

TEACHERS VOICE / HANDS-ON ARTICLES

Teaching soft skills in the modern history classroom beyond the parameters of the formal school curriculum

Paul M Haupt

Online History Tutor Metropole East Education District,
Western Cape Education Department
Cape Town
South Africa

Introduction

The history classroom lends itself to teaching soft skills conducive to good citizenship, sound values and cognitive processes that are critical in the world of work. It is incumbent on the History educator to become an enabler of inter-disciplinary investigation, debate and the discernment of validity, reliability and usefulness of source material. This approach stretches the child's capacity to relate intelligently with the printed word, statements of opinion, irrefutable facts, statistical analyses and artistic interpretation of reality. Unleashed is the ability to intellectually interrogate topics of the moment and cerebral engagement with pertinent issues of the modern age. The curriculum facilitates "historical comprehension, chronological thinking, analysis, interpretation and research skills" (American Historical Association, 2022) (American Historical Association, 2022), all of which are effective tools for the educator to hone values pertaining to Human Rights, Dignity, Unity and Justice, and which all promote a humane and caring society. Furthermore, in pursuance of an adequately educated and erudite citizenry in an era of exponential growth in the realm of available information and sources that provide a conduit for that explosion of knowledge, it is the competent History educator's role to craft lessons to enhance logical reasoning ability, discernment between fact and fiction, and the proficiency to communicate the validity of their opinions cogently.

The formal curriculum as a starting point for the intellectual interrogation of information

In the introduction to his discourse *Twenty One Lessons for the 21st Century*, Yuval Noah Harari pertinently observes, “In a world deluged by irrelevant information, clarity is power. In theory, anybody can join the debate about the future of humanity, but it is so hard to maintain a clear vision”. (Harari, 2019: 1) The school history curriculum has been expertly crafted to address this point and, concurrently, to provide a platform from which the engaged educator may explore a multiplicity of peripheral skills that enhance the academic learning experience. The formal secondary school curricula provide a content selection deemed by teams of academics, secondary school pedagogues and education administrators to be relevant to the geographic and political context in which it is being taught. The selection of content is, of its very nature, a process influenced by the biases of those who engage in it. When taken at face value, it is a process riven by controversy. It is critical to note, though, that the context in which this material is delivered and presented in the history classroom largely determines the extent to which values and life skill outcomes are cemented in the cognitive domain learners’ traverse. These outcomes cannot be taught in a content vacuum. Still, the content selection need not inhibit the extent to which learners are taught to engage with and scrutinise source material. If the core history curriculum of an education authority is not obsessively prescriptive about the presentation of that material, those soft skills alluded to, namely, discernment, logical reasoning, the formulation of defensible opinions and the inculcation of sound human values, are still within the ambit of the history educator in the classroom to explore.

The injunction to history educators to make prolific use of primary and secondary source material to both elucidate and dissect the core content pertinent to the classroom presentation is a critical component of a well-constructed syllabus. It binds the educator to the primary content but opens a wide field of investigation and analysis. This approach to setting formal curriculum parameters opens a vast scope for intellectual enquiry, debate and the discernment of bias, level of accuracy and the interpretation of the chronicle of human development in a particular milieu. Concerning European imperialism, Andrew Marr points to that subjugation process as having come with “a huge dollop of humbug and self-seeking propaganda”. Furthermore, and more importantly, he states, “European societies become more open and more self-critical at just the same time as they were acquiring empires. They had advanced beyond the point where they could live on a diet of humbug without feeling ill” (Marr, 2012: 438). It is precisely through this skill of recognising

‘humbug’, propaganda and bias that the utilisation of multiple sources representing a range of opinions can be actively taught. In the modern age, the proliferation of social media, fake information, accurate facts, bizarre theories and prejudice serve to discombobulate an undiscerning audience. History pedagogy is ideally positioned to elucidate core content with these clashing sources and to teach the discernment required to analyse the material critically. The formal curriculum, if crafted soundly, implores the educator to adopt this teaching methodology.

The formal curriculum also addresses the use of assessment as a teaching tool. A source-based assessment provides scope for learners to effectively communicate their logical reasoning, analysis and interpretation of historical discourses. Selection of supporting information from sources, assessment of the relevance and usefulness thereof, and expressing their opinion about the biases and prejudices contained therein are all required in the assessment techniques stipulated by well-crafted syllabi. As an adjunct to that, paragraph and essay writing hone written communication skills by requiring cogent arguments to be proffered using articles and visual material presented in the assessment tasks. In addition, the learner can demonstrate an ability to present a coherent exegesis or argument in response to a proposition upon which an essay topic is based. The presentation of a thoughtfully constructed line of argument is the cornerstone of historical writing.

