

DECOLONISATION VERSUS HEGEMONY: MAKING HISTORY COMPULSORY IN BASIC EDUCATION

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates the possibility of making History a compulsory subject up to Grade 10 in South African schools. At present, History is part of the Social Sciences learning area taught from Grade 4 to Grade 9. History is not a compulsory subject from Grade 10. In a quest to promote social cohesion and unity in the South African society that was fragmented along racial and ethnic lines, the democratic government has sought to introduce History as a compulsory subject as it is seen as a tool to unite the nation and to promote decolonisation, nation-building and social cohesion. This is an anti-positivist study based on a literature review. The researchers found that there was a general consensus among scholars and politicians that History should be made a compulsory subject. Yet they also found that there were those who were sceptical about its introduction as a compulsory subject for they feared the intention might be to use it as a political tool and that it might discourage those who intended studying it. Therefore, the researchers recommend that in order to pave the way for making History a compulsory subject at schools, a democratic curriculum committee should be established to design a History curriculum that accommodates all the population groups in the country. Furthermore, the public should be given the opportunity to participate by giving their input into the proposed curriculum.

Keywords: decolonising; colonisation; hegemony; history; compulsory subject; colonial apartheid



INTRODUCTION

The Department of Basic Education has taken the step to make History a compulsory subject by appointing a ministerial task team to investigate the matter. This team is tasked to oversee the implementation of History as a compulsory subject from Grade 10 to Grade 12. At present, students take History up to Grade 9 as part of Social Studies (which also comprises Geography) and they are allowed to drop it from Grade 10 (Makinana 2014).

This study contends that History should be made a compulsory subject up to Grade 10 so that learners get a grounding in the history of their country, for instance, the role that Africans played in liberation struggles against colonialism from the 1400s to 1994 when South Africa broke free from apartheid, which can be described as a special type of colonialism. Because of colonialism, which directed the history of Africa, the liberation struggles were never included in the History curriculum. According to Wa Thiong'o (cited in University of the Witwatersrand 2017), African history was marginalised because colonialists portrayed and spread the myth that Africa was a small continent, whereas in fact it is large enough to fit in all its many nations. This paper contends that this was a deliberate move to expunge African history from the record. King (2006, 42) contends that this was done in order to justify the idea that before colonialism, Africa did not have a history. Consistent with Napoleon Bonaparte who labelled history as "a set of lies agreed upon," King (2006, 42) posits that whenever the colonialists wrote African history they based it on fantasy and showed no respect for the continent's past. One of the greatest historians of all times, George McCall Theal, who compiled the *Compendium of South African History and Geography*, which was mainly based on oral evidence, excluded African evidence because, according to him, Africans' oral history lacked written evidence (King 2006, 42). The omission of African oral history suggests that the voice of "ordinary people" has been ignored, thus rendering their experiences hidden or unknown (Batty 2009). African oral history has some of its deepest roots in North Africa in the form of oral accounts of medieval African states, society and antecedents. These accounts were recorded in writing by Islamic and Arabic scholars in such chronicles as the *Tarikh al-Fattash* and the *Tarikh al-Sudan* (Moustafa 2015, 7).

The necessity of teaching History as a compulsory subject is premised on the fact that South Africa suffered xenophobic attacks in 2008 and 2013, attacks that were directed at those who came from other African countries. It is assumed that these attacks were caused by a limited knowledge of the history of the continent (Davids 2016, 84). The South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) advocates that History should be a compulsory subject in schools in order to raise awareness amongst the students that Africa and Africans cannot be defined by borders. However, the official opposition, the Democratic Party (DA), contends that the argument for making History a compulsory subject is driven by political reasons (Makinana 2014) on the grounds that this history would serve only to support the negative view that it was all about killing white people. This thinking by the DA still reflects a mentality hostile to democratic forces as

represented by Africans. This study contends that the DA feels that even in democratic South Africa a skewed colonial apartheid history should be preserved. There still exists a covert struggle about whose history should prevail in South Africa. The DA appears to share the opinion of Theal who described African history as that of barbarians not worthy of being recorded. Accordingly, therefore, South Africans did not write their own history, and hence it was not included in the History curriculum of schools.

As a consequence of the above, Africans grow up without knowing where they came from, where they are now and where they are going to in their country. Their lack of knowledge about their past, presence and future is captured by the statement of Napoleon Bonaparte who said that “History is written by the victors” (Sacco 2016). The victors, who are referred to as “winners,” have the power to “shape historical narratives through school textbooks, public iconography, movies, and a range of other mediums.” On the other hand, Motshekga (2017) opines that History should empower young people with the ethos of the new South Africa as provided for in the country’s Constitution, thus cementing the project of nation-building, social cohesion and reconciliation. According to Motshekga (2017), History should be able to foster the understanding of global and national citizenship and promote principles of non-racialism and non-sexism. Therefore, Motshekga’s approach seeks to change History from being determined by the “victors,” as Bonaparte sarcastically claimed, to being determined by all South African citizens. Both the victors and the vanquished after apartheid would determine the type of history they want.

