

Reconceptualising Africanising, and its positioning in history teaching and learning through regional and microspatial-planned programmes

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2223-0386/2025/n33a5>

Knysna T. Motumi

North-West University
Vanderbijlpark
South Africa

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-6980-84410>
knysnamotumi1@gmail.com

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2223-0386/2025/n33a5>

Elize S. van Eeden

North-West University
Vanderbijlpark
South Africa

Orcid: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4852-5522>
Elize.VanEeden@nwu.ac.za

DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.17159/2223-0386/2025/n33a5>

Abstract

In the past 60 or more years, African scholarly debates on education touched on Africanising and decolonising teaching and learning. Africanised pedagogies should be cognisant of the necessity to sensitise twenty-first century students to diverse scholarly and community voices as they become more accessible as learning possibilities. Equally so, present-day complex contexts in which people live because of the past, requires a more intense regional conversation. With these realities in mind, the authors, both familiar with the field of regional history and seasoned in the teaching of history, engaged in a research project to concisely, yet deeply, reflect on the historiography of Africanising. Secondly, to determine whether regional, and microspatial history variations can be deployed as

facilitating agencies of Africanised educational, the authors felt that it is de-ontologised from its former politically attachment. While the historiography emanated mostly from qualitative desktop research, the study that covered the Vredefort Dome region's value for understanding some curricula topics by considering the histories 'around us' had been recently intensively researched for the completion of a PhD. The outcome of this research has been mostly applied as experiential examples in this revisited debate on Africanising in teaching history and the features related to it, form part of this discussion. In engaging with the literature and research conducted in an applied analytical way allows the authors to affirm the possibilities of 'Africanising' the teaching of history with the involvement of local communities in the recovery of their memories and for researchers to consider its possibilities in microspatial contexts as a steppingstone towards African-inspired educational thought and scholarship.

Keywords: Africanis(z)ing; Africanis(z)ation; Regional history; Microspatial history; Higher Education and Training (HET) history; Curriculum and assessment policy statement (CAPS) for history; Teaching; Vredefort Dome region.

Introduction

Twenty-first century debates on transformation of education and intellectual thought in Southern Africa frequently associate with the concepts of decolonisation and Africanising/ Africanisation. What the difference is and which of these concepts as verbs in an African context may serve the continent best, is another debate. Whereas decolonising Higher Education and Training (HET) programmes or Further Education and Training (FET) curricula may imply a more diverse and inclusive agency of scholarly thought on any theme or phenomenon, a revitalised view on Africanisation, and its positioning in education, intends to combine these features with research principles as part of its methodology that may speak to the context and experience of African people.

In this discussion the authors first introduce historiography as context from which the "Africanisation" concept developed. Secondly, they investigate how it was perceived and perhaps should be perceived in history teaching on any level if more clearly defined as educational expectations for the 21st -century teaching and learning environment. In addition, the existing education policies such as, the exclusion of indigenous knowledge systems (IKS), an over-emphasis on the discourses of accountability, exam standards and testing are still familiar in South African schools.

To conclude this discussion, the suggested revitalised concept of Africanisation is applied to the rich microspatial history and tangible African and Eurocentric heritage of the Vredefort Dome region in the Free State province of South Africa. The discussion is intended to serve as an example that could be considered in teaching and be methodologically applied to other microspatial contexts to transform the historically engraved colonial-perceived approach as agency for teaching African histories.

Debates on Africanising/Africanisation as a concept and future in higher education: A historian's perspective

A de-shackling of Africa's subordination to the European colonial authorities after the 1940s was evident in leadership, the general politics and policies of the day. Intellectuals in Africa and elsewhere in the world embraced new waves, as observed in general research debates - 'Africanisation', viewed by some as an ideology, being one of them. Its origin and future also require a discussion from a historical perspective yet also keeping a refreshed understanding for history education on an HET and lower educational level in mind.

Roots of the first debates on Africanisation in the 1960s

In the early 1960s, educationalists like Williams of the Howard University (Washington DC, USA) remarked that the Africanisation debate was quite popular after African countries became independent. Williams visualised creating an Africa in which Africans become educated; politically replace Europeans in government positions and eventually gain freedom and independence of the mind. William's idea of Africanisation is testimony to the fact that originally, the concept was of a political and ideological nature.

Weinstein also suggested Africanisation as a way forward for French colonies in tropical Africa, and regard it as "a sense of human (African) autonomy from a sense of being an object ... it is a sign of independence and social change, a key to nation-building". Weinstein suggests two changes, first, Africanisation will allow Africans (especially learners) to develop a sense of identity and belonging in their African environment. Second, it will instil a sense of pride among Africans in their cultures and traditions which will ultimately lead to greater self-esteem and a stronger sense of community.