‘Soft skills’ beyond the formal curriculum

The London School of Economics explains succinctly on its website some compelling reasons for studying history pertinent to this context. It states that the aim should be “to widen the student’s experience and develop qualities of perception and judgement while fostering intellectual independence, sharpness and maturity” and also for their abilities to be “valuable for the graduate as [a] citizen and ... readily transferable to many occupations and careers”. (London School of Economics, 2022) The formal content is described in its online prospectus, and the intended aim for the student is to acquire the skills outlined as a consequence of the method by which they are taught to engage with that content.

In *The Lessons of History*, Will and Ariel Durant argue that the historian is challenged to assess, “Of what use have your studies been? Have you found in your work only the amusement of recounting the rise and fall of nations and ideas ... Have you learned more about human nature than the man in the street can learn without so much as opening a book?” (Durant, 2010: 11).

The informal curriculum, which extends beyond the framework of the formal syllabus, is

the history educator's gift to address. The history classroom is the venue for the investigation of required curriculum content. Still, it should serve as a cauldron in which ideas can be held up to scrutiny, discussion can ensue, and an exchange of opinions and perspectives is freely interrogated. The history educator ought to facilitate a process in which learners delve into the plausibility of arguments and assess the relevance and accuracy of the multitudinous array of sources that masquerade as inerrant fact on electronic media and the reams of text that fill the bits and bytes of the information space. Evaluation techniques need to be taught. Discernment can be taught as a critical skill for the 21st century to eliminate the thoughtless acceptance of intellectual dross that proliferates. The history learner should be taught the skill of sifting through the verbiage and giving credence only to factual, valid opinions that pass muster when held up to the light of intellectual scrutiny.

Curriculum design and History teaching methodology

Those who design the history curriculum ought to structure it to facilitate classroom teaching that not merely presents selected content or assessment formats that restrict pedagogy to the core curriculum. The vast array of knowledge and opinion available in the information space and easy accessibility has transformed history teaching from mere content sharing to inculcating a relevant skill set in the work world. Learners entering the realm of employment, entrepreneurship and, in a broader context, responsible citizenry need to provide those learners with the agency to navigate what Marr described as "humbug and self-seeking propaganda". Educators, for their part, need to stretch learners' intellect beyond the formal parameters of the curriculum by actively teaching the skills of discernment and analysis cum logical reasoning.

Conclusion

The modern history classroom is more than merely a conduit through which the formal curriculum is presented to a presumed attentive and engaged audience of learners. It is where soft skills must be actively taught to facilitate active participation in holding the information up to the light of scrutiny, assessing the validity of opinions and venturing beyond the formal curriculum. It is where engaged and involved citizens are taught useful life skills and sound values.

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Teaching for belonging: a course facilitating global pluralism, and dialogue.

Marj Brown

University of Cape Town, Online High School
Cape Town
South Africa

Daniel Otieno Okech

Department of Educational Management, Policy and Curriculum Studies
Kenyatta University
Nairobi
Kenya

The Canadian Global Centre for Pluralism and European History NGO Euroclio¹ recently offered a pilot course for teachers on *Teaching for Belonging*. The aim of the course, as stated by the organisers, was that “there is widespread recognition that education has an important role to play in building inclusive and equitable societies that are resilient to intolerance, exclusion and hate”. The training sought to address challenges teachers face, including the persistence of one-sided historical narratives that can perpetuate group-based conflicts and limit students’ ideas of who belongs and who should hold power in their societies, the need for dialogue facilitation training so teachers can create spaces for discussions that explore controversial issues related to diversity and the increase of fear and hate-based narratives around difference that come from the student’s often uncritical engagement with social media —thus the need for digital literacy.

Let me first define pluralism: according to the Global Centre for Pluralism, diversity in society is a universal fact and how societies respond to diversity is a choice. Pluralism is a positive response to diversity. Pluralism involves taking decisions and actions as individuals and societies grounded in respect for diversity. *Teaching for belonging* encompasses pluralism in the classroom.

I attended the pilot training early this year, and this paper reflects on the course with Dr Daniel Otieno Okech, lecturer at Kenyatta University and one of the course facilitators.

As Dr Daniel Otieno Okech states when contextualising the course:

¹ EuroClio. Available at <https://euroclio.eu/>

One of the ways in which the discourse around colonialism is being promoted is through virtual exchanges between countries in the global west and those in the south. Decolonisation is about reconstructing the African continent. The continent's history, the way its cultures and civilisations are studied and the understanding of its political economy have been shaped by European thinkers (Chukure, 2016). This one-sided perspective must change through candid discussions. The movement to decolonise education in Kenya started at the end of the 1960s after the country won independence from Britain. Garuba (2015) writes that the "fundamental question of place, perspective and orientation needed to be addressed in any reconceptualisation of the curriculum". Garuba (2015) has alluded that the process of decolonising the curriculum needs to be done contrapuntally. The contrapuntal analysis considers the perspectives of both the colonised and the coloniser, their interwoven histories, and their discursive entanglements – without necessarily harmonising them or attending to one while erasing the other. This means that as we revise the curriculum to incorporate African perspectives, we should not erase the colonial perspective, which also adds value to the curriculum.

