# History, a compulsory component of basic education in South Africa from 2023 – Are South African archivists ready?

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History helps society understand its past and its influence on the present and future. South Africa is a country with a unique history, comprising of varying accounts from the different people that make up its 'rainbow' nation. In 2018, South Africa's Department of Basic Education; announced that history would be a compulsory subject for learners from Grades 10–12 starting from 2023. Changes would include a revised curriculum, teacher training and other issues. Expectedly archives would also be factored into this transformation process, as they are integral to history. Therefore, this study investigated the involvement and readiness of archivists in South African public archival repositories to support this development. Nineteen (19) archivists from the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa and the nine (9) Provincial Archives participated in an online survey. The findings indicate that there was minimal involvement of archivists. Nevertheless, the archivists were confident that they had the content and skills, to some extent, to support the revised curriculum. The study recommends that archivists be more proactive in raising awareness about the archives and linking various stakeholders, such as the Department of Basic Education, with these valuable records.

Keywords: History, South African archives, Archival advocacy, Archival outreach, South Africa

## 1. Introduction

History as a school subject can develop a generation that has a better understanding of events that shaped the development of a country and has been able to understand world events and how these have shaped the interactions between different cultural groups and nationalities. There is also a danger that history could be used to promote propaganda. The South African government recently decided to make history compulsory for scholars in Grades 10 to 12 in South Africa (Department of Basic Education Ministerial Task Team, 2018). This move would require the History pedagogy to be taught responsibly, mainly due to the country's past and efforts to develop a rainbow nation (Davids, 2016). Teachers should be aware of the ethos in which history is taught and must align with the country's constitution, particularly the bill of rights.

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One cannot speak of history and exclude archives, as these records of an enduring value play a critical role in shaping and understanding history. Recent studies in South Africa indicate that few citizens appreciate the archives as integral to society (Sulej, 2014; Mukwevho, 2019; Makutla & Ngoepe, 2020). These studies advise archivists to raise awareness and help more people engage with these valuable records (Saurombe, 2020). In this context, the authors were interested in finding out what the public archivists in South Africa have done to support this initiative of the South African government and most likely promote archives to the Department of Basic Education (Department of Basic Education Ministerial Task Team, 2018). For that reason, the authors requested archivists from the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa (NARSSA) and the nine provincial archives in South Africa to complete an online survey. Their responses, to some extent, reflect the effectiveness of these public repositories' engagement in this contemporary matter.

Many countries worldwide have included archival collections in teaching history to scholars. An article by Schellnack-Kelly (2019) points out that countries like Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States of America, and Chile have digitised collections related to the school pedagogy curriculum. These archival institutions also use social media platforms like Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to showcase documents, photographs and audiovisual archival materials to highlight collections that may interest the public, particularly learners, teachers and scholars. This article attempts to portray what South Africa public archivists have done in light of the change in curriculum initiated by the Department of Basic Education.

### 1.1. Contextual setting

The South African education system has been deeply affected by its colonial past and apartheid. The education system was designed to benefit those in power who sought to undermine the indigenous people of South Africa and exploit them (Mndawe, 2017). The Dutch settlers established their fort in the Cape of South Africa in 1652; by 1795, the British had conquered the Cape Colony. After this period, there were many wars because of economic, political, ethnic, and social tensions between the indigenous people and the British and Dutch settlers (Britannica, 2018). In 1948, the apartheid regime was established under the leadership of the National Party, and it is no secret that the European settlers used education as a tool of domination in South Africa (Saurombe, 2018). Hewitt and Mathlako (1999) explain that the apartheid government used the subject of history in schools to justify apartheid as an ideology. The apartheid regime intended to implement 'separate development'; however, it created extreme disparities among racial groups in education, health, housing, and occupation (Ndimande, 2013). The struggle for democracy was fought on many fronts, socially, politically, and economically, and finally, in 1994, the first democratic elections took place. The late Nelson Mandela was elected as the country's first black president. The newly elected democratic government aimed to dismantle all unjust systems, such as the education system, to address societal imbalances (Vaughn 2018).

The South African Government has a three-tier system of government and an independent judiciary. It has a collection of clusters that oversee national and provincial services, and the Department of Basic Education forms part of the cluster for Social Protection, Community and Human Development. The South African government currently has seven (7) priorities which include: economic transformation and job creation, education, skills and health, consolidating the social wage through reliable and quality essential services, spatial integration, human settlements and local government, social cohesion and safe communities, a capable, ethical and developmental state, and a better Africa and World.