An additional feature of the Africanisation concept in the 1960s was that the word (as a verb) can also mean "the process of becoming or making something African or have African features". This process includes all the calls for Africans to liberate themselves; to decolonise their minds and to emancipate themselves from mental slavery implanted in

them by European colonisation. The process is also a further call on Africans to develop their uniquely created frameworks, strategies and resources of implementation. Therefore, this process of creating and renewing African features was termed 'Africanisation'.

From research it appears that the debate on Africanisation also thrived in the 1970s and 1980s and ironically, mostly practiced by white scholarship, sometimes outside the educational awareness of Africans. In South Africa, amongst others, the concept also developed to connect to political, social and cultural transformation during the nineteenth and twentieth centuries. However, by the end of the twentieth century, the reality of educational transformation further encouraged the Africanisation debate.

It has only since early in the twenty-first century that African scholars appeared to take more interest in 'Africanising' as a concept and its existence and meaning in country specific environments. For example, to African scholars such as Assie-Lumumba, 2001; Maringe and Ojo, 2017 and Mbembe 2016, Africanisation is also understood as a process of re-centring indigenous knowledge, Africanising the curriculum and a project that acknowledges the contextual complexities of postcolonial Africa and its implications for decolonisation.

Most African intellectuals proposed Africanisation as an education system that would uphold an IKS. The sentiments of these intellectuals resonate with academics, especially as it contends that through education, societies in Africa will be uplifted if education reflects their local IKS. In African societies, acknowledgement of the indigenous way of life in essence, has the potential of making learners/students conscious of their own ways of thinking amidst their African traditions of living, doing and surviving which may add much value to Western forms of education.

As recently as 2023, however, Paulus Zulu rejected both the concepts of 'Africanisation' and 'decolonisation' as useful for transformation of knowledge. The author accentuates that both concepts remain dogmatic and opinionated and still wear "politico-ideological" jackets so to speak, and can hardly be useful in an academic discourse. Zulu adds: "... while both concepts [Africanisation and decolonisation] might appeal to sentiment, practically they are unimaginable..."

Nonetheless, the argument here is that past concepts of Africanisation were easily 'captured' for political purposes and that it should be reclaimed or de-ontologised in academic debates by disciplines in the humanities (and also featuring well in education (such as history)) to rather direct an academic discourse. The authors are also mindful of the reality that colonial Africa cannot be de-shackled from its deep-rooted colonial state

in a fortnight, however, the debates are promising. Following from the above discussion, the following features were observed: the need to seek out our commonalities; affirmation of African culture, tradition and value systems; fostering an understanding of African consciousness in a more diverse-inclusive twenty-first century society and finding ways of blending Western and African methodologies.

Africanising/Africanisation and historians

Historians such as Ki-Zerbo, an editor of one of the UNESCO volumes of Africa's history, also joined the Africanisation debate during the 1960s and 1970s. The above observation is confirmed by Ki-Zerbo himself saying, Africanisation was popular among African nationalists in the sense of "retaining ownership and reclaiming colonial institutions". Ki-Zerbo also emphatically asserts that the political commitment by Africans to localise not only universities, but also other public institutions, was quite high in those years.

Educationally, Ki-Zerbo viewed traditional African education as "more pragmatic", global and task-oriented in comparison with the modern approach which is, discriminatory in nature and disconnected from the needs of society and its development. Minga further asserts that Ki-Zerbo was "supporting transformation of African pedagogy and change of perspectives and aims of education in general". More importantly, Ki-Zerbo embraced a multidisciplinary African history that is experiential through oral tradition alongside written sources, as introduced by colonial historians. From Falola's debate and reference to Ranger further on in this discussion, the multi- and interdisciplinary feature of African history is confirmed.

An African American voice, Molefi Asante, is acknowledged for his history on Afrocentrism which has more to do with an African consciousness in ideals and values towards a humanising motif. These ideas were originally partially embraced by African leaders such as Kwame Nkruma. Additionally, there is "Africanity" which mostly relates to being proud to be an African and with which Asante is also associated.

On the same note, studying their past, Asante and Mazama also found that the West had shattered the beautiful and well-ordered edifice of the African knowledge system, however, not to such an extent that it could not be revived. Basically, these historians had high hopes that Africans must reclaim their histories and traditions which were consciously and unconsciously taken away from them by colonial historians. In his *Theory of Social Change*, Asante posited: ... "What, after all, is any more valuable for the African person than this attempt to throw off the shackles of white dominance?"

