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A FORGOTTEN PAST IS THE PAST THAT IS YET TO BE: EVALUATION OF ORAL HISTORY PROGRAMME OF THE ORAL HISTORY ASSOCIATION OF SOUTH AFRICA

Sindiso Bhebhe & Mpho Ngoepe

University of South Africa, South Africa

sindiso.bhebhe@nust.ac.zw / ngoepms@unisa.ac.za

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Abstract

South Africa is one of the few countries in Africa that has a running oral history association. In some countries, especially in southern Africa, these oral history associations have arisen and then died a natural death. For example, Oral Traditions Association of Zimbabwe (OTAZI) did not last long. Therefore, it is a positive development for South Africa to have a functioning oral history association. The Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA) is the brainchild of the government and is mainly funded by the government. It is involved in the coordination and documentation of stories that were silent during the apartheid era. Therefore, with this highly perceived task it is necessary to critically evaluate its successes and failures in meeting the objectives of the National Oral History Programme (NOHP). This paper, through document analysis and purposively selected interviews, critically evaluates the achievements and shortcomings of the OHASA from its inception to present with the aim of proposing a 'working' model which involves the setting up of a monitoring and evaluating system. The paper concludes that although OHASA unveiled the muted marginalised voices, its oral history programme demonstrate elitism in critical emancipatory as mostly the stories of the elites are covered. Furthermore, such recorded stories are not accessible as the recordings are stashed in the boxes in archives repositories.

Key words: oral history; Oral History Association of South Africa; oral history programmes

Introduction

The axiom 'a forgotten past is the past that is yet to be' attributed to A.E. Samaan by Tuyang Initiative¹ in Malaysia, implies that memory missing from our collective conscience is a forgotten history. In embracing this maxim, the democratic government in South Africa through the National Archives and Records Services (NARS) Act (Act No 46 of 1996) set the tone for the national and provincial governments to become involved in the documentation of the once neglected history in the apartheid era so that it is not forgotten. The NARS Act of 1996, as amended in 2001, clearly states that one of the NARS's functions is to "collect non-public records with enduring value of national significance which cannot be more appropriately preserved by another institution, with due regard to the need to document

¹ <https://www.worldindigenousforum.com/exhibitors/the-tuyang-initiative>

aspects of the nation's experience neglected by archives repositories in the past.” The motivation of oral history programmes in Africa, South Africa included, is generally derived from addressing historical ‘fictions’ which were created by the imperialists during colonisation (Bhebhe 2019:167). This desire by the government of South Africa to capture the stories of the once marginalised population later culminated in a Cabinet decision to form the National Oral History Programme (NOHP), and the offshoot of that was the coming into existence of the Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA). These developments are well captured by Archives at the Crossroad (2007:97) which avers that:

The use of oral history as a mechanism for fulfilling this mandate was to be given effect through: the establishment in 1999 of the National Oral History Project, by the then Department of Arts, Culture Science and Technology (DACST); the formation of the Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA) in 2003 by the Department of Arts and Culture (DAC); and the flowering of oral history projects in national and provincial archives. Although this mandate has not been fully realised, these developments had the effect of positioning oral history firmly in the domain of archives.

Therefore, the thrust of this paper is to analyse how OHASA has fared in its main objective of popularising the use of oral history in documenting the story of the once neglected people of South Africa.

Contextual background

OHASA is one of the eight outcomes of the NOHP. According to the OHASA (2018) website, OHASA was launched in 2003 under the arm of the NARS and one of the primary preoccupations of OHASA has been the planning and execution of annual oral history conferences, in conjunction with the Local Organising Committee (LOC), which plays a key role in shaping, among others, the conference theme. These annual conferences serve as a platform for oral history practitioners in institutions of higher learning, NGOs, community organisations, educators, learners and local knowledge holders to engage one another. The OHASA 2018 website continues to outline that:

1. OHASA’s first two annual national conferences were held in the Gauteng province; the first was held in Pretoria in 2004, and the second was held in Johannesburg in 2005.
2. Thereafter, the annual conferences began to rotate between the different provinces as shown in Table 1.

Table 1: Annual Oral History Association of South Africa' conferences and their themes from 2006-2018

Year	Province	Theme of the conference
2018	Western Cape (Cape Town)	Freedom and egalitarianism: Nelson Mandela, the symbol of democracy
2017	Eastern Cape (Mthatha)	Oliver Reginald Tambo in Memoriam: Reminiscing on a centenary of struggle, true leadership and leadership values of a liberation stalwart
2016	Limpopo (Thohoyandou)	Chanted memories and anniversaries: celebrating our common past(s)
2015	KwaZulu-Natal (Durban)	Freedom charter, memories, and other (un)freedoms
2014	Gauteng (Johannesburg)	Celebrating 20 years of democracy: Oral history and the politics of transformation
2013	Northern Cape (Kimberley)	Centenary of the Land Act of 1913
2012	Free State (Bloemfontein)	Oral history, communities and the liberation struggle: Reflective memories in post-apartheid South Africa
2011	North West (Mahikeng)	Past distortions, present realities; (Re)construction(s) and (Re)configuration(s) of oral history
2010	Mpumalanga (Nelspruit)	Oral history and heritage, national and local identities
2009	Western Cape (Cape Town)	The politics of collecting and curating voices
2008	Eastern Cape (East London)	Hidden voices, untold stories and veiled memories: Oral history, representation and knowledge
2007	Limpopo (Polokwane)	Truth, legitimacy and representation: Oral history and alternative voices
2006	KwaZulu-Natal (Richards Bay)	Culture, memory and trauma

The OHASA (2016) constitution, as amended in Thohoyandou on 12 October 2016, at Thulamela Sports Centre, outlines the aim of OHASA as being that of promoting and developing oral history as a formal and distinct discipline. In order to achieve this aim, the association's main objectives are to:

- promote the research and dissemination of oral history in South Africa in the various official languages
- promote the use of oral history in schools and other institutions
- liaise with indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) holders in the promotion of oral history
- establish partnership with institutions, bodies, associations pursuing similar objectives and practices
- promote collection management and accessibility of oral history
- organise and host annual OHASA conferences.