Education is a critical priority in South Africa (Government of South Africa, 2022). The Department of Basic Education is responsible for schools from Grade R (Pre-Primary) to Grade 12 (High School). Citing the vision of the department, the department strives to build

> "*a South Africa in which all our people will have access to lifelong learning, education and training opportunities, which will, in turn, contribute towards improving the quality of life and building a peaceful, prosperous and democratic South Africa*".

In South Africa, as part of its efforts to transform the basic education curricula, the Department of Basic Education recently decided to make history compulsory for all learners in grades 10–12. This change will start with grade 10 learners in 2023 and reach grade 12 in 2025 (Department of Basic Education Ministerial Task Team, 2018).

As outlined in the National Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), the current South African curriculum for public schools indicates history as an elective subject for grades 10–12 (Government of South Africa, 2019). In 2015, in response to several challenges, such as the lack of social cohesion and bouts of Xenophobic attacks, the Department of Basic Education decided to integrate history as a compulsory subject for grades 10–12 with the hope of helping the youth to build a better knowledge of their society and other African countries (Davids, 2016, p. 85).

Since the dawn of the democratic government in South Africa in 1994, the South African education curriculum (pre-tertiary curriculum) has been restructured three (3) times (Government of South Africa, 2021). In each phase, the offering of history as a subject was changed as follows:

– Curriculum 1997–2005: Social Studies was a subject that included History and Geography. Schools taught Social Studies from Grades 1–9.
– Revised National Curriculum Statement 2007–2010: Emphasis on resource-based learning.
– Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement 2011: History is offered as part of the Life Skills subject from Grades 1–3. After Grade 3, history forms part of Social Sciences from Grades 4–9 as a compulsory subject and an elective subject from Grades 10–12.

Referring to the Curriculum Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS), students who opt to study History from Grades 10 to 12 should be able to develop the following skills:

– Understand a range of sources of information available for studying the past.
– Extract and interpret information from several sources.
– Evaluate the usefulness of sources, including reliability, stereotyping and subjectivity.
– Recognise that there is often more than one perspective of a historical event.
– Explain why there are different interpretations of historical events and people's actions.
– Participate in constructive and focused debate through the careful evaluation of historical evidence.
– Organise evidence to substantiate an argument to create an original, coherent and balanced piece of historical writing.
– Engage critically with issues of heritage and public representations of the past and conservation.
(South African Government, 2011)

The Department of Basic Education argues that history is vital in shaping South African citizens, known as a rainbow nation. The rainbow symbolises a country that comprises different people and cultures. For this reason, the Department of Basic Education aims to develop a history curriculum representative of the South African Rainbow nation. Emphasis is placed on the youth because they were not part of society before 1994 (Davids, 2016).

There are mixed reactions concerning schools and teachers' readiness to carry out this mandate (Chisolm, 2018). For instance, Schellnack-Kelly (2019) argues that as much as teachers play a critical role in teaching history, archives as records of enduring value are also necessary to enrich the learning process. There seems to be no information regarding archival institutions' involvement in teaching History at South African schools (Department of Basic Education Ministerial Task Team for History, 2018). The South African basic education system considers resource-based learning vital in the learning process; therefore, the exclusion of archives is concerning (Wessels & Mnkeni-Saurombe, 2012).

### 1.1.1. The National Archives and Records Service of South Africa and the provincial archives

The National Archives and Records Service of South Africa (NARSSA) was established per the National Archives and Records Service of South Africa Act (Act No 43 of 1996). The repository prides itself on collections that include the History and heritage of South Africa. The repository functions under the Department of Sports, Arts and Culture's auspices and strives to collect, preserve, and make accessible, inclusive archives for all South Africans.

South Africa comprises nine provinces: Gauteng, Limpopo, North West, Northern Cape, Eastern Cape, Western Cape, Mpumalanga, Kwazulu Natal and the Free State.

Each province has a provincial archive established according to the provincial archival legislation. These are independent institutions with provincial competency as outlined in Schedule 5 of the South African Constitution of 1996 (Government of South Africa, 1996).

### 1.2. The concern

Public archival repositories are an integral part of society (Mojapelo and Ngoepe, 2020); however, these institutions are not widely known or utilised by the public in South Africa (Sulej, 2014; Archival Platform, 2015; Mukwevho, 2018). More efforts are required to get the South African public interested in the archives (Ngulube et al., 2017). A Study by Kau (2018) proves that public repositories, to some extent, reach out to schools to get teachers and learners to engage with these valuable resources. Despite these efforts, the number of users fluctuates and declines (Mukwevho, 2018; Mojapelo & Ngoepe, 2020). Nesmith (2010) emphasises the need for a new type of public programming that involves archivists actively linking current and pressing public affairs with critical resources in the archives. That way, the public can easily comprehend the value of archives in their lives.

