education - University of South Africa
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Black Historians, Historiography, and History Education in the Era of #RhodesMustFall

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Abstract

Black historians have played a role in South African historiography and their role has been woefully neglected. This paper attempts to reappraise the work and effort of black scholars whose works have contributed to South African historiography in the context of history education in the high school curriculum. Much of their work has not filtered into the CAPS curriculum and the history education curriculum. Through the works of Black historians, we can gain a decolonial reading and understanding from the local context and understand that there is a historical scholarly tradition which goes back to the 1920s. This paper links Black historians' work to historiography, history education and the #RhodesMustFall movement. The #FeesMustFall movement and the generation involved called for a decolonised curriculum, and this paper, attempts to contribute to that discourse. Through looking at the works of scholars such as Molema, Fuze, Jabavu, Magubane, Mohlamme and Keto, the paper seeks to link these authors' work to the high school history curriculum. These Black writers and historians were chosen because many of them were pioneers in writing about South African history and society, and their work is important as part of South African history and historiography. The literature review focuses on works surrounding curriculum transformation, and a decolonised curriculum centred on the #RhodesMustFall movement. This paper uses a narrative review framework as part of its methodology and data analysis. The works of these scholars were chosen because they

are book-based, and because they were mostly printed for publication, which makes them accessible to some extent. This paper engages with the work and contributions of Black historians and makes several findings: (1) Representation matters in scholarship; (2) Part of decolonising history is changing the racialised discourse of historiography; (3) Black historians have made contributions to studies on colonialism, ethnicity, education, world wars and African-centred paradigms of history, and (4) The work of Black historians must be recentred in the high school history curriculum for the benefit of future generations.

Keywords: Historiography; Black Historians; History CAPS Curriculum; Decolonisation; Rhodes Must Fall; Africanisation

Introduction

Black historians have contributed to historiography in South Africa. The prevailing narrative and discourse often marginalised, erased and committed epistemic injustices against Black historians in the 1900s. The historiography of South African history has always emphasised a Eurocentric agenda and marginalises an African-centred approach (Keto, 1989). Despite attempts to marginalise them, African historians emerged in different time periods during the segregationist and apartheid eras, and contributed significantly to the historiography of South Africa. Tragically, their work does not appear in course curricula, citation lists or literature reviews. Historiography in South Africa often marginalised and excluded the work of Black historians from seminal works and edited volumes.

Much of the work on South African historiography has always been a bifurcation between English and Afrikaner historiography (Grundlingh, 1993). African historians were mostly footnoted, and their work was mostly not part of literature, or of historiographical reviews (Saunders, 2018). This claim bears testament to major historiographical works such as the Oxford History of South Africa, published in the 1970s, and the Cambridge History of South Africa, which was published in the 2010s (Ross et al., 2011; Wilson & Thompson, 1971). The Oxford History went against the liberal approach of the 1950s. The Cambridge History was a Marxist approach that promoted radical history in the 1980s and 1990s. These celebrated works often said that there was no black historian to include in these studies. However, Black scholars who could have contributed were present in the 1970s and 1980s (Saunders, 2018; Sparks, 2013; Visser, 2004). The excuse often seemed like an excuse for gatekeeping and racial exclusivity in South African historiography.

The major historians whose work has been written about and studied are part of these two traditions, which have often reproduced and replicated themselves in subsequent

generations (Dlamini et al., 2024). Black historians in South Africa were often not part of the institutional class of historiography. They were often exiled from history departments, or were overseas, and their works became marginalised and lost to current generations (Saunders, 1988; Smith, 1988). Institutionalisation is vital, because historians working in history departments tend to influence and hold power over historiography and the teaching of history for current and future generations. Often, one tends to find academic historians writing textbooks for the tertiary and basic education levels. Although history departments were established in the early 1900s at most South African universities, Black South Africans did not feature in the syllabi or as employment prospects, at historically white institutions, until 1994 (Grundlingh, 2006). The historically Black institutions did have Black historians on their staff, however, they were often marginalised and not given a conducive space to conduct historical research (More, 2018). The historically Black institutions were often teaching-intensive universities and had censorship measures in place. They were also often satellites of the Afrikaans-speaking institutions, which had a mandate to guard their academic development from anything that could challenge the apartheid government (Strydom, 2019). Some of these issues must be historicised, to show that the struggle for a decolonised curriculum are historical in their nature.

The #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall generation called for a decolonised education curriculum, and part of decolonisation is ensuring that Indigenous scholars and their work become part of the curriculum (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). This paper wrestles with the need for historical representation; since there is a colonial genealogy of knowledge, it calls for a decolonial genealogy of knowledge by excavating important and pioneering works by the Black scholars who were working from the margins and mostly without institutional backing and support. This decolonial genealogy of knowledge production is historical and rooted in African knowledge agency, which centres on Indigenous and scholarship.

Literature review

A proliferation of literature and historiography is starting to change the history landscape by looking at work done by Black South African scholars in the 1800s and 1900s. The work *Whose History Counts?* by June Bam et al. (2018) is an attempt to wrestle with historiography and bring to light an African-centred perspective on the production of history in the Eastern Cape region of South Africa. The work of the South African Democracy Education Trust brought to light liberation histories from African scholars, and took a deliberate stand of promoting and publishing the work of Black South African historians, and using a decolonisation method in South African history (Ndlovu, 2006).

The work of scholars such as Bongani Nyoka and Tendai Sithole on Mafeje and More, respectively, speaks to a new wave of scholarship that examines the scholarship of scholars and not merely treats them as biographical subjects (Nyoka, 2020; Sithole, 2022). Mafeje is perhaps more widely known for the Mafeje affair at the University of Cape Town (UCT) in 1968 than for his body of scholarship, and Nyoka sought to introduce his work thought to a new generation (Hendricks, 2008; Ntsebeza, 2014).[1] An edited volume by Simpson (2023) looks at the latest wave of historiography in the post-apartheid era and the different emerging specialities. The work of historians, such as Dlamini's (2009) *Native Nostalgia*, also contributes to the alternative historiographies that are much sought after in the era of #RhodesMustFall, as decolonisation and decoloniality must grapple with complex apartheid histories that are not just Black and white but see people acting out of their official racial identity.

The literature on #FeesMustFall often frames and privileges student struggles in universities over wider community struggles, such as those of workers, academics, and other community members. It rarely speaks to ideas, curricula, and the intellectual traditions that movements such as #RhodesMustFall are indebted to (Booysen, 2016; Nomvete & Mashayamombe, 2019; Xaba, 2017). As one traces the struggles of students and the #MustFall generation, it is essential to understand that these movements have a historical precedence in both the activist and intellectual forms. This paper traces the intellectual and historical activism that preceded the #MustFall generation and addresses a broader engagement with the historiography of Indigenous scholars. It argues that #MustFall intellectual activism cannot rely solely on overseas traditions, neglecting scholarly and intellectual traditions that, in their own right, possess rich discourses on decolonising and Africanising the curriculum (Mkhize, 2021).

Methodology

The methodology used in this paper is a qualitative framework. A narrative review is used to critically analyse written material. These are analysed by looking at their content matter regarding South African history and how it has been written. The paper uses a literature review format to compare multiple historiographical works. The argument is made about their other contributions to South African historiography and its subfields. The analysis also groups the different historiographies into the South African Further Education and

[1] The Mafeje Affair was a controversy at UCT in 1968, when the university was blocked by the apartheid government from hiring Archie Mafeje as a lecturer at UCT anthropology. It surfaced again in the 1990s when UCT failed again to offer Mafeje a Professorial post and later apologised after his death.

Training (FET) history curriculum using thematic and chronological frameworks, as history topics often go with chronology and thematic content. It uses their work to suggest how there can be a more inclusive curriculum at the basic education level. These works are mostly relevant to the South African history in the 1800s and the 1900s. The challenge with integrating these works into the curriculum is with their marginalisation and availability to historians and curriculum specialists.

Presentation of the data

The academic works of Black historians have an important role in debates surrounding decolonisation and Africanisation of the history curriculum, and the teaching of history in history education departments and secondary schools. This section details the work of historians by grouping them into different generations, starting in the 1920s and then proceeding into the 1940s and 1950s, and then into the 1960s and 1980s. These historians are privileged, as they have written books and, thereby, contributed to South African historiography. Although this paper highlights the work of different historians, it acknowledges the limitations of not going beyond the full scope of the humanities. It mostly focuses on work with a historical and historiographical edge to it, and a link to the history FET Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) document, which outlines how the high school history curriculum should be taught.

In the 1920s, an ambitious group of African pioneering historians.[2] These historians were largely self-taught and often, did not have professional history training. Their historiographies were usually based on their experiences, exposure and worldview from their cultural background and interaction with mission education. Magema Fuze and Silas Molema write about the black past, but often in their expansive works, one finds them at home when writing about their own ethnic communities, such as the AmaZulu and Barolong (Fuze, 2022 & Molema, 1920). In South Africa they hold an authority of experience compared to when they speak about other cultures, and so modulate the work with their own bias without doing further research within the other communities or ethnic groups. The authors' works are important as they reveal that history could be written by anyone and is not solely the preserve of professional and academic historians.

[2] I avoid using the term amateur historian, because in a setting like colonial and segregationist South Africa, the term is loaded with negative connotations and notions of erasure and marginalisation about whose work counts as historical work.

Historians of the 1920s wrote books about the Black experience in the past, and often recorded information that would not have been captured elsewhere for usage and interpretation in the modern day. Solomon Plaatjie's books on the South African War captured the historical experiences of Black people and their participation in the war (Plaatjie, 1999). Plaatjie's Boer War diary is an important part of the historiography of the South African War of 1899-1902 and puts to rest the idea that the war was a white man's war. This break-out allows one to write more widely about the South African war of 1899-1902. The diary also gives a voice to those whose experiences would have been neglected in telling the story of the war. In addition, Plaatjie wrote a book on the experiences of Black people during the promulgation of the Native Land Act of 1913. In his book, *Native Life in South Africa*, Plaatjie recounts the colonial story as it directly affected Black families and their material reality (Remmington et al., 2016). This book contributes to the historiography by allowing one to understand the deleterious effects of the notorious 1913 Land Act from the perspective of Black people.

Magema Fuze is another historian of the 1920s, who wrote about the Black past and Zulu history. His work "*Abantu abamnyama lapho bavela khona*" (The Black people and whence they came) was an essential contribution to the black experience in the 1920s (Fuze et al., 2022). Fuze interviewed Black people who had lived in the 1800s and had seen different eras of the Zulu Kingdom. Fuze's work is important in helping one to understand the Zulu kingdom during the precolonial and colonial eras (Mokoena, 2005b). The book provides rich source material on the historical events of *Shaka ka Senzangakhona, Dingane ka Senzangakhona, Mpande ka Senzangakhona, Cetshwayo ka Mpande, Dinizulu ka Cetshwayo*, and *Bambatha ka Mancinza*. Fuze wrote his work in Isizulu, a decolonial act of writing in the early 1900s, when the English language held sway and exercised supremacy over Indigenous languages (Mokoena, 2005a).

There are many debates and controversies surrounding the work of Magema Fuze. One controversy is that the book speaks more to AmaZulu history than Black history in general. The use of oral traditions shows the importance of Fuze's work and how oral traditions are key in unlocking alternative histories of the precolonial and colonial period. One can argue that through language, Fuze was able to access the cultural consciousness of the Nguni people of KwaZulu-Natal (Hamilton, 2019). Another key debate is the fact that Fuze was also reading the work of other historians such as AT Bryan, who wrote *Olden Times in Natal and Zululand*. The controversy is down to the fact that Fuze does not reference other scholars or engage with their work, which brings into question the merits of scholarliness

in the work of Fuze (Mokoena, 2011). Magema Fuze is one of the historians whose work deserves to be read, critiqued and used as part of the Africanisation and decolonisation of the curriculum at universities and basic education levels.

Dr Silas Modiri Molema was a historian in the 1920s who worked alongside Sol Plaatjie. Dr Molema was born in Mafikeng and trained to become a doctor in the 1920s in Scotland, at the University of Glasgow (Mayosi, 2015). Molema was part of an early generation of mission-educated African intelligentsia, who studied at overseas institutions and went on to lead organisations such as the South African Native National Congress, including Presidents Pixley Ka Isaka Seme, Dr A.B. Xuma and Dr James Moroka. Dr Molema wrote a book called *The Bantu Past and Present* (Molema, 1920). Molema's book on the black past was important, as it showed how different communities experienced the precolonial and colonial period. It is a book of its times and is influenced by the time's racial terminology and colonial influence (Morelli, 2024; Starfield, 2007). It is important to engage meaningfully with the historical value of the book and avoid an uncritical reproduction of the colonial language and frameworks. There is a need for such books to have a study guide that accompanies them, to sensitise and create awareness around the colonial consciousness that they carry as products of their historical times. Study guides must be written for these texts to make the reader aware of some of their unconscious biases and colonial ideologies.

Dr Molema also wrote books on two Batswana Dikgosi (Chiefs), Montshiwa and Moroka. These were some of the earliest attempts at writing biography by Black historians. His books on Moroka and Montshiwa show how the institution of chieftaincy faced difficulties in the precolonial and colonial periods. Montshiwa was a chief of the Barolong Boora Tshidi community in Mahikeng, and his rule extended into Botswana, where the territory was cut into different regions with the creation of the Bechuanaland Protectorate and British Bechuanaland in 1895 (Molema, 1966). Moroka was chief of the *Barolong boo Seleka* (Seleka Barolong people) from 1833-1884 (Molema, 1987). Chief Moroka oversaw the migration of the *Barolong Boo Seleka* from Mahikeng to Thaba Nchu in the Free State and worked with the Orange Free State government in the 1850s. These books by Molema are an invaluable part of South African historiography and show us that African historians were producing work in the 1900s.

Davison Jabavu was a professor of African studies at the University of Fort Hare in the 1940s. He wrote important books such as *The Life of Jon Tengo Jabavu*, his father, who was an eminent educationist and founding editor of one of the earliest Black newspapers, *Imvo*

Zabantsundu (Jabavu, 1922). The book becomes an important part of historical biography when looking at the lives of *Amakholwa*[3] elites, who lived in the 1800s and early 1900s. It became an important source document, as it was written in 1922. Jabavu was part of an educated generation of Africans who attended universities and occupied professorial positions at the University of Fort Hare (Higgs, 1997; Wotshela, 2017). In the 1940s and 1950s, there was a group of historians who emerged at the University of Fort Hare. Zack Keodirelang Matthews is one of the representatives of this group. Matthews was a professor of African studies at Fort Hare. He collected oral and archival histories of the Barolong (Matthews & Wilson, 1981) and wrote on African history. Matthews was also politically active in the African National Congress and was part of the group that wrote the Freedom Charter. Matthews and Jabavu were part of the first cohort of institutionalised African scholars and professors who published on different subject matters.

Professor Bernard Makhosezwe Magubane was part of South African historiography and scholarship who went into exile due to the hostile conditions of apartheid and Bantu Education in the 1950s. In 1959, the Extension of Open Universities Act was passed, which saw Black people restricted from entering universities, and the creation of ethnic universities to enforce racial segregation. These hostile acts saw the liberal English universities: University of Cape Town, University of the Witwatersrand, University of Natal, and Rhodes University closing their doors to black students, who could only be admitted with permission from the Minister of Education (Magubane, 2010; Murray, 2022). The deterioration of schooling for Africans meant that many promising Black academics were forced to go into exile to further their studies and assume faculty roles in African, American and British universities.

Professor Bernard Magubane was a historian who wrote a seminal text on British Imperialism and the Union of South Africa. By training, Magubane was a sociologist, however, he understood the importance of history and historiography in his work. Magubane was highly respected in African studies scholarship for his critically acclaimed article "*A critical look at indices used in the study of social change in colonial Africa*" (Magubane, 1971). Magubane looked at how African societies were often studied in a colonial manner as unchanging and static societies that did not have agency or complexity in their social interactions. The work of Magubane drew debates on a global scale about how African communities were studied.

[3] Amakholwa were Christian converts and believers who became a community all over the country and exercised political influence and started organisations in African communities.

The making of a racist state: British Imperialism in the Union of South Africa by Magubane is a key historiographical text. This text by Magubane critiqued British colonialism in South Africa (Magubane, 1996). It also emphasised the centrality of race and class in creating the Union of South Africa. Magubane was concerned with the silenced voices of Black South Africans in South African historiography. Magubane wrote about the dispossession of Black people and the role of South African historiography in the colonial and apartheid era. For Magubane, it is important to understand how British ideologies helped to create and shape the racist Union of South Africa. Magubane shows that segregation and apartheid was as much a creation of British Imperialism as the role Afrikaner nationalism played.

In Chapter 4 of the book *British Imperialism*, Magubane deals with Rhodes as a symbol of empire. In this book dealing with British Imperialism, Magubane critiques Cecil Rhodes as a historical actor and a major symbol of British Imperialism in colonial South Africa. From 1870-1910, the name Cecil John Rhodes was synonymous with British colonisation in Southern Africa. Magubane stated the following about Rhodes:

> *Anyone who visits Cape Town cannot avoid hearing his name and seeing the relics of his connection with the area. The Rhodes Monument in front of the University of Cape Town is an extravaganza of egoism and vanity, celebrating his imperial ambitions and created in accord with the terms of his last will. It is so situated as to command an imperial view of Africa from Cape Town to Cairo. A plaque informs the visitor that Rhodes' soul is Africa's soul. The monument of Rhodes riding a horse is larger than life size, flanked by two lions, and induces a feeling that one is standing before a man who thought his imperial work would last a thousand years. An imperious gesture of a god-like figure urges young white men into Africa's hinterland. The memorial is symptomatic of the cult of empire which, in Rhodes's age, had taken its hold over the British people and imposed its vice-like grip over large parts of South and central Africa.* (Magubane, 1996: 99).

Magubane writes this critique of Cecil John Rhodes in the expansion of the British Empire in Southern and Central Africa, and how he merged racial capitalism in his imperialist designs. This critique of Rhodes happened decades before the #RhodesMustFall movement and shows how the fight against the Rhodes statue was an intergenerational struggle mired in the consciousness against cultural imperialism. Magubane speaks about the silence of South African historiography when it comes to Rhodes, who had lofty imperial ambitions, reduced the political rights of Africans and wanted to see South Africa as a dominion in the British Empire (Magubane, 1996). Magubane's work challenges South African historiography to see imperialism as a historical process that had actors such

as Rhodes, Kipling, Froude and Trollope, men who played an important role in different spheres of empire building in settler colonial South Africa.

Professor Clement Tshehloane Keto is a South African-born historian who was based in the United States from the 1970s until the 1990s. Keto was part of the legendary Afrocentric circle at Temple University and a professor of African and African American studies. Afrocentricity is a theory of social change led by Molefi Kete Asante, who felt that African people worldwide had to study and analyse their situation from an African-centred perspective (Asante, 2007). Keto is known for his work on the African-centred perspective of history (Keto, 2001). Keto's African-centred perspective is very inclusive and is not a racialised decolonisation. Keto insists that an African-centred perspective of history does not seek to marginalise other cultures and racial groupings (Keto, 2001). Keto's work is important, as it allows one to have conceptual and theoretical frameworks that can be used to decolonise and indigenise South African history.

Professor Mohlamme is another historian whose work has been marginalised in South African historiography. Mohlamme is noted for his contribution to the discourse on the South African War of 1899-1902 and helping to expand the war from just being a debate between the British and the Boers (Mohlamme, 1985; Mohlamme, 1995). In his doctoral thesis, Mohlamme looks at the South African War from a Black perspective. The South African War historiography is quite extensive, and often the voices and contributions of Black scholars were marginalised. Mohlamme looks at the role of African communities such as the *Bakgatla ba Kgafela* (Bakgatla people of Kgafela), the *Bapedi ba Maroteng* (Pedi people) of Sekhukhune, and the *Barolong Boora Tshidi* (Barolong people of Ratshidi) of Mahikeng. These communities took up arms against the local *Boers* (Afrikaners), and inflicted heavy losses on their rivals. The South African War was not simply a white man's war, and Mohlamme's pioneering scholarship simply proves that. Mohlamme has also produced other notable works that contribute to South African historiography. The forced removals of the Bakubung people of Ledig is a contribution to land and agrarian studies focusing on forced removals (Mohlamme, 1989). Mohlamme looks at the struggles faced by the Bakubung community at Ledig near the Sun City resort in Rustenburg, who were moved from Molotestad in the Ventersdorp district, which was a fertile agricultural landscape.

These historians have played a part in South African history in one way or another. There are tendencies and perceptions in South African historiography at various moments in time to exclude different generations of Black scholars. The fact that the work of Black

scholars is not part of curricula means that generations of students go through humanities and social science curricula without learning from a diverse set of historians and writers.

Discussion and analysis

2025 marks ten years of the #FeesMustFall movement. The movement had its roots and genesis in the actions of students at UCT led by Chumani Manxwele, who threw faeces at the statue of Cecil John Rhodes in 2015 (Dlakavu et al., 2017; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Nyamnjoh, 2022). This catapulted into a global movement and saw a movement challenging coloniality in different parts of the world (Chigudu, 2020; Kwoba et al., 2018). One of the central demands of the #RhodesMustFall movement was a decolonised curriculum. The idea behind a decolonised curriculum was to ensure that the education curriculum reflects the demographic reality of the country, and ensure that apartheid educational legacies do not thrive and find a conducive environment.

The South African secondary school history curriculum (Grade 10-12) is a curriculum that has many topics that are mainly Eurocentric (Godsell, 2021). The call to decolonise and Africanise the curriculum is not only a task for universities, but it must also filter down to basic education. This is not to say that the curriculum does not offer African history or South African history, however, the way the curriculum is presented in textbooks, and the ways in which certain narratives are privileged over others, highlight the need to further decolonise and Africanise the curriculum (Maluleka, 2021). Topics such as the World in the 1600s in the Grade 10 curriculum must be geared towards showing how Africans interrelate with those communities, and not just learning about the communities without rooting the historiography in an African context and interaction. The FET Grade 10 history curriculum in CAPS sets the 1600s as the time frame and implies that the point of contact between Africans and Europeans was where history began and was not just a phase of African history (Department of Basic Education, 2011).

The recent calls for making history a compulsory subject is an important discourse that is part of curriculum reform and changing curriculum contents to give an African-centred perspective. The work of the History Ministerial Task Team is important insofar that it speaks to the decolonisation and Africanisation of the history curriculum in the CAPS curriculum (Department of Basic Education, 2018). The emphasis on oral history, African Indigenous Knowledge Systems, archaeology, and liberation routes means that history will valorise African knowledges and foster relations between South Africans and other African communities (Maluleka & Ledwaba, 2023). Another important point to emphasise is that

the curriculum will engage global history from an African-centred perspective, highlighting Africans' contributions to global events and histories.

The work of Magema Fuze links to the South African history school curriculum. The author's work on the AmaZulu Kingdom relates to the Grade 10 curriculum (Fuze et al., 2022). The sections dealings with different parts of the AmaZulu Kingdom are found in transformations in Africa after 1750. The work of Magema Fuze helps infuse African oral traditions and Indigenous Knowledge about the AmaZulu Kingdom, which will enrich the curriculum and historiography offered at the basic education level (Fuze et al., 2022). The work will also enrich debates about the rise and fall of the AmaZulu Kingdom and help one move away from a Shaka-centric narrative of the AmaZulu Kingdom, which has a rich and diverse history from the 1700s to the 1900s.

The works of Dr Silas Molema link to the South African Grade 10 history curriculum, with his work on Montshiwa and Moroka. The Grade 10 history curriculum topic *"Political changes from 1750 to 1820"* focuses on the Southern Batswana chiefdoms such as Barolong, Batlhaping and Batlharo in the Mafikeng, Vryburg, Taung and Kuruman regions (Department of Basic Education, 2011: 16).[4] Molema's books speak to those kingdoms' expansion and how they occupied their current areas (Molema, 1920). The work of Molema is relevant to the decolonisation agenda, as it allows one to have critical sources of the precolonial period. The books by Molema must be used when designing curriculum on Southern Batswana chiefdoms, as Molema writes about two important *Dikgosi* (chiefs)—Moroka of Thaba 'Nchu 1820-1884 and Montshiwa 1830-1896—who led different Barolong communities through the intra Batswana wars in the early 1800s, the *Difaqane* (forced dispersal) wars in the 1820s, the age of colonial invasion and the destruction of African kingdoms and chiefdoms from the 1860s onwards (Molema, 1966; Molema, 1987).

The work of Davidson Jabavu is important as part of understanding the processes of colonialism in Southern Africa. The biography that Davidson Jabavu wrote about the life of John Tengo Jabavu, fits into different history curricula such as colonial expansion after 1750, the South African War, and the Union of South Africa in 1910. Many of these topics fit the life of John Tengo Jabavu and how Africans who became part of the Amakholwa elite came to resist colonialism and used education to uplift black communities (Jabavu, 1922). Some of the earliest leaders of the South African Native National Congress are part of this

[4] The term Batswana means people who are associated with the identity of being a Motswana by ethnicity and cultural lineage. Although the term Batswana today is mainly used for citizenship in Botswana it has a broader meaning in terms of cultural identity across different Batswana communities in Southern Africa who might not use it to denote citizenship but rather ethnicity.

Amakholwa (Believers) community, who straddled the line between African and European culture (Mokoena, 2005a).

The work of Magubane is important in helping one understand how colonialism and apartheid functioned in South Africa. Magubane's (1996) work is an important part of the historiography, as it helps one analyse British colonialism's impact on the Union of South Africa. In the South African Grade 10 curriculum, there is specific focus on the South African War and the Union of South Africa (Magubane, 1996). Magubane's critical treatment of the role of the British empire is important, as it influenced and shaped the Union of South Africa after the South African War of 1899-1902. Magubane's work is also important when delving into the Grade 11 history curriculum, focusing on nationalism in South Africa and the origins of apartheid. Magubane gives critical treatment to the role of British cultural imperialism, and his work can be part of the debates about the origins of apartheid, British Imperialism, and segregation.

The work of Clement Keto is an important part of a historiography pertaining to an African-centred perspective. The work of Keto is mainly theoretical and can be of use with the debates about the methodologies of teaching history in an African-centred perspective. For Keto, The Africa-centred perspective of history rests on the premise that it is valid to posit Africa as a geographical and cultural starting base in the study of peoples of African descent (Keto, 2001). The centring of African people is important in history and using an Afrocentric approach will enrich the high school history curriculum and allow it to move away from a Eurocentric gaze to an Afrocentric gaze, which allows one to ask different questions, and using African source material as part of the curriculum (Keto, 2001).

The work of Mohlamme is important in helping one to decolonise the curriculum. The author's work relates to the Grade 10 curriculum on the South African War and the Union. The work of Mohlamme speaks to the experiences of Black South Africans in the South African War and the idea of writing of a wider war beyond the terms 'Anglo-Boer War' (Mohlamme, 1985). Using a diverse historiography allows one to grapple in detail with the participation of communities such as Barolong Boora Tshidi and Bakgatla ba Kgafela in the South African war, and Bahurutshe ba ga Moiloa who worked with the Boers. Mohlamme also touches on the role of Africans in the two World Wars (Mohlamme, 1995). Often when these topics are taught, the role of African soldiers is missing from the curriculum; the works of scholars such as Mohlamme cover these topics and bring the role of African soldiers in South Africa to the fore.

The recommendations for this paper are practical in nature and offer some solutions to the challenges of changing the historiography and history curriculum. The first step is to reprint books that are out of print and ensure that they are available for purchase. This could be a collaborative effort between government, libraries, university book publishers (press) and book companies, who can start a series of reprinting these historical books. Another recommendation is that these books must be part of the curriculum where in-service teacher training happens at the universities. Here, the operational logic is that trainee teachers will be familiar with the different texts and can translate them for a primary and high school audience. Another way these books can become more accessible to learners in schools is by creating study guides for the books under discussion, so that they can be contextualised and simplified for a younger audience. There is also a need to create a seminar series around these books to revive academic interest and publish review articles on them, so that a new generation of scholars can critically engage with the books. It would also be helpful for the Compulsory History Ministerial Task Team to familiarise themselves with such texts and integrate them into the new history curriculum that is an ongoing project.

Conclusion

This paper has looked at the contributions of Black scholars to South African history and historiography in the twentieth century. It also analyses how their works fit into the high school history curriculum. There is often a separation between high school history and university mainstream history. This is made worse by the fact that many universities in South Africa are moving away from a model of history students being part of the mainstream history subject in the humanities for three years, to having their own tailor-made programmes that often tend to align with the CAPS curriculum, and often miss out the historiography offered in the mainstream history course in favour of a balance between methodology and content.

This paper reappraises the work of African historians in South Africa whose voices have been silenced and whose work has not entered mainstream historiographical and history education debates. This work aligns with the #FeesMustFall movement by contributing to decolonisation and Africanisation through these works, which were often an engagement with oral histories, oral traditions, Indigenous Knowledge Systems and African ways of knowing. This paper strives to enlarge the debate surrounding decolonisation of the curriculum by saying that for one to move forward, we must first introspect and look

backward into our past and see if there are lessons that can be learned. Thus, as much as decolonial work has its origins in South America, decolonial theorists and practitioners must shift the geography of reason and engage with African modes of thought and historiography, to widen the scope and grapple with coloniality in the South African and African context. The big question is how history education is decolonised, and the answer cannot be a simple one-liner, but a gradual process of ensuring that all voices whose work seeks to bring to the fore marginalised voices.

The history curriculum is not static, but must be diverse and reflect the African personality and African-centred perspective of its majority and minority citizenry. It must also ensure that regional and provincial histories find their way into the curriculum, and that learners have some historical understanding of their province and local history. This paper has scrutinised the works of different Black South African historians and their contribution to historiography. It has also examined how their work can be included and cascaded into the high school history curriculum, where there is a relevance and need for diversity in some topics. It is long overdue that South African historiography deals with the culture of racial marginalisation and exclusion, moves away from a privileging of canonical texts and canon formation and engages a wider and more diverse historiography. The paper engages with historiography and calls for history education to excavate from historiographical sources to enrich the debate on decolonisation of the history curriculum, since this is an ongoing debate.

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Weaving Together a Tapestry of Historical Knowledge in the Post-apartheid School History Curriculum: The Case of Palesa Beverley Ditsie

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Abstract

In this article, we investigate the exclusion of Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex and Asexual (LGBTQIA+) experiences, contributions and narratives in the post-apartheid South African school history curriculum. We position the historical contributions of Palesa Beverley Ditsie, a pivotal human rights activist, freedom fighter and filmmaker who fought against apartheid and during the HIV/Aids crisis, as a critical case study of this erasure. The article is situated against the backdrop of the 2015-2016 student protests, notably the #MustFall movements, which catalysed a national reckoning with the pervasive coloniality of South African higher (and basic) education and demanded, amongst others, the radical decolonisation of curricula and the explicit inclusion of LGBTQIA+ experiences, contributions and narratives. However, despite

students' calls for epistemic and ontological justice, the contributions of Ditsie and her contemporaries, such as Tseko Simon Nkoli, remain peripherised. Employing decolonial queer theory and the metaphor of knowledge as a tapestry of the theoretical orientations, and using critical discourse analysis as the methodology, we make a direct appeal to the History Ministerial Task Team (HMTT) (Department of Basic Education [DBE], 2015, 2018), by arguing that the project of Africanising (and by extension: decolonising) the school history curriculum must be expanded to urgently include, rehistoricise and recentre Ditsie's experiences, as well as her contributions to the fight against apartheid and her contributions to the country's constitutional democracy. Such an inclusion, we argue, is fundamental to weaving a more complete tapestry of historical knowledge, enabling history educators and their learners to challenge the heteronormativity of traditional history writing and fostering a truly intersectional understanding of the struggle for liberation and human rights in South Africa.

Keywords: History Ministerial Task Team; Palesa Beverley Ditsie; School history; Queer histories

Introduction

As post-apartheid South Africa marks over three decades since the decriminalisation of same-sex relations—a landmark achievement in the nation's commitment to protect diverse sexual and gender identities (Matebeni, 2017). It also marks over 30 years of sustained effort to decolonise, Africanise and transform its school history curricula (Maluleka, 2021). This fight was thrust powerfully back into the national conscience during the 2015-2016 student protests. As the clarion call of #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall echoed across university campuses, students demanded more than just financial access; they demanded a fundamental reimagining of knowledge itself. They challenged the nation to ask: Whose histories are most valued and whose are not? And crucially, it was insisted that a decolonised education must explicitly include and rehistoricise Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, Queer/Questioning, Intersex, and Asexual (LGBTQIA+) experiences, contributions and narratives.

However, despite these parallel journeys of legal and curricular reform, a significant dissonance remains. The experiences and pivotal contributions of the LGBTIQA+ community to the anti-apartheid struggle, the establishment of the country's constitutional democracy and ongoing fights against intersectional oppressions continue to be marginalised and systematically excluded from the knowledge base of post-apartheid

school history curriculum.

In direct response to this epistemic and ontological erasure, this article calls on the History Ministerial Task Team (HMTT) (DBE, 2015), in its ongoing work, to expand the scope of the gender history framework proposed in its 2018 report (DBE, 2018). The intentional inclusion, rehistoricisation and recentring of LGBTIQA+ experiences and contributions are specifically advocated for within the new proposed school history curriculum. This is done by highlighting the life and work of Palesa Beverley Ditsie as a critical case study exemplifying the contributions made by the LGBTIQA+ community that have been overlooked.

To ground this argument, we first outline our theoretical foundations that include decolonial queer theory and the concept of knowledge as a tapestry. Thereafter, our application of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) is detailed as the primary methodological tool that we used to investigate the exclusion of LGBTIQA+ experiences, contributions and narratives in the post-apartheid school history curricula in South Africa. Thirdly, a subsequent literature review was conducted that traces the evolution of post-apartheid school history curriculum development, with latest effort being the HMTT and its 2018 report.

In the fourth section of the article, we actively counter historical silences that exist in South African post-apartheid school history curricula by tracing Ditsie's seminal contributions, including her activism against the apartheid regime, her leadership in LGBTIQA+ liberation movements and her vital work in HIV/Aids awareness advocacy. As a way of concluding, an appeal is made to the HMTT to weave together diverse historical experiences, contributions and narratives to foster a rich tapestry of historical knowledge—one that acknowledges the complex, intersectional nature of South Africa's past and provides a more truthful foundation for its future.

Theoretical orientations: A decolonial queer theory and knowledge as a tapestry

This article is anchored by two interconnected theoretical frameworks. The first is a decolonial queer theory. To understand this fusion, it is essential to trace the journey of the term 'queer' itself. Originating in the Global North as a derogatory label for those deemed 'abnormal' and 'nonhuman', it was strategically reclaimed by scholars from the 1980s onward (Butler, 1990; Sedgwick, 1990). These scholars transformed 'queer' into a theoretical tool designed to rupture rigid norms of kinship, gender and sexuality (Butler,

1994). At its core, queer theory challenges universal, Eurocentric and heteronormative explanations of the world. It meticulously deconstructs the binary conceptions of sex (as biological) and gender (as socially constructed), arguing instead that gendered subjectivity is performative—a fluid, context-dependent identity continually sustained through repetitive social practices (Butler, 1990; McCormic, 2013).

However, this Northern-born theory has not been universally embraced. Scholars from the Global South, and Africa in particular, have rightly critiqued its foundations in postmodern and poststructuralist thought, which can fail to fully articulate the lived realities and ways of knowing of the colonised Other (Ombagi, 2019, 2021). Some have argued that this specific formulation of queer theory should be acknowledged, but not promoted as a primary research strategy in Africa, as it can undermine local attempts to understand queer experiences on their own terms to reclaim humanity and identity (Macharia, 2015, 2016; Woubshet, 2003).

In response to these limitations, a dynamic scholarly movement has emerged. Rather than rejecting queer theory outright, these theorists advocate for stretching and strengthening it, treating it as a 'traveling theory' (Said, 2014), that must adapt, take on new hues, and be recontextualised within the specific realities of the Global South. This requires a critical awareness of its limitations, particularly in the face of pervasive coloniality and African neocolonialism (Abbas & Ekine, 2013; Otu & Van Klinken, 2023).

It is within these complex voyages of theory that queer theory productively encountered decolonial thought, which critiques the enduring structures of coloniality in power, knowledge and being (Quijano, 2000; Walsh, 2023). From this nuanced encounter, decolonial queer theory was born. This hybrid framework alerts one to the geopolitics of knowledge, where the Global South is often seen as a supplier of raw experiences, while the Global North exports theories to be applied (Pereira, 2019).

This study adopts this decolonial queer theory because it is concerned with the rich diversity, complexity and historical development of gendered and sexualised subjectivities in the global South (Otu & Van Klinken, 2023). The term 'queer' is used from a decolonial perspective as an anti-essentialist umbrella term that embraces plurality and seeks to transform oppressive systems, rather than assimilate into them (Abbas & Ekine, 2013; Ubisi, 2021). Specifically, this framework provides the epistemic and ontological tools to question why the post-apartheid school history curriculum continues to exclude, in its knowledge base, the contributions, experiences and narratives of LGBTIQA+ freedom

fighters with a specific focus on Ditsie. We also used this framework to guide our analysis of post-apartheid curricular literature to demonstrate this exclusion, as well as highlight opportunities to reimagine a school history curriculum that includes, rehistoricises and recentres LGBTIQA+ contributions, experiences and narratives.

This act of reimagining was and is aided by a second theoretical framing: knowledge as a tapestry. This metaphor is informed by a decolonial approach that actively searches for epistemic and ontological diversity, pluriversality and the recognition of situated knowers (Mbembe, 2001; Santos, 2014). It insists on dismantling the hegemony of Eurocentric knowledge canons (Fataar, 2022) and instead, views knowledge as a universal project woven together from intricate, diverse systems. Like a tapestry, the goal is to interlace these distinct knowledge threads to create an inclusive future knowledge space for curriculum-knowledge building (Fataar, 2022).

This framework directly justifies the central argument of this study: the need to weave the contributions, experiences and narrative of LGBTIQA+ figures like Ditsie into the fabric of the post-apartheid South African school history curriculum, thereby, creating a richer, more truthful and complete tapestry of the national past.

Research methodology

A CDA was used to interrogate the representation, or lack thereof, of LGBTIQA+ individuals within post-apartheid South African school history curriculum. We engaged in a close reading of both the official curriculum policy documents and the surrounding scholarly debates, utilising a purposive sampling strategy to gather the most relevant data. Moving beyond a simple search for keywords, the application of CDA specifically involved reading for absence—analysing the telling silences, gaps and omissions to understand how exclusionary histories are systematically maintained and transmitted within and through the school history curriculum. This approach was chosen for its fundamental concern with how language manifests relationships of power, dominance and ideology (Martin & Wodak, 2003), which aligns directly with the study's decolonial queer theoretical framework. Guided by Fairclough's (1989) model, the analysis of this study moved dialectically through text description, interpretation of production and reception and social explanation, allowing us to expose the structural mechanisms that govern whose histories are included in, or excluded from the knowledge base of the post-apartheid school history curriculum.

