Reconceptualising the teaching of heritage in schools

B. B. Moreeng
Faculty of Education
University of the Free State
Bloemfontein, South Africa
e-mail: moreengbb@ufs.ac.za

Abstract
The broader education system in South Africa, and specifically history teaching, has undergone changes that aimed both to cleanse the subject content of discriminatory and incriminating practices, and to affirm previously neglected histories. Thus, the principles of democratic citizenry, such as critical thinking, clear reasoning and respect for multiple perspectives were enhanced. This article uses a postcolonial discourse to report on a study conducted in the Free State, South Africa. It adds to the debate on enhancing democracy through education and augments the creation of sustainable learning environments by accommodating previously neglected forms of historical knowledge and heritage conceptualisation. Qualitative focus-group interviews were used to investigate how teachers conceptualise and teach heritage during their history lessons. The findings revealed that the participants’ initial training and socialisation plays an important part in conceptualising and teaching heritage from a predominantly colonial and imperialistic perspective. This approach disdains African knowledge systems and how Africans make meaning of their past, thereby compromising critical learning, as experiences and interpretations from one perspective only are promoted. It is recommended that history educators be exposed to other ways of interpreting the past, for example postcolonial discourse, to assist in challenging the legacy of imperialism, colonialism and apartheid instilled in history educators’ and learners’ approach towards heritage. The findings impact on the initial and in-service training of history teachers in that a more open way is needed of looking at the past and exposing them to multiple perspectives in the teaching of history.

Keywords: history teaching, heritage, African knowledge systems, postcolonial discourse

INTRODUCTION
Since 1994, South Africa has been striving towards transforming itself into a new nation. Various projects and initiatives have been employed to this end. Education – as a vehicle for social transformation – also had to be changed in order to respond to the needs of the new society. Changes in education have been driven by the need to actualise the Preamble to the Constitution of South Africa (RSA 1996), which states its aims, amongst others, as healing the divisions of the past and establishing a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights (DoE 1997). The principles underpinning the Constitution also found their way into
curriculum transformation in the form of Curriculum 2005, the Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS), the National Curriculum Statement (NCS) and the current Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS). The changes and modifications brought to the curriculum concentrated mainly on the content, methods of teaching and assessment (DoE 2000, 2009; DoBE 2010).

Reflecting on these curriculum changes, Volmink (2008, 191) purports that the introduction of the NCS further created an opportunity for learners to question, inquire, doubt, create and construct new perspectives about themselves and the society of which they are part. Adherence to this approach will result in a challenge to the pedagogy of preservation that promoted an uncritical allegiance to existing power relations and values. Therefore, if the curriculum is implemented correctly, the democratic citizenship principles, such as equity, social justice, human rights, freedom, gender equality and non-racism (Constandius and Rosochacki 2012, 14; Wilmont and Naidoo 2011, 29) might be enhanced. The contemporary notions of democratic citizenship allow for equal participation and strive to disable discriminatory practices and public discourses which either exclude minorities or marginalise them within the imagined community of the nation.

History as a subject has also had to metamorphose in response to the changes in the country (Asmal 2001; Schoeman and Manyane 2002; Twala 2005). Consequently, history could be seen as having the potential to address most of the principles underpinning the South African curriculum, for example, social transformation, critical learning, and thorough knowledge of human rights, inclusivity and social justice (DoBE 2010, 3). This is because it has to enable learners to explore the dynamics of change in the context of power relations in societies, and to critically engage with the past and the world around them in the process of constructing their own understanding. This is to be done by acknowledging previously subdued historical perspectives and by promoting local history and heritage (DoBE 2010, 34) through the use of social constructivism and learner-centred teaching approaches.

Another change that became conspicuous to the teaching of history was the introduction of heritage as one of the topics to be addressed in the Further Education and Training (FET) Band. Initially in the NCS document, heritage was addressed in Learning Outcome (LO) 4, which required learners to engage critically with, firstly, issues regarding heritage by linking local history, heritage and public history to sites, monuments, museums, oral histories and traditions, street names, buildings, public holidays and, secondly, the debates on these issues (DoE 2003). This LO stated explicitly what teachers had to address during the lessons. Within the streamlined NCS after the Chisholm Commission, which dealt away with the learning outcomes and assessment standards, heritage was included as one of the principles upon which the national curriculum should be based, while valuing indigenous knowledge systems and acknowledging the rich history and heritage of this country as important contributors to nurturing the values contained in the Constitution (DoBE 2010, 3). Conceptualised in this way, the Heritage Project as part of dealing with history in the classroom, has the potential – according to Subedi and Daza (2008, 4) – to
Reconceptualising the teaching of heritage in schools
decolonise the currently dominant ways of being and knowing by recognising
that there are multiple readings of people’s experiences and identities. The Heritage
Project may further serve as a critique of colonial domination and of the legacies of
colonialism, as argued by Loomba (1998).

