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# The Earth is what we all have in Common: Valorizing Environmental Knowledge in the History Curriculum in South Africa

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## Abstract

For centuries, humans, informed by Euro-Western modernity, colonialism, capitalism, and now coloniality, have been at the forefront of much of the current environmental challenges we face today. This ecological violence has significantly contributed to climate change, which is noticeable, especially in the Global South generally, and Africa specifically, through extreme weather events like erratic rainfall, floods, droughts, heatwaves, air and water pollution, desertification and wildfires. Thus, the world continues to witness unprecedented numbers of people being displaced from their indigenous homes, deaths and migrations that continue to threaten 'long term stability' locally, nationally and internationally. However, this environmental history continues to be erased from the school history curriculum (SHC) in South Africa. I use coloniality of nature and decolonial ecojustice as my theoretical lenses to argue for the inclusion and centring of environmental history within the SHC. This is because history as a discipline has a greater role to play towards conscientizing the world to understand the evolution of environments, including the topical subject of climate change emergency. So, history is better positioned to play an even more significant role in generating and disseminating knowledge on the nexus between societies and the environments, through, for instance, teaching about human activities on the environment, and how these have shaped local, regional, and global environments — in the process conscientizing learners about stewardship of the earth's natural resources.

**Keywords:** CAPS; Decolonial ecojustice; Environmental history; School History; South Africa.

## Introduction

In the wake of apartheid's demise, South Africa embarked on a journey of reconstructing a new nation that was to be underpinned by principles of democracy, equality, and justice. Central to this endeavour was the reconstruction of the basic education system, especially its school history curriculum (SHC). This undertaking was aimed at redressing epistemic, ontological and existential injustices within the knowledge base of the SHC that were Eurocentric, racist, homophobic, sexist, misogynistic, authoritarian, prescriptive, unchanging,

context-blind, and discriminatory in nature and form (Maluleka 2018). Equally, this effort was informed by the desire to establish a more inclusive SHC (Maluleka 2021). While some strides have been made in this regard, environmental history continues to be de-centred, erased, marginalised and peripherised when it comes to the knowledge base of the Curriculum and Assessment Policy Statement (CAPS) SHC in the Further Education and Training (FET) phase (Grades 10-12) in post-apartheid South Africa. Given this, this paper argues for the inclusion and centering of environmental history within the knowledge base of the SHC in the FET phase, especially in light of the History Ministerial Task Team (DBE 2015), its Report (DBE 2018) and its ongoing work. This is done by adopting coloniality of nature and decolonial ecojustice as theoretical framings to highlight the continued de-centering and exclusion of environmental history on the one hand, and champion for the inclusion and centring of environmental history on the other hand.

### **Theoretical Orientations: Coloniality of nature and decolonial ecojustice**

To understand what I refer to as the ‘coloniality of nature’, it is imperative that we first understand what is meant by ‘coloniality’. Numerous decolonial activists, scholars and thinkers have since theorised coloniality as the ‘darker side’ or ‘underside’ of Euro-Western modernity that is often hidden and should be unveiled or unmasked (Mignolo & Walsh 2018; Quijano 2007). This is because it

...survives colonialism. It is maintained alive in books, in the criteria for academic performance, in cultural patterns, in common sense, in the self-image of peoples, in aspirations of self, and so many other aspects of our modern experience. In a way, as modern subjects, we breathe coloniality all the time and every day (Maldonado-Torres 2007, 243).

In other words, coloniality denotes an enduring power structure that continues to be successfully maintained well beyond the demise of colonialism (Mabera 2021). This power has the ability to *reframe* culture, identity, knowledge production, labour rooted in cultural, economic, epistemic, ideological, and sociopolitical domination of the global South, especially Africa (Mabera, 2021). Because of this, coloniality continues to maintain itself in the school through its curriculum, especially the knowledge base of the SHC, and other operative general operative logic of the school (Maluleka 2021). Coloniality also reproduces itself in various dialectical yet interrelated domains that include: ‘coloniality of power’, ‘coloniality of knowledge’, ‘coloniality of being’, ‘coloniality of nature’ (Maldonado-Torres 2007; Sultana 2022).