Post-apartheid school history curricula

Since the dawn of democracy in South Africa, a persistent effort has been underway to decolonise and Africanise the school history curriculum to liberate it from its colonial-apartheid past (Maluleka, 2018). This protracted struggle has resulted in the adoption of four distinct curricula, each representing a step in this ongoing process, with the latest being proposed by the HMTT in 2018 (DBE, 2018).

The first attempt, the Interim Core Syllabus (ICS), emerged during a period of national transition as the country sought to build a more equitable education system (Bertram, 2006; Jansen, 2001). Despite its aspirational context, the ICS failed to include, rehistoricise or recentre the contributions and experiences of the LGBTIQA+ community in the struggle against apartheid and the fight for basic human rights for all South Africans.

The ICS was soon succeeded by Curriculum 2005 (C2005) in 1997 (DBE, 1997), an outcomes-based model framed as a radical break from the colonial-apartheid past (Mthethwa & Maluleka, 2025). Promoted as an 'inclusive' curriculum that would dismantle Eurocentric knowledge and forge a new national identity based on constitutional principles (Siebörger, 2000; Van Eeden & Vermeulen, 2005), C2005 nonetheless, repeated the exclusion of LGBTIQA+ histories. This failure can be partly attributed to the fact that the development of C2005 was largely the responsibility of officials still aligned with apartheid-era epistemologies (Maluleka, 2021). Additionally, the exclusion can also be explained by the political compromises of the time over the genuine pedagogical or epistemic imperatives (Jansen, 1998).

In 2002, the Revised National Curriculum Statement (RNCS) replaced C2005 following reviews that acknowledged its predecessor's limitations (DBE, 2002). The RNCS was explicitly marketed on the principles of social transformation, human rights and inclusivity, envisioning a learner imbued with democratic values (Bertram, 2020). However, despite these bold claims, the RNCS continued to be peripheralist and exclude LGBTIQA+ contributions and experiences in its knowledge base, including that of Ditsie (Maluleka & Godsell, 2024). This omission can be attributed to two primary factors: first, the deeply embedded epistemic coloniality that continued to dominate the RNCS knowledge structures, even amidst superficial changes in representation (Mthethwa & Maluleka, 2025). Second, the authors of the RNCS themselves, exercised a narrow historical lens, overlooking critically important subjects like Ditsie and the entire South African LGBTIQA+ community in the liberation struggle.

The subsequent introduction of CAPS in 2011 (DBE, 2009), was seen by some as a return to disciplinary familiarity. For others, it symbolised the enduring power of coloniality, because CAPS perpetuated the same epistemicide and marginalisation of its predecessors, privileging masculinist interpretations of the past and continuing to ignore LGBTIQA+ contributions (Maluleka, 2021; Wills, 2016). The persistent peripheralisation of the LGBTIQA+ community's contributions to the liberation struggle can be understood as a function of the new official master narrative that emerged in post-apartheid South Africa. As Wassermann (2017) suggests, this narrative, constructed around an imagined nationalism, downplayed the horrors of apartheid and created a sanitised history centered on a messianic Nelson Mandela and the ANC's triumphant transition to power in 1994. This process effectively erased complicating narratives. Wassermann's analysis signals the potent force of a rooted epistemic coloniality that, as Maluleka (2021: 80) argues, is "hellbent on preserving the status quo", actively engaging in epistemicide and rendering contributions and experiences like those of the LGBTIQA+ community historically insignificant within the national memory.

The appointment of the HMTT in **2**015 did not occur in an intellectual vacuum; it was directly propelled by the national fervour of the #MustFall student movements that emerged in 2015. These movements forcefully demanded the decolonisation of knowledge, curricula and institutions of learning. It was within this specific context of heightened demand for change and against the enduring backdrop of curricular exclusion, that the HMTT was formed.

The team's 2018 report emerged as a direct response to this pressure, representing a significant decolonial imperative. It rightly advocated for an Africa-centered approach and specifically recommended the rehistoricising and recentring of gender history, aligning with the student protests' call to dismantle patriarchal and Eurocentric narratives. However, while the inclusion of women's experiences is a necessary step toward intersectionality, the HMTT's recommendation remains worryingly trapped within a heteronormative framework. Consciously or unconsciously, it replicates the very exclusionary logic the student protests sought to overthrow**,** continuing the tradition of peripheralising LGBTIQA+ contributions and experiences, and lacking a truly inclusive gender-and-other gaze (Wills, 2016).

This critical omission betrays the expansive spirit of the 2015-2016 #MustFall movements and has profound consequences. This is because it perpetuates an existential crisis for LGBTIQA+ community, especially LGBTIQA+ history educators and learners,

by reinforcing their ontological and epistemic othering—a direct contradiction of the protests' demand for epistemic and ontological justice. Furthermore, it denies all history educators and learners, irrespective of their sexual orientations, the opportunity to learn about the foundational role of queer freedom fighters like Ditsie in contributing to building South Africa's constitutional democracy, thus presenting a fractured and incomplete history of the very liberation struggles the students in public universities in 2015-2016 were invoking.

Ultimately, by maintaining this absence, the proposed school history curriculum by the HMTT is denied its potential as a powerful site for combating the homophobia, transphobia and intersectional oppressions that plague South African schools and society—issues the student protests of 2015-2016 also highlighted. Including these narratives is, therefore, not merely an act of additive inclusion; it is an essential pedagogical strategy to actualise the decolonial goals of the protests. It is also a means to dispel ignorance, foster critical empathy, break down stereotypes and create safer, more understanding school communities. A curriculum that weaves in LGBTIQA+ history moves beyond mere tolerance to actively contribute to building a more just, inclusive and truthful national consciousness that was a central dream of the 2015-2016 uprising.

Palesa Beverley Ditsie

Ditsie is a human rights (LGBTIQA+) activist, musician, writer and filmmaker (Gay and Lesbian Memory in Action [GALA], 2020), who was born in 1971 in Orlando West, Soweto and was raised by her grandparents because her mother, a singer at the time, was usually touring Southern Africa. Ditsie recalls how, from a very young age, she knew that she was 'different' because at school her peers started dating each other, boys and girls, and she could not find someone who she could relate to at that level (GALA, 2020). This contributed to her melancholic and ambivalent condition at the time, which was then exacerbated by her family denying that she was 'gay' when she 'came out' to them (GALA, 2020). Because of these feelings of ambivalence, personal disconnection, liminality, invisibility and pariahdom, Ditsie tried to commit death by suicide (GALA, 2020).

In her journey to find herself and transcend those feelings of loneliness and alienation, Ditsie met Tseko Simon Nkoli in 1988 for the first time at a meeting in Johannesburg that led to the formation of the Gay and Lesbian Organisation of the Witwatersrand (GLOW) (Botes, 2023). Ditsie's involvement in GLOW, as a co-founder, ignited not only her activist self, but also her political persona, which was then nurtured by those around her, especially

Tseko, her lifelong confidant and best friend. GLOW was also a space in which Ditsie was able find her true self because, like Nkoli, Ditsie was also 'prepared to be herself at all costs'. Hence, at just eighteen years old, Ditsie publicly 'came out' and becoming one of the first Black lesbian to do so during apartheid. This was an act that had extraordinary personal consequences, as the publicising of her sexual orientation meant that she and her family lived in constant fear and in hiding for weeks just to avoid being sexually violated, and at worst, being killed or jailed (GALA, 2020).

It was, however, through her participation in GLOW that Ditsie was able to advance an intersectional struggle against apartheid and for human rights, especially those of Black lesbian women, Black women and Black queers in general. It was also through GLOW that Ditsie raised awareness around HIV/Aids (Mchunu, 2023) and fighting for free Antiretroviral treatment, as it was not freely available at time (Pakade, 2024; Reid, 2005).

On 13 October 1990, GLOW managed to host the first Johannesburg Pride, which acted as both a queer pride event and an anti-apartheid march. Ditsie, Tseko, Justice Edwin Cameron and many other LGBTIQA+ activists led this march which had over 800 participants (Martin, 2020). The march was met with much criticism, especially from religious groupings and onlookers who were present and described the march as 'disgusting' (South African History Online [SAHO], 2017b). Despite this, the march was a resounding success which paved the way for other similar marches across the country and elsewhere in the world (SAHO, 2017b).

A decade later, GLOW held its tenth Johannesburg march which attracted over 20 000 attendees, with Ditsie once again leading in the front, however, this time without her confidant and best friend, Tseko—who sadly transitioned to the ancestral world after suffering from Aids-related complications on 30 November 1998 at the age of 41. Ditsie and other LGBTIQA+ activists convinced the City of Johannesburg to rename a street corner in Hillbrow after Tseko, to honour and commemorate his memory and legacy. Thereafter, GLOW continued with its activist work with other LGBTIQA+ individuals and movements such as the Lesbians and Gays Against Oppression (LAGO) in the Western Cape; the Rand Gay Organisation, a multiracial lesbian and gay organisation based in Johannesburg formed by Alfred Machela; as well as the Organisation of Lesbian and Gay Activists (OLGA). Their efforts combined contributed to ensuring that the LGBTIQA+ community in South Africa was legally protected against any form of discrimination, oppression and segregation. In other words, GLOW and other organisations, with Ditsie, Tseko, Gcina Malindi, Edwin and Alfred as some of the leading figures, ensured that the

first democratic constitution (1996) included 'sexual rights orientation' in its Bill of Rights. The adoption of the democratic constitution also led to the 1998 Constitutional Court of South Africa judgement, *National Coalition for Gay and Lesbian Equality v. Minister of Justice* (1998) (Constitutional Court of South Africa, 1998), which declared all sodomy laws repugnant to the constitution; leading to the decriminalisation of what was considered as homosexual acts that were passed under colonial and apartheid era.

However, for Ditsie, the struggle for LGBTIQA+ rights and the fight against all forms of intersectional oppressions did not stop with the adoption and enactment of the 1996 constitution—in fact, the struggle had to continue, because no one was free unless all peoples of the world were free from all forms of oppression. On 13 September 1995, Ditsie delivered a statement at the United Nations Fourth World Conference on Women held in Beijing, China (SAHO, 2017a). Ditsie addressed the gathering as a representative of the International Gay and Lesbian Human Rights Commission, the International Lesbian Information Service, the International Lesbian and Gay Association, and over fifty other organisations. Ditsie was amongst the first openly Black lesbian woman to do so and it was also the first time that the United Nations (UN) was addressed on LGBTIQA+ realities and rights and how the organisation could contribute in making sure that LGBTIQA+ rights are also seen as fundamental human rights that must also be protected (SAHO, 2017a). In her address, Ditsie highlighted the realities that many lesbians across the world continued to endure by the stating the following:

> *Yet every day, in countries around the world, lesbians suffer violence, harassment and discrimination because of their sexual orientation. Their basic human rights -- such as the right to life, to bodily integrity, to freedom of association and expression – are violated. Women who love women are fired from their jobs; forced into marriages; beaten and murdered in their homes and on the streets; and have their children taken away by hostile courts. Some commit suicide due to the isolation and stigma that they experience within their families, religious institutions and their broader community . Yet the majority of these abuses have been difficult to document because although lesbians exist everywhere in the world (including Africa), we have been marginalized and silenced and remain invisible in most of the world.* (Ditsie, 1995).

She further urged the UN to prioritise all human rights, especially those of lesbian women by saying the following:

> *… it [the UN] must similarly recognise that discrimination based on sexual orientation is a violation of basic human rights. [Because] No woman can determine the direction of her own life without the ability to determine her sexuality. Sexuality is an integral, deeply ingrained part of every human being's life and should not be subject to debate or coercion. Anyone who is truly committed to women's human rights must recognize that every woman has the right to determine her sexuality free of discrimination and oppression. I urge you to make this a conference for all women, regardless of their sexual orientation, and to recognize in the Platform for Action that lesbian rights are women's rights and that women's rights are universal, inalienable, and indivisible human rights. I urge you to remove the brackets from sexual orientation. Thank you.*(Ditsie, 1995).

> *After the UN statement, Ditsie continued with her activist work and in 2002 she released a documentary entitled: Simon and I, directed by herself and Nicky Newman. In it, she traces and documents her relationship with her late best friend, Tseko, and their involvement in the struggle. She does this through narration, interviews, newspaper clippings and archival footage of speeches and parades. Currently, Ditsie still continues with her activist work using other forms of expression such as music, film, dance and many others.*

Despite this extraordinary legacy, Ditsie's experiences and her contributions to South Africa's constitutional democracy, universal human rights and HIV/Aids awareness, continue to be de-historicised and de-centred from the knowledge base of the post-apartheid school history curriculum.

Weaving together a tapestry of historical knowledge in the post-apartheid school history curriculum with reference to Palesa Beverley Ditsie's contributions

The imperative to weave a more inclusive tapestry of historical knowledge for the post-apartheid curriculum is not merely an academic exercise; it is a direct response to the clarion call of the 2015-2016 student protests, which demanded the decolonisation of education and the queering of knowledge. This project of curricular transformation is vital for several interconnected reasons.

Firstly, the inclusion, rehistoricisation, and recentring of a figure like Ditsie in the knowledge base of the post-apartheid school history curriculum in post-apartheid South

Africa, can and would fundamentally strengthen an intersectional understanding of our past (Maluleka & Ledwaba, 2023). Ditsie's narrative, as traced in this article, intricately connects the anti-apartheid struggle with fights for LGBTIQA+ human rights, gender equality and health justice. By integrating such previously occluded contributions and experiences, the school history curriculum can empower history educators and their learners to engage with and analyse how multiple, overlapping systems of oppression and privilege shape human experiences. More importantly, it would allow them to study the diverse and courageous ways individuals like Ditsie responded to these systems, providing a richer, more agentic model of historical change.

Secondly, this approach directly addresses a critical pedagogical failure. While topics like sexuality are abstractly covered in life orientation school curricula, they are often presented in a dehumanising vacuum, leading to the trivialisation of lived experiences. Including Ditsie's contributions and experiences in the school history curriculum, would perform the essential work of queering historical knowledge and the school curriculum in general. This is because such an act would move LGBTIQA+ existence from an abstract concept to a tangible, historical reality. This would, in turn, humanise othered sexualities and genders, fostering a school history curriculum that truly appreciates the diversity of human experiences. Consequently, LGBTIQA+ history educators and their learners would finally see their identities reflected and valued in historical studies (Godsell, 2019), mitigating the existential crisis of othering. Simultaneously, it would create a vital safe space for cisgender and heterosexual educators and learners to engage with narratives that demonstrate how people 'different' from themselves were also indispensable architects of the constitutional democracy they inherit today (Maluleka & Godsell, 2024).

Lastly, the inclusion and rehistoricisation of LGBTIQA+'s activism in the post-apartheid school history curriculum in South Africa is a foundational act of justice. It would align with the core human rights principles of the South African constitution and actively promotes epistemic, ontological and social justice. By challenging the systematic exclusion of LGBTIQA+ experiences and histories from the official historical canon, the curriculum ceases to be a tool of epistemicide and becomes a site of restoration and humanisation. It would also acknowledge that the fight for liberation in South Africa was waged on multiple fronts by people of all identities, and in doing so, it answers the 2015-2016 student protestors' demand for a knowledge system that truly reflects the complexity and richness of the South African struggle for freedom.

Conclusion

With this article, we have argued that the continued exclusion of LGBTQIA+ contributions and experiences from the South African school history curriculum constitutes a profound epistemic and ontological injustice, one that the #MustFall student movements of 2015-2016 explicitly sought to redress. Through decolonial queer theory and knowledge as a tapestry as theoretical orientations, as well as CDA as the methodological approach, we were able to reflect on and theorise about Ditsie's erased contributions and experiences. We were also to demonstrate that the project of decolonisation and Africanisation remains incomplete without a rigorous queering of its scope. Therefore, the appeal to the HMTT is not merely for inclusion, but for a fundamental reimagining of the historical canons that would underpin the knowledge base of their proposed school history curriculum in post-apartheid South Africa. Thus, to truly answer the call of the 2015-2016 student protests, the proposed school history curriculum must actively dismantle its heteronormativity by weaving the vital threads of LGBTQIA+ lives that are exemplified by the likes Ditsie into its very fabric. It is only that we, as a country, can claimed that we have achieved a tapestry of historical knowledge that is truly liberatory, fostering the intersectional understanding and inclusive national identity that is the rightful legacy of all who fought for freedom

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Forgotten Footsteps: Reclaiming the Legacy of South Africa's Unsung Heroines in History Education

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Abstract

The representation of historical figures in school curricula significantly shapes national identity and societal values. In South Africa, despite its rich and diverse history, the official history curriculum remains largely male-centric, often underrepresenting the contributions of women. Previous research has highlighted the exclusion of women from mainstream historical narratives, reinforcing gender inequalities in both education and broader society. Feminist scholars argue that such marginalisation not only distorts historical truth, it also perpetuates systemic gender biases.

The primary aim of this study is to examine the systematic exclusion of women and girls from the South African history Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) in the Department of Basic Education. Moreover, assess its implications for gender equality in education. By identifying gaps and biases in historical representation, the study seeks to advocate for a more inclusive and equitable curriculum that accurately reflects the diverse contributions of all individuals to South Africa's past. This research focuses on the South African educational landscape, particularly history curricula implemented in the Department of Basic Education. The study draws on a wide range of academic sources and curriculum documents to provide an analysis of gender representation in historical education. The research spans materials published between 2000 and 2024, offering a contemporary perspective on curriculum developments and persistent biases. The study

employs a systematic literature review (SLR) adhering to the preferred reporting items for systematic reviews and meta-analyses (PRISMA) protocols. The sources analysed include peer-reviewed academic articles, historical documents, curriculum guidelines and case studies. The research process involves identifying relevant literature, screening sources for eligibility, extracting key themes and synthesising findings to assess the representation of women in the history curriculum. Feminist theoretical frameworks are applied to critically examine how gender biases are embedded in historical narratives and educational materials. The findings reveal that the South African history curriculum overwhelmingly prioritises male figures, marginalising the contributions of women. Gender exclusion in historical narratives reinforces stereotypes and limits students' understanding of women's roles in shaping the country's history. The recommendations call for inclusive teaching practices and a more equitable educational framework that fosters gender equality and a comprehensive understanding of the nation's past.

Keywords: History curriculum; Gender exclusion; Women; Feminist theory

Introduction

History education plays a vital role in shaping national identity and collective memory. However, in South Africa, the history curriculum has long perpetuated systemic inequalities, such as sexism and racism (Shabangu, 2021). While post-apartheid reforms aimed to promote inclusivity, the curriculum remains gendered, with male figures dominating the historical narrative, while women's roles are largely marginalised. Scholars have long highlighted this gender imbalance, showing how women's contributions are minimised in history education (Noddings, 2001; Sincero & Woyshner, 2003). This exclusion distorts history and perpetuates patriarchal ideologies, shaping societal norms and expectations. For example, the emphasis on male political figures and revolutionaries reinforces the belief that leadership, courage, and public influence are traits naturally associated with men. This perpetuates a wider cultural belief that men are suited for leadership roles, while women are positioned as secondary or supportive. When women do appear in historical narratives, they are often confined to domestic or subordinate roles, such as caregivers, spouses, or behind-the-scenes supporters, rather than being recognised as key change-makers. Such portrayals imply that only visible, public and traditionally male-dominated forms of action are historically valuable, thereby diminishing the importance of the informal, grassroots and community-oriented efforts often driven by women. As a result, students are presented with a one-sided history that fails to acknowledge the full spectrum of contributions to South

Africa's liberation and social progress. The underrepresentation of women reflects broader structural inequalities, such as patriarchy, economic inequality and dominant narratives that reinforce gender biases (Sonkqayi, 2020). Despite some efforts to include women in the curriculum, their representation remains marginal and tokenistic. Wills (2016) critiques the way women are often included in history education in a tokenistic manner, meaning their presence is symbolic, rather than substantive (Wills, 2016). the author argues that rather than integrating women's experiences and contributions throughout the historical narrative, they are often inserted as isolated figures or brief mentions. This approach fails to challenge dominant male-centric narratives and instead reinforces the idea that women's roles in history are exceptions rather than the norm. Tokenism, as Wills (2016) explains, gives the illusion of inclusivity without addressing the deeper structural biases that shape historical discourse and education.

In South Africa, significant progress has been made in curriculum reform, however, colonial legacies and deep-rooted epistemic injustices continue to shape the way curricula are developed. As a result, the slow pace of reform and continued male-centric framing in historical education limit students' ability to critically engage with gender and power dynamics, perpetuating exclusion rather than transformation. This study adopts feminist theory to analyse the systemic exclusion of women in historical education and to challenge the power dynamics in historical narration that perpetuate gendered stereotypes (Lerner, 2019). Feminist pedagogy advocates for a more inclusive curriculum that actively integrates women's contributions and experiences. The study employed a systematic literature review (SLR) guided by the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA), an evidence-based framework designed to enhance the reporting quality of systematic reviews and meta-analyses. Following the PRISMA protocols, the study emphasises the importance of gender-sensitive curriculum reforms. The findings stress the importance of integrating women's roles in South Africa's history, urging policy changes, textbook revisions, and teaching strategies that promote gender equity in history education. For example, using inclusive and diverse historical sources, fostering critical thinking about gender bias in traditional narratives and applying intersectional approaches that consider race, class and sexuality alongside gender. Teachers can further support equity by challenging stereotypes, using gender-inclusive language, creating a classroom environment that ensures equal participation and encouraging student-led exploration of underrepresented historical perspectives.

Addressing this gap, the study contributes to broader discussions on curriculum reform and social justice in education, promoting a more inclusive and equitable representation of historical narratives.

Problem statement

Despite post-apartheid efforts to transform South Africa's education system, the history curriculum continues to marginalise the contributions of women, perpetuating gendered biases and reinforcing patriarchal narratives (Shabangu, 2021; Sonkqayi, 2020). Women's roles in resistance movements and nation-building are largely underrepresented, resulting in a distorted historical narrative that fails to reflect the diverse contributions to South Africa's liberation and social progress (Chimbunde & Moreeng, 2023; Lerner, 2004). This gender imbalance, compounded by epistemic issues and intersectional factors such as race and class, limits students' ability to critically engage with power dynamics and gender issues in history (Crenshaw, 2021; hooks, 1994). The continued dominance of male figures in historical education restricts efforts toward social justice, inclusion and gender equity (Meyiwa & Cekiso, 2020). Hence, there is a need for comprehensive gender-sensitive curriculum reforms that challenge traditional, exclusionary historical narratives and promote a more inclusive, balanced representation of South African history (Lerner, 2019).

Research question

The paper responded to the following question:

How does the gendered representation of history in South African curricula marginalise women's contributions?

Literature review

This study engages with a range of interconnected themes drawn from literature, including the systemic erasure of women from historical narratives. For example, the often-overlooked, yet pivotal roles played by women in the South African liberation struggle and the transformative potential of feminist pedagogy and curriculum reform in fostering gender-sensitive education. These themes serve as a foundation for the critical discussions presented in the following sections.

The historical elimination of women in the history curriculum

The marginalisation of women in South African history education, particularly within the national curriculum, has shaped how historical narratives are constructed and taught. Women's contributions to political resistance and social transformation have been systematically excluded, reinforcing a patriarchal historiography that minimises their roles. Walker (1991) critiques this erasure, arguing that women's efforts in formal resistance and grassroots activism have been relegated to the margins, distorting the broader liberation narrative. Similarly, Gasa (2007) highlights the dominance of male-centred historical discourse, emphasising how women's resistance efforts from political activism to cultural engagement are often overlooked, despite their significance in national movements. Erlank (2022) examines the intersection of gender, nationalism, and colonial ideologies, demonstrating how historical exclusion extends to the construction of South African identity. The author argues that the omission of women's contributions reinforces patriarchal structures within education and broader society. Gqola (2007) expands on this perspective by addressing the specific marginalisation of Black women, asserting that their historical exclusion perpetuates harmful stereotypes that shape contemporary social and political discourse. The continued erasure of Black women's roles, as discussed by Lewis (2021), has long-term implications for gender representation in historical education. Jaffer (2016), in her biography of Charlotte Maxeke, challenges this historical neglect by emphasising the crucial, yet frequently overlooked contributions of Black women to South African political and educational movements. Maluleka's (2021) work further enriches this discourse by critically analysing how curriculum design and knowledge production maintain epistemic silences on women's histories, advocating for transformative approaches to curriculum reform that foreground marginalised voices. Similarly, Godsell (2024) focuses on the politics of knowledge and memory in post-apartheid education. The author highlighted the need to decentre dominant master narratives to create space for women's diverse experiences in history education. Beyond political activism, this exclusion extends to critical events such as the 1976 Soweto Uprising, where the role of young women has been largely ignored in favour of male-dominated narratives. Although the uprising is widely recognised for its significance in the anti-apartheid struggle, the leadership and participation of young female activists remain overshadowed. Figures like Nokutela Mdima Dube, Miriam Tladi and Sibongile Mkhabela, pioneering activists, have been largely absent from mainstream historical accounts, highlighting the need for a more inclusive approach to South African history education (Gasa, 2007; Jaffer, 2016). Addressing these gaps is essential for ensuring

a more representative and equitable portrayal of women's contributions in shaping South Africa's liberation and political landscape.

The role of women in the South African liberation struggle: Curriculum overview

South Africa's curriculum has historically reflected Eurocentric and patriarchal ideologies, especially during apartheid, which marginalised the histories of women, particularly Black, Coloured, and Indian women (Mahabeer, 2021). Although post-apartheid reforms like Curriculum 2005 and Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) aimed to promote inclusivity and social justice, women's contributions remain limited and often tokenised (Bhat et al., 2023; Wills, 2016). These highlight ongoing epistemic issues in knowledge production, calling for a more inclusive curriculum that reflects diverse historical narratives (Bhat et al., 2023). Women played a crucial role in the South African liberation struggle, contributing significantly to political activism, grassroots mobilisation and resistance against apartheid (Cohen & Cobbett, 2024; Schwalm, 2023). Women organised protests, strikes and participated in underground movements, yet their contributions remain marginalised in the Department of Education policy statements. Nokutela Mdima-Dube was an early feminist activist advocating for African women's education and social upliftment, however, her efforts are largely unrecognised in mainstream history (Bell, 2020). Similarly, Lillian Ngoyi, a key leader in the Federation of South African Women, was central in organising the historic 1956 Women's March against pass laws, which drew 20 000 women to the Union Buildings in Pretoria (Devenish, 2025). Albertina Sisulu, a nurse and anti-apartheid activist, supported underground ANC networks and helped sustain resistance movements while male leaders were imprisoned (Van Niekerk & Freedman, 2023). Despite their pivotal roles, women's contributions to the anti-apartheid struggle are often overshadowed by dominant narratives focusing on male leaders such as Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo, and Steve Biko in the South African history curriculum (Britton, 2005; Gasa, 2007). Even when women are mentioned in historical records, they are frequently positioned behind their husbands or male counterparts, reinforcing the perception that their activism was secondary. The 1976 Soweto Uprising is often framed through the actions of male figures such as Hector Pieterson and Tsietsi Mashinini, whilst young women played a crucial role in mobilising students, organising protests and resisting state violence (Meinties, 1998; Walker, 1991). Many female students, including Antoinette Sithole and Mbuyisa Makhubo, were instrumental in sustaining the momentum of the movement, yet their names are rarely recorded in the history curriculum (South African

History Online [SAHO], n.d.). Beyond street protests, these young women engaged in underground resistance by distributing pamphlets, attending secret meetings, and challenging the apartheid education system (Walker, 1991). Despite their indispensable contributions, their roles continue to be marginalised, reinforcing male-centred narratives of the uprising (Gasa, 2007). The failure to adequately acknowledge women's roles in South Africa's liberation struggle is reflected in gaps within the country's history curriculum. Policy documents analyses reveal that the contributions of male leaders such as Mandela, Tambo and Biko are prioritised, while female revolutionaries receive minimal or superficial recognition (Geisler, 2004; SAHO, n.d.). Even when women are included, their activism is often framed in relation to their husbands or male comrades, rather than as independent political contributions (Britton, 2005).This exclusion has far-reaching consequences, shaping contemporary gender perceptions and reinforcing the notion that women's involvement in political movements is secondary (Britton, 2005). Furthermore, the omission of female freedom fighters from historical discourse distorts South Africa's past and affects discussions on gender equality, representation, and leadership today (Gasa, 2007). Addressing these gaps requires a concerted effort to incorporate women's voices into historical narratives, ensuring that their sacrifices and contributions are fully recognised in academic scholarship and public memory (Walker, 1991). A more inclusive historical approach would not only honour the legacy of women in the liberation struggle, it would also serve as a powerful tool for challenging persistent gender disparities in political and social spaces (Meintjes, 1998).

Feminist pedagogy and curriculum reform: The case for gender-sensitive education

Feminist pedagogy advocates for teaching practices that value diverse voices and perspectives, challenge traditional power structures, and encourage students to critically engage with social issues such as gender inequality. Key works by bell hooks (1994) in *Teaching to transgress: Education as a practice of freedom* and Paulo Freire in *Pedagogy of the oppressed* are foundational to this approach (Freire, 1970). hooks (1994) emphasises the importance of creating a classroom environment where students are encouraged to question societal norms and power dynamics, fostering critical thinking and mutual respect. Freire's (1970) concept of dialogical education, where students and teachers engage in a co-learning process, is crucial to feminist pedagogy, as it dismantles traditional hierarchical relationships in the classroom. By promoting active and participatory learning, feminist pedagogy empowers students to become agents of social change, especially regarding

issues of gender and power. The implementation of gender-sensitive pedagogy in history education aims to create more inclusive curricula by addressing gender representation and ensuring diverse representation in teaching materials. In post-apartheid South Africa, curriculum reforms have sought to rectify the historical exclusion of women by incorporating their contributions to the anti-apartheid struggle into educational resources (Gasa, 2007; Walker, 1991). The Department of Basic Education's CAPS has played a role in promoting gender inclusivity by ensuring that history curricula recognise the roles of women and marginalised groups in shaping the country's past (Department of Basic Education, 2011). This effort is part of broader global movements to introduce women's studies programmes and gender-inclusive textbooks, helping to correct patriarchal narratives in educational content (Gouws, 2008). These reforms are essential for creating a balanced understanding of history, one that highlights the contributions of all genders in national and global movements. It is important to question whether these changes are meaningful or merely symbolic. Key concerns include whether women's contributions are presented as central, how consistently these changes are implemented, and whether educators are equipped to teach them effectively.

Despite these challenges, integrating feminist pedagogy into history education provides a powerful means of challenging traditional, male-dominated narratives by centring the voices, experiences and contributions of women and other marginalised groups. This approach fosters critical thinking, inclusivity and active engagement, enabling students to question dominant power structures and historical omissions (Jaffer, 2017; Lewis, 2021). Through a curriculum that highlights diverse perspectives, feminist pedagogy cultivates a deeper awareness of social inequalities and encourages learners to critically examine the ways in which history has been constructed and taught. This critical awareness helps students understand the broader implications of gender and power in both historical and contemporary contexts. Moreover, by promoting a more balanced and representative portrayal of the past, feminist pedagogy supports the goals of gender equality and social justice. When embedded into curriculum reforms such as those outlined in CAPS, this approach can actively challenge gender stereotypes, empower all learners and contribute to a more just and inclusive society beyond the classroom.

Theoretical framework

This study is underpinned by feminist pedagogy and critical pedagogy. Feminist pedagogy, as articulated by hooks (1994) and South African scholars like Gqola (2007), emphasises the need for an inclusive educational environment that values diverse voices, particularly those of women. It advocates for challenging traditional power structures that perpetuate inequality and ensures that women's contributions to history are fully acknowledged. Critical pedagogy, particularly the work of Paulo Freire (1970), encourages educators to reflect critically on their biases and the societal power structures that influence education. Freire's approach underscores education as a tool for social change, empowering students to confront issues of gender inequality and injustice. Together, these pedagogical approaches provide a framework for analysing the exclusion of women from historical narratives in South Africa's education system and propose strategies for curricular reform to ensure gender inclusivity. By applying feminist pedagogy and critical pedagogy, this study aims to highlight the importance of gender-sensitive curriculum changes in South Africa's history education.

Methodology

This study adopts a qualitative and conceptual methodology to explore the gendered representation of history in South African curricula and identify strategies to promote gender equity and inclusive representation in history education. The research focuses on theoretical development, rather than empirical investigation, using a SLR to synthesise and analyse existing research. The methodology is grounded in feminist theory and an intersectional perspective, ensuring a comprehensive approach to understanding the marginalisation of women's contributions in historical narratives. The SLR follows the PRISMA guidelines, offering a structured process for identifying, evaluating and synthesising relevant research. The goal is to uncover themes related to the underrepresentation of women in historical curricula and explore strategies for promoting gender-sensitive reforms. The review focuses on studies that address gender inequality in education, feminist pedagogy, and curriculum transformation. Relevant peer-reviewed articles were identified through comprehensive searches of academic databases including JSTOR, ERIC, Google Scholar and Scopus. The search strategy employed keywords such as gender representation in history education, women in South African history, and gender equity in curriculum.

The inclusion criteria for the literature review were as follows:

- Studies that explore gender representation and gender equity in South African history curricula.
- Research papers that examine the role of women in historical narratives and their marginalisation.
- Articles related to feminist pedagogy and curriculum transformation in South African education.
- Peer-reviewed articles published in English.

Exclusion criteria included:

- Studies not focused on history education or gender representation.
- Theoretical papers without empirical data.
- Opinion pieces, editorials, and non-peer-reviewed articles.

After using reference management software to remove duplicates and employing Rayyan to assist with the screening of titles and abstracts, 175 unique articles were identified. Further evaluation through full-text review and inclusion criteria screening, supported by Covidence, resulted in 120 articles being included in the final review. Of these, 35 studies fully met all predefined inclusion criteria.

The selected studies were thematically analysed to identify key findings related to the gendered representation of history and the strategies for integrating more inclusive narratives. Thematic analysis focused on:

- The impact of gendered historical narratives on students' perceptions of gender roles.
- Feminist approaches to integrating women's contributions into history education.
- Challenges and opportunities for curriculum reform in South Africa's history education system.
- Examples of successful strategies for promoting gender equity and inclusive historical representation in education.

This review aims to reveal patterns in literature that could guide future curriculum reforms and contribute to gender equity in South African history education. Although this study does not involve empirical data collection, ethical considerations are central to the methodology, particularly in ensuring that the voices of marginalised groups, such as

women and other minority populations, are adequately represented in the analysis.

Table 1: Research question and generated themes

Research Question	Themes
How does the gendered representation of history in South African curricula marginalise women's contributions?	Theme 1: Gender exclusion in the history curriculum Theme 2: Impact of gendered historical narratives on student perceptions Theme 3: The underrepresentation of women's contributions to South Africa's liberation Theme 4: Strategies for incorporating gender inclusivity in the curriculum

Results/Findings

To promote gender equity in history education within South African basic education, a gender-inclusive approach is necessary. This involves integrating feminist pedagogy into the curriculum, combining theoretical frameworks with practical teaching strategies, fostering community involvement, supporting research initiatives and advocating for policy reforms.

Theme 1: Gender exclusion in the history curriculum

A significant finding of this study is the ongoing gender exclusion within South Africa's history curriculum, where women's contributions to the national liberation struggle are marginalised. Historical narratives in South Africa, particularly in the post-apartheid era, continue to emphasise male figures such as Nelson Mandela, Oliver Tambo and Steve Biko, while largely ignoring or downplaying the contributions of women to the resistance movements and nation-building efforts. Scholars such as Gasa (2007); Godsell (2024); Gqola (2007); Maluleka (2021), Walker (1991) and Wills (2016) argue that the omission of women's roles in political activism, social transformation and the anti-apartheid struggle perpetuates a male-centred master narrative; a dominant historical discourse that privileges male experiences as the standard. This master narrative marginalises alternative perspectives, particularly those of women, thereby shaping a collective memory that excludes their contributions (Gasa, 2007; Gqola, 2007; Walker, 1991). For example, the 1956 Women's March, which was a pivotal event in the resistance against apartheid, is often

overlooked in mainstream historical narratives, with key female leaders like Lillian Ngoyi, Helen Joseph and others receiving limited recognition (Devenish, 2025). This continued exclusion draws attention to a patriarchal historiography that centres male voices and contributions, which results in a historical narrative that fails to adequately represent the full spectrum of participants in the liberation struggle. This exclusion aligns with hooks' feminist pedagogical theory, which calls for the restructuring of educational practices to highlight marginalised voices, particularly those of women (hooks, 1994). The feminist reclamation of women's contributions to the liberation struggle is essential for rewriting South Africa's history more inclusively and equitably. Both feminist theorists challenge the patriarchal historiography by advocating for a history that acknowledges women's roles in shaping the nation. Gqola (2007) further asserts that this exclusion is rooted in the patriarchal frameworks that have traditionally dictated both historical and social narratives, calling for a more inclusive education that recognises women's contributions as central, rather than peripheral.

Theme 2: Impact of gendered historical narratives on student perceptions

The findings of Theme 2 reveal the significant impact that gendered historical narratives have on students' perceptions of gender roles, leadership and political agency. By emphasising male historical figures and underrepresenting women's contributions, students are conditioned to view political activism, leadership and national history through a predominantly male lens. This reinforces societal stereotypes about the roles that women are expected to play, both in the past and in contemporary society. As Meintjes (1998) and Walker (1991) observe, women's activism, especially in the context of events like the 1976 Soweto Uprising, is often erased or downplayed. Figures such as Antoinette Sithole, despite her crucial role in the uprising, are frequently left out of history textbooks as they play an important role in disseminating the content prescribed by the curricula (Walker, 1991). This erasure leads students to internalise gendered ideas about who is allowed to be a leader, with male figures being placed at the forefront of national memory and history. Hooks (1994) advocates for feminist pedagogy as a tool to address this imbalance, creating spaces where students are invited to challenge and deconstruct traditional views of leadership and authority (Gqola, 2007). By engaging students with historical narratives that highlight both male, female and other genders' contributions equally, feminist pedagogy encourages students to reject restrictive gender norms and embrace a broader, more diverse view of leadership. Through this lens, students can be encouraged to rethink leadership beyond gendered confines, broadening their understanding of who is empowered to enact social

change. Gqola (2007) similarly suggests that gendered narratives in education reinforce societal ideas about power and agency, highlighting the need for education that critically engages with gendered roles and histories (hooks, 1994).