Indeed, the quote by Bonaparte given above (Sacco 2016) confirms that History was used to establish and perpetuate hegemony of the victors over the vanquished. In light of this, the History curriculum has for years been used to establish hegemony in societies and as a tool of indoctrination. In order to dismantle this hegemony there is a need to decolonise the History curriculum.

According to Mamdani (as cited by Omoyele 2017), in a lecture he delivered at the University of Cape Town on August 22, 2017, decolonisation is the displacement of alien rulers by indigenous ones with liberal democracy, facilitating the achievement of this goal. Celliers (2017) views decolonisation as the contest between the traditionalists and the reformists with the former wanting to maintain the status quo whilst the latter seeks to change it. This study elevates this contest to a discourse on the contradictions of hegemony and decolonisation, each aiming to defeat the other. Hegemony is prevalent in education in that students absorb the ideology of the dominant ruling class (Slattery 2006, 38). Wa Thiong’o (cited in University of the Witwatersrand 2017) expresses the opinion that language is the means whereby the hegemony of the colonial power is perpetuated, and in the case of the British colonies, this was English. He adds that the imposed language forcibly alienated children from their own indigenous culture. Therefore, language is the most powerful tool of hegemony, and it remains the greatest obstacle in efforts to decolonise education in Africa and particularly in South Africa.

PROBLEM STATEMENT

The fall of colonialism and apartheid signalled a new vision for democratic South Africa that would change the system that discriminated against Africans. One of the changes should have focused on the colonial education system that ignored African history. Colonial history was given priority while African history reflected only negative aspects such as the theft of property from white colonialists. Colonial education did not include information on African struggles and African heritage but reaffirmed the superiority of colonialism by including information on its own history. In Tanzania, Julius Nyerere set the agenda in the Arusha Declaration of Socialism and Self-Reliance for the creation of a new society and the transformation of the colonial education system in Tanzania by reorganising schools, restructuring school management and making the curriculum more relevant for the learners (Sanga 2016). Makgoba (2015, 7) argues that Africans were denied education for over three centuries, and those who were lucky to get it received an inferior version that consigned them to servitude. Education was designed to serve those whom Napoleon described as victors over the vanquished black majority. The former Prime Minister of the Congo, Patrice Lumumba, called for Africa to write its own history (New Africa 2002, 23). Failure to push for fundamental change in the education curriculum serves to condemn black people to menial and unskilled work while white people receive an education that prepares them to manage the economy of the country (Gumede 2012, 178). In respect of the problem stated above, the researchers attempted to contribute to the debate about making History a compulsory school subject in order to make it a decolonising tool.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

This study is underpinned by the theory of decolonising the mind as put forward by Ngugi wa Thiong'o (1981). According to him, imperialists subjugated Africans through an education which transmitted Western values at the expense of African ones. This education system became what he calls a "cultural bomb" because its aim was to destroy African societies, their heritage of struggle, their unity, their capacities to think and lastly their languages (Wa Thiong'o cited in University of the Witwatersrand 2017). This paper argues that making History a compulsory school subject would mark the beginning of reversing the untold damage done to the continent. History would transmit cultural values, reconstruct African societies, and teach the history of African liberation struggles. History is the most relevant subject to reconstruct the continent; therefore it has to be made compulsory at school and it should not be optional as it is today.

It would be well to also focus on other definitions of decolonisation. Wa Thiong'o (cited in University of the Witwatersrand 2017) suggests that decolonisation is the

process of replacing a certain “species” of men by another “species” of men. Consistent with this definition, Mamdani (as cited by Omoyele 2017) sees decolonisation as the displacement of alien rulers by indigenous ones with liberal democracy facilitating its achievement. According to Fanon (1963, 35), decolonisation is not an easy process but a violent one involving two conflicting forces opposed to each other. Much worse are the results of colonisation and imperialism, for instance, the replacement of African personal names by so-called Christian names that are given to almost every African. These names lack meaning as they are not grounded in African culture and its languages. African names have meaning as they carry cultural connotations. This paper contends that decolonising so-called Christian names will assist in children rediscovering their heritage, and that History is key to this goal. Language is inseparable from culture, and history transmits it from generation to generation. The researchers are of the opinion that unless History is made a compulsory subject, the people of South Africa will not discover their past. Wa Thiong’o (cited in University of the Witwatersrand 2017) argues that the unity and harmony that Africans enjoyed were destroyed the very first day they went to a colonial school because the language of education was de-linked from culture.

