

https://dspace.org/

Conceptualisation of Decolonisation by Secondary School Teachers of History in Lusaka District of Zambia

Yvonne Kabombwe; Sarah Godsell; Alfred Masinire

https://hdl.handle.net/10539/48894
DOAJ

Downloaded from a DSpace repository. https://dspace.org/

Conceptualisation of Decolonisation by Secondary School Teachers of History in Lusaka District of Zambia

http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2223-0386/2025/n34a7

Yvonne Malambo Kabombwe
University of the Witwatersrand
Johannesburg, South Africa
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1844-7797
2429888@students.wits.ac.za
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2223-0386/2025/n34a7

Sarah Godsell
University of the Witwatersrand
Johannesburg, South Africa
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-3431-2868
Sarah.godsell@wits.ac.za
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2223-0386/2025/n34a7

Alfred Masinire
University of the Witwatersrand
Johannesburg, South Africa
Orcid: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1329-8569
Alfred.Masinire@wits.ac.za
DOI: http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2223-0386/2025/n34a7

Abstract

Decolonisation of the curriculum has been an important topic in Africa since the 1960s, however, most literature focuses on the content of the curriculum, rather than the role-players who enact it. Teachers play a significant role in the development and implementation of the curriculum, therefore, their conceptualisations of decolonisation will have an important impact on how the decolonisation process eventually unfolds. This

study sets out to explore the conception of decolonisation of selected history teachers in relation to the teaching and learning of history in Zambia. The study is anchored in a decolonial perspective by Wa Thiongo (1986) Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2019), Mignolo (2007), and Maldonado-Torres (2017) which proceeds from the position of regarding continued decolonisation in the curriculum, and thinking about potential ideas of decolonisation linked to it. The study used a qualitative approach and a case study design. Ten teachers from the Lusaka district were purposively selected and interviewed to determine how they conceptualised decolonisation in the Zambian history curriculum. The data collected from the interviews was analysed thematically. The study found that teacher's conceptualisation of decolonisation regarding teaching and learning of history included inclusions of neglected histories and knowledge, emphasis on local heroes, aligning to the curriculum to local needs and realities and promoting national identity and values. Thus, the current study concluded that the teachers of history had different understandings of decolonisation and ideas of its application to the history curriculum. This study could inform the teacher education programmes in higher education and decolonising of the school history.

Keywords: Decolonisation; Education; School History Curriculum; Teachers and Zambia

Introduction

There have been several forms of expression of decolonial agendas on the African continent from the nineteenth century that have come and disappeared, such as "Ethiopianism, Negritude, Garveyism, the Black Consciousness Movements" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019: 14). When most countries in Africa gained independence in the 1960s, the Organisation for Africa Unity called on the newly independent states to make commitments to decolonise their education systems (Organisation for African Unity, 1961). It was, however, the 2015 #FeesMustFall campaign by students at the Universities of Cape Town and Witwatersrand in South Africa that revived the debates on decolonisation of education in Africa (Heleta, 2016; Mahabeer, 2018; Maluleka, 2023). As with regards to the subject of history, the African Union (AU) (2024), has re-affirmed the teaching of African history as a pathway to decolonisation in Africa to achieve Agenda 2063. The AU has called on curriculum reforms that do not centre on racial bias, but celebrate the achievements and civilisations of African societies (AU, 2024).

Zambia was a colony of Britain for more than 60 years (Money & Chansa, 2024). The country gained political independence in 1964 (Kalusa & Phiri, 2014). At the time of independence, Zambia had two segregated education systems operating based on racial

discrimination; one system for the Europeans and the other was for the African children (Achola, 1990; Kalimaposo, 2022). The education system inherited the curriculum from the colonial period, specifically the one designed for the Central African Federation of Rhodesia and Nyasaland from 1963 (Chishimba & Simukoko, 2000).

There have been several education reforms to decolonise the education system in Zambia after independence such as the 1977, 1992, 1996, 2013 and 2023 education reforms (Ministry of Education [MoE], Zambia, 1992, 1996, Ministry of Education Science and Vocational Training Early Education, Zambia, (MOESVTEE), 2013; MoE, 2023).After gaining power from the colonialist government, the nationalist government began the process to decolonise the school curriculum so that it could meet the aspirations of the newly independent government and address local needs (Chishimba & Simukoko, 2000). Humanism was used as a policy to guide the decolonisation process in the education system and other spheres of life (Chishimba & Simukoko, 2000; Lungwangwa, 1980; Mboyonga, 2024). The purpose was to equip learners and graduates with human values (Mboyonga, 2024).

This paper seeks to address the question of how teachers of history conceptualise decolonisation in relation to the teaching and learning of history in Zambia at secondary school level. It seeks to contribute to the bigger conversation around decolonisation, decoloniality and education. With Zambia attempting to decolonise the history curriculum, this study interviewed ten teachers to gain a sense of their views on decolonisation. The interviews were analysed and thought was given to what these views mean for a decolonised curriculum. For example, do teachers need to be knowledgeable on the core principles that decolonisation of education rests on to enact a decolonised curriculum? While further studies, involving classroom observations, would be necessary to fully answer this question, the views of teachers are deemed important in that they interpret and enact any given curriculum.

The burden to understand the complexities surrounding the curriculum and how it can be implemented in the classroom as well as the impact on the performance of learners, is the responsibility of the teachers (Bentrovato & Moyo, 2025; Gulo, 2024). Thus, overlooking teachers' views in a curriculum development process is undermining an important group. Teachers respond to the society in which they operate from and are often equally shaped by structural and institutional forces (Freire, 1970). Hence, it is important to explore teachers' knowledge and disposition to gauge their ability or willingness to promote decolonisation in their teaching profession (Sathorar & Geduld, 2018).

Literature review

The literature review is divided into two parts, first, the conceptions of decolonisation are discussed. Second, attempts by the Zambian government to decolonise the education system and the role of teachers in the decolonial agenda are explained.