Theme 3: The underrepresentation of women's contributions to South Africa's liberation

A critical finding from this study is the underrepresentation of women's contributions to the liberation struggle in South Africa. Women played a vital role in organising protests, resisting apartheid policies and supporting underground movements, yet their efforts are often overlooked or downplayed in historical accounts. Key figures like Albertina Sisulu, Nokutela Mdima-Dube and others have been instrumental in the fight against apartheid, however, their contributions are frequently overshadowed by their male counterparts. As in the curriculum, there is limited coverage of women-led events like the 1956 Women's March, and a lack of critical engagement with their roles in the curriculum and assessment policy. This marginalisation reinforces a male-centred master narrative that minimises women's agency in South African history. Cohen and Cobbett (2024) and Schwalm (2023) argue that the narrative of South Africa's liberation struggle is often told through the actions of male leaders, leaving women's pivotal roles marginalised. Similarly, the 1976 Soweto Uprising, a critical event in the anti-apartheid movement, is predominantly framed through the actions of male leaders such as Hector Pieterson, with the contributions of young women in the struggle being largely unrecognised (Meintjes, 1998; Walker, 1991). The continued omission of these women from the historical record perpetuates a historical erasure that diminishes their agency in South Africa's liberation process. This underrepresentation can be critiqued through hooks's (1994) feminist pedagogy, which advocates for the inclusion of women's voices and experiences in historical narratives. Gqola (2007) contributes to this by arguing that the systematic underrepresentation of women's contributions is a function of broader societal structures that fail to recognise women as equal agents in shaping political and social change. By integrating women's contributions into the broader historical narrative, feminist pedagogy seeks to reframe history in a way that values the roles of all genders in shaping national identity and social transformation.

Theme 4: Strategies for incorporating gender inclusivity in the curriculum

The current study highlights several strategies for incorporating gender inclusivity into South Africa's history curriculum. The Department of Basic Education (2011) has made strides in recent years to address gender inequality in the curriculum, particularly

through CAPS, which outlines the inclusion of women and marginalised groups in history education. However, the study identifies challenges in the full implementation of these gender-sensitive reforms, including institutional resistance, a lack of resources and insufficient teacher training. To overcome these challenges, the study recommends first addressing the curriculum, which currently centres male figures as the primary face of the anti-apartheid struggle. Revising curriculum themes to include the significant roles women played is essential. Following this, history textbooks should be updated to accurately reflect women's contributions, using gender-neutral language. Additionally, incorporating more participatory teaching methods can encourage students to critically engage with and challenge dominant historical narratives (Meyiwa & Cekiso, 2020). Furthermore, creating inclusive and supportive classroom environments where students are encouraged to question and critique dominant historical narratives. This can help foster a deeper understanding of gender and power dynamics in history. Hooks's feminist pedagogy offers a valuable framework for these changes, as it emphasises the need to create inclusive and participatory learning environments that challenge traditional power structures (hooks, 1994). Freire's (1970) concept of dialogical education encourages the co-learning process between students and teachers, where both parties actively engage in the construction of knowledge. Through such methods, feminist pedagogy fosters a learning environment where all voices are valued, and students can critically examine how history is constructed as well as whose voices are included or excluded. Gqola (2007) also suggests that to move toward gender-inclusive education, a shift in teaching methodologies is essential, where all histories, including women's contributions, are treated with equal importance.

Discussion of the findings

This study reveals key findings regarding gender exclusion in South Africa's history curriculum, where women's contributions to the national liberation struggle are often marginalised. Despite their crucial roles, women's participation in movements such as the 1956 Women's March and the 1976 Soweto Uprising is largely overlooked in favor of male figures like Nelson Mandela and Steve Biko (Gasa, 2007; Walker, 1991). A scholar such as Gqola emphasises the need to reclaim women's roles in history, as the omission of their contributions reflects a patriarchal narrative that distorts the true scope of the liberation struggle. The study also highlights how gendered historical narratives shape students' perceptions of leadership and political agency, reinforcing societal stereotypes that view leadership as a male-dominated domain. This erasure of women's activism, such as the contributions of Antoinette Sithole, contributes to gendered views of who is allowed to lead

(Meintjes, 1998). Feminist pedagogy, as proposed by hooks (1994), can play a vital role in addressing these issues by creating spaces that challenge traditional gender norms and promote a more inclusive understanding of leadership. The underrepresentation of women in historical narratives is another major finding, with key female figures like Albertina Sisulu and Nokutela Mdima-Dube being overshadowed by their male counterparts in the liberation struggle (Cohen & Cobbett, 2024). Integrating women's contributions into the historical narrative is necessary for correcting this historical erasure and acknowledging their active roles in shaping the nation's history. Feminist pedagogy advocates for a history that values contributions from all genders and challenges historical structures that diminish women's agency (Gqola, 2007). The study proposes strategies to address gender exclusion in the curriculum, as Maluleka recommended, including revising textbooks, using gender-neutral language, and adopting participatory teaching methods (Meyiwa & Cekiso, 2020). These strategies aim to create an inclusive learning environment where students can critically engage with history, question dominant narratives, and recognise the contributions of both men and women in shaping the nation. Feminist pedagogies, as articulated by hooks and Freire, provide frameworks to encourage students to deconstruct gendered histories and envision a more equitable portrayal of South Africa's liberation struggle (Freire, 1970; hooks, 1994).

Implications for practice

The findings of this study emphasise the need for significant changes in the practice of history education in South Africa, particularly in the inclusion of gendered perspectives in historical narratives. Teachers play a crucial role in shaping students' understanding of history and social structures, and thus, they must be equipped with the necessary tools to address gender inequality in the curriculum. One immediate implication is the need for targeted training on gender issues for educators. By providing teachers with professional development on gender sensitivity, teachers can be better prepared to critically examine historical narratives and be cautious of perpetuating gender stereotypes in their teaching. While the Department of Basic Education has made some strides in incorporating gender-sensitive content, a more concerted effort is needed to ensure that historical materials do not overlook or marginalise women's roles. Educators can act as facilitators of change within their classrooms by promoting gender-inclusive teaching practices and encouraging critical discussions around the contributions of women in shaping the country's history. This would foster an environment in which students develop a more inclusive understanding of leadership and political agency, allowing them to challenge traditional gender roles

and understand leadership as a shared space. Schools should work with curriculum developers to create and integrate gender-neutral language in teaching resources, such as textbooks, to ensure that gender biases are reduced in instructional materials. Teachers should also encourage participatory teaching methods that invite students to critically analyse historical narratives and consider multiple perspectives, fostering a more inclusive approach to learning.

Conclusion

The marginalisation of women in South Africa's historical narratives is not just an academic oversight; it is a political act that shapes societal perceptions of power, leadership and agency. By continuing to exclude women from the curriculum, a distorted history is reinforced that upholds patriarchal structures and limits how future generations understand activism and resistance. Addressing this gendered erasure is not merely about inclusion; it is about justice. A history that acknowledges the contributions of everyone irrespective of gender offers a more truthful account of the liberation struggle and fosters a more equitable understanding of leadership. Through feminist pedagogies and transformative educational strategies, the voices of women who fought for freedom can be reclaimed. In doing so, new generations can be inspired to recognise leadership beyond the constraints of gender. Ultimately, it reshapes historical narratives about the past, challenges the inequalities of the present and reimagines a more just future.

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The Significance of Environmental History in South Africa's School History Curriculum within a VUCA Context

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Abstract

Environmental history investigates the interactions between humans and the natural environment over a specific period, exploring how these relationships have shaped ecological systems and human societies. The relationship between nature and humanity is analogous to a tapestry woven thread by thread, emphasising the importance of the depth of the connection between the two. The scholarly neglect of environmental history in the history Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) is increasingly difficult to justify and understand in the face of global land, ecological and climate crises. The history curriculum commits itself to ensuring environmental justice. At the same time, it excludes history which is necessary for achieving this environmental justice, and there are also pressing environmental issues that require immediate attention. This conceptual paper employs a critical inquiry approach to examine the absence of environmental history in the history CAPS and argues for its inclusion in this curriculum. The paper aims to critically interrogate the epistemic exclusions within the CAPS history curriculum and proposes

integrating environmental history as a pathway to curricular justice. Using the decolonial and rhizomatic approaches as theoretical frameworks, the argument is developed through conceptual analysis of curriculum policy documents and the broader historical context of epistemic exclusion in the Volatile, Uncertain, Complex, Ambiguous (VUCA) world. Environmental history offers learners critical tools to understand the intersection of humans and nature, from colonial land dispossession to contemporary environmental issues. Therefore, this paper argues for including environmental history to promote epistemic, social and environmental justice. Its inclusion will equip learners to critically reflect on the evolving relationship between human societies and the natural environment, fostering environmental consciousness and contextual historical understanding. This would help learners critically engage with Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) and draw insights to address environmental issues.

Keywords: Environmental education; Environmental history; School history curriculum; VUCA world; CAPS

Introduction

The African Renaissance has called for decolonisation, Africanisation and the inclusion of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) in the South African curriculum, challenging historically accepted practices. Colonial authorities imposed systems that kept Africans passive and subservient, profoundly influencing education and knowledge production. As a result, South Africa's school curricula are being critically examined to address past injustices, particularly regarding epistemological and ontological gaps in the history curriculum. The History Ministerial Task Team (HMTT) report of 2018 highlights progress and ongoing challenges in curriculum reform, specifically regarding content selection and inclusivity (Ndlovu et al., 2018). While it supports reintroducing a subject-based curriculum, concerns remain about the superficial treatment of content and its inclusivity. One glaring injustice is excluding environmental history from the history CAPS (Kgari-Masondo, 2013a; Maluleka, 2024).

Despite the growing importance of environmental history, it remains largely absent from the history CAPS, relegated to geography or environmental education. Geography and environmental education's focus on physical and social phenomena overlooks the historical dimensions of environmental issues. While the history CAPS includes topics such as the colonisation of Southern Africa and industrialisation, it omits an explicit focus on how these processes altered landscapes, ecosystems and Indigenous ecological knowledge. This

exclusion represents an epistemological injustice, as the historical roots of environmental struggles, such as land dispossession, are central to South Africa's history (Kgari-Masondo, 2013b). The ongoing land disputes highlight the need to include environmental history in the curriculum, which would help learners understand the intersection of human and ecological systems, from colonial land dispossession to contemporary environmental issues. As a curricular imperative, environmental justice requires learners to understand the historical roots of ecological inequality. Yet, these histories are absent from the current CAPS curriculum. This paper aims to critically explore the exclusion of environmental history from the CAPS history curriculum, arguing for its integration to promote decolonial, environmental, and epistemic justice—that is, ensuring that historically marginalised perspectives are reflected in what is taught. Through the lens of decolonial and rhizomatic theoretical frameworks, this paper argues that including environmental history in the Grades 10-12 history curriculum is essential for fostering critical thinking and enabling students to navigate the complexities of our rapidly changing world. This argument is premised on the belief that incorporating environmental history into the history CAPS would address South Africa's environmental challenges and promote epistemic, social and environmental justice. The growing urgency of climate change and ecological crises further strengthens the case for this inclusion. Hence, recommendations are provided for the HMTT to consider this vital component in developing South Africa's history curriculum.

Methodological approach

This study adopts a conceptual and qualitative approach, grounded in critical inquiry. It draws mainly on the history CAPS documents for further education and training (Grades 10-12). These documents were carefully examined to understand their priorities, particularly their aims, content choices and teaching intentions. It focused on how the curriculum presents or omits environmental themes, historical relationships to land and IKS, using a purposive document analysis to guide this exploration. Decolonial perspectives shaped the analysis by foregrounding epistemic exclusion and coloniality in curriculum content, prompting a close reading of how IKS and histories of land are omitted and the rhizomatic approach informed the study's attention to non-linear, interconnected themes across content strands, allowing for the identification of silences and subtexts within the curriculum structure. The discussion in this paper is based on a close reading of curriculum policy documents, particularly the history CAPS document, alongside relevant scholarly publications in curriculum studies, environmental education and history education. Through conceptual and thematic analysis, informed by decolonial perspectives

and a rhizomatic lens, recurring patterns of exclusion, silencing and knowledge hierarchy were identified. While the paper does not draw on empirical data such as interviews, it offers a theoretically grounded critique of how environmental history is marginalised in curriculum content and broader epistemic structures.

Theoretical framework: Decolonial theory and the rhizomatic approach

Decolonial scholars, often Indigenous or First Nations people, argue that colonialism remains an ongoing structure, rather than a past event (Noxolo, 2017: 342-344). Decolonial theory critiques Western representations of the "other". It exposes how knowledge produced in the West is saturated with colonial power, sustaining an epistemic hierarchy that privileges Western ways of knowing while marginalising non-Western perspectives (Manning, 2021: 1204). Applying this lens to the exclusion of environmental history in South African curricula reveals how colonial power dynamics have shaped knowledge production and curriculum development. This lens highlights how including environmental history in the curriculum can disrupt colonial narratives, foreground African perspectives and create a more contextually relevant and epistemically just historical discourse.

The rhizomatic approach challenges linear, hierarchical structures of knowledge production and dissemination. Introduced by Deleuze and Guattari (1987), the rhizomatic approach serves as a metaphor for non-linear, interconnected ways of knowing, akin to plant roots' sprawling, unpredictable growth (Honan & Sellers, 2006). Rather than viewing knowledge as fixed and structured, the rhizome offers a framework for understanding knowledge, culture and society in fluid and dynamic ways. It is grounded in a philosophical stance that directly challenges traditional Western thought (Drumm, 2024). This paper draws on three key principles of the rhizomatic approach, namely connection, heterogeneity and non-linearity, to critique the exclusion of environmental history from the curriculum. These principles expose the limitations of Western ideologies that disconnect Africans from nature, reinforcing an education system that produces uncritical and environmentally unconscious learners.

The *decolonial theory and rhizomatic approach* offer a fresh and critical way to rethink South Africa's secondary school history curriculum. These perspectives encourage a more inclusive, flexible and contextually rich approach to teaching history. They also open the door for integrating environmental history to reflect the country's diverse historical, cultural and ecological realities.

Colonialism and apartheid in South Africa

Colonialism in South Africa marked the commencement of extensive environmental exploitation, which was closely tied to the dispossession of Indigenous communities across Southern Africa (Nyathi, 2025: 396 - 3999). European settlers introduced capitalist agricultural practices and mining industries, disrupting traditional land-use systems and ecosystems in pursuit of economic gain. Their interaction with these environments in the late nineteenth century produced one of the most dramatic transformations across Africa (Beinart & Delius, 2014: 669; Shanguhyia, 2023). This was because the colonial governments focused on resource extraction, which led to widespread deforestation, soil degradation and the displacement of local populations (Cebekhulu et al., 2024; Skosana, 2022).

The significant land dispossession occurred well before the Native Land Act of 1913 (Nyathi, 2025: 396), however, it intensified in the first half of the twentieth century by enforcing the 1913 and 1936 Land Acts. These laws allocated most arable land to white farmers, while confining Black communities to overcrowded and environmentally degraded homelands. Desmond (2015) observed that this dispossession ignored people's deep spiritual connection with the lands from which they were removed. Similarly, Skosana (2022) highlighted how, in South Africa's coalfields, people's heritage is reduced to a mere transaction, disregarding their spiritual ties to the land from which they are evicted. Supporting this, Kgatla (2013) concluded that these forced removals during the colonial and apartheid periods were deeply humiliating and dehumanising. The land dispossession also serves as evidence that the "scramble for Africa" was driven not only by colonial ambitions, but also by the exploitation of natural resources and the domination of African cultures (Munyai, 2020: 2). In South Africa, access to resources in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries was shaped by complex interactions between colonial political economies and environmental transformations. As social and cultural dynamics shifted, individuals adapted to new realities, often relying on forest resources for their livelihoods (Tropp, 2006).

Apartheid, formally introduced in 1948 by the National Party (NP) government, was rooted in the belief that whites and Blacks were so culturally distinct that they could not coexist harmoniously in a unified society. This belief fuelled fears that the numerically more substantial African population would eventually overpower and marginalise the white minority (Nattrass, 2017: 169). The NP proposed territorial separation as a solution,

dividing South Africa in a way that granted full citizenship to white settlers, while relegating Black South Africans to separate homelands known as Bantustans. These homelands, characterised by poverty and a lack of political autonomy, were designed to contain the Black population, while perpetuating economic dependence on white-dominated areas. The policy of 'divide and rule' was further entrenched by reviving 'tribal' authorities, which acted as extensions of the state to govern these homelands and foster divisions among Black communities. Blacks were excluded from meaningful participation in national politics, and according to Nattrass (2017), the government argued that they could not achieve political independence until they had economic strength, a goal that apartheid policies intentionally sabotaged.

Social and educational apartheid

The education of Blacks has a deeply contested history, spanning nearly three centuries within present-day South Africa. Seroto (2013) argues that a comprehensive understanding of Black education requires examining the broader socio-philosophical, political, religious and cultural forces that shaped the country. This is most evident in the formulation and implementation of Bantu Education, which institutionalised racial discrimination and economic marginalisation. At the heart of this policy was Dr Werner Eiselen, a key architect of Bantu Education and a passionate proponent of white supremacy. A member of the *Broederbond*, a secretive Afrikaner nationalist organisation, Eiselen believed Afrikaners were divinely ordained to rule South Africa (Seroto, 2013). This belief was reflected in the recommendations of the Commission he chaired, which aligned with the NP's apartheid agenda and reinforced racial hierarchies to sustain white minority rule.

The Commission on Native Education (1949), established under Eiselen's leadership, was a strategic move by the NP to use education as a mechanism of social control. The Commission's findings culminated in the Eiselen report (1951), which argued that Western education had given Africans unrealistic aspirations. The Eiselen report recommended redirecting Black education to prepare learners for their "appropriate" place in a segregated society, ensuring their continued economic and political subordination (Seroto, 2020: 108). It not only reinforced the apartheid ideology but actively structured it. As Soudien (2005) notes, the commission's recommendations established the philosophical and structural foundations for Bantu Education. The NP, concerned with the growing political consciousness of the Black working class, sought to contain Black aspirations through an education system designed to limit access to economic mobility and political participation. This policy of containment redefined Black education within the broader apartheid framework of segregation and socioeconomic exclusion (Soudien, 2005).

The Bantu Education Act of 1953 formalised this system, giving the apartheid government complete control over Black schools. All Black schools were required to register with the state, placing their existence at the discretion of the Minister of Education (Christie & Collines, 1982). The Act also centralised control over key aspects of Black education, including teacher appointments, curriculum development and governance. Christie and Collins (1982) note that this centralised control ensured that Blacks were denied access to an education that could empower them economically or politically, thus, perpetuating their marginalisation.

The historiography of school history curriculum in South Africa

History is crucial to understanding the past and present, and shaping the future and national identity. The history curriculum and classroom teaching have long been debated in South Africa, reflecting broader discussions about education and historiography. Traditionally, South African historiography has been shaped by distinct schools of thought, including the British imperialist, settler-colonialist, Afrikaner nationalist, liberal, revisionist or radical and African nationalist schools (Maluleka & Ledwaba, 2023). These historiographical perspectives have influenced the writing and teaching of history, determining what narratives are emphasised or omitted in the school curriculum.

Historically, the dominant narratives presented in South African classrooms have been primarily shaped by British imperialist and Afrikaner nationalist perspectives (Kallaway, 2012). This resulted in a Eurocentric approach, reinforcing colonial and apartheid-era ideologies. The HMTT acknowledged that the historiography of the school history curriculum had been well documented in academic discourses (Ndlovu et al., 2018). However, debates persist regarding how much history education has transformed to reflect a more inclusive and balanced perspective.

Over the years, scholars have examined shifts in the curriculum, notably the transition from an outcomes-based approach to a more content-driven model. Some researchers have explored whether these changes have ensured parity between skills development and historical content. In contrast, others have assessed how this shift has impacted learners' engagement and enjoyment of history as a subject (Ndlovu et al, 2018). Despite these reforms, history teaching in South Africa has primarily remained rooted in traditional fact-learning, emphasising rote memorisation rather than critical engagement (Bertram, 2020: 7). This Eurocentric and Afrikaner nationalist perspective has contributed to ongoing debates about the relevance and inclusivity of the curriculum.

Under apartheid, history was used as a tool for indoctrination, ensuring that learners internalised and perpetuated Western values. This legacy continues to shape contemporary debates on decolonising history education. While some scholars advocate overhauling the curriculum, others call for incremental revisions to address its Eurocentric bias. After 1994, the government sought to create a new national curriculum representative of all racial groups in South Africa (see Bertram, 2020). This process, termed "superficial cleansing of the inherited curriculum" by Jansen (1999: 57), aimed to eliminate racist and sexist elements from the educational framework.

Decolonising history requires a fundamental reappraisal of existing theories, concepts and Western epistemologies that constrain authentic learning and limit South Africa's ability to address contemporary challenges; teachers, academics and policymakers broadly agree that South African history classrooms remain tied to Western cultural norms, doing little to promote African histories, cultures and identities (Moloi et al., 2023; Ndlovu et al., 2018). This concern has also been echoed by former Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, who called for history to be made compulsory in all public secondary schools. Consequently, HMTT was established to explore how this transformation could be achieved.

The interest of colonial powers in *Nature*

Nature, colonialism and apartheid in South Africa have an inextricable relationship. Nature is an umbrella term encompassing all natural phenomena, including human and non-human resources. In South Africa, this includes (but is not limited to) gold, coal, diamonds and fertile lands. Natural resources such as forests, rangelands, lakes and coastal ecosystems are crucial for economic activities (Nelson, 2010). Kgari-Masondo (2013a) emphasises the importance of humans as part of nature, arguing that the relationship between humans and their environment is fundamental for achieving a holistic life (Kgari-Masondo, 2013a).

The 1913 Native Land Act is a pertinent example of the colonial exploitation of natural resources in South Africa. Indigenous communities were forcibly removed from their land and relegated to barren, unproductive areas. The infertile land amounted to only 7 per cent of the 93 per cent of land that was seized from Indigenous communities. This dispossession contributed to rural marginalisation, exploitation and the oppression of Blacks (Stull et al., 2015). Historically, elders and chiefs were crucial in managing community resources through established rules and traditions (Kameri-Mbote & Cullet, 1997: 27). However, colonial tenure policies and legislation shifted these roles, undermining traditional

governance systems. The extraction of resources enriched Europe, but it underdeveloped Africa (Munyai, 2020).

The systematic apartheid that is often discussed was underpinned by environmental apartheid, given the central role of natural resources in the colonial project. The exploitation of the environment enabled the establishment of unjust laws, policies and systems that legitimised the dispossession of black people's natural resources. Since the onset of colonialism and apartheid, the focus has been on transferring formal authority over land and resources from Indigenous people to national political jurisdictions (Nelson, 2010). This expropriation intensified inequalities that persist to date (Murombedzi, 2016).

Nyathi and Ajani (2023) contend that the devastation caused by land dispossession was immense, as the land was central to the survival and prosperity of Southern African communities in the pre-colonial period. Masuku and Shadrack (2023: 57) prefer the term "land looting" to "appropriation" as it highlights the socioeconomic injustices and the resulting food insecurities for Blacks. The colonial authorities' agenda of displacing Blacks is also evident in Kaziboni's (2024: 45-52) examination of water scarcity during apartheid and colonialism. Kaziboni (2024) argues that water governance was placed under white control, leading to unequal water distribution that excluded Blacks and jeopardised their livelihoods. This reflects an environmental injustice shielded by the Glen Grey Act of 1894, which prohibited Blacks from landownership and tied water access to property rights, which they did not have.

Kameri-Mbote and Cullet (1997) suggest that colonial authorities imposed the privatisation of property due to their flawed understanding of nature and indigenous management practices. This misunderstanding led to the imposition of Western practices, resulting in the mismanagement of natural resources. As Wynn et al. (2022) argue, the interest in environmental care has declined, partly due to economic growth models prioritising short-term development over long-term sustainability. This shift has contributed to widespread environmental mismanagement, including land degradation, deforestation and climate vulnerability. Within history education, this declining emphasis is reflected in the marginalisation of environmental history in the curriculum, weakening learners' ability to understand the historical roots of current ecological crises.

Moreover, relocating Blacks to barren lands projected an image of their inferiority. Stull et al. (2015) convincingly argue that colonial authorities sought to reinforce the notion of separate citizenship and the backwardness of Blacks by stripping them of their resources and relegating them to desolate areas. This narrative of Black inferiority was promoted in writings from the early nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

Despite these historical injustices, colonial laws and policies still influence the management of African natural resources (Kameri-Mbote & Cullet, 1997). This enduring influence is partly due to neglecting environmental perspectives in historical writing, shifting environmental issues to geographers. Nature cannot be studied separately from human interaction, since the two are intrinsically linked. The Western approach to compartmentalising nature and humanity fails to recognise this interconnectedness (Kgari-Masondo, 2013a). Solutions must be integrative rather than fragmented to promote ecological and social justice (Gardner, 2005). The fragmented approach to environmental issues is not Afrocentric, but a product of Western thought. The ideologies underpinning the separation of nature and humans must be critically interrogated and challenged. In a democratic society like South Africa, which prioritises inclusion and social and environmental justice, there is no place for ideologies that conflict with these principles.

Colonialism and apartheid were based on flawed perceptions of nature in African communities, and their legacies continue to shape South Africa. The ongoing controversy over forced removals highlights the need for inclusive solutions that actively involve affected communities. Integrating environmental history into history education is crucial for environmental progress, as studying history without it constitutes multiple injustices. According to Shivji (1998), nature has always been central to South African history, linking its use to power structures. Colonial ideologies should not be romanticised in a democratic South Africa, and learners must critically engage with these histories to understand contemporary complexities (Kgari-Masondo, 2013a).

Unpacking environmental history

Environmental history is a dynamic field within the humanities that examines the intricate relationship between human societies and their physical environments (Mauch & Robbin, 2014). It explores the dynamic interactions between humans and the natural environment over time, investigating how they have influenced ecological systems and human societies. The relationship between nature and humanity can be likened to a carefully woven tapestry, with each thread symbolising the profound interdependence between the two. It extends

beyond traditional historical narratives by integrating environmental dimensions into contemporary political, economic and cultural histories. According to O'Connor (1997), environmental history can be seen as the culmination of all previous histories, provided these histories account for environmental factors.

The environmental revolution unfolded uniquely in Africa, shaped significantly by apartheid and the contrasting perspectives of Black and white citizens in South Africa (Mauch & Robbin, 2014). This field draws on insights from literature and science to critically evaluate and analyse its subject matter (Atkinson, 1992). Kwashirai (2011) observes that African environmental historiography provides valuable lessons on the risks of preservationist and desiccation rhetoric and the misrepresentation of African people and landscapes by external technocratic authorities. Similarly, Carruthers (2004) highlights that African environmental history emerged from a robust social history tradition deeply rooted in environmental justice issues.

The significance of environmental history

Environmental history can be understood as a lens through which the development of capitalism and its associated political, economic, social, cultural and environmental revolutions are explored. It provides insights into the broader historical forces, connecting these elements with environmental changes (O'Connor, 1997). One of the key contributions of environmental history is its ability to offer a more nuanced interpretation of the past. It challenges traditional historical narratives by providing fresh perspectives that reinvigorate the study of history itself. This approach prevents history from becoming overly static, instead providing a reinterpretation of historical processes and their environmental dimensions (Mauch & Robbin, 2014).

Environmental history also addresses universal themes that transcend cultures, such as food production, property, power and the interconnectedness of human societies with their natural environments. As a global and transnational field, it traces the movement of ideas, goods and technologies across boundaries at different times. This enriches national histories and the broader environmental discourse, offering new insights into established historical themes (Carruthers, 2004). Environmental history would help learners gain the ability to critically engage with IKS, offering valuable perspectives on addressing contemporary environmental challenges rooted in historical injustices. Moreover, environmental history would foster critical thinking, ethical reflection, and an appreciation of human resilience in response to ecological changes. It would equip learners to navigate modern environmental

challenges, while providing a deeper understanding of how historical human-environment interactions have shaped contemporary society. Including environmental history would enrich the history CAPS, empowering learners to critically engage with the evolution of environmental issues across colonial, apartheid and post-apartheid periods.

The historical interactions between Indigenous African communities and European colonists further underscore the need for environmental history in the curriculum. Colonial policies curtailed traditional hunting practices, encouraged concentrated village settlements and intensified labour migration, reshaping ecosystems. For instance, as Beinart (2000) notes, colonial interventions exacerbated the effects of the nineteenth century Ngoni invasions by expanding areas dominated by bush, wildlife and tsetse fly populations. However, such histories remain marginal in school history textbooks, obscuring a more nuanced understanding of Indigenous communities' encounters with white settlers and the environmental transformations that followed.

Other key themes of environmental history—such as forced removals, dispossession and the creation of protected areas like game reserves—are also camouflaged within the current curriculum. These topics are often presented simplistically without fully engaging with their environmental and social consequences on affected communities and ecosystems. The curriculum, which includes environmental history, could give learners a deeper and more critical perspective on how historical processes have shaped contemporary environmental and social landscapes in South Africa.

Environmental history, VUCA conditions and curriculum development

Global climate change is one of the most pressing environmental challenges in the contemporary world. As we recognise humanity's capacity to reshape the planet's future, environmental history offers a critical framework for understanding the human agency involved in such changes. This field is essential in shifting perspectives on the human-environment relationship (Carruthers, 2004). Considering the escalating climate and ecological crises, environmental history is essential for countering harmful historical distortions and providing the knowledge and emotional resilience needed to confront these urgent challenges. As Holmes et al., (2020) emphasise, environmental history helps one navigate the complex environmental issues of our time by offering deep insights into past environmental practices and their implications.

The call for including environmental history in the curriculum is not a mere rhetorical appeal. It is premised on social, environmental and cognitive justice as well as the environmental consciousness of learners. We live in a world of chaos, unpredictability and perplexity. VUCA describes this chaotic and unstable world (Horstmeyer, 2019). The acronym VUCA was first used in the US military college after the end of the Cold War (Stein, 2021; Taskan et al., 2022). It became dominant in the business sector, especially in leadership scholarship (see Bennett and Lemoine, 2014; Kaivo-oja & Lauraeus, 2018; Putro et al., 2022; Sembiring, 2023; Setiawati, 2021).

Over time, using the acronym VUCA has also become evident in educational scholarship. It is also worth noting that most of these studies mainly recognise emerging technologies and the twenty-first century context as the drivers of the VUCA conditions. Admittedly, these factors challenge many education systems and educational policies. This paper, however, diverges from these factors. It draws from environmental issues such as the propellers of the VUCA conditions in South Africa and the commitment to decolonising the history curriculum. These issues stimulate VUCA conditions in that environmental issues rapidly disrupt many South Africans' livelihoods. Although environmental issues have traditionally been considered scientific issues, this paper positions them within the social and humanities modalities and addresses them accordingly.

In the VUCA acronym, *Volatile* speaks to the environments characterised by rapid and sudden change and the inability to predict or record patterns (Taskan et al., 2022). The speed and pace of events and changes are fast-paced and rapid. In the context of the highlighted environmental issues, these issues occur at a concerning rate. Interestingly, these environmental issues are historical, yet when they resurface, or the effects of the historical causes materialise, the history CAPS is not linked or contextualised with the historical events that have contributed to these.

Uncertainty is the inability to predict incoming or possible occurrences. Uncertainty describes the unclearness of the significance of an event in contributing to a meaningful cause (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014). This leads to problems in determining what the future of the issues at hand may look like. Accordingly, with the colonised history curriculum and the exclusion of environmental history, understanding and predicting environmental problems that may occur in future becomes difficult. For example, Nyathi (2025) and Nyathi and Ajani (2023) explore the issue of the forced removals of the Dukuduku community from their forest, describing the dynamics around land disposition, the interaction between nature and the Indigenous people and land claims. These issues are historical, therefore, it is

essential to revert to environmental history to predict or devise solutions, leading to the key historical events that have shaped the current land and claim crisis (Bennett & Lemoine, 2014). Beckman et al. (2016: 210) argue that individuals who are differently affected by environmental issues do not interrogate the interests of the assurances of corporations. As a result, they become vulnerable to environmental uncertainties. Similarly, suppose learners, especially those from communities such as Dukuduku, do not question the historical interests of colonial authorities in their land. As a result, they will likely pass on this environmental injustice and uncertainties to the next generation.

Complexities allude to the intricacies of the issues and events at hand. Beckman et al. (2016) explain a complex situation as one that has several parts and aspects that interconnect, making it difficult to understand. Following this, complexities are reflected by the difficulties of understanding and determining the causes of the current environmental issues, evident due to the interconnectedness of social, economic and political issues and systems such as colonialism and apartheid. Finally, ambiguity accentuates the difficulties in handling issues because of the multiplicity of the dynamics of the problem. It occurs when multiple viable solutions have unclear interpretations, causing haziness in the reality of these issues (Taskan et al., 2022). In the case of environmental issues, ambiguity is highlighted by multiple suggestions, recommendations and solutions for environmental problems. Voices emanate from all different aspects of life. While some propose solutions and insights from a Western-oriented perspective, others explore the possibility of drawing from the African IKS to address contemporary environmental problems.

The environmental issues within the VUCA conditions make it challenging to justify the epistemicide of environmental history in the history CAPS. Environmental history is excluded from the curriculum, prioritising Western-centric content over indigenous perspectives. Arguably, to improve future predictability, many seek to expand their knowledge, overlooking that growing complexity naturally restricts what can be known (Schick et al., 2017). Sometimes, the knowability may be muddy, leading to an inconsistent understanding of being. These are essential areas to decolonise by bringing environmental history into the history CAPS. In addressing these injustices, the focus should be on these issues, and understanding VUCA conditions that nurture and stimulate these issues is essential.

The continued exclusion of environmental history will produce learners who lack a deeper understanding and appreciation of the impacts of socioeconomic and political events on the environment (Kgari-Masondo, 2013a). In line with the above logic, it

can be argued that curriculum development must consider that learners need vision, understanding, clarity and agility to navigate environmental issues in the VUCA world and develop curriculum policies that prioritise these attributes. The consideration of environmental history in the history curriculum could enable learners to understand the role of the environment in shaping historical events. The inclusion of environmental history is essential, because it will allow learners to understand the impact of segregationist policies and forced removals on the environment, the livelihoods of Blacks, especially those who were displaced during colonial and apartheid periods, and the poverty and destruction of cultural and economic systems. Lastly, McNeill (2010) contends that while climate change necessitates scientific and technical solutions, historical narratives can also play a vital role in shaping public consciousness. Stories of past environmental challenges and disasters can prompt societies to reconsider their consumption habits, while more optimistic histories can inspire action toward a sustainable future.

Environmental history and the history CAPS

Human activities have significantly altered natural landscapes, ecosystems and water sources, leading to severe environmental consequences (Ndumeya & Maluleka, 2024). These disruptions have contributed to increased natural disasters, as recently seen in KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa, where unpredictable weather patterns have caused widespread damage to infrastructure and loss of life (Ndumeya & Maluleka, 2024). While environmental education and geography have played a crucial role in disseminating knowledge about ecological issues and natural processes, they alone are insufficient. Addressing contemporary environmental challenges requires a historical understanding of how human-environment interactions have shaped landscapes over time.

Scholars have argued that environmental history should be included in the history CAPS. They emphasise that history education must actively contribute to environmental awareness and sustainability efforts. Ndumeya and Maluleka (2024) advocate for incorporating histories that explore how human interactions with the environment have contributed to atmospheric changes, climate shifts, and evolving weather patterns. Such an approach would give learners a more comprehensive perspective on environmental change, linking past human activities to present-day ecological crises.

Similarly, Kgari-Masondo (2013a) critiques the history CAPS for neglecting socio-environmental history. The author argues that under colonial and apartheid regimes, education was not designed to foster critical thinking, problem-solving or active

participation in environmental and political decision-making. Instead, it served as a tool of control, ensuring that Black learners remained passive and subservient to white rulers. This legacy continues to shape the curriculum, where environmental history remains largely absent, despite CAPS aiming to address environmental issues and cultivate responsible global citizens. Given South Africa's historical struggles over land, natural resources and environmental justice, this omission undermines a holistic understanding of the nation's past.

William Beinart (2000) echoes these concerns, arguing that African environmental history provides crucial insights into colonial encounters and power dynamics between colonisers and the colonised. Beinart (2000) highlights how this field has begun challenging colonial narratives that celebrated Western knowledge, while portraying Africans as reckless in their environmental practices. Environmental history would help learners develop a more nuanced understanding of historical and contemporary environmental struggles, fostering critical engagement with land use, conservation and sustainability issues.

A shift towards integrating environmental history into the history CAPS

The history CAPS is underpinned by values that recognise and commit to social and environmental justice. It stipulates its commitment to instilling human rights, inclusivity and environmental and social justice. The curriculum also proclaims that history supports democratic citizens by encouraging responsibility in leadership and civics, which includes addressing current social and environmental issues. Furthermore, history CAPS claims to value IKS, referencing the rich South African history and heritage. In addition, history CAPS commits to prepare and develop locally and globally accountable learners. These commitments indicate that history CAPS recognises the importance of environmental justice and consciousness as well as the holistic development of learners in these areas during these VUCA times. History CAPS also acknowledges and validates the significance of progress in fighting for a socially just society driven by humanistic principles and values.

These commitments, however, are not evident in the history content and teaching, because environmental history is excluded from the curriculum. There is a lack of clarity on the engagement of Indigenous communities with the environment (Kgari-Masondo, 2013a). Scholars maintain that the silencing and erasing of environmental history are concerning, especially considering that the curricula in post-apartheid South Africa have undergone cleansing. The development of the history school curriculum must centralise

environmental history to achieve social and environmental justice. The curriculum cannot be decolonised, while the fundamental histories that continue to impact present-day South Africa are marginalised. From environmental history, learners must be exposed to the knowledge that will help them build environmental consciousness.

Considering the role of environmental history in South African history, it is difficult to understand how the history CAPS can claim value in the IKS. Understanding the significance of African Indigenous knowledge necessitates an appreciation of its cultural heritage and ecological framework (Obiora & Emeka, 2015). IKS cannot be understood and embraced without the community and the environment in which they are produced (Abah et al., 2015). The lack of IKS in history CAPS concludes that it is incomplete, even in cases where the sight of this knowledge is addressed from the Western perspective (see Kgari-Masondo, 2013a). The calls to return to African Indigenous knowledge also require environmental history, and to a particular extent, the calls for the substantial use of natural resources require environmental history. It is necessary to rehabilitate Black environmental activism. Therefore, the exclusion of environmental history may impede progress in Africanising the curriculum with African Indigenous Knowledge.

The commitment to civic responsibility and leadership in the history CAPS is questionable. Encouraging civic responsibility around current social and environmental concerns must begin at home with issues that affect local communities. The exclusion of environmental history in this area implies that civic responsibility conceptualised in CAPS excludes environmental consciousness and accountability, which means that the curriculum will produce environmentally unconscious leaders. Hence, concerns are raised following the environmental policies that South Africa has committed to. Furthermore, for learners to be global citizens and competent in international matters, they must also be informed about their histories, contemporary issues and connections.