The old constitution of OHASA (2004) had only one objective, which was "to promote and facilitate the recording, preservation, access, popularisation and study of oral history in South Africa. This includes poetry, music, oral praise, oral performance and oral traditions."

Professional associations (PA) play a major role in the development of a profession. In this case, it is the development of the oral history profession in South Africa. "If a PA does not exist, there is no focal point for the profession. It is difficult for members to contribute to policy and decision making, and it is difficult for the profession to be consulted in its own right" (Moyo & Renard 2016). Moyo and Renard (2016:1-9) list the following as important reasons for having a PA:

1. It gives a common vision and goal to the profession.
2. It aggregates efforts, thoughts, and ideas of members.
3. It gives a voice to the profession.
4. It gives power and credibility to the profession.
5. It is a powerhouse of professional expertise.
6. It keeps members up to date.
7. It serves as conduit of professional development.
8. It provides structure and governance to the profession.
9. It communicates with the government, press and other stakeholders.

According to observation, these are benefits that OHASA as a PA received. Putting the benefits listed by Moyo and Renard (2016) into the context of oral history, Ngulube (2015:11) adds that:

Professional associations play an important role in laying out ethical standards for their members... For instance, one of the objectives of the Oral History Association of Australia (OHAA) is to “promote discussion and training on all aspects of the methodology and ethical practices of oral history as a discipline and a means of gathering and preserving social and cultural history” ... The Oral History Association (OHA) (2015) and the Oral History Association of South Africa (2007) recognized the need to codify standards for oral history and developed codes of ethics and professional responsibility... Some associations maintain registers of experts in oral history and those who offer oral history workshops (Shopes 2009).

However, the benefits suggested by Moyo and Renard (2016) are not all used optimally by OHASA, hence “it is important to strengthen the PA in a focused and systematic way by assessing strengths and weaknesses to ensure that all departments are functioning well” (Moyo & Renard 2016:2). This is what this paper is set to do.

Problem statement

Oral history in South Africa is well established, especially in universities and in the private domain (Klopfer 2001). Private archives, including university archives, seem to be ‘well advanced’ in their oral history methodologies as seen in Sinomlando’s memory box approach (Sinomlando 2018). Interestingly, this observation is well captured in The Transversal Oral History Framework of the Department of Cultural Affairs (2015:1) which argues that “while the use of oral history is well defined and structured in the academic environment, this has not come into fruition in the public domain of South Africa.” The introduction of the NOHP was to add positively to this trajectory as the government of South Africa was now also becoming fully involved in the documentation of the stories and indigenous knowledge systems of its people. OHASA was to become the professional association at the forefront of these new oral history developments. Much has since been achieved by OHASA, such as the success of the learners’ oral history programme and the Coffee Table project (OHASA Newsletter 2014-2018). Despite these and other achievements, OHASA still has not facilitated substantively ‘enough’ oral history projects. Archiving of and access to oral history projects are still restricted in the government repositories and the organisation’s membership is still very low (OHASA Newsletter 2018). Observations on the ground revealed that the organisation concentrates more on the hosting of conferences; therefore, other goals of OHASA suffer indirect neglect. Observations also revealed that there is no monitoring and evaluation system to measure the performance of the organisation.

Methodology

This was an interpretivist, qualitative case study. The data were collected mainly through content analysis of OHASA's newsletters, OHASA's website, OHASA's president's annual reports and OHASA's minutes of annual general meetings. Data were also gathered through observation and purposive interviews conducted with some of the executive members of OHASA. The data were mainly presented in narrative form.

Findings, discussions and recommendations

Analysis of the Annual Oral History Association of South Africa's conferences

Table 1 reveals that since its inception, OHASA has always successfully managed to host its annual conferences. It is during these annual conferences that policy issues, challenges, successes and OHASA's president's annual reports are discussed. Academic papers on oral history, including the learners' articles, are presented and organic indigenous scholars are given a platform to present on oral history. OHASA (2014:2) cites Ntsimane, the former deputy president of OHASA, who notes that "the part played by organic intellectuals in our gatherings since the Mpumalanga conference has enhanced the value of our meetings tremendously." OHASA (2018:2) cites Zulu, the acting editor of OHASA's newsletter, as having said, "we have engaged on a number of issues concerning oral history but we are far from holistically covering all the aspects of oral history. We are soldiering on ... at the same time also tapping on marginalised areas which are in remote areas of our country."

Despite OHASA's constitution (2016) stating that membership is open to any individual person, public institution or community-based organisation that actively supports its aims and objectives, there is still definitely a problem of low membership as witnessed in these annual conferences. This is noted again in the President's Report (2017) which laments the low membership by stating that:

Another nagging concern that OHASA would have to seriously investigate, and resolve is the dwindling number of members in good standing. According to the credentials report tabled by our deputy secretary Mr Ntuthuko Khuzwayo last year, OHASA had 34 members in good standing (i.e. members who had paid their membership fee) and these were divided into two categories: 13 individual membership and 21 institutional membership.

