International Journal of Learning, Teaching and Educational Research
Vol. 24, No. 7, pp. 696-716, July 2025
https://doi.org/10.26803/ijlter.24.7.34
Received May 15, 2025; Revised Jun 18, 2025; Accepted Jul 9, 2025

Teaching School History in Post-colonial Southern Africa: A Decolonial Review of Teacher Education Challenges

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Abstract Teaching school history in post-colonial societies is problematic for conventionally trained teachers. Deploying the decolonial theory, this case study interrogated the teaching challenges that history teachers face in post-colonial contexts to explore the implications for teacher education programmes in three Southern African countries: Lesotho, South Africa and Zimbabwe. The primary aim of the paper was to investigate the teaching challenges history teachers face in three post-colonial countries of Southern Africa and explore how teacher education programmes can be reconfigured. To generate data, a structured narrative literature review with thematic synthesis was employed. The findings revealed that controversial topics, multilingualism, and cultural diversity pose challenges to history teachers, underscoring the need for more comprehensive training programmes that address the region's specific historical, cultural, and educational contexts. The study recommends that institutions offering teacher preparation in post-colonial contexts adopt humanising, translanguaging, and transcultural pedagogies in their programmes, emphasising context-based training for history teachers. The study finds value in locating the current and future needs of history teachers in a post-colonial context and providing foundational insights into the development of more effective teacher education programmes

Keywords: Controversial topics; translanguaging; transcultural; post-colonial states; teacher education

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1. Introduction

In the aftermath of colonialism, societies worldwide grapple with the complex task of reconciliation, striving to heal historical wounds while constructing inclusive national identities. In Lesotho, South Africa and Zimbabwe, this process is particularly intricate, given the region's diverse cultural landscapes and the enduring legacies of colonial education systems. The role of school history education is pivotal in this context, serving as a medium through which collective memories are shaped and contested. However, the teaching of history in post-colonial Southern Africa faces significant challenges. Curricula often remain entrenched in colonial narratives, smarginalising indigenous perspectives and reinforcing Eurocentric viewpoints.

The situation is exacerbated by the limited capacity of teacher education programmes to equip educators with the necessary tools to decolonise their pedagogy. This is because, for every society emerging from violent conflict, addressing a painful past is a crucial question (Tibbitts & Weldon, 2017). Questions about how to deal with the past arise in societies recuperating from violent conflict, particularly if the past includes memories of victimisation, death, and degradation that affect a large proportion of the people. While politicians, alongside others who are attempting to move on and foster normalcy, frequently appear to favour social oblivion in the aftermath of violence, teachers often struggle to fulfil their responsibilities in these post-colonial nations, with some of them receiving little, no, or inadequate training on how to teach in such contexts (Cole & Barsalou, 2006).

Consequently, history teachers face immense pressure to assume several roles, ranging from psychotherapist and guidance counsellor to mediator and expert in conflict resolution. Holding teachers accountable for societal failures means casting blame on both individual teachers and the institutions that provide their training. This study aims to explore and analyse the key challenges faced by history teachers in post-colonial Southern Africa when teaching history in three post-colonial countries: Lesotho, South Africa and Zimbabwe. The subsequent research questions directed the study:

1. What teaching challenges do history teachers face in post-colonial contexts?
2. How can teacher education programmes prepare history teachers to address these complexities of teaching history?

By examining the interplay between the challenges faced by history teachers in post-colonial societies and the implications for teacher development, this study aims to open new avenues and provide insights into what is lacking in teacher preparation programs, ultimately training teachers to meet the needs of post-colonial societies. The study extends scholarship on teacher development by arguing that teacher education programmes must be context-based rather than generic.

2. Literature Review

2.1 Post-colonial context and historical education

Teaching school history in post-colonial settings is challenging for conventionally trained teachers. This is because school history education is value-laden, given that the themes and scope of content embedded in its curriculum are expressions of the country's ideology. What is included in national curricula as 'official' memory illustrates how various groups and ideologies in society can define the past in ways that serve their own agendas (Tibbitts & Weldon, 2017, p. 446). As reported by Kabombwe and Mulenga (2019), governments frequently utilise history as a means of legitimation, and history education has been used to advance governmental objectives. Since Southern African countries were under colonisation for years until five decades ago, the attainment of political independence transformed the design, development and implementation of the school history curriculum to preserve the narratives of the elite of the day.

Considering the historical divisions, school history reform cannot occur without considering teachers (Tibbitts & Weldon, 2017), as professional development programs should offer a secure environment and opportunities for teachers to engage with students from diverse backgrounds, especially in nations that have experienced colonialism. Therefore, as South Africa, Lesotho, and Zimbabwe have transitioned to democracy, there has been a shift in the focus of school history, which ultimately led to the need to transform the way school history is taught, considering the changes in the socio-political landscape of these countries.