The term decolonisation has different meanings depending on context and space. The earliest use of the term was in 1836 by French writer Professor CR Ageron who was advocating for the withdrawal of the French government in Algeria (Filho, 2024). In this instance it was used in a political sense (Mkansi, Emwanu & Kuchwa-Dube, 2018). The term later surfaced after the Second World War in the late 1940s as a process of granting self-determination by European countries in Asia, Africa and the Middle East (Jansen & Osterhammel, 2017). However, in this paper, decolonisation means going beyond political subjugation, it encompasses how colonialism affected the social, cultural and economic aspect of the colonised, as noted by the earliest proponents of decolonisation (Fanon, 1968; Oelofsen, 2015 Wa Thiongo, 1981;). Thus, for us decolonisation is a process of undoing the way the colonised were defined by the colonialist (Ranawana, 2023).

A decolonised education seeks to expose and disrupt the ongoing processes of Western colonialism and cultural reproduction of Eurocentrism (Bhambra, Gebrial & Nişancıoğlu, 2018) through formal curriculum knowledge and discourses. It also aims at exposing colonial and discriminatory legacies in the education sector that expose inequalities in the production of knowledge (Heleta, 2016; Sathorar & Geduld, 2018). Apart from exposing colonial legacies, it also intends to reject the colonial ideals, customs and imperial worldviews that circulate in the school curriculum of the formerly colonised countries (Mahabeer, 2018). Heleta (2016: 9) asserts that "one of the most destructive effects of colonialism was the subjugation of local knowledge and promotion of the Western knowledge as the universal knowledge".

Decolonisation of education is a clarion for "Eurocentric consciousness to be disrupted, and notions of meritocracy within education and society that have privileged some, to be challenged" (Du Plessis, 2021: 57). It is a process where those who were formerly colonised "embrace and recognise their own cultures, tell their own histories, study from books written by Africans, and run institutions based on values that are reflective of African culture, as opposed to Eurocentric models" (Du Plessis, 2021: 54). Africans must decolonise, un-learn and re-learn about their original history of civilisation and Africanisation (Enaifoghe, 2019: 63). This has caused debates on what a 'balanced'

history curriculum would be in terms of local versus global knowledge (Van Eeden & Warnich, 2018). For Godsell, decolonising education also encompasses using decolonial pedagogies and assessments in the classroom (Godsell, 2019, 2021).

It is important to know the perceptions surrounding the concept of decolonisation so that relevant ways of approaching decolonisation are designed (Auerbach, 2017). Focus on decolonisation can also help develop African renaissance in the field of education (Koma, 2018). For the purposes of this study, focus was placed on understanding how teachers relate to this concept.

Teachers conceptions of decolonisation

Little research is available on teacher's view on the concept of decolonisation, yet it plays a critical role in curriculum design and the implementation thereof in Africa. The studies available centre on students, pre-service or student teachers views as well as lecturers in higher education institutions, mostly in South Africa and to a lesser extent in countries such as Botswana, Kenya, Ghana and Zimbabwe (Laakso & Adu, 2024).

Maluleka's (2023) work on teachers of history in Gauteng and Limpopo provinces, South Africa, reveals that teachers conceptualised decolonisation as Africanisation of the school history curriculum, as a way of decolonising the history curriculum. While student teachers for history education such as Dollie et al. (2020) conceptualised decolonisation as the need to rewrite the history that was distorted in the school history curriculum in South Africa.

Chinyamurindi's (2023) study on student's view revealed that most of the students who were interviewed showed that they lacked understanding on what decolonisation meant and were sceptical on how the process of decolonisation could play out. However, they noted that the decolonisation process could provide an opportunity to use indigenous teaching methods and local languages (Chinyamurindi, 2023). The study utilised a focus group of 30 students and narrative analysis. In the same vein, Muller (2018) argued that the concept of decolonisation was poorly defined by students in natural sciences. While De Jager (2019) noted that decolonisation, for students who were interviewed meant a need for a balance between Euro-American centric sciences and indigenous knowledge, a use of mother tongue language and everyday life experiences from diverse cultures for decolonisation of sciences in the African education system.On the other hand, Dollie et al. (2020) pointed out that teachers have a critical role in the decolonisation of the school history curriculum. Therefore, teachers should take agency and reflect critically on historical

issues that they teach in the classroom. Thus, teachers' understanding of decolonisation was very important.

An overview of the attempts to decolonise the school history curriculum and the role of history teachers in Zambia

At independence in 1964, the Zambian nationalist government aimed at eliminating the colonial education that was given to African learners during the colonial period in Northern Rhodesia (Lungwangwa, 1980). The subject of history was given national importance (Garvey & Krug, 1977). Teaching history in Zambia is divided into two parts, namely African history and World history. The main objective of the history curriculum post-independence was to foster national consciousness in Zambia regarding African history (Garvey & Krug, 1977). The fostering of national consciousness and pride was to be done through teaching Central African History in Zambia (Garvey & Krug, 1977). The teaching of history shifted from teaching European, British Empire and Commonwealth history to African history as experienced by the African people in Zambia in African history. Thus, West, North, East, Southern and Central African history was included in the new school history curriculum. Zambian history was to be taught in Central African history. It should be noted that African history was taught in the colonial period but it was taught from a Eurocentric point of view. For the nationalist government, decolonising[1] the school history curriculum was the inclusion of more African history in the curriculum. While there was an attempt to include African and Zambian history, it has not been done comprehensively enough.

In the Second Republic, the curriculum for history was expected to follow the principles of humanism by focusing on the teaching of man as guided in the First Republic (Kaunda, 1968). The aim was to provide a curriculum that was meaningful and relevant to the context of the country. The purpose of the history curriculum was to enable learners to be aware of their immediate environment and other environments (Examination Council of Zambia, 1987). The effort to decolonise the content of the history curriculum was to be achieved by helping learners to be aware of their own local environment in their society so that the learners could tackle the political, cultural and economic problems in society

[1] It is understood that decoloniality and decolonisation are distinct terms. For this early period, post-independence, the term decolonisation is used as an attempt to remove direct influence of the colonial power after independence, while decoloniality is used in the later iterations of the curriculum, interlinked with coloniality and modernity.