The Nigerian historian, Toyin Falola was involved in a publication titled “*Africanising Knowledge: African studies across disciplines*” with Canadian scholar Christian Jennings. These authors made the following observation:

“Nealy four decades ago, Terence Ranger questioned to what extent African history was African, and whether methods and concerns derived from Western historiography were sufficient tools for researching and narrating African history . . . the effort to make African scholarship ‘more Africa’ is fundamentally interdisciplinary. . . ‘Africanising African History’ offers several diverse methods for bringing distinctly African modes of historical discourse to the foreground in academic historical research.”

What these authors convey and suggest is a shift in epistemology that accounts for, and centres African history, culture and context in our understanding of the continent and the world at large. In the discipline of history, for example, one may not always find the terms Africanising or Africanisation, however, one might observe a preoccupation with an autonomous African philosophy of history or with inscribing the African factor in African history.

There was also a discussion by the South American historian Esperanza Brizuela-Garcia on Africanisation of the African continent’s historiography. First, Brizuela-Garcia, explaining its conceptual understanding in the contextual environment of decolonisation the “methods, questions, and sources used by historians in the writing of African history needed to be Africanised”. Second, it was assumed that more of the personnel involved in the writing of African history and the institutions supporting this endeavour would be based in Africa, connected to African societies and their everyday problems.

The following are examples of African historians’ thoughts (excluding South Africa) in the noted schools; The Ibadan School in Nigeria which focuses on their region for a better understanding of their identity; The Dar-Es-Salaam School in Tanzania appears to be more multidisciplinary and collaborative with scholars’ pro anti-colonialism and the Dakar School (Senegal and North-Western parts of Africa) emphasises debates about Afrocentrism and subaltern studies.

It can be said that South African historians entered the debate on Africanisation and Africanising later, but under the frequently used concept of decolonisation, or as part of it. The work of Ndlovu-Gatsheni is an excellent example. The author’s view on Higher Education in 2013 was that curricula were still too Eurocentric, while “Africa-centred knowledges remain marginalised”. Ndlovu-Gatsheni observed that Africanisation initiatives (thus as a first priority) “have not resulted in decolonisation” (seemingly an outcome

feature having complied to the first priority). However, scholars such as Mbembe argue, “decolonisation is not about closing the door to European or other traditions. Rather, it is about defining clearly what the centre is.” In essence, Africa should be the centre alongside other traditions.

Attempting to fast-track the decolonisation process, in 2015, South African students and a small number of academics embarked on a campaign to decolonise the curriculum at universities. Heleta claims that these students wanted “to tackle and dismantle the epistemic violence and hegemony of Eurocentrism, completely rethink, reframe and reconstruct the curriculum and place South Africa, southern Africa and Africa at the centre of teaching, learning and research”. Indeed, the proverbial 1960 “winds of change” were blowing again and were propelled by decolonisation projects that engulfed almost all institutions of Higher Education in South Africa.

On the same note, Ndlovu-Gatsheni further links Africanisation to the process of decolonisation which would “include making the universities African in form and content; attempts to bring indigenous knowledge systems (IKS) into universities, as does the addition of African scholars and African philosophies into the curriculum”. As for us, as part of the South African scholarship, we view that Africanising, the teaching and learning of history, requires deploying variations of regional as concept that accentuate a local to microspatial approach. To do so will require more in-depth research to be recorded and practically utilised from time to time. It further requires definite Africanised features viewed as part of the African way of considering Africanising knowledge and historical knowledge *per se*.

Therefore, Africanising/Africanisation is regarded as learning and teaching by experiencing the history around ones as pivotal guidelines to understand the array of histories that are combined in a curriculum. Again, history curricula must become more engaged with the regional and local histories to understand the distanced and unfamiliar curriculum themes. Historians are keen to show that Africa had a history worthy of scientific inquiry, and that Africans are conscious historical subjects that are active in shaping their history.

Reclaiming Africanising by de-ontologising it as concept for education and for history education?

In the contemporary context, African historians aim to de-ontologise the European colonial historiography which “portrayed Africans as peoples without [a written or usable] history, coupled with [mainly stereotyped] ‘vulgar notions of stagnation and barbarism’”. Therefore, African historians should seek to Africanise history teaching and learning by illustrating and vindicating Africa’s rich historical past. In so doing, it would centre African sources and African peoples as the elements that animated African history. In the same vein, microspatial history can be another Africanising feature which brings together an epistemological perspective of microhistory connected to a spatially sensitive methodology of working towards a global understanding of any theme or trend in a micro context, however, viewed trans-locally.