PROBLEM STATEMENT
Besides the depiction of heritage in the curriculum document, history teachers are
exposed to the different ways in which the concept is conceptualised and dealt with
in South Africa. It is therefore important to look at how heritage is conceptualised
and depicted in South Africa, since this has an impact on the way teachers address
it during their lessons. The knowledge and understanding of this aspect is also vital
because it will influence the training of history teachers in the field and student
teachers at higher education institutions (HEIs).

Various factors affect the way in which heritage is conceptualised in South Africa.
Firstly, South Africa is an environment in which culture and identity are highly
contested because of its past and history. Exclusion from the canon of the established
notion of history can thus be interpreted as a deliberate act of suppression in that the
different communities have different pasts and need to know specific things about
these pasts (Crooke 2005, 135; Mazel 2008, 41). So, in an attempt to address this
challenge, the government sought to promote multiracialism and multiculturalism,
as indicated in the Preamble to the Constitution (RSA 1996), which states that ‘South
Africa belongs to all who live in it, united in our diversity’. This stance seems to be
further supported by Freire (2008, 132–133) in his call for cultural pluralism as he
views it as guaranteeing the right of each culture to move in mutual respect, each one
running the risk of being different, each culture being itself.

I find this multicultural discourse with regard to the South African situation, as
pronounced in the Constitution and seemingly supported by Freire, problematic.
Instead, I find solace in Sobukwe’s (1959) and Volmink’s (2008, 192) critique of this
notion of multiculturalism when they argue that over-emphasising multiracialism
implies such basic insuperable differences between the various national groups
that the best course is to keep them permanently distinctive in a kind of democratic
apartheid. Progler (1999, 1) further argues that this approach to multiculturalism
does not respond well to constant and continuing subjugation of the marginalised
by the ‘powerful’; instead, it culminates in most communities being trapped in
the design of perpetuating their own subjugation. Furthermore, Turner (2008, 73)
rejects the integration based on the standards of white society and views as a kind
of liberal cosmopolitanism in which ethno-racial segregation goes by the political
fiction of pluralism, with or without the empowerment of subordinated racial or
ethnic elite. Therefore, I view any attempt to promote recognition of minority rights
and individual rights as espoused in the Constitution, as legitimising the divide-and-
rule concept initiated by the earlier conquerors, imperialists and colonialists. In this
stance, I am further strengthened by Soudien’s (2005) assertion that multiculturalism
B. B. Moreeng

seems to entrench and support the themes of tribalism, primitivism and ethnicity in dealing with South Africa’s past and heritage. Consequently, we cannot arrive at strategies that, minimally, promote the networking and, optimally, promote the integration of the population of South Africa (Alexander 2001, 83). As in the pursuit and the promotion of multiculturalism, there seems to be a deliberate turning of a blind eye to the fact that some groups – especially some whites with their Eurocentric view and need to promote Afrikaner nationalism – had benefited from the previous dispensation, which impacts on how South Africa’s past is conceptualised and depicted. Indiscriminate adherence to multiculturalism therefore runs the risk of potential acculturation by the dominant cultures.

Currently, South Africa’s heritage is reflected in a skewed and biased fashion, with Flynn and King (2007, 462) putting the blame on the post-apartheid government for allowing the way in which history was presented, through the cultural heritage media of museums, monuments and commemorative parks, to continue unchallenged. There is therefore a need to reclaim what Yosso (2005, 82) refers to as community cultural wealth of the marginalised communities, and to guard against what Nkoane and Lavia (2012, 49) refer to as ‘othering’ of the indigenous knowledge and experiences as it is reflected in the current conceptualisation and representation of heritage.

Another factor that seems to have an influence on how South African heritage is depicted is the way in which heritage is viewed as a strategic resource for socio-economic development. Succumbing to global economic discourses informed by western outlook, South Africa’s heritage sector was shaped by the convergence of conservation objectives, political agendas and tourism development strategies (Marschall 2008, 255). This resulted in many initiatives by the different provinces and municipalities with a focus on heritage in order to achieve development objectives. Unfortunately, some of these initiatives resulted in a shift towards modernity, commodification and artificial ways of conceptualising and depicting heritage (Chidester 2008, 283; Mazel 2008, 42). History teachers and learners are therefore constantly exposed to these depictions and they might end up internalising them as the true conceptualisation of heritage.

In addition to the above factors, the ways in which history teachers are guided to address heritage during their lessons seem unsuccessful. Curriculum policy documents are vague and do not clearly indicate both what should be covered and how it should be covered. This was noted as one of the issues that diminished the relevance of the NCS documents (DoE 2001, 2009). Hence, the Review Committee on the NCS recommended designing curriculum statements that specify content at specific grade levels (DoBE 2010). In the latest CAPS, heritage is not specifically included as a topic for any of the three grades. It is written into Grade 10 as a heritage investigation with a research component to teach research skills. The content detail is not specified and thus allows the choice of studying local, regional or national examples of heritage (DoBE 2010, 34). The list of items to be addressed is not specific, which will continue to result in individual interpretations and segmented
conceptualisations of heritage by teachers and learners. Such a non-committal stance from the DoBE will, unfortunately, perpetuate the current status quo in which learners are exposed to different ‘heritages’ in an attempt to acknowledge what it is referred to as local or regional histories.