Table 1 shows history topics prescribed in history CAPS for Grades 10-12, in which environmental history should be included. In Grade 10, for instance, environmental history can be introduced through topics like *The world around 1600* and *Expansion and conquest during the 15th–18th centuries*. These themes provide an opportunity to explore how early civilisations interacted with their environments, including the impact of European exploration on indigenous lands and natural resources. The transformations in Southern Africa after 1750 and colonial expansion after 1750, further allow discussions on environmental changes caused by colonial settlement, land dispossession and resource exploitation. The South African War and Union can also examine how conflicts over land

and resources shaped historical developments and later resulted in new policies like the Land Act. This could further address the issues of environmental and social justice as scores of people were displaced, detaching them from the ancestral lands they had occupied for decades before the enactment of such legislation.

In Grade 11, environmental history can be woven into economic and political transformations. The study of Communism in Russia (1900-1940) and Capitalism in the USA (1900-1940) can incorporate discussions on industrialisation, resource consumption and environmental degradation. This could address the rapid industrialisation in Russia and the amalgamation of state farms that resulted in landscape changes. How did the weather play in favour of, or against the people during this time? Learners could explore how industrialisation in the Soviet Union during the first half of the twentieth century was influenced by, and in turn affected, weather conditions. This theme, *Ideas of race in the late 19th and 20th centuries,* offers a chance to explore how racial ideologies influenced land dispossession and environmental and social injustices. Australia could be used as an example to examine how the Aborigines were displaced and how that contributed to the global environmental challenges of this time. Similarly, Nationalism in South Africa, the Middle East and Africa can highlight how struggles for independence were often tied to control over land and natural resources, and it could offer insights into how the legislation and their opposition thereof impacted the landscapes and environmental issues in Southern Africa in general and South Africa in particular. The history of *Apartheid in South Africa (1940s-1960s)* can be enriched by examining environmental discrimination, such as forced removals and the establishment of racially segregated landscapes.

In Grade 12, environmental history can deepen learners' understanding of global and local environmental struggles. The *Cold War* can include analysing how geopolitical conflicts influenced environmental policies and resource extraction. *Independent Africa* provides an avenue to discuss how the newly independent nations dealt with environmental challenges, resource management and the injustices of the former colonial governments in their territories. *Civil Society Protests (1950s-1990s)* and *Civil Resistance (1970s-1980s)* in South Africa can integrate discussions on environmental activism and the role of communities in resisting environmental injustices. Finally, *The coming of democracy in South Africa and coming to terms with the past* can address environmental justice and policies to redress historical land and resource dispossession. The end of the Cold War and a New Global World Order (1989-Present) can allow learners to explore contemporary global environmental challenges, including climate change and sustainable development.

Table 1: Prescribed History grades 10-12 content

Grade 10	Grade 11	Grade 12
1. The world around 1600	1. Communism in Russia, 1900 to 1940	1 The Cold War
2. Expansion and conquest during the 15th -18th centuries	2. Capitalism and the USA, 1900 to 1940	2 Independent Africa
3. The French revolution	3. Ideas of race in the late 19th and 20th centuries	3 Civil society protests 1950s to 1990s
4 Transformations in Southern Africa after 1750	4. Nationalisms: South Africa, the Middle East and Africa	4 Civil resistance, 1970s to 1980s in South Africa
5 Colonial expansion after 1750	5 Apartheid in South Africa 1940s to 1960s	5 The coming of democracy in South Africa and coming to terms with the past
6 The South African War and Union		6 The end of the Cold War and a new global world order 1989 to present.

Conclusion

This paper has critically discussed the colonial and apartheid landscapes, examining the role of nature during these times in a responsive manner. The discussion has demonstrated mainly that nature played a crucial role in both pre-colonial communities in South Africa and colonial authorities. For the colonial authorities, control over nature was equivalent to power and authority. Hence, many of the policies, legislation and systems as well as the exploitation of Africans discussed in this paper, were intended to protect nature to fuel colonial greed and the subjugation of Blacks in Southern Africa. The historical tracing of the neglect and exclusion of environmental history from the history curriculum and the significance of environmental history itself justifies the epistemicide of environmental history. The history curriculum has historically been used as an instrument for many political agendas; hence, environmental history has often been excluded because it unveils the extreme brutality and cruelty of the colonial authorities. Given the environmental challenges in the VUCA South Africa, this paper called for the inclusion of environmental history in the history curriculum to equip learners to be environmentally conscious and competent in addressing environmental challenges in the VUCA world. It argued that it is essential for a *decolonised* history curriculum to incorporate environmental history. The paper also offered a detailed discussion demonstrating how environmental history can be included.

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Centring African Vocabularies & Terminologies in Representing the Past: Insights from South African School History Textbooks

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Abstract

Historical representation, especially in school history textbooks within the African diaspora and other settler-colonial societies, has been shaped by settler grammar. In detail, settler grammar in history refers to how historical narratives are constructed, often relying heavily on colonial languages. These languages influence narratives that uphold colonial

perspectives of history. As a result, African ways of knowing and representing their past become marginalised or erased. Along with these colonial languages come colonial vocabularies and terminologies, which play a central role in defining and categorising the world through Eurocentric viewpoints. In the South African context, the writing of history textbooks has been influenced by English vocabularies and terminologies. Through a critical discourse analysis of three selected history textbooks, this paper explores how the development of post-apartheid history textbooks continues to be shaped by settler grammar. Using decolonial theory, the paper argues that it is essential to prioritise African vocabularies and terminologies when constructing African historical narratives. It further contends that historical narratives engaging with colonial discourses should avoid the use of passive language, as it tends to obscure, sanitise, and romanticise the violence inherent in colonialism. The findings show that, because the English language has been universalised and depends on Eurocentric worldviews, it cannot fully capture the nuances, core meanings and deep cultural aspects embedded in African vocabularies and terms when representing their history.

Keywords: Indigenous; Representation; History; African; Textbooks; Coloniality

Introduction

Research on settler grammar in history education, spanning from basic to tertiary levels, has been conducted in other settler-colonial contexts and the Global South (Calderon, 2014; Cutrara, 2018; Da Silva & Klausen, 2024; Keynes et al., 2021; McGregor, 2017). For example, writing in the context of the United States, Calderon (2014) argues that settler grammar reproduces colonial discourses and narratives in the social sciences curriculum. Building on the work of Weitzer (1990), Calderon (2014) suggests that settler grammar "makes Indigenous peoples absent by promoting a vision of a 'new' world built by immigrants, while also making Indigenous peoples present through the political and legal mechanisms that demonstrate colonial superiority" (Cutrara, 2018: 257). In other words, the discursive structure of settler grammar plays a crucial role in sustaining coloniality, particularly through its impact on historical narratives and ideologies in history and social studies education (Calderon, 2014; Cutrara, 2018).

In South Africa, following the largely youth-led movements of 2015/2016, known as #MustFall, the colonial and settler language has been questioned by scholars through a decolonial turn as a step toward Africanising history education (Bam et al., 2018; Godsell, 2019; Maluleka, 2021). These movements highlighted deep-seated issues with

the vocabularies and terminologies that shape the epistemological foundations of history education (Bam et al., 2018; Godsell, 2019; Maluleka & Ramoupi, 2022). Mbembe (2015) insightfully notes that these rebellious movements, which started with #RhodesMustFall, aimed to disrupt and challenge colonial legacies maintained through public archives such as statues. These colonial statues in public spaces play an essential role in "overlapping roles in territorial formation, public memory, social control, and necropolitics" (Mbembe, 2019, in Labadi, 2024: 319). Arguably, what Mbembe (2019) expresses is that colonial statues like that of Cecil John Rhodes symbolise the concept of epistemicide. De Sousa Santos (2005) in Sonkqayi (2024: 1307) describes epistemicide as "a systematic destruction of knowledges and sciences that are not in alignment with the dominant paradigm, which have traditionally been used to pursue a sovereign path of development".

Moreover, drawing on Bennett (2007), epistemicide has sustained the notion that African vocabularies and terminologies are insufficient to represent and narrate history. Their rejection is based on the idea that their existence cannot be incorporated within the dominant paradigm of valid knowledge. As a result, #FeesMustFall, which followed #RhodesMustFall, became a tool to challenge these obsolete forms of knowledge or Eurocentric epistemologies (Griffiths, 2019; Mbembe, 2015). In history education, this movement marked the start of a journey toward epistemic justice to counter the settler grammar that still influences the field (Maluleka, 2021; Maluleka & Ramoupi, 2022). Shabangu (2024) echoes this perspective, arguing that portraying African history should reflect their experiences through Indigenous ideas of history. Here, Shabangu (2024) was addressing the epistemicide in history education caused by "European dominance of what constitutes valid and acceptable knowledge" (Dei, 2008: 245). This hegemonic view of knowledge positions the settler language in history education as a universal way of representing the past. Clearly, colonial vocabularies and terminologies rooted in objective, linear and normative thinking (see Botha et al., 2021; Godsell, 2019) have "…set up interpretive frameworks that make it difficult to think outside these frames" (Mbembe, 2016: 33), which Shabangu (2024) argues should be challenged.

It becomes clear that the writing of history textbooks in South Africa continues to be influenced by settler grammar. This paper critically examines the concept of settler grammar, especially as it appears in colonial vocabularies and terminologies. Consequently, the paper aims to explore strategies for overcoming the ongoing influence of settler grammar in shaping historical knowledge. The structure of the paper is as follows: First, it analyses the presence and role of settler grammar during the colonial and apartheid eras. Then, it

considers how elements of this grammar have persisted in post-apartheid history textbooks. Second, the paper introduces epistemic decolonisation as the theoretical framework for questioning settler grammar. Third, it describes the methodological approach used in the study, focusing on the dynamics of power in constructing historical narratives within school textbooks. This is followed by a presentation and analysis of the data, interpreted through the chosen theoretical and methodological frameworks. Finally, the paper offers critical reflections and suggests potential ways to challenge and move beyond settler grammar in history textbooks.

The nature of settler grammar in history textbooks, from apartheid to a democracy

The aim of this section is not to examine the overall nature of history education, but rather to highlight specific manifestations of settler grammar as reflected in the literature on history textbooks.

History textbooks during the colonial-apartheid period, 1658-1993

Settler grammar in history textbooks during the colonial-apartheid[1] era was justified and broadly accepted under the assumption that African ideas of history are insufficient to frame the past and narratives (Maluleka & Ramoupi, 2022; Seroto, 2015; Shabangu, 2024). According to Seroto (2015: 169-170), "the history of Indigenous people was largely ignored by textbook authors and, where it was included, it was retold by the settler colonial powers". As a result, the history of Africans became oversimplified through colonial stereotypes (Chernis, 1990; Du Preez, 1983). For example, colonial terms like 'Kaffir'[2] and 'uncivilised' were primarily used to describe Africans in textbooks, serving to impose an identity of inferiority (Chernis, 1990; Shabangu, 2024). A textbook titled: '*South Africa and the British Empire: A Course of Lessons for the Cape Matriculation History Syllabus*', authored by AS Bleby in 1912, discusses the expansion of the British Empire and promotes the view that African ways of life, perceived as 'backward', could be transformed through integration

[1] In this paper, the term colonial-apartheid is used to describe the historical period spanning from the onset of colonial rule in 1652 to the end of apartheid in 1994, marked by South Africa's first democratic elections. However, the paper places particular emphasis on the period during which history textbooks were produced for educational purposes, beginning in approximately 1658. Although South Africa experienced multiple phases of colonisation, initially under Dutch control, followed by British rule, and later by Afrikaner dominance, this study conceptualises colonisation as a continuous process driven by European powers.

[2] The term 'Kaffir' in South Africa is deeply offensive and pejorative. Historically, it was primarily used by colonial settlers to refer to Africans in a derogatory manner, implying that they were inherently barbaric and uncivilised.

into colonial rule. This shows that the history textbook relied on Eurocentric vocabularies and terms when describing Africans. Regarding their 'backwardness', Bleby (1912: 189) suggested that "…the only alternative with the Kaffir (sic) was to conquer and repel him, or to civilise and bring him under colonial control". This aligns with Mbembe's (2019) assertion that settlers create public memories that serve colonial narratives, perpetuating the idea that Africans do not belong to the world of civilisation and, therefore, require a 'white man's intervention'.

Language played a crucial role in these textbooks, especially in constructing derogatory narratives about Africans. It also became a tool to uphold the colonial languages in South Africa. According to Maluleka and Ramoupi (2022), language became part of linguistic imperialism, which fostered settler grammar. During British colonial rule, South Africa experienced a sense of anglicisation, reflected in the history textbooks that propagated British values and norms, often referred to as 'British ideas of civilisation' (Chernis, 1990). EB Sargent, who served as the education advisor from around 1900 to 1910, explicitly stated in a report dated 30 June 1901, that "English must be the paramount, and indeed, the only language throughout South Africa…I have therefore determined to propose that English shall be the medium of instruction on" (Chernis, 1990: 160). What Sargent advocated was the promotion of a colonial discourse that aimed to establish English as a universal language, as noted by Calderon (2014).

Eurocentric perspectives further shaped the representation of the past in history textbooks. The settler grammar, which framed, for example, histories of colonialism, conquest and land theft, relied on vocabularies and terms that justified settler presence. History textbooks that explore the relationship between the Indigenous people at the Cape (i.e., the KhoiKhoi) and Dutch colonial settlers from 1652 to late 1663, portray the conflicts between the groups as neutral and fair. According to Nishino (2011), this portrayal overlooks the agency of these individuals in their resistance against colonial 'expansion'. Instead, their relationship with the colonial settlers is limited to trade and livestock theft, with the settlers positioned as the leading figures in these narratives (Nishino, 2011; Seroto, 2015). An excerpt from a textbook by BE Paynter, written in 1968, titled: '*A New Course in History Standard 6*', which is worth quoting in length, states that:

> *… Van Riebeeck had arrived before the winter rains and the Kaapmans and the 'tobacco thieves', who periodically visited the [Table] Bay with their herds of cattle and sheep in search of grazing, were not there. However, he was able to obtain a few cattle from wandering Hottentots … and much bartering took place. A piece of copper wire or a*

> *roll of tobacco as long as the distance from the sheep's nose to the tip of its tail was the price of a sheep. The Hottentots were also eager to exchange their animals for beads, mirrors and wine. But the Hottentots were angry that the Whites had come to take their pastures. They sometimes stole back the cattle they had sold. Even Harry, with whom the Commander [van Riebeeck] was friendly, proved treacherous. One Sunday while the people were engaged in worship, he and his people killed the cattle herd and vanished with a large number of cattle. Eventually, van Riebeeck sent a bartering expedition further inland, and they obtained cattle and sheep from the larger Hottentot clans.* (Paynter, 1968: 94)

The extract engages with what Du Preez (1983), Chernis (1990) and Calderon (2014) referred to as the oversimplification of history, where the Africans in these narratives became absent while demonstrating colonial superiority. To achieve that, these narratives were framed using colonial linguistic strategies that served to reinforce European perspectives. The settler grammar in the above extract is unpacked by Nishino (2011: 86), who observes that it refers to "the Dutch settlers' conduct with terms such as 'obtain' and 'barter' to make their 'trade' seem neutral, fair, and mutually agreed between the Dutch and the Khoikhoi. The text describes the Khoikhoi as 'eager to exchange'. However, they are introduced as 'tobacco thieves' from the beginning, although the text fails to explain the origins of this reputation".

Post-apartheid history textbooks, 1994-20211

When the newly elected government, the African National Congress (ANC), took power from the apartheid regime, it was anticipated that it would address the issue of settler grammar in the history textbooks (Engelbrecht, 2006; Polakow-Suransky, 2002). However, several scholars have raised the point that the writing of textbooks continues to grapple with the coloniality of settler grammar and its epistemological foundations, which are rooted in Western modernity (Godsell, 2019; Maluleka, 2021; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018; Seroto, 2015; Shabangu, 2024). In other words, the revisions that have been taking place since the advent of democracy still do not reflect the historiographical advances in African history. For example, narratives about the history of South Africa continued to place settlers as the main focus of life in the 'Cape Colony', which overlooks the fact that African societies were already established in the region (Seroto, 2015). Even the naming of the region, 'Cape Colony', relies on colonial terms that suppress the naming systems that had been in place in the region. This is epitomised in a textbook written by J Bottaro, P Visser and N Worden in 2005 titled '*Oxford in Search of History. Grade 10 Learner's Book*'. An extract from the

textbook mentions that:

> *The main aim of the Dutch East India Company was to gain control of the spice trade with the east. They managed this by taking control of the Spice Islands from the Portuguese. They established their headquarters at Batavia on the island of Java. The VOC had a powerful army and fleet and captured Sri Lanka and several ports in India from the Portuguese… Within 20 years the Dutch decided to make the Cape a permanent settlement. This was influenced by rivalry with other European powers: the French were showing interest in the Cape, and had tried to capture Saldanha Bay to the north. So the VOC, which had started off as reluctant colonizers, became the rulers of a colony in Africa.* (Bottaro et al., 2005: 78)

According to Seroto (2015), the above extract is rooted in settler grammar, as it presents the history of Africans as beginning with the arrival of settlers at the Cape. This is a colonial narrative that assumes the settlers discovered the Cape, implying it was uninhabited (Chisholm, 2004; Da Cruz, 2005; Seroto, 2015). This aligns with the "Eurocentric, especially the Afrikaner, view that South Africa's history is the history of European settlers" (Nishino, 2011: 86). The issue with this form of settler grammar is that it ignores African histories that existed long before settlers arrived at the Cape (Bam, 1996; Seroto, 2015).

The discursive structures shaping narratives in history textbooks continue to depend on the English language. Ramoupi (2014) describes this as a missed opportunity in post-apartheid society to incorporate African languages into history education. The author references Ngũgĩ wa Thiong'o, who argues that African history should be written in African languages, rather than in colonial languages like English (Wa Thiong'o, 1986). For Wa Thiong'o (1986: 3), a complete rejection of colonial languages is necessary since their imposition led to a "cultural bomb… [meant to] annihilate Indigenous peoples' languages, environments, and heritages". Maluleka and Ramoupi (2022) maintain that relying on colonial languages in history often leads to linguicide. While in South Africa, English promotes Anglonormativity (see McKinney, 2016), the outright rejection of it is unnecessary, as the language has become naturalised in African societies (Jeyifo, 2018), thus, facilitating easy access to the epistemology of the past amongst Africans. Nonetheless, what should be challenged is the dominance of English, as some African narratives and historical concepts cannot be fully understood or expressed through English alone. This is important for Africans, because language is a "reliable source in understanding the thoughts and experiences of the societies which speak it, particularly in relation to their past and the present" (Maseko, 2018: 36).

Furthermore, an excerpt from '*Viva History: Learner's Book. Grade 10*', written by KL Angier, JT Hobbs, EA Horner, R.L. Mowatt, G. Nattrass, and JA Wallace in 2011, reveals that the skills of African people were often misunderstood because of relying solely on English when recording their history. The textbook states that:

> *The first Dutch sent by the VOC were under the command of Jan van Riebeeck and they reached Table Bay in the Cape on 6 April 1652. Van Riebeeck built a fort to protect the Company's employees and fought two wars with the indigenous Khoikhoi people. A five-pointed stone castle was built from where the VOC governed and administered the colony. Over time a number of Dutch artisans and craftsmen such as carpenters, blacksmiths, tailors and cobblers came to settle around the fort and a small town developed. It was called Cape Town.* (Angier et al., 2011: 91)

The text above aligns with a settler perspective by highlighting that the KhoiKhoi people possessed the necessary survival skills consistent with their social and economic structures. Seroto (2015: 176) emphasises that the views presented above conform to the "Eurocentric view as the dominant perspective for constructing the world economy. Indigenous people are depicted as lacking skills, which suggests that one reason for the colonisation of the Cape of Good Hope was the transfer of skills to indigenous people." Moreover, for these settler narratives to be credible and trustworthy, authentic vocabularies that truly reflect African history are marginalised, thus, excluding Africans from the narrative (Weitzer, 1990). For instance, the historiography detailing the socio-economic activities of the KhoiKhoi and San—such as pottery-making and trading ivory and cattle with sailors for iron hoops and brass, was disregarded (Marks, 1972; Mountain, 2003; Seroto, 2015).

Theoretical foundation: Epistemic decolonisation

This paper draws on Mignolo's (2009) concept of epistemic decolonisation as its theoretical foundation for interrogating the settler grammar that continues to shape the way narratives are constructed in history textbooks. Rather than accepting Eurocentric ways of knowing as universal, epistemic decolonisation serves as a tool to challenge and disrupt these dominant frameworks (Griffiths, 2019). It critiques and seeks to move beyond forms of epistemic oppression and violence (Godsell & Maluleka, 2025; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). Mignolo (2009) and Fataar (2018) argue that the assumption of a singular, universal knowledge system—rooted in Western epistemology—must be questioned. In this context, epistemic decolonisation emerges as a form of resistance against the Western knowledge systems

that the #MustFall movements sought to confront (Griffiths, 2019). In essence, this paper employs epistemic decolonisation as a direct response to the #MustFall movements, which called for urgent redress of epistemic injustices in history education (see Fricker, 2007; Maluleka, 2021). Addressing these injustices requires recognising the legitimacy and equal validity of diverse knowledge systems and allowing freedom to theorise from those perspectives (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018, in Tobi, 2020).

Consequently, this paper advocates for epistemic disobedience (Mignolo, 2009) as a challenge to settler grammar—the persistent framework that assumes a universal structure for narrating the past using only Eurocentric vocabularies and terminologies. Through epistemic decolonisation, the aim is to move beyond the 'zero point epistemology' (Mignolo, 2009), the belief in a single, objective way of representing history that applies across all cultures (Shabangu, 2024). This approach also addresses forms of epistemic violence such as Anglonormativity, epistemicide, linguicide and linguistic domination (Maluleka & Ramoupi, 2022; McKinney, 2017). Confronting these issues would not only ensure a more accurate and authentic representation of African people using their vocabularies and terminologies, it would also promote epistemic justice. This, in turn, supports a broader diversification of the language and frameworks used to narrate the past, contributing to the rehumanisation of African subjects (Godsell & Maluleka, 2025; Mkhize, 2018). Ultimately, such a shift moves one away from vocabularies and terminologies that "tell us far less about those who are being represented [in history textbooks] than they [do] about the preconceptions and prejudices of those engaged in the act of representing" (Ogot, 2009: 2).

Methodological considerations

This is a conceptual paper that analyses confined, government-approved history textbooks that are widely used in South African classrooms (Godsell & Maluleka, 2025; Nishino, 2011). The paper aims to expose settler grammar, reinforced by the coloniality of knowledge, in three Grade 10 Curriculum Assessment Policy Statements (CAPS) history textbooks. The coloniality the paper seeks to untangle is rooted in the discursive structures of English, which create epistemic inequalities (Maldonado-Torres, 2007; Maluleka, 2021) through vocabularies and terminologies shaping history. To gain a nuanced understanding of how colonial discursive structures manifest—explicitly linked to ideas of Western superiority and the perceived ability to shape history—the paper uses critical discourse analysis. According to Martin and Wodak (2003: 6), critical discourse analysis is "fundamentally

interested in analysing opaque as well as transparent structural relationships of dominance, discrimination, power and control as manifested in language". This paper employs critical discourse analysis to examine how language reinforces settler grammar, thus, contributing to the dominance of Western vocabularies and terminologies in historical narratives. In parallel with epistemic decolonisation, the paper investigates how discursive formations and linguistic choices sustain Anglonormativity in the writing of history textbooks.

As mentioned, three history textbooks approved by the Department of Basic Education were selected for analysis. These textbooks were chosen because they serve as primary sources that allow for a purposeful analysis of settler grammar. Their selection is based on the fact that history textbooks function as tools for spreading colonial vocabularies and terminologies when narrating history (Da Cruz, 2005; Seroto, 2015)., below, provides a tabular representation of the selected South African school history textbooks for analysis:

Table 1: An outline of selected Grade 10 school history textbooks.

Dataset	Author(s)	Description	Year
Textbook 1	B Johanneson, M Fernandez, B Roberts, M Jacobs and Y Seleti	Focus History: Grade 10: Learner's Book, Maskew Miller Longman, South Africa	2011
Textbook 2	J Bottaro, P Visser and N Worden	Oxford History: Grade 10: Learner's Book, Oxford University Press, South Africa	2011
Textbook 3	CA Stephenson, L Sikhakhane, F Frank, J Hlongwane, R Subramony, C Virasamy, C Collier, K Govender and T Mbansini	New Generation History: Grade 10: Learner's Book, New Generation Publishing, South Africa	2011

Since these textbooks are widely used across the country, the findings will have a broad impact on understanding how settler grammar has been normalised within these books. This can also provide ways for a larger audience to resist and challenge the settler grammar found in the textbooks. The selected textbooks are published by various publishing houses, including Maskew Miller Longman, Oxford University Press and New Generation. Each editorial team's linguistic choices vary, which in turn, influences how settler grammar is constructed. Two themes, which are (a) *Topic 4: Transformations in Southern Africa after 1750* (b) *Topic 5: Colonial expansion after 1750,* were chosen for analysis. These two themes are representative of historical narratives where colonial ideologies or settler grammar may be reproduced. While similar studies have been conducted, the two selected themes have

never been examined specifically for settler grammar. These themes will not only reveal how settler grammar continues to be expressed in the textbooks but also suggest possible ways to challenge it. Overall, both themes focus on historical activities and periods that are tied and directly linked to settler colonialism, thus, making the themes more suitable for analysing settler grammar. The data for analysis are arranged below in the sequence presented in the textbooks.

Representation of data and discussion of findings

To have a nuanced understanding of the themes under scrutiny, the paper first provides a historical context of each theme. The focus on these themes is on examining how colonial discursive structures and settler grammar are naturalised when narrating history.

Topic 4: Transformations in Southern Africa after 1750

Historical background

According to the curriculum, which outlines the content that the textbooks should engage with when creating the narrative:

> *Southern Africa experienced transformation in the 18th and 19th centuries. This was the period that became known as the 'mfecane'. This unit reflects research that helps us to understand how and why transformation occurred at this time. Shaka was regarded as being the major cause of conflict during this period. However, historians are moving away from the idea of mfecane/difaqane, which is linked to outdated, colonial-era ideas of the centrality of the 'wars of Shaka'. Wars and disruptions took place, but most of them were not caused by Shaka and the Zulu. This unit investigates the recent research and explores the ways in which historical myths are constructed.* (Department of Basic Education, 2011: 16)

The theme discusses historical narratives that explore the transformation that has been taking place in Southern Africa from the eighteenth century onwards. It then acknowledges that colonial historiography has dominated the writing of these narratives. It presents an argument that these colonial narratives (Omer-Cooper, 1966) have shifted from centring Shaka kaSenzangakhona Zulu as the sole cause of the violence and upheavals that were taking place at the time, to a new understanding which explains that issues such as colonial expansion and inadequate resources were part of the problem (Cobbing, 1988; Mvenene, 2014; Peires, 2009).

Textbook approaches

Although major revisions were made in terms of addressing the colonial historiography underlying Theme 4, the settler grammar is still prevalent and shapes the writing of narratives. Speaking of the 'political revolution from 1920 -1835', the textbooks adopt a passive language that silences colonial violence when speaking of the impacts of colonialism in Africa. Notably, there are texts from the textbooks that exhibit a 'zero-point epistemology' identified by Mignolo (2009). The following excerpt from Textbook 2 does not assign responsibility for who and what led to the political revolution:

> *The competition in southern Africa for resources and control over trade that started in the 1810s continued through until the 1830s. It increased during the 1820s and 1830s, as a result, there was increasing political conflict and change. By the 1830s the smaller chiefdoms had been conquered and the remaining people joined other chiefdoms to form large centralised African states.* (Bottaro et al., 2011: 112)

The excerpt obscures the idea that settlers are partly responsible for the political revolutions happening. To achieve this, the authors employ terms such as 'competition' and 'trade' to construct a narrative that suggests conquest was inevitable. It gives the impression that 'competition' and 'trade' are the main reasons for the changes that occurred, which downplays the violence and force used by colonial settlers, confirming what De Sousa Santos (2005) and Maluleka (2021) refer to as epistemicide—the intentional erasure of certain narratives. These narratives are also framed using colonial vocabulary, which distorts the true representation of African people (Ogot, 2009) in history textbooks. Two key aspects of epistemic oppression and violence in history, identified by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) and Maluleka (2021), are clear in the excerpt. First, the statement that ".there was increasing political conflict and change" (Bottaro et al., 2011: 112) dismisses the possibility that African actions were deliberate rather than chaotic, as the language suggests. It overlooks the political and military strategies and innovations that Africans developed. Second, the claim that ".the remaining people joined other chiefdoms to form large centralised African states" (Bottaro et al., 2011: 112) silences the idea that these people were not simply passively absorbed but had the agency to negotiate during the formation of these 'African states'.

Even though efforts have been made to move away from a solely colonial perspective in explaining Theme 4, the textbook still relies on a Eurocentric framework that dominates historical narratives (see Martin & Wodak, 2003). For example, in the section discussing the remembrance and legacy of Shaka kaSenzangakhona, Zulu, Textbook 2 uses biased language to describe his role during the transformation period, while Textbook 3 dismisses

the importance of women in shaping Shaka's figure. Overall, Textbook 2 promotes the idea of 'great men in history', rooted in settler grammar that views history as a story of 'important men', which biases and erases the contributions of ordinary people. This is exemplified in the following excerpt from Textbook 2, which states:

It is often said that the history we learn is the history produced by the winners, not the losers. We see this in the different ways Shaka has been portrayed:

- *The "military genius": Some people have viewed him as a "genius" who led the Zulu nation to military glory over their enemies and who is still an inspiration to African leaders today.*
- *The "cruel tyrant": Others have seen him as the cause of great destruction and misery in large parts of southern Africa during the Mfecane, by controlling every aspect of the lives of his subjects and putting them to death when he wanted to.*
- *The "nation builder": Others have portrayed him as a great leader who built up the Zulu nation.* (Bottaro et al., 2011: 124)

The bias is multifaceted; the narrative is biased in that Shaka is portrayed as a central figure in the discussions, where, in some cases, terminologies such as 'genius' are used to describe him. These narratives undermine the collective role played by different African polities and people in governing their societies, which reflects the European conception that history is about 'great men', which oversimplifies history as noted by Chernis (1990) and Calderon (2014). One could argue that these oversimplified narratives, overshadowed by terminologies such as 'genius', 'tyrant' and 'builder', are limiting the understanding of African leadership to Western understandings. For instance, the idea of 'nation-building' has its roots in colonial narratives of what it means to build a society, which in turn, erases the idea that Africans have long engaged in activities of building their societies, thus, erasing the African political imagination (see Mudimbe, 1988).

It could be further argued that the framing of Theme 4 is also shaped by narratives that are rooted in the idea of universal historical narratives, which are pointed out by Mignolo (2009) and Shabangu (2024), who argue that settler grammar tends to present the past in a way suggesting that there is a singular way of understanding it. Here, Textbook 2, as shown above, mentions that "…it is often said that the history we learn is the history produced by the winners, not the losers" (Bottaro et al., 2011: 124), implicitly insinuating that history is always written by winners. It does not consider the power dynamics that come into play when it comes to the construction of historical narratives. Kros et al. (2022: 39)

convincingly inferred that framing history in the identified way sustains the settler grammar in that it does not focus on "political conflicts that took place inside African kingdoms, or the lives and politics of ordinary people". Such an absence can be seen as a colonial lens of viewing the past, where the narratives of ordinary Africans tell us less about their complex everyday practices, contributions and navigation of life in history (Ogot, 2009), which can be directly linked to the notion of oversimplifying African history (Calderon, 2014; Shabangu, 2024).

As mentioned earlier, Textbook 3 reflects an erasure of a contribution made by women in the making of Shaka. This historical erasure can be attributed to epistemic injustice (Fricker, 2007; Maluleka, 2021). That can be described as the prejudices of those engaged in the act of representing, which is discussed by Ogot (2009). For instance, Textbook 3 frames the narratives using a vocabulary that is rooted in epistemic sexism, overshadowing the history of women. In speaking of how the figure Shaka was constructed, Textbook 3 poses two crucial questions, which are: "Who was King Shaka?" (Stephenson et al., 2011: 128) and "How did Shaka gain control over the people of the Phongola–Thukela region?" (Stephenson et al., 2011: 128). In answering the questions, Textbook 3, which is worth quoting in length, states the following:

Who was King Shaka?

- *Shaka was born into the Zulu clan who lived along the Mhlatuze River. As the illegitimate born son of the chief, Senzangakhona, Shaka was disowned by his father and was not considered heir to the chieftainship.*
- *He became a soldier in the Mthethwa army where his bravery and leadership qualities were soon noticed by Dingiswayo. When Senzangakhona died in about 1816, Dingiswaso made Shaka chief of the Zulus.*
- *How did Shaka gain control over the people of the Phongola–Thukela region?*
- *Shaka gained control of most of the Phongola-Thukela region by conquest and peaceful means. He was able to win the loyalty of many different groups of people and created a well-organised kingdom.* (Stephenson et al., 2011: 128)

To understand the settler grammar at play here, it is important to recognise that the two questions and the accompanying narratives describe the making of Shaka. The extract reveals a clear omission of the women who nurtured, guided and advised Shaka in his development. The narrative is undoubtedly male-centred, presenting Shaka as the central figure or as the protagonist, while only acknowledging the role of his father, Senzangakhona, in his formation. Furthermore, the text attributes some influence to Dingiswayo in shaping Shaka as both a political leader and an individual. The presence of settler grammar is evident in the underlying colonial assumption that African history is shaped solely by men, an assumption that has been critically challenged by scholars such as Oyewumi (1997) and Magoqwana (2018).

To think of it, the history of Nandi kaBhebhe, who was Shaka's mother, a prominent person who played an essential role in his upbringing and later advised him as Inkosi, a king in English, is marginalised (Weitzer, 1990). The framing not only echoes the marginalisation of women's histories, it also "resembles the colonial patriarchal structures in erasing African women's contribution in African societies" (Aidoo, 1992, in Magoqwana, 2018: 75). The framing adopted a testimonial injustice (see Fricker 2007), which the linguistic choice of gender reinforces the idea that legitimate history can only come from the discourse of men (Tobi, 2020). This, according to Seroto (2015: 176), who draws from the work of Kim (2001), highlights that the issues with this settler grammar are that it only provides "one side of the coin by highlighting the coloniser's perspective as the central view of the event". In this case, the coloniser's perspectives of history are aligned with the masculinist model of power, where dominance of men is only embraced and glorified as epitomised in the history of Shaka and Van Riebeeck, to some extent, as demonstrated in the paper by Da Cruz (2005) and Nishino (2011).

Topic 5: Colonial expansion after 1750

Historical background

Here, the curriculum discusses the colonial expansion that took place in southern Africa after 1750, and in length, it states that:

> *The focus is on the impact that the demands of the emerging capitalist economy in Britain had on societies in southern Africa. During this period, southern Africa was drawn into the world economy. A link can be made with the French Revolutionary wars, with Britain having taken control of the Cape in 1795, as well as the consolidation of British control and*

> *the impact this had after 1806. Review how the slave trade stimulated Britain's Industrial Revolution, enabling it to develop the technologies of colonialism. A broad understanding rather than detail is needed.*
>
> *Co-operation and conflict on the Highveld focuses on the fragility of the Boer Republics and the conflicts and alliances between the Boers and the Highveld chiefdoms, in particular with Moshoeshoe. Moshoeshoe emerges at this time as a skilful tactician, balancing military strategy with a policy of generosity in victory, diplomacy and negotiation in his dealings with other African leaders, as well as the Boer trekkers, the British colonisers and the missionaries. Moshoeshoe is celebrated in praise poetry as a military strategist, diplomat, negotiator, reconciler and nation builder.* (Department of Education, 2011: 17)

The theme engages with the factors that led to a global colonial expansion, with a focus on Southern Africa (see Thompson, 2014). Several factors are said to have contributed to the emergence of this global capitalist economy. These narratives frame technology as one of the significant forces for colonialism (Leshota & Mushonga, 2023). Although it does not specify, the curriculum seems to project Moshoeshoe as a thoughtful leader who played an essential role during the colonial expansion.

Textbook approaches

Historical representations in this theme are closely connected to settler perspectives, as Western epistemology dominates historical narratives, especially regarding colonial discourses. Pratt (1992) rightly emphasises that stories about the colonial era should not only focus on power relations but also go beyond that. The author clearly states that attention should also be given to the "social space where culture clashes meet and grapple with each other, often in highly unequal relations of domination and subordination" (Pratt, 1992: 48). Seroto (2015: 178) notes that many history textbooks tend to highlight how white settlers centralised political territories and why and how Indigenous people were displaced from their lands. The authors often fail to adequately address the conflicts resulting from cultural clashes. What Seroto (2015) points out is evident in Textbook 1, which does not explore the idea of cultural conflicts (Johanneson et al., 2011). In its introduction, Textbook 1 explains that indigenous groups like the KhoiKhoi and San lived in the Cape region before Europeans arrived. It then shifts focus to the European arrival, marking the beginning of colonialism (Johanneson et al., 2011). The textbook presents a single, dominant historical perspective, as De Sousa Santos (2005) describes. Therefore, the focus is mainly on acknowledging Indigenous people and the European arrival, without

addressing the cultural clashes (Seroto, 2015).

Euphemistic language, linked to Anglonormativity—the idea that historical narratives should reflect worldviews and ideas of history aligned with the English language, is evident in the textbooks. Terminologies that minimise the violence and brutality of European colonisation are used to describe these events. For example, Textbook 2 begins with the question: "How did colonial expansion in the interior transform South Africa?" (Bottaro et al., 2011: 134). Words like 'expansion' and 'transform' are used to obscure the atrocities associated with colonialism. More accurate terms like 'invasion' and 'destructive' should have been used to better reflect the reality of colonialism. Additionally, the narratives in these textbooks tend to endorse colonial systems, which is clear in the subsequent content extract:

> *Between 1750 and the 1830s important changes took place in the Cape Colony. The Cape became part of the British Empire at a time when Britain was the leading trading and industrial nation. New policies led to the abolition of slavery and its replacement by wage labour and the growth of commercial farming. Land become sought after, especially in the eastern frontier region. By the 1850s the Xhosa were defeated and much of their land occupied by new European settlers. Meanwhile, Boer farmers (trekkers) had left the colony and moved into the interior. They defeated the Zulu and settled in Natal until the British took over in 1843.* (Bottaro et al., 2011: 134)

The vocabulary underpinning the extract provides a Eurocentric view of colonialism, which ignores the consequences of colonialism on the livelihood of the Indigenous people who were residing in the region (Da Cruz, 2005). This is evident in the close examination of the linguistic choices, which shows that the authors present colonisation as progress instead of highlighting that Britain's colonial efforts at the 'Cape' were primarily about securing trade routes while disrupting indigenous ways of life in the region, as noted by Seroto (2015). The narratives from the extract further create an impression that the land was fought for fairly, instead of projecting it as a colonial conquest, where land was violently and forcibly seized from the African people. It does that by using vocabulary such as "Land became sought after, especially in the eastern frontier region" (Bottaro et al., 2011: 134). This view sanitises and suppresses the view that there was an encroachment from settlers in Southern Africa, which led to the loss of land and dispossession. What is appalling is that it draws from African vocabularies, which would provide a view on how this colonial invasion led to their demise and resistance. Textbook 3 adopts a similar approach as it introduces the theme by mentioning that:

> *As an emerging capitalist economy Britain began to colonise countries to obtain raw materials for factories. This led to Britain taking control of the Cape in 1795 and establishing a colony in South Africa in 1908. The British objective in South Africa was to control the Cape sea-route to the east. It was only when it was realised that South Africa had large deposits of minerals that the British took keen interest in developing the South African economy.* (Stephenson et al., 2011: 150)

Similarly, these narratives use vocabularies that centralise the experiences of Settlers centred around the notion of progress. This is explained using terms such as 'developing', which undermines the idea that the African people were already living in developing societies. It becomes clear that development here is understood under the colonial universalistic terms (Dei, 2008). Seroto (2015: 177) similarly critiques these historical accounts, noting that:

> *…Authors present the historical development of socioeconomic conditions at the Cape as something to which the indigenous people made no contribution. Yet indigenous people were involved with pastoral and artistic activities: the Khoi did not only keep cattle and sheep, they were also pottery-makers.*

The point Seroto (2015) is raising is evident in the discursive structures of the extract, describing that "Britain began to colonise countries to obtain raw materials for factories" (Bottaro et al., 2011: 150). This narrative can be linked to the coloniality of knowledge, where historical vocabularies describing the history of Europe are rationalised, legitimised and positioned at the top of the hierarchy (Mignolo, 2009). In the extract, the economic progression of Britain, which is justified by the idea of developing the economy of South Africa, seeks to rationalise and legitimise colonisation, while silencing the violence that came with it.

