


Chapter 5

Teaching Higher Education History Teachers on Indigenizing the Curriculum: The Case Study of the Representation of African Women in History Textbooks

Dineo Felicia Mosina

 <https://orcid.org/0009-0001-0687-1427>

University of KwaZulu-Natal, South Africa

ABSTRACT

Systemic marginalization plays an integral role in how the minority being women and the last race African women are subjected to misrepresentation or underrepresented within the curricula not an isolated phenomenon that occurs only in Higher Education but as well as Basic Education curricula. Furthermore, Higher Education History teachers themselves at university should be seen to be accountable to the ways in which knowledge is represented, and how particular material worlds are enacted for students within the curricula they teach. The methodology employed in this study is a qualitative case study is employed. Subsequently, the key components of a case study include a distinguished phenomenon, context, and case. The phenomenon that my study focuses on is the representation of Black women, while the context is post-Apartheid South Africa and the case is Further Education and Training (FET) NCS and CAPS-compliant history textbooks from one publishing company. The data analysis method that is used is content analysis using Decolonial Africana-Womanism as a theoretical framework.

INTRODUCTION

Since 1994, numerous scholars and activists have called for the transformation of education in general, and higher education specifically, as a means to address the inequalities resulting from the Apartheid system. Kaur and Nagaich (2019) argue that research on women's issues has evolved, highlighting gender as a central concern and offering a more nuanced understanding of systematic marginalization driven by forces such as patriarchy, colonialism, casteism, and racism. A prime example of this transformation can be found in Basic Education curricula, where textbooks are seen as ideological tools used by textbook

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producers to shape the portrayal of women. Polakow and Suransky (2002) argue that textbook content is constantly changing to align with the interests of those in power. As a result, textbooks become a tool for ideological and political influence. Similarly, Apple and Christian-Smith (1991), highlight that content development follows a selective tradition, where knowledge and culture are shaped by dominant groups, potentially empowering one cultural perspective while marginalizing another. This selective tradition has led to significant research on gender representation in textbooks, particularly questioning which figures are historically significant. The process of determining who is classified as an important historical figure remains a contested issue, reinforcing historical silences in many instances.

Furthermore, the portrayal of women in textbooks and within school structures plays a critical role in perpetuating the inferior positions often ascribed to them. Society and social institutions frequently assign women roles that are seen as less meaningful or requiring less intellectual capability (Akala, 2018). The established rules that legitimize certain bodies of knowledge while delegitimizing others must be scrutinized (Rehman & Alharthi, 2016). Mwanza and Changwa (2021), highlighted the unique role of education in preserving a country's cultural and traditional heritage, while indigenous education specifically focuses on teaching indigenous knowledge and models. The Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement stresses the importance of valuing indigenous knowledge systems in the curriculum, which includes recognizing the South African rich history and legacy (Department of Basic Education, 2011). The Department of Basic Education (2011) seeks to inspire patriotism and nation-building through the curriculum, particularly the history curriculum, by emphasizing issues of heritage, public representations of the past, and the importance of understanding and appreciating the history that has shaped the nation. Educators often face challenges such as inadequate planning time, limited access to diverse resources, and institutional resistance to curriculum changes. A study on effective teaching in history found that student-teachers perceive effective teaching as comprising content knowledge, understanding of learners, adequate planning, and collaboration with other teachers. They also emphasize the importance of demonstrating mastery over content, showing enthusiasm, and using multiple instructional methods to engage students (Boadu, 2015).

This paper aims to investigate how higher education history lecturers indigenize the curriculum. Msila and Gumbo (2016) argue that education in post-colonial Africa must transform decolonization and reconstruction, as knowledge should be celebrated for its diversity, multiplicity, and heterogeneity, without elevating one form of knowledge over another. A pedagogy and curriculum reflecting African epistemic experience is essential, requiring the reclamation of indigenous African epistemologies. The ability of students to critically engage with history textbooks is influenced by their lecturers, who guide them in challenging prevailing narratives, identifying biases, and evaluating opposing perspectives. Wineburg (2001) argues that fostering historical consciousness and critical thinking is more important than simply teaching facts. History textbooks are often influenced by nationalist and political agendas, reflecting the dominant ideology of the time (VanSledright, 2008). Deconstructing these biases is a key role for lecturers, who help students understand how marginalized voices are silenced and how history is often written by the victors. Wineburg (2001) advocates for history education that prepares students to comprehend the complexities and contradictions of historical events, rather than simply reiterating patriotic narratives. This includes examining whose viewpoints are prioritized and considering how colonialism, Apartheid, and gendered histories are represented in textbooks. Lecturers should supplement textbooks with alternative sources, such as oral histories, archival documents, and indigenous perspectives, to offer a more comprehensive understanding of history. This multivocal approach ensures that students view history as a contested, dynamic field (Barton & Levstik, 2004). For instance, South African history

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