The above paragraphs paint a picture of South Africa’s heritage as still being dominated by imperial, colonial and apartheid underpinnings and to such an extent that such knowledge is perpetuated in the classroom. This state of affairs seems to justify the use of postcolonial theory in interrogating how heritage is conceptualised in the classroom. Postcolonial discourse is recommended because South Africa has experienced colonialism and apartheid and will therefore need to explore means of meaningfully engaging with its past and with its heritage.

In the following section, postcolonial theory will be analysed and its relevance in the teaching and learning of heritage affirmed.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK: POSTCOLONIAL DISCOURSE

The term ‘postcolonial theory’ was coined by the post-structuralist Said and is seen as a critical movement that took shape in the 1980s (Marraouchi 2003, 37). The links between postcolonial theory and post-structuralism are explicit in that both seek to offer ways of, firstly, dismantling the signifying system of colonialism and, secondly, of exposing its operation in silencing and oppressing colonial subjects (Ashcroft, Griffiths and Tiffin 1998). In an attempt to understand the concept ‘discourse’, I approached it from a Foucauldian stance, which views discourse as a system for knowledge. Social scientists inspired by Foucault typically present the discourse in their field of study in accordance with the power relations they have uncovered, endowing them with valuable insights (Hewitt 2009).

Foucault’s notion of discourse refutes the notion that there is an ‘absolute truth’ (Hall 1997). Discourse is about the production of knowledge, framing ways of thinking about certain topics, things and objects. It dominates how people define and organise themselves and their social world (Hobbs 2008). However, discourses are more than ways of thinking and how meaning is produced (Weedon 1987), and they are defined in different ways, depending on the discipline or the theoretical framework. A postcolonial discourse is an approach grounded in a struggle for power (Sawyer 2002) that will be used to dominate what is seen as the truth. Colonialists and the apartheid regime used the power they had to push for the kind of knowledge that excluded and marginalised the history and heritage of the indigenous peoples. Thus, there is a need to challenge this discourse and find alternatives that will affirm the knowledge, history and heritage of the marginalised communities of South Africa, thereby adding to the concept of democratic citizenship.

According to the literature, postcolonial theory emerged from an inability to deal adequately with both the complexities and the varied cultural provenance of postcolonial setups. As a political discourse, postcolonial theory emerged mainly from experiences of oppression and struggles for freedom. It is a means of defiance
by which any exploitative and discriminative practices, regardless of time and space, can be challenged. It is especially postmodern intellectual discourse that consists of reactions to and analysis of the cultural legacy of colonialism (Rukundwa and Van Aarde 2007, 1174). Postcolonial theory is further viewed by Subedi and Daza (2008, 1–2) as being committed to the decolonisation of dominant ways of being and knowing. It aims to recognise that there are multiple readings of people’s experiences and identities through the recognition of the heterogeneity of cultural identities and through asserting the value of pluralism, diversity and difference. The main focus of postcolonialism is on oppression, racism, gender, matters of identity and ethnicity. In this regard, the challenges are developing a postcolonial national identity; determining how colonised peoples’ knowledge was used against them in service of the colonisers’ interest; and discovering how knowledge about the world is generated under specific relations between the powerful and the powerless, is circulated repeatedly, and is, finally, legitimated when in service to certain imperial interests (Middleton 2005, 447–480).

Nkrumah (1973) and Bhabha (1994, 6) validate the relevance of postcolonial theory when maintaining that it remains relevant for as long as colonial rulers continue binding colonies to themselves with the aim of promoting their own colonialist economic advantage. It is also a reminder of the persistent neo-colonial relations within the new world order and of the multinational division of labour as alluded to in the form of global economic pressures on the depiction of heritage earlier in this article. In an attempt to be progressive, postcolonial theory further suggests ways of resisting colonial power in order to forge a more socially just world order (Rizvi, Lingard and Lavia 2006, 250). Therefore, the use of the prefix ‘post’ in postcolonial theory should not be confused as signalling a premature end to either colonialism or neo-colonialism. Furthermore, postcolonial theory should also not be confused with or equated to postmodernism. The latter implies the general collapse of modernist thinking, while the former is used to indicate how the colonial condition has not passed (Ahluwalia 2005, 139–140; Subedi and Daza 2008, 2) or that it is a marker of a spatial challenge of occupying powers of the west by ethical, political and aesthetic forms of marginalisation (Dimitriadis and McCarthy 2001, 7).