2.2. Teacher education challenges in post-colonial societies

The histories taught in these nations' curricula not only represent the historical content but also reflect the dominant socio-political ideologies. Considering that situation, history teachers are exposed to differences of opinion and controversy, which spill over into classrooms of a heterogeneous student population (Bharath, 2024). That scenario necessitates reframing and reimagining of teaching practices to align them with the dictates of the present society. While it is a novel idea to modify the history curriculum to capture the history of the diverse populations evident in each country and the way it is taught that takes cognisance of the new terrain, little is known about how teacher education programmes in post-colonial Southern African countries have been re-crafted to accommodate the various needs of students enrolled in schools, coming from a history that was conflict ridden.

What teachers practice in schools is believed to be a culmination of several processes and engagements that take place in teacher education programmes. Some previous studies have concentrated on the challenges that teachers face in the teaching school of history in general (Chimbunde et al., 2024; Fru, 2015; Moyo, 2020), neglecting to interrogate the intersectionality between teacher programmes and the teaching practices in post-colonial contexts. To contextualise the study, we examine the context of post-colonial states below, with the aim of understanding the terrain that teachers navigate in their daily teaching practices.

2.3. Multilingualism and cultural diversity in teaching history

South Africa, Lesotho, and Zimbabwe were once under colonisation in their history. Colonisation refers to 'a political and economic relation in whom the sovereignty of a nation or a people rests on the power of another nation, which makes such a nation an empire' (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 246). Colonisation is thus the deliberate annexation of native people and their territories by another nation for political and economic dominance, after which the nation occupies and rules (Ahmed-Landeryou, 2023).

In practice, colonialisation is when one country violently invades and occupies another, claiming the area and evacuating its former occupants. The colonised people then submit to the domination of the imperialist nation in politics, administration, culture, and economy. The three countries we understudied were reeling from the remnants of colonisation. During the colonisation of these countries, the natives suffered a series of intense, violent conflicts characterised by dehumanisation through segregation and subjugation. Deploying diverse legislations, the settlers colonised the natives on four fronts, as explained by Ndhlovu-Gatsheni (2020, p. 886), who writes:

> ''*The key consequences of colonisation have been epistemicides (killing of existing endogenous knowledge), linguicide (killing of existing Indigenous languages and the imposition of colonial languages), culturecides (killing of Indigenous cultures and setting cultural imperialism afoot) and alienation (exiling of Indigenous people from their languages, histories, and cultures, and even from themselves).*''

The reminiscent of colonisation persists today, leaving the once colonised countries deeply immersed in conflict as they battle to recover their knowledge, languages and cultures despite employing decolonisation efforts that seek to overcome the legacy of political, social, and economic oppression they endured while under colonial rule, demonstrating the long-lasting repercussions of colonialism. As for Zimbabwe, the educational system was racially biased before independence, favouring European students at the expense of Black students (Shizha, 2013). Zimbabwe was perceived to have inherited a colonial education system that was racist, individualistic, competitive, Eurocentric, and focused on capitalism, with only cosmetic changes made after attaining political independence (Chimbunde & Moreeng, 2024).

The same trend is evident in both South Africa and Lesotho, where, although the new governments have been fervently committed to change, post-colonial education has demonstrated that colonial education has persisted in terms of power dynamics (Ntabeni, 2007). Regrettably, the decision-making about education in these nations corresponded with the policies of the previous colonial authority (Shizha, 2013). The new African leaders effectively adopted and implemented the policies of control and discrimination that characterised the colonial regimes. Rather than promoting democracy and tolerance in the classroom, where diverse students learn, the elite entrenched and perpetuated their ideologies in the construction of the school history curriculum. For example, in Zimbabwe, the school history curriculum reforms have been under the spotlight for the wrong reasons (Dube & Moyo, 2022; Moyo & Modiba, 2013;

Barnes, 2007). As argued by Moyo (2020) Zimbabwe has a national history curriculum, which has been mobilised to promote nationalist historiographies that encourage the nation's story at the expense of critical thinking and democratic practice. Barnes (2007) previously claimed that Zimbabwe implemented a nationalist, Africa-focused, and Marxist-inspired history curriculum in 1991, amended it in 2000, and updated it in 2002 with a narrower curriculum that conveyed divisive sentiments along racial lines.

In South Africa, Samuel (1998) notes that the South African education system was marked by plans to give various ethnic communities unfair and inequitable education, and it was intended to support apartheid notions that promoted the racial, cultural, and linguistic superiority of the legal authority of the colonisers. This was further confirmed by Bharath (2024, p. 152), who argues that South Africa's tumultuous past is characterised by 'its struggle against apartheid and colonisation. Unresolved conflicts persist in history classrooms, especially when historical memories are revisited when we teach about the past'. As a result, many South Africans, regardless of race, have come to see history negatively because they believe it could cause them discomfort or embarrassment because it explicitly links apartheid to bullying, oppression, dehumanisation and humiliation of Black people (Fru, 2015).