The Minister of the Department of Basic Education's announcement on history as a compulsory subject for grades 10 to 12 could be one of those opportune moments that Nesmith (2010) highlights as vital opportunities to advocate for the public archives with significant influencers such as the government to raise awareness about the archives among the public. However, a careful review of the Ministerial Task Team's report (Department of Basic Education Ministerial Task Team Report, 2018) seemingly does not indicate archivists' involvement in this plan. Though archives are a crucial part of South African society (NARSSA Act no 43 of 1996), the same government that considers them essential has a component that disregards them. On the other hand, archivists do not always take advantage of such opportunities to reiterate the importance of archives and actively participate in crucial change processes (Saurombe, 2018). Therefore, this study attempted to point out the readiness of South African archivists to participate in strengthening the History curriculum and its application in South Africa.

The objectives of this study were as follows:

– To identify the role archival resources can play in teaching history in the South African Basic Education curricula, and
– To find out whether public archives in South Africa are ready to support the teaching and learning of history as a compulsory part of the South African basic education system.

## 2. Value of historical studies

History can teach scholars valuable skills like debating, assessing information, understanding the impact of various events, and viewing situations from multiple

perspectives (Butcher, 2018). Viewing situations from different viewpoints is a valuable skill in the workplace. History is a life-changer that opens people's eyes to bias, prejudice, propaganda and misinformation. It enables a better understanding of the world and encourages scholars to understand and learn from different cultures worldwide. Most importantly, history teaches respect for different views and scholars to listen to all stakeholders before formulating an opinion (Butcher, 2018).

South Africa has many historical sites which provide valuable life lessons which enable a person to develop empathy and understanding (Butcher, 2018). Historical sites and access to original documents, photographs, and audiovisual material can enrich scholars' experiences when learning about the History of South Africa and the country's role and participatory roles in historical events worldwide. Colby (2008) explains that as historical detectives, learners can use the precious primary documents within archives to answer questions about their current studies. These primary resources may include excerpts from diaries, biographies, autobiographies, court proceedings, letters, murals, reports of events and personal memoirs. These resources are available in archival repositories and other heritage institutions.

Learning the history of the world around us is crucial, but there is a need to know about South Africa's turbulent past. South Africa is still a young democracy and a country with a unique history. Unlike other African nations that only experienced colonialism, in addition to colonialism, South Africa suffered under an apartheid regime that enforced racial segregation with detrimental consequences (Saurombe, 2018). The Department of Basic Education initiative will likely create an inclusive curriculum representative of all cultures and heritage in South Africa (Bailey, 2019). Before 1994, the South African school history syllabus tended to be dominated by the narratives of the white settlers who had fled religious prosecutions during the Reformation and the trials and tribulations these communities encountered from both local and international tribulations. The narratives culminated with the establishment of the apartheid system and a rejection of being regarded as a British colony. As noted by Wits and Hamilton (1991), the narratives of local communities have largely been ignored, and the historical narrative only takes shape with the arrival of Jan van Riebeek in 1652.

Prior to 1994, South Africa, to a certain extent, was alienated from the rest of the African continent. Parle and Waetjen (2005) argue that this resulted from colonialism, apartheid and the discriminatory schooling legacy these regimes established. To make matters worse, political bans from other countries fighting in solidarity with those oppressed in South Africa to end this discriminatory government system also disconnected South Africans from the rest of the continent (Vaughn, 2018). As a result, the history of the rest of the African continent and the role other African countries played in the fight against apartheid remains unknown in South Africa. Hewitt and Mathlako (1999) contend that a thorough understanding of African history might help South Africans understand their social identity as part of Africa and further lead to improved linkages and synergies directed towards the continent's development. Parle and Waetjen (2005) similarly argue that the collective recognition and valuing

of Africa's strengths through teaching African history will help countries of Africa think creatively about how to tackle the challenges the continent currently faces.

According to Demolder (2019), history should form part of the curriculum because it is "intrinsic to our shared citizenship; to be without such knowledge is to be permanently burdened with a lack of perspective, empathy and wisdom". History helps people understand individuals' and societies' different experiences (Colby, 2008). There are many ways to discuss the natural functions of the subject, as there are numerous other historical talents and paths to historical meaning. History helps to understand people and societies, offering a storehouse of information about how people and societies behave (Bailey, 2019). While social scientists attempt to formulate laws and theories about human behaviour, they still depend on historical information. Significant aspects of society's operations, like mass elections, missionary activities or military alliances, cannot be set up as precise experiments without understanding the related historical events and activities. History must serve as our laboratory, and data from the past must serve as valuable evidence to figure out why complex societies behave like they do in societal settings. Fundamentally, we cannot stay away from history as it offers an extensive evidence base to contemplate and analyse societies' functions. People need to understand how societies work to run their own lives (Stearns, 1998).