(Examination Council of Zambia, 1987). The curriculum was intended to emphasise "how man produced food, organised himself and the interdependence of the human race" (Examination Council of Zambia, 1987: vi). The teaching of history focused on the teaching of Central African, Southern African and World history. The other African regions became optional. Thus, the decolonising of education focused on providing education that was linked to the Zambian people and removing regions of history that were not directly linked to Zambia. This links to decolonial theory on histories and historical knowledge of, and with relevance to indigenous people, however, does not necessarily remove the lens of modernity and coloniality from the subject (Maluleka, 2023).

In the Third Republic, curriculum designers added new topics into the history curriculum in the section of contemporary issues, such as the Gulf War, Iran and Iraq War, Democratic Republic of Congo, Angolan Civil War, Rwanda Genocide, land issues in Zimbabwe, HIV/AIDS, environmental degradation, international terrorism, human trafficking, drug abuse and gender issues as well as post independent developments in Zambia in World and African History (History Syllabus, 1996). Nevertheless, human rights, democracy and sexuality were to be emphasised as cross-cutting issues in the history curriculum (MoE, 1996). This content was incorporated in the curriculum to enable learners to reflect on the contemporary problems in their society and to experience the realities in their society and the world. Thus, the decolonising of the history curriculum was envisioned as having a balance between local and global history. Therefore, the decolonisation of the history curriculum was primarily focused on content changes in the school history curriculum, and less concerned with the lens, or issues of coloniality of knowledge (Ndhlovu-Gatsheni, 2019).

Apart from removing content that is not relevant to the Zambian context, the education policy of 1996, Educating Our Future, the 2013 Outcomes Based Education and the 2023 Competency Based Curriculum Framework urged teachers to implement localisation of the curriculum as a way of decolonising the curriculum (MoE, 1996; MOESVTEE,2013; MoE,2023). This meant that the burden to decolonise (in this case make local history relevant and applicable) the school history curriculum was placed on the shoulders of the teachers in all topics in African and World History. Thus, the teachers' views and experiences become especially relevant: even if their views are based on attempts that were already made after independence, this expectation for teachers to localise the curriculum identifies a gap. Teachers were to localise the school history curriculum by incorporating local examples in their lessons for history so that learners could connect to events in the

world and their environment (MOE, 1996; MOESVTEE, 2013; MOE,2023). Thus, teachers have a critical role to play in the decolonial turn in history education, providing the living link between a changing curriculum document and what learners are exposed to in the classrooms. Nevertheless, their opinions were not appreciated by the different curriculum initiatives to deepen the understanding of what decolonisation of the history curriculum was at that point, or what it could be in the classrooms. This paper attempts to address this gap.

Theoretical and conceptual framework

This paper used decolonial theory as a lens to understand decolonisation. It was guided by Maldonado-Torres' (2017), Mingolo (2007), Ndhlovu-Gatsheni (2019) and Wa Thiongo (1986), perspectives that posit that decolonisation is more than political independence, it is a process where people can start thinking of new possibilities and redefine humanity to undo the effects of colonialism and Western universalism of knowledge in the modern world. These perspectives were adopted because decolonial theory is not anchored on a single perspective of diverse scholars. For Wa Thiongo (1981), decolonisation is the reclaiming of African languages and the positioning of African knowledge at the centre among other narratives. While Ndhlovu-Gatsheni (2019) argued that decolonisation is a move towards creating ecologies of knowledge and pluriversality, the call for decolonisation has been heightened due to the marginalisation of indigenous knowledge that was created because of colonialism and coloniality that led to the displacement of other knowledge in the Global South (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019).

Among the several concepts that decolonial thinkers work with, is decoloniality. Decoloniality is the process of how decolonisation can be achieved by unmasking, revealing and challenging coloniality of power, knowledge and being by undoing the colonial matrix of power (Maldonado-Torres, 2017; Mignolo, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019; Ranawana, 2023). The colonial matrix of power is a structure that has been reproduced in post-colonial contexts due to colonialism (Mignolo, 2007). Decoloniality is opposition to the coloniality of power, knowledge and being (Maldonado-Torres, 2017). Decoloniality is premised on three concepts/units of analysis that is; coloniality of power, knowledge and being. Coloniality of power "investigates the global politics of how the world is hierarchised racially and ideologically" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2019: 490). Coloniality of knowledge focuses on the epistemological issues and politics of knowledge production. It deals with how indigenous knowledge systems are sidelined from the mainstreams of

knowledge production (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2019). Coloniality prioritises Eurocentric and Western forms of knowledge as universal and superior to other knowledge systems (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019), while coloniality of being is concerned with how the formerly colonised people are represented in the colonial matrix of power (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2019). The decolonial theory has been used in this study because the coloniality matrix of power is still reinforced in the field of education post independent countries, through knowledge production, universalising of Western knowledge in school curricular, the use of English in schools from primary school level and provision of university education (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019). Western knowledge is still perpetuated by the educational systems which ignore indigenous knowledge (Mignolo,2007). Hence, for decolonial scholars there was a need to undo the coloniality of power, knowledge and being in the formerly colonised countries. For the current study, this understanding of decolonisation helps one to understand the current position of the Zambian school history curriculum and teachers own perceptions of decoloniality. Teacher's perceptions were not judged by academic positions, but were read as 'on the ground' interpretations of what this theory might mean for teachers.

Methodology

This paper used the qualitative research approach considering that it gathers participants behaviours, perceptions and experience on real world situations or phenomenon (Moser & Korstjens, 2017). A case study design was used to determine how teachers of history specifically conceptualise the term decolonisation in their work. A case study approach was adopted as it provides an opportunity for the researcher to have an in-depth investigation and gain understanding of a complex phenomenon in its real-life context in its natural context (Crowe et al., 2011). A critical research paradigm was adopted for this paper, because the paradigm questions power structures, inequalities in societies and strives to undo them (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). This is in line with the decolonial paradigm, since it aims to challenge "Western hegemony and colonial ways of thinking" (Denscombe, 2025: 231). With regards to ontology, reality is shaped by historical contexts and epistemologically, the researcher questions their own and other people's assumptions (Crowe, et al., 2011). This is in line with the decolonial paradigm, as it must be understood in-terms of its historical roots of colonialism as well as the need to unmask and transform society (Denscombe, 2025). This was a single and intrinsic case study as it intended to study teachers' conceptualisation of decolonisation by teachers of history in Zambia only. Ten teachers of history were purposively selected from the Lusaka district in Lusaka province, Zambia from ten school zones from the urban area. Teachers of history were

purposively sampled because they provide rich information on how decolonisation was conceptualised in the subject of history, since they interact closely with the school history curriculum during preparation for teaching, while teaching and during the assessment of learners more than any other stakeholders. The number was chosen because it would give a wide enough qualitative data selection for deep reading of themes, however, the number would not be overwhelming in terms of the amount of data produced.

