



Re-Writing His-Story: Exploring the Censorship of History through School Textbooks and Public Artefacts

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2223-0386/2024/n32a5>

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2223-0386/2024/n32a5>

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DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2223-0386/2024/n32a5>

Abstract

This article, titled *Re-writing His-Story: Exploring the censorship of History through school textbooks and public artefacts*, explores how ideological and political differences of those in power can censor history, affecting how future generations engage with the past. As new regimes ascend, they promote a distinctive cultural narrative that could alter or omit long-standing historical narratives. Textbooks and historic monuments are cultural artefacts created at a specific time, in a space, and a particular context. In South Africa, for example (as in many other countries), historic monuments and public statues have been (re)moved, and selectively replaced by alternative heroes. Likewise, post-apartheid textbooks have been rewritten to include cultural diversity. Our principal concern is the restricted access to key symbols of the past as future generations lose crucial historical facts and a sense of identity as different histories are propagated. Located in the interpretive paradigm, the study utilises a desktop review incorporating critical discourse analysis to understand

how meaning is conveyed about textbooks and public artefacts in print media and online platforms. Using a wide range of case studies as its empirical base, the findings indicate that textbook content is censored due to the influence of socio-political, cultural, and religious reasons. Similarly, monuments, statues, and other public artefacts perceived as outdated or representing controversial histories are often targeted for removal.

Keywords: Censorship; Artefacts; Monuments; Cultural revision; Public statues; Re-writing history; Textbooks; Visual meaning-making

Introduction

The story of the past is visualised and told in multiple ways and reaches people through various means, including the agency of books (such as popular, academic, and grey literature as well as school textbooks), physical artefacts, and oral history. Who tells the story, why, and for what purpose is an important facet of understanding history. While history is about the past and historians present a narrative that is their interpretation of evidence, it is recognised that historical accounts may be influenced by the agendas of people who record them. What is considered historically significant is contingent and open to interpretation. Across generations, the history that is written is done so *by* the ‘important’ people in society *about* people of ‘importance’ (i.e. the saying, ‘history is written by the victors’). What remains in the public domain, literature, or artefacts is therefore in a state of flux as the purpose for writing often changes with the goals of people in power.

In our current, 21st century society, the ideal is that stereotypes and distortion of facts are removed while creating a more balanced, representative, and inclusive history. However, certain groups in history are still glorified to the detriment of others, breeding division in society. Such exclusionary practices in countries like South Africa have thwarted social cohesion resulting in a turbulent past and present. The transition to democracy in the 1990s brought significant transformation in the content and narratives of South African textbooks, aiming to promote reconciliation and inclusivity. The general aim of the South African Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) curriculum is to build critical thinking, inclusivity, and social transformation.¹ These competencies are important to develop informed citizens who can navigate complex societal challenges. To eliminate incomplete historical records or misinformation, learners are ideally taught to recognise and challenge biases, while embracing tenets of critical thinking and multiple perspectives.

Following generic guidelines in curriculum and policy, post-apartheid, the aim is integration and inclusion. However, as global historical instances have shown, the coexistence of diverse groups within the same territory often leads to a sense of alienation for some, stemming from how people are portrayed or omitted (silenced) from history textbooks and other texts. This is best captured in a quote by Michel-Rolph Trouillot when he states: “The production of historical narratives involves the uneven contribution of competing groups and individuals who have unequal access to the means for such

1 Department of Education. National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement, (CAPS) Social Sciences. (Pretoria, 2011), pp. 4-5.

production”.² It is important to remember that the meaning of texts, whether written or visual, depends on the context in which they appear. There is an entire discourse, as Smith purports, on which the original inhabitants or Indigenous groups of a region or nation are, what constitutes ‘Indigenous’, and if their earlier occupancy establishes them as heirs to a legitimate narrative.³ The presence of other groups gives rise to conflicting nationalistic sentiments and territorial disputes.⁴ Considering the diverse nature of populations, characterised by, amongst other things, linguistic and ethnic differences, historical accuracy becomes obscured when disparities emerge. Moreover, with the shifting power dynamics, the historical storyline is subject to alteration.

Yet, times have changed and continue to change, and global movements have evolved and should integrate different dialects, cultures, respective histories, and favour a collaborative curriculum. Nonetheless, there is a question on the veracity of this occurrence. Knowledge is socially and politically constructed and is important in the formation of learners’ worldviews. Likewise, myths, socially constructed truths, often appear in the form of ideologies and stereotypes.⁵ For example, in Blank’s review of “Questioning Ramayana’s” he notes how “on December 6 1992, members of Hindu militant organizations tore down the Babri Masjid, a Muslim house of worship in the pilgrimage town of Ayodhya”, because they believed it was built on the birth site of Lord Rama.⁶ Thus, unless learners are taught to critically analyse the contents of textbooks, as well as critically engage with public works, such as statues of certain political figures perpetuating certain ideologies, they will remain exposed to a narrow version of the past as is presented in the limited scope of the curriculum.

In this paper, our primary aim is to elucidate the presence of biased histories in curricula across various nations to promote an alternate approach that duly recognises the

2 MR Trouillot, *Silencing the past: Power and production of history* (United States, Beacon Press, 1995), pp. xxiii.

3 LT Smith, *Decolonising methodologies: Research and Indigenous Peoples* (London and New York, University of Otago Press, 2008).

4 This is observed in South African history, where conflict between indigenous groups and colonial settlers led to segregational practices known as apartheid in the 20th century.

5 See D Human, “Visual culture literacies: seeing is be.[lie].ving. Creating visual arguments through multimodal and multiliteracies pedagogy”, A Engelbrecht & G Genis (eds.), *Multiliteracies in education: South African perspectives* (Pretoria, Van Schaik, 2019), pp.131 – 154 and M Sturken & L Cartwright, *Practices of looking: An introduction to visual culture* (New York and Oxford, Oxford University Press, 2018) (3rd ed.).

6 J Blank, Book review of *Questioning Ramayanas: A South Asian tradition*, P Richman (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2001). *American Anthropologist*, 104(4), 2002, pp. 1228-1230. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3567113>

right to coexist and to legitimise competing historical and cultural narratives. To achieve our primary aim, we draw on examples found in the public sphere and consider how the visibility of certain ideologies is reflected in official textbooks. Thus, the questions directing our research are:

1. How is censorship of textbook content and other public artefacts perceived in certain countries?
2. To what extent do the data sources ascribe the responsibility for an inclusive history to the power structures in these countries?