According to Stephenson, Mbansini, Frank, Pillay and Hlongwane (2019), the study of history builds the capacity of people to make informed choices to contribute constructively to society and advance democracy. History engenders the learners an understanding of human agency, which brings with it the knowledge that, as people, there are choices, and as learners, they can choose to change the world for the better. The focus of historical studies involves the study of change and development in society over time.

History contributes to moral understanding and provides a terrain for moral contemplation. Studying the stories of individuals and situations in the past allows a student of history to test their moral sense to hone it against some of the real complexities individuals have faced in difficult situations. People who have weathered adversity in genuine cases may inspire youth (Stearns, 1998). History teaching by example describes studying the past of certifiable heroes, the greatness of women of history who successfully worked through moral dilemmas, and ordinary persons who provide lessons in courage, diligence, and constructive protest (Stearns, 1998). In teaching history, teachers should explore issues of race, gender, class, xenophobia and genocide and the impact that these have had in the past and present (Davids, 2016). South African schoolteachers should raise questions concerning human rights and guide learners to explore power relations, how political power is exercised and how gender relations influence people's lives (Stephenson et al., 2019).

Historical studies enable learners to:

– Understand the range of sources of information for studying the past.
– Extract and interpret data from several sources.

– Evaluate the usefulness of sources, including reliability, stereotyping and subjectivity.
– Recognising that there is often more than one perspective of a historical event.
– Explain why there are different interpretations of historical events and peoples' actions.
– Participate in constructive and focused debate through the careful evaluation of historical evidence.
– Organise evidence to substantiate an argument to create an original, coherent and balanced piece of historical writing; and
– Engage with heritage issues and public representations of the past and conversations.
(Stephenson et al., 2019).

These skills require the archival institutions to engage with school learners by providing them easy access to original sources in their custody.

### 2.1. Role of archival institutions in promoting historical research

According to Madrigal (2020), history comes from the archive as a discipline. The archive is not a library. Libraries spread knowledge that has been compressed into books and other media. Archives are where collections of accounts are stored. While libraries have become central actors in the digitisation of knowledge, some archives have resisted this trend because most archives are still overwhelmingly paper-based. Traditionally, a researcher would go to a place and sit for days, working through boxes, taking extensive notes and making photocopies. However, fewer people have the time, money and patience to work through extensive collections. Smartphones and cheap digital technology enable historians to snap pictures of documents and look at them later. Digital photos lessen the costs of archival research, allowing an individual to capture more documents. Different histories will be written because the tools of discipline are changing. With technology, different types of people can do history, leading to more top-notch, archivally-based scholarly work outside of well-resourced institutions. It opens history to researchers who are caregivers and will lead to more diverse authors (Madrigal, 2020).

Digital accessibility could lead to more learners accessing valuable records, enriching the history learning experience. Including history as a compulsory subject in the Basic Education Curriculum in South Africa; offers NARSSA and the provincial archives an opportunity to get more of the younger generation in South Africa to appreciate and use archives in shaping their understanding of their identity and heritage. Studies based on the utilisation of the archives in South Africa by learners in South African schools show that not many learners are aware of or engage with these resources as part of the learning process (Van der Walt, 2011; Kau, 2018 & Mukwevho, Ngoepe & Ngulube, 2019). The records within the archives, otherwise known as primary materials, have proven to be helpful in various ways to learners and teachers; Hunter (2020) describes these advantages as follows:

- Stimulates both affective learning and logical thinking.
- It makes abstractions personal for students.
- Stimulates classroom discussions.
- Fosters historical empathy (understanding the past on its own terms).
- Challenge deeply held stereotypes.
- Present authentic voices of underrepresented groups.
- Sharpens critical thinking skills.
- It helps students understand conflicting points of view, complexity and the importance of context.

The described benefits (Hunter, 2020) align with the objectives set by the Department of Basic Education, which aim at shaping information-literate citizens in the rainbow nation who are aware of the country's past and how it affects the socio-economic matters at present and in the future (Government of South Africa, 2011).