Lusaka was selected as the research site because it is in the capital city of the country and there are a lot of secondary schools that are easily accessible. Lusaka district was also selected because the curriculum development process and orientations start from there. Thus, the teachers in Lusaka have had more opportunities to participate in curriculum development processes. Semi-structured interviews were used to collect data from the teachers on their conceptualisation of decolonisation in relation to the teaching and learning of history in Zambia. Semi-structured interviews were used to guide, but not determine, the interview process. The interviews varied from 40 to 50 minutes, as this work stems from part of a PhD study and extra questions were asked to the participants. Thus, other questions were asked within the time-frame of the interview. The data was analysed using thematic analysis. Ethical considerations such as confidentiality and anonymity of the research participants were considered. For this reason, teachers are identified with symbols from TS01 to TS10.

Findings of the study

Teacher's understanding of decolonisation in relation to the teaching of history

The study sought to address the question of how teachers of history conceptualise decolonisation in relation to the teaching and learning of history in Zambia at secondary school level. The data was analysed thematically, and four interrelated themes emerged: inclusion of neglected histories; local heroes and cultural identity; balanced narratives between local and global narratives and tailoring the curriculum to Zambian needs and realities and promoting national values and unity.

Inclusion of neglected histories and knowledge systems

The participating teachers agreed that decolonising of the history curriculum meant to include knowledges that were sidelined in the school history curriculum. Thus, for them, a significant aspect of decolonisation involves acknowledging and incorporating omitted histories and local knowledge. For example, participant T01 explained that:

> *So, decolonisation in my view entails appreciating other knowledges and other histories, not just the dominant societies in Zambian history. Because most of those narratives were written by the whites who settled among the local societies like the Lozi, the Lunda, the Ngoni and wrote their history based on observation and interaction. It didn't mean that the Lala of Serenje, for instance, didn't have a better history, it wasn't just documented.* (T01)

Participant T04 further elaborated that:

> *In the context of knowledge, decolonisation is an aspect of bringing out some of the neglected or the omitted knowledge systems. For instance, in the history syllabus, how are the voices captured in the syllabus? If we talk of topics such as the first or the second world war, how do we teach that? Or from which perspective? So, you will find that we teach such topics from a European perspective, when we are in Africa, and we are supposed to bring in the African point of view. We don't tell our pupils that Zambia, for instance, fought or that people in Zambia lost their lives in the second world war. Our pupils don't know that. Our secondary school history books don't capture that. So, decolonisation would be going back to highlight such neglected historical narratives which are Afrocentric, but also bringing in the other perspectives challenging the Afrocentricity of our curriculum by also appreciating the contributions, for instance, of women and how certain historical events affected women in precolonial, in colonial and their urgency and their contribution.* (T04)

Another participant stated that:

> *To remove foreign influence in our curriculum, so that our curriculum becomes independent of foreign influence. It is like we have been working under the influence of our colonial masters and all those Western countries. We are learning much more on things to do with Western world. Even when we do things, we do things as if we belong to the Western world, meanwhile we are not part of them. So, decolonisation is to create independence on our own curriculum in order to create our own independent knowledge.* (T07)

Some respondents stressed that decolonisation does not mean entirely removing European history, but creating a balanced narrative. For instance, participant T06 stated that:

> *The history that has something to do with Zambia, to start with. Also of course a few topics from the Southern and European history can be included and something which have something to do with Zambia and then other topics which have content that seem to be irrelevant to our Zambian context, I think those ones should be removed.* (T06)

The participants' views show that the teachers interviewed considered that the inclusion of neglected knowledges in the school history curriculum was a very important aspect in decolonising the school history curriculum. The participants also considered the perspectives of these knowledges, in other words, the lenses. This moves beyond mere content, and includes the epistemologies, although the participants do not delve into this. These findings are in line with those of Moloi, Lebelo, Akindeinde & Adesanya, 2023; Mvenene, 2017; Shabangu, 2024). Shabangu (2024) argued that indigenous archives of history were important in the decolonisation of the history curriculum. Moloi et al. (2023) argued that teachers must infuse Indigenous Knowledge Systems in the school history curriculum by focusing on the struggles of the people for land dispossession, mineral exploitations, massacres and genocides. While, Mvenene (2017) noted that Indigenous Knowledge Systems can provide solutions for current historical inaccuracies, discrepancies, omissions, bias and prejudice in the school history curriculum. Maluleka (2021), however, argues that mere replacement of Eurocentric knowledge is not decolonising of the curriculum, but marginalisation of Western knowledge. The study's participants support this perspective, decolonising the curriculum was seen by the participants as more than an inclusion of sidelined knowledge, but thinking about the lenses and perspectives, as well as power relations and epistemologies of the history curriculum.