Implicit in the process of colonisation is the issue of hegemony. What then is hegemony? Hegemony is defined as the domination and oppression of one group by another in the system (Yilmaz 2010, 194). However, Gramsci (as cited in Barrett 1997, 239) is of the view that hegemony could take the form of cooperation—coercion of the oppressed, combining it with social and political supervision, force and consent. This suggests that the oppressed may not immediately feel that they are being indoctrinated and manipulated until their culture has been destroyed and replaced by a foreign one. An example is the imposition of European languages on colonised countries. According to Wa Thiong’o (cited in University of the Witwatersrand 2017), these languages replace the indigenous languages, leading to, among other things, the colonised being called names derived from the languages of their colonisers (e.g. French or Portuguese). Slattery (2006, 38) postulates that the essence of hegemony is indoctrination and manipulation.

The question that must be asked is what the rationale is behind the proposal to make History a compulsory school subject. The answer is captured in the following words of Mamdani (as cited by Omoyele 2017, n.p.):

If you regard yourself as prisoners in this ongoing colonizing project, then your task has to be one of subverting that project from within through a series of acts which sift through the historical legacy and contemporary reality, discarding some parts and adapting others to a new-found purpose, in short decolonization.

The importance of history should be linked with Patrice Lumumba’s prophesy that:

History will one day have its day, but it will not be the history that is taught in Brussels, Paris, Washington or at the United Nations, the history which will be taught in the countries freed from imperialism and its puppets. Africa will write its own history, and to the north and south of the Sahara, it will be a glorious and dignified history. (New Africa 2002, 22)

The type of history outlined above by Lumumba will define an education curriculum that will be handed down from generation to generation. This kind of history is continental, is not racially based, and it promotes unity of purpose. It will not be the one inherited from the Bantu education system whose education curriculum prevented black people from acquiring skills necessary for work beyond manual work (Gumede 2012, 178). This study contends that the type of education curriculum provided during colonialism and apartheid was aimed at maintaining imperialist control of Africa instead of promoting African unity as postulated by Lumumba who advocated Africa's own unique history to be written and studied in all decolonised societies. While education has for a long time been regarded as a powerful tool for the transformation of Africa after World War II, the colonial authorities considered the provision of education to Africans as detrimental to the stranglehold they had on the continent (Rodney 2012, 269). Colonialists had no intention to provide black people with education similar to the education colonial children received, but where it was provided, they wished it to be under their control (Rodney 2012, 269).

In Tanzania, a Catholic mission released a report that opposed the establishment of schools that were run by the Africans themselves (Rodney 2012, 269). Wa Thiong'o (cited in University of the Witwatersrand 2017) argues that the introduction of foreign languages in Kenya where he attended a colonial school meant that he could no longer use his mother tongue. Capitalist colonial society was characterised by dividing lines in all spheres of life. There were different schools for black and white learners simply to cement the power relations whereby the former were expected to receive an education that would make them good and loyal servants of the latter (Gumede 2012, 178). Mamdani (as cited by Omoyele 2017) suggests that the affected people should use every opportunity to compare their historical legacy with contemporary reality and then discard those elements they do not want. This determines the quest to decolonise. This study contends that making History a compulsory school subject would be one way of raising awareness of the wrongs in society and providing an opportunity to address issues that underpin curriculum development.

DESIGN AND METHODOLOGY

The objective of this study was to make a contribution to strengthening the case for making History a compulsory subject. History is currently not a compulsory subject from Grade 10; it is part of the Social Sciences learning area for grades 4 to 9, which comprises History and Geography (and there are no electives). The study followed a qualitative research design in order to achieve its objective. A research design is defined as the formulation of a strategy to investigate a specific topic (Babbie 1992, 89). It is a practical way of collecting data and is useful for defining the study (David and Sutton 2011, 12–13). It may be described as a strategic framework for action that serves the purpose of bridging the gap between research function and research implementation.

The qualitative research design was considered to be appropriate for this study, the aim of which was to explore the possibility of making History a compulsory subject (Kumar 2014, 121).

According to Welman, Kruger, and Mitchell (2005, 6–7), there are two types of research design, namely positivist and anti-positivist. The former underlies the natural scientific method in human behavioural research and confines research to what is observable and measurable in an objective way. The latter is interested in the understanding of human behaviour from the perspective of those who are involved. This study aimed to provide a description of History as a subject and put forward an explanatory argument for History to be made a compulsory subject. It thus adopted an anti-positivist design. It sought to understand and describe the decolonising process in education in South Africa so that it could serve the students and leaders of tomorrow. This decolonising process through History can take place through the passing of legislation that would make History a compulsory subject for all learners. History should not be an optional subject as is currently the case.

This study took place over a two-year period, from 2014 to 2015, and involved the study of the performance results of Grade 12 learners in the subject of History (see Table 2 lower down). A two-year cycle was decided on as it would highlight a decline or increase in the numbers of learners studying History. In addition, the numbers of learners taking History and those taking other subjects were compared, as well as learners' performance in these subjects during the previous three years. The numbers obtained, which extended over a two-year cycle, indicated that learners had an option of choosing History, hence the difference between the numbers of learners who were enrolled for the subject and the numbers of those who eventually sat for the examination (see tables 1 and 2 lower down). The number of learners who registered for History was found to be low, which was an indication that it was an optional subject.

