

Chapter 21

Exploration of the South African Student Activism Archives as a New History Education Resource on Teaching First–Years at University

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ABSTRACT

This chapter explored the South Africa Student Activism (SASA) archives as a new history education resource for teaching first years at university. The history of SASA is underrepresented in the South African history curriculum. This was influenced by the apartheid educational system, which neglected the preservation of the history of students' struggle to inform first-year students entering university to study history. The study used a case study design. Data were collected through interviews and analysis of documents. Qualitative data were collected through interviews with selected students, history teachers, and archivists from a selected university in South Africa. The key findings revealed that utilizing archival material and oral history enhance first-year students during the teaching and learning and development of handbook materials.

INTRODUCTION

This book chapter explores the South Africa Student activism archives (SASA) as a new historical resource on teaching and learning at the selected university in South Africa to recommend the best practices. In this study, SASA is referred to as the South African student contemporary history about the student fight against the increase of the fees. The student embarked on a Fees Must Fall campaign which led to

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the creation of the collection known as the SASA. The fees were an expression of students fighting the State against the exclusion of disadvantaged students from academic activities because of lack of funding. University students were the core actors in the political democratization of national politics during the Fees Must Fall campaign in South Africa. The fees must fall campaign records known as SASA are important for this study since they form part of a collection of contemporary history which is important to understand the South African political development. Recent studies have shown that SASA in educational settings is an interesting pedagogical strategy to rewrite the history of South African student politics. Teaching to be conducted in the archival environment was necessary to enhance the critical analysis of archives materials. SASA collections are textbook supplement. The SASA archives may play an essential role to document the history of students who fought for contemporary democracy. History teachers, first-year history students, and archivists were assessed on how they used SASA as an educational resource. There are methods used by history teachers, first-year history students, and archivists to interpret archives materials. The Archives repository is one of the sections that can provide primary sources for both students and educators. The primary sources, if utilized effectively, can be of real value to teaching and learning at universities.

BACKGROUND OF SOUTH AFRICA HIGHER EDUCATION

South African universities are composed of three institutional types, traditional universities, universities of technology, and comprehensive universities (Mckenna 2016, p. 153). Traditional universities offer teaching and research, offering qualifications from a three-year bachelor's degree to a doctoral degree. Comprehensive universities offer qualifications from the higher certificate to doctoral levels with some related research activity while the university of technology offers undergraduate qualifications with postgraduate and research activity. The focus of the selected universities is focused on industrial and technological disciplines. The selected case study is a comprehensive university. The university was established because of the transformation of South Africa's higher education in 2004. The university was established also because of a merger between universities. Universities differ in terms of providing teaching and learning. The implications of institutional differentiation for teaching and learning were also influenced by institutional history (Mckenna 2016, p. 154). A division between historical advantages and historical disadvantages influenced Teaching and learning at university. The apartheid-era historical education and scholarship were characterized by a tendency to overlook the role of SASA history (Houston, Twala, & Majoji 2018, p. 67). The demand of post-apartheid South Africa was placed on teaching and learning is that it contributes to social justice (Mckena 2016, p. 143). The post-apartheid system expected the department of history to teach contemporary South African history that includes the SASA theme.

South Africa's higher education has undergone transition since the dawn of the democratic era in 1994 (AkooJee & Nkomo 2012, p. 89). The transformation of South African society led to reforms in the national system of higher education. The National Commission on Higher Education (NCHE) was appointed by the minister of education, Mr. Sibusiso Bhengu to recommend a new educational system management (Houston, Twala & Majoji 2018, p. 74). The Curriculum transformation was the strategy recommended by the NCHE. The higher education transformation places considerable emphasis on the role of lecturers and students to facilitate the development of training and development of education. The curriculum framework addressed the systematic faults as a pre-requisite for improving the performance

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