Against that backdrop, the study of history in South Africa was infused with the 'capacity to define the nation's story' (Clark, 2005, p. ii). That becomes a conundrum for teachers when they attempt to include all students in teaching school history without bias, given that their preparation often lacks addressing controversial topics in history (Wasserman & Bentrovato, 2018). That could be explained by the fact that the teachers may come from ethnic groups that differ from the rest of the class. That presents a succinct message to teacher educators that speaks to the need to re-frame and re-define teacher education programmes. While the above studies have assisted in understanding the nature of conflicts evident in the three countries, very few studies have explored the interplay between the challenges that history teachers face and how teacher education programmes in post-colonial societies can be re-configured. This study fills this lacuna.

3. Framing the study

We frame our understanding of the study's focus through the decolonial lens. Decolonisation is the 'dismantling of relations of power and conceptions of knowledge that foment the reproduction of racial, gender, and geo-political hierarchies that came into being or found new and more powerful forms of expression in the modern world' (Maldonado-Torres, 2007, p. 117). Maringe (2023) posits that decolonisation entails incorporating Indigenous elements into the curriculum, guaranteeing free and open access to education for all, Africanizing the curriculum, eliminating colonial symbols and remnants from education, giving priority to the use of native languages for instruction and communication, fostering equity and justice in educational procedures, and fostering inclusivity in the educational process. When viewed in this light, decolonisation is a process of scholarly transformation that is founded on the

epistemic de-linking from the institutionalisation of education in the West and Europe. It involves persistent, critical awareness exercises aimed at undoing, disobeying, and de-linking from the colonial power structure. This study makes use of Maringe's (2023) definition of decolonisation, which posits it as the process of identifying and resolving the barriers to education imposed by colonisation, in which the colonised people demolish, disrupt, and reject practices that marginalise others before coming up with solutions to ensure that education is equitable for all.

The decolonial lens is suitable for this study as it assists in unpacking the challenges that history teachers face due to remnants of colonisation in the three post-colonial Southern African countries. The lens will also provide insights into how teacher education programmes in post-conflict societies can be re-defined and re-crafted to ensure the training of history teachers empowers them to navigate the challenges imposed by colonisation.

4. Research design and methods

The researchers employed a narrative review design (Darlow & Wen, 2016), which involved appraising the existing literature to facilitate a qualitative interpretation of prior knowledge. Thus, we generated data using the literature review processes following Levy and Ellis (2006), who argue that narrative review design involves sequential steps to collect, comprehend, apply, analyse, synthesise, and evaluate quality literature to provide a firm foundation to answer the two research questions: (a) What teaching challenges do history teachers face in post-colonial contexts and (b) How can teacher education programmes prepare history teachers to address these complexities of teaching history?

This qualitative strategy facilitated the integration of multiple sources of data to ssynthesise what has been written on the challenges history teachers face to demonstrate the value of teacher education programmes for history teachers as set out in the purpose of the study (Darlow & Wen, 2016; Levy & Ellis, 2006). The study was confined to the challenges that history teachers face in South Africa, Lesotho, and Zimbabwe, with special reference to the post-colonial contexts, as these countries were recovering from violent conflicts.

To provide clear answers, the researchers selected publicly available literature using resources from Scopus, Web of Science, ERIC, JSTOR, ScienceDirect, and similar databases and search engines that were deemed to have the relevant data to shed insight on the study's focus. The search was performed using several search terms, single text words, or combinations of them as appropriate (Davies, 2000; Levy & Ellis, 2006). The electronic databases were searched for peer-reviewed publications to produce data using the following using topic descriptor 'post-colonial challenges of history teachers, post-colonial challenges of social science teachers in South Africa, Lesotho and Zimbabwe.'

We used the same topic descriptor to search Google Scholar alongside these databases. The first search yielded 21 entries, of which 8 were removed because they showed discrepancies in the reported results and had an overall perception

of publication bias, including articles written by specific researchers at institutions (Guyatt et al., 2008). Additionally, we retained 13 studies after excluding those that were not relevant, based on our review of the abstracts and comparison to the study's intent. We then read through the remaining 13 studies and eliminated an additional three studies. A study was included if it: (a) discussed the challenges of teaching history or social studies in post-colonial Lesotho, South Africa and Zimbabwe (b) was a historical survey, qualitative/quantitative, comparative analysis, or descriptive/case study; and (c) was a research article written in English between 2014 and 2025. We read the included 10 papers several times to make sure we understood the problems.

By reading the contents aloud several times, coding important ideas and themes, and combining different datasets, patterns in the data were identified (Mais-Thompson et al., 2025). These techniques adhered to the traditions of qualitative research (Brown et al., 2023). To ensure the trustworthiness of the study, each of the retrieved publications was evaluated separately by both researchers to ascertain its eligibility and extract pertinent study data. While the study was literature-based, an effort was made to credit all authors through citations to maintain academic integrity. The findings and discussions are reported below.