It was observed that most of the members of OHASA are government departments and academics, with very few local community members. The annual OHASA conferences are again attended by representatives from different government departments, academics, learners and politicians. Very few people from local communities attend or are invited.

OHASA should then attempt by all means possible to have people from local communities on their executive rather than a scenario in which its executive consists of only civil servants and academics. Indigenous and local communities should be encouraged to be part of OHASA's paid-up members in order to turn away from the current situation in which the membership mainly consists of government departments, academics and civil servants. This should be done in the spirit of incorporating the whole of different sections of society of South Africa into OHASA, which is spearheading the government's oral history programme. Inclusivity, and not exclusivity, should be the order of the day.

Another important issue for OHASA to think about is the idea of ‘unconferencing’. The present scenario where it is assumed that the people on stage have more information than those listening is now viewed as old fashioned and does not bring new innovative ideas to the table. Budd et al. (2015:1) state the following:

Unlike traditional conferences, an unconference is a participant-oriented meeting where the attendees decide on the agenda, discussion topics, workshops, and, often, even the time and venues. The informal and flexible program allows participants to suggest topics of their own interest and choose sessions accordingly... The overarching goal for most unconferences is to prioritize conversation over presentation. In other words, the content for a session does not come from a select number of individuals at the front of the room, but is generated by all the attendees within the room, and, as such, every participant has an important role.

Some of the advantages of the unconference format listed by Budd et al (2015:1) include the following:

1. A focus on topics that are relevant to the attendees (because they suggested them)
2. An opportunity for teamwork development, flexibility of schedule, and an emphasis on contributions from every participant
3. The relationships built during an unconference often continue well after the event. The interactions can lead to productive collaborations, professional development opportunities, and a network of resources, and are very effective at building a community among participants.
4. The unconference format, therefore, gives participants experience in working together, and this can change how they think about their day-to-day work.

Besides breaking the monotony of traditional conferences and bringing innovative ideas to how oral history should be done in South Africa, such an approach of ‘unconferencing’ goes a long way in addressing the perennial challenge of having delegates who show up during lunch times, but going AWOL during the presentation of academic papers. This leads to academic tourism.

On the issue of increasing membership of PAs, Moyo and Renard (2016:7) have this to say:

A very important role of the PA is to increase the number of its members, and recruitment activities must be ongoing. To make this easier, members should clearly understand the benefits of belonging to the association. Hence, the association should clearly articulate member benefits and the need for a PA in the country, and this should be communicated to members and non-members. To attract more members, regular membership drives should be conducted. The PA might also host events that cost less for members or create a member only page on the website to nudge non-members to join.

OHASA can adopt some of the suggested strategies by Moyo and Renard (2016:7). Furthermore, OHASA should make sure that its membership includes all races and ethnic groups in South Africa in order to avoid reverse apartheid. It should be a rainbow membership.

Provincialisation of OHASA

Under the news section on the OHASA (2018) website, Limpopo's first Provincial Oral History is reported on. In addition, the 4th Oral History Conference, held in Ermelo in the Mpumalanga province, is reported on. This shows that, so far, Limpopo and Mpumalanga are the only provinces that have provincial oral history conferences. The OHASA newsletter (2016:1) talks of the Mpumalanga department taking oral history to greater heights through its oral history conference under the theme "Capturing Memories, History, Heritage and the Pride of Mpumalanga Province." The OHASA newsletter (2016:1) states that the aim of this conference "was to amplify silent voices, expose emerging stories which have found space because of the democratic dispensation we are enjoying today..." OHASA (2016:1) continues to narrate that the issue of "disparities in affording equal status to all languages in the province came out sharply. Speakers such as Mr P Mnisi and Mr G Mashego made presentations calling for the recognition of marginalised languages of Mapulana, Amashangane and VaHlanganu."

OHASA (2016:2) cites Mahalefa who observes that the "partnership between the national Department of Arts and Culture, OHASA, Witwatersrand History Workshop, and different provinces is working very well to promote oral history in the country... I am happy to announce that one of the grand outcomes of such projects is the book by Harold Lekhuleni" (a book about the history of his former school).

OHASA's (2014:6) newsletter reveals that, in some provinces, the Department of Arts and Culture has established oral history units to consolidate and take forward the oral history initiatives that have been ongoing in a piecemeal fashion within its archival services sub-directorate. Such is the case at the KwaZulu-Natal Archives and the Oral History Unit. The OHASA (2014:6) newsletter notes that "the task of the Unit is not dissimilar to the work done in the regional archives' repositories in Ulundi and Pietermaritzburg within the province. The other provinces have also adopted oral history to add on the information already archived and to improve on the weak documentation available." The OHASA (2014:6) newsletter reveals that the unit has so far conducted interviews on the following topics: struggle veterans, mainly in Mpumalanga near Hammarsdale; political violence; traditional healing (IKS) in the Port Shepstone area; traditional leadership of Amakhosi in Nkandla, Greytown and Ixopo, and the American Board Mission church in Durban, especially the biography of Reverend BK Dlodla who is about 90 years old.

OHASA (2014:10) also reports on the Oral History Elderly Day in North West. This event intends to gather significant history from communities around the North West province. It also aimed to gather as much as possible information and knowledge from senior citizens identified to share their history, dating back from forced removals to indigenous knowledge systems. The provincial archives documented the presentations given by selected elderly citizens on various topics and what stemmed from these presentations was the issue of forced removals from the initial residential area to the area of Madibogopane where they now reside.