The coloniality of power speaks to the power the global North has over the global South when it comes to its economies, its land and natural resources, its sociopolitical and cultural systems, as well as the global North's imposition of its understanding of binary understanding of sexuality and gender (Mabera 2021). The coloniality of knowledge denotes how the global North, through its use of coloniality of power, continues to monopolise the production of knowledge and epistemologies and thus de-centred, erase, marginalise and peripherise knowledge and epistemologies from the global South, especially those concerned with the environment and nature (Maluleka 2023a). The coloniality of being deals with how the global North, through the coloniality of power and knowledge, continues to eradicate ways of those in global South, the colonised people of this world, as irrational (Maluleka 2023a). Through this, the global North is then able to dictate the social classification and edification of the world's population centred on the notion of race, gender and sexuality.

The coloniality of nature, which forms one aspect of my theoretical orientation, deals how colonial legacies, Euro-Western modernity, global capitalism, neocolonialism, imperialism, international development, and now coloniality continue to shape our understanding of the environment, land use, and environmental governance. This is often

experienced through continued ecological degradations that are both overt and covert, episodic and creeping—for example, pollution, toxic waste, mining, disasters, desertification, deforestation, land erosion, and more—whereby global capitalism, via development and economic growth ideologies, reproduces various forms of colonial racial harms to entire countries in the Global South and communities of colour in the Global North. (Sultana 2023, 60)

The coloniality of nature is believed to consist of a number of key features, which include

(1) separation into hierarchies with non-moderns at the bottom of the scale; (2) essentialised views of nature and the environment as exterior of the human domain; (3) the subjugation of body and nature to logocentrism and phallogocentrism; (4) commodification of the environment and natural resources in service of labour and capital-oriented market economies; (5) positioning of certain natures (colonial and third world environments, women's bodies, dark bodies) in the exteriority of the modern/colonial world; and (6) the subalternisation of other ecological cultures and knowledges particularly those that uphold a continuity between the natural, human and supernatural worlds or between being, knowing and doing (Escobar 2008, 121).

Mignolo also pointed out that the function of coloniality of nature was to create a situation whereby human beings no longer exist *in* and *through* nature but exist *separate* from it. He claimed that

(N)ature became a repository of objectified, neutralised and largely inert materiality that existed for the fulfilment of the economic goals of the 'masters' of the materials. The legacy of this transformation lives today in our assumption that 'nature' is the provider of 'natural resources' for daily survival: water as a bottled commodity. The mutation of nature into natural resources in the West was a sign of progress and modernisation and at the same time a sign that other civilisations stagnated and were falling behind the West. (Mignolo 2011, 21-13)

So, both Escobar and Mignolo, highlight the commodification of the environment and all natural resources as being at the core of Euro-western modernity, colonialism, and capitalism, apartheid, and now coloniality. This has resulted in the many environmental crisis that confront us today, as well as the continued marginalisation of knowledges within the academy (i.e. SHC) and elsewhere. These are knowledges that emphasise the importance of human beings being one with nature and their environments.

I use coloniality of nature, informed by coloniality of power, knowledge and being, to highlight how the FET SHC in post-apartheid South Africa continues to occlude, ignore, marginalise, deny, and erase environmental history in its knowledge base. This is because the global North continues to control and hold significant influence over narratives surrounding environmental issues. It through coloniality of power that the global North continues to perpetuate colonial structures and dynamics even after formal colonial rule has ended. Hence, they are then able to enact coloniality of knowledge which, in turn, allows them to have a monopoly concerning knowledge production systems. They are able to marginalise, delegitimise and erase any narrative and experiences, especially in the FET SHC, that will cast them as leading contributors to climate (change), extractivism and land dispossession through the use of military power, economic exploitation, political control and knowledge production. all of this disproportionately make those in global south vulnerable and disposable.