To answer these questions, we provide background of what is happening in South Africa, India, and other countries. We integrate the data to ascertain global patterns, found for example through the Fall-ism movement and other incidents that reflect censorship or proscription of historical narratives.

Background and contextualisation: Textbooks

“For societies in transition, school curriculum and textbooks play a particularly important role as they attempt to stamp the values of new [or current] rulers on the societies. This often requires major distancing of the present from the past when the past is still present in the contemporary world in invisible and unspoken ways.”⁷ This quote by Chisholm aptly illustrates that the state uses content in textbooks to inculcate a ‘master narrative’ or view of history.

Content included in school textbooks, particularly in a subject like ‘history’, can perpetuate certain myths (socially and politically constructed truths) about those in positions of authority and those who are not. These narratives are consumed by the learners as ‘truths’ and consequently influence how they perceive themselves within the society (and world) in which they reside. “Whether we like it or not, the content and course design brought by a given textbook plays a role in what happens in the classroom of the teacher who has to work with it” and this places the teacher as the “sole mediator between this

7 L Chisholm, Comparing history textbooks in apartheid South Africa and the German Democratic Republic: 1950-1990, *South African Review of Education*, 21(1), 2015, pp. 80-93, <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC193712>.

pre-established representation of content and the learner.”⁸ Textbooks impart to learners a particular worldview or knowledge deemed valuable in society (or at least by the authors of the textbook and consequently those in power who decided for the said textbook to be used in the classroom). Textbooks serve as sources of historical data as they tell stories of societies over time. Analysing them allows insight into the trajectory of changes. While the objective is to encourage multiple perspectives and a comprehensive portrayal of a balanced history, textbook content is inherently shaped by curriculum guidelines.⁹ By deliberately including specific content a corollary emerges: that of inherent exclusions. These omissions exert a discernable influence not only on the worldviews of the learners but also shape their identities and in turn, wield a significant impact on the enduring knowledge that is subsequently transmitted to future generations.

The type of national narrative conveyed in textbooks significantly shapes learners’ viewpoints. Yet, the content should cater to learners’ right to comprehend their nation’s historical context and its perceived position in the global landscape. One disparity currently prevalent in history textbooks is the link between a learner’s language, culture, and history. Politics can play a significant role in determining the type of knowledge that is favoured in the curriculum. This knowledge, in the form of activities or chapters in textbooks, can present a cultural stance in its use of visual or textual content. This content is also observed in the public sphere, such as advertisements of political campaigns on billboards, TV, magazines, or public artworks such as statues of prominent political figures, or even the erection of monuments and memorials.¹⁰ There appears to be limited contestation by educators or school principals perhaps (at least in part) due to the authority already vested in the textbook knowledge as these books are approved by governmental bodies as curriculum-compliant.

Literature review on understanding textbooks

A vast bank of studies highlights that textbooks are not merely tools for academic learning, but also powerful ideological instruments that can alter a learner’s view. Wassermann

8 E Waltermann & C Forel, Why and how to include textbook analysis in language teacher education programs, *Elted*, 18, 2015, pp. 43-48, here p. 43.

9 EV Eeden, South Africa’s revised history curriculum on globalism and national narratives in grade 12 textbooks, *Historica*, 55(1), 2010, pp. 110-124, <https://hdl.handle.net/10520/EJC38390>.

10 Also see P Chandra & D Human, [Decolonising] the contentious politics of seeing: Reading visual cultures, *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03043754241288097> (in press).

and Roberts discuss how “Loewen changed the way History textbooks were viewed irrevocably with *Lies My Teacher Told Me: Everything Your American History Textbook Got Wrong* (1995), which was republished in 2007 and 2018. In this, he laid bare how textbook producers and authors powerfully propagated one-sided views of History that were in many instances mythological.”¹¹ Additionally, Bertram and Wassermann¹² provide an overview of studies in school history textbooks in South Africa, alluding to these studies manifesting at key points of political change. According to them, the first ‘mini-boom’ took place in 1960 when South Africa became a republic, the next at the dawn of democracy, and then post-apartheid saw an upward surge in textbook studies. Shifts in political power result in revised educational materials often aligned with the agenda of the ruling parties.

During the 1940s South Africa saw the National Party with a political will to drive Afrikaner nationalism and enforce the policy of apartheid and discrimination.¹³ ‘Apartheid’ was a system of institutionalised racial segregation enforced in South Africa between 1948 and 1994 by Afrikaners who held significant political power. As a result, a distorted view of history in textbooks emerged, justifying racial segregation, land dispossession, and subjugation of non-white communities. Apartheid policies and structures, such as the Population Registration Act of 1950, were rooted in arbitrarily determined racial classifications, regulating all aspects of life. The histories of so-called Black, Indian, and Coloured race populations were marginalised with non-white people often portrayed as uncivilised and inferior. This notion was further observed through visual culture that was (and still is) utilised as a tool to enhance certain societal ideologies and myths. The frieze of the Voortrekker Monument, for example, an iconic symbol celebrating Afrikaner nationalism, depicts black people as (semi-)naked, savage, and uncultivated, as opposed to fully dressed, seemingly civilised Afrikaners.¹⁴ The visual imagery was used to enforce

11 J Wassermann & SL, Roberts. Making good use of textbooks: Introduction to the special issue on teaching with history textbooks. *Annals of Social Studies Education Research for Teachers*, 3(2), 2022, pp. 1-4. doi: 10.29173/assert54

12 C Bertram & J Wassermann, South African history textbook research – A review of scholarly literature, *Yesterday & Today*, 14, 2015. pp. 151-174. <https://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2223-0386/2015/n14a7>

13 C Verwey & M Quayle, Whiteness, race and Afrikaner identity in post-apartheid South Africa, *African Affairs*, 111(445), 2012, pp. 551-571, <https://doi.org/10.1093/afraf/ads056>.

14 Many conservative Afrikaners, particularly those conforming to Calvinist dogma and values, believed it was their God-given duty to ‘educate’ and convert indigenous groups to Christianity, as exemplified by Obermeyer and von Veh.

J Obermeyer, “Apartheid South Africa’s propaganda effort, c.1960 – 1980: The hearts and minds campaign of the National Party”, (M.A., Stellenbosch University, 2016), p. 10.