Even though the decentralisation or provincialisation of OHASA's annual conferences is still in its infancy because only the Limpopo and Mpumalanga provinces have been involved, it is a step in the right direction that needs to be encouraged. Other provinces need to follow suit as it will assist the provincial OHASA executive to concentrate on recording and archiving oral histories in their provinces. Each province has a unique history and, therefore, needs a

unique approach in recording its stories. For example, it was noted that in Mpumalanga, there is an issue of the following minority languages that are not recognised: Mapulana, Tsongas and VaHlanganu. Therefore, the provincialisation of OHASA helps with the establishment of a provincial executive that will be able to tackle such issues because they are closer to the people and most likely speak the local languages. Such an approach is supported by Wales (2014:58) who elaborates on the devolution of mainstream archives as this usually led to the incorporation of local interests in the discourse of the officialised national narrative. All this should be done in the spirit that an over-centralised OHASA is counterproductive.

If conducted well, these provincial oral history chapters are likely to fill the empty repositories in the provinces (Ngoepe 2019). However, in these OHASA provincial chapters, it should be prudent that they do not fall into the trap of concentrating too much on annual conferences and not on dedicating more time to working with local communities in recording their histories.

Coffee Table oral history programme

The oral history project, which appears on the OHASA (2018) website, is called the Coffee Table project and is targeting the stories of South African women. The OHASA (2018) newsletter mentions that the published book *Tell your Mother's Story* is a collection of oral stories from the Coffee Table oral history programme. This Coffee Table publication *Tell your Mother's Story* is reviewed by Hingston (2018:47) in the following words:

There is a dearth of women's stories and a few that are told usually focus on renowned and public-figure women. The stories of ordinary women are left untold, giving the impression that they have not made any meaningful contribution to their societies. This is what makes these compiled stories unique. They detail the lives of women whose stories may not have been told and whom many will perceive as ordinary.

The general analysis coming from the OHASA newsletters is that there is much information on conferences and learners' programmes but very little on oral history programmes in the form of case studies with the communities. The exceptions are the KwaNdanama Project in the Eastern Cape and the Coffee Table project, which are encouraging women to tell their stories. In other words, apart from a few learners' programmes, there is dearth of oral history projects being undertaken by OHASA. Most of the projects are not producing tangible products. As Ngoepe (2019) observes, in cases where products are produced, such products are stashed into boxes in archives repositories. However, the Coffee Table oral history project is an example that if OHASA prioritises such approaches, more stories of the marginalised groups of society would be documented. The importance of targeting stories of women cannot be downplayed, as Rodrigues (2013:75) avers that postmodernism and social history are of

The notion that there is a need to preserve a comprehensive documentary heritage of society by not only favouring the dominant narrative discourse, but by equally including the voices of ordinary people and the marginalised that may be underrepresented such as women, marginal religious groups, ethnic, linguistic and immigrant minorities, and so on.

The learners' oral history programme

The OHASA (2014 – 2018) newsletters illustrate that most of the oral history projects performed by OHASA are those that involve the training of educators and learners in oral history methodologies. The OHASA newsletter (2014:5) shows that the Mpumalanga Department of Culture Sports and Recreation was working in partnership with the Department of Education to make its training workshops available to educators. There were 30 history/social sciences subject advisors from nearby districts who were trained by OHASA in oral history methodologies. The OHASA (2016) newsletter mentions the following oral history projects conducted: training Limpopo learners in oral history methodology (the National Archives and Records Services of South Africa (NARSSA), in partnership with the Limpopo Provincial Archives, trained 46 learners from the Vhembe and Polokwane areas in the methodology of oral history).

Another interesting oral history project reported in the OHASA newsletter (2014:8) was the Galeshewe 8 September 1980 Memorial Project, which was commemorated by the community and the three local schools. The theme that governed the three-day event was “34 Years on: Telling our Story”. The organisers wanted the learners of today to appreciate the history of those who had first-hand experience when students rose up in the boycott on 8 September 1980, due to the multiple challenges with the education system.

The OHASA (2015) newsletter reports on the Second Mpumalanga Oral History Conference, which equipped the North West educators with oral history research skills (on 8 September 2015, 60 participants consisting of educators and eight learners took part in the oral history training workshop organised by the archives unit of the North West Provincial Government in Mafikeng); the OHASA fundraising drive, oral history training (the KwaZulu-Natal Provincial Archives and the NARSSA hosted 50 learners from five schools in uMgungundlovu District for oral history training. These schools were selected because they are part of the Family Tree project initiated jointly by the KwaZulu-Natal Archives and the KwaZulu-Natal Department of Education); the Eastern Cape Learners Training Workshop (in May 2015, the officials from the National Archives of the Department of Arts and Culture facilitated oral history training for learners in King William's Town); and the Nkosi Albert Luthuli Oral History Competition. The OHASA newsletter (2015:8) citing Singh who was one of the executive members of OHASA describes the Nkosi Albert Luthuli competition in the newsletter in the following words:

This competition helps to build confidence among learners and educators alike. The competition is hosted by the Department of Basic Education (DBE) annually. The competition encourages learners to research topics [oral history topics] that they are interested in from the array of topics provided. They need not go far as we can use the resources from within their community.