This study made use of secondary data to address the research question. This secondary data had been collected for other research purposes (Adams et al. 2007, 85). Data was collected from books, articles, newspaper articles, historical material, and university websites. The literature studied made it clear that History should be made a compulsory subject so that the history of the country and the continent could be taught to ensure nation-building. History has the potential to raise awareness about xenophobic occurrences, for instance those that occurred in 2008 and 2013, and to provide a view of South Africa as one of the countries on the continent of Africa. The literature also indicated that History could form a sound foundation for those who further their studies in law, management and administration sciences.

The data for this study was based on the numbers of Grade 12 learners in South African schools who were registered for 12 selected subjects in 2014 and 2015. These are summarised in Table 1. Of the subjects listed, Afrikaans, Accounting, Agricultural Sciences and History are optional subjects. Of these, History had the lowest number of

registered learners. If History is made a compulsory subject, many more students will benefit from it than if it remains an optional subject.

As indicated in Table 1, there was an increase of about 39 876 students from 2014 to 2015.

Table 1: Number of school learners registered for the subjects indicated

Subjects	Registered 2014	Registered 2015
Accounting	128 779	143 962
Afrikaans First Additional Language	83 866	88 069
Agricultural Sciences	80 194	106 183
Business Studies	212 147	254 188
Economics	140 860	169 937
English First Additional Language	443 145	554 565
Geography	241 321	310 300
History	118 575	158 451
Life Sciences	290 580	355 614
Mathematical Literacy	318 994	398 632
Mathematics	229 888	269 253
Physical Sciences	171 549	197 047

Table 2 below shows the performance of students in History and other subjects over the same period. The pass mark is 86.3 per cent for 2014 and 84 per cent for 2015, representing a decline of 2.3 per cent. The drop in performance could be explained by the fact that more students wrote the examinations in 2015 than in 2014 (see Table 2). The low number of students taking History is an indication that it is an optional subject.

Table 2: Performance of learners in subjects

Subject (full-time)	2014			2015		
	Wrote	Achieved 30% & above	% achieved	Wrote	Achieved 30% & above	% achieved
Accounting	125 987	85 681	68.0	140 474	83 747	59.6
Agricultural Science	78 063	64 486	82.6	104 251	80 125	76.9
Business Studies	207 659	161 723	77.9	247 822	187 485	75.7

Subject (full-time)	2014			2015		
	Wrote	Achieved 30% & above	% achieved	Wrote	Achieved 30% & above	% achieved
Economics	137 478	94 779	68.9	165 642	112 922	88.2
Geography	236 051	191 966	81.3	303 985	234 209	77.0
History	115 686	99 823	86.3	154 398	129 643	84.0
Life Orientation	542 956	540 810	99.6	660 202	658 308	99.7
Life Sciences	284 298	209 783	73.8	348 076	245 164	70.4
Mathematical Literacy	312 054	262 495	84.1	388 845	277 594	71.4
Mathematics	225 458	120 523	53.5	263 903	129 481	49.1
Physical Science	167 997	103 348	61.5	193 189	173 121	58.6

TRANSFORMATION OF THE HISTORY CURRICULUM

The transformation of a curriculum, like any other transformation, does not happen on its own but should be guided and managed so that it can produce the intended result. Mnisi (2017) posits that in order to put things in the right perspective, people must unlearn, relearn, unthink, and rethink the oppressive and dominant ideologies. Wa Thiong'o (cited in University of the Witwatersrand 2017) expresses the opinion that the language that characterised colonial education was dissociated from culture. He further argues that language preserves the collective memory of people's experience in history.

This study contends that language is central to communicating the culture and history of a people. That is why it was important for colonialism to destroy language and culture so that the history of the conquered could be eliminated and replaced by that of the colonial masters. According to Wa Thiong'o (cited in University of the Witwatersrand 2017), to destroy the history of the people, colonial powers did not only use military conquests but also sought to control how people perceived themselves and their relationship with the world by dismissing and ignoring their culture. For the researchers, these facts laid the foundation for debating the transformation of the curriculum.

It is pertinent here to describe what we understand by the transformation of a curriculum. Maistry (2011, 118) defines curriculum transformation as bringing about fundamental changes in the core of the academic syllabus of an institution, namely, fundamental epistemological, ontological and methodological reforms that promote

a transformational agenda. A curriculum is viewed as more than just a textbook, a classroom, and a body of teachers and students but rather embraces all the other social influences that shape people's lives outside the classrooms (Cary 2006, xi–xii). History under the apartheid system was indoctrination; all students at all levels of education had to memorise the date of Jan van Riebeeck's arrival in South Africa and were examined on it. The democratic government that came into power in 1994 adopted a new Constitution in 1996 to reverse the more than 300 years of colonial and apartheid domination of black people by white people by guaranteeing equality before the law and at the same time abolishing the majority of colonial and apartheid policies. According to Heleta (2016), the movement to radically transform and decolonise higher education must find ways to hold institutions accountable and maintain the non-violent and intellectual struggle until knowledge which is irrelevant and alien for contemporary South Africa is dismantled.