The second aspect of my theoretical framing is informed by decolonial ecojustice, which is concerned with the intersection between fundamental basis of decolonisation and calls for environmental justice (Jahnel 2023). This is because it seeks to highlight, on the one hand, how colonial legacies, Euro-Western modernity, capitalism, neocolonialism, imperialism, international development and coloniality (of the environment) have significantly contributed to environmental degradation and destruction as a result of land dispossession, exploitation of land, resources and indigenous peoples around the world, especially in the global South (Blenkinsop et al. 2016). As a theoretical framing, decolonial ecojustice offers a holistic and transformative framework for addressing environmental injustices rooted in colonial legacies, Euro-Western

modernity, capitalism, neocolonialism, imperialism, international development and coloniality (of the environment). It centres principles of justice, equity, cultural respect, and community empowerment. One avenue in which this can be achieved is through “education for sustainability,” (Blenkinsop et al. 2016, 204), which I believe the post-apartheid SHC can contribute too. This is a form of education that is also meant to make sure that “the repatriation of Indigenous land and life” is realised (Tuck & Yang 2012, 21).

Therefore, I use decolonial ecojustice to highlight how the post-apartheid FET SHC can be reimagined as a space to pluralise, problematise and critically incorporate environmental histories in its curriculum knowledge base (Fataar & Subreenduth 2015).

### **Debates on environmental history from around the world**

Environmental historians like any other social theorists within the Humanities and Social Sciences are yet to reach a common consensus on the definition of environment history. This is because of the nature, the character and the complexity of the discipline itself. Hence, environmental history within the Humanities and Social Sciences is thought of differently, which is different from how it is thought of within the Natural Sciences. Nevertheless, for the purpose of this study, environmental history can be thought of as an interdisciplinary field of study that seeks to make sense of the complex and often nuanced interactions between human societies and the natural world throughout history.

Concerns about the environment and nature, and the need to protect and conserve them emerged in the global North around the 20<sup>th</sup> century, especially within the academy in a form of different disciplines. However, indigenous populations located in the global South and elsewhere, knew more about the environment and nature and the different ways to conserve, preserve and benefit from both the environment and nature well before this recognition from the global North and the advocacy that accompanies it. In other words, they knew how to become one with nature and the surrounding environment. They did this by using decades of lived experiences about the natural world, “but because they may not have used ‘academic’ theories and concepts, this knowledge exists outside of the academy.” (Maluleka & Ramoupi 2022, 78). For instance, the late Kenyan Professor and decolonial scholar, Wangari Maathai, in her autobiography, *Unbowed: A Memoir* (2006), highlights how her native community, the Gikuyu community, was harmoniously living with nature and the environment and how they were able to do this outside the academic theorisation and abstraction. She explains how in her native community newborn babies were welcomed and immediately connected to nature and their environment

Even before breast milk, I would have swallowed the juice of green bananas, blue purple sugarcane, sweet potatoes and a fattened lamb, all fruits of the local land (Maathai 2006, 4)

In this offering, Maathai goes to great lengths to show the oneness and wholeness that existed between indigenous people of Africa (Mabera 2021). Such practices can also be observed from other indigenous populations of the world. For an example, indigenous people of modern Australia, the Aborigines, have a long history that speaks to their interconnectedness with their environment and nature, which goes beyond mere coexistence, in that, it profoundly speaks to their understanding and respect for the natural world.