By means of postcolonial analysis, people will be able to realise that imperialism assumed various guises in the different societies and has left widely varying postcolonial residues (Jackson 2008, 148). This implies that postcolonial theory will be applied to respond to the unique contextual dynamics of the places under scrutiny. For South Africa, people need to recognise the role played by imperialism, colonialism and apartheid. Its pedagogic dimension is emphasised by Asher (2010, 67) as relating to an imperative to understand, to reflect upon, and to transform relations of objectification and dehumanisation, and then to pass this knowledge on to future generations. Contrary to the pessimistic view of postcolonialism, Young (2001; 2003) proclaims that postcolonial theory can have humanitarian, economic and political justifications, which thus requires that postcolonialism be viewed as a hopeful discourse in that it looks forward to a world that has truly moved beyond all
that colonialism entails and is now striving towards the ultimate decolonisation of the future.

Postcolonial theory is relevant for the current study because I view it as a springboard from which the dominant form of cultural oppression perpetuated by colonialism and apartheid can be denounced and from which an opportunity and a possibility can be provided for a new story, a different story and a contested story (Lavia and Mahlomaholo 2012, 6).

The importance and relevance of postcolonial theory is further provided by Subedi and Daza (2008, 2–3) when they maintain that postcolonialism advocates a number of issues that are critically relevant within the field of education. Firstly, it is concerned with the decolonising of knowledge and, ultimately, with the production of transformative knowledge. Secondly, it challenges the discourse of nationalism by foregrounding racial, ethnic, religious and other identities in the making of citizen-subjects, which is critical with regard to how national identity and citizenship are conceptualised within racialised and hetero-normative frameworks. Thirdly, it is concerned with questions of agency and how marginalised subjects are capable either of interrupting or resisting dominant discourses. Fourthly, postcolonial theory also allows people to investigate power relations within society as well as the plight of the marginalised and the dispossessed through locating the traces left by colonial education. In analysing the ways in which the teaching of heritage is conducted in schools in the Free State, South Africa, most of the ideas provided by postcolonial theorists will be used.

**RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

**Research design**

The main aim of the article is to investigate the ways in which history teachers conceptualise and teach heritage during their history lessons. More specifically, the article focuses on the type of knowledge that history teachers have regarding heritage and the impact that this has on how they conceptualise the Heritage Project during the teaching and learning of history in FET schools in the Free State.

In pursuit of this aim, I collected and analysed primary data using an interpretivist paradigm and a narrative approach, which are rooted primarily in a qualitative approach. Babbie (2001) argues that the qualitative approach, as an inductive approach, is eminently effective in determining the deeper meaning of human beings’ experiences and in giving a rich description of the specific phenomena being investigated in reality. For the qualitative approach, the content-analysis method as explained by Leedy and Ormrod (2001, 221–234) was used. The data was coded, themes were identified, and the data was then organised and defined according to these codes and themes. Interpretations were subsequently made.
Sampling
Fifteen teachers were randomly selected in one education district in the Free State. Care was taken to establish representivity with regard to gender, race and the type of schools at which the teachers taught. As a result, there were three white teachers (two male and one female). Two of the participants were from Afrikaans-dominated schools and one from an English-medium former Model C school. Two male participants were coloured teachers working at two different schools within the district. The remaining ten participants comprised three black female and seven black male teachers from various schools in the townships of the district. Participants’ anonymity was ensured and pseudonyms were adopted and used for the purposes of reporting.

Data collection and analysis
The results of the individual and group (N = 15) interviews were recorded, analysed and reported. Interviews were conducted on a face-to-face basis. Before starting with the interviews, the justification for conducting the current study was explained to participants and their consent was obtained. Ethical considerations were explained and adhered to by the researchers for the purposes of confidentiality. Interviewees accepted the official invitation and 30-minute interview sessions were conducted with them. All interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and coded, after which themes were identified. The transcription process helped me to gain deeper access to the data. I was able to think about what the interviewees were saying and about how this was said. Furthermore, each typed transcript was read several times while I listened to the corresponding video and audio tape to ensure the accuracy of the transcription and to come to a better overall understanding of each participant’s experience of the teaching methods demonstrated during the training sessions. I used the ‘highlighting’ textual-analysis approach so as to uncover the thematic aspects of participants’ knowledge about heritage and how they teach heritage in class (Van Manen 1990). The text was read several times and statements that appeared to be relevant to the phenomenon were highlighted. Themes were identified by highlighting material in the interview transcripts that reflected the participants’ views on the teaching of heritage. From the analysis of participants’ responses, the following themes/issues emerged: Knowledge about heritage and the conceptualisation of heritage (definitions, the importance of the project, types of activities given to learners). An analysis and discussion of the responses of the focus-group interviewees are outlined below. The main issues emanating from the identified themes were infused with my suggestions as to how to use postcolonial theory in reconceptualising the Heritage Project in schools.
RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Theme 1: Teachers’ sources of knowledge about heritage

A teacher’s source of knowledge is very important in that it helps to determine the type of knowledge that the teacher possesses. It is therefore important to determine the type of training that teachers received and the experience they have, particularly regarding issues of heritage. Participants revealed that they had received their initial teacher training at different training colleges and universities throughout South Africa. The following responses reflect that the focus in each of these institutions was different, which had an impact on the kind of knowledge that the teachers received.