"Similarly, one has to look at cross-continental dialogue and exchange of ideas within this framework – the dialogue can facilitate a better understanding of each other, but who creates the forum, and is it equal for everyone? Even language, the most basic starting point, means that not all are on an equal footing".

As a Kenyan, Dr Daniel Otieno Okech's involvement in this discourse has been mainly via participation in several virtual exchange programmes with academic colleagues from Europe and Africa as a trained and UN-certified virtual exchange facilitator. He reflects that *as much as the topic of decolonisation is covered in these programmes, there is a paucity of information derived from the African content that represents the African perspective. The topics of diversity and inclusion are still presented from a Eurocentric/Americentric perspective.*

In the *Teaching for Belonging* course, I was asked to invite two or maybe three other teachers to join, as this was a pilot. I did invite and get acceptance from three other teachers, but once the course started, they all failed to attend due to teaching commitments or workload. The course was asynchronous for the most part so that one could work through modules in one's own time, and every three weeks or so, there were online meetings set up where one could choose which time zone/time slot suited one best. The modules had deadlines, including commenting on the coursework and each other's responses.

Participants included teachers from Eastern Europe, Western Europe, the USA, Canada,

Africa, Russia, South Asia, and South America. Forty-five educators from over 30 countries were selected, the majority of whom were recommended to GCP or who had reached out to express interest. Every participant was recommended because of their commitment to or interest in fostering and advancing equity, diversity and inclusion in their work. GCP anticipated that several participants would drop out throughout the training. In the end, 37 participants completed the training.

Of the 37 participants, 30 were classroom teachers who taught various subjects, from history and social studies to science and drama. The other seven participants included a history museum director, representatives from non-profit education organisations, a teacher trainer and a guidance counsellor. This led to rich debate and discussion as the course required completing modules and activities. Teachers could comment on the application of tools and approaches in their classes and engage in online dialogue with one another. There were also live webinars and debates facilitated as examples of handling conflict and ensuring that all pupils are heard. When attending the course, I could apply some of the tools and frameworks to sections of work, and it was interesting to witness pupils' engagement in difficult and emotive topics. There were some takeaways regarding insights into controversial topics and how important it is to make everyone feel heard. Still, not all opinions are inclusive, and one has to be mindful of how to deal with opinions that seek to divide and perpetuate discrimination or how to deal with a participant who may start to feel threatened by the discussion.

With such tools, it is easier for a teacher to explore controversial topics and facilitate decolonising the curriculum, as it allows for the hidden histories/experiences and voices in the classroom to emerge rather than just the dominant narratives.

As the GCP states

*We are living in a historic moment of urgency for pluralism. Societies worldwide are being challenged to address injustice, inequality and exclusion issues. When societies commit to becoming more just, peaceful and prosperous by respecting diversity and addressing systemic inequality, the impacts can be transformational. When the dignity of every individual is recognised, everyone feels they belong. We are all better off for generations to come.*²

The course was full of excellent reading material on pluralism, identity and social justice.

At the beginning of the first module, participants were challenged to write down

² Global Center for Pluralism. Available at <https://www.pluralism.ca/>.

ten things that encapsulate their identity. Then they were asked to shave this down to 4 aspects, and finally two. It was interesting to see how many people chose their religion or nationalism as their core identity, while others chose family member, sister or brother—more familial terms. We then discussed the social identity wheel—which helped us unpack different forms of identity. (Appendix A)

This led to a discussion on how people outside of that identity could be excluded somehow, and we assessed different forms of exclusion in our contexts.

The second module explored how historical narratives influence a person's sense of belonging in the present. We analysed multiple perspectives of a single historical event. There were questions such as:

- In a few sentences, describe a major event from the past in which there was a conflict between two or more groups as it relates to inequality and exclusion, which is part of your history education curriculum.
- Who was presented as a hero, victim, or perpetrator?
- Do you think some groups, perspectives and related events are missing? Which ones?
- How do you think your history education has contributed to present-day ideas of who belongs in your society?

The third module explored the purpose and practice of dialogue, and this flowed into exploring tools for educators to facilitate dialogue. This included designing a “brave space”, setting ground rules for dialogue and formulating questions that deepen thinking. The Good questions guide helped teachers distinguish between questions that facilitate open-ended dialogue and those that are closed, slanted, or vague. (See Appendix B)

Digital pluralism and the need to create respectful and inclusive online spaces, teaching learners to recognise how online information may be filtered, monitored or manipulated was also a focus of the course.

Educators and students can take specific actions to connect with different perspectives online. Some of these individual actions include the following:

- While there is an ongoing debate on whether filter bubbles and echo chambers are more or less harmful, there appears to be a consensus that it is worth being aware of them. So, an initial step in responding to echo chambers and filter bubbles is being aware of them.
- Learn about how personalisation works on different sites. Explore which personalisation settings users have control over, especially those that can be turned on or off. Review user ad preferences. If you want to seek

wider perspectives or find out what information you would get without personalisation, you can use browsers that don't track your history or conduct your searches using incognito mode.