Citing Singh, the OHASA newsletter (2015:8) then notes the weakness of the iNkosi Albert Luthuli Oral History Programme by observing that those participating in this competition are mainly coming from the “urban areas closer to where the DBE offices are located. It is crucial that such opportunities are not denied learners from areas far away from the urban centres. Educators from rural areas should engage in such projects to expand the horizons of the learners.”

One of the participants in charge of the learners' oral history programme was interviewed. The participant mentioned that one of the objectives was to improve the research skills of all

learners taking social sciences and history as subjects throughout the country. This programme is coordinated in the form of a competition that takes place at circuit, district, and provincial level, and end at national level. Teachers and subject advisors support schools by assessing their research step by step.

Asked about what the programme entailed, the participant indicated that: “A national theme for the year (for example centenary year of Nelson Mandela) is used to come up with the different topics to be researched, in line with the general steps of conducting an oral history research. Topics are sent out to provinces at the beginning of the year. The competition takes place at different levels until the number is scaled down to eight learners going to the national competition.”

The following were provided as some of the themes that have graced the learners’ programme:

Main theme: Centenary year of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela

Sub-themes:

1. Life story of a former activist(s) in my community who emulated the values of Nelson Rolihlahla Mandela in addressing issues of gender equality, non-racialism, socio-economic equality as well as to better the lives of the people in their community.
2. Life story of a former worker in the 1970s who took part on the 1973 Durban strike and how their actions contributed to the current workers’ rights in South Africa.
3. The 1954 Women’s Charter states: We, the women of South Africa, wives and mothers, working women and housewives, African, Indians, European and coloured, hereby declare our aim of striving for the removal of all laws, regulations, conventions and customs that discriminate against us as women, and that deprive us in any way of our inherent right to the advantages, responsibilities and opportunities that society offers to any one section of the population.
4. Freedom, democracy and history of my school: how my school experienced apartheid and the changes since the advent of democracy in 1994.
5. The Native Land Act of 1913 passed by the Union Government decreed that blacks were to hold only 7% of the land. This piece of legislation also deprived black people of owning land and was a precursor to other more repressive laws such as the Group Areas Act of 1950.

The participant stated that these sub-themes touched on the histories of minorities like women and recorded those unknowns who are in the communities but have a historical story to tell that would feed into the national narrative. In terms of documenting the minorities, the participant specified that “there was once the unsung hero sub-theme that was previously included as part of the competition”.

OHASA has played a major role in the learners’ oral history programme, as data collected and presented have shown. It has provided the necessary expertise in the training of learners in the oral history skills. In the importance of the learners’ oral history programme, SAHA (2007:1) cites the then Minister of Education stating that:

The Department of Education strongly supports the strengthening of oral history research in our schools... Oral history research enables young people to engage with their communities to find positive role models of people who overcame obstacles of all kinds to truly make a difference in the quality of life for the people around them.

This creates a constructive dialogue between youth and elders, which is otherwise often sadly missing. Indeed, the skills that are taught through oral history research are important academic skills. However, values are also strengthened through the interaction with members of the community.

The NARSSA and provincial archives, including OHASA, are involved in training the learners in oral history methodologies. This is a commendable exercise but, in addition to Singh's observation of the weakness of the iNkosi Albert Luthuli Oral History Programme by observing that those participating in this competition are mainly coming from the "urban areas closer to where the DBE offices are located", OHASA and other stakeholders should guide against turning these oral history project presentations into public speech competitions in which only those with a good command of English take the centre stage.

Popularising and providing access to oral history

Some of the objectives of the OHASA (2016) constitution, which speak to issues of access, are to:

1. promote the usage of oral history in schools and other institutions
2. liaise with IKS holders in the promotion of oral history
3. promote collection management and accessibility of oral history.

According to OHASA (2015:1), Lekgoathi, the former President of OHASA, writing in the OHASA newsletter argues that:

We have done a remarkable job in terms of popularising oral history across our nine provinces, as well as in terms of supporting provincial initiatives. Our conference proceedings have been published and the oral history journal of South Africa – the first of its kind on the African continent – has been established ...

As the participant said, the NARSSA was in charge of the maintenance of the National Register of Oral Sources (NAROS). Through document analysis, the history of NAROS can be traced from the aims and objectives of the NOHP in which the DACST (2001) outlines that it was agreed "to develop an online National Register of Oral Sources (NAROS) as a support mechanism for the NOHP." The NARSSA (2016) website states that the "National Archives is responsible for the maintenance of a National Register of Oral Sources (NAROS) at which stories are registered. This database is managed to provide leads to interested parties about research conducted on subjects that may be of interest." The website (NARSSA 2016) further continues to outline that "all oral history collections preserved at the National Archives are preserved for access. These collections are made available to researchers, students and members of communities" and they are "consulted for their research value by scholars and practitioners who use them for different reasons such as short writing, drama, and filmmaking or for their historical content." However, the participant said the oral history archive is rarely used and it is estimated that only two out of ten researchers access the stories at any given time. The participant also said the use of social media to market the oral history archive was lacking.