However, all of these knowledge and wisdom from the indigenous people of the world, especially those from the global South, was disrupted by the introduction of Euro-western modernity, colonialism, and capitalism, apartheid, and now coloniality and its power matrix. To the extent that the history of Africa and the global South in general were environmental is concern has been and continues to be a history of disconnection, exclusion, and marginalisation, because Africa and the global South continue to be framed as a “‘place-in-the-world’, where, place, refers to both geographical location and rank in a hierarchical system, and ‘world’ refers to an ‘encompassing categorical system’ in which Africa [and the global South] continue[s] to be projected as marginal, under-developed and ‘dark’ against the whiteness of the modern/colonial world’ (Mabera 2021, 192; Ferguson 2006, 242). This disregard of Africa and the global South where the environment and nature are a concern has resulted in a situation where what is currently experienced in terms of global warming, drought, pollution and famine by the people of the global South are the consequences of global factors underpinned by of Euro-western modernity, colonialism, and capitalism, apartheid, and now coloniality and not necessarily the doings of those people (Mabera 2021). Yet, the devastating effects of those global factors manifest right in front of their doorsteps (ibid).

It was only in the 1960s and 1970s that the global North woke up from the slumber and ignorance around issue of environmental degradation. In 1962, Rachel Carson, published a book titled *Silent Spring*, which highlighted the continued environmental damage as a result of industrialisation and urbanisation, as well as the fatal impact of agricultural chemicals on birdlife in North America. This realisation of the need to save, maintain and protect both the environment and nature saw, in a short space of time, environmental history becoming a vibrant field of study in the global North, which enabled many to finally realise links in regional, national, and world histories (Carruthers 2009). The environmental

historiography or canon of the global North was further enriched by the likes of White (1967), Passmore (1974), Anderson and Grove (1984), Lowenthal (1996), , Sörlin and Warde (2007), and many others. Despite these concerted efforts, the field of environmental is the global North too, continues to be considered as “a subdiscipline that is one of the least understood in modern academia [that claims] more inherent theoretical ambiguities and methodological dilemmas than any other area of history” (Carruthers 2009, 101).

The global South, Africa specifically, has developed and established its own canon of environmental history. For instance, the likes of Maathai have produced a body of work that not only articulate how indigenous African people related to the environment and nature; but work that also speaks to need to advance an environmentalism approach of the poor (Mabera 2021). Other prolific African environmental historians include the likes of Ruth Edgecombe with respect to South and Terence Ranger with respect to Zimbabwe, both of which guided many students and fellow colleagues to contribute to environmental history in Africa (Carruthers 2009).

Recently, there has been a new young group of environmental historians from the global South. This includes the likes of Elijah Doro who has since argued that human activities have environmental consequences, and can change the natural ecosystems, inevitably affecting humans and the humans’ body (Doro, 2023). Doro’s study corroborates that of Kwashirai (2006), Musemwa (2009), Nyambara and Nyandoro (2019), and many others.

### **Post-apartheid school history curricula and environmental history**

The primary aim of both colonial and apartheid education was to serve the interests of the colonial-settlers rather than the colonised. In the colonial-settlers’ imagination, the colonised were and continue to be considered nonhuman being who were foreign to reason, philosophy, logic, (Maluleka & Ledwaba 2023), because Africa was and continues to be considered as a geographical location characterised by darkness and the absence of civilisation, history and time – an inference that has informed “exploitation and appropriation of the continent’s peoples and places” (Mabera 2021, 193). The colonial and apartheid SHCs was one site in which such injustices were justified.

Post-apartheid South Africa has been engaged in a protracted struggle to rid its SHC from its colonial and apartheid past (Maluleka & Mathebula 2022). This has resulted in four SHC changes with the proposed new SHC by the HMTT (DBE, 2018) constituting a possible fifth SHC change. The first of these curricula changes saw the introduction of the interim syllabi (also known as the Interim Core

Syllabus (ICS) documents) in 1996. This curriculum was enacted to cleanse school history “of any clearly sexist and racist content, to eliminate inaccuracies in subject content and to establish a common core curriculum” (Bertram 2020, 34), because both the colonial and apartheid SHCs reflected a Eurocentric and Afrikaner nationalist perspective (du Preez 1983). However, because these were interim syllabuses while plans were underway towards a more extensive curriculum reform (Bertram, 2006: 34), environmental history did not take priority. Part of this was as a result of the fragmentation of those syllabuses (Kros 1996), that, in turned, continued to centre content that was aligned more to elitist political history with less social history (Seleti 1997), and no environmental history.