- Consciously (and periodically), seek out different and opposing perspectives, points of view, new sources and new forms of expression. For example, follow multiple/opposing news sources, politicians and advocacy groups. You can also access sources (e.g., [allsides.com](https://www.allsides.com)) specifically created to provide multiple perspectives. Plugins, such as Escape Your Bubble and Flip Feed, are designed to insert diverging perspectives into your Facebook or Twitter feed.
- Bring attention to under-represented stories and viewpoints. Social media provides a significant opportunity to move outside of traditional news structures. You can leverage the reach of social media to educate others on stories and perspectives that they may not be aware of. If you decide to do this, you must use your critical thinking skills and share stories that help humanise issues. Companies and institutions are involved in making algorithms less likely to amplify one perspective. In the meantime, an awareness of how these algorithms work and exploring ways to break out of your bubble—at least occasionally—can help build a digital world that supports pluralism.

Finally, teachers were encouraged to zone in on their school and identify the multiple ways exclusion can be experienced and reinforced in a school setting, evaluate the challenges of addressing exclusion in their school community and create an action plan to address one example of exclusion in their school community.

Throughout this course, lesson plans were created by the participants, which were shared and commented on by fellow participants and the course coordinators. We also commented on the readings and applied them to our contexts.

I was at the time very involved in facilitating pluralism in my school, as a history teacher in the classroom and as a member of the school's transformation committee. It was beneficial to reflect on our approaches as I did the course.

Some of my key takeaways were:

- Applying a pluralism lens to education points to the importance of looking at what is being taught, how it is being taught, and the extent to which educational institutions model and lay the foundation for pluralistic societies. Both hardware (e.g., legislation, policies, hiring practices, curriculum/textbooks, monitoring mechanisms) and software (e.g., norms, beliefs, attitudes, language, historical narratives) can either facilitate inclusion or exacerbate tensions and

deepen social exclusion through simplistic or negative perceptions of and responses to difference.

- The idea of creating a safe space in one's classroom for exploring such issues was important, and, in addition, for many who attended the course, the course became a safe space. Most participants confirmed that this training made them more self-aware. Participants also commented several times through the pilot that the experience provided them with a (brave) space where they could share in a vulnerable way about personal, political and social issues. This, in turn, led to an openness to learn and positively impacted their experience. For example, some people were more comfortable speaking openly about sexuality and gender than others. Such differences can make people try to play it safe and limit conversation or ignore an issue altogether. Establishing ground rules for engagement during this course helped.

Applying a pluralism lens in the classroom

One of the topics I was teaching at the time of the course was Social Darwinism, and I applied some of the tools to see if it helped the quieter pupils voice their thoughts. I used “what perspectives are missing from this discussion”?

It led to previously quiet mixed-race children and children of Indian origin asking lots of questions about the racial hierarchy created by Social Darwinists and trying to work out where they would have been placed and how they are viewed today. Too often, a class's larger or largest group will dominate the discussion. I find the tools developed by the course on pluralism heighten one's consciousness to constantly look for the hidden voices in the class, encouraging all voices to be equally heard and previously silent voices to emerge, thereby decolonising the curriculum.

I was running an elective for Grade-8 learners (13-year-olds) on Voices Across the Ocean, which included looking at Hydro-colonialism. The course inspired me on pluralism to explore slavery not only across the Atlantic Ocean but also the Indian Ocean and the indentured labourers brought to South Africa by the British. I had Joanne Joseph as a guest speaker to talk about her book *Children of Sugarcane*, a historical novel focussing on the journey and experiences of two Indian women brought to SA. Joanne spoke to the learners and then also talked to parents and the interesting thing was that she seemed to have opened a topic that Indian parents have not been able to address. So many women

divulged how they don't talk about this past of their ancestors because it is painful history.

I also invited professor Isobel Hofmeyr to talk about Hydro-colonialism and how many people of colour consider the ocean a spiritual place because of the drowned souls in its depths. This has led artists such as Jason de Caires Taylor, Estabrak El Ansari and Pinar Yoldas to try and depict the people below the ocean.

Others have tried to resist oil companies drilling in the ocean's depths and disturbing these souls. Recently, a service was held in Cape Town to commemorate the 200 slave souls lost at sea when the Portuguese slave ship sank off the coast in 1794. (Smith, 2015)

I also spoke of noise pollution in the ocean and how this affects the life of whales and their breeding habits.³

Finally, I organised an online classroom chat between my students and students from a school in Connecticut to discuss how the different education curricula covered slavery and how this impacted their historical consciousness. Here the students became the voices across the ocean. The elective wrapped up with students writing poems about their view of the ocean after the elective, and it was fascinating to see how many diverse voices emerged.