According to the OHASA constitution (2016:2), the office-bearers should include a president, deputy president, treasurer, secretary and deputy secretary, partnership and international liaisons, editor, promotions and publicity, and research and development. This paper is mainly interested in analysing the roles of promotion and publicity, editor, and research and development, as they are of interest in this article. According to the OHASA constitution

(2016:4), the person responsible for promotion and publicity promotes the brand and image of the organisation, updates the website and newsletter, enhances visibility and awareness of the association to the public, and designs brochures to be distributed in other conferences. The OHASA Constitution (2016) states that the editor looks into the publication of conference proceedings and edits the new conference proceedings and the publication of the academic journal. The OHASA constitution (2016:5) outlines the role of research and development as follows: to train young oral historians (presentations, workshops, and conference abstracts, among other things). Some other responsibilities of research and development include the following:

- Encourage, promote, and support emerging oral history projects.
- Encourage and promote discussion and debate around alternative methodologies in oral history and indigenous knowledge systems.
- Coordinate and evaluate abstracts.
- Maintain the database of the oral history research.
- Maintain the database of speakers and organic speakers.
- Liaise with the national archives regarding the training of learners in the oral history project.

This amended part of the OHASA constitution clearly shows the new thrust of the organisation in its endeavour to popularise oral history and provide access to it.

Access to archives is one of the cornerstones of the profession, as argued by Wales (2014:36-37) citing the National Archives of Australia, that “there is little point in keeping records unless they can be accessed by interested researchers.” Cannon (2009:17) echoes this statement by stating that “an unused archive is a sad archive indeed.” Therefore, it is important that OHASA, working with national and provincial archives repositories, should provide access to the oral histories collected. However, the fact that most of the archives repositories are being centralised in metropolises except the Gauteng one (Ngoepe 2019) means “distance is a barrier to access because, despite efforts to digitise which makes material accessible across space on the worldwide (web), the vast majority of archives and manuscripts remain non-digitised and accessible only if researchers can physically visit the repository” (Greene 2007:2). Bickford-Smith, Field and Glaser (2001:19) advocate that it is imperative that people’s stories are taken beyond the confines of ‘The Academy’ and ‘The Archive’. One of the outcomes of the NOPH was the regular broadcasting of oral records on national and local radio and television (DACST 2001). OHASA should do a follow-up on this aspect so that oral history stories can be taken beyond the confines of ‘The Academy’ and ‘The Archive’ as suggested by Bickford-Smith et al (2001).

Access through online archiving is now becoming very popular in the world of archives, including in South Africa. This is noted by Archival Platform (2015:172) when it narrates that there are now a number of online archives, which include the South African History Online (SAHO), Claremont Histories, the Ulwazi and the Apartheid projects which make it possible for individuals to contribute to the creation of an online archive through high-level use of ICTs and social media. One such online archives is Royal Bafokeng Digital Archives. OHASA, the national archives and the provincial archives can copy some of these online approaches so that the product of the NOPH is made easily accessible to the most South Africans.

Content analysis of the Oral History Journal of South Africa' dissemination activities

The Oral History Journal of South Africa (OHJSA) was one of the means used to disseminate the products of the NOHP. Therefore, it is important to analyse how effective it was in doing that, especially considering the objectives of the NOHP and OHASA. For example, how many articles about the South African oral history landscape have been published? Since the first publication in 2013 to 2018, 70 articles have been published and, out of these, 35 are based on South African oral history stories, while the other 35 are stories relating to events outside South African borders. The 2018 volume six, number one edition of the OHJSA contains six articles and only one of these articles was about a South African story; the other five were about stories outside the South African border and mostly written by non-South Africans.

The OHJSA, which is supposed to disseminate and tell the documented histories of South Africans to the world, is publishing fewer projects on South Africa. At this ratio, it means the story of South Africa and South Africans risked being eclipsed by the stories of other countries. Therefore, it would be best for OHASA to make sure that at least sixty per cent of articles in every volume of OHJSA are about of South African projects. Again, it should be noted that while having a journal is a positive development, OHASA should try to consider other methods to use to disseminate their work, because, sometimes, these journals are elitist and meant for academics and not for the rural communities. Exhibitions, especially the travel shows, are offering CDs, books, pamphlets, brochures, multi-media awareness events, workshops, performances of storytelling, drama, theatre, musicals, and rituals detailing oral history projects published in vernacular, which could be some of the ways that can be used by OHASA to disseminate their products to the non-academic audience (DASCT 2001).

Archiving oral history collection

According to OHASA (2015:1), Lekgoathi, writing in the OHASA newsletter, argues that:

OHASA has also experienced some challenges in terms of making sure that the Oral History interviews conducted by the researchers and learners make their way to the archives (both provincial and national) where they would become accessible to the public.

Asked about where they keep the oral history recordings that learners create, the participant said, “at province level we don’t keep the learners product, they take it back to school after the competition. I am not sure with national, but learners’ files are given back after the competition.” Furthermore, these can be accessed only during the adjudication process of the competition, after which learners keep these as their personal products. The strengths and weaknesses of the programme are clear from the following participant’s response: “Learners are doing well in terms of finding untold stories or information in their communities, although the department does not have a proper way of archiving the information. It is only used for competition purposes.” The participant added that this means that such rich collection of community histories is lost because of the lack of strategy in archiving it. OHASA needs to encourage its members to send their oral history collections to national repositories. Academic articles on oral history are presented during annual conferences and most of those papers are compiled from oral history interviews. Therefore, OHASA, the national archives and the provincial archives can encourage and incentivise the presenters not only to submit academic papers, but also the raw data of oral history interviews they used to write their papers.

Financial independence

OHASA (2015:1) cites Lekgoathi who also raised the issue of financial independence of OHASA by arguing that “we have not been very successful in our fundraising ventures, which would ensure that in the long term, we become financially sustainable and less dependent on the Department of Arts and Culture.” The situation is worsened by the following:

The NOHP has never been adequately supported in terms of funding and staff. From its inception it managed to fund a few projects with what funds could be allocated from the already strained budget of the NARSSA as a whole. The problem continues to exist in name, but without the resources to develop into a fully functional area of work with dedicated staff in the NFVSA. At the same time, while OHASA remains useful in raising awareness of the need to document aspects of the past that were previously neglected and has political purchase, it is inadequately funded to do its work (Archival Platform 2015:118).