In 1997, an Outcome-based Education called Curriculum 2005 (C2005) for grades 0 – 9 was adopted and introduced by the Ministry of Education under Sibusiso Mandlenkosi Emmanuel Bengu (DBE 1997). This after a lot of constations, consultations and engagements between various stakeholders in (history) education (i.e., National Education Co-ordinating Committee, The Wits History project and the Human Sciences Research Council appointed by the state, just to name a few) (see Bertram 2020). This meant that Interim Core Syllabus continued to be taught in the FET phase even with the introduction of C2005, and thus the de-centering and exclusion of environmental history continued within the FET phase.

Nevertheless, C2005 was sold to the South African public as an ‘inclusive’ SHC (Van Eeden 1997). Because of this, school history was then combined with geography to form a learning area called Human and Social Sciences. The HSS was seen as “important area of study” because learners were to “learn how to interact with each other and with their *environment*.” (DBE 1997, 14). However, “there were no lists of content topics provided” and “Instead, broad sets of concepts which were labelled “range statements” were provided to indicate to teachers what they should teach, and there were “performance indicators” which described what learners should be able to do.” (Bertram 2020, 8). This approach led, in some instances, to the exclusion of environmental history by some history teachers in their teaching because the curriculum was quickly implemented with less to no training of teachers, as well as the lack of streamlined learning materials. So, many of the history teachers decided to go back to teaching from the colonial and apartheid script because that was what they knew and had access to (Maluleka 2023b). But the marginalisation of environmental history further within C2005 can be attributed to the fact that its “epistemic and recontextualization logics were still very much dominated and controlled by government officials, academics, policymakers, curriculum developers and so on, who were still very much aligned

with colonial-apartheid” (Maluleka 2021, 78). Moreover, C2005 failed to fully include and centre environmental history because it was underpinned by neoliberal capitalism and its market-orientated fundamentalism which prioritised profit maximisation over environment and nature.

In 2000, the Ministry of Education under Kader Asmal appointed a committee to review C2005 (Chisholm 2004). On top of this, Asmal also appointed a Working Group which consisted of a range of thinkers to assist the state in coming up with ways to improve school history and its offering (Bertram 2020). The Working Group released a Report entitled *Values, education and democracy*, which stressed the need got the Ministry of Education to appoint or establish a panel of historians and archaeologists that would then work towards recommending to the state how best it could address the challenges that were confronting school history and its offering (Chisholm 2005). Responding to the recommendations of the Working Group, as well as the Review Committee, the Ministry of Education then decided to establish and launch the History and Archaeology Panel and the Values in Education Initiative in September of 2000 (DBE 2000ab; Bertram 2020). This Panel was to work within specific terms of reference relating to the critical analysis of how school history was being taught, how pre-service history teachers were being trained, as well as the examination of learning materials that were being used by history teachers, with the view of making substantive recommendations to the state (Bertram 2020). All these initiatives recommended that History and Geography be unbundled and offered separately within the Social Sciences Learning Area (Bertram 2020). They also suggested that the content underpinning the knowledge base of C2005 needed to strengthen and improved, especially that it continued to de-centre, erase, marginalise and peripherise other histories such as environmental history (Wassermann 2017).

All these initiatives and recommendations led to the adoption of the Revised National Curriculum Statements (RNCS) in 2002 (DBE 2002). The RNCS was also conceptualised for only grades R to 9 not for the FET phase. This meant that the exclusion and marginalisation of environmental history within the SHC of the FET phase continued without being addressed. Nevertheless, the RNCS for grades R to 9 presented both History and Geography separately with their own specific learning outcomes and content within the Social Sciences Learning Areas (DBE 2002). RNCS also continued on the same path of being an outcomes-based curriculum; but it also had a section which outlined the ‘knowledge focus’ for history for each grade (Bertram 2020).