5. Findings and discussion

Two themes and subthemes emerged from the study as shown in the table below.

Table 1 Themes and subthemes of findings

Theme	Subthemes
1. Challenges in teaching school history in post-colonial contexts	1.1. Controversial topics 1.2. Tapestry of languages 1.3. Cultural challenges
2. Pedagogies for incorporation in teacher education programmes	2.1 Humanising pedagogy 2.2 Translanguaging pedagogy 2.3 Transcultural Pedagogy

5.1. Challenges in teaching school history in post-colonial contexts

5.1.1. Controversial topics

Analysis of the literature suggests that history teachers in Southern African countries face significant challenges when teaching controversial issues in school history due to inadequate training (Bharath, 2024; Maluleka, 2023). That inadequate training posed insurmountable challenges when teaching controversial issues in school history. That was because these countries have complex histories marked by earlier periods of contention and conflict. Despite the new democratic frameworks in the three countries, numerous new challenges persisted in the teaching of history.

In South Africa, for instance, Bharath (2024, p. 153) reports that 'unresolved conflicts persist in history classrooms, especially when historical memories are revisited when we teach about the past.' That is premised on the fact that conflicts between educational goals, societal viewpoints, and historical knowledge are ever-present in the historical narratives found in curricula. As confirmed by

Maluleka (2023) one such curriculum that incorporates sensitive and contentious topics throughout its knowledge base is the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, which serves as the curriculum for South Africa's post-apartheid school history. These topics include slavery, apartheid, colonisation, and the Anglo-Boer War. To exacerbate the persistence of conflict, the curriculum provides no framework or innovative pedagogical tools that students and their history teachers might utilise to address such themes (Maluleka, 2023). This finding, in the context of South Africa, challenges policymakers and higher education institutions to re-define their policies and provide alternative perspectives on how history teachers should be trained, as controversial issues in history education are crucial, especially for young and emerging history teachers and aspiring historians (Mojela, 2024).

Not only is South Africa grappling with the framing, comprehension, and teaching of school history, but Zimbabwe is as well. Sibanda and Blignaut (2019) report that following the end of British colonial control and imperialism, Zimbabwe's educational curriculum has been a continuous effort to reduce the historical and epistemological legacies of Eurocentrism. Moyo (2020) raised the concern that the primary reason for the existence of the national history curriculum in Zimbabwe is that the nation has utilised it to foster a sense of patriotism and nationhood in the face of the conflicts that inevitably exist within the country.

Consequently, the national history curriculum in Zimbabwe has been used to advance nationalist historiographies that prioritise the nation's narrative over democratic principles and critical thought (Barnes, 2007). Given such a scenario, history teachers in Zimbabwe teach the subject in line with the country's ideology, fueling disgruntlement among citizens (Moyo, 2020).

Like South Africa, the history curriculum in Zimbabwe is littered with sensitive and controversial topics such as the land question, nationalism and colonisation. Some topics are intentionally left out, for instance, *Gukurahundi*, which was a state-sponsored campaign against other tribes, other than the Shona, in the early 1980s (Rwodzi & Fosl, 2020). Skipping such controversial themes is indicative of what Mojela (2024, p. 165) call the 'feeling of guilt and fear of dealing with controversial issues in history education.' The finding in Zimbabwe is not unique, as Germany is reported to have shunned teaching controversy in history in a context marked by Eurocentrism, a lack of patriotism, guilt, and shame, and the apparent dangers of ultra-patriotism (Mojela, 2024).

However, considering the controversy in the history topics cited above, Zimbabwe history teachers encounter incongruities and controversies that permeate classrooms because of a diverse student population. How to negotiate teaching in such a terrain remains a concern that higher education, which trains history teachers in the country, has not addressed, given that nowhere in the curriculum document does it outline how teachers are to navigate the teachings in conflict-ridden classes (MoPSE, 2015).

For Lesotho, evidence of conflict pervading history classrooms is available. As reported by Fru (2015) that without prompt SADC intervention, a coup attempt in 2014 threatened to spark a civil war in the nation. Thereafter, the nation's political climate has remained, at best, turbulent and unstable ever since (Fru, 2015). The teaching of school history in such a climate is problematic, as it is difficult to determine whether one is aligned with the ruling elite or not. While contention and conflict were omniscient present in Lesotho, the history teachers face the challenge of fostering democratic values in learners, partly, as contended by Fru (2015) that since fact-memorisation was used to present history to students at various levels (secondary or tertiary), student teachers find this method more practical and are content to teach it in the same manner.

They believed that reflectively teaching history is significantly more strenuous than teaching facts alone, which is comparatively more straightforward. Resultantly, the Lesotho school history teachers employ the pedagogical approaches that were used to teach them when they were students. It ascertains Twala's (2005, p. 27) argument that in the training of teachers, there is 'an inherent habit, though unconscious, to carry out the teaching process in a way that mirrors their education experiences.'