## 3. Research methods

Related literature was consulted to determine the value of history in society and prove that archival holdings are integral to any country's history. This document analysis method (Frey, 2018) also allowed the researchers to review various Department of Basic Education records regarding the History curriculum and the government's plan to roll it out as a compulsory subject for Grades 10–12 from 2023. These records included primary records from the Department of Basic Education and secondary sources from articles, books and other sources. This method alone could not provide all the answers to the objectives set out in this study. Therefore, the researchers also included an online survey to get the archivists' perspectives. This multi-method approach with post-positivist underpinnings (Ryan, 2006; Pickard, 2017) helped the study gain relevant information to address the study's objectives. Ryan (2006: 12) explains that:

> The post-positivist stance asserts the value of values, passion, and politics in research . . . The post-positivist researcher assumes a learning role rather than a testing role. Post positivists do not see themselves as inevitably solving the problems they set out to investigate . . . but equally, the research can be about problem setting. This is an intrinsically valuable scholarly activity.

This study will likely not have the perfect solution for the concern laid out by this paper; however, it highlights the plight of South African public archival repositories and seeks to contribute toward strategies to make these valuable institutions known and utilised by South African society. More specifically, utilisation by government structures such as the Department for Basic Education. The combination of a literature review and the information gathered from the survey led to possible recommendations that may prove helpful to the public archives in South Africa.

The online survey enabled the researchers to determine whether archivists from the NARSSA and the provincial archives were involved in the government's plan to strengthen and implement the History curriculum from 2023 onwards. Similar regional studies have also successfully utilised online surveys (Mukwevho, 2018). The survey was created using Microsoft Forms and circulated via e-mail. The online survey comprised ten questions that sought answers linked to the archivists' working experience, the repositories' engagement with the ministerial history task team, the readiness of the archives to support the curriculum and their personal opinions regarding their role in the curriculum change. The researchers communicated with Directors based at NARSSA and the provincial archives requesting them and other archivists to complete the survey. The emphasis was to get each institution to participate in the study rather than focusing on individual archivists. Two (2) provincial archives did not respond. The respondents of the online survey remained anonymous. Nineteen (19) responses were received. The response rate was adequate as the study's findings would not be generalised to represent all public archival repositories in South Africa (Pickard, 2017).

## 4. Findings

This study would not be complete without the perspective of archivists. In alignment with the University of South Africa's Research Ethics Policy (2016), the researchers obtained the necessary permissions and ethical clearance to conduct the study. The respondents would remain anonymous; for that reason, the article reports the information collectively without identifying the respondent or the institution that the respondent worked for at the time of the survey.

A brief demographic overview of these respondents indicated that eight (8) of the respondents were archivists at the repositories, followed by five (5) directors/managers (5) and six (6) senior archivists.

The study also sought to find out the levels of experience of these respondents. Most of the respondents (10) had less than five (5) years of working experience in the archival repository, followed by five (5) individuals who had more than ten (10) years of working experience.

Though ten (10) respondents had less than five (5) years of working experience, this study's topic was a current matter they could relate to and might have come across after commencing employment at the repository.

### 4.1. Archivists' involvement in the preparation to roll out history as a compulsory subject from 2023

Archives are integral to South Africa's history and heritage (Sulej, 2014; Dominy, 2017; Ngulube et al., 2017). Therefore, expectations are that archival institutions would also play a key role in supporting the changes introduced by the Department

of Basic Education. Thus, the archivists were asked if they participated in the consultations led by the History Ministerial Task Team. Most respondents (14) did not participate, while five (5) participated in the consultations. The survey further probed the respondents to mention whether their archival repositories made any written submissions for the task team. Similarly, most respondents (15) claimed this was not done, while four (4) archival institutions sent formal recommendations to the History Ministerial Task Team.

Most archivists and their institutions did not participate in the History Ministerial Task Team's consultations. This is a missed opportunity for both parties to integrate the archives into the teaching and learning of History in South African schools. Hendrich (2017) insists that archival repositories are not merely storehouses but active agents in South Africa's struggle for open government, accountability, diversity and social justice. For that reason, these records can add value to the history curriculum. Unfortunately, archival repositories remain largely unknown in South African society (Archival Platform, 2015; Mukwevho and Ngoepe, 2020; Mojapelo, Modiba and Saurombe, 2021). More still needs to be done to raise awareness about the archives and increase their utilisation (Mukwevho, 2018; Kau, 2018). Nesmith (2010) advises archival institutions to be more proactive in creating interest in the archives; he advises archivists to note public affairs and help the public and organisations link archives to these initiatives.

### 4.2. Readiness of the public archival institutions to support the teaching of history in South African schools

The Department of Basic Education has acknowledged that history is an integral part of the South African schools' curriculum; however, it has served as an elective course from Grades 10 to 12 for many years. The Department of Basic Education has sought to change this as the department views history as a vehicle for transformation among young people in South Africa (Government of South Africa, 2011).