Reflection from a facilitator:

As reflected by Dr Daniel Otieno Okech:

The evaluations done by the participants revealed that the six modules equipped teachers with competencies related to pluralism, but it also facilitated global connections and built a network of pluralism education champions. Although the course did not explicitly cover decolonisation as a topic, the fact that participants dealt with equality and inclusion made it possible to weave in the discourse about decolonisation. Through these programmes, participants learnt a lot in the areas of intercultural awareness and understanding of global issues such as climate change, pluralism, immigration crisis, racism etc. It provided an opportunity to navigate digital technologies through collaborative tools across different continental regions and time zones. This experience has made me a better educator and a facilitator of global learning.

Possible ways forward:

3 Ocean Care, 2022. Available at <https://www.oceancare.org/en/south-african-court-bans-offshore-oil-and-gas-exploration-by-shell/>.

The GCP evaluates the pilot course and considers whether it should be offered globally or regionally.

It would be important in future courses to look into a language tool to make translation easier for non-native English speakers.

A pluralism inventory was created for use in Canada and the USA that could be changed and adapted to a SA setting but contained questions which can lead to discussion. This is useful for whole school consciousness-raising, about transformation, for teachers and pupils alike, but it may need to be adapted for schools beyond North America and Europe. (See Appendix C)

The inventory is followed by discussion questions:

Were there any questions that made you feel uncomfortable? If yes, why do you think that is?

How does this inventory help us understand the concept of pluralism?

Are any questions missing, in your opinion? Are there any questions you would add that would be relevant to your context?

Conclusion

The course on *Teaching for Belonging* helps heighten one's sensitivity to issues that one may intrinsically know about the importance of addressing diversity in the classroom in a positive way. It aids a teacher's approach and facilitation skills and has practical tools to assist teachers who would otherwise shy away from difficult discussions with learners. It also creates a global network of voices, who could become a network of educators sharing resources and lessons or even just sharing perspectives as guest speakers.

Appendix A



Appendix B

Good discussion questions are **NOT** among the following question types:

- **CLOSE-ENDED/SIMPLE OR YES/NO.** This can end discussion and encourages guessing. An example of the type of question is "Is technology good?"
- **VALUE OR TOO GENERAL.** This leaves students guessing at what is being asked. An example of a question that is too general is "What do you think of technology?"
- **LEADING/BIASED.** This conveys the expected answer and/or the educator's opinion. An example of this type of question is "Don't you think that technology is amazing?"

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS

Follow-up questions have different objectives. Below are some examples.

1. **To deepen thinking and understanding, ask participants**
 - What do you remember...?
 - Can you help me with your thinking here or please say more about...?
 - You've put a lot of thought into this. How did you get this position?
 - Can you provide an additional example of...?
 - How does this compare and/or contrast to...?
 - What are the potential advantages and disadvantages of...?
2. **To address assumptions and stereotypes, ask participants**
 - What assumptions are underlying this point of view? What could be assumed instead?
 - Do you have personal experiences with this issue? How has it impacted your position?
 - How many people from that group have you spoken to/met?
 - Do you know where that name came from and what it originally meant?
 - Do you know why people stopped using that word? Why is it unacceptable these days?
3. **To bring in additional perspectives, ask participants**
 - What would someone who disagrees say?
 - What perspectives are missing from this discussion?
4. **To seek additional evidence, ask participants**
 - How can we find out more about this topic?

Appendix C

INCLUSION AND EXCLUSION INVENTORY

Please check off which of the following statements apply to you:

- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have never been discriminated against because of my skin colour. | <input type="checkbox"/> I have never had to "come out." |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have never been the only person of my race in a room. | <input type="checkbox"/> I never doubted my parents' acceptance of my sexual orientation. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have never been mocked for my accent. | <input type="checkbox"/> I have always been comfortable with expressing affection with a partner in public. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have never been a victim of violence because of my race. | <input type="checkbox"/> I have never been rejected by my religion for my sexual orientation. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have never been called a racial slur. | <input type="checkbox"/> I have never been violently threatened because of my sexual orientation. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I have never been told that I "sound white." | <input type="checkbox"/> I have never been told that my sexual orientation is "just a phase." |
| <input type="checkbox"/> A stranger has never asked to touch my hair or asked if it is real. | <input type="checkbox"/> I have never been denied an opportunity because of my gender. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I am never asked to speak for all the people of my ethnic, cultural, racial or religious group. | <input type="checkbox"/> I have never felt unsafe because of my gender. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> If a police officer pulls me over, I can be sure I haven't been singled out because of my race. | <input type="checkbox"/> I feel comfortable in the gender in which I was born. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I can easily buy posters, postcards, picture books, greeting cards, dolls, toys and children's magazines featuring people of my race. | <input type="checkbox"/> I have never been sexually harassed or assaulted. |
| <input type="checkbox"/> I can easily find skin care products and makeup. | <input type="checkbox"/> I have never been judged for either wearing |

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History Teaching in and beyond the formal curriculum Two Students Looking Back and Looking Forward

Mechall Abrahams and Waseemah Arendse

Two Oceans Graduate Institute, Cape Town, South Africa

Introduction

This article focuses on the learning journey, experiences, and research related to history education in schools and the interaction between them. I am Mechall Abrahams, a recent graduate of the Two Oceans Graduate Institute in Cape Town, where I completed my B.Ed. degree in the intermediate phase. I live in Park Rynie, a rural community in KwaZulu-Natal. As an online English teacher, I work with students from various cultures across the globe. In addition, I have gained a greater understanding of myself and other cultures through studying history. As I have become more aware of other people's viewpoints and have begun to listen to them first, my views have also evolved.