Emphasis on local heroes and cultural identity

Participants highlighted the importance of replacing Eurocentric narratives with those centred on Zambian heroes, heroines and cultures. For example, participant T10 argued:

> *So, for me there is a need to include heroes, like in every part of this country, I believe when you go around, we still have freedom fighters, you have to interview them. They will give you, maybe, the perspectives of what really happened and how they really fought for independence. The pre-nineteen sixty-four period, maybe ten years down the line, the people really fought. Their views are missing. If you can have that, it will really help us to understand the history of where we come from, and in the history syllabus it is not there, so the views of Zambians are not included.* (T10)

Another participant, T08, explained that:

> *When we talk of decolonisation, it is bringing out the history of marginalised societies. Knowledge is power. So, if we don't teach the significant roles of marginalised societies or groups such as the women, the youths and other ethnic groups in Zambia, then we deny them their urgency as contributors to national building. We say one Zambia one nation but out of the 72 ethnic groups, we only write essays on the few. So, if we are to be decolonised, we need to change the way we examine and the way we teach.* (T08)

Participant T10 mentioned that:

> *When you look at the way it is now, we still have topics that are not really relevant to our Zambian learners now. I will give examples of, let's say, Lenshina uprising, it is not there. Also, the fight for independence by local Zambians, those were women and men, it is silent. Most of the writings, they are treated like they are labels or the people who were revolting or demonstrators, when in the actual sense, they were fighting for liberation from the colonisers. So, from that perspective you find that it is not written in our views.* (T10)

It is evident that, for the participants, decolonising the history curriculum meant the inclusion of heroes, marginalised societies and women in society. This is in line with Shabangu (2022) who noted that inclusivity should be at the core of decolonised school history curriculum as way of moving away from a school history that is used as a political tool to promote racism, sexism, exclusion, alienation, domination and negation. Similarly, Mboyonga (2023) argued that a decolonised history curriculum should include women's contribution in society. This is because some of the marginalised members of society contributed to history and could be beneficial to the school history curriculum. For example, Chiponda (2020) noted that there was under-representation of historical characters with disabilities in the verbal and visual context of the Malawian school history curriculum and textbook production. Participant T08 mentions that "*knowledge is power*", pointing to the interconnectedness of these two aspects of coloniality, and gesturing that, even though the teachers focus is mainly on knowledge, they are aware of the different levels on which this knowledge operates.

Tailoring the curriculum to Zambian needs and realities

The participants noted decolonisation involves aligning the curriculum with Zambia's current reality and development needs. Participants suggested adapting topics to show relevance and inspire learners. For example, one of the participants (T04) mentioned that:

> *Decolonisation is tailoring our education curriculum to the local content by removing it from the way it was in the colonial period. Those people who made the curriculum during the colonial period tailored it according to their needs at that time and they had certain targets. Now with independence, we need to tailor it to our needs. So, the history curriculum should have been tailored since independence according to what the people wanted out history curriculum to teach our children.* (T04)

Another participant T05 stated that:

> *Decolonisation of the curriculum should mean in terms of refocusing what learners are taught in the history curriculum so that we align the content they learn to our current cultural spheres of our nation.* (T05)

Participant T04 further argued that:

> *Decolonisation is designing the curriculum to our local needs, infusing in our relevant history. We should not only tell stories of old happenings, but we should tell stories of how certain aspects of the past made us improve. Stories which show development and change over time. So, if we talk of Mushala, we should attach it to some relevance. Our learners should know why we are learning about Mushala, how is it affecting our development.* (T04)

Participant T03 emphasised the point by stating that:

> *In my view, the school history curriculum is irrelevant and outdated. Most of the things we teach children, don't seem to align with their future and their environment as well.* (T03)

The responses from the participants revealed that a decolonised school history curriculum is one that is tailored to local needs and relevant to Zambian society. Mazimba and Kabombwe (2022) noted that the Zambian school history curriculum needed to include the local aspects as the former ones alienated the learners from their history. The local content was important to counter the Eurocentric narrative in the school history curriculum (Ncube & Moyo, 2024). In this vein, coloniality of knowledge is tied to coloniality of being, as the knowledge in the history curriculum is orienting students towards their future, part of imagining who they were, who they are and who they will be. Again, the participants' understanding has implications beyond the immediate reading of it.

Promoting national identity and values

The participants highlighted that a decolonised school history curriculum should foster a sense of unity and shared national identity. By teaching about the interconnection of Zambia's peoples and cultures, learners develop a sense of belonging and pride.

Participant T05 explained:

> *Decolonisation of the curriculum means removing components that focus on Eurocentric traits, it means designing the curriculum in line with current trends of African descent, it means shaping the curriculum in line with societal norms and customs….* (T05)

In the same vein, participants T09 and T04 suggested that:

> *Decolonisation of the curriculum, I think is where you would want to teach something that is not tied to, or teaching the history that was written by the colonial masters. So, decolonisation is where, maybe the Africans would want to teach their own history which would be written by the Africans themselves. So, decolonisation basically is doing away with the history of the colonialists.* (T09)

> *We should have included the history of Zambia, maybe if we wanted to include the history of Zambia in relation to other countries, that is when we could have included the history of Germany, Canada and the histories of the Western world. The history curriculum should have included our place in the global world.* (T04)

This view draws an intersection of the above themes, with emphasis on African history from African viewpoints and epistemologies as well as and shifting the focus onto this history to replace both the colonial content and lens. The overwhelming sense that emerged from the interviews was: decolonisation involved an active shift, an active decolonial shift to give importance to the local, the African, and the marginalised and to remove the legacy of coloniality. One can understand this as a push-back against coloniality of knowledge, but also with an understanding of coloniality of being, stressing that the history is written by the Africans themselves, not produced externally. Teachers' views suggest that the work already done is not sufficient in their view.

Discussion of the study

The findings of the study suggest that teachers of history had started imagining the possibilities (Maldonado-Torres, 2017; Mignolo, 2007; Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2019; Wa Thiongo, 1981) of what a decolonised history curriculum could be by advocating for inclusion of neglected histories, emphasis on local heroes, aligning to the curriculum to local needs and realities and promoting national values in the Zambian society through the history curriculum. The findings of this study are in line with those of Wa Thiong'o (1986: 9) who argued that decolonisation of knowledge is about "African people seeing themselves in a relationship with their surrounding and fellow Africans around the continent, as well as in relation to other cultures and peoples around the world". The participants offered glimpses of paths towards this 'new humanity' through visions of a decolonised history curriculum acknowledging the relationship between knowledge and power, and towards African histories written by Africans, reflecting local values and for local needs.

Participants' views, centred on addressing coloniality of knowledge, showed an awareness, even though not explicit and in the theoretical terminology, that spoke to coloniality of power and being. This would seem that their vision of a decolonised history curriculum would include an education system that addresses (through the history curriculum) how people think and feel about themselves, so that there can be social transformation in society, an orientation towards Africa, aware from the West, or ideas of African 'deficit'. This finding concurs with that of Fanon's (1968: 30), who posits that decolonisation is to move beyond colonialism towards a "new humanity" which offers a more worthy goal to pursue, even if it is only a regulative utopian ideal.