Mr Hussein said:

I did my training at a college of education between 1989 and 1992. Throughout my training I was only taught South African history and what we referred to European history. The history of South Africa covered the period 1652 up to 1960 and 1970. But looking back at it now I can say it was mainly about the Afrikaners and the English. Heritage was not addressed as a separate theme or topic part; we just took as part of what history covered.

Mr Kruger, a participant from an Afrikaans-medium school, added:

I think I can relate to what my colleague is saying because even though [I] received my training from a university, I think the approach was still the same, history was viewed from a white, Eurocentric view. We did not learn about the role that black people played in the creation of the South African society. European history also focused on the nationalism, imperialism and the colonialism and the wars that were fought to defend it. Therefore the only heritage I understand is the one that is related to the way history was taught during our times.

From the responses provided, it became evident that history teachers did not receive any formal training on heritage as part of their initial training as teachers. Participants’ knowledge of the use and value of and the debates on heritage and its representation as expected in the CAPS document (DoBE 2010) might therefore decidedly be compromised.

Participants’ responses further revealed a knowledge of the past that is influenced by the kind of initial teacher training they received. A study conducted by Moreeng (2009) indicated that most of the history teachers were properly qualified and had more than ten years of teaching experience. Mahlomaholo, Francis and Nkoane (2010, 282) seem to support this finding when they mention that post-1994 teachers were qualified but did not possess the relevant skills to perform their duties effectively. The fact that the majority of the history teachers were experienced also reflects on the kind of training they had – which might have been during apartheid times in a college of education or university informed by the infamous Bantu Education of
1947 and the Universities Act of 1955. The foundations of such an approach by the teachers can be seen in apartheid government acts such as the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959, which suggested that the Bantu people of South Africa do not constitute a homogeneous people, but separate national units on the basis of language and culture (Hayward 2007, 27). Biko (1987, 83–84) views this divide-and-rule policy as being meant to create a sense of false hope among blacks so that any further attempt to collectively enunciate their aspirations should be dampened. Apartheid education specifically promoted race, class, gender and ethnic divisions and emphasised separateness instead of common citizenship and nationhood in its focus on the creation of black nations outside the white-ruled Republic of South Africa (RSA) (Chidester 2008, 273).

Le Grange (2008, 400) acknowledges the power of an individual’s training background and the extent of its impact on teachers and asserts that the place where students complete their initial and further teacher training determines how they were inducted into the teaching profession and also the type of knowledge they would be adding. In support of the above, Freire (2008, 23) proclaims that no one leaves the world without having been transfixed by its roots – people carry with them the memory of many fabrics, self-soaked in their history, culture and memory. Therefore, teachers as members of the community display the habits of educating through personal experiences, school incidents and encounters with other teachers, (Bristol 2012, 2). In 1994, there were 101 public colleges and 22 universities in South Africa offering initial teaching qualifications (Pratt, 2001), informed mainly by the divide-and-rule apartheid policy. As a result, Christian National Education (CNE) dominated training both in historically Afrikaner (white and Afrikaans-medium) universities and in the black universities and colleges which were dominated by Afrikaner academics.

Thus, by implication, the teachers who formed part of the study seem to be products of a divided society that emphasised the differences between people rather than their common virtues as human beings – a situation resulting from the training they received. Hayward (2007, 23) illuminates this point by looking at some of the concepts and terminologies entrenched through CNE, including the term ‘indigenous’, which was understood, mostly by Europeans, as being similar to or synonymous with ‘traditional’, ‘aboriginal’, ‘vernacular’, ‘African’, ‘black’ and ‘native’ American. The words ‘primitive’, ‘tribalism’ and ‘ethnicity’ are also added to the list as terms that are generally eschewed in current scholarship on South Africa in recognition of their role in the construction of negative stereotypes of Africans used to legitimise colonial domination. Consequently, a parallel way has been created of looking at the past and what learners are taught. This is even worse in the case of South Africa, where its diverse communities have a history of struggle in the face of political and social adversity. As a result, most people from these diverse backgrounds have experienced centuries of oppression, discrimination and unthinkable human rights abuses, while others have been the perpetrators of these
Reconceptualising the teaching of heritage in schools

atrocities. These experiences are sometimes internalised and thus have an impact on how teachers present and facilitate their lessons.