That approach is not in sync with what Bharath (2024, p. 153) terms 'an evidence-based method or 'inquiry' that is vital for demonstrating 'value clarification, critical reflection, source analysis, consideration of different points of view, respectful debate and empathy among students. Taken together, history teachers in the three countries face numerous challenges when trying to teach history in the way it should be taught, given that the curriculum is not crafted to suit a particular group. The fear is to perpetuate conflict and contention in countries believed to be living in the aftermath of conflicts.

5.1.2. Tapestry of languages

This study found that in the three countries, conflict based on language differences presents one of the challenges that history teachers face, as they employ English, a colonial language, while neglecting a tapestry of Indigenous languages (Pascoe et al., 2024). In South Africa, despite having 12 official languages, the teaching of school history is often conducted in English, despite language barriers (Chimbunde et al., 2024). For example, in their study, Chimbunde et al. (2024) reveal that the communication barrier between teachers and learners is worsened by using English as the language of teaching, which is a foreign language to most learners in South African schools.

That could be so because South Africa is a nation known for its tremendous linguistic and cultural diversity (Pascoe et al., 2024), despite that 12 official languages are recognised by the constitution. To exacerbate this, many teachers are not adequately trained to instruct using multiple languages or to integrate language learning with historical content (Chimbunde etal., 2024). That can lead to ineffective teaching methods and a lack of support for students who struggle with the language of instruction. Albeit the policy document in South Africa

acknowledges that South Africa's multiculturalism is a strength of the country, implementing it faces numerous difficulties. As Probyn (2019, 216) affirms:

> *''Most learners in South African schools are African language speakers, yet the dominance of English in the political economy has meant that schools choose to switch to English medium instruction by Grade 4, before learners have the necessary English proficiency to access the curriculum, with negative effects on learning.''*

That implies that despite being denied the same status as English, Indigenous languages are nonetheless widely spoken in South Africa today. Studies show that the expected use of the native language in the classroom runs counter to the monolingual mindset prevalent in the South African environment (Chimbunde et al., 2024). In concurrence, Mpofu (2023) argues that the South African Department of Basic Education introduced a method known as 'English Across the Curriculum' in 2013 to improve academic success by integrating language skills into disciplines such as history. This was akin to forcing English on learners of African languages, as noted by Meighan (2023) who argued that English has historically been imposed under the pretext of linguistic imperialism and civilisation regarding minority cultures.

Rajendram (2022) contends that, under the framework of colonisation, English as a language of teaching contributed to the stigmatisation of the linguistic practices of learners who were identified as minoritised and racialised. That led to the erosion of the diverse linguistic repertoires of learners. Th at confirms Tai (20230 who argues that the policy of using English for teaching and learning limits the opportunities for successful communication between teachers and students who share similar linguistic and cultural backgrounds.

As for Zimbabwe, Chimbunde and Kgari-Masondo (2022) report that, even though English is the official language of Zimbabwe, most of its citizens are multilingual, which illustrates the dominance of the colonial language in this nation. Particularly considering that the constitution designates all 16 languages as official, very little has been done to rectify the use of English as the medium of instruction. The lack of government initiatives to support language learning of the other disadvantaged languages is also disturbing (Chimbunde & Kgari-Masondo, 2022). That suggests that the use of English is also a wedge between teachers and students when history is taught in the dominant language rather than using local languages.

In the Lesotho education system, Ntabeni (2007) reports that beginning in the fourth year of elementary schooling, teaching is conducted in the English language, despite that the country has nine languages, which are Sesotho, English, Zulu, Xhosa, Sesotho sa Leboa, Northern Sotho, Tswana, Afrikaans, and sign language. Over 90% of people in Lesotho are proficient in Sesotho, making it the language used most frequently in the nation. However, the use of mother tongue in language classroom where English was used as the language of teaching and learning was perceived to be an impediment rather than a good teaching approach (Nkhi & Shange, 2024).

As such, the Basotho students struggle with English as a second language since they are first and foremost Sesotho speakers. However, the school systems expect them to be conversant with the English language because they must understand and answer questions in that language when answering examination questions. Ntabeni (2007) goes further to claim that teachers fail to ensure that the candidates were ready to take the test by helping them acquire the necessary essay writing skills.

Consequently, the concern is that students continue to submit rambling, poorly thought-out essays in answer to questions rather than providing context or clarification for their ideas that, we argue, can be avoided using the Indigenous languages. These observations affirm with the decolonisation lens that speaks to the killing of local languages caused by colonisation. In confirmation Motha (2014) contends that various aspects of English language teaching in former colonised countries continue to promote English imperialism.