K Von Veh, “Transgressive Christian imagery in post-apartheid South African art”, (Ph.D., Rhodes University, 2011), pp. 39-40.

notions of binary opposites: Christian/heathen, civilised/uneducated, white/non-white. As noted by JM Coetzee (1996) in *Giving offense: essays on censorship*:

*When Europeans first arrived in southern Africa, they called themselves Christians and the indigenous people wild or heathen. The dyad Christian/heathen later mutated, taking a succession of forms, among them civilized/primitive, European/native, white/nonwhite. But in each case, no matter what the nominally opposed terms, there was a constant feature: it was always the Christian (or white or European or civilized person) in whose power it lay to apply the names – the name for himself, the name for the other. The heathens, the nonwhites, the natives, the primitives of course had their own names for the Christian/European/white/civilized others. But to the extent that those who did this counternaming did not do so from a position of power, a position of authority, their naming did not count.*¹⁵

Therefore, by, for example, depicting the black body as naked, for instance, through representations of women in traditional clothing or with exposed breasts on postcards and in the cultural pages of magazines,¹⁶ notions of their inferiority in a racist and patriarchal society were enforced.¹⁷ These perceptions of roles ascribed to certain groups of people, in turn, have been preserved and historically recorded as so-called ‘truths’ in prevailing textbooks.

In South Africa, teachers are required to choose textbooks that are CAPS curriculum-compliant and included in the Department Catalogue for Learner and Teacher Support Materials.¹⁸ The CAPS curriculum is a guideline of what needs to be included, but teachers have somewhat freedom in how they teach the content. While educators have some freedom and space for creativity, much of the freedom for planning learning programmes is taken away from teachers as topics are spelled out in the curriculum. Siebörger notes: “the level of content specification could reduce the scope for creativity in teaching”.¹⁹ The

15 JM Coetzee, *Giving offense: Essays on censorship*, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1996), p. 1-2.

16 P Webster, Seeing the odalisque: Aspects of the colonial gaze in South Africa 1845-1975, *de arte*, 34(60), 1999, pp. 20-28.

17 D Human, “Censorship and proscription of the visual arts in South Africa between the 1950s and 1970” (Ph.D., University of Johannesburg, 2022), pp. 75-78.

18 P Bharath, Tracing the substantive structure of historical knowledge in South African school textbooks, *Yesterday & Today*, 30, 2023, pp. 36-65.

19 R Siebörger, How should a national curriculum for history be quality assured? The case of the South African Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), *Yesterday & Today*, 26, 2021, pp. 139-154, here p. 154, <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2223-0386/2021/n26a7>.

teacher's creativity is limited to his or her interpretation of the given topic. Questions that arise concern whether the knowledge that is shared is compliant, fair, and balanced and if it is conceived as inclusive.²⁰ Questions such as, 'Which people should be included?' and 'Why and what of their history is significant?' arise. The answers to these questions often highlight certain silences and exclusions. These silences or exclusions might not be overt censorship in its legislative approach, but rather represent a form of proscription that is subtly shaping the narratives that learners are exposed to.

Literature and discourse around public artefacts

Much has been written on public artefacts and monuments in South Africa (and elsewhere), particularly relating to their continued relevance in public spaces, including edited books by Miller and Schmahmann²¹ and Freschi, Schmahmann and van Robbroeck.²² Due to the nature and scope of this article, these texts are not discussed in depth, but relevant literature has been referred to throughout to substantiate our arguments.

Due to one-sided representations and the exclusion or silencing of certain groups, protests and a call to remove symbolic artefacts are inevitable. The removal of statues has long been linked to attempts at decolonisation, showing the need to address the histories – *his stories* – that these works perpetuate. Nicholas Mirzoeff notes: "The removal of racist, colonial, or otherwise offensive artworks, often statues, ends one form of visual dominance and creates the possibility of making a different visible relation."²³ The #RhodesMustFall movement in 2015, with the removal of the Cecil John Rhodes statue, previously on the University of Cape Town campus, encouraged a wave of national and international protests, known as Fall-ism.²⁴

Not only is the removal of Rhodes' statue noteworthy, but the public engagement and artistic intervention(s) at the time are significant. During the process of removal on 9 April 2015, in addition to large, engaged crowds, South African Fine Arts master's student, Sethembile Msezane, decided to take a stand. In line with the statue and crane, she stood in

20 P Engelbrecht, Inclusive education: Developments and challenges in South Africa, *Prospects*, 49, 2020, pp. 291-232, <https://doi.org/10.1007/s11125-020-09499-6>.

21 K Miller & B Schmahmann (eds.), *Public art in South Africa: Bronze warriors and plastic presidents* (Indiana, Indiana University Press, 2017).

22 F Freschi, B Schmahmann & L van Robbroek (eds.), *Troubling images: Visual culture and the politics of Afrikaner Nationalism* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2020).

23 N Mirzoeff, *An Introduction to Visual Culture*, (London and New York, Routledge, 2023) (3rd ed.), p. 149.

24 N Mirzoeff, *An Introduction ...*, pp. 151-152.

costume atop a plinth, slowly lifting her arms to reveal the makeshift wings of a bird – later revealed to be representative of the Zimbabwe Bird wrongfully appropriated from Great Zimbabwe by the British colonialist, Rhodes, and which is still housed at his Groote Schuur estate in Cape Town. This incident occurred scarcely a month after this statue of Rhodes, sculpted by Marion Walgate in 1934, was tossed with a bucket of human excrement by a political student, Chumani Maxwele.²⁵

Shortly before the statue's removal, someone outlined the shadow cast on the Jameson Steps and later filled it with black paint. While Rhodes' seat is now empty, his plinth continues to serve as a canvas for graffiti art and impromptu performances. His shadow, like his colonial legacy, remains. Perhaps the shadow is enough to remind future generations of what once was and allows for the layering of new understandings and meanings to present an inclusive history of humankind. Msezane describes her performance work as "a response, to get people to look at the landscape with a different eye. People haven't forgiven [n]or forgotten; they're still harbor[ing] hatred. That's why the statue needed to fall. It fostered the kind of thinking that is dangerous to a country in healing."²⁶ These actions are indicative of the immense impact that public statues and their inherent meanings have on both individual and group identities. The artefacts embody colonial, imperial, or nationalist hegemonies, in which ruling parties' triumph and systematically suppress and silence the histories of their opposition (not necessarily even the minority, as exemplified by the historical context of apartheid South Africa). These omissions intend to place one group's history as superior, perpetuating myths surrounding their narratives as so-called truth, allowing them to remain in power. As Aldous Huxley writes in the foreword of *Brave New World* (1946): "The greatest triumphs of propaganda have been accomplished, not by doing something, but by refraining from doing. Great is truth, but greater still, from a practical standpoint, is silence about truth. By simply not mentioning certain subjects, ... propagandists have influenced opinion much more effectively than they could have done by the most eloquent denunciations, the most compelling of logical rebuttals."²⁷ The preservation of "its imperial legacy", is seen, for example, by the British government, which

25 K Miller & B Schmahmann (eds.), *Public art in South Africa: Bronze warriors and plastic presidents* (Indiana, Indiana University Press, 2017), p. vii.