Nuttal (2021:90) argues that the function of "history education is to pass on knowledge from the past... to encourage the development of cultural literacy-having the traditional literate knowledge, information on attitudes and assumptions required to understand our communities." Some of the information described here can be found in the various accounts stored within archival repositories. For that reason, schools should be encouraged to incorporate these materials while teaching and learning about history (Van der Walt, 2011). The literature reports on different initiatives by the South African national and provincial archives to raise awareness about the archives at schools (Kau, 2018; Manganye, 2021). However, there is no information on how teachers integrated archival records in teaching and learning practises at the schools. Most of these encounters were once-off visits, with limited or no information on ensuing initiatives. Little is known about such teaching and learning experiences involving archives in South Africa (Van der Walt,2011; Kau, 2018).

Considering this, the researchers wanted to determine what the archivists thought about their holdings and ability to support the new history curriculum. Eighteen (18) respondents claimed that their holdings had limited content from the rest of Africa and other undocumented communities from within South Africa that could be beneficial for teaching and learning. Only six (6) individuals reported that they had pre-colonial records that teachers could incorporate into the curriculum.

According to these findings, to some extent, the holdings have content that can support teaching and learning history at South African schools. However, reports in recent archival literature reveal that most of the holdings are biased, with most of the content focusing on the history of the white minority and limited information from previously marginalised communities (Saurombe, 2018; Ngoepe, 2019). Nevertheless, the knowledge of these gaps has led to more initiatives to make archival holdings in South Africa more inclusive, such as projects by the Oral History Association of South Africa (OHASA) and the National and Provincial archives in oral history projects (OHASA, 2021).

Though inclusive archival holdings are essential, accessibility and use are facilitated to a greater extent by the archivists that work at these public repositories. These qualified individuals know how to collect, appraise, preserve and raise awareness about the holdings. Skills, know-how and commitment are integral to the archivist's work (Saurombe and Ngulube, 2016). The archivists were therefore asked whether they thought they had the capacity, skill and know-how to support the Department of Basic Education in the transformation of the history curriculum in the country. Six (6) of the respondents were confident that they could do so, while eight (8) were not sure, and five (5) of the respondents did not think that they were ready. These are some of the responses from those that were not so confident:

> *"We do not have enough equipment/capacity for all the staff members in our institution, let alone supporting other institutions."*
> *"Tools are there, but capacity and experienced manpower are not there at all."*
> *"Archival institutions are managed provincialy, and provinces are not equal in terms of resources and capacity. Some can provide support while others will not be able to."*
> *"Lack of qualified staff and resources"*

According to these statements, the lack of resources is a significant concern; the same problem was revealed in studies by Archival Platform (2015), Kau (2018), and Manganye (2021). Challenges such as high staff turnover, moratoriums on staff appointments, and lack of skills and training were others indicated in these studies too. Functional archival repositories rely on adequate staffing with appropriate skills and know-how (Mukwevho, 2018; Saurombe, 2020). Increased demand for educational support from the Department of Basic Education could lead to more resources and training for archivists.

*4.3. Collaboration with the Department of Education in other projects*

It was essential to determine whether the archival repositories had collaborated with the Department of Education on other educational projects. Nine (9) out of the 19 respondents confirmed that they had done so, while ten (10) indicated otherwise. Those who responded positively elaborated on their response as follows:

– Arts Projects: Collaborated with school learners in the Albert Luthuli History Project. Grade 10 and 11 learners participated in this project,
– Oral History Projects: School teachers have received training on oral history projects and are part of teams collecting missing accounts in the archives.
– School visits: National and Provincial archivists visit schools to raise awareness about the archives.

There is evidence of collaboration; however, all these initiatives were initiated by archivists at public archival repositories. According to these respondents, the Department of Basic Education has not engaged with the public archival repositories to collaborate in educational initiatives. These are some of the opinions of the respondents who responded negatively:

*"The current government has no knowledge of the functions of Archives; as a result, departments also have no clue what Archives are and its functions."*
*"There has never been any engagement with the Department at the Provincial level, and one is not aware if nationally it was done."*
*"It's been the exclusive domain of academics, and archival profession is not adequately recognised owing to less popularity and lack of understanding of the connection between archives and history."*

The lack of awareness of archives and their value to society worried the respondents, who responded negatively. The Department of Basic Education probably does not fully understand how archival holdings can positively impact history education in South African schools. Hunter (2020) insists that archival repositories should collaborate as much as possible to improve their reach and visibility in society.

