

EDITORIAL

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History Education greetings,

The contributions in this issue of Yesterday & Today arrive at a pivotal moment for history education in South Africa and Africa. As global debates around artificial intelligence, decolonisation, pedagogical innovation and curriculum transformation intensify, the research presented in Volume 35 reminds us that the South African context, shaped by profound inequalities, a complex past, and a rapidly shifting technological landscape, requires thoughtful, locally grounded responses. What emerges across the seven articles in this edition is a shared concern, namely, that history education is being reshaped by powerful forces that all history educators need to take cognisance of.

The opening conceptual article by Michael Stack argues for a structured and authentic approach to integrating Artificial Intelligence (AI) in social sciences and history teacher training. In a sector where students often access AI tools without guidance and sometimes use them to circumvent learning, the author warns of a genuine risk: producing graduates who, through over-reliance on AI-generated work, enter classrooms insufficiently prepared. This is not simply a technological issue but an ethical one, one that strikes at the heart of teacher professionalism and the integrity of the South African education system. The article's call for hospitable institutional environments, clear policy guidance and didactic training for ethical AI use is both timely and urgent.

From a complementary angle, Adigun's reflective piece on archaeology students at a distance university paints a candid picture of the "copy-and-paste" culture emerging in the Generative AI era. Through Kolb's experiential learning cycle, she acknowledges the promise of AI while exposing the pitfalls of uncritical adoption. Her insights reinforce the argument that students must be taught, not merely told, how to use AI to enhance, rather than replace, their thinking. History and archaeology, disciplines rooted in interpretation and critical engagement with evidence, are particularly vulnerable when these cognitive processes are outsourced to AI.

Technological innovation remains a central theme in Volume 35 in the study of virtual reality (VR) head-mounted displays in pre-service teacher training for history. VR's ability to transport learners into immersive historical environments, such as Holocaust museums

and battlefield re-enactments like Pearl Harbour, signals new possibilities for cultivating historical empathy, spatial understanding, and self-directed learning. Notably, the research shows that VR is not a gimmick but a pedagogical tool capable of fostering motivation, critical thinking and reflective engagement. In a context where textbook-based learning dominates due to resource constraints, such technologies offer both excitement and a reminder of the access disparities that continue to shape educational opportunity.

Decolonisation, another pressing thread in South African and African scholarship, surfaces powerfully in the critique of colonial-era Northern Rhodesian (now Zambia) textbooks. The authors, Kabombwe and Masinire, demonstrate how content steeped in Eurocentric ideology shaped generations of learners' understandings of Africa's past. Their findings prompt a broader reflection: although some strides have been made in revising curriculum content, the colonial logic embedded in many inherited teaching materials, such as programmatic curricula, still requires scrutiny. Decolonisation, as the authors argue, is not simply about adding African content but interrogating the ideological foundations of the narratives we present to learners.

A related historical-pedagogical intervention is offered through the study of colonial infrastructure and economic geography by Fru and Olatoye. In this transdisciplinary article, the authors trace the spatial logic of ports, railways, and power grids, which are designed to extract rather than develop, and expose enduring spatial inequalities. Their call for integrating critical cartography, Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and place-based inquiry highlights the transformative potential of historically grounded geographic literacy, a powerful antidote to the "historical amnesia" they identified in their article.

Policy debates emerge sharply in the article, which examines the perspectives of South African history lecturers on making history compulsory in the 12th grade. While the proposal of compulsion promises broader historical consciousness, lecturers anticipate significant strain on already stretched university systems. This would include larger classes, more diverse academic preparedness and potential dilution of rigour. Their reflections underscore the need for institutional planning and investment, should such a policy be revived as part of the Ministerial Task Team's recommendations.

Closing Volume 35, Mvenene's analysis of pedagogical strategies adds a practical dimension. The documented shift from traditional, teacher-centred instruction toward inquiry, collaboration, role-play and other learner-centred approaches signals genuine progress. Yet the study also calls on history teachers, not technologies alone, to create

classrooms where understanding takes precedence over memorisation and historical problem-solving becomes central.

Taken together, the papers in this issue remind us that the future of history education lies at the intersection of innovation, identity and pedagogy. New technologies, such as AI and VR, can reimagine how history is taught and learned, but only if they are integrated critically, ethically, and with a clear pedagogical purpose. Simultaneously, the ongoing work of decolonisation demands vigilance, reflection and the courage to rethink historical narratives and teaching practices.

Complementing the seven articles in Volume 35 are a book review, conference reports on history education in African contexts, and two hands-on contributions.

As the landscape of education continues to shift, Yesterday & Today remains committed to fostering scholarship that equips South African and African history education educators, researchers, and policymakers to navigate these complexities with insight and integrity.

Prof Johan Wassermann

Editor-in-Chief