26 S Msezane, "Sethembile Msezane performs at the fall of the Cecil Rhodes statue, 9 April 2015", 2015, (available at <https://www.theguardian.com/artanddesign/2015/may/15/sethembile-msezane-cecil-rhodes-statue-cape-town-south-africa>).

27 A Huxley (1946: foreword) in T Huckin, Textual silence and the discourse of homelessness, *Discourse & Society*, 13(3), 2002, pp 347-372, here p 347, doi:10.1177/0957926502013003054.

“passed a law in 2022 that made damaging a statue punishable by a ten-year jail sentence”.²⁸

Research design, methodology and theoretical framing

This study utilises the method of a desktop review. A desktop or conceptual review enables conceptual components of a complex phenomenon to be analysed.²⁹ This method incorporates critical discourse to explore how perceptions related to textbooks and public artefacts are articulated in both print media and online platforms. Critical discourse analysis (CDA), which Norman Fairclough (1993) argues is a methodology “to systematically question the open or latent mutual determination relations between discursive practices and social structure”.³⁰ Brown and Yule highlight that discourse analysts are “committed to an investigation of what language is used for”.³¹ Our aim is to consider how language and texts (whether written, oral, and/or visual) are used to perpetuate certain ideologies and myths to keep the powers that be in authority and control. In order to achieve this, this qualitative, multidisciplinary literary study is located within a conceptual framework that addresses issues of interpretation and perception, namely, a hermeneutical and phenomenological approach. We rely on a range of literature, newspaper reports, and archival materials on and related to recent developments in textbook revisions, statues, and monuments available in the public domain. Insights are leveraged from international public discourse as manifested in the media to construct an informed understanding. We acknowledge that the discourses are more comprehensive and layered than detailed in our paper. While the totality of available discussions is impossible, we instead draw the readers’ attention to the complexities surrounding the selected examples. Multicultural countries were purposively selected to scrutinise how they presented identities which were reconciliatory and peaceful. We acknowledge that meanings never remain static and question their relevance in changing environments.

Each individual’s identity and perceptions of their environments are defined by their

28 N Mirzoeff, *An Introduction...*, p. 149.

29 “TU Delft OpenCourseWare. Introduction desktop research and literature study. Multidisciplinary research methods for engineers”, (available at <https://online-learning.tudelft.nl/courses/efficient-hvac-systems/>).

30 N Fairclough, Critical discourse analysis and the marketization of public discourse: *The Universities, Discourse & Society*, 4(2), 1993, pp. 133-168, here p. 135, <https://doi.org/10.1177/0957926593004002>

31 G Brown & G Yule, *Discourse Analysis*, (Cambridge, New York, Port Chester, Melbourne, Sydney: Cambridge University Press, 1983), p. 1.

unique experiences, upbringing, beliefs and histories, what Martin Heidegger refers to as ‘pre-understanding,’³² or Gadamer describes as ‘prejudice.’³³ Their prejudices influence how people interpret texts (visual or textual) and make meaning. These prejudices, situated in each individual’s unique ‘horizon’, reside within both the interpreter (the public/learner) and the creator (artist/author/policymakers). Meaning springs from overlapping horizons. However, meaning is not static as the horizons of both interpreters and creators are continuously shifting. Thus, the hermeneutic aspects of this study do not only include the horizon (encompassing the intentions, prejudices, and situatedness) of individual interpreters and creators (the authoritative entities) respectively but also include the cultural environments and social circumstances in which contemporary interpreters and historians are situated.³⁴ We, therefore, infer that those interpretations of artefacts (textbooks and public statues and monuments) do not only rely on socio-culturally contributed meanings but are also influenced by the agendas of those in power.

Antonio Gramsci (1971) alludes to the fact that cultural institutions like schools can disseminate biased knowledge.³⁵ Gramsci’s notion of hegemony here refers to the socio-culturally dominant structures within a specific context, which determine the acceptable modes of thinking, doing, and living in that society. The struggle of social reality is defined by John Storey, who suggests that certain cultures “make the world (and the things in it) mean in particular ways and with the particular effect of power.”³⁶ The readers of any text (visual or otherwise) should be aware that some meanings “acquire their authority and legitimacy, knowing that dominant modes of making the world meaningful are a fundamental aspect of the process of hegemony.”³⁷ Michel Foucault’s writings on knowledge and power, and his texts on silence as a form of oppression, are instrumental in our investigation, as for Foucault, “silence is more fundamental than truth or identity since it exists before discourse is ever initiated. ‘Discourse’ is his term for the various ways societies impose power relations on their members.”³⁸

The silencing of voices or the censorship of ‘undesirable’ materials by bodies in

32 M Heidegger, *Being and Time* (New York, Harper & Row Publishers, 1962).

33 Hans-Georg Gadamer, *Truth and Method*. (New York, Crossroad Publishing, 1989) (2nd ed.).

34 See P Chandra & D Human, [Decolonising] the contentious politics of seeing: Reading visual cultures, *Alternatives: Global, Local, Political*, 2024. <https://doi.org/10.1177/03043754241288097> (in press).

35 J Zajda & R Zajda, The politics of rewriting history: New history textbooks and curriculum materials in Russia, *International Review of Education*, 49(3-4), 2003 pp. 363-384, here p. 372.

36 J Storey, *Culture and power in cultural studies: The politics of signification*, (Edinburgh, Edinburg University Press, 2010).