Nieftagodien, a professor in History at the University of the Witwatersrand, postulates (as cited by Bega 2014) that the History curriculum should not be politicised but should provide a critical interrogation of events and issues unlike during apartheid where only the history of the dominant group was included in the curriculum. This argument is supported by the DA which fears that those who are driving democracy might use the History curriculum to revenge the colonial/apartheid marginalisation of African history (Makinana 2014). However, Motshekga, the Minister of Basic Education, has declared that the new History curriculum will not be a political tool but a curriculum that empowers the whole of society. The Minister wants a History curriculum that promotes social cohesion by encompassing shared values. Students should be prepared for active citizenship and should critically question economic and political issues (Motshekga 2015). The Minister further contends that the curriculum should instil values that promote peace, human rights, democracy and personal identity. The colonial and apartheid education system alienated students; therefore the History curriculum should integrate students and society (Wa Thiong'o cited in University of the Witwatersrand 2017). Since history is the transmitter of culture, the curriculum should make language and culture the vehicle for learning history, which will enable students to learn through association. In addition, it is through the study of culture within history that values, which are the basis of a people's identity and their sense of particularity as members of the human race, are transmitted (Wa Thiong'o cited in University of the Witwatersrand 2017). Similarly, Slattery (2006, 38) posits that this History curriculum should not promote indoctrination and manipulation but should stimulate critical thinking and debate. It must include, amongst others, the history of culture, music, cities and migration, and other African states (Bega 2014).

Colonialists felt that they had the power to decide on the type of education Africans should receive without involving them. Of course this attitude confirms the theory of modernity which puts a student at the periphery of learning because it encourages rote learning as it aims at indoctrination and hegemony (Slattery 2006, 26). In the new South Africa, the History curriculum emphasises historical skills and the diversity of voices,

and side-lines the study of the dominant history of white supremacy (Chisholm 2003, 3) The Minister of Basic Education, Angie Motshekga, in her speech (Motshekga 2015) indicates that South Africa has not made any determination about the status of History as a compulsory subject. However, she confirms that the Department of Education is busy investigating methodologies to strengthen the curriculum with a view to making History compulsory and that a relevant curriculum will be developed that will respond to the needs of the citizens and eliminate indoctrination that is still prevalent.

THE MEANING OF HISTORY

This study contends that it is meaningless to discuss history without reference to its conceptual framework. Underwood (2008) postulates that history is the study of a subset of the past, and as a discipline it reveals a portion of the past in an objective manner. Hegel (2001, 88) posits that history is the development of spirit in time, as nature is the development of the idea in space. According to him, world history is a vast picture of changes and transactions, of an infinite variety of peoples, states, individuals in unceasing succession. Hegel (2001, 95) refers to history as follows:

It is of the highest importance in apprehending and comprehending History to have and to understand the thought involved in this transition. The individual traverses as a unity various grades of development, and remains the same individual; in like manner also does a people, till the Spirit which it embodies reaches the grade of universality. In this point lies the fundamental, the Ideal necessity of transition. This is the soul — the essential consideration — of the philosophical comprehension of History.

Standler (2013, 1) describes history as the study of some subject in a chronological manner: tracing ideas to their origin and studying the evolution of ideas or events. The author posits that it is usually used to study government and politics whilst it can be used to illuminate subjects such as science, technology or war. According to Mathews (cited by Smith 1988, 4), history should accommodate oral history since blacks' history is based on word of mouth. To quote his words: "The European insisted that we accept his version of the past."

CAN HISTORY CLAIM A PLACE IN COMPULSORY FAMILY SUBJECTS?

According to Cannadine (cited in Leggett 2011), History should be made a compulsory subject in the United Kingdom till the age of 16. In contrast, Roderick (cited in Leggett 2011) contends that making History compulsory will limit the opportunity to choose and will thus be costly. Nieftagodien (cited in Bega 2014) contends that History should not be forced on learners otherwise even those who take it as a subject might be discouraged. Bailey (2015) sarcastically points out that the study of History is dangerous in that it stimulates critical thinking and an ability to engage in issues, and it is not