The findings of the current study suggest that, teachers' conceptualisation of decolonisation was limited in that they focused on content change in the Zambian school history curriculum. However, a more detailed reading surfaced which ties into a broader understanding of decoloniality, one that responds to both coloniality of being and of power, as well as of knowledge. This conceptualisation of decolonising of school history curriculum focuses on ways of countering coloniality of knowledge explicitly, however, even though addressing this takes into subtle consideration other aspects of decoloniality such as unmaking the coloniality of power and being in the Zambian school history curriculum.

The reason why participants expressed limited knowledge on undoing the coloniality of power, knowledge and being, could be due to little exposure to the explicit vocabulary of decolonisation and decoloniality. This remains a barrier to decolonial work in education,

as a vocabulary can offer avenues towards action. It is, however, important to note that even with the vocabulary primarily linked to decolonisation of curriculum (as guided in the interviews), aspects of coloniality of being and power were present, as shown above.

From the findings of the study, it is evident that teachers need explicit training and orientation on decolonisation and decoloniality. Thus, it is not surprising that conversation on decoloniality and teachers has focused on the need to decolonise teacher education curricula (Sathorar & Geduld, 2018). Part of this argument is that teachers should be prepared to embrace local context and content in their teaching process (Sathorar & Geduld, 2018). We also acknowledge that there are no hard rules that can guide teachers on decoloniality in their classrooms, however, current literature suggests they should be exposed to a wide range of decolonial possibilities and avoid reproducing the colonial biases in the education system (Maluleka, 2023, 2024; Sathorar & Geduld, 2018). Vandeyar (2024) argued that teachers are crucial to the decolonial turn and decolonisation of education. Thus, according to Vandeyar (2024), more effort must be placed on pre-service teacher programmes to have an effective decolonial turn through decolonisation of the mind and critical and transformative teacher preparations.

Teachers' conceptualisation of decolonisation did not consider that decolonising of pedagogy and assessment was also important in the quest to decolonise the school history curriculum (Godsell, 2019, 2021). This points to the way in which decolonisation is understood in a school sense, and perhaps, to the overwhelming presence and indeed the power of the official curriculum, as the aspect around which everything in the classroom orients. It also points to the lesser popularisation of the discourse around decolonisation of pedagogy and assessment, and the even more limited way in which this has been taken into the discourse surrounding primary and secondary education (schools) in Africa (Godsell, 2021). The discourse has primarily been centred in the higher educational space.

Although language is one of the most important components in the process of decolonisation, the teachers of history did not foreground language to be important. For Wa Thiongo (1986), decolonisation of education for Africans is to reclaim their language and culture that was destroyed during the colonial period. The reason being, despite Zambia having more than 72 ethnic languages, English has been the official language for use in schools since the colonial period (Mambwe & Njobvu, 2024). It is the only language of instruction recognised by the constitution (Mambwe & Njobvu, 2024). Apart from having a rich linguistic diversity, only seven languages of the 72 ethnic groups were selected to be official local languages, post-independence, that are taught at primary school level. In

2013 local languages were to be a medium of teaching and learning at primary school level up to Grade 4 (MOESTVEE, 2013). However, the 2023 competency-based curriculum overturned the decision to teaching in local languages to English from primary school level to tertiary level (MoE, 2023).

Conclusion

Teachers' knowledge of decolonisation of the school history curriculum represented what they confronted in the curriculum, and in the knowledge that was produced in the classroom around the curriculum, in that it focused on inclusion of content that was marginalised as a way of decolonising the school history curriculum. This is an important aspect of decolonial work, and perhaps the one participants felt most urgent in the curriculum. While their responses show the interconnectedness of different aspects of coloniality, and speak to all three aspects, their understanding does not explicitly address issues of coloniality of power and being. Thus, it can be argued, there is a need for a teachers' education programme that would prepare teachers to have knowledge on decolonisation and develop their decolonial impulses, already visible in the participants' responses. The researchers also acknowledge that the way decolonisation was introduced in the interviews may have played a role in how it was conceptualised and responded to, however, the researchers wanted the participating teachers to have the space to respond spontaneously and genuinely. The study recommends teachers' vocabulary surrounding decoloniality be deepened, and that this could perhaps be done through a module offered addressing decoloniality in teacher education programmes. It was also suggested that in-service teachers should be given knowledge on elements of decolonisation and decoloniality to implement the decolonial agenda. A key finding of the current study is that teachers' views and lived experiences on decolonisation and decoloniality must be taken seriously for the decolonial agenda to be implemented effectively in the field of education in Zambia.

References

Achola, PPW 1990. *Implementing educational policies in Zambia.* World Bank Discussion Papers, No. 90. Africa Technical Department Series.

African Union (AU) 2024. *Teaching of African history pathways to Africa's renaissance and integration,* Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, May 2024. Available at https://au.int/fr/node/43844 Accessed on 15 July 2025.

Auerbach, J 2017. Decolonising social sciences. *Quest,* 13(2): 32-33.

Bentrovato, D & Moyo, N 2025. Teachers' troubled interactions with prescribed school history and its national imaginaries: The case of post-Mugabe Zimbabwe. *Research Papers in Education*, 1–23. Available at https://doi.org/10.1080/02671522.2025.2495110 Accessed on 20 June 2025.

Bhambra, GK, Gebrial, D & Nişancıoğlu, K 2018. *Decolonising the university*. Pluto Press.

Chinyamurindi, WT 2023.Perceptions of what decolonisation means: an exploratory study amongst a sample of rural campus students. *South African Journal of Higher Education,* 37 (3), 59-72.

Chiponda, AF 2020. The contradiction between policy and the representation of people with disabilities in Malawian junior secondary school history textbooks.In *Denise Bentrovato and Johan Wasserman Eds Teaching African History in Schools: Experience and perspectives from Africa and beyond,* 45-63. Brill.

Chishimba, CP & Simukoko, RK 2000. Social studies in Zambia. In MB Adeyemi (ed.). *Social Studies in Africa* (pp. 281-30). Gaborone: Pyramid Publishers.