37 J Storey, *Culture and Power ...*, pp. viii; ix.

38 S Bindeman, *Silence in philosophy, literature, and art* (Leiden, Brill-Rodopi, 2017), p. 143.

authoritative positions is not a new concept and is observed in different ways globally. For example, as is well known, South Africa operated one of the most draconian censorship systems in the world at the height of apartheid, by implementing, for example, the Publications and Entertainments Act of 1963.³⁹ Censorship laws supported the government's goals, serving as a mechanism to ensure they remained in power and control. Knowledge is power, and political censorship becomes a tool used by those in power to manipulate knowledge and silence any opposition, consequently remaining in power. While the process of writing, reviewing, and rewriting history textbooks is not comparable to the draconian approach of apartheid censorship as seen through the Publications and Entertainments Act of 1963, for example, various forms of historical censorship do exist. Censorship is not only observed in South African history. It is a global phenomenon that spans centuries. This process is also observed in the case of Indian history textbooks.

Results and discussion: Global patterns of history censorship

Our findings indicate that textbooks hold a prominent role in conveying historical and cultural knowledge and what is deemed valuable within the curriculum context. As discussed above, knowledge is power, and textbook content is determined by people in certain positions of power. The way content is framed is important as it has considerable sway over learners' perceptions and understanding of the world and themselves.

Juxtaposing international reviews on textbooks and Fall-ism, a global phenomenon is presented. Like South Africa, India grapples with a tumultuous, multifaceted, and diverse past. While South Africa ostensibly demonstrates a transformative stance by incorporating a spectrum of historical narratives into its history curriculum, India's situation is fraught with dissension over its national identity. The rise to power of Hindu nationalist (or *Sangh Parivar*) organisations at the national level in 1998 resulted in a change in textbook content. While earlier curriculum frameworks emphasised “democratic values, social justice, and integration through appreciation of the different subcultures, the chief end of history”, and “of education as a whole, was presented as the development of national consciousness through its unique ‘religio-philosophical’ ethos, which was presented as primarily Hindu”.⁴⁰

Similarly, in the context of the United States, the Sangh's Hindu associations also

³⁹ D Human, “Censorship and proscription ...”, p. 6.

⁴⁰ K Visweswaran, M Witzel, N Manjrekar, D Bhog & U Chakravatri, The Hindutva view of history, Rewriting textbooks in India and the United States, Georgetown, *Journal of International Affairs*, 10(1), 2009, pp. 101-112, here p. 101.

claimed that the portrayal of Hindus in Californian textbooks was demeaning. The call for textbook edits, as suggested by the Hindu American Foundation and the Vedic Foundation, was to disseminate false notions of Indian history, including that “Aryans” constituted the original inhabitants of India and that the essence of Hinduism lies in the Vedic religion of Aryans. The objective was to promote the political and cultural position of the authority in power at the expense of the minority group. The violence against Muslims in Gujarat, where the Bharatiya Janata Party (BJP), Sangh Parivar’s political arm, “first came into office in the mid-1990s, suggests that a curriculum can create a setting in which social intolerance and injustices against minorities can be justified”⁴¹

Social outrage has been reported in public responses to the current edit of Mughal history⁴² in India’s history textbooks. The educational environment is polarised as the claims about a distortion of the past gain momentum. The removal of sections of Mughal history from Indian textbooks has accelerated tension in a country already dominated by religious and cultural differences. The National Council of Educational Research and Training (NCERT) defended the deletions from Indian textbooks as a “rationalization” to reduce the academic burden on learners post-Covid.⁴³ Among the deletions were the removal of Darwin’s theory of evolution, proof of the Pythagoras theorem, and the periodic table below Class 11.⁴⁴ There are claims that a pattern in specific deletions is observed, highlighting “whether they serve to purge textbooks of ‘anti-Hindu bias or imbue them with pro-state feeling-dilute any understanding of citizens’ rights to be informed, protest and demand rather than lie low, applaud and obey”, reducing both access to knowledge and the ability to develop critical thought.⁴⁵ More than 30 academics involved in the process of textbook ‘rationalisation’ have requested to have their names withdrawn, commenting on the obstinacy of NCERT which had implications for constitutional democracy.⁴⁶

41 K Visweswaran, M Witzel, N Manjrekar, D Bhog & U Chakravatri, *The Hindutva view of history...*, p. 101.

42 The Mughals were the Muslim dynasty ruling over most Hindus between 1526-1858.

43 A Pasricha, “Revisions of history in school texts stirs controversy”, *Voice of America. South and Central Asia*, 10 April 2023 (available at <https://www.voanews.com/a/in-indiarevision-of-history-in-school-texts-stirs-controversy/7043585.html>).

44 A Pasricha, “Revisions of history in school texts stirs controversy”, *Voice of America. South and Central Asia*, 10 April 2023 (available at <https://www.voanews.com/a/in-indiarevision-of-history-in-school-texts-stirs-controversy/7043585.html>).

45 P Sharma, “Textbook revisions will hit lower-income students the hardest”, *Voices, Newsblogs India*, 10 July 2023 (available at <https://timesofindia.indiatimes.com/blogs/voices/textbook-revisions-will-hit-lower-income-students-the-hardest/>).

46 PR deSouza, “Why I withdrew my name from NCERT books”, *The Indian Express Journalism of Courage*, 17 July 2023 (available at <https://indianexpress.com/article/opinion/peter-ronald-desouza-why-withdrew-name-ncert-books-8667205/>).

This is accompanied by, amongst others, the renaming of landmarks, towns, and roads that had Muslim-sounding names as part of a cultural purge. There are removals of sections in history textbooks on the extremist background of Mahatma Gandhi's assassination and the 2002 Gujarat riots which occurred under the watch of the present Prime Minister of India Narendra Modi.⁴⁷ Additionally, mosques, like Shahi Masjid, in India were being demolished as they were said to be originally temples that were forcefully converted by Muslim rulers into mosques.⁴⁸ Ellis-Peterson notes: "The version of history propagated by BJP leaders, government-backed historians and school curriculums was that of an ancient Hindu nation oppressed and persecuted by ruthless Muslim invaders, particularly the Islamic Mughal empire. The alleged destruction of Hindu temples to build mosques has been central to this narrative."⁴⁹ State-approved textbooks thus present the 'official knowledge' to school learners transmitting the dominant political ideology. Pradyumna Jairam suggests that "the BJP carried out processes of omission and decontextualization to ensure that its vision of identity is imparted, creating a linear progression of history in which conflict and controversy are minimized for the sake of its master narrative."⁵⁰

The study of the Mughal Empire is included in the South African school history syllabus for Grade 10. The Curriculum Assessment and Policy Statement (CAPS) document published in 2011 lists content under Section 3 for Grade 10 to include the theme 'What the world was like around 1600?' The background and focus of the section present the statement: "The studies of the three empires should include accounts of the first contacts with Europe before conquests when relationships were still balanced."⁵¹ The broad comparative overview of countries to be discussed includes China, Songhai, India, and European societies. Interestingly, Indian history (1526 to 1858) focuses on the:

- Mughal Empire: government and society

47 A Jha, "Why is Modi so scared of history textbooks?" *Al Jazeera*, 13 April 2023 (available at <https://aljazeera.com/opinion/2023/4/13/why-is-modi-so-scared-of-history-textbooks?traffic-source=KeepReading>).