Conclusion: A move towards recognising African Vocabularies and terminologies

Many questions were raised during the #MustFall movement regarding a way forward for addressing the identified epistemic issues. For example, Bam et al. (2018: 6) note that the following question arose: "what would a transformed curriculum look like?". Building on the work of Bam et al. (2018), Godsell (2019) and Maluleka (2021), it can be observed that these questions in relation to history education sought to highlight that history in Africa has been written from a Eurocentric perspective, which should be transformed. The history written from a Eurocentric viewpoint fails to articulate and accurately capture the

realities of Africans (Bam et al., 2018; Godsell, 2019; Maluleka, 2021). It does not end there; a history written using a colonial framing tends to distort and conceal the violence, land dispossession, and disruption brought by colonial settlers in Africa (Ogot, 2009; Seroto, 2015) using colonial vocabularies and terminologies. Thus, Godsell (2019) was correct that the construction of historical narratives is not only about whose voice is heard; it goes beyond that. In essence, "it is about whose framing, whose narrative, whose language, whose terminology, whose world view, and definitions of reality and humanity are used in the curriculum and in the classroom" (Godsell, 2019: 8).

The question that this paper poses is related to what Godsell (2019) raises, and it is equally pertinent to addressing some of the epistemic issues identified by the #MustFall movement: In what ways can settler grammar be dismantled when constructing narratives in history textbooks? Like in the case of the #MustFall movement, the question raises that settler grammar, as shown in this paper, denies "the presence of Indigenous epistemologies as legitimate ways for understanding the past, while also demonstrating the need for Western logic, Western epistemic rule, to organise and make sense of the past" (Cutrara, 2018: 257). Thus, the start in transcending settler grammar in history textbooks should be recognising African vocabularies and terminologies. These vocabularies and terminologies will reflect their worldviews, ideas of engaging with history and historical agency as noted by Godsell (2019), which will accurately represent their past, while moving away from Eurocentric views of history that sanitise the history of Europeans. For instance, the idea of using passive voice, which downplays responsibility and obscures agency, can be addressed by recognising the legitimacy of African vocabularies (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018). Instead of claiming that "smaller chiefdoms had been conquered, and their remaining populations were absorbed into larger chiefdoms" (Bottaro et al., 2011: 112), it could also be said during the reign of Shaka Zulu, African leadership structures made use of *imbizo*—public gatherings/councils—to deliberate on political matters, resolve disputes and consult with communities and possibly consolidate power.

Moreover, centring African agency, as shown above, addresses the issue of epistemic oppression and violence (Godsell & Maluleka, 2022; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018), where a Eurocentric, universal way of understanding systems of governance is often narrated. The discursive structures framing these narratives will now present African systems of governance as political systems that were structured and legitimate at that specific time and place. It will also demonstrate that these systems were consultative, not merely chaotic, as portrayed by colonial vocabulary and terminology. It will show that these consultative

processes involved the voices, narratives and terminologies of women. For example, the part discussing who Shaka kaSenzangakhona Zulu was, and the role he played in forming the *isizwe sika* Zulu (the Zulu polity) (see Kros et al., 2022), can be recentred to include the role played by women such as his mother, *Indlunkulu* (the great house), under the guardianship of *Umfazi wokuqala* (the first wife) in that particular polity. This can be supported by the fact that "Shaka's reign tends to be traced back to his paternal grandmother, Mthaniya … who influenced Zulu royal affairs" (Magoqwana, 2018: 82). In other words, the concept of *Imbokodo* (a grindstone symbolising power from women) as an African term should be adopted to represent how women in African societies like the Zulu polity, managed to influence governance and leadership as central figures.

Challenging Anglonormativity, which depicts colonisation as a civilising mission aimed at progress and development, requires terminology grounded in the perspectives and lived experiences of the formerly colonised. According to Godsell (2019: 8), this means there is a need for "historical narratives which shift ideas of 'civilisation,' 'development,' or 'progress' away from the Global North". Achieving this involves using African vocabularies to describe what it meant to be civilised and progressive in the past. This is a step toward rehumanising African subjects, who have long been perceived and described as 'backward' and 'uncivilised' in history textbooks (Bleby, 1913; Paynter, 1968). It means that future narratives would better reflect the perspectives of Africans, as those narratives would now be informed by their vocabularies, terminologies and languages (Godsell, 2019; Ogot, 2009). In conclusion, the paper has identified settler grammar in selected post-apartheid history textbooks and proposed ways to address this grammatical influence.

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Conceptualisation of Decolonisation by Secondary School Teachers of History in Lusaka District of Zambia

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Abstract

Decolonisation of the curriculum has been an important topic in Africa since the 1960s, however, most literature focuses on the content of the curriculum, rather than the role-players who enact it. Teachers play a significant role in the development and implementation of the curriculum, therefore, their conceptualisations of decolonisation will have an important impact on how the decolonisation process eventually unfolds. This

study sets out to explore the conception of decolonisation of selected history teachers in relation to the teaching and learning of history in Zambia. The study is anchored in a decolonial perspective by Wa Thiongo (1986) Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2019), Mignolo (2007), and Maldonado-Torres (2017) which proceeds from the position of regarding continued decolonisation in the curriculum, and thinking about potential ideas of decolonisation linked to it. The study used a qualitative approach and a case study design. Ten teachers from the Lusaka district were purposively selected and interviewed to determine how they conceptualised decolonisation in the Zambian history curriculum. The data collected from the interviews was analysed thematically. The study found that teacher's conceptualisation of decolonisation regarding teaching and learning of history included inclusions of neglected histories and knowledge, emphasis on local heroes, aligning to the curriculum to local needs and realities and promoting national identity and values. Thus, the current study concluded that the teachers of history had different understandings of decolonisation and ideas of its application to the history curriculum. This study could inform the teacher education programmes in higher education and decolonising of the school history.

Keywords: Decolonisation; Education; School History Curriculum; Teachers and Zambia

Introduction

There have been several forms of expression of decolonial agendas on the African continent from the nineteenth century that have come and disappeared, such as "Ethiopianism, Negritude, Garveyism, the Black Consciousness Movements" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019: 14). When most countries in Africa gained independence in the 1960s, the Organisation for Africa Unity called on the newly independent states to make commitments to decolonise their education systems (Organisation for African Unity, 1961). It was, however, the 2015 #FeesMustFall campaign by students at the Universities of Cape Town and Witwatersrand in South Africa that revived the debates on decolonisation of education in Africa (Heleta, 2016; Mahabeer, 2018; Maluleka, 2023). As with regards to the subject of history, the African Union (AU) (2024), has re-affirmed the teaching of African history as a pathway to decolonisation in Africa to achieve Agenda 2063. The AU has called on curriculum reforms that do not centre on racial bias, but celebrate the achievements and civilisations of African societies (AU, 2024).

Zambia was a colony of Britain for more than 60 years (Money & Chansa, 2024). The country gained political independence in 1964 (Kalusa & Phiri, 2014). At the time of independence, Zambia had two segregated education systems operating based on racial

discrimination; one system for the Europeans and the other was for the African children (Achola, 1990; Kalimaposo, 2022). The education system inherited the curriculum from the colonial period, specifically the one designed for the Central African Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland from 1963 (Chishimba & Simukoko, 2000).

There have been several education reforms to decolonise the education system in Zambia after independence such as the 1977, 1992, 1996, 2013 and 2023 education reforms (Ministry of Education [MoE], Zambia, 1992, 1996, Ministry of Education Science and Vocational Training Early Education, Zambia, (MOESVTEE), 2013; MoE, 2023).After gaining power from the colonialist government, the nationalist government began the process to decolonise the school curriculum so that it could meet the aspirations of the newly independent government and address local needs (Chishimba & Simukoko, 2000). Humanism was used as a policy to guide the decolonisation process in the education system and other spheres of life (Chishimba & Simukoko, 2000; Lungwangwa, 1980; Mboyonga, 2024). The purpose was to equip learners and graduates with human values (Mboyonga, 2024).

This paper seeks to address the question of how teachers of history conceptualise decolonisation in relation to the teaching and learning of history in Zambia at secondary school level. It seeks to contribute to the bigger conversation around decolonisation, decoloniality and education. With Zambia attempting to decolonise the history curriculum, this study interviewed ten teachers to gain a sense of their views on decolonisation. The interviews were analysed and thought was given to what these views mean for a decolonised curriculum. For example, do teachers need to be knowledgeable on the core principles that decolonisation of education rests on to enact a decolonised curriculum? While further studies, involving classroom observations, would be necessary to fully answer this question, the views of teachers are deemed important in that they interpret and enact any given curriculum.

The burden to understand the complexities surrounding the curriculum and how it can be implemented in the classroom as well as the impact on the performance of learners, is the responsibility of the teachers (Bentrovato & Moyo, 2025; Gulo, 2024). Thus, overlooking teachers' views in a curriculum development process is undermining an important group. Teachers respond to the society in which they operate from and are often equally shaped by structural and institutional forces (Freire, 1970). Hence, it is important to explore teachers' knowledge and disposition to gauge their ability or willingness to promote decolonisation in their teaching profession (Sathorar & Geduld, 2018).

Literature review

The literature review is divided into two parts, first, the conceptions of decolonisation are discussed. Second, attempts by the Zambian government to decolonise the education system and the role of teachers in the decolonial agenda are explained.

The term decolonisation has different meanings depending on context and space. The earliest use of the term was in 1836 by French writer Professor CR Ageron who was advocating for the withdrawal of the French government in Algeria (Filho, 2024). In this instance it was used in a political sense (Mkansi, Emwanu & Kuchwa-Dube, 2018). The term later surfaced after the Second World War in the late 1940s as a process of granting self-determination by European countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East (Jansen & Osterhammel, 2017). However, in this paper, decolonisation means going beyond political subjugation, it encompasses how colonialism affected the social, cultural and economic aspect of the colonised, as noted by the earliest proponents of decolonisation (Fanon, 1968; Oelofsen, 2015 Wa Thiongo, 1981;). Thus, for us decolonisation is a process of undoing the way the colonised were defined by the colonialist (Ranawana, 2023).

A decolonised education seeks to expose and disrupt the ongoing processes of Western colonialism and cultural reproduction of Eurocentrism (Bhambra, Gebrial & Nişancıoğlu, 2018) through formal curriculum knowledge and discourses. It also aims at exposing colonial and discriminatory legacies in the education sector that expose inequalities in the production of knowledge (Heleta, 2016; Sathorar & Geduld, 2018). Apart from exposing colonial legacies, it also intends to reject the colonial ideals, customs and imperial worldviews that circulate in the school curriculum of the formerly colonised countries (Mahabeer, 2018). Heleta (2016: 9) asserts that "one of the most destructive effects of colonialism was the subjugation of local knowledge and promotion of the Western knowledge as the universal knowledge".

Decolonisation of education is a clarion for "Eurocentric consciousness to be disrupted, and notions of meritocracy within education and society that have privileged some, to be challenged" (Du Plessis, 2021: 57). It is a process where those who were formerly colonised "embrace and recognise their own cultures, tell their own histories, study from books written by Africans, and run institutions based on values that are reflective of African culture, as opposed to Eurocentric models" (Du Plessis, 2021: 54). Africans must decolonise, un-learn and re-learn about their original history of civilisation and Africanisation (Enaifoghe, 2019: 63). This has caused debates on what a 'balanced'

history curriculum would be in terms of local versus global knowledge (Van Eeden & Warnich, 2018). For Godsell, decolonising education also encompasses using decolonial pedagogies and assessments in the classroom (Godsell, 2019, 2021).

It is important to know the perceptions surrounding the concept of decolonisation so that relevant ways of approaching decolonisation are designed (Auerbach, 2017). Focus on decolonisation can also help develop African renaissance in the field of education (Koma, 2018). For the purposes of this study, focus was placed on understanding how teachers relate to this concept.

Teachers conceptions of decolonisation

Little research is available on teacher's view on the concept of decolonisation, yet it plays a critical role in curriculum design and the implementation thereof in Africa. The studies available centre on students, pre-service or student teachers views as well as lecturers in higher education institutions, mostly in South Africa and to a lesser extent in countries such as Botswana, Kenya, Ghana and Zimbabwe (Laakso & Adu, 2024).

Maluleka's (2023) work on teachers of history in Gauteng and Limpopo provinces, South Africa, reveals that teachers conceptualised decolonisation as Africanisation of the school history curriculum, as a way of decolonising the history curriculum. While student teachers for history education such as Dollie et al. (2020) conceptualised decolonisation as the need to rewrite the history that was distorted in the school history curriculum in South Africa.

Chinyamurindi's (2023) study on student's view revealed that most of the students who were interviewed showed that they lacked understanding on what decolonisation meant and were sceptical on how the process of decolonisation could play out. However, they noted that the decolonisation process could provide an opportunity to use indigenous teaching methods and local languages (Chinyamurindi, 2023). The study utilised a focus group of 30 students and narrative analysis. In the same vein, Muller (2018) argued that the concept of decolonisation was poorly defined by students in natural sciences. While De Jager (2019) noted that decolonisation, for students who were interviewed meant a need for a balance between Euro-American centric sciences and indigenous knowledge, a use of mother tongue language and everyday life experiences from diverse cultures for decolonisation of sciences in the African education system.On the other hand, Dollie et al. (2020) pointed out that teachers have a critical role in the decolonisation of the school history curriculum. Therefore, teachers should take agency and reflect critically on historical

issues that they teach in the classroom. Thus, teachers' understanding of decolonisation was very important.

An overview of the attempts to decolonise the school history curriculum and the role of history teachers in Zambia

At independence in 1964, the Zambian nationalist government aimed at eliminating the colonial education that was given to African learners during the colonial period in Northern Rhodesia (Lungwangwa, 1980). The subject of history was given national importance (Garvey & Krug, 1977). Teaching history in Zambia is divided into two parts, namely African history and World history. The main objective of the history curriculum post-independence was to foster national consciousness in Zambia regarding African history (Garvey & Krug, 1977). The fostering of national consciousness and pride was to be done through teaching Central African History in Zambia (Garvey & Krug, 1977). The teaching of history shifted from teaching European, British Empire and Commonwealth history to African history as experienced by the African people in Zambia in African history. Thus, West, North, East, Southern and Central African history was included in the new school history curriculum. Zambian history was to be taught in Central African history. It should be noted that African history was taught in the colonial period but it was taught from a Eurocentric point of view. For the nationalist government, decolonising[1] the school history curriculum was the inclusion of more African history in the curriculum. While there was an attempt to include African and Zambian history, it has not been done comprehensively enough.

In the Second Republic, the curriculum for history was expected to follow the principles of humanism by focusing on the teaching of man as guided in the First Republic (Kaunda, 1968). The aim was to provide a curriculum that was meaningful and relevant to the context of the country. The purpose of the history curriculum was to enable learners to be aware of their immediate environment and other environments (Examination Council of Zambia, 1987). The effort to decolonise the content of the history curriculum was to be achieved by helping learners to be aware of their own local environment in their society so that the learners could tackle the political, cultural and economic problems in society

[1] It is understood that decoloniality and decolonisation are distinct terms. For this early period, post-independence, the term decolonisation is used as an attempt to remove direct influence of the colonial power after independence, while decoloniality is used in the later iterations of the curriculum, interlinked with coloniality and modernity.

(Examination Council of Zambia, 1987). The curriculum was intended to emphasise "how man produced food, organised himself and the interdependence of the human race" (Examination Council of Zambia, 1987: vi). The teaching of history focused on the teaching of Central African, Southern African and World history. The other African regions became optional. Thus, the decolonising of education focused on providing education that was linked to the Zambian people and removing regions of history that were not directly linked to Zambia. This links to decolonial theory on histories and historical knowledge of, and with relevance to indigenous people, however, does not necessarily remove the lens of modernity and coloniality from the subject (Maluleka, 2023).

In the Third Republic, curriculum designers added new topics into the history curriculum in the section of contemporary issues, such as the Gulf War, Iran and Iraq War, Democratic Republic of Congo, Angolan Civil War, Rwanda Genocide, land issues in Zimbabwe, HIV/AIDS, environmental degradation, international terrorism, human trafficking, drug abuse and gender issues as well as post independent developments in Zambia in World and African History (History Syllabus, 1996). Nevertheless, human rights, democracy and sexuality were to be emphasised as cross-cutting issues in the history curriculum (MoE, 1996). This content was incorporated in the curriculum to enable learners to reflect on the contemporary problems in their society and to experience the realities in their society and the world. Thus, the decolonising of the history curriculum was envisioned as having a balance between local and global history. Therefore, the decolonisation of the history curriculum was primarily focused on content changes in the school history curriculum, and less concerned with the lens, or issues of coloniality of knowledge (Ndhlovu-Gatsheni, 2019).

Apart from removing content that is not relevant to the Zambian context, the education policy of 1996, Educating Our Future, the 2013 Outcomes Based Education and the 2023 Competency Based Curriculum Framework urged teachers to implement localisation of the curriculum as a way of decolonising the curriculum (MoE, 1996; MOESVTEE,2013; MoE,2023). This meant that the burden to decolonise (in this case make local history relevant and applicable) the school history curriculum was placed on the shoulders of the teachers in all topics in African and World History. Thus, the teachers' views and experiences become especially relevant: even if their views are based on attempts that were already made after independence, this expectation for teachers to localise the curriculum identifies a gap. Teachers were to localise the school history curriculum by incorporating local examples in their lessons for history so that learners could connect to events in the

world and their environment (MOE, 1996; MOESVTEE, 2013; MOE,2023). Thus, teachers have a critical role to play in the decolonial turn in history education, providing the living link between a changing curriculum document and what learners are exposed to in the classrooms. Nevertheless, their opinions were not appreciated by the different curriculum initiatives to deepen the understanding of what decolonisation of the history curriculum was at that point, or what it could be in the classrooms. This paper attempts to address this gap.

Theoretical and conceptual framework

This paper used decolonial theory as a lens to understand decolonisation. It was guided by Maldonado-Torres' (2017), Mingolo (2007), Ndhlovu-Gatsheni (2019) and Wa Thiongo (1986), perspectives that posit that decolonisation is more than political independence, it is a process where people can start thinking of new possibilities and redefine humanity to undo the effects of colonialism and Western universalism of knowledge in the modern world. These perspectives were adopted because decolonial theory is not anchored on a single perspective of diverse scholars. For Wa Thiongo (1981), decolonisation is the reclaiming of African languages and the positioning of African knowledge at the centre among other narratives. While Ndhlovu-Gatsheni (2019) argued that decolonisation is a move towards creating ecologies of knowledge and pluriversality, the call for decolonisation has been heightened due to the marginalisation of indigenous knowledge that was created because of colonialism and coloniality that led to the displacement of other knowledge in the Global South (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019).

Among the several concepts that decolonial thinkers work with, is decoloniality. Decoloniality is the process of how decolonisation can be achieved by unmasking, revealing and challenging coloniality of power, knowledge and being by undoing the colonial matrix of power (Maldonado-Torres, 2017; Mignolo, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019; Ranawana, 2023). The colonial matrix of power is a structure that has been reproduced in post-colonial contexts due to colonialism (Mignolo, 2007). Decoloniality is opposition to the coloniality of power, knowledge and being (Maldonado-Torres, 2017). Decoloniality is premised on three concepts/units of analysis that is; coloniality of power, knowledge and being. Coloniality of power "investigates the global politics of how the world is hierarchised racially and ideologically" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2019: 490). Coloniality of knowledge focuses on the epistemological issues and politics of knowledge production. It deals with how indigenous knowledge systems are sidelined from the mainstreams of

knowledge production (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2019). Coloniality prioritises Eurocentric and Western forms of knowledge as universal and superior to other knowledge systems (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019), while coloniality of being is concerned with how the formerly colonised people are represented in the colonial matrix of power (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2019). The decolonial theory has been used in this study because the coloniality matrix of power is still reinforced in the field of education post independent countries, through knowledge production, universalising of Western knowledge in school curricular, the use of English in schools from primary school level and provision of university education (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019). Western knowledge is still perpetuated by the educational systems which ignore indigenous knowledge (Mignolo,2007). Hence, for decolonial scholars there was a need to undo the coloniality of power, knowledge and being in the formerly colonised countries. For the current study, this understanding of decolonisation helps one to understand the current position of the Zambian school history curriculum and teachers own perceptions of decoloniality. Teacher's perceptions were not judged by academic positions, but were read as 'on the ground' interpretations of what this theory might mean for teachers.

Methodology

This paper used the qualitative research approach considering that it gathers participants behaviours, perceptions and experience on real world situations or phenomenon (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). A case study design was used to determine how teachers of history specifically conceptualise the term decolonisation in their work. A case study approach was adopted as it provides an opportunity for the researcher to have an in-depth investigation and gain understanding of a complex phenomenon in its real-life context in its natural context (Crowe et al., 2011). A critical research paradigm was adopted for this paper, because the paradigm questions power structures, inequalities in societies and strives to undo them (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). This is in line with the decolonial paradigm, since it aims to challenge "Western hegemony and colonial ways of thinking" (Denscombe, 2025: 231). With regards to ontology, reality is shaped by historical contexts and epistemologically, the researcher questions their own and other people's assumptions (Crowe, et al., 2011). This is in line with the decolonial paradigm, as it must be understood in-terms of its historical roots of colonialism as well as the need to unmask and transform society (Denscombe, 2025). This was a single and intrinsic case study as it intended to study teachers' conceptualisation of decolonisation by teachers of history in Zambia only. Ten teachers of history were purposively selected from the Lusaka district in Lusaka province, Zambia from ten school zones from the urban area. Teachers of history were

purposively sampled because they provide rich information on how decolonisation was conceptualised in the subject of history, since they interact closely with the school history curriculum during preparation for teaching, while teaching and during the assessment of learners more than any other stakeholders. The number was chosen because it would give a wide enough qualitative data selection for deep reading of themes, however, the number would not be overwhelming in terms of the amount of data produced.

Lusaka was selected as the research site because it is in the capital city of the country and there are a lot of secondary schools that are easily accessible. Lusaka district was also selected because the curriculum development process and orientations start from there. Thus, the teachers in Lusaka have had more opportunities to participate in curriculum development processes. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from the teachers on their conceptualisation of decolonisation in relation to the teaching and learning of history in Zambia. Semi-structured interviews were used to guide, but not determine, the interview process. The interviews varied from 40 to 50 minutes, as this work stems from part of a PhD study and extra questions were asked to the participants. Thus, other questions were asked within the time-frame of the interview. The data was analysed using thematic analysis. Ethical considerations such as confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants were considered. For this reason, teachers are identified with symbols from TS01 to TS10.

Findings of the study

Teacher's understanding of decolonisation in relation to the teaching of history

The study sought to address the question of how teachers of history conceptualise decolonisation in relation to the teaching and learning of history in Zambia at secondary school level. The data was analysed thematically, and four interrelated themes emerged: inclusion of neglected histories; local heroes and cultural identity; balanced narratives between local and global narratives and tailoring the curriculum to Zambian needs and realities and promoting national values and unity.

Inclusion of neglected histories and knowledge systems

The participating teachers agreed that decolonising of the history curriculum meant to include knowledges that were sidelined in the school history curriculum. Thus, for them, a significant aspect of decolonisation involves acknowledging and incorporating omitted histories and local knowledge. For example, participant T01 explained that:

> *So, decolonisation in my view entails appreciating other knowledges and other histories, not just the dominant societies in Zambian history. Because most of those narratives were written by the whites who settled among the local societies like the Lozi, the Lunda, the Ngoni and wrote their history based on observation and interaction. It didn't mean that the Lala of Serenje, for instance, didn't have a better history, it wasn't just documented.* (T01)

Participant T04 further elaborated that:

> *In the context of knowledge, decolonisation is an aspect of bringing out some of the neglected or the omitted knowledge systems. For instance, in the history syllabus, how are the voices captured in the syllabus? If we talk of topics such as the first or the second world war, how do we teach that? Or from which perspective? So, you will find that we teach such topics from a European perspective, when we are in Africa, and we are supposed to bring in the African point of view. We don't tell our pupils that Zambia, for instance, fought or that people in Zambia lost their lives in the second world war. Our pupils don't know that. Our secondary school history books don't capture that. So, decolonisation would be going back to highlight such neglected historical narratives which are Afrocentric, but also bringing in the other perspectives challenging the Afrocentricity of our curriculum by also appreciating the contributions, for instance, of women and how certain historical events affected women in precolonial, in colonial and their urgency and their contribution.* (T04)

Another participant stated that:

> *To remove foreign influence in our curriculum, so that our curriculum becomes independent of foreign influence. It is like we have been working under the influence of our colonial masters and all those Western countries. We are learning much more on things to do with Western world. Even when we do things, we do things as if we belong to the Western world, meanwhile we are not part of them. So, decolonisation is to create independence on our own curriculum in order to create our own independent knowledge.* (T07)

Some respondents stressed that decolonisation does not mean entirely removing European history, but creating a balanced narrative. For instance, participant T06 stated that:

> *The history that has something to do with Zambia, to start with. Also of course a few topics from the Southern and European history can be included and something which have something to do with Zambia and then other topics which have content that seem to be irrelevant to our Zambian context, I think those ones should be removed.* (T06)

The participants' views show that the teachers interviewed considered that the inclusion of neglected knowledges in the school history curriculum was a very important aspect in decolonising the school history curriculum. The participants also considered the perspectives of these knowledges, in other words, the lenses. This moves beyond mere content, and includes the epistemologies, although the participants do not delve into this. These findings are in line with those of Moloi, Lebelo, Akindeinde & Adesanya, 2023; Mvenene, 2017; Shabangu, 2024). Shabangu (2024) argued that indigenous archives of history were important in the decolonisation of the history curriculum. Moloi et al. (2023) argued that teachers must infuse Indigenous Knowledge Systems in the school history curriculum by focusing on the struggles of the people for land dispossession, mineral exploitations, massacres and genocides. While, Mvenene (2017) noted that Indigenous Knowledge Systems can provide solutions for current historical inaccuracies, discrepancies, omissions, bias and prejudice in the school history curriculum. Maluleka (2021), however, argues that mere replacement of Eurocentric knowledge is not decolonising of the curriculum, but marginalisation of Western knowledge. The study's participants support this perspective, decolonising the curriculum was seen by the participants as more than an inclusion of sidelined knowledge, but thinking about the lenses and perspectives, as well as power relations and epistemologies of the history curriculum.

Emphasis on local heroes and cultural identity

Participants highlighted the importance of replacing Eurocentric narratives with those centred on Zambian heroes, heroines and cultures. For example, participant T10 argued:

> *So, for me there is a need to include heroes, like in every part of this country, I believe when you go around, we still have freedom fighters, you have to interview them. They will give you, maybe, the perspectives of what really happened and how they really fought for independence. The pre-nineteen sixty-four period, maybe ten years down the line, the people really fought. Their views are missing. If you can have that, it will really help us to understand the history of where we come from, and in the history syllabus it is not there, so the views of Zambians are not included.* (T10)

Another participant, T08, explained that:

> *When we talk of decolonisation, it is bringing out the history of marginalised societies. Knowledge is power. So, if we don't teach the significant roles of marginalised societies or groups such as the women, the youths and other ethnic groups in Zambia, then we deny them their urgency as contributors to national building. We say one Zambia one nation but out of the 72 ethnic groups, we only write essays on the few. So, if we are to be decolonised, we need to change the way we examine and the way we teach.* (T08)

Participant T10 mentioned that:

> *When you look at the way it is now, we still have topics that are not really relevant to our Zambian learners now. I will give examples of, let's say, Lenshina uprising, it is not there. Also, the fight for independence by local Zambians, those were women and men, it is silent. Most of the writings, they are treated like they are labels or the people who were revolting or demonstrators, when in the actual sense, they were fighting for liberation from the colonisers. So, from that perspective you find that it is not written in our views.* (T10)

It is evident that, for the participants, decolonising the history curriculum meant the inclusion of heroes, marginalised societies and women in society. This is in line with Shabangu (2022) who noted that inclusivity should be at the core of decolonised school history curriculum as way of moving away from a school history that is used as a political tool to promote racism, sexism, exclusion, alienation, domination and negation. Similarly, Mboyonga (2023) argued that a decolonised history curriculum should include women's contribution in society. This is because some of the marginalised members of society contributed to history and could be beneficial to the school history curriculum. For example, Chiponda (2020) noted that there was under-representation of historical characters with disabilities in the verbal and visual context of the Malawian school history curriculum and textbook production. Participant T08 mentions that "*knowledge is power*", pointing to the interconnectedness of these two aspects of coloniality, and gesturing that, even though the teachers focus is mainly on knowledge, they are aware of the different levels on which this knowledge operates.

Tailoring the curriculum to Zambian needs and realities

The participants noted decolonisation involves aligning the curriculum with Zambia's current reality and development needs. Participants suggested adapting topics to show relevance and inspire learners. For example, one of the participants (T04) mentioned that:

> *Decolonisation is tailoring our education curriculum to the local content by removing it from the way it was in the colonial period. Those people who made the curriculum during the colonial period tailored it according to their needs at that time and they had certain targets. Now with independence, we need to tailor it to our needs. So, the history curriculum should have been tailored since independence according to what the people wanted out history curriculum to teach our children.* (T04)

Another participant T05 stated that:

> *Decolonisation of the curriculum should mean in terms of refocusing what learners are taught in the history curriculum so that we align the content they learn to our current cultural spheres of our nation.* (T05)

Participant T04 further argued that:

> *Decolonisation is designing the curriculum to our local needs, infusing in our relevant history. We should not only tell stories of old happenings, but we should tell stories of how certain aspects of the past made us improve. Stories which show development and change over time. So, if we talk of Mushala, we should attach it to some relevance. Our learners should know why we are learning about Mushala, how is it affecting our development.* (T04)

Participant T03 emphasised the point by stating that:

> *In my view, the school history curriculum is irrelevant and outdated. Most of the things we teach children, don't seem to align with their future and their environment as well.* (T03)

The responses from the participants revealed that a decolonised school history curriculum is one that is tailored to local needs and relevant to Zambian society. Mazimba and Kabombwe (2022) noted that the Zambian school history curriculum needed to include the local aspects as the former ones alienated the learners from their history. The local content was important to counter the Eurocentric narrative in the school history curriculum (Ncube & Moyo, 2024). In this vein, coloniality of knowledge is tied to coloniality of being, as the knowledge in the history curriculum is orienting students towards their future, part of imagining who they were, who they are and who they will be. Again, the participants' understanding has implications beyond the immediate reading of it.

Promoting national identity and values

The participants highlighted that a decolonised school history curriculum should foster a sense of unity and shared national identity. By teaching about the interconnection of Zambia's peoples and cultures, learners develop a sense of belonging and pride.

Participant T05 explained:

> *Decolonisation of the curriculum means removing components that focus on Eurocentric traits, it means designing the curriculum in line with current trends of African descent, it means shaping the curriculum in line with societal norms and customs….* (T05)

In the same vein, participants T09 and T04 suggested that:

> *Decolonisation of the curriculum, I think is where you would want to teach something that is not tied to, or teaching the history that was written by the colonial masters. So, decolonisation is where, maybe the Africans would want to teach their own history which would be written by the Africans themselves. So, decolonisation basically is doing away with the history of the colonialists.* (T09)

> *We should have included the history of Zambia, maybe if we wanted to include the history of Zambia in relation to other countries, that is when we could have included the history of Germany, Canada and the histories of the Western world. The history curriculum should have included our place in the global world.* (T04)

This view draws an intersection of the above themes, with emphasis on African history from African viewpoints and epistemologies as well as and shifting the focus onto this history to replace both the colonial content and lens. The overwhelming sense that emerged from the interviews was: decolonisation involved an active shift, an active decolonial shift to give importance to the local, the African, and the marginalised and to remove the legacy of coloniality. One can understand this as a push-back against coloniality of knowledge, but also with an understanding of coloniality of being, stressing that the history is written by the Africans themselves, not produced externally. Teachers' views suggest that the work already done is not sufficient in their view.

Discussion of the study

The findings of the study suggest that teachers of history had started imagining the possibilities (Maldonado-Torres, 2017; Mignolo, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019; Wa Thiongo, 1981) of what a decolonised history curriculum could be by advocating for inclusion of neglected histories, emphasis on local heroes, aligning to the curriculum to local needs and realities and promoting national values in the Zambian society through the history curriculum. The findings of this study are in line with those of Wa Thiong'o (1986: 9) who argued that decolonisation of knowledge is about "African people seeing themselves in a relationship with their surrounding and fellow Africans around the continent, as well as in relation to other cultures and peoples around the world". The participants offered glimpses of paths towards this 'new humanity' through visions of a decolonised history curriculum acknowledging the relationship between knowledge and power, and towards African histories written by Africans, reflecting local values and for local needs.

Participants' views, centred on addressing coloniality of knowledge, showed an awareness, even though not explicit and in the theoretical terminology, that spoke to coloniality of power and being. This would seem that their vision of a decolonised history curriculum would include an education system that addresses (through the history curriculum) how people think and feel about themselves, so that there can be social transformation in society, an orientation towards Africa, aware from the West, or ideas of African 'deficit'. This finding concurs with that of Fanon's (1968: 30), who posits that decolonisation is to move beyond colonialism towards a "new humanity" which offers a more worthy goal to pursue, even if it is only a regulative utopian ideal.

The findings of the current study suggest that, teachers' conceptualisation of decolonisation was limited in that they focused on content change in the Zambian school history curriculum. However, a more detailed reading surfaced which ties into a broader understanding of decoloniality, one that responds to both coloniality of being and of power, as well as of knowledge. This conceptualisation of decolonising of school history curriculum focuses on ways of countering coloniality of knowledge explicitly, however, even though addressing this takes into subtle consideration other aspects of decoloniality such as unmaking the coloniality of power and being in the Zambian school history curriculum.

The reason why participants expressed limited knowledge on undoing the coloniality of power, knowledge and being, could be due to little exposure to the explicit vocabulary of decolonisation and decoloniality. This remains a barrier to decolonial work in education,

as a vocabulary can offer avenues towards action. It is, however, important to note that even with the vocabulary primarily linked to decolonisation of curriculum (as guided in the interviews), aspects of coloniality of being and power were present, as shown above.

From the findings of the study, it is evident that teachers need explicit training and orientation on decolonisation and decoloniality. Thus, it is not surprising that conversation on decoloniality and teachers has focused on the need to decolonise teacher education curricula (Sathorar & Geduld, 2018). Part of this argument is that teachers should be prepared to embrace local context and content in their teaching process (Sathorar & Geduld, 2018). We also acknowledge that there are no hard rules that can guide teachers on decoloniality in their classrooms, however, current literature suggests they should be exposed to a wide range of decolonial possibilities and avoid reproducing the colonial biases in the education system (Maluleka, 2023, 2024; Sathorar & Geduld, 2018). Vandeyar (2024) argued that teachers are crucial to the decolonial turn and decolonisation of education. Thus, according to Vandeyar (2024), more effort must be placed on pre-service teacher programmes to have an effective decolonial turn through decolonisation of the mind and critical and transformative teacher preparations.

Teachers' conceptualisation of decolonisation did not consider that decolonising of pedagogy and assessment was also important in the quest to decolonise the school history curriculum (Godsell, 2019, 2021). This points to the way in which decolonisation is understood in a school sense, and perhaps, to the overwhelming presence and indeed the power of the official curriculum, as the aspect around which everything in the classroom orients. It also points to the lesser popularisation of the discourse around decolonisation of pedagogy and assessment, and the even more limited way in which this has been taken into the discourse surrounding primary and secondary education (schools) in Africa (Godsell, 2021). The discourse has primarily been centred in the higher educational space.

Although language is one of the most important components in the process of decolonisation, the teachers of history did not foreground language to be important. For Wa Thiongo (1986), decolonisation of education for Africans is to reclaim their language and culture that was destroyed during the colonial period. The reason being, despite Zambia having more than 72 ethnic languages, English has been the official language for use in schools since the colonial period (Mambwe & Njobvu, 2024). It is the only language of instruction recognised by the constitution (Mambwe & Njobvu, 2024). Apart from having a rich linguistic diversity, only seven languages of the 72 ethnic groups were selected to be official local languages, post-independence, that are taught at primary school level. In

2013 local languages were to be a medium of teaching and learning at primary school level up to Grade 4 (MOESTVEE, 2013). However, the 2023 competency-based curriculum overturned the decision to teaching in local languages to English from primary school level to tertiary level (MoE, 2023).

Conclusion

Teachers' knowledge of decolonisation of the school history curriculum represented what they confronted in the curriculum, and in the knowledge that was produced in the classroom around the curriculum, in that it focused on inclusion of content that was marginalised as a way of decolonising the school history curriculum. This is an important aspect of decolonial work, and perhaps the one participants felt most urgent in the curriculum. While their responses show the interconnectedness of different aspects of coloniality, and speak to all three aspects, their understanding does not explicitly address issues of coloniality of power and being. Thus, it can be argued, there is a need for a teachers' education programme that would prepare teachers to have knowledge on decolonisation and develop their decolonial impulses, already visible in the participants' responses. The researchers also acknowledge that the way decolonisation was introduced in the interviews may have played a role in how it was conceptualised and responded to, however, the researchers wanted the participating teachers to have the space to respond spontaneously and genuinely. The study recommends teachers' vocabulary surrounding decoloniality be deepened, and that this could perhaps be done through a module offered addressing decoloniality in teacher education programmes. It was also suggested that in-service teachers should be given knowledge on elements of decolonisation and decoloniality to implement the decolonial agenda. A key finding of the current study is that teachers' views and lived experiences on decolonisation and decoloniality must be taken seriously for the decolonial agenda to be implemented effectively in the field of education in Zambia.