limited to storytelling by memorising events such as dates and battles. She contends that History is learning about society and the people who have contributed to the creation of these societies, but of particular importance is the fact that History empowers citizens, something which autocratic governments abhor and so desire to control. Similarly, Chang'ach (2011, 688) argues that the objectives of the study of History are to demonstrate an understanding of how people and events have contributed to the ways in which contemporary people live and conduct themselves. The same author sees History as having the potential to develop a sense of patriotism and national pride in the country in the interests of nation-building and overcoming ethnic differences. However, Houston (2015) points out that despite the fact that South Africa has a rich history of liberation struggles, the school curricula do not include History as a compulsory subject. According to this author, the majority of South Africans do not know the history of the struggle for freedom their country has gone through. Furthermore, it has been found that there is a progressive decline in student enrolment for History from Grade 10 (Houston 2015, 26) and that the number of students who sit for the Grade 12 History examination is very small compared with other subjects (Houston 2015, 12). The figures given earlier in Table 2 corroborate this assertion in terms of Grade 12 (since no data was available for 2010). In 2014, 115 686 candidates sat for the History examination whilst in 2015, 154 398 wrote this examination. Although this shows an increase of 33.5 per cent, the percentage is still low when taking the general increase in the numbers of students into consideration. Citing Kenya as an example, Chang'ach (2011, 688) writes that History teaching contributes to the creation of a sense of nationalism and patriotism.

Based on the literature cited so far, we contend that teaching History is important for instilling a sense of social cohesion in students and preparing them to be responsible citizens. We further contend that teaching History has the potential to encourage students to contribute to resolving challenges they face in society and to not embark on the destruction of property during demonstrations against lack of service delivery.

History education has the potential to prepare students to become members of society who are equipped with the knowledge to make a positive contribution to development (Wilkinson 2012, 2). Carr (1987, 55) is of the view that history is a mirror since it enables people to understand the value chain of time in which the past informs the present while the present informs an understanding of the future. Similarly, Peter Tosh (1979, n.p.) says that "I am a man of the past living in the present walking to the future." The authors of this paper contend that the lack of knowledge of the value chain of time casts the nation adrift on an ocean where they cannot understand the sequence of events and how they came to the present. We believe that the lack of knowledge of history detaches present generations from their past so that they are unable to critically reflect on the future.

THE CHALLENGES OF A COMPULSORY HISTORY CURRICULUM

Should History be compulsory in all grades at school? Are there enough trained teachers to teach or facilitate History if it is made a compulsory subject in South African schools? In New Zealand, History is not a compulsory subject at secondary school level: it is only offered as an optional subject for a minority of students who choose to take it in the final three years of secondary education (Taylor and Sheehan 2011, 156). The authors of this paper contend that, as far as South Africa is concerned, History should not be made compulsory for all school levels but only for certain levels (particularly the lower levels) and that it should be made optional for Grade 11 and Grade 12. Those who want to discontinue taking the subject could do so after Grade 10—at this stage they should have acquired a sufficient grounding in History. In other words, History as a subject must be compulsory up to Grade 10, and it must be taught in such a manner that the students will have acquired a deeper and more concrete knowledge of the subject at the end of Grade 10. Research should be conducted to determine the long-term socioeconomic and political needs of the country. The other challenge that Taylor and Sheehan (2011, 162) have identified in their study is how to accommodate the “history norm-referenced prescriptions into the standards-based assessment system.” The study by Stenner (2015, 25) has found that identification of training needs, tool selection, materials development, facilitation and evaluation might be a challenge for the implementation of a new curriculum since the teachers will need to be trained and equipped to present the subject.

EDUCATION AND NATION-BUILDING

History embodies the culture of a particular group of people and society. It promotes a spirit of tolerance towards other people’s cultures, thus promoting social cohesion particularly after the fall of divisive systems such as colonialism and apartheid. In an address delivered by the Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga (2015), she contends that History contributes to nation-building, national pride, patriotism, social cohesion and the transmission of cultural heritage. On the contrary, the apartheid education system was used to widen racial differences since its leaders argued that their mission was to civilise primitive groups of people (i.e. black people) whom they believed to be communist inspired (Gumede 2012, 12). History is needed to counteract this kind of racial division or racial polarisation, to reconstruct a shattered society, and to ensure that the socioeconomic and political needs of everybody and not only a select few are met (Chang’ach 2011, 690). It is the duty of education to ensure that citizens are enlightened and that they refrain from taking actions that have dire consequences for society as a whole. The apartheid education curriculum, by contrast, sought to promote master-and-slave relationships whereby black people were to be developed under white guardianship (Gumede 2012, 28). Moyo (2014, 18) postulates that teaching History has the potential to create nation-

building, unity of action and an understanding of diversity among the population and to guard against people focusing on their cultural group as the only people that matter. Moyo (2014) suggests that national unity should be deliberately promoted by subjects, such as History, as they prepare students for collective leadership in the future. Wa Thiong'o (cited in University of the Witwatersrand 2017) contends that the weapon for nation-building is the promotion of values and language within the History curriculum, which children must experience both inside and outside the classroom. Mnisi (2017) posits that the teaching of History provides opportunities for the decolonisation of the colonised mind.