Dominy (2017) also implies that South Africa's public archival repositories operate in a policy vacuum, which causes these institutions to be marginalised and not considered influential in matters such as national development. His paper (Dominy, 2017) refers to the State of the Archives report compiled by The Archival Platform in 2014 (Archival Platform 2015), which outlines the development of archives starting from the colonial era through the apartheid regime after the new government dispensation in the 1990s. The report states that most of the problems are because the operations of the National Archives and the provincial archives are the responsibility of both the national and provincial governments, respectively (South African Constitution, Schedule 5). Schedule 5 of the Constitution of South Africa (Government of South Africa,1996) further complicates the coordination and financing of archival repositories at national and provincial levels because the section seems vague about what

the different tiers of government are responsible for. Therefore, the national and provincial archival repositories are subsidiary directorates within arts and culture departments (Mukwevho & Ngoepe, 2019). In most instances, the needs of the archival repositories are not a priority, which hampers most outreach and advocacy initiatives by the repositories (Ngulube et al., 2017).

Mukwevho (2018) also reports that the visibility and accessibility of the South African public archives remain a challenge, and as a result, the mandate of the archives remains misunderstood. Perhaps, more advocacy initiatives in the different government tiers could help increase support for its functions (Saurombe, 2016). Increased support might lead to more collaboration initiatives with other government departments, such as the Department of Education. Hunter (2020) provides the following advice for advocacy campaigns:

– Be persistent and willing to take risks.
– Develop a key message and present it in a variety of ways which are appropriate for different audiences.
– Understand the organisation's culture and describe how the records can meet these needs.
– Collaborate as much as possible to increase your visibility. Identify allies and influential people you can work with within various projects.
– Develop a good action plan.
– Be a reliable source of information for your stakeholders.

### 4.4. *Role of public archival repositories in the transformation of the history curriculum in South Africa*

Undoubtedly, archival records play an essential role in transforming any country. Sulej (2014) argues that during the apartheid regime, access to the records was controlled and complex. However, post-1994, after the establishment of a democratic government, many South Africans are still unaware of the records and possibly the impact they could have on their lives. One of Sulej's (2014:30) suggestions is that "the *process of using archives in the education of pupils and students by teaching them history, geography, literature, arts and cultures should be implemented... this should be made possible by making public records accessible for public use.*" The archivists were allowed to explain what they thought could be the role of public archival institutions in transforming the history curriculum in South Africa. Fifteen (15) of the respondents provided their insights regarding this matter, and the common themes that emerged from their comments were as follows:

– Archives like libraries hold essential pieces of information that could be useful for resource-based learning. Learners and their teachers should use these resources to conduct research and make their own deductions on the history of South Africa.

- Public archival repositories need to receive enough funding to help them effectively function in the development of South Africa, especially in the transformation of the history curriculum.
- Recognising the role of records in history is critical. Transformation can be controversial; history should not be rewritten but rather be inclusive. The public archives have the puzzle pieces to support the perspectives of various angles of South Africa's history.
- All the public archival institutions are engaged in oral history projects to build more inclusive archives in South Africa. These could also be fruitful avenues for collaboration with South African schools, particularly in history classes.
- Though not as inclusive as desired, South African public archival repositories still have resources that can be beneficial for teachers and learners embarking on investigating South Africa's history and its impact on today's society and the future.

The archivists who participated in the study believe that public archival institutions have an essential role in teaching history in South African schools. Paliienko (2019) writes on the value of archives in the transformation from a Ukrainian perspective, stating that archives keep documentary evidence for the future and historical development continuity. Similarly, Chaterera and Ngulube (2019: 45) explain that archival material plays a significant role in people's social, political, and economic development. Therefore, it is crucial to allow educators and learners to access these resources to investigate the country's history. Schellnack-Kelly (2019) and Mukwevho, Ngoepe and Ngulube (2019) further acknowledge that linking schools to the archives could be challenging due to the geographical distances between these institutions. However, these authors explain that providing schools with access to digital content could counter this problem and result in a more significant impact on the learning process.

### 4.5. *Transforming the history curriculum: an opportunity to raise awareness about archives in South Africa*

Chaterera and Ngulube (2019: 55) argue that most archival institutions focus on their conventional users, such as researchers and genealogists; this has to change as archivists need to adapt to the changing needs of society. In the context of this study, this would mean South African public repositories need to investigate how best to support the Department of Basic Education in its pursuit to transform the history curriculum and the mode of teaching this subject.

Nesmith (2010) advises archival institutions to take advantage of societal changes and educate the public and governing authorities on the relevance of archives in the trending matter. Therefore, the changes the Department of Basic Education brought about should be an opportunity to advocate for the archives and seek further engagement in this transformation project. Archival advocacy, in this instance, can be a daunting task for public archival repositories in South Africa due to reasons such as the policy vacuum (Dominy, 2017) and the funding constraints these institutions face

(Kau, 2019; Manganye, 2021), and the lack of advocacy skills (Saurombe & Ngulube, 2016).