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Decolonising Pedagogies for Values Inculcation in Secondary School History Teaching in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

Values inculcation is one of the principal goals of the secondary school history curriculum in Africa generally and Zimbabwe in particular. The development of values in secondary school history education is essential to promote cultural awareness, influence the development of sound character dispositions and to shape the identity of learners. Thus, teaching history should develop values which are a cornerstone of the way of life of concerned societies. However, some African values have been rendered insignificant by Eurocentric historiography. This necessitates pedagogical approaches that expose learners to enriching learning experiences where they can openly and critically engage with historical concepts and challenge the skewed Western discourses and perspectives on African experiences and civilisations. This will empower history learners to reach a consciousness of societal values through making informed inferences on the experiences of both past and present societies. Using a critical pedagogy as a lens, this paper explores pedagogies that can be instrumental to promote values inculcation grounded on the decolonial perspective.

A qualitative approach was employed to review secondary research on service learning, structured academic controversy, Indigenous games and folktales which are some of the teaching methods that are recommended by scholarship as having potential to foster values inculcation. Scholarship on debates on history education are reviewed to enable this paper to provide insights on how the mentioned teaching methods can promote a culturally responsive approach to values inculcation. Overall, the authors endeavour to advance an argument that pedagogy for values inculcation in the teaching and learning of history should speak to the lived experiences of learners to realise values internalisation.

Keywords: Values; Values inculcation; Secondary school history curriculum; Pedagogy; Culturally responsive approach; Decolonial perspective

Introduction and background

Teaching secondary school history in post-colonial Africa and Zimbabwe in particular, seeks to respond to different pertinent issues affecting African societies. One of the major concerns African societies are grappling with in the twenty-first century is the deterioration of the moral compass across the strata of society. Obiagu (2023) laments that post-colonial Africa is experiencing immoral behaviour from the youths, unethical code of conduct from the civil service officers, inconsiderate leadership, ethnic rivalry and religious intolerance which breed multiple social problems to the communities. Yoon (2022) suggests that a rigorous teaching of morality in school subjects such as history can be instrumental in addressing these issues by repairing the social fabric. This view is supported by Prokhel et al. (2023: 140) who argue that taking a serious stance on implementation of values education that addresses "humanistic aspects of students' development" in all the school subjects, including history, can have a positive impact in curbing the persisting issues of immorality. This requires secondary school history teaching that commits to the development of social values to evoke and nurture a sense of humanity and social responsivity amongst learners. In other words, secondary school history education should create enriching learning experiences to facilitate positive behavioural and societal transformations (Karn, 2023).

Zimbabwe, like other African countries, acknowledges that sustainable development can be realised when citizens possess not only technical skills and knowledge, but also a sound value system (Mohamad et al., 2020). This explains why the Zimbabwean secondary school history curriculum aims to foster "an understanding and appreciation of issues concerning Unhu/Ubuntu/Vumunhu (societal norms and values) leading to a change in learners' attitudes and behaviour" (History syllabus, 2015: 1). Thus, it is

intended that secondary school history teaching should play a pivotal role in opening the eyes of learners to moral issues so that they draw moral lessons to inform their everyday life experiences through the study of history. In this regard, the view by Sopacu (2020: 464) is broadened, in that the "internalisation of character values in learning history is a necessity", by emphasising that it is also essential to go beyond personality or character values to a plethora of values that inform other socioeconomic and political dynamics of the Zimbabwean society. It is, however, noted that the school history curriculum and pedagogical approaches as well as historiography inherited from the colonial systems are not appropriately fit for this purpose, hence, fall short in addressing pertinent issues affecting Zimbabwe. It is worthy to note that this concern does not dismiss the strides that have been initiated and continue to be implemented in Africa and in Zimbabwe to ensure that school history education contributes in "servicing achievement of society by instilling to people a broad sense of values" (Khoza, 2005: 269). In Zimbabwe, scholars such as Sibanda and Blignaut (2020: 4) point out that the history curriculum is yet to fully "dismantle the cultural and epistemological heritage of Eurocentrism". On the same note, Mavhunga (2006: 54) accuses the school curriculum of "breeding apologists to Western hegemony, products that look to Europe for solutions to local problems, people who have no cultural base and therefore no identity". The continuation of this in secondary school history teaching casts a bleak shadow in achieving the role of history in inculcating values that can transform the lives of Africans in a way that enhances overall societal wellbeing. Against this backdrop, the current paper argues for a decolonial approach in the implementation of values education in secondary school history in Zimbabwe.

Decoloniality in the secondary school history curriculum

The exit of colonial governments in the African continent did not bring the immediate dissolution of colonial systems as observed by Race et al. (2021: 3) that "coloniality survives colonialism". The colonial ideologies and structures that have been deliberately imposed and ingrained in different aspects of the lifestyles of Africans, continue to exist in post-colonial Africa. This explains why decolonisation is still an ongoing process which endeavours to dismantle the colonial structures and colonial mentality to re-build and restore the identities of African people (Makhanya & Mzinyane, 2023). Therefore, decoloniality examines colonial systems to understand the effects of colonialism on African people and institutions to devise strategies or approaches that can address the negative impact of colonialism. One focal point in the decolonisation agenda in Africa is the education system. The education system has been used by the colonial powers in Africa

as a vehicle to cultivate and glorify Western culture amongst Africans, whilst at the same time denigrating Africa and its socio-economic and political systems (Mahaye, 2018).

The colonial school history curriculum in Africa was also intentionally curated to serve the colonial agenda. Colonial narratives informing the history curriculum turned a blind eye on African experiences and propagated myths that portrayed Africans as stagnant and primitive people incapable of driving any meaningful development (Dube & Moyo, 2022). Consequently, African learners were exposed to historical content and learning experiences that castigated their own culture and civilisations. To Quan-Baffour (2014), this was meant to create cultural assimilation whereby Africans will completely abandon their way of life. According to Mulder (2016), this gradually detached the colonised from their identity and cultural practices.

The decolonial movement in history education in Africa boldly challenged the Western skewed approach which robbed Africa of her place in history. This led to unwavering advocacy for a paradigm shift to history education that empowers Africans to "think positively in the reclaiming and reconstruction of their history, cultural heritage, identity and personhood" (Mahaye, 2018: 7). This motivated the school history curriculum objective that commits to revive the transmission and appreciation of value systems that can transform African societies in a positive way (Moloi et al., 2023). However, Kabombwe et al. (2024) note that the secondary school history curriculum in post-colonial Africa, including Zimbabwe is yet to fully eliminate biased colonial narratives which continue to perpetuate Western hegemony. For instance, some history textbooks used as a learning resource in secondary school history in post-colonial Zimbabwe continue to justify colonialism as a noble act to civilise Africa and to save Africans from slave trade (Muchatuta & Sabeta, 2020). In this regard, teaching of values in the secondary school history education in Zimbabwe should be conscious that the colonial mentalities still haunt the social environment in which history is taught.

This requires secondary history education that reconnects the African learners to their lived experiences and cultural roots (Maluleka, 2019). We consider it valid that a history curriculum that is alienated from the experiences of learners and is rooted in dominant Western narratives, does little in empowering learners to be responsive citizens (Rahm & Nillas, 2023). Therefore, we argue for decolonisation of the secondary school history curriculum that goes beyond curriculum content. Dube and Moyo (2022: 2) observed that the "mere introduction of Africa centred topics on the history curriculum does not disrupt the hegemony of colonialism". All aspects of the history curriculum including

pedagogies that inform history teaching, should complement and reinforce the ultimate goal of decolonising secondary school history education.

The authors regard pedagogy as the art of teaching which involves elements such as methodology that help to create meaningful learning experiences (Kapur, 2020). This implies that pedagogy act as a vehicle to deliver history curricular concepts. Thus, pedagogy stands as a salient feature in the realisation of learning outcomes and for this reason, it should be fit for purpose. From a decolonial perspective, pedagogy to foster development of values in history education should "be relevant to students' everyday life and be fitting to the values systems of the community in which they grew" (Ali & Shishigu, 2020: 2). In other words, history learners should be able to situate their lived experiences in the study of history, so that they critically "approach actual reality based on historical reality" (Nasution, 2022: 37). Therefore, we argue that decolonising pedagogies for values education inculcation in secondary school history teaching should be grounded on the principles of critical pedagogy.

Critical pedagogy theory

Critical pedagogy was developed as a challenge to the existence of forces of oppression that are embedded in various social systems (Luitel et al., 2022). Therefore, its principal objective is to transform the subjugated societies by confronting the sources of oppression to bring about liberation and emancipation of the oppressed (Rahm & Nillas, 2023). To achieve this, critical pedagogy theorists underscore the need to gain a comprehensive understanding of the nature and impact of social dominance to combat the forces of oppression from an informed standpoint. Paulo Freire, the progenitor of critical pedagogy, used critical lenses to examine the education systems of the oppressed societies and came to the conclusion that the education system of the oppressed was dominated by a Banking Concept of Education whereby "teachers just deposited their knowledge in the heads of students" (Freire, 2016: 73). As such, learners remained inactive participants in the teaching and learning process, as they passively absorb curriculum concepts to reproduce them when required. Passive learning is teacher dominated and it hinders a holistic development of the intellectual, physical and affective domains (Ndomondo et al., 2022). These shortcomings of the Banking Concept of Education motivated Paulo Freire to coin critical pedagogy as a "correct way of thinking that goes beyond the ingenious" (Freire, 2001: 43). Thus, critical pedagogy demands a departure from teacher dominated instruction to learner-centred instruction that "enhances consciousness, understanding and judgement" (Uddin, 2019: 111).

A core objective of critical pedagogy is to create a conducive learning environment to ensure active learner participation through dialogic instruction. Freire (1972: 65) argues that "without dialogue, there is no communication and without communication there is no true education". Thus, the dialogic method fixes the teacher dominated approach by giving learners a voice in the learning environment. According to Freire (2001), dialogue as part of the liberation process enables learners a meaningful and critical engagement with curricula concepts. Applied in secondary school history education, this means history learners should be involved in "active construction, deconstruction and contestation of historical narratives" (Dollie et al., 2020: 275). According to Moloi et al. (2023: 24), this has the power to uproot the "colonial mentality and internalised oppressions". Thus, dialogic interaction rejects indoctrination of values in the teaching and learning of history and takes an open discussion approach to help learners comprehend "what cultural values are and how they were born and developed" (Ulosoy, 2021: 140). Arguably, this can empower secondary school history learners to appreciate their cultural roots and help them to create their own identities, rather that imposing identities on them (Dollie et al., 2020).

Furthermore, critical pedagogy holds that empowering learning experiences should be based on real life experiences. Critical pedagogy theorists argue that "there is no self-realisation and no critical awareness in education which cannot connect to the real-life situation" (Uddin, 2019: 114). Linking curricular concepts to real world experiences can have a profound effect in motivating learners to apply the acquired knowledge and competencies in authentic situations which can transform the lives of individual learners. Translating this to secondary school history education implies its teaching and learning should be "cathartic and help young learners to liberate themselves consciously from mental colonialism and cultural imperialism" (Moloi et al., 2023: 114). In other words, learners should be able to use historical knowledge and skills to "openly challenge unjust relations of power that continue to reproduce patterns of exploitation" (Dolie et al., 2020: 275). This creates an ideal platform for secondary school history learners to identify, relate and apply different social values taught in history to their social environment.

Critical pedagogy also advocates for the development of student agency in educational settings. The outcome of emancipation should manifest in learners who are intrinsically motivated to take up challenges and are able to provide solutions to problems encountered in the learning process (Cheptoo, 2019). Committing to enhance student agency in the teaching and learning of secondary school history can award learners their "right to cognitive justice which could nourish their ontological being and propel them to be agentic

beings in charge of remaking their world" (Dube & Moyo, 2022: 2). Boadu and Donnelly (2020) also emphasise the significance of developing student agency to help learners be proactive members of society. This can strengthen history learners' civic awareness and can also boost their eagerness to respond to social issues experienced in their communities.

The empowerment-oriented and learner centred thrust of critical pedagogy makes it a fundamental approach to drive the decolonisation of pedagogy to ensure meaningful values inculcation in the teaching of secondary school history in the Zimbabwean context. In its essence, critical pedagogy views decoloniality in education as: "Born out of a realisation that the modern world is an asymmetrical world order that is sustained not only by colonial matrices of power but also by pedagogies and epistemologies that continue to produce eliminated Africans that are socialised into hating Africa that produced them" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015: 489).

This standpoint assigns secondary school history education a huge responsibility of building the multifaceted capacities of learners to enable them to identify and challenge existing complex social structures of oppression in the study of history. Resultantly, history teaching and learning should "not only foster critical thinking but should also teach how to change the surrounding environment" (Uddin, 2019: 112). This can be impelled by pedagogies that strengthen civic responsibilities with a focus on the real-life experiences of history learners (Mkosi et al., 2023). To this end, this paper identifies and discusses some teaching methods that can be instrumental in promoting empowering learning experiences for the development of values in the teaching and learning of secondary school history in Zimbabwe. These are structured academic controversy, Indigenous games, folktales and service learning.

Methodology

This conceptual paper employed a qualitative approach to explore the pedagogies that can be instrumental to promote a decolonial perspective in secondary school history education in Zimbabwe. A search of secondary research from 2020-2025 was conducted in search engines that include JSTOR, Google Scholar and ResearchGate. The abstract and keywords, such as decolonising pedagogy, values education, Indigenous pedagogy, secondary school history teaching and learning were used to identify the target articles. A meticulous reading of the selected papers after screening was conducted and themes were generated on emerging insights.

Structured academic controversy

Structured academic controversy is a teaching and learning technique that is ideal for allowing learners to interrogate controversial issues in the history learning environment (Jacobs, 2010). It involves teachers working together with learners to identify a topical problem which is presented in the form of a question that has two views to be addressed using factual information (Tavakoli et al., 2017). In groups, learners conduct research and gather evidence from authentic sources to create a substantiated response that addresses their standpoint. After the presentation of responses from both standpoints, the learners exchange and respond to the other side they were not initially supporting (Parker, 2021). This is followed by the dissolution of groups and a discussion where all the learners come together to propose a common position regarding the problem being interrogated. The final solution can be a modified version of the two viewpoints, or an alternative position developed through a consensus.

Structured academic controversy is commended by scholars such as Dettman (2019) and Parker (2021) for its immense potential to nurture critical thinking skills which are vital for the development of responsive citizenship. Rahm and Nillas (2023) argue that allowing history learners to openly engage in controversial issues, boost both their social and intellectual competences. It is highly likely that as learners consult a wide range of sources to gather evidence, they also get to apply high order skills to make illuminating interpretations and formulate sound arguments. Karn (2023) points out that history learner's ability to critically interrogate historical events in relation to cause, consequence and various dynamics shaping events, is associated with an enhanced awareness of social responsibilities. Therefore, this makes structured academic controversy essential to foster the development of desired social values and in creating a sense of concern towards social issues history learners encounter in everyday life.

Moreover, structured academic controversy emphasises learner engagement in interrogating issues that affect them and their societies both in the past and present. Jacobs (2010) argues that structured academic controversy encourages learners to create their own meaning of curricular concepts by responding to social issues within their environment. Accordingly, when learners appreciate the significance of historical knowledge in addressing real life situations, they can be empowered to be change agents in their communities. Thorp (2020) highlights that this raises an awareness amongst learners on the complex factors affecting their social experiences which can give them an

obligation to contribute constructively to solving problems faced. Uddin (2019: 110) also supports this line of thinking by stressing that learning experiences that are centred on real life situations give learners a voice to "critique a wide range of personal, social and cultural forces" present in their social environment. This can positively promote the development of values amongst secondary school learners and can also motivate them to identify the "values and cultural past that need to be adjusted to conditions that occur in the present" (Oktavia et al., 2023: 108).

Structured academic controversy can also provide authentic settings for secondary school history learners to apply some key social values in the study of history. In fact, the success of structured academic controversy in achieving desired learning outcomes, rests largely upon the ability of learners to work collaboratively to gather information and to reach a common decision on the argument to advance (Tavakoli et al., 2017). For this reason, Jacobs (2010: 3) equates structured academic controversy to cooperative debating that creates a "positive interdependence" amongst learners who all contribute meaningfully to constructing and defending their standpoint on the topic under discussion. This means that in the learning process, history learners are not only exposed to divergent opinions surrounding the issue of concern, they also learn to exercise empathy and appreciate other viewpoints different from their own perceptions. According to Jacobs (2010: 4), this aspect of structured academic controversy is essential for instilling desired social values, since it gives learners a "glimpse of the complexity of the real world and promote tolerance of ambiguity which leads to emotional resilience, acceptance of diversity and intercultural competence". Therefore, it is argued that in this way, structured academic controversy can facilitate inculcation of foundational values for responsible citizenship which requires learners to be "engaged in collective decision making about the community and social issues" (Dettman, 2019: 150).

Indigenous games

Indigenous games in the African set up refer to traditional forms of play developed by Indigenous people and passed from one generation to the other. Each Indigenous game has its own set of rules and guidelines which inform the conduct of players. Indigenous games are part of the Indigenous Knowledge Systems that inform the way of life of Africans. Hadebe-Ndlovu (2022: 7) views Indigenous games as "symbolic cultural expressions from a specific society". This implies that Indigenous games depict the sociocultural practices of different African societies. However, there is a growing concern that despite the relevance

of Indigenous games to the experiences of African learners, they remain unpopular in the pedagogical choices of many educators (Mosimege, 2020). Hadebe-Ndlovu (2022: 1) laments that Indigenous games in African educational settings continue to be regarded as the "other and this sadly continues to perpetrate race and class division in the society". From a critical perspective, the lack of trust on the potential of Indigenous games in creating enriching learning experiences creates a negative notion on African Indigenous Knowledge in the teaching and learning of secondary school history. Indigenous games developed by African societies were not only limited to entertainment purposes, but also played a significant role in the socialisation process as well as facilitation of acquisition of life skills. This makes Indigenous games an appropriate instruction to promote development of societal values in the teaching and learning of secondary school history in Zimbabwe.

The development of Indigenous games in African societies was inspired by social experiences of people involved, and for this reason Hadebe-Ndlovu (2022) argues that they are a form of culturally embedded pedagogy. The significance of learning experiences that link with the sociocultural environment in promoting quality learning outcomes need not be overemphasised. Mosimege (2020) stresses that Indigenous activities are connected to the everyday life of learners in many ways and disregarding them in educational settings alienates curricular concepts from the lived realities of learners. In this regard, Matsekoleng et al. (2024) advocate for a procedural utilisation of Indigenous games as pedagogy. In the context of secondary school history education, Indigenous games can help to nurture an intimate connection between learners and the social values and cultural practices of their society. This qualifies Indigenous games as instrumental for the study of secondary school history in Zimbabwe to restore the "cultural identity of children and enables them to acquire norms, values and societal skills that foster self-usefulness and help them to perform expected future roles as adults" (Lukong & Mbuwir, 2024: 17).

Employing Indigenous games in secondary school history education can also play a vital role in ensuring a holistic development of learners, since it provides learning experiences that respond to multiple domains. Research in secondary school history education expresses optimism in the power of holistic learning in fostering development and strengthening both appreciation and application of social value. Marsh (2008) point out that some Indigenous games require a physical, cognitive and emotional engagement from participants. This holistic engagement of learners can fulfil the objective of values inculcation in history lessons by creating engaging learning experiences that boost emotional intelligence and intellectual capabilities of secondary school history learners.

As such, the implementation of the Zimbabwean secondary school history curriculum can make internationalisation of values in history teaching and learning possible as one of the principal learning outcomes (Amlor, 2016).

One of the strengths of using Indigenous games as pedagogy is that they can be tailored to different learning settings to achieve different curriculum outcomes. To corroborate this line of thinking, Hadebe-Ndlovu (2020: 6) asserts that Indigenous games can be "adapted to suit a variety of social, cognitive and affective needs of children". Thus, the flexibility of Indigenous games can make it possible for secondary school history teachers to utilise them to help history learners "understand the ethical dimensions" (Kilag et al., 2023: 2) of history as a school subject that examines human experiences. This suggests that if properly aligned to learning objectives, Indigenous games can be a catalyst to stimulate both historical reasoning and ethical understanding in the teaching and learning of history (Ulusoy, 2021). Therefore, secondary school history teaching and learning can take advantage of Indigenous games to contextualise historical concepts to the concerns in the social setting and cultural landscape of learners. For instance, participation in Indigenous games can incorporate local narratives and build positive interpersonal interaction which is crucial to develop constructive collaboration as well as peaceful coexistence grounded on a sense of tolerance.

Service learning

Service learning is a form of instruction which involves the fusion of academic learning with community services (Preradovic, 2015). Warren (2012: 56) regards service learning as a teaching methodology "in which students participate in community service that will enhance their understanding of course concepts and enable them to make contributions in their communities". Learners engage in planned community services which stem from the curricula concepts learnt in the classroom. This makes it mandatory that the identified service responds to the problems or needs present in the community and at the same time be aligned to subject content. Khalili (2025: 347) commends service learning for providing a "powerful alternative for enhancing student learning, promoting social responsibility and fostering community development". This shows that service learning can provide ideal learning experiences to enable secondary school history learners to develop a rich understanding of the relevance of academic concepts in transforming real life experiences in their communities. This stresses the necessity of designing service-learning activities that contribute to provision of sustainable solutions to challenges faced by the community and at the same time, reinforcing curriculum outcomes.

Service learning has the potential to sensitise secondary school history learners on both social issues experienced in the community and values cherished by their societies. As highlighted above, this is possible, because service learning allows learners to apply knowledge, skills and values gained in history lessons to respond proactively to real life situations. Considering an observation by Khathi et al. (2022), that learners can be accustomed to social values if they have the opportunity to practice them in authentic settings, service learning becomes an invaluable learning approach to enhance values inculcation in the teaching and learning of secondary school history in Zimbabwe. History teachers can design service-learning activities to facilitate learner-community engagement in tackling human rights violations, corruption, gender-based violence, high crime rate, environmental devastation as well as drug and substance abuse which are some of the major problems experienced in Zimbabwe which can be attributed to loss of strong morals amongst citizens. Arguably, this can make secondary school history learning in Zimbabwe serve the purpose of empowering learners to challenge the social injustices they come across in their communities.

Furthermore, an active engagement of secondary school history learners in meaningful community services can also motivate them to introspect on their own behaviour standards, attitudes and values in a positive way. To reinforce this point, Pacho (2019: 238) explains that service learning is "more than just mere volunteering…it integrates community service with academic instruction as it focuses on critical, reflective thinking and civic responsibility." In a way, service learning can propel secondary school history learners to question their own beliefs, values and attitudes in relation to what is socially desirable. As observed by Khalili (2025: 348), reaching this level of self-awareness "inspires a greater a sense of responsibility and civic participation" amongst learners in the study of history. Resultantly, this can help in shaping history learners' personality and development of social competencies. Thus, making values inculcation an attainable learning outcome in the implementation of the secondary school history curriculum in Zimbabwe.

Folktales

Adeyemi (2021) defines folktales as Indigenous stories with a clear plot which involves characters experiencing different life situations. One of the unique features of folktales is that they contain unrealistic actions such as talking animals and plants which contributes in fulfilling the purpose of entertainment, cultural awareness and to evoke critical thinking from listeners (Wiysahnyuy & Valentine, 2023). Paul (1992) classifies African folktales

into three categories, which include moral tales that focus on upholding ethical behaviour, aetiological tales that explain phenomena and dilemma tales that present complex issues that must be resolved. The events portrayed in these different types of folktales mirror the real life social, economic and political experiences of concerned societies which makes it imperative to employ folktales as instruction to facilitate development of values in secondary school history education. As proffered by Afolayan (2021), folktales have potential to draw the attention of history learners to social issues encountered by their communities and further motivate them to be proactive change agents.

The strength of utilising folktales as an instructional conduit to facilitate the development of values, lie in its potential to incorporate local narratives in history teaching and learning. A study by Pakpahan et al. (2025) that focused on the use of *Marsikam* folktale as a learning resource in history teaching, validates that integration of local experiences create relatable learning opportunities that resonate with lived realities of learners. Considering the significance of social backdrop in facilitating effective values education (Sahin, 2019), this can help to create a conducive learning space for secondary school history learners to develop a contextualised appreciation of values. In the same vein, Avcu (2025: 11) notes that folktales, "not only transmit social norms, values and historical events from one generation to the next but also helps students to comprehend their own cultural identities". This brings out the culturally responsive aspect of folktales which can enhance the development of values if history learners engage in a deeper interpretation of folktales to discern and appreciate how they portray the different cultural values.

Moreover, Indigenous folktales in the African context are embedded with moral lessons which can be a bedrock for values inculcation in the teaching and learning of secondary school history. As highlighted above, some tales specifically serve a moral purpose, thereby portraying socially desirable behaviour standards and attitudes (Paul, 1992). Arguably, employing such folktales as a learning resource can motivate secondary school history learners to draw moral lessons, realise the consequences of immoral behaviour simultaneously reflect on standards of morality in their own social environments. Promoting reflective practice amongst learners is commended in critical pedagogy for empowering learners to develop the "values of justice and equality in student minds" (Uddin, 2019: 109). In this study, we argue that this is crucial in the teaching of secondary school history in Zimbabwe to create a space to confront multifaceted forms of injustices that exist in different communities.

Recommendations

Having expatiated the essence of a decolonial approach in the pedagogy for values teaching in the implementation of the Zimbabwean secondary school history curriculum, the following recommendations are proposed for values inculcation to have a profound impact on learning outcomes:

- History teachers must develop a grounded understanding of both decoloniality and critical pedagogy as progressive perspectives that can transform the teaching of values in the secondary school history curriculum. Workshops should be conducted by the authorities in the Ministry of Primary Education to equip in-service teachers with decolonial pedagogic content knowledge in the context of values teaching in the secondary school history curriculum. Teacher training should also consider this initiative so that preservice teachers are empowered for the same purpose. This can help teachers towards achieving a holistic decolonisation of the secondary school history curriculum which stands to benefit the implementation of values inculcation.
- There is need for a systematic integration of values inculcation in the teaching and learning of secondary school history in Zimbabwe. To ensure this, the curriculum planners should design a secondary school curriculum that provides explicit guidelines on the teaching of values that speaks to a decolonial perspective. This can enable history teachers to plan on the appropriate pedagogy to employ and create transformative learning experiences that speak to multiple domains, including the affective domain. The teaching strategies discussed above require prior planning to create meaningful interaction with historical content in a way that empowers learners to promote a sense of civic engagement and development of social values.
- Considering the core elements of decolonial-oriented instruction and critical pedagogy, the implementation of values education in secondary school education should be anchored on both substantive and procedural history concepts. It is imperative for secondary school history learners to reach a level of historical reasoning and understanding to be able to translate historical content into lived experiences. This can enable history learners to apply values learnt in practical experiences.
- It is essential to follow a culturally responsive approach in the teaching of values in the teaching and learning of secondary school history in Zimbabwe. This can assist learners to find the meaning in values taught in their sociocultural landscape. The pedagogical strategies discussed in this paper require history teachers to take a contextualised approach in values teaching, so that learners

can relate values in the African context. It can also help learners to identify some prejudiced opinions against their culture and value systems in the study of secondary school history in Zimbabwe.

Conclusion

This paper stresses that values inculcation underpinned by the principles of critical pedagogy can enhance the development of values in line with a decolonial perspective in the teaching and learning of secondary school history in Zimbabwe. In its quest for empowerment of learners, critical pedagogy stands on learner-centred methodology which is informed by the needs, interests and prevailing realities of learners. This is in sync with the decolonial agenda in the teaching of secondary school history in Zimbabwe, which seeks to dismantle the biased colonial narratives that rendered African Indigenous cultural practices and value systems insignificant. Structured academic controversy, Indigenous games and service learning as illustrated above, have what it takes to create capacitating learning experiences that promote student autonomy, critical thinking, problem solving, cultural awareness and a sense of civic concern. These are fundamental aspects to ensure the development of desired social values that inform the livelihoods of history learners. The afore-mentioned pedagogies can allow history teachers to exploit the social and cultural experiences of history learners as a major learning resource, thus, drawing their attention to social problems in their communities and country at large. On this basis, we assert that secondary school history pedagogy that addresses development of values and strong morals should be grounded on the cultural context of Zimbabwean learners to promote effective values inculcation in secondary school history education in Zimbabwe.

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Decolonising and Africanising Curriculum Knowledge: The Utility of the Music of Bob Marley, Fela Kuti and Tupac Shakur in Teaching Decoloniality in African Universities

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Abstract

The focus of this paper is to examine the practical use of music in university teaching. Music has been seen as a useful tool in communicating certain messages in society. The main aim of this research is to examine and assess the utility of the music of Bob Marley, Fela Kuti and Tupac Shakur in teaching decoloniality in African universities. Using the ideas on decoloniality by Chinua Achebe (1983), we explore how the messages encapsulated in the song called *'Redemption Song'* by Bob Marley, '*Teacher don't teach me nonsense*' by Fela Kuti and '*Changes*' by Tupac Shakur may help in teaching decoloniality in African universities. Drawing on qualitative research, content analysis was used to get a systematic and objective approach to analysing texts, images and videos of the songs of the selected artists. An analysis of the selected songs reveals that the revolutionary and liberatory undertones in

the selected songs can inform teaching decoloniality in African universities and beyond.

Keywords: Decoloniality; Coloniality; Africanising; Curriculum; Bob Marley; Fela Kuti; Tupac Shakur

Introduction

In Africa and non-Western societies in general, the education systems and ways of knowing are mainly influenced and shaped by colonial tropes of knowing. Despite the official end of colonialism and the attainment of political independence in most African countries, colonial ways of knowing continue. Though efforts to ensure that Indigenous Knowledge Systems are taken into consideration, Western ways of knowing tend to supersede due to a multiplicity of reason which include *inter alia,* the fact that most academics in these universities have received Western education and trained in Western universities. Agenda setting by Western funders in some African universities influence and continue to shape the nature in which teaching is done in some African universities. In Southern Africa, as is the case in other parts of African countries that were at some point colonised, foreign colonial languages such as English and French are the medium of instruction (Wa Thiong'o, 2007).

Curricula in most of these countries are mainly characterised by the Western orientated methods of teaching and research. In the words of Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2013, 2018), the modern school system, the Christianised religion and the Westernised university play a very active role in the colonial and post-colonial processes of the dismemberment of non-Westerners from the human family. For Wa Thiong'o (1997) this was the case, since cultural subjugation is seen as an essential condition for political and economic mastery sought by Westerners. The colonial education and Westernised curricula are seen by Wa Thiong'o (2012) as the most important force for the alienation of non-Westerners, since it invades and takes control of the mental or cognitive map of the other, and in the end produces what is known and seen as a distorted consciousness among people who are colonised (Wa Thiong'o 2012).

The need to decolonise has become a global movement in which the emphasis is to reconfigure and remodel everything in non-Western societies. While the decolonial initiatives have been seen as recycling the old and tired narratives, the reality is that the need to ensure that there should be changes in how teaching and learning is done is gaining ground. This in part could be influenced by the success in a homegrown curriculum in countries such as China, South Korea and in some cases, Japan. Although changes in Africa are insignificant and not as pronounced, some of the oldest universities in countries such

as Morocco and Egypt have managed to keep their Indigenous languages in teaching and continue to be influenced by their Indigenous ways of knowing.

Socrates was perplexed by the fact that what was preached by both politicians and the clergy was in contrast with what was happening in reality. The thingification of human beings happened right in Athens, a city that was celebrated as the citadel of freedom. The same can be said of most African universities, especially in Southern Africa today. The use of Eurocentric curricula and the use of foreign languages in teaching can be equated to what was happening in Athens during the time of Socrates, which is quite paradoxical. It was paradoxical in that what was preached and seen as ideal, was not what was done pragmatically.

In light of this, one can argue that in the same way that Achebe (1983) pondered about the beginnings of dehumanisation, the music by Bob Marley, Fela Kuti and Tupac Shakur agonise over the origins of human inequality, to the extent that they make suggestions of a new way of knowing among those driven to the periphery through a multiplicity of ways which could also be through a colonised education system. After an analysis of the lyrics of the chosen songs, one can go further in stating more songs from the chosen artists which carry a decolonial message. Given these realities, it becomes important to study the utility of music in decolonial teaching in African universities as what this article endeavours to do.

Thus, in the political present, shaped by the insurgent recognition of the consequences of coloniality of knowledge and flaring decolonial mantra which was incendiary of the #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall movements, but whose execution is fraught with challenges, this paper examines the utility of the music of Bob Marley, Fela Kuti and Tupac Shakur in the decolonising and Africanising of curriculum knowledge in Southern Africa. Through thinking from a decolonial conjuncture, the study explores the practical and ethical limitations of what kind of success using the music of Bob Marley, Fela Kuti and Tupac Shakur can produce. Identifying that the harms against non-whites' modes of thinking and making sense of their world through their Indigenous Knowledge Systems are harmful against their ways of being, the paper engages with the possibility of the relational discipline of Black ecologies and other forms of alterity to offer a framework for conceptualising a full sense of a decolonised and Africanised curriculum.

Theoretical framework

We engage ourselves and gather material using a theoretical framework which builds on the ideas of Achebe (1983). Achebe's (1983) works offer profound insights into the complexities of culture, identity, colonialism and power. The main ideas by the author are that culture is a dynamic and contested terrain, shaped by historical and social forces, such as religion and the legal systems that influence how people live.

Colonialism disrupts cultural identity, imposing dominant narratives and values. Identity formation is a continuous process, involving negotiation and resistance. The blending of different cultural traditions create new forms and meanings which must be confronted and disrupted. Achebe's (1983) ideas hold that culture is a site of struggle, where different forces negotiate meaning and identity. It is through colonialism in which dominant discourses, which disrupted Indigenous cultures and identities were imposed, especially through Afrikaans centred learning in South Africa.

From this standpoint, Achebe (1983) argues that cultural hybridity emerges as a response, blending different traditions and creating new forms. Moreover, considering this, Achebe suggested that counter-narratives that challenge dominant discourses, reclaiming Indigenous voices and perspectives, are needed. Based on this, the framework whose substratum lies in the ideas of Achebe (1983), provides a foundation for understanding the intricate relationships between culture, power and identity in the South African education system and other parts of Southern Africa. It is from this standpoint that we aim to explore the utility of the music of Fela Kuti, Bob Marley and Tupa Shakur.

Methodology

Meta-theoretically, this study is underpinned by the qualitative research design and informed by the pragmatist paradigm. For pragmatists, research always takes place in a political, social and historical context. Pragmatists believe in a world that is independent of one's mind in addition to what is lodged in one's mind. This study investigates how the music of Bob Marley, Fela Kuti and Tupac Shakur can be useful in decolonial teaching in South African universities and other universities in Southern Africa and beyond. Bob Marley is one of the most prominent reggae artists who inspired and continues to inspire, new generations of reggae artists in Jamaica and beyond.

Bob Marley's music gained fame during the late 1970s and 1980s when the African liberation movement was at its peak. In this context, Bob Marley's discography and lyrical

prowess appealed to a lot of people who yearned for freedom in Africa and beyond. Though his well thought songs such as *Buffalo Solider, Exodus, One Love, Get Up, Stand Up, War, Survival, Africa Unite, Zimbabwe* among others, his music provided a powerful message that inspired liberation movements in different parts of the world.

Fela Kuti was a product of a resistance movement against military dictatorships in Nigeria. Born Olufela Olusegun Oludotun Ransome-Kuti to a Nigerian middle-class family, Fela Kuti's mother was a fierce anti-colonial feminist activist and his father was an Anglican church priest before he became the first president of the Nigerian Union of Teachers.

As a product of seasoned activists, Fela Kuti formed a music band which played a music genre which mixed West African music with American funk and jazz and became known as Afrobeat music. Throughout his musical career, which was social and political commentary, Fela Kuti produced highly revolutionary songs under albums such as *Zombie, Shuffering and Shmiling, 'Teacher don't teach me nonsense', 'Expensive shit', 'Authority stealing', 'Sorrow tears and blood', 'Why black man dey suffer'*, among others.

Born Lusane Parish Crooks, Tupac Amaru Shakur also known by his stage names 2Pac and Makaveli, was an American rapper who is regarded as one of the greatest rappers of all time. Tupac Shakur was born to a radical Black feminist, Afeni Shakur, whose political consciousness led her to be a radical Black political party known as the Black Panther party. Growing up, Tupac was exposed to Black radical thought through his mother's political ideas and this later influenced his rap music which was sought to address issues of social justice, police brutality and the marginalisation of Black Americans in the United States of America. In trying to put across his message, Tupac Shakur produced songs such as '*Changes', 'Dear mama', 'Keep ya head up', 'Ghetto gospel', 'So many tears', 'Life goes on'* among others.

From these three artists, the following songs were selected for the purposes of the current study, namely '*Redemption Song'* by Bob Marley, '*Teacher don't teach me nonsense'* by Fela Kuti and '*Changes'* by Tupac. As fans of these three scholars we, the authors, listen to the music of these songs often. The three songs mentioned carry messages which resonate well with the decolonial movement.

Content analysis was used to get a systematic and objective approach to analysing texts, images and videos of the videos and songs of the selected artists. Content analysis facilitates the examination of media representation, enabling researchers to study how different

groups are portrayed and how messages are constructed and disseminated.

Content analysis supports historical research by analysing archival documents, speeches and texts to understand past events, ideologies and cultural contexts. Content analysis research design is a powerful tool for understanding complex social phenomena, cultural trends and communication strategies. Its applications span various fields, from media studies and market research, to historical analysis and programme evaluation. By employing content analysis, this study was able to uncover valuable insights from the songs of the chosen artists, hence, making it important and relevant in a study of this nature.

One song each from Fela Kuti, Bob Marley and Tupac Shakur were sampled using the purposive sampling technique. Purposive sampling relies on the researcher's judgement when selecting units to be studied (Marshall & Rossman, 2011). The number of songs which carry a decolonial message from these artists is quite large, however, it may depend on the discretion of the researcher in categorising whether the music carries a decolonial message.

In this regard, a sample of one song per artist sufficed. Songs with a decolonial message were selected based on the accessibility of the songs to the researchers and their discretion of whether the message encapsulated therein may be categorised as decolonial. Thus, in this context, studying the decolonial message encapsulated in the music of these artists is insightful in establishing this decolonial message and how it is communicated in ways that can inform decolonial teaching in African universities.