48 A Sara, "Politics of ruin: Why Modi wants to demolish India's mosques." *Al Jazeera*, 3 April 2023 (available at <https://www.aljazeera.com/opinions/2023/4/3/politics-of-ruin-why-modi-wants-to-demolish-indias-mosques>).

49 H Ellis-Peterson, Thousands of mosques targeted as Hindu nationalists rewrite India's history. *The Observer, India*, 2022-10-30 (available at <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2022/oct/30/thousands-of-mosques-targeted-as-hindu-nationalists-try-to-rewrite-indias-history>).

50 P Jairam, Securing identity via history: Majoritarian frameworks of history writing in Rajasthan, *Journal of Educational Media, Memory, and Society*, 15(2), 2023, pp. 45-70.

51 Department of Education. National Curriculum Statement Grades R-12 Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement. Social Sciences. (Pretoria: Department of Education, 2011), p. 13.

- Traded in the Indian Ocean and Islamic World
- Astronomy and technology architecture in the 16th and 17th centuries: the Taj Mahal
- Britain and the end of the Mughal Empire

This content provides a one-sided perspective of history and marginalises India's Hindu history. The current question around India's Hindu nationalist history is perhaps necessary when here in South Africa we study a Mughal-centric Indian history (1526 to 1858).

Similarly, Japanese publications of history textbooks create a rift between Japan and its neighbouring countries over its colonial expansion in World War 2. Japan justified its invasion of other countries with its educational ministry ordering the word 'invade' to be changed to 'advance' and identifying Korea's Dokdo (Takeshima in Japan) as Japanese territory in all 2012 middle school textbooks. The Korean government did not want Japanese children to believe that Dokdo was their so-called rightful territory and consequently lodged an official dispute, accusing Japan of playing with words to "obscure historical facts, understate and evade its historical responsibility and deny and misrepresent its history of aggression".⁵² While research shows that historians from China, Korea, and Japan are collaborating towards a more accurate and balanced history to achieve harmony, a new 'standard map' updated annually by the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) has created outrage among other claimants. The map depicts a 'nine-dash line' incorporating territorial grabs. Some of this land, claimed by Brunei, Malaysia, the Philippines, Taiwan, and Vietnam is rich in natural resources and encompasses vital shipping lanes with three trillion dollars of annual trade. Williams writes that "books are scrutinised by the CCP, to the extent that many foreign publishers avoid putting any type of map in publications destined for China", because there is an intensive censorship process.⁵³

Censorship in Florida, United States, reared its ugly head when education officials rejected 35% of social studies textbooks. Publishers were urged to change other textbooks due to "inaccurate material and other information not aligned with Florida Law."⁵⁴

⁵² J Griffiths, "Japanese textbook row threatens diplomatic progress with South Korea, China". *The Globe and Mail Asia Correspondent*, 31 March 2023 (available at <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/world/article-japanese-textbook-row-threatens-diplomatic-progress-with-south-korea/>).

⁵³ I Williams, "China's 'standard map' is a chilling reminder of its imperial ambitions", *The Spectator*, 3 September 2023 (available at <https://www.spectator.co.uk/article/chinas-standard-map-is-a-chilling-reminder-of-its-imperial-ambitions/>).

⁵⁴ J Hernandez, "Florida rejects some social studies textbooks and pushes publishers to change others". *NPR*, 10 May 2023 (available at <https://rb.gy/6k4a4>).

Republican Governor Ron DeSantis is said to have influenced what is taught in the state's public schools by removing inaccuracies or ideological rhetoric. Books were rejected because of politically charged language, unsolicited topics, and others not being age-appropriate. Exclusions involved the topics: *The African American experience*, *History of the Holocaust*, and *Modern Genocide*, another teaching on the Holocaust. NAACP President and CEO, Derrick Johnson, has stated to CNN that "Governor Ron DeSantis is committed to erasing our history and unraveling our democracy by indoctrinating our children and stripping away our fundamental freedoms."⁵⁵ An investigation by the Fordham Institute in America revealed a process of sanitisation of textbooks was done to conform to the preferences of special interest groups.⁵⁶ In pursuit of publication, the authors self-censored content, leading to the alteration of certain content.

The current controversy in Houston, United States includes textbook use in public schools. Chapters about vaccines and climate change have been redacted because of "a perception that humans are bad".⁵⁷ The 'Texas Freedom to Read Project', fighting the bans, believes that withholding information from students is unconstitutional and takes away their access to real-life ideas. Salam argues that "book bans become a core element of platforms of well-funded far-right politicians, who have tried to win a larger presence on school boards across the US".⁵⁸

Textbooks are used by learners and teachers and so the content becomes important to scrutinise. Unless learners are taught to critically analyse the content (thus focus should be both on content and critical skills) inside and outside of their cultural situatedness and question the information while developing multiple perspectives, they will lack a holistic understanding of the history of humanity and consequently their perceptions will be skewed. A vital part of human history will be lost for future generations. Yet, the narrative presented in the textbooks is also the content they have to learn and be tested on, and so the beliefs and values embedded in the text, as determined by those in power, tend to influence learners. While history is about the past, history is also about people, written and

55 J Hernandez, "Florida rejects some social studies textbooks and pushes publishers to change others", *NPR*, 10 May 2023 (available at <https://rb.gy/6k4a4>).

56 M Matusевич, Strange bedfellows: Censorship and history textbooks, *Social Studies Research and Practice* 1(3), 2006, pp. 359-373, <https://doi.org/10.1108/SSRP-03-2006-B0006>.