My name is Waseemah Arendse, and I have just completed my B.Ed. (Intermediate Phase Teaching) from the Two Oceans Graduate Institute. I live in Bonteheuwel, Cape Town—commonly known as the Cape Flats. I work as a Grades 6 and 7 mathematics and science teacher at a school in this same area. This article will reflect on our journey with our studies, experiences, research, and interaction with how history is taught in our schools.

Mechall Abrahams: Looking back: an evaluation and reflection on primary history education in the intermediate phase

In my four years as a student at the Two Oceans Graduate Institute, one of the most valuable opportunities was visiting different primary schools for teaching practice. By doing so, I could learn about various history teachers, history lessons, and strategies. I learned that history is commonly considered a divisive subject that is either admired or despised without much understanding of historical significance and meaning.

As a result of reviewing the Curriculum and Policy Statements CAPS Social Sciences

documents for Grades 4 to 7, it was noted that Grade 4 term one could include more oral history and folklore to understand how people perceived their environment. Moreover, I noticed that great leaders and the first settlers needed more emphasis, like focusing on oral history, poetry, and Indigenous knowledge.

Whilst having the pleasure of teaching Grade 7 learners History, I observed that most learners had not developed the cognitive capacity required to comprehend the content associated with the transatlantic slave trade. I think Grade 7 learners develop historical cognitive skills over time from Grade 4 concerning historical content. A perfect example would be critical thinking skills and collaborative skills. Furthermore, I firmly believe that providing learners with more in-depth content will give them background knowledge of how to apply historical thinking skills in the FET phase.

Moreover, I noticed that diversity and inclusiveness fit together like a puzzle, allowing learners to achieve their desired outcomes through learning. In addition, I strongly feel that in an inclusive history classroom, the teacher's primary goal must be to make all students feel valued and comfortable so they can meaningfully participate in the learning process.

When learning history during the 1980s, lessons seemed monotonous. In addition, there were no classroom debates, and as a student, I had no opportunities to question the past, investigate, explore, and research using historical thinking skills. As a history teacher, I aim to investigate unique contexts for exploring a variety of emotions and issues in history; and examine the emotional and controversial issues affecting modern society and how they interact so that we can reflect on and effectively teach controversial and emotive issues.

Waseemah Arendse: Looking back: an evaluation and reflection on primary history education in the intermediate phase

History teachers are often labelled irrelevant, and they should envy teachers who teach subjects like mathematics and science. I want to state that as a mathematics and science teacher, I have been full of envy of the history teachers at my school. For example, I knew that the passing of the late majesty Queen Elizabeth II was a fantastic opportunity to bring relevant information into the classroom that would be considered history for centuries.

Through my studying of history teaching, I discovered that the CAPS document proposes a focus on social transformation, Ubuntu, and indigenous knowledge. History education in South Africa is tasked with achieving three specific goals. Developing critical thinking involves a range of evidence and developing nation-building to create an identity,

social relations, and solidarity amongst diverse communities and cultures.

Sitting in a history classroom during my teaching practice experiences, topics such as Ancient Egypt turn into a contest of who can write like the Egyptians best instead of what they can learn from how they lived and how they built their success. Much can be said about Ubuntu and inclusivity. Teaching our learners only what is available in the textbook cannot teach them to be inclusive human beings and to create environments and communities with Ubuntu practices.

Studying at an institution that thrives on equipping us with 21st-century skills, our expectations for going to schools were relatively high. I was disappointed when I realised that teaching history consists of the teachers planning dictated in the CAPS guidelines and the textbook chosen by the school. Learners enter the classroom prepared to listen to the teacher for approximately ten minutes, and a discussion about the content might occur. The rest of the period is dedicated to learners copying notes from a textbook already in their possession.

The classrooms of the schools I visited and the way history lessons are taught have not changed since the last time I sat at those desks. I saw the conventional way of teaching with the teacher being the only person speaking for the lesson duration.

Too few resources and too little time for anything else. The learners are seemingly uninterested and uninvolved in what is taught in the classroom. Inclusivity to investigate, explore, and research using historical skills and thinking is non-existent.

Mechall Abrahams: Looking forward: possible solutions for teaching and learning primary history education

The CAPS document highlights the importance of preserving South Africa's rich heritage and legacy of the past. In addition, the CAPS content contains some references to Ubuntu and indigenous knowledge systems. However, much more needs to be added. Also, when restructuring a history curriculum, it is essential to consider the diversity of cultures and the inclusiveness of the classroom.