The concepts associated with Africanising or Africanisation that might, from an African perspective, be more accentuated as unique possibilities in method and approach in, for example, history education and scholarly history teaching on an HET and FET level, are:

Acknowledge on a larger scale, local/regional community/ies and their IKS

Since the dawn of the twenty-first century, the debate on curriculum transformation and Africanisation have made it critical for scholars and students alike “to seriously consider Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS) as a catalyst in education. IKS can empower communities to participate in their educational development since it respects diversity and acknowledges the challenge of hegemony of Western Eurocentric forms of universal knowledge”. However, the revitalised field of African history registered a significant disciplinary contribution by enhancing the scientific merits of oral tradition as a legitimate scientific resource and historical archive. The main objective of an Africanising history teaching and learning is to challenge dominant narratives, acknowledge diverse knowledge systems and centre the voices and experiences of marginalised communities.

In this study the Africanising of history teaching and learning should be regarded as a process of restoring the original African “‘living or people’s science’ because no one can deny that African philosophy has been negatively affected by colonialism”, as stated by Msila. Therefore, when learners and their teachers create knowledge in their local milieu, this is bound to support lifelong learning initiatives. As indicated in the previous sections,

many scholars believe African's way of life creates an opportunity to develop an inclusive approach to education. In this context, the teaching and learning of African traditions and familiarise oneself with other micro-spatial narratives can become a viable tool in the Africanising of the curriculum.

Letseka is of a similar view. He suggests education must be made “relevant to the material, historical and social realities of the communities in which schools operate”. Acknowledging the broader microspatial value of each community in understanding its broader translocal and transregional histories contributes also directly to accepting the value of engaging with each community's IKS. Continuing in curricula and modules, this will enhance the relevance and effectiveness of what is learnt since it also adheres to closer to home perspectives, experiences, language and customs. Furthermore, “the inclusion and interfacing of African indigenous knowledge and modern (Western) knowledge systems within the curricula, instructional materials, and textbooks will help to prepare students and learners for the greater world”, says Kante, which is similarly articulated in the debate as offered by Shizha.

Experiencing/observing the environment and the heritage experiences and associations of community/ies in their microspatial environments

Educationally, environmentally-based experiences answer the question of disconnect raised by Dewey in the late nineteenth century about the unrelatedness between children's schools and their home and neighbourhood lives. It is also known that the Annales historians have accentuated environmental time and trends as a valued consideration in thinking about human kind's history. Recently, most scholars generally suggest that worthwhile education should develop from the environment, and the teaching and learning process should be directly related to the pattern of life in the society concerned. Ndille's definition of Africanisation highlights the importance of experiencing and observing the environment, it “emanates from the premise that education is man's acquired experiences as (s)he interacts primarily with his/her environment”. As a result, institutions of teaching and learning in the new Africa, must accept a call to firmly entrench their roots in their native soil, without neglecting the common heritage of other societies.

On the same note, Makhele also firmly believes that “an *ecological principle* can assist in the conceptual framework of the Africanization of the curriculum”. This principle suggests the element of interdependence of different organisms or people in, and with, their

environment. In the educational circles, the ecological theory as suggested by Makhele can further be used to explain the relationship between home, school and community. The theory explains that people are involved in roles, relationships and patterns of daily activities that shape their cognitive, social, emotional, moral and spiritual development in their environment.

To emphasise the importance of experiencing the environment in Africanising education, Makgoba suggests that the African education should “draw its inspiration from its environment, as an indigenous tree growing from a seed that is planted and nurtured in African soil”. African education, therefore, to be truly useful and relevant to Africa and the world, must be grounded in African communities, cultures and their experience with their local environment. The importance of the environment is reiterated by Naidoo recommending that the learner’s experience of their environment should be the starting point of their education.

Like many other scholars before, Naidoo explains the “idea is that education will produce people who are not alienated from their communities and are sensitive to the environmental challenges facing Africa”. It is, therefore, suggested that the teaching and learning of history, particularly local and regional history, is grounded on the local environment of the learners. Through this type of an Africanised teaching and learning of history approach, Africa will write her own history, and north and south of the Sahara, it will be a history of glory and dignity.

Thinking and acting more consciously about scholarly inclusivity, diversity and multiversity and collaboration of knowledge in educational contexts

Inclusivity in knowledge content and in the accessibility and understanding of content through language, for example, remains an important ideal in Africanisation for country specific needs. This means a sensitivity to all languages in, for example, HET environments. The main objective of Africanising the teaching of history, is to integrate that which is originally African with that which is foreign and come up with an integrative knowledge and method that portrays an African outlook in the global context.