Evidence from the three countries affirms that teachers face the problem of teaching school history because of the use of a colonial language, overlooking the potential of indigenous languages that are not exploited to maximum use. We argue that while there are policies promoting mother-tongue education in the three countries, their implementation has been inconsistent. As argued by Lemmer that:

> *''Language in education policies designed to redress former racial inequality may unintentionally create new class stratifications because the proposed equal treatment of the indigenous African languages embodied in constitutional documents often means their decline in practice in the light of their impotency to compete with the popularity of and perceived advantages associated with* English (1996, p. 20).''

That is against the backdrop that it can be easier to relate to and keep students interested in school history when the subject is taught in a language that students are familiar with. However, the current language regulations in the three nations usually ignore the variety of languages spoken by learners. That reflects and affirms what Ndlovu-Gtasheni (2020) call linguicide because the indication in the three countries shows the eradication of Indigenous languages in use and the imposing colonial languages in teaching and learning school history. As such, this calls for the decolonisation of languages used for teaching and learning school history.

5.1.3 Cultural challenges

One lingering problem arises from having students within the schools coming from different cultures that may not necessarily align with those of the history teachers. The three countries under discussion, show similar trends in terms of having heterogeneous societies though that of South Africa represents a large portion of the student population with diverse cultures. Despite having different cultures, the incorporation of African culture into the education sector remains minimal.

In South Africa, for instance, Mncwango (2009) reports that it is clear from the predominance of English culture and the lack of African culture in schools with diverse student populations that the so-called African culture is not practised or even discussed. Students who receive that kind of education devoid of their culture end up with limited and distorted conceptions of who they are, how to relate with others outside of their own racial and cultural groupings, and what their own cultures can provide.

The absence of the African culture confirms the decolonial lens which argues that local culture was pushed to the periphery in what is called culturecides (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2020) - a state where the indigenous culture is neglected and killed due to colonisation. In this regard, history teachers must deal with the three countries' cultures which Twala (2003) taking South Africa as an example, argues is filled with divisions and conflicts. The problem lies on the teachers' ability to avoid perpetuating the division in the teaching of school history, and whether it is possible to teach it without the influences of race and ethnicity. Chinyere et al (2023) caution that as cross-cultural interactions become more commonplace, it is morally necessary for educators, teacher preparation programmes, and policy makers to think about, engage with, and treat historically marginalised indigenous ontologies seriously. This should be done without resorting to cognitive colonialism, but rather with ethical intentionality, hesitancy, and humility.

Given the post conflict contexts of the Southern African countries, we raise two questions: what does this signify for the history classrooms and what does it mean to engage indigenous ontologies in the classroom and to put an end to European arrogance? These questions have answers in the way how history teachers are trained to mitigate clashes in the transcultural space, which Chinyere et al (2023) define as an area of interaction where various cultures collide, struggle and interact. History should be taught to students so they can understand the cultures and worldviews of others in addition to helping them identify and appreciate their own cultural roots, identity, and heritage. Learning about cultural plurality and developing tolerant views on various ethnic groups should be ingrained in the implementation of school history. For that reason, teachers must be trained to handle students from diverse cultures, so that these students can navigate the transcultural space with ease.

6.2. Pedagogies for incorporation into teacher education programmes

The findings above affirm that school history teachers face challenges related to the pedagogical approaches that they use to navigate the teaching of school history in post-colonial contexts. That is because they are prone to perpetuate contention and conflict through either by commission or omission of their influences of race, language and ethnicity, or ignore themes that they deem may invoke emotions among their students (Chimbunde & Moreeng, 2024). The findings suggest that teacher programmes in the three countries inadequately prepare them to teach in such contexts. That presents a succinct pointer to the need to transform teacher education programmes.

As argued by Yaylali et al. (2024) that, citing the example of the United States context, there is growing requirement for teachers who are sensitive to cultural and language differences. That suggest that teacher training courses must adapt to the changing makeup of public schools to produce qualified personnel who can deliver equitable educational opportunities.

Some universities in South Africa, Lesotho, and Zimbabwe have take proactive action to assist history teachers in navigating the challenges they face, particularly when dealing with controversial issues. For example, the University of Pretoria has made strides in this regard as explained by Bharath (2024) that the university incorporates the teaching of these controversial issues in the training of Post Graduate students pursuing a Post Graduate Certificate in Education and Bachelor of Education Degree in History education. That was a follow up to Wassermann and Bentrovato's (2018) study that promised to think of practical ways to make sure that they, along with a few history teachers, collaborate to create a better module on addressing contentious themes in South African history courses.

However, what is happening at the University of Pretoria is not enough as the remedy provided concentrated on controversial topics, overlooking challenges that emanate from cultural diversity and a cocktail of languages evident in the schools. As argued by Maistry (2024) that within the framework of South Africa, teacher education that is shaped by national policy directives, including Minimum Requirements for Teacher Education (MRTEQ), finds it difficult to adequately address the various demands of diversity. It is crucial to remember that the purpose of teacher education is still deeply rooted in western humanism (Maistry, 2024). As such, Soudien and Sayed (2019) contend that a strong implementation plan that adequately addresses the historical and structural injustices in South Africa is lacking from these policies and directives.