Crowe, S, Cresswell K Robertson A Huby G, Avery A, Sheikh A (2011).The case study approach. BMC Medical Research Methodology, 1 (100), 2-9 Available at https://bmcmedresmethodol.biomedcentral.com/articles/10.1186/1471-2288-11-100 Accessed on 10th June 2025.

Curriculum Development Center 1996. Junior secondary school history syllabus. CDC: Lusaka.

de Jager, Thelma. (2019). Millennial science student teachers' views on decolonisation and culturally responsive teaching. Journal of Education (University of KwaZulu-Natal), (76), 185-201. Available at https://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_isoref&pid=S59132021000100005-1753&lng=en&tlng=en Accessed on 11 June 2025.

Denscombe, M 2025. Decolonial research methodology: An assessment of the challenge to established practice. *International Journal of Social Research Methodology*, 28(2): 231-240. Available at https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/full/10.1080/13645579.2024.2357558 Accessed 18 June 2025.

Dollie, A, Ramjain, A, Varachia, T, Maangoale, TM, Tshipugu, T, Laurence, T., Laher, YD, Dabhelia, A, Abba, M., Karanie, A., Mitha, A, Mbuli, M, Mogane, K, Montshioa, T, Mamogobo, A & Sahula, M 2020. Decolonial history teachers' charter: A praxis guide. *Yesterday and Today,* (24): 274-288. Available at http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S2223-03862020000200019&lng=en&tlng=en Accessed on 30 June 2025.

Du Plessis, P 2021. Decolonisation of education in South Africa: challenges to decolonise the university curriculum. *South African Journal of Higher Education*, 35(1), 54-69. Available at https://scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_abstract&pid=S1753-59132021000100005 Accessed 20 July 2025

Enaifoghe, AO 2019. The decolonization of African education and history. *African Renaissance*, 16(Special Issue 1), 61-84.

Examination Council of Zambia 1987. *Basic education: Social studies syllabus Grades 3-9*. Lusaka: Curriculum Development Center.

Fanon, F 1968. *The wretched of the Earth*. Grove Press.

Freire, P 1970. *Pedagogy of the oppressed.* Continuum.

Garvey, B & Krug, M 1977. History in Central Africa. *Teaching History,* 17: 10-12. Available at https://www.jstor.org/stable/i40128178 Accessed on 10 January 2025.

Godsell, S 2019. Poetry as method in the history classroom: Decolonising possibilities. *Yesterday and Today*, 21: 1-28. Available at https://doi.org/10.17159/2223-0386/2019/n21a1 Accessed on 8 December 2024.

Godsell, S 2021. Decolonisation of history assessment: An exploration. *South African Journal of Higher Education,* 35(6): 101-20. Available at https://doi.org/10.20853/35-6-4339 Accessed 6 December 2024.

Gulo, FA 2024. Teachers' role and the development of curriculum. Sintaksis: Publikasi Para ahli Bahasa dan Sastra Inggris (Syntax: Publication of English Language and Literature Experts), 2(1): 226-230.

Heleta S 2016. Decolonisation of higher education: Dismantling epistemic violence and Eurocentrism in South Africa. *Transformation in Higher Education*, 1(1): a9. Available at https://doi.org/10.4102/the.v1i1.9 Accessed 12 December 2024.

Jansen JC & Osterhammel, J 2017. Decolonization: A short history.(Princeton: Princeton University).

Kalimaposo, K 2022. The emergence of teacher education in Zambia.*Zambian Journal of Contemporary Issues*, 35: 112-128.

Kalusa, WT & Phiri, BJ 2014. Introduction: Zambia's postcolonial historiography. *Zambia Social Science Journal,* 5(1): Article 3. Available at http://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/zssj/vol5/iss1/3 Accessed on 15 June 2025.

Kaunda, KD 1968. *Humanism in Zambia and a guide to its implementation Part I.* Lusaka: Zambia Information Services.

Koma, SB 2018. The African renaissance and the impetus for transforming higher education. *African Journal of Public Affairs,* 10(2): 97-108.

Laakso, L & Adu, HK 2024. The unofficial curriculum is where the real teaching takes place': faculty experiences of decolonising the curriculum in Africa. *Higher Education,* 87: 185-200. Available at https://link.springer.com/article/10.1007/s10734-023-01000-4 Accessed on 2 July 2025.

Lungwangwa, G 1980. *Education and humanism: An investigation into the ideology of Zambian ideology as a basis of education.* MEd, University of Zambia.

Mahabeer, P 2018. Curriculum decision-makers on decolonising the teacher education curriculum. *South African Journal of Education*, 38(4). Available at https://www.sajournalofeducation.co.za/index.php/saje/article/view/1705/819 Accessed on 1 July 2025.

Maldonado-Torres, N 2017. On the coloniality of human rights. *Revista Crítica de Ciências Sociais (Critical Review of Social Sciences),* 114: 117-136. Available at https://journals.openedition.org/rccs/6793 Accessed on 20 January 2025.

Maluleka, P 2021. Fallism as decoloniality: Towards a decolonised school history curriculum in post-colonial-apartheid South Africa. *Yesterday and Today,* 26: 68-91. Available at https://upjournals.up.ac.za/index.php/yesterday_and_today/article/view/3745/3501 Accessed on 28 January 2025.

Maluleka, P 2023. *Towards a decolonized and Africanized school history curriculum in post apartheid South Africa*. PhD Thesis, University of the Witswatersrand. Available at https://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/items/576d691c-73b9-4a31-8a47-80d8ddecad91 Accessed on 30 June 2025.

Maluleka, P 2024. Teaching through and with decolonial love in a neoliberal South African University. *Transformation in Higher Education,* 9(1): a409. Available at https://doi.org/10.4102/the.v9i0.409 Accessed on 28 January 2025.

Mambwe, K & Njobvu,N 2024. Language-in-education policy in Zambia: The case of teaching in a regional official language at a selected mission school in Lusaka. *Daengku: Journal of Humanities and Social Sciences Innovation*, 4(4): 628-637. Available at https://doi.org/10.35877/454RI.daengku268229 Accessed on 5 July 2025.