Further probing into the impact of the kind of knowledge acquired during their initial teacher training, elicited the following response from Mrs Mabule from a township school:

It is tough because you always felt like what you were teaching was not really related to what learners wanted to know – especially in the days when our learners were politically conscious and they wanted answers from the past. What I taught was mainly determined by what was in the textbook and what was going to be examined at the end of the year.

The above response revealed a sense of frustration from this participant because she viewed the content of her teaching as neither relevant nor appropriate to the learners’ needs. This sense of hopelessness is noted by Freire (2008, 101) who hence advocates for the provision of a relevant pedagogy that allows for critical understanding through a dialogic means in order to enhance the struggle for liberation and the provision of hope. The relevance of the knowledge that learners receive is also emphasised by Alexander, Van Wyk, Bereng and November (2009, 46) in their assertion that the knowledge to which learners are exposed should be socially beneficial and not merely a collection of inert information. Teachers, therefore, have to question the relevance of the knowledge they present and expose their learners to, as Mrs Mabule did, especially in light of the Eurocentric knowledge that promotes the decidedly segregatory policies of imperialism, colonialism and apartheid. There is clearly a need for de-learning and an ability to come up with socially relevant knowledge that will be meaningful to the learners’ lives. Mrs Mabule required exposure to different perspectives and forms of knowing and knowledge depiction that would affirm the previously marginalised forms of knowledge.

The use of a postcolonial theory could do much in ensuring that learners are exposed to relevant and appropriate knowledge. The agenda for the creation of a new post-apartheid society in South Africa might potentially benefit from the use of postcolonial theory in that it is a counter-discourse that seeks to disrupt the cultural hegemony of the west by challenging imperialism in its various guises (Ahluwalia 2005, 140) while, simultaneously, serving as a critique of colonial domination and its legacies (Lavia 2007, 286; Loomba 1998, 12). This will be no easy task – especially in a place where people hold stereotypical views that uphold Eurocentric outlooks created by what Flynn and King (2007, 462) see as a concerted effort to project whites as a single group, while splitting Africans into ten national/ethnic groups. In addition, according to Osman (2010), the indigenous cultures are consistently made inferior in an attempt to erase their existing knowledge systems and replace these with western-driven belief and knowledge systems.

By means of postcolonial discourse, history teachers and learners will have to question and critique issues, such as why, on the one hand, according to Neocosmos
(2006, 321), ‘whiteness’ and western values (liberal and neo-colonial) are to be idealised while, on the other, Africa is seen to be the place of the ‘other’ and thus to be ‘led’, ‘advised’, ‘developed’, and ‘excluded’. A postcolonial approach will therefore project the indigenous people as a group possessing, practising and protecting a total sum of knowledge and skills constitutive of their meaning, belief systems, livelihood constructions and expressions that distinguish them from other groups (Osman 2010). If history teachers fail to do this, they might run the risk of perpetuating the coloniser’s internalised ways and language in order to survive within extant social structures (Asher 2005; Fanon 1986, 84). An approach that seeks to deconstruct the colonial outlook has a fundamentally pedagogic impact that is key to understanding, reflecting upon, and transforming relations of objectification and dehumanisation, and also to passing this knowledge on to future generations (Asher 2010, 67).

**Theme 2: Conceptualisation of heritage**

The way in which heritage is conceptualised is very important as it influences how it will be taught and presented to learners. Participants in the study held the view that heritage is something that has been passed down over many years within a family or a group and further indicated that this knowledge from the past is taken as is with little interrogation and debates around the different ideologies, influencing the way heritage is conceptualised. Mager (2006) opposes this passive approach to heritage conceptualisation. Instead, he contends that the heritage landscape needs to be engaged with what he terms ‘translation’, a process by means of which the translator identifies contested elements and compromises made in the conceptualisation of heritage. This point was also articulated by Mr Thotobolo:

> Everything I know about my past I have learnt from my parents and the community from which I come. My heritage covers things like music, rituals, culture and many other things from the past. All these are what is differentiating me from the other groups. How will they know that I am a Mosotho and not Xhosa or Zulu.

A response from Mr Thomas also echoed and reiterated the sentiments expressed by the other participants about how divisive teachers’ approaches towards heritage are:

> I work in the same area where I grew up, which is a rural area dominated by one cultural group – or so we believe – because during times of apartheid people in the homelands had to be seen to be belonging to the dominant culture in that homeland. So focus more on the culture of that same group and encourage the preservation of the groups’ specific heritage, it sometimes looks like it is the culture of that particular school. The school also went to the extent of having working relations based on the perceived similarities with regard to culture and the past.