The role of music in the decolonial discourse

Music has been increasingly recognised as a valuable tool in decolonial teaching, offering a unique means of challenging dominant narratives and promoting social justice. A key importance of music in the decolonial movement is to subvert the traditional pedagogical approaches, providing a platform for marginalised voices and perspectives (Giroux, 2003). Apart from this, music also encourages critical analysis of power dynamics, cultural norms and historical contexts (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

The bridging of cultural chasms through the promotion of empathy and understanding among diverse populations is another importance of music (Delpit, 1995). This goes hand in glove with ensuring that the emotions of listeners and their bodies are engaged, hence, enhancing cognitive retention and affective connections with the decolonial message embodied in a certain song (Hooks, 1994). Additionally, music also fosters solidarity and a

sense of community among listeners and ultimately, promotes social change and collective action (Freire, 1970).

Though music does offer great potential in spreading the decolonial message, implementing it in decolonial teaching calls for a careful consideration of the power dynamics inherent in a community. It is also important to consider power dynamics and the agency of those listening to the music for one to be in a position to fully harness its potential in transforming lives and spread the decolonial message as well as create the needed empowerment, create inclusivity and enhance the needed decoloniality.

There is a surge of literature on the utility of music in addressing social ills and putting certain social phenomena in the limelight in Africa (Chasi and Tagwirei, 2020; Chitando, 2002; Hungwe et al., 2024; Kyker, 2012, 2016; Machingura, 2022; Maguraushe; 2020; Mangeya & Jakaza, 2022). The surge in literature of this nature is influenced by the diverse interpretation of how music of different genres is understood and interpreted, as discussed by Hungwe et al. (2024). Despite the surge of studies on music, its utility in decolonial teaching and learning remains limited. While decoloniality, as an area of study, has been well-documented and continues to be studied, not much has been done through understanding the utility of music in decolonial teaching in African universities.

Music has always been an integral part of human life. Music and different artists have become a medium through which certain messages are spread and communicated not only among those living, but also with the dead. Considering this, music has negative and positive impacts on both their emotional and physical well-being (Bennet & Taylor, 2012; Cohen, 2009; Creech et al., 2013; De Nora, 2000; Diaz Abrahan et al., 2019; Kelly et al., 2016). The utility of music in shaping and influencing people's ways of being, both on a personal and social level, is widely documented (Crozier, 1997; De Nora, 2000; Hargreaves & North, 1999). Music's power transcends cognitive understanding; it affects people in both emotional and psychological ways. As was the case with what has been dubbed the rebel music fronted by Bob Marley, music can evoke the emotional landscape of historical events in a way that textbooks cannot. This emotional engagement can lead to a deeper empathy and a more profound commitment to decolonial practices.

Music transcends geographic and cultural boundaries, making it an excellent tool for building solidarity across different oppressed communities worldwide. For instance, reggae music, rooted in the struggles of the Jamaican people, has found resonance in various parts of the world where people face oppression and injustice. This characteristic is particularly

useful in teaching decoloniality, which requires an empathetic understanding of the trauma and resilience of colonised peoples.

The same can be said of the afrobeat by Fela Kuti which was a rallying point for the people to fight against not only white oppression, but also Black oppression. By integrating such music into the curriculum, educators can teach students about global interconnections and the universal struggle for justice and equity, thus, fostering a sense of global citizenship and solidarity. Music not only preserves and communicates the suppressed histories and identities of colonised peoples, it also engages listeners emotionally and psychologically, fostering empathy and a deeper understanding of the complexities of colonial histories. Furthermore, by crossing cultural and national boundaries, music promotes solidarity.

Given the different and sometimes contradictory messages encapsulated in certain songs, researchers must be wary of the ways in which music conveys certain meanings and messages (Kelly et al., 2016; Ng, 2021; Hungwe et al., 2023). The selected artists were and continue to be the most celebrated artists in their countries of origin and beyond. These singers have been perceived as global icons and cultural ambassadors of their respective genres. Their selected songs provide an opportunity for one to examine how music can shape decoloniality and decolonial teaching in African universities.

Arguably, teaching and learning in most universities of Southern Africa follow the orthodox ways of imparting knowledge to learners. Although changes are gradually coming in some African universities, especially in South Africa where efforts are made to include new forms of learning in which technology and new tools of learning are adopted alongside the use of Indigenous languages in some parts of learning, the use of orthodox means of teaching to teach course content which still trace its roots in colonial curricula, still supersede (Oelofsen, 2015; Waghid & Hibbertimagemaqui, 2018; Zeleza, 2009).

For instance, Lopez and Rugano (2018); Luckett (2016); Mbembe, (2016); Oelofsen (2015); and Zeleza (2009) bemoan the detachment of most curricula in Africa to the African realities and the highly Eurocentric modes of teaching, hence, the need for reforms. On their part, Du Plessis (2021); Le Grange (2016) and Mahabeer (2018) and discuss the problems South Africa faces in decolonising the curriculum in line with the #RhodesMustFall movement and suggest ways in which the demands of what have become known as the 'fallists' can be met through decolonisation. The dissatisfaction with the way in which the curriculum is modelled in South Africa has led to the #RhodesMustFall and the #FeesMustFall movements (Naude, 2017; Soudien, 2010). In Zimbabwe, calls to

decolonise the curriculum has spurred the adoption of a home-grown curriculum and has led to what is known as the education 5.0 blueprint adopted in 2018.

The adoption of the education 5.0 blueprint and calls for the need to decolonise the curriculum come with new demands aimed at ensuring that students are taught in ways that they can easily relate with. The adoption of learner-based teaching and learning as well as the use of locally available tools and Indigenous Knowledge Systems, have been advised with the aim of ensuring that learners are taught and learn what is relevant to their context.

The context of Bob Marley's music on decoloniality

To get a better understanding of Bob Marley's decolonial message in his music, it is of critical importance to locate Bob Marley's music and the musician in the wider historical context in which the music was made and produced. Bob Marley sang in Jamaican English which though made up of some phrases that are not seen in conventional English, is understandable to most English speakers. Bob Marley produced his music at a time in which decolonial movements were at their peak in most colonised countries across the World. The message in most of his songs were seen as carrying decolonial messages and became the rallying point of most liberation movements in colonised countries at the time.

The idea of freedom which is key to the decolonial movement permeates some of the songs that were produced by Bob Marley (Freire, 1970). Through his songs, Bob Marley aimed to challenge the dominant narratives of Western ways of knowing through subverting the traditional pedagogical approaches (Giroux, 2003). His music contributed to the need of Africans in the diaspora and those in Africa to promote their cultural identity and pride through fostering a sense of belonging and self-worth among marginalised people (Ladson-Billings, 1995).

The music of Bob Marley also facilitated critical pedagogy through the continuous encouragement of personal empowerment, social justice and encourage what is known as the critical analysis of power dynamics (Hooks, 1994). Bob Marley's music also reflects the intersectionality of race, class and social justice, providing a nuanced understanding of decolonial struggles.

Song 1: *Redemption song*: Bob Marley

Grounded within the decolonial and liberation mantra, the song '*Redemption Song*' can be regarded as a direct challenge to the subjugated to demand their emancipation from the subjugators. Liberation or emancipation is represented in the song as something that

those subjugated should strive to get through, not only free themselves physically, but also mentally. The song starts off by giving an account of how people were enslaved, bundled into ships and taken to faraway places as slaves:

Oh pirate, yes, they rob I,

Sold I to the merchant ships,

Minutes after they took I,

From the bottomless pit, …

Bob Marley then evokes the spirit of resilience and broadcasts the message of emancipation and decoloniality in the verses that followed:

But my hand was made strong,

By the hand of the Almighty,

We forward in this generation,

Triumphantly,

Won't you help to sing,

This song of freedom,

Cause all I ever had,

Redemption songs…

Emancipate yourselves from mental slavery,

None but ourselves can free our minds,

I have no fear for atomic energy,

Cause none of them can stop the time

How long shall they kill our prophets,

While we stand aside and look?

Some say it's just a part of it; we've got to fulfil the book…

The '*Redemption song'* represents the experiences of the dismemberment of the Black bodies from the human family. In this song, Bob Marley gives an account of how Black bodies were stripped of their humanness and identity through slavery. In the context of this dismemberment, Bob Marley challenges those dismembered to wake up and fight for their freedom. He asks a rhetorical question in which he, in a way, challenges the dismembered to be confrontational and subversive.

Bob Marley's verse in which he challenges the dismembered to emancipate themselves from mental slavery, carries with it the message of decoloniality in a very direct way. This expression and other expressions embodied in this song challenges the enslaved people to change the way that they understand the world around them through changing how they teach and train their young.

From this, one can argue that the '*Redemption song'* is a song from which decolonising education can start. Bob Marley's talk of not fearing atomic energy can be interpreted to mean the established tropes of Western education and ways of knowing which keep on enslaving the other or those enslaved into perpetual consumers of Western knowledge. Thus, the verses on the need for the other to emancipate themselves from mental slavery and stop being slaves to Western ways of knowing, promotes a decolonial message.

Fela Kuti's music and the decolonial narratives

Considered as one of the pioneers of the afrobeat music genre, the musical legacy of Fela Kuti is in offering music as a powerful tool in challenging colonial dominance and its new form, neocolonialism. Apart from challenging colonialism through music, Fela Kuti also challenged corruption and inspires critical thinking and resistance (Achebe, 1983). Through his challenging of colonialism, neocolonialism and corruption, Fela Kuti's music aimed to promote African culture. The music by Fela Kuti is a celebration of African traditions, language, culture and fostering self-awareness among Africans (Wa Thiong'o, 1986).

The music by Fela Kuti can be regarded as an embodiment of critical pedagogy through the challenging of dominant narratives and oppression. His music also reflects the intersectionality of race, class and social justice and ultimately, giving a nuanced understanding of decolonial struggles, thus, facilitated critical thinking by challenging decolonial scholars to challenge systemic injustices.

Song 2: *Teacher don't teach me nonsense*: Fela Kuti

The song '*Teacher don't teach me nonsense'*, was composed by Fela Kuti during the peak of his career. '*Teacher don't teach me nonsense'* is a song loaded with meaning, but challenges the existing and Eurocentric tropes of knowing. The song is sung for more than twenty minutes and touches several which challenge the established order of things. Fela Kuti's voice and the song is accompanied by cultural acts and dances in which he fuses sounds from guitars, trumpets, traditional instruments and keyboards and pronounces his disappointments in which students are taught to be workers elsewhere and not the countries of their origin:

Teacher, teacher-o na the lecturer be your name

Teacher, teacher-o na the lecture be the same

Make-ee no teach-ee me again oh

As soon teaching finish yes, da thing-ee it gon die it dey-o

As soon teaching finish yes, da thing-ee it gon die it dey-o

Me and you no dey for the same-u category

Na the same category-o

All the wahala, all the problems

All the things, all the things they go do

For this world go start

When the teacher, schoolboy and schoolgirl jam together

Who be teacher?

I go let you know

When we be pikin

Fatha/ mama be teacher

When we dey for school

Teacher be teacher

Now dey university

Lecturer be teacher

When we start to work

Government be teacher

Now the problem side, of a teaching student-ee

I go sing about

I don pass pikin, I don pass school, university, se-fa pass

As I don start to work, na government I must se-fa pass

Da go for France

Yes sir/yes maam

Engi-land

Italy

Germany

Na dem culture

For der

Be teacher

For dem

Go China

Russia

Korea

Viet Nam

Na dem culture

For der

Be teacher

For dem

Go Syria

Jordan

Iran

Iraq

Na dem culture

For der

Be teacher

For dem

Let us face ourselves for Afrika

Na de matter of Afrika

This part-ee of my song

Na all the problems of this world

In we dey carry, for Afrika

Wey no go ask-ee me

Which one?

Problems of inflation

Problems of corruption

Of mismanagement

Stealing by government

Nothing we dey carry

All over Afrika

Na de latest one

Na him dey make me laugh

The failure of Western education and modes of doing things to provide the solutions to African problems is at the centre stage of the song. In the song and some of the live shows (especially the live show of the song done in Catalonia), Fela Kuti is interviewed about an array of things that are broadcasted by the song.

Key to the message he gave is the need for African ways of doing things to be respected and not driven to the periphery. Fela Kuti excoriates most of the things introduced to Africans through colonialism, especially democracy, which he sees as not helping solve African problems. He then indirectly advocates for a revision of most of the Eurocentric ways for doing things for a more Afrocentric way of knowing and doing things. One can argue that this message, was in a way, advocating decoloniality.

Tupac Shakur, his music and decoloniality

Like the music of Fela Kuti and Bob Marley, the music of Tupac Shakur also offers a powerful tool for the decolonial movement. The music Tupac made offered an adulterated representation of marginalised communities in a racist American society.

The lyrics of the songs by Tupac Shakur provide a genuine portrayal of systematic oppression which was experienced by the marginalised communities of America. Through his music, Tupac gave a critical examination of power dynamics through providing critiques of racism, police brutality and social injustice, encouraging critical thinking and analysis (Giroux, 2003).

The music of Tupac Shakur is also an embodiment of resistance given that his music exemplifies resistance against oppression. Considering this, the message embodied in the music of Tupac fosters critical consciousness in ways that empower students and critical thinkers to recognise and challenge systematic injustice (Hooks, 1994). Additionally, Tupac's songs reflect the intersectionality of class, race and social justice and ultimately, provide a nuanced understanding of decolonial struggles (Crenshaw, 1991).

Song 3: *Changes*: Tupac Shakur

Rooted within the rap music genre, the song '*Changes*' can be interpreted as a direct confrontation against segregation, police brutality and racism. Police brutality, segregation and racism is represented in the song as undesirable and something that must be eradicated. As etched in the name of the song itself, the need for change is central to the song. The song bemoans the lack of changes in how people of different shades treat each other in ways that lead to harm on those seen as inferior, who in this case are Black people as noted in the verses:

Come on, come on

I see no changes, wake up in the morning, and I ask myself

Is life worth living, should I blast myself?

I'm tired of bein' poor, and even worse I'm black

My stomach hurts, so I'm lookin' for a purse to snatch

Cops give a damn about a negro

Pull the trigger, kill a nigga, he's a hero

Give the crack to the kids who the hell cares

One less hungry mouth on the welfare

First, ship 'em dope and let 'em deal the brothers

Give 'em guns, step back, watch 'em kill each other

It's time to fight back, that's what Huey said

Two shots in the dark, now Huey's dead

I got love for my brother, but we can never go nowhere

Unless we share with each other

We gotta start makin' changes

Learn to see me as a brother instead of two distant strangers

And that's how it's supposed to be

How can the devil take a brother, if he's close to me?

I'd love to go back to when we played as kids

But things changed, and that's the way it is

Come on, come on

That's just the way it is

Things will never be the same

That's just the way it is

Ooh, yeah

Come on, come on

That's just the way it is

Things will never be the same

That's just the way it is

Aww, yeah

I see no changes, all I see is racist faces

Misplaced hate makes disgrace to races

We under, I wonder what it takes to make this

One better place, let's erase the wasted

Take the evil out the people, they'll be acting right

'Cause mo' black and white is smokin' crack tonight

And only time we chill is when we kill each other

It takes skill to be real, time to heal each other

And although it seems heaven sent

We ain't ready, to see a black President

It ain't a secret, don't conceal the fact

The penitentiary's packed, and it's filled with blacks

But some things will never change

Try to show another way but you stayin' in the dope game

Now tell me, what's a mother to do?

Bein' real don't appeal to the brother in you

You gotta operate the easy way

(I made a G today) But you made it in a sleazy way

Sellin' crack to the kid (I gotta get paid)

Well, hey, well, that's the way it is…

The song '*Changes*' presents the experiences of Black people as the most marginalised people, as clearly shown in the lyrics. The song seems to be a personal conversation of a frustrated Black body who is lamenting the social ills and how things are in the highly racialised American society. While the singer sees the social ills around him, the solutions to these problems seem to be difficult to achieve. The singer, however, makes suggestions that may help change things for the better. One can argue that the message of change encapsulated in this song seeks to advance the decolonial message in which the singer seeks a paradigm shift from the established order.

Discussion of findings: On decoloniality and education in Africa

We engage ourselves and the material gathered through the works of Achebe (1983). Since Achebe's (1983) ideas inform this study, calls to decolonise the curriculum through decolonial teaching starts with reflecting on Achebe's (1983: 43) question: "Where and when exactly did the rain begin to beat us?" In asking this question, Achebe (1983) was mediating on the African socio-political condition. Achebe is considered as one of the African thinkers who called for the need to ensure that Africans return to historical sources as well as political genealogies in the quest of time and place in which Africans found themselves losing their equality in the human family.

Like with Bob Marley's song: '*Redemption Song'*, Fela Kuti's song: '*Teacher don't teach me nonsense'* and Tupac Shakur song: '*Changes'*, Achebe (1982) pondered what is known as "hopes and impediments" which defined and continued to define attempts at understanding the unequal relationships between people from the Global South and the Global North, and how their differential positioning within intersecting power relations affects them.

One can argue that an analysis of the lyrical content of the songs selected reflect the same message of decoloniality. The '*Redemption song*' by Bob Marley traces the history of slavery and how this has led to the dismemberment of the black bodies from the human family, hence, the need to ensure it is remembered. The song '*Teacher don't teach me nonsense*' by Fela Kuti is also critical of the established order of things and suggests a change which would ensure that those driven to the fringes of society are moved back to the centre. On its part, '*Changes*' by Tupac Shakur also calls for the need to ensure that there are changes in how things are done for the betterment of society and people of all races.

Achebe (1983)'s need to know what happened to the common humanity of human beings is in sync with what Bob Marley, Fela Kuti and Tupac Shakur try say in their music. All these artists demand to know the unstable and unsustainable link between the *human* and the *humane* (Steyn & Mpofu, 2021). Decolonial teaching through music may give answers on the ways in which some humans use power in monopolising being human and exclude others from the human family. One can argue that through tapping into the ideas by Achebe (1983) which are somehow vindicated in the songs by Bob Marley, Fela Kuti and Tupac Shakur, Socrates' question of the fourth century BCE regarding why everyone on earth seems to believe in humanity 'but not in the existence of humans' can be answered.

Decoloniality involves recentring the perspectives and experiences that were marginalised by colonial narratives. Music, accessible and emotionally resonant, is an effective medium for amplifying these voices. Artists such as Bob Marley, Fela Kuti and Tupac Shakur have used their music to challenge colonial legacies or powers and advocate for social justice and equity. Their work provides a framework for examining how colonial histories have been contested and redefined through cultural expression. Educators can harness these narratives to engage students in critical thinking about history, power and identity using songs from particular artists to make students learn and be aware of how they, the Western tropes of knowing, can be limited in teaching the realities of their countries.

Conclusion

In the realm of education, music can serve as a dynamic pedagogical tool to explore decolonial themes. By integrating music into the curriculum, educators can create more engaging and immersive learning experiences. For example, analysing lyrics from Indigenous musicians can offer students insights into the historical and ongoing struggles of these communities. Such an approach not only educates, but also empowers students by connecting them with a broader decolonial movement.

The concept of decoloniality involves understanding and dismantling the legacies of colonialism that persist in today's societies and minds (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2013). It seeks to valorise the knowledge, culture and perspective of those marginalised or suppressed by colonial powers. Music, as a universal language, plays a pivotal role in this educational and transformative process. Music has historically served as a subtle form of resistance against colonial powers.

From the field songs of enslaved Africans in the Americas to the protest songs that defined the anti-apartheid movement in South Africa, music has helped articulate the struggles and hopes of colonised peoples. These songs not only provided a means of covert communication; they also helped to preserve Indigenous languages and stories that colonial powers sought to suppress. By studying these musical expressions, learners can gain insights into the resilience and creativity of oppressed cultures, which is crucial for understanding the dynamics of colonialism and the necessity of decolonial practices.

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By the Way, Who is Cranford Pratt? Questioning Active and Symbolic Monumentalisation of the University of Dar es Salaam

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Abstract

Considering the ongoing debates regarding the relevance of white supremacy in African public spaces and institutions, the presence of the name 'Cranford Pratt' on the monumental Utawala building at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), inaugurated in 2011, is striking. Few are familiar with Pratt's legacy. This monument, however, holds significance in addressing contemporary critiques of the commemoration of whiteness in African academic institutions, a debate intensified by the University of Cape Town's 'Rhodes Must Fall' movement. The perpetuation of whiteness within academic spaces often carries an implicit assertion of supremacy when left unchallenged. In institutions that have made strides toward decolonising curricula, history education, and promoting gender inclusivity, the continued veneration of colonial figures represents a form of epistemicide. This paper employs observation and a review of existing literature to advocate for an 'idiosyncratic demonumentalisation' process that critically engages both the intrinsic and extrinsic values of monumental heritage, challenging the unquestioned preservation of colonial legacies in history education. On one hand, the paper emphasises the role of monuments in shaping historical narratives and the importance of critically examining their messages in the context of ongoing debates about decolonisation and the role of history education. On the other hand, the paper focuses on the broader impact of colonial legacies on history education and the need to decolonise curricula, teaching practices, and the university space at large.

Keywords: Decolonisation, Monument, Heritage, Whiteness, Epistemicide

Introduction

This paper was first written to commemorate a decade of the humanities college at the University of Dar es Salaam (UDSM), 2014-2024. It offers a reflective analysis of its historical trajectory and provides a glimpse into the college's future. The paper draws inspiration from the words of Mwalimu Julius Nyerere, the first President of Tanzania and a foundational intellectual figure in the country's humanities landscape. Nyerere, who also served as the first Chancellor of UDSM, articulated a vision for higher education that emphasised the need for objectivity and scientific rigor in research and teaching. Nyerere asserted, "In all its research and teaching, the university must be as objective and scientific as is humanly possible" (Nyerere, 1963: 218). While 'humanly' does not directly correspond to the humanities, it can be interpreted as advocating for a balanced integration of both the sciences and humanities. From its inception, Nyerere recognised that for a university in Africa to be truly impactful, it needed to deeply engage with the arts, music, literature, religion, philosophy and history. At the UDSM, the humanities have, thus, been integral in shaping critical national discourses; a central domain where this influence is particularly evident is in the discourse surrounding history education, which has been foundational at UDSM since its establishment.

This paper specifically explores the role of history education at UDSM and examines how monuments from the early independence era provoke critical questions regarding race and identity. How does the history education at UDSM address colonialism's physical and symbolic legacies? How do these legacies intersect with the historical significance of monuments in shaping societal values? Article 1 of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) Convention *Concerning the Protection of the World Cultural and Natural Heritage* (UNESCO, 1972) defines a monument as a structure imbued with historical, archaeological, artistic, aesthetic, architectural, social, or cultural value. Monuments are classified as any building over 100 years old, whether formally documented or not (Tanzania's Antiquities Act of 1979). They are designated based on their cultural, aesthetic, architectural or historical value. The Antiquities Act mandates the declaration of any building as a monument by considering its value. The monuments of the UDSM survive under the latter category. While several African monuments were erected during the colonial era to commemorate colonialism, their legacy has been the subject of contestation across the continent, seen as a glorification of colonialism (Chirikure et al., 2022). In various African countries, such as Mozambique, South Africa, Angola, Kenya, Zimbabwe and Malawi, colonial monuments have faced vandalism, removal, or

replacement as part of efforts to distance national identities from the legacy of colonial oppression (Marschall, 2017; Mirzoeff, 2023; Qwatekana et al., 2021). Tanzania, however, presents a distinct case where colonial monuments have not been removed, instead, the narrative surrounding them has been reframed, with new symbols emerging in the post-independence era to commemorate significant events.

One such monument is the Cranford Pratt building, constructed between 1961 and 1964 at UDSM, which has served as the university's central administrative structure since its early years. Initially known as the 'administration building' or '*Utawala*' in Kiswahili, the building was renamed in 2011 to honour Cranford Pratt, the first principal of UDSM, in conjunction with the university's centenary celebrations. This renaming marked a significant turning point in the university's engagement with its colonial legacy, coinciding with a broader global movement questioning colonial-era commemorations, such as the Rhodes Must Fall movement in South Africa. Before its renaming, the building stood as a symbol of UDSM's early governance and institutional development, because it was the first university building occupied by administrators. Serving as the first principal from 1961-1965, Cranford Pratt played a pivotal role in shaping this landmark institution both as an overseer and as a key fundraiser. Before the university's establishment at its current location, UDSM was initially housed at the headquarters of the *Chama Cha Mapinduzi* (CCM) political party on Lumumba Street. The initial location faced significant political challenges, with critics labelling it a 'political party university' (Cheater, 1991). This reflects the broader political climate of post-independence Tanzania, where universities became arenas of political and ideological contestation. It is unfortunate to see the lack of engagement with the monument and the passivity towards university spaces (Rushohora, 2024). This paper argues that monuments like that of Cranford Pratt serve not only as physical structures, but as sites of ideological struggle, which must be problematised in Tanzania history classroom. History education that utilises monuments for learning and teaching has a lasting impact, extending from the school to citizenship (Labadi, 2024). The revision of the curriculum at the UDSM, thus, ought to go hand in hand with the monumentalisation paradox to avoid glorifying whiteness, which works against Black consciousness (Biko, 1978: 30).

The choice to focus on the Cranford Pratt building at Tanzania's oldest university was a purposeful act rather than a mere coincidence. It offers a case study in the politics of memory—specifically, in addressing the enduring question: *whose history is preserved and whose is omitted* in the national narrative. Cranford Pratt, a Canadian political scientist, memorialisation stands in stark contrast to the absence of recognition for Tanzanians who were instrumental in conceptualising and establishing the university itself. This disparity underscores a persistent gap in honouring local historical figures and highlights a broader issue of national historical marginalisation (Chuhila, 2021). The decision to name such a prominent building after a foreign intellectual without accompanying interpretive signage or historical context, further widens the disconnect between institutional memory and its current academic community. For many students and staff, the building's significance remains opaque, pointing to a missed opportunity for the university to engage critically with its past. As scholars such as Pierre Nora (1989) have argued, collective memory is actively constructed through sites, symbols, and commemorations—and when these are left uninterrogated, they risk becoming invisible or misaligned with the lived experiences of those who inhabit these spaces.

The Cranford Pratt building, thus, becomes a powerful entry point into the study of memory politics in post-colonial Tanzania. It represents the complex intersection of memory, power and historical narrative, revealing how universities—key institutions of national knowledge production—can sometimes reproduce colonial or external frameworks of remembrance, even after independence. This example highlights the underexamined dynamics of national identity formation, the uneven legacy of foreign intellectuals and how memorialisation practices in educational spaces can either challenge or reinforce dominant historical discourses (Kireyi, 2023). In this context, studying the Pratt building is not just an act of architectural or heritage curiosity—it is a means of uncovering more profound silences in the historical record and of questioning whose contributions are celebrated, whose are erased, and what this reveals about post-colonial state formation and identity.

Monument and history education

This section examines how the UDSM's history education has evolved to reflect the need for conscious intellectual engagement with the past, emphasising the role of history in fostering an African Renaissance. From its inception, the UDSM recognised the importance of history as a critical tool for shaping national identity and empowering the next generation of thinkers, leaders and scholars. Three years after the university was established in 1964,

the Department of History was founded, signalling a commitment to studying the past as an essential component of understanding the present and shaping the future. The Department's unique approach to historical research, teaching and writing was grounded in the belief that history must reflect African agency and initiative, challenging colonial narratives that had previously dominated historical scholarship (Masebo, 2017). The Dar es Salaam School of Thought emerged in the 1960s as a direct result of this emphasis on African perspectives in history. Scholars at UDSM sought to redefine historical narratives by emphasising the active role Africans played in shaping their own histories, both before and after colonialism. The movement fostered an intellectual space where history was viewed as a tool for emancipation, serving not only to preserve the past, but also as a means of liberating the African mind from the constraints of colonial ideology (Maddox, 2018). The attainment of independence in many African countries was viewed as the first step in the broader liberation movement, and history education was seen to solidify this newfound freedom by fostering a deep understanding of African identity, struggles and triumphs.

Emphasis on African agency in historical narratives exposes a notable gap in teaching Tanzania-centred history (Chuhila, 2021). The broader trend, in which the national curriculum prioritised pan-African liberation struggles over localised engagement with Tanzania's colonial history and post-independence challenges, while important, often overshadows the unique complexities of Tanzania's historical experience. The commemoration of Dr Kwame Nkrumah in one of the university's central buildings serves as an example. The Bank of Tanzania featured the building on the Tanzanian 500-shilling note until 2010. Other African leaders—such as Sam Nujoma, Robert Mugabe, Nnamdi Azikiwe, Samora Machel, Uhuru Kenyatta, Nelson Mandela and Patrice Lumumba—are memorialised through street names and school dedications across the country. At the Sokoine University of Agriculture (SUA), the legacy of the South African African National Congress (ANC) in exile is preserved at the *Mazimbu* site, now known as the Solomon Mahlangu Campus, where the former ANC school and hospital have been repurposed as the College of Natural and Applied Sciences. In contrast, many other Tanzanian universities, being relatively new, lack significant memorials or monuments. Little effort has been made to teach Tanzanian history in ways that allow students to critically and meaningfully connect with their national past. This absence is also evident in the country's treatment of its monuments. Tanzania has largely avoided a critical examination of its colonial-era monuments (Kireyi, 2023). These structures, once symbols of colonial dominance, were not meaningfully incorporated into educational or historical discourse. The 2011 monumentalisation of Cranford Pratt is a telling example of the country's unresolved relationship with its colonial past and national identity.

Monuments, as teaching aids for history education, play a vital role in how history is communicated to the public. They serve as physical embodiments of the past, offering spaces where history is not just read in books, but experienced in tangible ways. Monuments help people reflect on national achievements, recognise the struggles and tragedies of the past, and confront the horrors of colonialism and other injustices. Sypnowich (2021) emphasises that monuments are crucial for fostering a deeper, more visceral understanding of history, providing opportunities to engage with the past beyond the classroom. Examining monuments at African academic institutions, such as UDSM, is essential to the ongoing curriculum reviews to reshape historical education. This process allows for a more inclusive, critical engagement with both the triumphs and the traumas of the past, and it underscores the importance of monuments as part of the broader project of decolonising education and fostering a more authentic understanding of African history.

The Tanzania monumentalisation approach has chosen to disengage with monuments constructed during the colonial period, whether memorial monuments or colonial buildings, which have remained as public and private memorials. Tanzania's memorialisation approach—particularly in the post-independence period—has been shaped by a combination of ideological, political, and historical drivers, mainly rooted in the vision of national unity, anti-colonial struggle, and African socialism. Through the state promoted vision of national unity and collective identity memorialisation efforts, avoided ethnic or religious divisions and focused on shared history and support for the broader African liberation movements, thereby emphasising Tanzania's role in regional decolonisation. Through this, the government maintained firm control over which aspects of history to commemorate and how to commemorate them. Education reinforced these narratives by aligning the history curricula with the national story. The national narrative provides Tanzanian citizens with little space for alternative narratives. The Majimaji War (1904-1908) and the Zanzibar Revolution (1964), for instance, which are remembered as a state liberation movement, were, however, at grassroots, violent and traumatic events. The missionary memorials, contested as burial, memorial and martyrdom sites (Tuzinde, 2021), have remained as dual memorials to the government and the public. The sites are marketed as tourist destinations, used for local interpretation of the events that occurred on the sites, and as sites of martyrdom for Catholic believers. Tanzania remains passive to the colonial monumentalisation of public spaces. The worst that has happened to monuments, such as colonial prisons and police stations, which carry a negative connotation, is that they have been left to decay (Rushohora, 2019) due to a lack of care and preservation strategies. Intentional removal and demolition often occur because of overlooking cultural heritage in

favour of development, a common issue in many developing countries (Pikirayi, 2005). In Tanzania, adopting the monumentalisation approach became a trend after independence. The first two decades after independence (1961-1980) saw the construction of monuments attributed to the Majimaji War and the independence movement in different parts of Tanzania, which went hand in hand with the renaming of streets to leaders of nationalism in Africa, such as Sam Nujoma, Nelson Mandela, Jomo Kenyatta and Nnamdi Azikiwe.

History is not just a record of the past, it is a powerful tool for liberation and the formation of national identity. The treatment of monuments, which often serve as tangible representations of history, has the potential to enhance identity, while also contributing to African and global history scholarship. The scrutiny of monuments in historical education, encompassing both colonial and postcolonial monuments, presents an opportunity to integrate into the historical discourse and allows public reflection and understanding. By examining monuments, particularly those that are part of the university's daily experience, and incorporating them into history education, one can gain a deeper and more nuanced understanding of Tanzania's past, fostering a generation of students who are equipped to critically engage with their history and identity in the pursuit of an African renaissance.

UDSM *Lieux de Mémoire*

The UDSM can be understood through the lens of Pierre Nora's concept of *lieux de mémoire*, or 'sites of memory', which refers to places imbued with historical significance and cultural meaning (Nora, 1989). As Tanzania's oldest university (Ishengoma, 2017), UDSM serves as a site that encapsulates multiple layers of memory, ranging from its founding principles to its physical establishment and leadership. These layers are historical and ideological, shaped by the values embedded in the university's creation, development and the institutional figures memorialised in its architecture.

One particularly significant aspect of UDSM's relationship to memory is the positionality of Cranford Pratt, whose name is prominently displayed on the face of one of the university's most visible buildings, the *Utawala* or Cranford Pratt building. This selective monumentalisation raises important questions about the glorification of whiteness in the university's narrative. Pratt, as a symbol of colonial academia, stands at the centre of a contested legacy. His monumental presence in this prominent space underscores a form of remembering that privileges colonial figures, while largely omitting the contributions of local Tanzanians, including the pioneers and early university supporters who envisioned it as a tool for African emancipation. This selective remembrance of history is exemplified

by the university's naming practices, where the streets of UDSM bear names like *Yombo*, *Uvumbuzi* and *Ubungo*, however, fail to acknowledge the individuals who played a central role in the institution's founding or those who directly contributed to the intellectual and political liberation of Tanzania (De Kiewiet, 1971).

Further perpetuating this historical gap, several buildings at UDSM, such as the old library, are named after figures connected to the colonial and early post-independence period. For instance, the Dr Weston building, housing the School of Law, is dedicated to the first dean of the faculty, while Manning Hall of Residence honours the first female student of UDSM. While these dedications acknowledge essential figures in the university's history, they still reflect a narrow focus that overlooks broader contributions, particularly those of local Tanzanians who were integral to the university's creation and its more significant role in the country's liberation.

The challenge of navigating the legacies of colonial monuments is a central issue in post-colonial Africa. Monuments from the colonial era were erected to honour colonial figures, soldiers and leaders for their roles in territorial conquest and domination (Elago, 2015). However, these monuments often fail to reflect the African perspective of history, which sees these exact figures as agents of oppression, rather than heroic figures. Addressing the challenge of colonial monuments requires rethinking public memory, confronting colonial legacies and actively engaging society in the process of historical reckoning. Recontextualisation, by adding interpretive plaques, counter-monuments or educational materials that critically explain the role of the monument without celebrating it uncritically. Critical engagement with history, rather than historical amnesia, and the introduction of monuments commemorating African resistance leaders, intellectuals, freedom fighters and community heroes sidelined in colonial narratives will create a more balanced public memory landscape and assert African agency in the historical record. In post-colonial African nations, there has been a growing recognition of the need to reassess the role of these monuments within national memory and identity. This reconsideration of heritage, which involves reviewing and reimagining monuments, is a complex process that requires navigating competing narratives about the past and its place in the present.

In current and historical forms, monuments have profound implications for public spaces and national identity. They embody the past in ways that challenge or reinforce present-day values, often serving as symbols of national pride or as reminders of historical injustices (Sanni, 2024). While the erasure or demolition of monuments is sometimes viewed as a means of sanitising history (Sanni, 2021), such actions can also be considered

part of a broader effort to reshape the public memory in response to changing societal values. The educational value of monuments cannot be overstated, as they provide a unique opportunity to engage with the complexities of history, including the legacies of imperialism and racial injustice (Enslin, 2020). As memorial texts embedded in the landscape, monuments often tell a singular story that reflects official narratives while excluding alternative histories. For example, placing Pratt in a privileged space without addressing the broader implications of his role in the colonial system, may obscure as much as it reveals. While Pratt's contributions to institution-building at UDSM are noteworthy, framing him solely as a benevolent founder, risks overlooking his position within larger structures of colonial authority and knowledge production. This selective remembrance can inadvertently reinforce colonial hierarchies by presenting them as neutral or even progressive, rather than critically engaging with their lasting impacts.

For educators, teaching about monuments demands an approach that exposes students to multiple historical sources and interpretations, encouraging a more comprehensive and critical engagement with the past. Moreeng and Twala (2014) argue that meaningful history teaching requires including diverse historical resources that enrich students' understanding and foster critical thinking. When considering the monumental narratives embedded in the university's architecture, it becomes essential to ask how the curriculum is connected to today's society and the emerging future. Integrating an Afro-centred curriculum, which challenges students to engage with racial pride and national identity issues, becomes central to this process (Novakowski et al., 2022).

As Thelen (1993) suggests, memory is not a passive retrieval of past events, but an active process of constructing stories about the past to meet present needs. In this context, the increasing media attention on statue removals and the histories of racial injustice have further catalysed discussions on the role of monuments in shaping collective memory. These debates have infiltrated university classrooms, promoting broader conversations about how historical narratives are constructed and whose memories are preserved in public spaces (Shelby, 2022). At UDSM, this ongoing dialogue about monuments and memory is integral to rethinking the role of history education in shaping the future of Tanzania and Africa as a whole.

To understand Pratt's monument, one must look at the spirit of monumentalisation when the idea of the university was formulated, or at least the first decade of independence (1961-1971). Immediately after Tanzania's independence, a monumentalisation project aimed to restore the pre-colonial leaders who had been forcibly enthroned by the colonial

regime (Rushohora, 2019). The Majimaji War monument in Kilwa was among such monuments established to commemorate the heroes of the war. The monumentalisation agenda was a struggle that followed that of independence, mainly aiming at repossessing what was lost during colonialism. It was a restoration project to the inferiority of the Black people who were not only enthroned, but also trampled culturally, economically, socially and politically at that time. Nkrumah Hall is one of the UDSM monuments which accorded national recognition. Completed in 1966 and named after the first president of Ghana—Kwame Nkrumah, the monument entered the national register in 2015, based mainly on its architectural significance. Nkrumah Hall monument also saw its glory in the Bank of Tanzania when it was customised in the print of 500 Tanzania shillings notes between 2003 and 2010. The Tanzanian 500 note is no longer in circulation. Replacing notes with coins abandoned the use of the Nkrumah Hall monument. From the Nkrumah Hall monument, one would see how a careful monumentalisation of the UDSM is vital as these monuments stand for the public interests and represent Tanzania. The Nkrumah Hall monument is a marker of socialism and pan-Africanism that Tanzania is acknowledged for (Olalajulo et al., 2016). Tanzania became many African countries' military and academic training centres until they regained independence (Rushohora, 2022). The questioning of Pratt's monument is, thus, beyond xenophobic whiteness or Blackness. Whiteness transfigures from myth to reality when given the positionality that everything emanates from it (Mbembe, 2015). It is the position that situates Dr Livingstone and John Speke as discoverers of the land that has scientifically been proven as the most anciently populated (Bushozi, 2022). Unlike the Cape Town Rhodes and Stellenbosch Jan Marais monuments in South Africa (to mention a couple) which are colonial-era structures (Breakfast et al., 2018), monuments at UDSM are postcolonial. The theory of 'self' ownership ought to be the governing paradigm of the true decolonisation of the landscape with a high hierarchy in both geographical location and significance for the lives of Tanzanians.