57 E Salam, "'Scary': public-school textbooks the latest target as US book bans intensifies", *The Guardian*, 19 May 2023 (available at <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/article/2024/may/19/us-public-schools-texas-book-bans>).

58 E Salam, "'Scary': public-school textbooks the latest target as US book bans intensifies", *The Guardian*, 19 May 2023, p.1. (available at <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/article/2024/may/19/us-public-schools-texas-book-bans>).

told by people so future people will know the so-called ‘truth’ – his-story (or her-story). Yet, what is true and to whom it is true, are highly philosophical and contestable questions. In history we deal with the human element, each with a different experience, perspective, and purpose, and so a different story and narrative is crafted individually, a story told from a personal dimension. Our findings show that controversy sets in if one experience is seen as more valuable or powerful than the next. We suggest that alternative interventions and engagement with textbooks and their content should be considered to create ‘our-story’, representative of all.

Creative interventions and alternative histories

One attempt at creating an ‘inclusive’ monument in South Africa is the Long March to Freedom National Heritage Monument. Originally comprising ten sculptures of apartheid freedom fighters, the display was exhibited in 2015 at the Walter Sisulu Square in Kliptown, later moved to Fountain’s Valley in Pretoria, then Maropeng in the Cradle of Humankind and is now residing at Century City, a Cape Town, mixed-use suburban area. The body of work has grown to encompass over 100 life-sized bronze sculptures, created by various South African artists. The display comprises key figures throughout South African history, ranging from 18th-century rebel chiefs and missionaries to prominent freedom fighters during apartheid.⁵⁹ This monument could perhaps be seen as a counter-monument to the countless statues of colonial leaders, many still proudly displayed in the public domain and representing a one-sided history.

Yet, while many diverse leaders are depicted, it is not all-inclusive. And since it is in a separate, isolated location, accessible only to a few, the needed conversation between the statues (amongst themselves) and the public is still missing. As Kirsten points out:

relationship[s] between monuments, memorials, and collective memory involves another dimension – the space in which monuments/memorials are interacted with, and in which monuments/memorials are located and invoke a collective memory. Henri Lefebvre (1991:33) shows that space is not a neutral and natural entity, but one that is socially produced, containing the relations of its production, including Foucauldian

⁵⁹ M Kirsten, The march continues: A critique of The Long March to Freedom statue collection exhibited in Century City, *Image & Text*, 24, 2020, pp. 1-16, here p. 1, doi: /10.17159/2617-3255/2020/n34a8.

relations of power, in 'the form of buildings, monuments and works of art'.⁶⁰

Thus, the space in which these statues are encountered carries inherent meanings that are not easily erased or forgotten. As Huckin emphasises “often what is not said or written can be as important, if not more so, than what is”.⁶¹ Thus, silences speak louder than words. Kirsten continues that “the permanence of statues and large-scale memorials in many ways makes permanent the discourses and ideologies that the statues or memorials carry traces of”.⁶² Likewise, the histories removed from textbooks are not forgotten or erased. Yet, like the sculptures in the example above, their accessibility and effectiveness are questioned. While teachers could take their learners on field trips to spaces such as the one described above when discussing certain historical components of the curriculum, accessibility is limited due to location and resources. Furthermore, if references to these spaces or the figures they represent are not included in the curriculum, a field trip to such a space may not be warranted or supported by the school principal or governing body.

Chandra and Human (2024) refer to participatory art and participatory viewing as a way for the public to engage with visual materials that may be contested. They state that “forms of participatory art have often emerged in spaces of political contestation and upheaval”, and continue that “in such a context both the artist and the audience are placed in a participatory or dialectic exchange, through active participation or even through protest, to express ideas, public moods, political ideologies and contestations within a lived visual culture”.⁶³ Brenda Schmahmann refers to “creative interventions”,⁶⁴ in which artists’ engagements with existing monuments and memorials are considered, as seen, for example, in Sethembile Msezane’s performances. Perhaps these interventions are needed to renegotiate the often contested meaning and purpose of these artefacts in a contemporary context. However, they may also serve as inspiration for history teachers to approach certain curriculum content and history lessons. Teachers could, for example, ask learners to engage critically with contested histories. As noted by Chandra and Human (2024): “An alternative to dismantling these statues could be using them as subjects for a historical study of the context they represent, and preserving and commemorating the

⁶⁰ M Kirsten, *The march continues*, p. 2.

⁶¹ T Huckin, *Textual silence and the discourse of homelessness*, *Discourse & Society* 13(3), 2002, pp 347-372, here 348, doi:10.1177/0957926502013003054.

⁶² M Kirsten, *The march continues*, p. 3.

⁶³ P Chandra & D Human, [Decolonising] *the contentious politics ...*, 2024 (in press).

⁶⁴ B Schmahmann, 2018, p. 147 in M Kirsten, *The march continues ...*, p. 3.

history through the medium of visual cultures. An artwork depicting a problematic idea or icon can also be used as the starting point into the inquiry of the history of said event or icon and the context in which they operated”.⁶⁵ This approach will not create ‘new’ histories, but may provide learners with a more holistic understanding of certain histories and their representations. Schmahmann highlights the importance of “facilitating interventions with statues and objects of similar significance”:

*While total removal of a work associated with ideologies that have fallen from favo[u]r raises a host of difficulties, it is surely also highly problematical to continue to exhibit and display such an object without critical mediation or contextual explanation of it. Lack of any intervention to such an object may well be construed as suggesting that it continues to be venerated, and overlooks its capacity to promote feelings of exclusion as well as offense.*⁶⁶

Perhaps an artistic ‘creative intervention,’ as seen through the Plastic Histories project at the Vryfees at the University of the Free State in 2014, by Cigdem Aydemir, could allow for more open discourse on the meaning and continued purpose and relevance of public historical monuments and the history of humanity, while engaging a broader audience that may include the school learner. Aydemir integrated augmented reality and physical space by shrinkwrapping monuments of two historical male figures, President Martinus Theunis Steyn and President CR Swart, in pink plastic.⁶⁷ This engagement with existing statues questions their continued purpose and relevance. Aydemir notes that:

Most 19th Century, and even contemporary monuments in post-colonial countries such as South Africa are typically a celebration of men’s achievements in serving the empires or their nations. These monuments serve to shape collective memory in public spaces, and ensure against the failure of individual memory. Yet, we now know that our memory, far from being set in stone (or bronze), is plastic in the sense that it is constantly shaped and mo[u]lded based on our new knowledge of the past. We also

65 P Chandra & D Human, [Decolonising] the contentious politics ..., 2024 (in press).

66 B Schmahmann, 2016, p. 103 in M Kirsten, The march continues ..., p. 3.

67 Both these statues were eventually affected by the #RhodesMust Fall campaign by being either vandalised or removed.

J Jansen, “It’s not Even Past’: Dealing with monuments and memorials on divided campuses”, F Freschi, B Schmahmann & L van Robbroek (eds.), *Troubling images: Visual culture and the politics of Afrikaner Nationalism* (Johannesburg, Wits University Press, 2020), pp. 119-139, here p. 133.