All RNCS curriculum documents for all Learning Areas emphasised the importance of conscientizing learners “of the relationship between social justice,

human rights, *a healthy environment* and inclusivity.” (DBE 2002, 2). The role of the Social Sciences within “environmental education” was considered to be “integral to both History and Geography.” (DBE 2002, 23). Because of this, the curriculum document also stressed the significance of “promoting ethics and the *environment*” with the view of producing a learner that respected the environment (DBE 2002, 8). Thus, Social Sciences as a Learning Area was defined as a discipline that “studies relationships between people, and between people and the *environment*.” (DBE 2002, 4). History as a separate subject within the Social Sciences was considered to instil in learners “an appreciation of the special contribution of oral tradition and archaeology, and of the impact of the *environment* on historical developments.” (DBE 2002, 4). So, within the knowledge base of the RNCS SHC (grades R to 9), some environmental history was included, especially from grades 4 to 9. However, as mentioned earlier, this was not the case in the FET phase as RNCS was only meant for grades R to 9.

Within a year after RNCS was adopted for grades R-9, a new process was initiated to review the SHC in the FET phase (grade 10 – 12), with the History Working Group consisting of three representatives of the South African History Project, and three department of education representatives leading the process (Bertram, 2006). The National Curriculum Statement (NCS) history curriculum (DBE 2003) then replaced the Interim Core Syllabus of 1996 in the FET phase in 2006 (Bertram 2020). The NCS for History FET phase (grade 10 -12) was underpinned by principles such as “human rights, inclusivity, *environmental* and social justice.” (DBE 2003, 1). However, only the grade 12 content covered issues related to the environment under the broad topic entitled: *What do we understand by globalisation?* with a sub-topic entitled *the responses and challenges to globalisation: localisation, extremism and movement of civil society (e.g. environmental movements)* (DBE 2003, 31). This was a signal that environment history was still not a priority within the knowledge base of the NCS SHC that was introduced in the FET phase.

However, the NCS was also subjected to a review by other Minister of Education Grace Naledi Pandor, and this review process was then continued by Matsie Angelina Motshekga who was appointed in 2009 and is still the Minister of Basic Education in South Africa (Maluleka 2023b). Motshekga appointed a Ministerial Review Committee which was tasked reviewing how the NCS was being practicalised and then make recommendations to the Ministry as to how its practicalisation could be improved and strengthened (Bertram 2020). The review committee consisted of two representatives from the South African Democratic Teachers Union (SADTU) and the National Professional Teachers’ Organisation of South Africa (NPTOSA), three academics, a textbook publisher and two ‘overseeing’ bureaucrats (Hoadley 2018). The review committee after consultation

with various stakeholders within (history) education discovered that there were “a number of different curriculum documents at local, provincial and national level that were fragmented, and often contradictory, which was confusing for teachers.” (Bertram 2020, 17). They also unearthed that some departmental officials and history teachers still relied on C2005 especially when came to non-use of textbooks because teachers ought to solely develop their own learning aids (Bertram, 2006). The review committee then recommended to the Ministry of Education that a single curriculum document for each subject and grade ought to be developed with clear content “knowledge to be learnt, recommended texts, recommended pedagogical approaches and assessment requirements” (DBE 2009, 45). Out of this, the CAPS was conceived.

CAPS was rolled out from 2010 and it is also underpinned by the principles of “human rights, inclusivity, *environmental* and social justice: infusing the principles and practices of social and *environmental* justice and human rights as defined in the Constitution of the Republic of South Africa.” (DBE 2011, 5). It also emphasised “on disciplinary procedural knowledge, as is the detailed specification of what substantive knowledge should be covered in each topic.” (Bertram, 2006: 18). Despite this, CAPS also comes short when it comes to meaningful inclusion and recentring of environmental history in its knowledge base. Similar to the NCS, CAPS also has only a single topic on environmental history in its FET phase. That topic can be found in the grade 12 curriculum document, and it is Topic 6 entitled *The end of the Cold War and a new world order 1989* under the *new world order* sub-topic (DBE 2011, 50). Within this topic, history learners are expected to learn about “environmental movements” during the height of the Cold War (DBE 2011, 50).