In Zimbabwe, Sibanda and Blignaut (2020) observed that teachers were modifying the new History curriculum to fit their pedagogical approach, which may not address the problems related to controversial issues, diverse cultures and multiculturalism. We argue that what is needed is a transformation teacher education strategy that brings the goals of the post-colonial teacher education policy framework to life, guaranteeing the training of the top-notch history teacher for the schools that serve the formerly minoritised and marginalised students. It is also pleasing to note that the University of Zululand in South Africa offers trainee history teachers a combination of history and languages at graduate level with the aim to promote the teaching of African oral traditions (HMTT, 2018). However, having one university doing this is not enough considering the number of universities in South Africa and in Southern Africa.

Drawing from the findings discussed above, at least three areas need to be added to teacher education programmes in Southern African countries, inter alia: humanistic pedagogy, translanguaging pedagogy, and transcultural pedagogy. This conclusion is reached premised on that in the 'teachers' roles as social justice advocates and as transformational experts, they play a critical role as mediators

of transformative change (Kajee, 2021), especially so in South Africa, Zimbabwe and Lesotho that are trying to shake the constrains of the remnants of injustices from the past and today. Effective teaching and learning require teachers as a key component. Consequently, teacher preparation broadens 'teachers' areas of expertise.

6.2.1. Humanising Pedagogy

The humanising pedagogy that the study suggests importing into teacher education programmes, draws from the works of Freire (1970) who laments dehumanisation in education and argues for a process that is conducive to re-humanisation to be deployed. In contrast to the school system's and teachers' manipulation of students' specific needs and experiences, his contribution to education in this regard emphasises the human elements of learning. The main goal of a humanising pedagogy is building connections between teachers and students based on trust, academic rigour, power sharing, and respect (Dhliwayo & Jita, 2024). Teachers who use humanising pedagogy respect the histories, cultures, languages, and backgrounds of their students (Gao, 2024).

Given the contention and conflict that exist in post-colonial countries in Southern Africa after colonisation, there arises the requirement for a re-orientation of the teacher education programme that is not patterned after Eurocentric trends During colonisation the history of the elite was glorified at the expense of that of the colonised. In addition, the teachers were the only source of information and students were recepients. That silenced the students as they could not question knowledge provided. For Freire (1970) human existence can only be sustained by truthful words, words that enable men and women to change the world, rather than by silence or lies.

The pedagogy's humanising interest is thus 'linked to focusing on both structural and psycho-social dimensions of human suffering, and human liberation' (Keet et al., 2009, p. 113) wherein the core of it, is to reinstate voice as a fundamental aspect of what constitutes to be human. Within the context of Southern African countries, 'the power of voice, story, and oral tradition is particularly pertinent' (Zinn & Rodgers, 2012, p. 77).

Based on the above arguments, training of history teachers must equip them with skills and strategies in humanising pedagogy to help students see the interrelationship of different modes of knowing and thinking and take initiative to critically analyse their potential to change the world (Gao, 2024), because humanising pedagogy as a form of decolonisation challenges deficit-driven teaching methods that place little significance on the cultures, literacies, and languages of different student populations. As argued by Gao (2024) teacher education programmes must assist on how teachers employ humanising pedagogy critically by incorporating language and culture study into the creation of new inclusive narratives, identities and structure, and how students negotiate, reconstruct and re-present inequitable power relations and reshape the way they perceive the world.

At the end of the teacher education programme, in contrast to being a tool for teachers to control their students, humanising pedagogy will be a decolonial approach of teaching school history that 'expresses the consciousness of the students themselves' (Freire, 1970, p. 51). To facilitate a process of mutual humanisation, teachers would then use humanising pedagogy to encourage their students to pose problems among themselves and to their teachers as co-investigators in school history.

6.2.2. Translanguaging pedagogy

Institutions that train the history teacher can incorporate, as part of their training, translanguaging pedagogy. Nooyod and Ambele (2024, p. 81) define translanguaging pedagogy as the 'instructional strategies integrating two or more languages in naturally occurring contexts where boundaries between languages are fluid and constantly shifting.' Rather than insisting that students maintain Indigenous languages outside of the classroom, translanguaging as a pedagogy encourages teachers to use students' whole linguistic and semiotic repertoires to facilitate their learning (Rajendram, 2022).

Integration of two languages in teaching has been identified as a challenge for many mainstream teachers (Chimbunde et al., 2024). Failure to use indigenous languages alongside the dominant language, such as English in the case of Southern African countries, has presented history teachers and learners with a communication breakdown problem (Chimbunde et al., 2024; Ntabeni, 2007; Wei, 2024). Translanguaging pedagogy can be a better option. When teachers in training get exposed on how to integrate two languages, then translanguaging would be used in history lessons, where there is 'the planned and systematic use of two languages for teaching and learning inside the same lesson' (Xin et al., 2024, p. 209).