*know that there are multiple histories in every era, and that often these alternative histories are not represented in public space. Plastic Histories is an attempt to visualize this by uncovering alternative Histories ...*⁶⁸

Other attempts at forging dialogues can be seen at the Voortrekker Monument, entrenched with Afrikaner nationalist symbolism and the adjacent Freedom Park, or the 2006 Peter Hall *Dinuzulu ka Cetshwayo* bronze statue on a beehive base designed by Erhard Huizinga in conversation with Anton van Wouw's 1921 bronze statue of *Louis Botha* situated in Durban, Kwa-Zulu Natal. Another example can be seen through a much earlier intervention by John Nankin, *Mister Rhodes* in 1999, in which he hung bricks on ropes from the Henry Alfred Pegram 1908 bronze sculpture *Cecil John Rhodes*. The dangling bricks from the north pointing arm of Rhodes "alluded to riggings in mining in Kimberly while simultaneously suggesting gold bars, which served to suggest 'a burden or retribution' and thus an 'invasion of the idea of accumulation'".⁶⁹ These cases may serve as examples in the South African history classroom to obtain a more holistic view of our country's past.

Jonathan Jansen, in response to the Plastic Histories project, writes that:

*Plastic can and does change shape and colour under the hands of real human beings. Here is the case for agency and activism; history is not simply given, it is made and remade by all of us in formal settings like schools and universities but also in everyday life by what we talk about, remember and construct alongside, or in place of, others' sacred statues.*⁷⁰

Similarly, Denise Benvolato argues that collaborative textbook work can build peace, dialogue, and social cohesion if prejudices are challenged.⁷¹ Eichner reports a revolution of textbooks by Saudi Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman as he oversees the removal of

68 C Aydemir, *Plastic Histories* (Introduction of catalogue, Public art project by Cigdem Aydemir at the Vryfees in Bloemfontein, South Africa, 14 July – 1 August 2014), (available at chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://vrystaatkunstefees.co.za/wpcontent/uploads/2022/07/Plastic-Histories-2014.pdf, accessed on 15 February 2024).

69 K Miller & B Schmammann (eds), *Public art in South Africa ...*, p. xxvii.

70 Jansen in De Jesus & Peach 2015 in J Jansen, "It's not even past'...", p. 131.

71 D Benvolato, History textbook writing in post-conflict societies: From battlefield to site and means of conflict transformation", C Psaltis, M Carretero & S Cehajic-Clancy (eds.), *History education and conflict transformation*, (Switzerland, Palgrave Macmillan, 2017), p. 37-76.

anti-Israeli and antisemitic content and gender issues in Saudi Arabia.⁷² While these Saudi Arabian textbooks do not recognise Israel or teach the Holocaust, terminology directed at Israel was moderated. Since these textbooks are distributed and studied by Muslim communities around the world, these silences/exclusions would have a definite impact on how the history of certain cultures and groups of people will be perceived and remembered. Notably, on 16 July 2023, Marcus Sheff, the CEO of IMPACT-SE stated that textbooks from Palestine, Jerusalem, and Gaza were replete with incitements against Jews and Israel and that there had been no progress made in this regard. Unrelenting in their radicalism, their textbooks drive the vision of 'one-state', gained through Jihad and martyrdom, encouraging children to sacrifice themselves physically. To encourage contents of peace and tolerance according to the standards of UNESCO, Sheff advocates for new material in textbooks which, like Saudi Arabia, is highly critical of terrorist incitement.⁷³

Conclusion

Constructing a curriculum requires adequate representation and expertise of people from all fields, historians, political leaders, publishers, educators, curriculum and subject advisors, unions, the public, newspaper reporters, and learners to balance the broad spectrum of viewpoints. Transparent consultations with the public, opinions shared over open forums, dialogues, and surveys should guide the decision-making process. History is not a static subject but one that is informed by time and change. As there are updates, different perspectives, and discoveries, a wide range of new stakeholders and their expertise motivate alternate proposals.

There must be ongoing evaluation, moderation, and mediation so that factual errors, misinformation, and stereotypes that perpetuate discrimination and distorted perspectives are removed. Silences should be carefully re-evaluated. There are calls for vigilance to identify propaganda and ideology enhancement in history to ensure social tolerance and religious freedom. Teachers need comprehensive training in well-defined history methodologies which can affect the way they teach. Teachers play a critical role in teaching content as gospel, compelled to complete a defined syllabus from the curriculum document. Conversely, they can teach evolved content using the current methodology of history and

72 I Eichner, "No more 'monkeys' and 'pigs': Anti-Israeli content removed from textbooks in Saudi Arabia." *Ynetnews.com.*, 16 July 2023 (available at <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/r1qvgpwqn>).

73 M Sheff, "Removal of antisemitic content", International Research and Policy Institute. *Ynetnews.com* CEO IMPACT-SE, 16 July 2023 (available at <https://www.ynetnews.com/article/r1qvgpwqn>).

deviate from expectations. They need to be aware of their influence and authority, without allowing their personal beliefs to cloud their teaching. Awareness of the contentious nature of the narrative, teachers should teach historical thinking and assist learners to evaluate information and approach learning critically. Close supervision and monitoring can deter this.

Continuous textbook research is mandatory to identify and call out inaccurate information and ensure the content is relevant. History is source-based, depending on a multi-text environment to offer divergent views, content, methodology, and approaches. Educational materials are required to be inclusive and accurate. While in a country like South Africa it may seem difficult to address all the needs of a culturally diverse population with twelve official languages and differing belief systems, comparing and holistically balancing perspectives are important strategies to teach history, develop critical thinking, and strive for an inclusive narrative to be remembered by future generations.