Participants seemed to focus more on the differences between the various groups than on the similarities with regard to their values and experiences, the latter resulting from their common exposure before and after imperialism, colonialism
Reconceptualising the teaching of heritage in schools

and apartheid. According to Lentz (1995), this divide-and-rule approach can be attributed to the era of imperialism and colonialism when there were concerted efforts by the colonial powers to subjugate and control people and their resources through their policy of divide and rule. This divide-and-rule approach is critiqued by Osman (2010) and Biko (1987) as promoting ethnicity which, they argue, has not always been a historically specific or socially generated pattern of identity, but a colonial creation. Under colonial rule in Africa, the concept of individual identity with its corresponding cultural and linguistic components of distinct groups confined to specific areas was deliberately introduced. In some instances, people belonging together were further divided into nationalities. This fragmentation of land and resources, separation of people and restricted access to resources sowed the seeds of competition and conflict between groups so that the collective strength and resistance of the blacks could be fragmented. In the African context, historians and anthropologists agree that the pre-colonial African population was not composed of tribes or ethnic groups with distinct boundaries, and that the dominant characteristics of those pre-colonial societies were mobility, overlapping networks, multiple group membership and flexible, context-dependent drawing of boundaries (Okoro 2010, 139).

Postcolonial theory, with its approach of asking disturbing questions, is specifically suited for the current article, since the focus is not on the differences between people, but on why they are different and how they became different, so that the past can be understood in context. A new way of thinking about heritage will therefore be necessary, and the new way is not supposed to be informed by an understanding of integration that is imposed to promote the minority settlers’ system of values on the indigenous peoples; instead, at the heart of true integration, provision should be made for each person, each group to rise and attain their envisioned selves (More 2008, 58). The postcolonial approach will also encourage the development of a critical global perspective through the decolonising dominant discourse that has privileged Eurocentric forms of knowledge. It will further expect history teachers to rethink ways in which local/global formations are represented and included in the curriculum and in teaching (Subedi and Daza 2008, 2).

Mrs Manana raised another issue that affects the way in which heritage is conceptualised in the classroom, that is, the issue of the commodification of heritage, through the creation of heritage sites and museums that display bias towards the middle class and are influenced by colonial forces. She maintained that:

Learners end up doing what we want them to do, trying to preserve what the parents and, by extension, what the community wants. The educational tours that are organised are always to the same places that are in the areas that have been declared heritage sites or have been familiarised by the community. I usually take my learners to the cultural village in the area where they get exposed to the ‘real African culture’. Sometimes we visit museums in the neighbouring town, which I must add are also not very representative and some of the displays are derogatory.
The concern voiced by Mrs Manana concurs with Marschall (2008, 245–246), who maintains that such promotion of regional heritage through the revived indigenous cultural villages results in tribal displays based on romanticised, simplified and sometimes distorted images of ‘primitive’ black South African culture. The cultures are then signified by a few stereotypical attributes, usually visual, that are upheld as representing and encompassing the grossly simplified ‘tribal culture’ in its entirety (Hayward 2007, 28). The authenticity of such displays remains suspect, as they further project artificial uniformity in which differences, disagreements and debate remain buried under scripted narratives and framed imagery for the sake of creating consensus (Chidester 2008, 291). The government’s move to commercialise South Africa’s heritage has played right into the hands of big companies who believe that what gives heritage its force is not its antiquity, but its immediacy and given-ness. In these white-owned heritage sites, whites are constructed as the ‘experts’ on black African culture and are granted authority as mediators of public discourse and displays of African heritage (Hayward 2007, 29). As a result, some of these companies present distorted views of South Africa’s heritage by purposefully manipulating heritage to satisfy contemporary consumption (Mager 2006, 159–160). In some instances, white colonial heritage has been presented as progressive and black heritage as static, thereby promoting a heritage of power relations that maps race, class and gender in ways that disable black South Africans as interlocutors and agents. This deliberate misrepresentation of indigenous peoples’ history sometimes results in what Glass (2001) views as a dehumanising process that makes people objects of a distorted history and culture and denies them the opportunity to also be self-defining subjects creating their own history and culture.

Through stressing their uniqueness rather than emphasising their shared features or interdependence, the brokers of ethnic culture continue to define an ethnic group in competition with other ethnic cultures. This emphasis on tribal heritage leads to tribalism and the perpetuation of imperialist and colonialist ways of interpreting and representing the past. Postcolonial discourse opposes the presentation of colonial knowledge as being superior and progressive while the knowledge of the colonised is portrayed as being backward and static. A postcolonial approach to heritage teaching and learning will therefore encourage the interrogation of concepts such as ideology, nationalism, ethnicity and racism and how they influence the ways in which heritage is depicted through constructivist approaches. Such an approach will help history teachers to understand the historical context of knowledge production and how colonial practices are interconnected to present neo-colonialism.

With regard to how the participants have been managing the Heritage Project in class, it emerged that teachers are not encouraging learners to consider differing views and perspectives. Learners are simply retelling what the different monuments and grave sites are about and recounting historical events as they happened. Little is being done to clarify the link between the different ethnic groups and to dispel any myths about events as portrayed in the past. The following responses alluded to the above assertion:
My activities for the past three years included learners focusing on their own culture, by way of rituals, culture and traditions. In another one they had to visit the different sites of the Anglo-Boer War in the district, and to ask questions about the monuments and the historical buildings around town. Some of this information is about people and places that have not been recognised before.