Regarding teaching controversial and emotive topics, I would suggest recommendations included in the CAPS curriculum for teachers to ask learners more questions. I firmly believe having the ability to listen is an essential skill that all learners can learn if they are shown how to do it. Moreover, it is essential to point out the consequences of all emotions and feelings. Consequently, it influences the learner's thinking and learning; as a result, we may be able to imagine what others feel when we have more knowledge.

The history taught in school should focus on displaying the lives of ordinary people through time. Furthermore, it should focus on integrating the 6Cs of 21st-century history education into the development of primary history education and how we teach history in our classrooms. Communicating and collaborating with learners can help develop empathy in them when dealing with emotive issues.

Waseemah Arendse: Looking forward: possible solutions for teaching and learning primary history education

So how can new teachers, along with teachers who have been teaching history for 30 years, teach history that will allow learners to become historians in the classroom? How do we teach history for learners to learn about their own cultures and heritage and feel proud of who they are as individuals living in such a fast-paced, evolving world flooded with technology that did not even exist 20 years ago?

Additionally, when reviewing and restructuring a history curriculum, it is vital to consider the diversity of cultures and the inclusiveness in a primary history classroom setting.

Teaching relevant and age-appropriate content would be an excellent example of how teaching in the intermediate phase can be transformed into an effective subject that is not perceived as a repetition of facts or a tedious practice.

Creativity should be treated with a very high level of importance. It is significant since the world's future is unknown, and we have no idea what to expect or how much innovation will be necessary to succeed. As adults, we may not see this future, but our children will, and it is our responsibility to guarantee they can thrive. Historical thinking is critical for students to build skills and tactics to help them understand the past. These skills are critical for our learners to examine, interpret, and comprehend past experiences rather than remember what occurred.

Conclusion

The past cannot be changed, but we can create new knowledge about it. To ensure the aims and outcomes of the country's curriculum are met, teachers must teach the content in a way that meets those aims and outcomes. While it is evident that primary history education requires revising and restructuring, it is our opinion that this should be started within the intermediate phase and ensure the effectiveness of the changes and implementation in the

higher grades. Our recommendation is to elevate historical thinking skills, oral history, folklore, and controversial and emotive topics to a deeper level in the classroom, thus encouraging students to become responsible citizens. Students who work with content that relates to their daily lives in the 21st century are more likely to develop humane, empathetic traits as humans.

Challenges related to the Zambian history curriculum and how the history school curriculum can be decolonised

Francis Mbeba

University of Zambia, Lusaka, Zambia

In Zambia, the attainment of independence and democracy in 1964 and 1991, respectively, necessitated innovations in the education system. After independence, different educational reforms were formulated, such as the 1977 educational reforms aimed at improving the quality of education by redesigning the Zambian education system and integrating work and study into the curriculum. The focus was to transform the school curriculum to help learners acquire different educational skills. The effort to improve the education system and change the curriculum continued, and the Ministry of Education in 1996 presented the aim of education as being the development of a complete and well-rounded individual for personal fulfilment and the good of society. Since 1964, the history school curriculum has been revamped to align with the rapidly changing world. Primary and secondary syllabi reflect Zambian history, but this has not been done to the merit. As of the 2013 revised curriculum, the Outcomes-based Education curriculum (OBE) was adopted. The introduction of the competency-based curriculum in 2013 was to help learners acquire knowledge, skills, values, and attitudes that are likely to equip them with competencies that they can effectively use to serve society and the nation at large. Even though such was the case, such gains are bound to contribute little, if anything, to the curriculum process as history teaching has not been conceptualised within the context of the other human and social sciences. This article aims to explain the challenges relating to the Zambian history curriculum and further explain how the curriculum can be decolonised to suit the Zambian people.

After independence, most African countries (Zambia inclusive) revised their curricula to Africanise and decolonise the former curricula to meet their societies' growing demands and promote their local cultures. In Zambia, the effort to revise the history curriculum has been made under difficult conditions. This is because the country inherited a curriculum formulated by the colonial government. The colonial history curriculum failed to appreciate the local history to greater inclusiveness. For example, colonial masters taught much of European history by praising a European man, including the history of David Livingstone

till his death and the history of some ethnic groups that were neglected. This has continued until the 21st century, and local history is no longer relevant. It has failed to satisfy the needs and aspirations of contemporary society. For this reason, there is a need to focus on aspects of the country's cultural heritage to enable an understanding of the origin, shortcomings, failures, and successes to have an intelligent reconstruction of the curriculum (Ng'andu, 2020).