National and provincial archives repositories in South Africa have a legal right to be supported by the National Treasury. One of the duties of PAs is to play an advocacy role (Moyo & Renard 2016). OHASA can then advocate on behalf of its members such as national archives to receive at least reasonable funds from the National Treasury. However, for OHASA to be able to maintain its independence and represent those ‘shunned’ by the government, it needs financial independence. The present situation in which most of its budget comes from the government means that OHASA is politically purchased by the African National Congress (ANC). It then comes as no surprise that annual conferences of OHASA are dominated by politicians from the ANC government, as has been observed. Even the conference themes are memorialising ANC cadres, for example the 2018 theme was “Freedom and egalitarianism: Nelson Mandela, the symbol of democracy.” The 2017 conference theme was “Oliver Reginald Tambo in Memoriam: Reminiscing on a centenary of struggle, true leadership and leadership values of a liberation stalwart.” In addition, the conferences’ overtones are of the liberation struggle in which the present government was engaged during the apartheid era. In order to avoid this bias in favour of the ANC government, OHASA needs to be politically, organisationally and financially independent, as Ndhlovu (2018:337) argues that once they are state funded, such heritage institutions are expected to align their activities to state programmes, thereby reducing their ‘free’ spokenness.

Building relationships

The OHASA (2014:7) newsletter publicised *New Oral History Documents* at the Alan Paton Centre and Struggle archives. The newsletter states that the Sinomlando Research Centre for Oral History and Memory Work in Africa once again handed over two important documents to the Alan Paton Centre and Struggle at the University of KwaZulu-Natal in Pietermaritzburg. Previously, there have been handovers of the black clergy under apartheid, and women leadership projects. The handover of 2 April 2014 was the culmination of the interviews on the political violence that enveloped the Mpophomeni Township near Howick in the 1980s and 1990s. Mr Frank Mchunu, who heads the Zulu Mpophomeni Township Experience, which collaborated with Sinomlando on the project, was present to do the handover. The OHASA (2014:7) newsletter also mentions the second project which handed over memories of AIDS and which was a collaboration of the three professors at the University of KwaZulu-Natal School of Religion and Classics, namely Philippe Denis, Isabel

Phiri and Beverly Haddad. Even though these were not initiated and conducted by OHASA, the presence of these professors at the official handover indicated the interest of the association in all oral history programmes taking place in the country, as stated in the newsletter.

One of OHASA's objectives is "to establish partnerships with institutions, bodies, associations pursuing similar objectives and practices" (OHASA 2016). The organisation needs to fulfil this objective by not only attending oral history programmes of other institutions, but also forming viable collaborations and partnerships. There are many organisations in South Africa that are involved in oral history, some of which are universities, and OHASA can collaborate with them for its development.

Building the monitoring and evaluating system for OHASA

Monitoring and Evaluation for Sustainable Communities (MESC) (2014:5) defines that "Monitoring is the collection and analysis of information about a project or programme, undertaken while the project/programme is ongoing." "Evaluation is the periodic, retrospective assessment of an organisation, project or programme that might be conducted internally or by external independent evaluators" (MESC 2014:5). The MESC (2014:5) further argues that "Monitoring and evaluation can sometimes seem like an unaffordable luxury, an administrative burden, or an unwelcome instrument of external oversight. But if used well, M&E can become a powerful tool for social and political change."

Kusek and Rist (2004:163) argue that:

Good M&E systems also build knowledge capital by enabling governments and organisations to develop a knowledge base of the types of policies, programs, and projects that are successful – and more generally what works, what does not, and why. Results-based M&E systems also help promote greater transparency and accountability, and may have beneficial spill-over effects in other parts of a government or organisation. In short, there is tremendous power in measuring performance.

Figure 1 shows an example of how one objective of OHASA can be monitored and evaluated. This can be replicated to other objectives of OHASA.