The concept of knowledge construction as a component of effective learning and powerful learning environment can be useful in approaching heritage in that it requires learners to understand, investigate and determine the implicit cultural assumptions, frames of reference, perspectives, and biases within a discipline. These can, in turn, reduce prejudice and stereotypes, and thereby empower all learners from diverse, racial, ethnic, linguistic, religious and cultural backgrounds (Sehlaoui 2008, 288). The use of knowledge construction strategies will be relevant to the South African situation because the post-apartheid government inherited a one-sided heritage industry that sought to promote white and Afrikaner historical memory. This memory is in the form of the efflorescence of heritage sites celebrating white history in sculpture, architecture, museums and street names, but does not include information on the social, political and economic impact of imperialism, colonialism and apartheid on the indigenous peoples. The negotiated-settlement way in which South African democracy was ushered in further adds to the challenge due to the continuing presence of both the victim and the perpetrator (Flynn and King 2007, 463).

In attempting to assist history in how to deal with knowledge construction, Selçuk (2008, 511) states that the task of history teachers is not to convey their knowledge but to kindle learners’ minds through challenging their ideological or historical boundaries of understanding. This understanding of the other is not only enriching, but also enhances the individual’s own existence. History teachers need to be aware of their own mental and emotional traps. Doing so holds the potential of opening doors for mutual understanding and developing the capacities to respond positively and in an open-minded fashion to issues of heritage. The representation and interpretation of heritage will continuously have to be enhanced by both accommodating the emergence of the new heritage voices and dealing with the difficulties of representing a contested history in dealing with the legacy of the past (Crooke 2005). This is because postcolonial theory is, according to Manathunga (2006, 21), a constant and continuing struggle in the company of humanity, drawing upon discursive and interrogative processes.

The findings of the current study further suggest that there is a need to train history teachers and expose them to the different perspectives of interpreting the past – especially postcolonial discourse – in order to address heritage in a more broad- and open-minded manner. This is what Mahlomaholo (2012, 35) refers to as the re-theorised education privileging and validating the aspirations of all; and what Van Wyk, Alexander and Moreeng (2010, 1038) see as the redesigning of teacher training programmes so as to produce teachers who understand their role as agents of
transformation. These programmes should be underpinned by values, principles and philosophies that promote democratic citizenship. This kind of training will further empower teachers to address the need to expose learners to multiple perspectives and to have learners question the ways in which the past is represented – as stated in the CAPS document (DoBE 2011). These teachers will have to be reflexive practitioners who always seek to question and adapt their own beliefs, language, activities and ways of doing things to respond better to the current demand of their role. In addition, approaching heritage from a postcolonial perspective will enhance learners’ ability to be constructive and critical thinkers. A key goal in this approach is clearing space for multiple voices, especially for those of subalterns who were previously silenced by dominant ideologies.

A change in the way history teachers are trained and how they ultimately teach the subject resonates well with Vale and Jackson’s (2009, 21) assertion that, as education was used to maintain a segregated social order through both its structure and content, there is an expectation within the democratic social order that educational institutions should be redefined in a post-apartheid era to serve a more emancipatory role. A change, as argued in the article, in how to teach and conceptualise the Heritage Project in history is therefore seen as adding to this emancipatory role of education.

CONCLUSION

The findings of the study suggest that history teachers, at present, are still upholding and promoting discourses that advance colonial-, imperial- and apartheid-oriented perspectives. This seems to concur with the findings of an earlier study by Wilmont and Naidoo (2011, 36) who found that the history lessons behind closed doors are deployed for the transmission of racist and sexist ideologies that compromise the quality of the learning environment and the enhancement of the democratic principles. These perspectives result in heritage knowledge that is not critiqued sufficiently to enhance deeper understanding. The study further highlights that history teachers are not embracing critical discourses in addressing the past, and specifically when dealing with heritage. Teachers are doing this as a result of their initial training and the skewed way in which heritage has been represented and depicted in South Africa in order to promote Eurocentric perspectives.

The results of the study need to be interpreted cautiously in that it was a small-scale study conducted over a relatively short period of time. The analysis of the results was based on the interviews conducted with 15 teachers. The study did not employ classroom observations of lessons, nor did it include interviews with history learners on how they experience the Heritage Project.

Clearly, more research is needed to document, over time, the type of knowledge that history teachers have about the teaching of history and to determine how this impacts the teaching of the subject. Such research will then inform history-teaching educators on how to structure both training and development opportunities for history teachers.
REFERENCES


DoBE see Department of Basic Education.

DoE see Department of Education.


Reconceptualising the teaching of heritage in schools


RSA see Republic of South Africa.