Currently, there is an ongoing process to review the CAPS. This is a process spearheaded by the HMTT (DBE 2015) and they have since released a Report (DBE 2018). The HMTT was appointed in 2015 at the height of the #MustFall student-worker protests in our public universities, which called for the decolonisation of higher education, and by extension, basic education too. The HMTT was also partly established as a result of what was deemed by some as xenophobic attacks that occurred in 2008 and 2013 (Maluleka 2018). So, on the one hand, the HMTT was tasked with responding to student-worker demands around the decolonisation of education and in this case the decolonisation of the SHC. On the other hand, they were tasked with weaponizing the SHC in response to the xenophobic attacks because it was believed that those attacks happened because their perpetrators did not know the history of South Africa with the rest of the continent; therefore, through a compulsory decolonised SHC such social ills could be addressed ( Davids 2016).

The call to make school history compulsory to all learners in the FET phase was led by the SADTU, an ally of the ruling party, the African National Congress (ANC). This call was contained in their 2014 document entitled *The Importance of Teaching History as a Compulsory Subject*. In it, SADTU argued that history teaching should seek to advance nation-building through the democratic constitution and heal the wounds of the past with the hope of fostering social cohesion. SADTU also believed that given the wave of xenophobic outbreaks in 2008, 2013 and that of recent, through compulsory history teaching such social ills could be addressed.

However, Bertram reads the SADTU document differently. To quote her at length, she asserts that

This was not only a call to make history compulsory, but also to change the story that was currently told in schools. [sic] [The document] assumes that there is a 'correct' story that should be told, which reflects a memory history approach, rather than the disciplinary history of multi-perspectives that is currently supported in the CAPS. [This memory history approach] is often used to support a particular version of a national history where history is about believing a national narrative and not about analytic disciplinary enquiry. (Bertram 2020, 19-20)

So, under pressure from the students and workers, their political ally and the general public, the ANC led government appointed the HMTT, which was then expected to work within specific terms of references, which included

To advise on the feasibility of making History compulsory in the FET phase; To advise on where History should be located in the curriculum (for example, should it be incorporated into Life Orientation or not); To review the content and pedagogy of the History curriculum with a view to strengthening History in the curriculum; and To investigate the implications (for teaching, classrooms, textbooks, etc.) of making History a compulsory subject. (DBE 2018, 84).

In 2018, the HMTT made several recommendations to the Minister of Basic Education in a form of Report (DBE, 2018). Some of these recommendations suggested re-writing of school history and then make it compulsory in the FET phase (DBE 2018). In terms of what could be read as a decolonising imperative, the HMTT suggested "that Africa-centeredness becomes a principle in revisiting the content" (DBE 2018, 134).

In its Report, the HMTT has been successful in highlighting how the countries it has studied in form of a case study have incorporated and centred environmental history within the knowledge base of their SHC. However, it fell short in articulating how they think environmental history could be repositioned, included and centred in the new SHC that they are proposing. This is quite a disappointing for a country like South Africa that only have a rich and diverse ecology on the one hand, and its currently confronted by complex environmental challenges, on the

other hand. Thus, by not including and recentering environmental history into the knowledge base of the SHC, history teachers and their learners are denied valuable insights into the relationship between humans and their natural surroundings over time.

### **The need to include and centre environmental history in the post-apartheid school history curriculum**

The FET SHC in post-apartheid South Africa can contribute significantly to initiatives that are attempting to save the planet. This can be possible through the inclusion and recentering of environmental history in its knowledge base. Therefore, in this section I suggest ways in which environmental history can be infused in some of the existing topics in the current CAPS FET SHC, as well as in the proposed new SHC by the HMTT Report (DBE 2018).