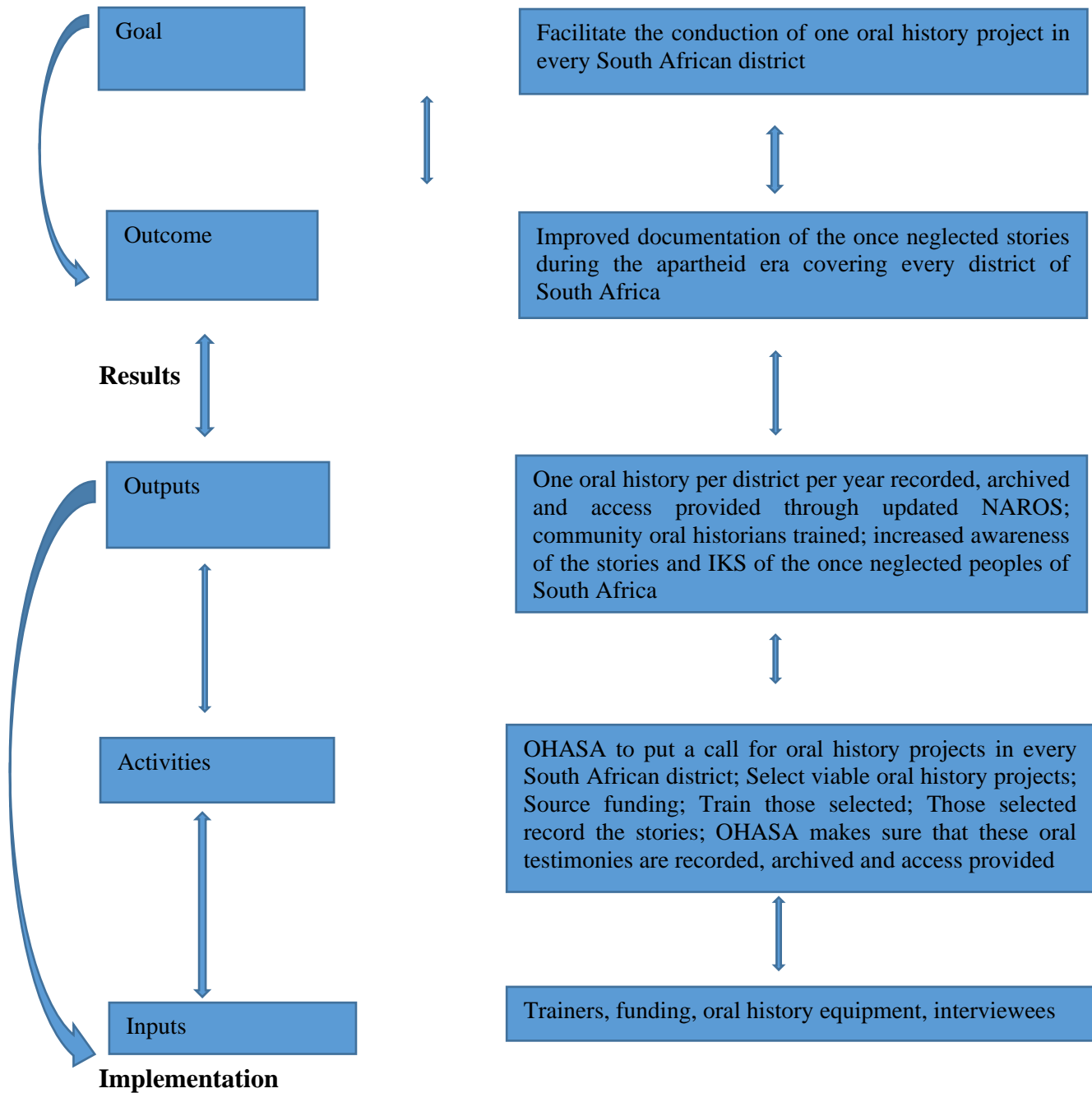


Figure 1. A proposed illustrative Logic Model for One OHASA’s goal of facilitation the conduction of oral history programmes

OHASA can take advantage of the complementary roles of results-based monitoring and evaluation, as shown in Table 2. Table 2 can also be read in conjunction with Figure 1.

Table 2: Proposed complementary roles of results-based monitoring and evaluation at OHASA

Monitoring	Evaluation
Clarifies OHASA's programme objectives	Analyses why intended results were or were not achieved; for example, why are few oral history programmes being facilitated by OHASA
Links activities mentioned in Figure 1 and their resources to objectives or goals	Assesses specific causal contributions of activities to results
Translates objectives into performance indicators and set targets as shown in Figure 1	Examines implementation process
Routinely collects data on these indicators, compares actual results with targets	Explores unintended results
Reports progress to the OHASA executive and the Department of Arts and Culture and alerts them to problems	Provides lessons, highlights significant accomplishment or programme potential, and offers recommendations for improvement

In brief, results-based systems, if adopted by OHASA, will help answer the following questions:

1. What are the goals of OHASA?
2. Are they being achieved?
3. How can achievement be proven?

Concluding remarks

It is not disputable that OHASA plays a major role in coordinating oral history programmes in South Africa. Since its inception, it has managed to host annual conferences in every province in South Africa and, in the process, popularise oral history. It has again managed to introduce learners to oral history methodologies, which is one of its objectives for promoting the use of oral history in schools and other institutions. However, when it comes to oral history projects that are coordinated or conducted by OHASA, besides the learners' programme, nothing much has been achieved. The general analysis is that there is much information on conferences and learners' programmes, but little on oral history programmes in the form of case studies from the communities.

OHASA is a major stakeholder in the public documentation of oral history; therefore, it is prudent that they evaluate their progress occasionally. Their success should not only be measured by how many oral history conferences they have hosted so far, but also by the number of oral history projects they have conducted, documented, archived and provided access to since their inception. This calls for OHASA to revisit each of their objectives and measure their performance as exemplified in Figure 1.

A call to universities in South Africa is to consider re-curriculating and introducing programmes in indigenous knowledge system that incorporate oral history rather than as a footnote or orphan of the history department. OHASA can support through the creation of standards (both for the Council on Higher Education and for the South African Bureau of Standards). Finally, OHASA and NARSSA should revisit and update the National Register of Oral Sources to incorporate all oral history projects in the country, small or big. There are such small projects that are successful as reported by Molobye (2014); Setumu (2015), Ngoepe and Setumu (2016), as well as Ngoepe, Maluleka and Shekgola (2021). Lastly, in our introductory remarks we indicated that the NARSSA has set the tone for the national and provincial governments to become involved in the documentation of the once neglected history in the apartheid era so that it is not forgotten through the collection of non-public

records. As this is not enough, we are making a call that a definition of archives should be revisited in the NARSSA Act to accommodate oral history, not just as non-public record.

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