Elsewhere, the North and South universities link has been argued as a possible avenue to perpetuate the colonial situation (Brock-Utne, 1999), in this case, monumentalisation. One of the obvious questions is, who benefits from the monumentalization of Pratt? During the golden anniversary of the UDSM, when the monument was unveiled, Canada and the embassy in Tanzania were visited by the UDSM top administration. The visit was the last of the university's link with Canada (Mathew&Pratt, 1988). Plausibly, Pratt was used as a stepping-stone to access scholarships and funding for university projects that were less funded. Research funding is still a national challenge. Although efforts are seen from government bodies such as the Commission for Science and Technology (COSTECH)

and the UDSM setting aside funds for research, development and innovation, most of the research conducted in Tanzania still depends on donor funds. The primary role of monuments is to instil pride in past glories, excellent leadership and memory/reminder. They are agencies of memory elucidating at a particular point the role of an individual or group in fulfilling a specific task. Pratt's monument needs such an inscription. Asking for the files that detail who Pratt landed in different university offices, which succumbed to oral memories, especially from the early encounters with the cadre of the first students of UDSM (two are still alive). Who is the custodian of the university memory institution? Should these memories be left in the hands of early intellectuals of the UDSM and wait to hear them as obituaries? Who is responsible for the monumentalisation of the Hill, and what ideology should be used in using the university space as a site of memory and memorialisation of the pedagogy, country, Africa and the world?

Only in homogeneous societies could monuments survive straightforwardly, however, whenever identities are contested, justification is inevitable. The case of the missionaries in Tanzania is interesting to borrow in this regard. For the Catholics in Dar es Salaam, a site such as Pugu, where early Benedictine missionaries were murdered during the Abushiri resistance, has become a holy site. The clergy, priests and nuns organise pilgrimages to honour the martyrs of the faith. However, the missionaries involved were at no point innocent incomers. From the word go, their primary roles were to pave the way for colonialism. Their involvement in conflict owes to their double agentive role of dealing with Christianity and government (the flag and the cross) concomitantly (Napachii, 1998). A Tanzanian priest of the same congregation, Father Simon Mgassa Tuzinde, aspires to correct this notion (Tuzinde, 2021). Father Tuzinde argues that the Africans on African soil, including Abushir, are the defenders of the dignity of the Africans. The invasion by the Germans, the suppression of the resistance and the genocide inflicted on them could not be tolerated without a fight. On the other hand, the missionaries are challenging to confer as martyrs. Tuzinde (2021: 1-2) argues that objective historical facts "do not allow to conclude that missionaries who died at Pugu and elsewhere during the German colonialism in Tanzania died for Christ. They died during the war. It was collateral damage". Equally, the heterogeneity of the founders of the university and their contributions must be enlisted in such a way that what Pratt did that surpasses the predecessors who prosed the idea, contributed to its construction, solicited books and saw the development of the university to its global ranks is elucidated.

African monumental culture-way forward

Understanding the monument from African and Western perspectives is quite different. While in Western culture, a monument is physical, in African culture, a space can be a significant marker of a person or event. The Western notion of monument emphasises durability and conservation of the visible that can be touched, unlike the abstract intangible heritage. The nature of cultural heritage includes tangible and intangible symbols and instruments of identity. Beyond materials, heritage carries emotional impacts. Built monuments are symbols of inequality (Prescott & Lahti, 2022), in the sense that they often reflect the values, power structures and dominant narratives at the expense of marginalised voices. Thus, monuments claim to represent shared memory, can perpetuate historical silences and materialise social hierarchies, reminding some communities of exclusion rather than belonging. Addressing this inequality requires a critical examination of who is commemorated, who decides and whose history is left untold in the public landscape. While the West uses media such as photographs as carriers of memory, it is commonplace for Africa to use drawings, pictographs and inscriptions, not necessarily on paper, but on trees, stones and houses. The whole idea of monumentalisation is a Western concept; its entry into Africa depicted the superiority of the colonisers. In an academic institution, monumentalism should also show the sophistication of the university. Where pen and paper are possible, these should be detailed to elaborate the significance of the space. The elaborations help guide tourists who visit the university, mainly for its historical significance or collaboration. In the wake of digitalisation, digital maps of sites and the location of university monuments are also significant. It is essential that the detailed digitised information be free of error.

The fact that Tanzania has never been a victim of urban fallism, as actions of contesting, transforming and removing monuments from urban spaces (Frank & Ristic, 2020) should never be taken for granted. Silences over monuments tend to result in memoricide (killing of memories embodied in monuments and historic buildings) (see also Bevan, 2006). Dar es Salaam's old city has fallen prey to memoricide, where unregulated constructions have destroyed monumental architecture that would have otherwise stood as national monuments. The custodians of the memory institution of UDSM must be eager to preserve the university's heritage. These are national treasures, and the university, should be the agency for conserving and preserving such heritage. The UDSM has courses in preservation and tourism. The UDSM could be used as a ground not only for pedagogy, but also be at the forefront to oversee that the university monuments, toponyms and memorial

landscape are preserved for the present and future generations. The memorialisation and monumentalisation agenda should consider the agentive roles of the memorialised and look for heritage's intrinsic and extrinsic value. The safeguarding of heritage, according to these values, could aid in avoiding the bias. In the absence of the original memory of the university, the memorialisation ought to be a professional body guiding issues of heritage conservation, cultural heritage impact assessment, and other archaeological, historical and cultural heritage that might be found in the university. This would be a significant humanities service to the university and the country.

Conclusion

This paper has examined the layered historical, ideological and educational dimensions of monuments at the UDSM using the case of the Cranford Pratt building to interrogate broader questions of memory, identity and postcolonial legacy. As the university marks a decade of the College of Humanities (2014-2024), it is an opportune moment to reflect not only on its institutional growth, but also on the memorial landscape that has helped shape—and, in some ways, distorted—its identity. Drawing inspiration from Mwalimu Julius Nyerere's vision of a university committed to objectivity and national relevance, the paper argues for a more deliberate and critically engaged approach to history education and monumentalisation.

At UDSM, monuments are more than physical markers; they are ideological texts that reflect who is remembered, how they are remembered, and for what purposes. Memorialisation of Cranford Pratt, without recognition of other local contributors', risks perpetuating colonialism within an institution meant to embody African agency and liberation. However, rather than advocating for the erasure of such monuments, this paper calls for their recontextualisation through interpretive inscriptions, curricular integration and public engagement, as part of a broader decolonial project. Together with the curriculum review, interpreting the monuments serves as a pedagogical tool for fostering historical consciousness and encouraging students to examine critically and question inherited narratives. In doing so, UDSM embraces its role not only as an academic institution, but also as a custodian of national memory.

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The Lingering Coloniality of Knowledge: Challenges to Decolonising South African Universities

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Abstract

Despite South Africa's democratic transformation, colonial epistemic frameworks continue to dominate university curricula, impeding decolonisation and Africanisation efforts. This paper examines the persistence of these colonial knowledge systems within higher education, drawing on the #FeesMustFall movement as a critical juncture that exposed fundamental inequities in knowledge production. Situated within the history of education, this work interrogates the historical, sociological, and philosophical dimensions of teaching

and learning through a decolonial theoretical lens. Using qualitative methodology, the research investigates institutional cultures and pedagogical practices across South African universities. The cases of Lwazi Lushaba and Pedro Mzileni contextualise the movement's origins and significance for international audiences. Findings reveal enduring colonial legacies manifested through Western ideological dominance across disciplines, including history, sociology, development, and literature, perpetuating systemic and epistemic injustices. The research identifies specific forms of institutional resistance to decolonisation: the maintenance of Eurocentric curricula, pedagogical approaches disconnected from Indigenous Knowledge Systems, and historical disparities in educational access. The study demonstrates that Africanisation can foster intellectual sovereignty, cultural pride, critical consciousness, and ontological density among academics and students. However, entrenched institutional practices and Western epistemologies continue to hinder meaningful curricular reform. This work underscores the need for a (re)evaluation of higher education curricula to achieve epistemic justice and authentic decolonisation. The findings contribute to broader discussions on post-colonial education reform and knowledge production in the Global South.

Keywords: Decolonisation; Africanisation; #FeesMustFall; Curriculum Reform; Lwazi Lushaba; Pedro Mzileni; Epistemic Justice

Introduction

The colonial, apartheid past and the slow pace of transformation necessitated movements such as #RhodesMustFall and #FeesMustFall, which inspired a commitment to improve re-engagement efforts to decolonise and Africanise South Africa's educational systems. As we reflect on three decades of democracy, the call to decolonise knowledge systems and prioritise African epistemologies has become increasingly urgent (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2015). This work explores the interplay between decolonisation and Africanisation in South Africa's higher education, with a particular emphasis on curricular transformation and knowledge production paradigms that continue to prioritise Western perspectives over Indigenous Knowledge Systems. Ramoupi's (2014) conclusion on 20 years of lost scholarship supports this claim, emphasising that despite three decades of struggle, there is still lingering coloniality in the higher education system.

The conceptual framework of decolonisation, as articulated by Heleta (2016), encompasses more than simple curricular reform; it involves a fundamental restructuring of knowledge hierarchies and the dismantling of the epistemic violence entrenched within educational institutions. This process is intertwined with Africanisation, which

Letsekha (2013) defines as the intentional integration of African philosophical traditions, historical narratives and cultural paradigms into educational practice. Collectively, these movements pose a significant challenge to the hegemonic Western knowledge systems that have historically dominated South African education and still do. The need for this transformation has been illustrated by recent social movements, particularly the #FeesMustFall and #RhodesMustFall movements, which brought to light not only the financial barriers to education, but also the deeper structural inequities inherited from the colonial and apartheid eras. These student-led protests underscored how the legacy of colonialism continues to echo in both the material conditions surrounding education and the epistemic frameworks that influence curriculum content and delivery.

This work contributes to decolonial scholarship by analysing why coloniality continues to linger in higher education. Drawing on critical pedagogy and African philosophy, the study explores how curricular transformation can serve as a vehicle for epistemic justice and social change. The analysis goes beyond theoretical frameworks to consider the practical implications of decolonisation and Africanisation for pedagogy, knowledge production, and identity formation within educational spaces. By situating this discussion within the broader historical context of South African education reform, the aim of this study is to highlight the interplay between colonial legacies, contemporary struggles for educational justice and the vision of an education system that authentically reflects and serves the diverse communities of South Africa (Mbembe, 2016). This investigation is appropriate, as South Africa continues to confront pressing questions of educational equity, cultural representation, epistemic justice and the role of education in fostering social cohesion in a post-apartheid context; this is witnessed through ongoing parliamentary debates, ministerial works, committees, curriculum review boards and court verdicts.

Background: Cases of Lwazi Lushaba and Pedro Mzileni

This work centres on the cases of Lwazi Lushaba and Pedro Mzileni as its focal point. It analyses the earlier (2016) matter with Lwazi Lushaba and the University of Cape Town (UCT) on 'class disruption' and the recent (2023) matter with Pedro Mzileni at the University of the Free State (UFS) on 'hate speech' (Lushaba, 2016; Mzileni, 2023). These two matters are employed to explore the tensions between Western-centred knowledge systems and decolonial pedagogical approaches in South African higher education. By interrogating institutional responses to critical scholarship that challenges colonial epistemologies, this discussion contributes to broader debates concerning academic

freedom, epistemic justice, and the simultaneous processes of decolonisation and Africanisation in post-apartheid academic spaces.

The enduring dominance of Western epistemologies in African higher education institutions poses a significant obstacle to the transformation of knowledge systems in post-colonial contexts. This work contends that the matters of two exceptional academics in the political and social sciences, Lushaba, who was threatened behind closed doors and warned for aiding class disruptions of political mobilisations and Mzileni, who faced institutional disciplinary actions and accusations of hate speech for teaching from decolonial and Pan-African perspectives, illustrates the structural resistance to epistemic diversification within former white universities in South Africa. By analysing these cases, the discussion explores the interplay between academic freedom, entrenched colonial knowledge systems, and the need to decolonise and Africanise curricula.

Mzileni faced disciplinary charges after questioning the university's vision and participating in public debates, ultimately resulting in his suspension and subsequent hearings (Mzileni, 2023). Both Lushaba and Mzileni have since shared their experiences through mainstream media outlets such as SAfm, various newspapers, YouTube and other social media platforms. They have discussed the challenges they encountered, including false accusations from right-wing organisations such as AfriForum targeting Mzileni, as well as the lack of institutional support from the university administration (Mzileni, 2023). By analysing these cases, the discussion highlights the relationship between academic freedom, entrenched colonial knowledge systems, and the imperative to decolonise and Africanise curricula.

Institutional resistance to decolonial knowledge production

Whilst these two cases have gone public in South Africa, they sit as empirical evidence that demonstrates how historically white institutions may operationalise administrative and disciplinary mechanisms to constrain decolonial scholarship. Many other cases are unknown, yet they exist, which is attested by the book titled *Black Academic Voices: The South African Experience* by Khunou et al. (2019). Lushaba and Mzileni's assertion that South African higher education places a very high premium on academic discourse that does not disrupt coloniality, whiteness, white supremacy, racism and the legacy of land dispossession and Eurocentric epistemic hegemony is evidenced by UCT and UFS's response to their teachings. This pattern of institutional response suggests not only disagreement with particular academic positions, but a structural resistance to epistemological approaches that

fundamentally challenge the colonial foundations of knowledge production. It exemplifies what Mamdani (2016) identifies as the epistemological containment of African scholarship, wherein critique is tolerated only insofar as it does not threaten established power relations in knowledge production. The Higher Education Act of 1997 states 'transformation' at least 50 times, which emphasises the cruciality of the reformation of higher educational systems to portray historical inequalities and foster inclusivity and an equal system. Transformation is characterised by the Act as the restructuring of institutional traditions, governance as well as curriculum to reflect the diversified needs and desires of South Africa's people (South Africa, 1997).

The South African Human Rights Commission's dismissal of hate speech (SAHRC) allegations against Mzileni affirmed that his teaching "constituted robust, constructive scholarly engagements backed by credible academic sources that enjoy special protection as an expression that lies at the heart of the right to freedom of expression and academic freedom" (Mzileni, 2024: 1). Academic freedom and university autonomy refer to the ability of a university and scholars to be independent, enabling them to pursue knowledge, be able to teach and conduct valuable research without any external assistance, enabling an inclusive and diverse academic environment for all (Ramoupi, 2014). This ruling highlights the essential tension between narrow conceptions of academic freedom that privilege Western epistemologies and broader understandings that encompass the freedom to challenge those very epistemologies.

By analysing the cases of Lushaba and Mzileni, this work contends that genuine academic freedom in post-colonial contexts must include the right to interrogate and dismantle colonial knowledge structures. Duncan (2018) argues that academic freedom in South Africa has historically been conceptualised in liberal terms, namely abstract knowledge production from its socio-political context. These cases demonstrate how this abstraction serves to protect established epistemological hierarchies, while delegitimising scholarship that explicitly addresses colonial power relations.

The institutional response to Lushaba and Mzileni's teaching demonstrates the necessity of conceptualising decolonisation and Africanisation as simultaneous, dialectically related processes. Decolonisation, understood as the dismantling of colonial knowledge frameworks and power relations, is insufficient without the concurrent Africanisation of curricula, which is the centre of African experiences, histories and knowledge systems (Swart et al., 2020). Decolonisation without Africanisation risks removing colonial elements without replacing them with Indigenous perspectives, while Africanisation

without decolonisation may add African content without challenging the underlying colonial structures. Lushaba and Mzileni's pedagogical approach engaged in both processes simultaneously by critiquing colonial narratives while teaching from Pan-African and decolonial perspectives. They commented on colonial narratives and included Pan-African narratives, which resulted in institutional resistance. The aggressive institutional responses suggest that this simultaneity is particularly threatening to established epistemic orders, because it not only critiques Western frameworks, it actively constructs alternatives.

This dialectical conceptualisation challenges approaches to curriculum transformation that emphasise either a critique of Western epistemologies or the inclusion of African content without fundamentally altering epistemological foundations. As Nyamnjoh (2012) argues, genuine transformation requires more than simply adding African content to Western frameworks, but reconstituting the fundamental epistemological assumptions of academic disciplines. Lushaba and Mzileni's involvement with Africanisation and decolonisation represents this dialectical approach, emphasising the need for both procedures to take place together for effective curricular change.

The analysis of this case yields several implications for the transformation of South African higher education. First, it makes one think, how many other cases are similar, but unreported and unpublicised in the universities in South Africa? Secondly, it demonstrates that formal decolonisation has not yielded substantive epistemic decolonisation in historically white universities. Institutional cultures continue to privilege Western knowledge systems while marginalising or actively suppressing African-centred approaches. While these cases provide a specific example, further research into the curricula of history, sociology, literature and the representation of Black professors is necessary to understand the extent of this issue. Thirdly, the two cases highlight the vulnerability of scholars, especially Black South African scholars, engaged in decolonial work to institutional backlash, suggesting the need for stronger structural protections for academic freedom that explicitly acknowledge the legitimacy of challenging dominant epistemologies. The asymmetry in institutional responses against Lushaba and Mzileni without equivalent investigation, reveals the operation of power in determining which voices are protected in academic spaces. Fourthly, the media's amplification of allegations demonstrates how public discourse reinforces colonial knowledge hierarchies. This suggests that decolonisation must extend beyond academic institutions to encompass broader societal narratives about knowledge production (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2018).

The matters concerning Lushaba and Mzileni exemplify the complexities of decolonising and Africanising curricula in post-apartheid South Africa. In Chapter 5 of *Paradise Lost: Race and Racism in Post-Apartheid South Africa*, Langa Ramoupi examines racial exclusion from academic positions at universities, attributing it to both the historical governance of the apartheid system and the ongoing racism in the democratic era (Ramoupi, 2022). The analysis reveals that Western knowledge systems remain entrenched in predominantly white institutions, and attempts to prioritise African perspectives, face considerable resistance. The situations involving Lushaba and Mzileni highlight that decolonisation encompasses more than merely diversifying content; it fundamentally challenges the power dynamics that determine whose knowledge is regarded as valuable and whose voices are amplified within academic contexts. Therefore, it is crucial to see decolonisation and Africanisation as interconnected processes that collectively represent a quest for epistemic justice in South African higher education.

Methodology

This work employed a qualitative research design to explore the persistent colonial legacies and contemporary challenges embedded within South African higher education, particularly as they relate to curriculum reform and the dynamics of decolonisation and Africanisation. The qualitative approach was selected for its capacity to unpack the complexities of institutional cultures, power relations, and epistemic hierarchies, while providing deeper insights into the lived experiences, perceptions and struggles of academics and students navigating these contested spaces. This methodological choice enabled the identification of subtle forms of resistance, the interplay between academic freedom and institutional authority, and the intricate processes through which Western epistemologies continue to shape curricula and knowledge production in South African universities. The research methodology was grounded in critical theory and post-colonial studies, providing a theoretical framework that facilitated an examination of how dominant knowledge systems maintain their hegemonic position within higher education institutions. This framework allowed for a nuanced understanding of the dialectical relationship between structural constraints and individual agency, revealing both the barriers to epistemic transformation and the possibilities for contesting established knowledge hierarchies.

The investigation employed three complementary data collection methods. Firstly, case study analysis focusing on two purposively selected cases, formed the core of this investigation: the experiences of Lushaba at the UCT and Mzileni at the UFS. These

cases were chosen for their exemplification of the colonial epistemological and power structures that persist in higher education, as well as their representation of individual agency within broader decolonisation and Africanisation movements. The case study approach enabled a detailed, situated analysis that revealed ongoing tensions, institutional resistance and complexities involved in transforming curricula and fostering epistemic justice within specific institutional contexts. Secondly, media analysis and interview data were sourced from publicly available content, including a SAfm interview with Sakina Kamwendo on AMLive concerning Lwazi Lushaba's matter and a YouTube interview with Sizwe Mpofu-Walsh on SMWX concerning Mzileni's case. These media sources provided rich, contextualised data about the participants lived experiences, institutional challenges and perspectives on decolonisation efforts within their respective universities, offering insights into the personal dimensions of broader structural transformations. Thirdly, a scholarly literature review was conducted, focusing on decolonial theory and practice in higher education, Africanisation of curricula and knowledge systems, the #FeesMustFall movement and its impact on institutional transformation, South Africa's colonial and apartheid educational legacies and epistemic justice and knowledge production in post-colonial contexts. The literature review provided theoretical grounding and contextualised the case studies within the broader academic discourse on transformation in South African higher education, establishing the intellectual foundations for understanding contemporary challenges and possibilities.

Assessing the necessity to simultaneously decolonise and Africanise Western-centred curricula

The intricate relationship between decolonisation and Africanisation within South Africa's educational framework reveals several significant tensions and opportunities that merit thorough exploration. This work assesses the multifaceted dimensions of curriculum transformation, contextualising these processes within broader socio-historical frameworks to understand why coloniality still prevails despite efforts to decolonise and Africanise. It is essential to recognise that the endeavour to decolonise education transcends curricular changes. As Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) contends, it necessitates a fundamental epistemic rupture, a radical reimagining of knowledge production, validation and dissemination. Despite post-apartheid reforms, the current educational structure continues to favour Western epistemologies, leaving African knowledge systems on the margins. This epistemic violence, as Maldonado-Torres (2016) terms it, perpetuates cognitive injustice and cultural alienation among learners. The integration of Africanisation into educational practice

presents both opportunities and hurdles. Letsekha (2013) advocates for the prioritisation of African philosophical traditions and cultural paradigms, yet the implementation of such approaches often encounters institutional resistance. This resistance frequently manifests itself in what Mbembe (2016) describes as cognitive imperialism, the enduring belief in the superiority of Western knowledge systems. Therefore, the challenge lies not only in embedding African perspectives, but also in fundamentally transforming the epistemological underpinnings of education.

A critical analysis of existing curriculum structures exposes what Heleta (2016) identifies as epistemic racism, the systematic exclusion or marginalisation of non-Western knowledge systems. This marginalisation occurs at various levels: in the selection of content; pedagogical methods and assessment techniques. The imperative for curriculum transformation must be understood within the framework of what De Sousa Santos (2014) refers to as cognitive justice. This concept underscores the importance of recognising the plurality of knowledge systems and diverse ways of knowing. Ramoupi (2014) points out that the existing educational system often reduces Africanisation to a superficial inclusion of culture, while perpetuating Western epistemological dominance. Steve Biko's decolonial and African-rooted scholarship and activism with a Pan-Africanist perspective attests to this. Likewise, Robert Sobukwe placed emphasis on Africanisation and decolonisation during the Student Representative Council President's Address in 1949. The relationship between decolonisation and Africanisation necessitates careful examination. While these processes are complementary, they are not synonymous. Decolonisation, as articulated by Fanon (1963), requires a fundamental dismantling of colonial power structures. In contrast, Africanisation emphasises the positive assertion of African epistemologies and cultural paradigms. The integration of these approaches foster what Grosfoguel (2011) and De Sousa Santos (2014) describe as pluriversality, a space where various knowledge systems coexist without hierarchical ranking.

However, the practical implementation of these theoretical frameworks presents considerable challenges. Msila (2017) notes that there is a need to interrogate educators; some educators lack theoretical knowledge, but, most particularly in higher education, lack the interest to incorporate African knowledge systems into their teaching practices effectively.

Perpetuation of Western-centred curricula

Western education has globally influenced educational standards. The educational paradigm is characterised by the promotion of science and liberal arts, which has structured lifetime learning and adaptation in modern society (Benavot et al, 2022). Critics such as Crossley and Watson (2003) contend that the dominance of Western educational paradigms is not only a reflection of a colonial legacy but also a practical necessity in an interconnected world. From this viewpoint, the revolutionary shift for decolonisation may unintentionally put South African students in a very tricky position where they are perceived as being disadvantaged in global contexts. King and McGrath (2004) noted that international employers and institutions often prefer Western educational credentials and knowledge systems.

Nevertheless, the argument for maintaining Western-centred curricula deserves careful consideration within the context of global economic and academic systems. Genuine educational transformation should embrace what Young (2008) refers to as powerful knowledge from all traditions, rather than favouring any single epistemological framework. Furthermore, in an increasingly globalised world, the argument for maintaining diverse epistemological perspectives becomes even more compelling. Contemporary knowledge production occurs through global networks that transcend traditional cultural boundaries.

Resistance to curriculum transformation often arises from empirical observations regarding the effectiveness of existing systems. Jansen (2017) highlights that many educators point to successful outcomes within current frameworks, particularly for students who excel in Western academic conventions. This pragmatic defence of the status quo implies that a wholesale transformation could disrupt functional aspects of education without ensuring improved results. Moreover, such critics assert that institutional resistance is rooted not only in a colonial mentality but also in genuine concerns regarding educational quality and consistency. As Biesta (2015) observes, educational systems require stable frameworks for assessment and progression. Therefore, radical transformation risks undermining these essential structural elements.

Critics contend that instead of continuing with decolonisation and Africanisation in their current forms, South African education might benefit from a more effective alternative framework. This new approach would (i) acknowledge the practical utility of Western knowledge systems while critically evaluating their limitations; (ii) integrate African epistemologies, recognising the valuable aspects of existing frameworks and (iii)

develop hybrid pedagogical strategies that adequately prepare students for both local and global contexts. This suggests that an exclusive emphasis on Africanisation could potentially restrict, rather than expand, educational horizons (Edoho, 2011). While linguistic imperialism deserves critique, critics argue that the pragmatic advantages of English proficiency cannot be overlooked. As noted by Crystal (2003), English functions as a global lingua franca in academic and professional environments. Therefore, prioritising Indigenous languages, although culturally significant, may limit access to international opportunities for both students and academics.

Additionally, critics raise concerns regarding the institutional capacity for transformation. Cloete et al. (2015) emphasise that many South African educational institutions are struggling with fundamental resource constraints. This suggests that radical transformation could overextend already limited resources without guaranteeing improved outcomes.

Historical educational structures in South Africa

The historical trajectory of South African education under colonialism and apartheid reveals deeply entrenched systems of epistemic violence that continue to impact contemporary educational frameworks. This discussion critically examines how colonial education functioned as an instrument of cultural domination and explores its lasting implications for current decolonial initiatives. The colonial education system functioned as a deliberate strategy aimed at fostering psychological dependence on Western epistemologies, while systematically undermining Indigenous Knowledge Systems. This process, as demonstrated by the educational policies of the colonial administration, went beyond academic instruction to become what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2021) refers to as epistemicide, the systematic eradication of Indigenous ways of knowing and existing. The strategic implementation of Western education in colonial Sub-Saharan Africa exemplifies what Abrokwaa (2017) identifies as a three-pronged approach: administrative control, economic exploitation, and missionary influence. This tripartite system produced colonial subjects, individuals alienated from their cultural roots and simultaneously excluded from full participation in the colonial power structure. The consequences of this system extend far beyond the colonial era, yielding what Wa Thiong'o (1986) describes as a cultural bomb that continues to disrupt the psychological landscape of African learners.

A critical analysis indicates that colonial education served various functions in maintaining hegemonic control. As Shizha and Kariwo (2012) observe, the emphasis on

Western academic literacy skills over Indigenous Knowledge Systems resulted in a form of cognitive imperialism that continues to shape educational policies and practices today. This systematic devaluation of African epistemologies has led to what De Sousa Santos (2014) describes as an abyssal line, creating a pronounced division between Western and Indigenous Knowledge Systems that renders the latter invisible or inconsequential.

For instance, in History at various South African universities, the core undergraduate modules predominantly emphasise European history, such as the French Revolution, British imperialism and the World Wars. In contrast, African precolonial and Indigenous histories are often relegated to electives or receive minimal attention. Similarly, in Sociology, foundational texts and theories by Western scholars such as Durkheim, Marx and Weber are standard requirements, while African sociological perspectives are seldom prioritised in the curriculum (Lushaba, 2016). In the field of literature, syllabi frequently favour works by British and American authors, with African literature either confined to a single module or examined through a Western analytical lens. This preference for Western content is also reflected in prescribed reading lists, which are primarily dominated by Western theorists and frameworks, as well as in assessment criteria that favour familiarity with Western academic conventions over Indigenous knowledge production methods. Consequently, students are often compelled to engage with and master Western paradigms to achieve academic success, while African epistemologies remain marginalised or treated as supplementary.

Equally important are the economic dimensions of colonial education. Rodney (2018) illustrates how education was a crucial instrument in establishing and perpetuating economic dependencies. The curriculum was deliberately designed to produce individuals trained to serve colonial interests, rather than contribute to Indigenous development and the production of knowledge. This is clearly illustrated in the Bantu Education Act of 1953, which mandated that Black South African learners receive an education focused on basic literacy, religious instruction and vocational training, while systematically excluding African history, indigenous languages, and critical thinking skills. School syllabi were tailored to prepare Black students for menial jobs in the service of the colonial economy.

University curricula similarly prioritised European thinkers and frameworks, with African intellectual traditions either omitted or treated as peripheral. These curricular choices ensured that Black learners were socialised to admire and emulate Western norms and values, while being denied the tools and knowledge necessary to advance their communities. The contemporary implications of this historical legacy are profound. As

Heleta (2016) argues, current initiatives in decolonial education must confront not only institutional structures, but also deeply entrenched psychological and epistemological challenges.

Bantu Education

The implementation of Bantu Education represents one of the most insidious forms of systemic oppression under apartheid, with effects that continue to resonate across South Africa's educational landscape. This segment examines how Bantu Education served as a foundational element of racial capitalism and explores its enduring impact on contemporary efforts aimed at educational transformation.

The framework of Bantu Education exemplifies what Wolpe (2023) termed education for domestication, a deliberate strategy designed to sustain racial capitalism through educational means. The Eiselen Commission's Report of 1951 claims that regarding the perceived inability of Black Africans to develop their curricula, underscores the fundamental justification of the colonial state: the notion of racial difference as both natural and immutable. This justification for educational apartheid illustrates the boomerang effect of colonialism, as described by Césaire (2000), wherein the dehumanisation of the colonised ultimately undermines the ethical foundations of the colonisers themselves. The strategic implementation of differentiated education systems, as Thobejane (2013) documents, operated through what Foucault would term capillary power, penetrating every aspect of educational experience to produce subjects suited to apartheid's racial hierarchy. This system, as Alexander (2003) argues, was not about limiting access to knowledge, but about producing specific forms of consciousness that would maintain white supremacy.

The contemporary implications of Bantu Education's legacy are profound. As Soudien (2012) argues, post-apartheid educational reforms must contend not only with material inequalities, but institutional habitus and deeply embedded patterns of thinking and practice that reproduce inequality, even in formally democratic structures.

Post-apartheid curriculum reforms

The trajectory of post-apartheid curriculum reforms in South Africa illuminates both the aspirations and limitations of educational transformation within a society grappling with entrenched colonial legacies. Since 1994, there have been significant efforts to transform higher education curricula, including the adoption of new policies, the establishment of

curriculum review committees, and the explicit commitment by universities to Africanise and decolonise their syllabi. Institutions have repeatedly articulated their intention to move beyond Eurocentric frameworks and to include African perspectives in teaching and research. However, as the history of the Mamdani Affair at UCT demonstrates, these efforts have often encountered substantial resistance at the level of implementation. In 1996, Mamdani's proposal to introduce a foundational course, Problematising Africa, which would have foregrounded African thoughts and experiences, was met with institutional pushback and ultimately sidelined by university authorities. As Smit (2018) reports, the controversy revealed a deep-seated reluctance within the institution to fundamentally challenge Western epistemological dominance despite official rhetoric supporting transformation. Even decades later, Mamdani's return to UCT was marked by reflection on how little had changed in terms of actual curricular content and the persistence of what he called an intellectual apartheid.

This gap between policy rhetoric and the realities of implementation exemplifies the abyssal line in knowledge production described by De Sousa Santos (2007), where Western epistemological frameworks continue to dominate despite professed commitments to transformation. The Mamdani case, and others such as it, as well as that of Lushaba and Mzileni, show that while transformation is frequently discussed at the policy level, entrenched institutional cultures and practices often prevent meaningful curricular change. The inability of higher education to truly emancipate students must be understood in the context of what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) terms the coloniality of knowledge and the ongoing prevalence of colonial epistemological hierarchies even after formal decolonisation. As Gumede and Biyase (2016) illustrate, the complexities of Western educational frameworks have inadvertently reinforced what Bourdieu (1990) describes as cultural capital, thereby privileging educators and learners who are already familiar with Western pedagogical approaches.

This brings to light what Mbembe (2016) understands as the phenomenon where attempts at transformation inadvertently reinforce existing power structures. The ongoing marginalisation of indigenous knowledge systems calls for a fundamental challenge to Western epistemological dominance. This challenge is particularly pressing in what Fataar (2018) identifies as the lived curriculum, the intersection of educational policies with the realities of daily classroom experiences.

#FeesMustFall movement: Beyond the colonial-decolonial binary

A critical counterargument to the dominant decolonial critique of South African curriculum reforms reveals a more nuanced reality than is typically represented in the literature. While scholars such as Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2018) and Mbembe (2016) frame these reforms within a colonial-decolonial binary, this perspective may oversimplify the intricate dynamics of educational transformation in post-apartheid South Africa. As demonstrated from the foregoing discussions, the trajectory of curriculum transformation in South Africa reveals deep-seated contradictions and persistent challenges that illuminate the interplay between colonial legacies and post-apartheid reforms. The historical analysis reveals what Jansen (1990) refers to as curriculum convergence, a trend in which superficial alignment between Black and white education conceals more profound structural inequalities. This phenomenon exemplifies what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2022) identifies as the coloniality of power, the persistence of colonial power dynamics even in the aftermath of formal decolonisation.

This segment examines how curriculum transformation and student activism, particularly through the lens of the #FeesMustFall movement, intersect with identity formation in contemporary South Africa. By situating these developments within the broader context of knowledge production and societal change, the analysis highlights both the progress made and the persistent challenges in achieving genuine educational equity and epistemic justice. As Ocheni and Nwankwo (2012) contend, these systematic barriers have fostered a cycle of voicelessness that extends beyond educational achievement to influence broader societal participation. The dominance of Western educational paradigms has led to what can be characterised as an epistemicide of local knowledge systems, effectively alienating learners from their cultural heritage and contemporary realities.

The advocacy for the Africanisation of the curriculum transcends the superficial inclusion of African content; it represents a profound shift in the conceptualisation and transmission of knowledge. Hungwe and Mkhize (2022) illustrate how this transformation process reconnects learners with their cultural identities, while challenging the hegemony of Eurocentric epistemologies. Furthermore, the integration of Indigenous Knowledge Systems, as noted by Saurombe (2018), serves a dual purpose: it validates local ways of knowing and enhances cognitive development through multilingual engagement. The #FeesMustFall movement represents a pivotal moment in South African higher education,

serving as more than just a protest against rising fees. As Langa et al. (2017) note, the movement articulated a thorough critique of the neoliberal university model, while emphasising the intersectionality of economic exclusion and cognitive justice. Its demands for decolonisation and Africanisation reflect a profound awareness of how financial exclusion intertwines with epistemological violence, perpetuating systemic inequalities.

The influence of decolonial practices on identity formation highlights the intricate relationship between individual and collective consciousness. The psychological remnants of colonialism, as discussed in Steve Biko's writings, continue to evoke what can be termed a colonial wound that impacts both personal and collective identity development (Biko, 1981). Engaging with Africanised perspectives in the context of contemporary global realities, creates what Fomunyam and Khoza (2020) describe as a third space where new forms of knowledge and identity can take shape. The transformation of the curriculum holds significant implications for livelihood dynamics and social justice outcomes. As argued by Ogude et al. (2005), an Africanised curriculum cultivates critical consciousness, empowering learners to confront systemic inequalities, while acquiring practical skills relevant to their communities. This approach aligns with what can be characterised as decolonial praxis, wherein theoretical understanding translates into tangible action for social transformation.

The ongoing process of decolonising higher education in South Africa reveals the intricate relationships between knowledge systems, identity formation and social justice. The #FeesMustFall movement has highlighted how financial exclusion operates in tandem with epistemological violence to maintain systemic inequalities. The push for Africanisation represents not just a curricular change, but a fundamental transformation in how knowledge is conceived, produced and transmitted in the South African context.

Conclusion

The trajectory of educational transformation in post-apartheid South Africa highlights both the enduring challenges and emerging opportunities in the pursuit of decolonial education. This analysis illustrates that the intertwined processes of decolonisation and Africanisation extend beyond curricular reforms; they pose fundamental challenges to the epistemic violence inherent in South African educational institutions. The historical legacy of colonial and apartheid-era education continues to profoundly influence contemporary educational frameworks. The systematic dismantling of indigenous knowledge systems, combined with coloniality, has created entrenched psychological and institutional obstacles to genuine

transformation. These barriers are evident not only in the content of the curriculum, but also in the very foundations of knowledge production and validation.

The #FeesMustFall movement serves as a powerful illustration of how financial exclusion intersects with epistemic violence in the perpetuation of systemic inequalities. Student activism has highlighted the shortcomings of post-apartheid reforms that address only superficial changes while allowing colonial knowledge hierarchies to persist. The push for decolonisation and Africanisation presents potential pathways for progress. However, this process must extend beyond content inclusion to the coloniality of knowledge and the underlying power relations that dictate what constitutes valid knowledge. Integrating Indigenous knowledge systems can both validate local epistemologies and enhance cognitive development through multilingual engagement.

Looking ahead, transforming South African education requires the creation of educational spaces that genuinely embrace multiple knowledge systems without imposing a hierarchical structure. This transformation necessitates attention to the intersection of educational policies with everyday classroom realities. It also involves addressing epistemic racism, which refers to the systematic exclusion or marginalisation of non-Western knowledge systems. The path forward must acknowledge that psychological liberation is inextricably linked to structural transformation. This entails confronting colonial education while fostering spaces where new forms of knowledge and identity can flourish. Therefore, the task of decolonising South Africa's education remains urgent. It requires not only policy reform, but also a fundamental shift in how knowledge is conceived, produced and transmitted.

In conclusion, the project of decolonising and Africanising South African education represents a fundamental challenge to centuries of epistemic violence. Its success requires sustained engagement with both theoretical frameworks and practical implementation strategies, always mindful of the coloniality of knowledge. Through such transformation, South Africa's education may truly serve its diverse communities, whose majority population is African and Black, while contributing to broader social justice and epistemic freedom.

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