REQUIREMENTS FOR A HISTORY EDUCATOR

Teaching and learning revolve around teachers. As a result, the quality of teachers mirrors the quality of the education system since the two are interlinked. Qualities that are important for teachers include professionalism, aptitude, ability (knowledge, skills, and pedagogical insight) and competence (imparting and instilling knowledge, skills and values that pupils should acquire at school) (Spaull 2013, 22). In addition, Van Eeden (2008, 17) lists the following traits of/requirements for a good educator: teachers' identities; training for disadvantaged educators; familiarity with outcome-based education in History; professional training; and the ability to select textbooks appropriate for the subject. Teachers working in the postmodernist era should encourage critical thinking, debate, engagement and dialogue. They should stimulate independent thought (Bailey 2015) and prepare student-centred lessons appropriate to students' levels and interests (Slattery 2006). Teachers should discourage indoctrination through rote learning and the exclusive focus on political agendas but at the same time they should be able to handle controversial issues and topics (Bailey 2015).

DISCUSSION

This study investigated whether History should be made a compulsory school subject up to Grade 10. It argued that History was a catalyst for promoting decolonisation. It attempted to strengthen the debate on advocating that History should be made compulsory in South African secondary schools. At present, History and Geography form part of the Social Sciences learning area that is taught from Grade 4 to Grade 9. This paper contends that History should be made compulsory up to Grade 10, which should be the exit level for those who do not want to continue with it at tertiary level. The Minister of Basic Education, Mrs Angie Motshekga, has declared that the government intends making History a compulsory subject (Motshekga 2015). Scholars and politicians have expressed opposing views on the matter.

As stated earlier, history is defined as the study of a subset of the past and as a discipline that explains a period of the past in an objective manner (Underwood 2008),

and that history is learning about societies and the people who have contributed to their creation (Bailey 2015). From these definitions it can be deduced that society is formed by human actions that are either documented or are preserved in the minds of people in the form of oral history. It is important that documented and undocumented history should be known by people and should be handed down from one generation to the next. Lessons learnt from history enable people to understand the functioning of society and its interactions with other societies. Scholars and politicians are divided on how to disseminate historical knowledge to learners in school. This paper argues that History should be introduced as a compulsory subject in the classroom. History transmits knowledge about relationships between peoples.

In 2008 and 2013 South Africa experienced occurrences of xenophobic attacks on foreign internationals living in the country. SADTU (cited in Davids 2016) has ascribed these xenophobic attacks to people's lack of knowledge that South Africa is part of the African continent and that its borders were created at the Berlin Conference of 1884–1885, which divided a once proud and united people. Cannadine (cited in Leggett 2011) contends that History should be made a compulsory subject in the United Kingdom up to the age of 16. On the other hand, Roderick (cited in Leggett 2011) is of the view that making History compulsory will limit the range of choices available and will thus be costly. This study contends that once the subject is made compulsory there will be no need to make any choice as Roderick has argued. However, the authors of this paper concur with Roderick that it will be a costly exercise to introduce it at all levels at the same time. Therefore the suggestion is that there should be a gradual phase-in of the subject in South African schools until it is compulsory up to Grade 10. On the other hand, Nieftagodien (cited in Bega 2014) argues that it should not be forced on learners because it would discourage those who take it as a subject. The Department of Basic Education has indicated that Mathematics will remain compulsory for grades 7 to 9 (Singh 2017). To suggest that students would be discouraged is not to acknowledge the reality on the ground since it is not only History that will be compulsory. Languages are also compulsory. The argument by Nieftagodien ignores the fact that History lessons can be designed in a way that arouses the learners' interest so that they want to study the subject. Many subjects (e.g. languages) are compulsory but this does not discourage students. Teachers will also stimulate the independent thought of learners (Bailey 2015). In addition, Slattery (2006) expresses the opinion that teachers will prepare lessons taking the students into account so as to ensure they do not see it as just another subject taught in schools.

The contention of Nieftagodien (cited in Bega 2014) that History should not be forced on learners because it would discourage them is corroborated by Taylor and Sheehan (2011). These authors report that History is not a compulsory subject in the secondary school curriculum in New Zealand; it is only offered as an optional subject for a minority of students in the final three years of secondary education. The current study contends that making the subject optional defeats the goal of nation-building

since only a segment of the population would understand history whilst others would not, which would disadvantage them. This argument by the authors of this study is consistent with the argument of Chang'ach (2011) that the objectives of the study of History are to demonstrate an understanding of how people and events have contributed to the ways in which contemporary people live and conduct themselves. South Africa suffered from discriminatory policies that divided the population into ethnic groups, and this undermined nation-building. The study by Chang'ach (2011, 688) in Kenya has shown that if History is a compulsory subject, it instils a sense of patriotism and national pride in learners. Similarly, Moyo (2014, 18) postulates that teaching History has the potential to create nation-building, unity of action, and an understanding of the diversity of a population, and to guard against people focusing on their cultural group as the only people that matter.