When teachers are trained in translanguaging pedagogy, students can have the freedom to employ their mother tongue whenever they encounter challenges with the dominant language (Nkhi & Shange, 2024). Several studies confirm that translanguaging improves students' communicative abilities, their receptive and productive abilities and improved communication between students and teachers as translanguaging improves classroom participation, expedites learning of relevant material and encourages the acquisition of vocabulary (Chimbunde et al., 2024; Nkhi & Shange, 2024; Tai, 2023).

Drawing from the decolonial lens, it is possible to change the hierarchical disparities in education through translanguaging, which involves re-framing language as a decolonising process and re-claiming the linguistic practices of multilingual,minoritised communities in former colonised countries. As confirmed by Wei (2024), translanguaging challenges the raciolinguistic beliefs that hold bilingual learners to their own distinct languages and lifestyles. By combining languages that have traditionally been separated, categorised, and racialised due to colonisation, a translanguaging pedagogy offers an opportunity to decolonise the teaching of history in the three countries of Southern Africa.

Consistent with this view, Rajendram (2022) argues that translanguaging possesses the transformative capacity to liberate language practices that have been constrained by formal and informal language policies, as well as to establish more egalitarian learning environments in classrooms, which has been happening in schools located in Southern African countries. However, a common concern that may be raised is that if translanguaging is confined to the teaching of the subject per se, how will students be assessed in their formative tests? Will students be assessed in their formative tests? Future research must tease this question.

6.2.3. Transcultural Pedagogy

Another area that school history teachers must benefit from teacher programmes to enable them to address the challenges of teaching in post-colonial contexts is the adoption of transcultural pedagogy. Vinanda (2024) views transcultural pedagogy as a response to integrating diverse cultures in the teaching, where local contexts are taken into consideration when deciding upon teaching methodology.

Drawing from that perspective, Transcultural spaces are contact zones where different cultures come into contact, clash and struggle with one another. Post-colonial have set the stage wherein African and European cultures compete for supremacy. Teachers are strained to ensure that each culture from the country is embraced when they teach History. Even African cultures clash among themselves creating a transcultural space. Understanding of these clashes during teacher preparation is important as that can better position the history teachers when they encounter these in their teaching practices.

We argue therefore that the existence of these diverse cultures in school settings is a clarion call for those who run teacher education programmes to investigate how teacher education equips teachers to deal with students in a world that is becoming more diverse and where people are more outspoken about their opinions, cultural norms, and expectations of behaviour.

The proposal for using transcultural pedagogy is not unique and confined to formerly colonised countries but extends to other countries in similar contexts. For example, in the United States, Yaylali et al. (2024) report that through the promotion of linguistic consciousness and knowledge of language learner populations, numerous teacher education programs in that nation seek to meet the pressing need for educators who are both culturally and linguistically sensitive. We regard the employ of transcultural pedagogy to diversity as a critical value-related perspective for teaching school history because it moves the emphasis from individuals bringing their differences to the possibilities of other ways of coming together.

This is what Sadownik and Jevtić (2023, p. ix) call super-diversity that 'does not exclude respect for and acknowledgement of individual or family identity, nor does it lock the individual within the family identity.' What superdiversity offers is the chance to develop into and construct one's self by dialogical interaction with the various cultural meanings and values present in an intercultural community. Ultimately, it is the responsibility of history teachers to instil in each student the

capacity to think critically, to arrive at their own conclusions, and to choose for themselves what is right and wrong.

7. Conclusion

The study explored the challenges faced by history teachers in post-colonial Southern Africa, highlighting the need for improved teacher training to effectively teach themes that may catalyse contention and conflict among students. Given that the student population in post-colonial countries in Southern Africa is characterised by controversial topics, multilingualism, and diverse cultures, this is particularly important. Teachers face challenges in implementing school history curricula in post-colonial settings due to the existence of controversial topics in the curriculum, as well as the tapestry of languages and diverse cultures found in Southern African countries.

To overcome these challenges, three context-based pedagogical dimensions—namely, humanising pedagogy, transcultural pedagogy, and translanguaging pedagogy—must be incorporated into the study modules of teacher education programmes. These can help teacher candidates accurately interpret the school history curriculum, re-frame heterogeneity, and cultivate a critical self-perception of pluralism and multiculturalism in schools.

The limitation of the study lies in its reliance on literature analysis, and therefore, empirical studies can be undertaken to either confirm, reject, or extend the present findings. The sample size was also small hence, the findings cannot be generalised and thus must be read with caution. A large-scale study can also be undertaken as the current study lays the foundation for further research. Furthermore, to gain insight into the viability of these suggested pedagogies in practice and policy formulation, it is necessary to conduct further studies to examine their application and feasibility.

8. References

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