In Zambia, teaching and learning history, as a curriculum discipline, has been characterised by political, economic, cultural, and ideological imperatives, whose teleological goal is one of the nation-building process and one of cultivating a modern dimension of national identity in the global culture. However, teachers face many challenges when teaching history because the subject's content is restricted to the curriculum. The Zambian history curriculum has not been decolonised as it contains few topics relating to the country's history (Mulenga and Mwanza, 2019). For example, the grade 11 history focuses on Europe's social, political and economic history. This history addresses issues of the world from a European perspective. When teaching World War One, pupils are only taught about Europe, not Zambia. Mbala or Abercorn is not recognised as the most important site during the war and is not included in the secondary school history curriculum. Such issues make decolonising history curricula hard (Ministry of General Education, 2013). The removal of history as an independent subject at the junior level has been received with mixed feelings. History has been incorporated into social studies, which include civics and geography. This has removed many topics, especially those related to Zambian kingdoms, of which few are taught (Curriculum Development Centre, 2011).

Further, during the curriculum implementation, history teachers are left out because they are very critical about reform; their absence in the curriculum reform process means that history is placed at a disadvantage. Mzumala (2021) revealed that teaching history at all levels must admit the inevitability of development and change. Teaching history and related disciplines should raise awareness of prejudice, discrimination, inequality, injustice, and assumptions that would otherwise go unchallenged. Without that essential way of thinking critical historical analysis, learners cannot fully enjoy learning history (Mwanza and Changwe, 2020). Some teachers I have interacted with, especially in rural areas of the Lundazi district, mentioned that they are not in contact with curriculum specialists. Some of them said that their absence had delayed them in airing out the challenges they face in teaching history, especially topics on European history (Banda, 2021).

At the primary level, history is taught in social studies, which does not advocate for better access to what teachers need to deliver sound historical content to the learners. The

fact is that teachers are not consulted or involved in the process of curriculum formulation or development. They have no access to participate in local or national discussions on the future of social studies, compromising the quality of the aims, goals, and purpose of what social studies should be or yield (Curriculum Development Centre, 2011). For example, Matilda Banda, one of the history teachers I contacted, mentioned that for the past ten years she had taught history, she has never been consulted by anyone from higher authority. This makes it hard for her to explain the challenges she has been facing in preparing the current history curriculum. Banda further mentioned that it is challenging to teach Zambian history to merit, and some learners describe the subject as boring (Banda, 2021).

Many teachers I have engaged with complained that the secondary history syllabus includes much European history. For example, it explains many works of Benito Mussolini, Adolf Hitler, Otto Von Bismarck and others and African leaders like Shaka are viewed as cruel leaders and never praised. Great men in Zambia who fought in world wars are never mentioned. Most of Zambian history is the history of pre-colonial times, and this focus is on labour migration and how Zambians became labourers in Copperbelt and other mines. This history is Eurocentric in nature, and it depended on gossip and rumours. It is a history of propaganda. This history is heroic in nature and judgmental. The Europeans mostly wrote what they saw, most of which was concerned with a trade that existed in the pre-colonial era (Curriculum Development Centre, 2013).

It is a pity that the country has been independent for 57 years, but its history has been neglected. Few studies have been done, and this is due lack of financial support to sponsor students to do their masters and PhDs. The country has few history professors who are old and cannot be relied on. Some of these professors are not updated with the current history. Contemporary issues in history are not well addressed because most professors depend on only the information they obtain at school (Mulenga and Mwanza, 2019). Because the examination is set in line with the syllabus, teachers do not teach what they know but what is in the syllabus. They teach what is in the book to make learners pass exams and not acquire practical skills. Most of the information in the syllabus is bookish and does not address 21st-century challenges. Most pedagogical models used in teaching history in school are teacher-centred (Curriculum Development Centre, 2013).

Despite many challenges our Zambian teachers face, I believe it is possible to decolonise the history curriculum. The following is how this can be done. Firstly, learners must gain a conceptual understanding of historical events and geographical places to understand the past. This can be more effective through the educational trip. Historical sites like the Ing'ombe Illede must be visited by the pupils at least once a term. Pupils across the country

must well utilise the Lusaka national museum. This is because the national museum is rich in the country's history. Moreover, discovery, dialogue and life experiences are essential to give learners ample chance to have first-hand information by discovering things for themselves through experiences (Mwanza and Changwe, 2020).

It can be suggested that research history courses be compulsory in all colleges and universities to allow students to participate in the writing of different local histories. This can be effective if all students research local history. For example, the University of Zambia should provide a research course to students having history as a subject. The curriculum specialists should also include history teachers before reforming the curriculum. The University of Zambia has made progress by offering Zambian history as a compulsory course. History teachers need to be consulted and their thoughts. Sponsoring the best history students is the most important thing to do as a country. Lectures and other great historians need to be involved in the history curriculum.

In conclusion, teachers face many challenges because they are not involved in curriculum reform. This challenge can end if many teachers are consulted. Also, history can be an enjoyable and worthy subject when teachers prepare effectively to foster a deep knowledge of their discipline and understand how to teach historical thinking. History teachers need to emphasise the blending of content and pedagogy. I further suggest that history teachers must be aware of contemporary issues, especially those near our region or within the country.

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