South Africa achieved a democratic dispensation in 1994, yet students do not know the history of the country's struggle for freedom. Only through the compulsory teaching of the subject History will they learn about it (Houston 2015). Houston is of the opinion that the history of the liberation struggle should be made part of the curriculum so that it becomes part of the life of learners. Wilkinson (2012, 2) contends that the knowledge thus acquired will benefit all students so that they are prepared to become responsible members of society equipped with the means to make a positive contribution to the development of their society. This study corroborates the statement of Wa Thiong'o (cited in University of the Witwatersrand 2017) that teaching History will assist in liberating students from alienation caused by colonialism and apartheid. Since History is the transmitter of culture, the curriculum should make language and culture the vehicles for learning History, which will enable students to learn through association (Wa Thiong'o cited in University of the Witwatersrand 2017).

The introduction of History as a compulsory subject will facilitate the process of decolonisation and the destruction of hegemony. No longer will black people in general and Africans in particular be forced by colonialism and apartheid to study European history and their leaders such as Napoleon Bonaparte, Adolf Hitler and Vladimir Lenin, to mention but a few. According to King (2006, 42), the way History was taught in the past was deliberate in order to pretend that Africa did not have a history before colonialism, that history began with the arrival of the white people. As a result, the history of African leaders, such as Nelson Mandela, Robert Sobukwe and Josias Madzunya, to mention but a few, was not taught. Omitting this history suggests that the voice of "ordinary people" was ignored, thus rendering their experiences hidden or unknown (Batty 2009). This deliberate omission served only one purpose—to show that African history was based on fantasy and that the continent's past deserved no respect (King 2006, 42). There is therefore a need to transform the way the nation sees its own history and its past, and this can be done through using History as a tool of decolonisation.

CONCLUSION

The literature has revealed two opposing groups concerning the introduction of History as a compulsory subject. One group supports its introduction as a compulsory subject, seeing it as a tool to promote nation-building and social cohesion since South Africa has now become a united nation. This group wants the subject of History to be used for preserving and transmitting the nation's heritage for all population groups. In order to achieve this goal, all learners must be exposed to the subject by making it compulsory. This group includes those who advocate that History should not be compulsory for all the grades or for learners up to the age of 16. This is consistent with the argument of this study. South Africa currently does not have a compulsory History curriculum, and this study contends that it must be made compulsory and capped at Grade 10 and at age 16. The other group argues that History should not be made compulsory because it might be used as a political tool. Within this group there are people who argue that making the subject compulsory would discourage even those who show interest in it. What can be deduced from the views of the two groups is that there is a consensus to make the subject compulsory. However, the second group seems to be looking for some assurance that History would not be used as a political tool but instead to promote the cause of nation-building and social cohesion. This includes the argument that it might discourage learners who might be interested in it. However, there are other compulsory subjects, such as Mathematics, which learners take without being discouraged. This has been pointed out by Nieftagodien (cited in Bega 2014). What applies to Mathematics will also apply to History. The current study, therefore, recommends that in order to advance the project of making History compulsory, there must be a democratically elected curriculum committee to design a representative History curriculum that accommodates all population groups. The proposed curriculum should be subjected to public scrutiny so that the public may make suggestions. This study welcomes and appreciates the debate that still goes on to make History compulsory. Its stance is that its implementation should be capped at Grade 10 to allow those who want to specialise in History in grades 11 and 12 to lay a foundation for further studies. Currently, History is compulsory up to Grade 9, and learners may drop it when they go to Grade 10.

History is a *sine qua non* for those students who intend to study Public Administration, the study of political theory and those who are regarded as the fathers in the field such as Woodrow Wilson. Law students, who study the origin of South African Law (which is based on Roman-Dutch Law), will need a background in History to understand it. Generally speaking, those who studied History at secondary school will have a competitive advantage over those who did not. Students of politics will need knowledge of History to understand, for example, the distribution of political power among a legislature, an executive and a judiciary as first described by the French philosopher Montesquieu. Learners will be able to assess the performance of governments through the eye of History as it provides them with the required tools of analysis.

The fact that History is currently not a compulsory subject suggests that learners are not able to establish a link between trends from the past and trends in the present: this should be addressed by making History compulsory. The introduction of History as a compulsory subject will certainly make learners who are leaders of tomorrow appreciate cultural diversity and condemn xenophobia. It is clear that History has the capacity to serve as a tool to decolonise society, and therefore it must be made a compulsory subject. The fact that History is currently not a compulsory subject suggests that some learners are prevented from understanding themselves and their role in history. Such understanding might help them overcome the racism that still exists in schools, universities and society even at a time when the Constitution accords everyone equal citizenship. The introduction of History as a compulsory subject will certainly make learners who are the leaders of tomorrow appreciate cultural diversity.

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