Saurombe and Ngulube (2016) and Chaterera and Ngulube (2019) further discovered that most archivists had limited advocacy and lobbying skills when engaging with other organisations and governing or influential authorities. Advocacy should be part of training opportunities and further incorporated into the archival curriculum at institutions that offer archival education (Saurombe, 2016). Advisably, archival information literacy should form part of training and the curriculum for history teachers.

Van der Walt (2011) and Kau (2018) argue that most archival outreach and public programmes target adults and neglect the youth and children. Including history as a compulsory subject could be a perfect opportunity to expose all learners in South Africa to the archives and allow them to critically engage with the records and reach their personal understanding of the South African society's past, present, and future.

Beyond the historical value, the use of archives in education programmes has also proved to have a variety of positive outcomes that include stimulating affective and logical thinking, boosting classroom discussions, sharpening critical thinking skills, challenging stereotypes and fostering historical empathy (Yakel, 2004). These outcomes can further increase the strength of the archivists' claim on the value of archives in education.

Archivists can no longer be on the sidelines of development and transformation strategies; it is opportunities like these, the Department of Education's history project, that archivists should take advantage of to justify and prove their worth (Venson, Ngoepe & Ngulube, 2014).

## 5. Conclusion and recommendations

In conclusion, it is admirable that South Africa has acknowledged the necessity to embrace its history and have it taught as part of the education curriculum. Assumedly, archivists would also be involved in this process as archival records are a significant part of illuminating a country's history, heritage, culture, and identity. The findings indicate very minimal involvement of the public archival repositories in the process. This observation seems to echo previous studies on the minimal participation of South African public archives in matters related to national development, such as education (Venson, Ngoepe & Ngulube, 2014, Kau, Ngoepe & Saurombe, 2019). Respondents believed the available content could support curriculum development and teaching and learning practises. Primary resources have proved beneficial for learners (Van der Walt, 2011; Kau, 2018; Hunter, 2022) and should be encouraged among South African schools. The respondents strongly felt that archivists should be part of the transformation process and that they had the skills and content that would be of value to South African teachers and learners.

The Department of Basic Education has not fully realised the necessity for collaborating with public archival repositories. Respondents argued that their institutions remain unknown; this raised the need for more advocacy initiatives (Kau, 2018; Saurombe, 2020, Makutla & Ngoepe, 2021). Hackman (2011) and Hunter (2020) advise that raising awareness about archives in influential circles such as the Department of Education and other external stakeholders is critical. That way, these institutions may integrate these valuable records as part of their plans for transformation and development. The archivists could achieve this by seeking an audience with those in leadership, participating in external stakeholders' events, establishing partnerships, keeping up to date with government and other stakeholders' developments and linking stakeholders with records (from the archives) that can address their cause (Nesmith, 2010; Hunter, 2020).

It was evident that public archival repositories face some challenges, with funding constraints being a significant concern. The study recommends that:

– Public archivists should reach out to the Department of Education and explain how their resources and services can add value to teaching history in South Africa. Contributions could be at the stage of curriculum development, teacher training and school learning experiences.
– Archivists at the public repositories in South Africa should focus on more advocacy strategies in addition to their public programming initiatives to increase their sphere of influence in government and other stakeholders.
– The current economic climate has negatively affected the operations of many public archival repositories in South Africa. As a result, economic worth is a prerequisite for most services and activities (McCausland, 2017). It is not always easy to connect this kind of value with the archives, and therefore unique skills are required to illustrate the return on investment gained through archival records. Archivists can attain these skills through training, sharing experiences or records of best practices.
– Knowing the archival holdings in detail is essential before promoting them to different stakeholders (Hunter, 2020). Nesmith (2010: 171) further advises that archivists must employ their knowledge of records and archives to help identify and contextualise records for public affairs. Understanding what is within the holdings is critical for all archivists if they aim to be effective advocates for the repository.
– Accessing archives from various schools throughout the country could be a challenge. However, there are means to overcome this; for instance, digitising records could help more schools access these resources. These resources can boost learning by allowing learners to approach history actively, creatively and critically (Mukwevho, Ngoepe & Ngulube, 2019). Partnerships with other information organisations, such as school libraries, public libraries, and mobile libraries, could also reach out to learners in different parts of South Africa (Saurombe, 2016).

Seemingly, South African archivists were not effectively involved in the transformation process of making history a compulsory subject in South African schools. Even though implementation of the project starts in schools in 2023, public archival repositories should not lose hope but still strive to seek opportunities to contribute to this vital project. Most likely, the involvement of archivists will make learning history exciting and rewarding for learners across South Africa. As a result, more young people will value and engage with the archives in society.

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