The table below lists two topics from each grade in the CAPS SHC in the FET phase that I believe can be useful in the process of including and recentering environmental history in the knowledge base of that curriculum.

<b>Topic</b>	<b>Grade</b>	<b>Reason why I think environmental history can be included and centred within that topic</b>
Topic 1: The world around 1600	10	This topic, as the topic suggests, focuses on the world around 1600 in China during the Ming dynasty, Africa during the Songhai Empire, India during the Mughal Empire, and European societies of the time. Therefore, these case studies can be used to also highlight how different indigenous societies interacted with the environment in different parts of the world at the same time. This interaction can focus on how these societies conserved the environment, on the one hand, and how, if there are any instance, of environmental exploitation on their part
Topic 5: Colonial expansion after 1750	10	This topic focuses on the impact that the demands of the emerging capitalist economy in Britain had on societies in southern Africa. Hence, the topic name is colonial expansion after 1750. Therefore, this topic can be instrumental in highlighting how capitalism has been in the forefront of exacerbating environmental degradation and contributing to the climate crisis confronting the world, and the global South specifically.

Topic 2: Capitalism in the USA 1900 to 1940	11	This topic is taught in grade 11 and similar to the one taught in grade 10 as mentioned above, because they focus on capitalism. Difference between the two is that the one in grade 10 uses South Africa as a case study, and the one in grade 11 uses the USA as a case study. However, both topics can be used to highlight how, historically, capitalism has always been based on exploitation of natural resources leading to environmental damage, as well as other environmental issues or crisis
Topic 5: Apartheid South Africa 1940s to 1960s	11	This topic focuses on the introduction of apartheid in the 1940s and its entrenchment in the 1960s. Between 1936 and 1937, three important Acts, namely: Acts were the Representation of Blacks (Native) Act (1936), the Development Trust and Land Act (1936), and the Black (Native) Laws Amendment Act (1937), were passed which developed further the process of dispossession of land from indigenous Africans. These Acts can also be framed as capitalist tools used not only to entrench capitalism under apartheid; but also, how then capitalism led to environment damage under apartheid.
Topic 1: The Cold War	12	This topic can be used to highlight the Cold War's contribution to climate crisis by exploring, in detail, arms race and military spending and how that contribute to the climate crisis we experience today. This can be expanded nuclear testing by both superpowers released radioactive materials into the atmosphere and thus contributing to environmental contamination and radiation exposure, which can have long-term effects on the global ecosystems and human health, military operations and environmental degradation.
Topic 6: The end of the Cold War and a new world order 1989 to the present	12	This topic can also be framed to explore what the end of the Cold War mean for environmental restoration by looking at priority shifts for both superpowers and what that meant for attempts to redirect of resources towards environmental restoration efforts. It can also explore transnational cooperation and collaboration efforts were established on environmental issues.

In terms of the HMTT Report (DBE, 2018), more still needs to be done in relation to inserting and recentering environmental in the proposed SHC. In other words, more articulations is needed from the HMTT around how they propose that environmental could be included in centred in the knowledge base of their proposed SHC. For instance, they have proposed *Archaeology as History* approach to doing history. This can be used as site where environmental history could be explored. The same goes for on *Gender History and African Oral Traditions* lens they have proposed, which can explore how different persons in Africa and elsewhere have been interacting with the environment.

## Conclusion

Post-apartheid South Africa has managed, to some extent, rid its SHC from its colonial-apartheid past. However, environmental history, which examines the interaction between human societies and the natural environment over time, has and continues to be overlooked where the SHC is a concern. Therefore, this paper sought to investigate how environmental history continues to be de-centred, erased, marginalised and peripherised when it comes to the knowledge base of the SHC in post-apartheid South Africa, and how this situation could be overturned for the benefit of the learners of history and their environment.

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