Mkansi, M Emwanu, B & Kuchwa-Dube, C 2018. The concept of decolonisation within engineering education. *In International conference on industrial engineering and operations management Pretoria.* University of Pretoria.

Mazimba, MT & Kabombwe, YM 2022. Stakeholders' appraisals of the school history curriculum in Zambia on social media. *Yesterday and Today, 28*(1), 97-121. Available at https://upjournals.up.ac.za/index.php/yesterday_and_today/article/view/4426/3840 Accessed on 28 January 2025.

Mboyonga, E 2023. Representation of women's role in the anti-colonial struggle in Zambian secondary school history textbooks. Hermes: *Tijdschrift Van de Vlaamse vereniging voor Leraren Geschiedenis (Journal of the Flemish Association for History Teachers),* 27(1): 38-43.

Mboyonga, E 2024. The role of Kenneth Kaunda's humanism in fostering higher education for social responsibility in post-colonial Zambia (1964-1991). *Zambian Social Science Journal*, 9,(2): 25-50. Available at https://scholarship.law.cornell.edu/zssj/vol9/iss2/3/ Accessed on 20 June 2025.

Mignolo, WD 2007. Delinking: The rhetoric of modernity, the logic of coloniality and the grammar of de-coloniality. *Cultural Studies,* 21(2-3): 449-514.

Ministry of Education Science and Vocational Training 2013. *Zambia education curriculum framework of 2013*. Lusaka: Curriculum Development Center.

Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training, and Early Childhood Education 2013a. *Grade 10-12 History Syllabus*. Curriculum Development Center: Lusaka.

Ministry of Education, Science, Vocational Training, and Early Childhood Education, Zambia 2013b. *Social Studies Syllabus, Grade 8-9*. Curriculum Development Center: Lusaka.

Ministry of Education, Zambia 1977. *Educational reform: proposals and recommendations.* Lusaka: Government Printer.

Ministry of Education, Zambia 1992. *Focus on learning: Strategies for the development of school education in Zambia: Report on the team appointed to review investment strategies in education*. Lusaka. ZEPH.

Ministry of Education, Zambia 1996. *Educating our future, national policy on education.* Lusaka: ZEPH.

Ministry of Education, Zambia 2023. *Zambia education curriculum framework, 2023.* Lusaka: Curriculum Development Center.

Moloi, KC, Lebelo, RS, Akindeinde, S, & Adesanya, SO 2023. Decolonisation of history in the South African school curriculum. *Mitteilungen Klosterneuburg (Communications from Klosterneuburg)*, 73(5): 23-35.

Money, D & Chansa, CJ 2024. Sixty years since Zambia's independence: Revisiting scholarship on the struggle against colonialism. *South African Historical Journal,* 76(1–2), 228–232. Available at https://doi.org/10.1080/02582473.2024.2441739 Accessed on 10 July 2025.

Moser A & Korstjens I 2017. Series: Practical guidance to qualitative research. Part 1: Introduction. *European Journal of General Practice,* 273-271 :(1)23.

Muller, M 2018. Decolonising engineering in South Africa – Experience to date and some emerging challenges. *South African Journal of Science,* 114(5/6): 1-6.

Mvenene, J 2017. The infusion of indigenous knowledge systems in the teaching and learning of South African history in the further education and training phase. *Indilinga African Journal of Indigenous Knowledge System*, 16(1): 100-117.

Ncube, H & Moyo, N 2024. Countering colonial narratives through the secondary school history curriculum: A case of the Zimbabwean post- colonial school history curriculum education from 1980-2022. *Nova Revista Amazônica (New Amazonian Review)*, 12(1), 78-92.

Ndlovu-Gatsheni, SJ 2019. Discourses of decolonization/decoloniality. *Papers on Language and Literature*, 55(3): 201-226.

Oelofsen, R 2015. Decolonisation of the African mind and intellectual landscape. *Phronimon, 16* (2), 130-146. Available at http://www.scielo.org.za/scielo.php?script=sci_arttext&pid=S1561-40182015000200008&lng=en&tlng=en Accessed on 19 June 2025.

Organisation for African Unity 1961. *Outline of a plan for African educational development.* Conference of African States on the Development of Education in Africa. O.A.U. Addis Ababa, Ethiopia, 15th May-25th May.

Ranawana, A 2023. *Decolonisation and decoloniality: A position paper for research and evidence cultures in Christian aid*. Position Paper.

Rehman AA & Alharthi K 2016. An introduction to research paradigms. *International Journal of Educational Investigations*, 3(8): 51-59.

Sathorar, H & Geduld, D 2018. Towards decolonising teacher education: Reimagining the relationship between theory and praxis. *South African Journal of Education*, 38(4): 1-12. Available at https://www.ajol.info/index.php/saje/article/view/182628 Accessed on 10 February 2025.

Shabangu, B 2022. *Investigating (possible) tensions and possibilities of decolonising history curriculum as a locus to foster inclusive education in South African schools.* Master of Education, University of the Witwatersrand. Available at https://wiredspace.wits.ac.za/items/208f5b85-32c3-48dc-ab56-f480e6774930 Accessed on 12 July 2025.

Shabangu, B 2024. Rethinking the South African school history curriculum: Theorising indigenous archives of history. In G Boadu and CA Oppong, *History Education in Africa, Research, Perspectives and Practice* (pp. 69-90). Palgrave Macmillan, Cham.

Filho, TW 2024. On decolonization and its correlates. *PPGAS 50 Anos*, 49(1): 66–116.

Van Eeden, ES & Warnich, P 2018. Reflecting the 2018 history ministerial task team report on compulsory history in South Africa. *Yesterday & Today*, 20: 18-45. Available at https://doi.org/10.17159/2223-0386/2018/n19a2 Accessed on 2 July 2025.

Vandeyar, S 2025. Decolonisation of education: The pre- service teacher turn. *Teacher Development,* 29(2): 187-203. Available at https://doi.org/10.1080/13664530.2024.2401872 Accessed on 20 January 2025.

Wa Thiong'o, N 1986. *Decolonising the mind: The politics of language in African literature.* Nairobi, Kenya: East African Educational Publishers Ltd.