Makgoba’s definition of Africanisation (see also Letsekha’s reference) is used within this context as “a process of inclusion that stresses the importance of affirming African cultures and identities in a world community”. In other words, Makgoba suggests African features and paraphernalia can and must co-exist with characteristic features from other

continents. Makgoba, like many other scholars, suggested that African knowledge should not replace Western knowledge, instead they must complement and enrich each other. The element of inclusivity as articulated by Makgoba, explains that Africanisation is “practically non-racial”.

The inclusivity of Africanising is also emphasised by Blyden. With all the author’s “Africanization ideology he did not dismiss the ‘Western’ type of schooling in favour of education and instruction along ‘African’ lines”. Therefore, unlike the original aim of Africanisation in political terms which was to replace Europeans in government positions, and so creating a sense of human (African) autonomy, African scholars gradually acknowledged that in an Africanised the African value system should be at the epicentre, however, it still requires a complementary foreign content base through intercultural dialogue.

In its 2010 strategic plan, the University of South Africa (UNISA), also intended to contribute to a “multiplicity of voices, alternative canons, and diversity in thought” to serve the specific needs of Africa through its collaboration and research. In this context, Africanisation includes transnational knowledge that “recognizes global ethnic diversity and honours the diasporic and African-based experiences of Black people and privileges the flourishing of Black life in Africa without re-centring Western thought”.

Embracing more multi and transdisciplinary scholarly views in history curricula

Transdisciplinary research is aimed at contributing to the development of Africanised academic content that informs praxis and thereby, contributes to decolonisation and community development. Throughout this learning process between, across and beyond the disciplines, the voices of the people on grassroots level are also incorporated in the development of a new understanding. Nissani explains that through this approach “distinctive components of two or more disciplines are being integrated into... a single mind”. Therefore, multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary approaches will help scholars to develop unique and integrated ways of gaining knowledge, understanding and skills.

The use of multi-, inter- and transdisciplinary approaches to decolonised pedagogy is supported by Razack who argues that different theories and understandings from “a variety of disciplines should be compared with each other as the manner in which they relate to the context”. Therefore, transdisciplinary discussions, in particular, work towards unmasking those aspects that prevent Africanised knowledge and skills from developing, as well as

towards the exploration of indigenous knowledge and skills to build an empirically sound framework from which to develop history material.

The proposed transdisciplinary discussion above places emphasis on working from local and microspatial community development approaches when developing Africanised history curricula for schools. The transdisciplinary framework, therefore, requires that there is more of a sensitised approach to include South Africans and their making of histories micro spatially when the content needed to develop Africanised history curricula, are identified and emphasises that Africanised knowledge should lead to praxis that can create insight and other forms of applications in general.

Engaging with the Vredefort Dome region in an Africanised epistemology

The application of the concept of Africanising/Africanisation as more structurally explained in the previous section will be illustrated in this section. To do so, a concise historical context of the region will be provided. Thereafter, only four of the de-ontologised, revitalised and renewed suggested concepts of Africanising the teaching and learning of history, and its features in this region, will be debated.

The Vredefort Dome region, situated in the Free State Province of the South African Highveld, is a UNESCO World heritage Site (2005), and is one of the oldest and largest meteorite impact sites in the world. The Vaal River remains a dominant natural feature of the Vredefort Dome landscape through which it passes, consisting of a confusing “series of parallel valleys, ridges, and woody islands, especially when it cuts right through the Dome region in the vicinity of Parys”. Parys is a town in the Free State province and in proximity of the Vredefort Dome. Added to its geological significance is the cultural significance, with human interaction dating back to the Middle Stone Age, through the Late Iron Age to more recent historical periods such as the Anglo-Boer (South African) War, 1899-1902.

It is important to indicate that an in-depth study of the Vredefort Dome region was undertaken by KT Motumi: First at Masters’ level in 1997 under the title, “*Black Education in Mokwallo: A historical perspective of the period 1920-1980*” and second at PhD level in 2020, with the title, “*Practicalising the significance of ‘history-is-all-around-us’ approach in, and outside the classroom*”. The entire Chapter 3, namely, “Observing the “history-is-all-around-us” principle in the Fezile Dabi region, 1836-2019” is dedicated to the understanding of the histories of the different people of the Vredefort Dome region from a micro-spatial research approach .

In these two in-depth studies, the focus was placed on the histories of the descendants of the enslaved, displaced, colonised and racialised people. The aim was to proclaim loudly that they are human beings, their lives matter and they are born into valid and legitimate knowledge systems that can help humanity to transcend the current epistemic and systemic crises. This idea was influenced by African historians such as Bethwell Ogot who argued that, to “gain their confidence as a people, Africans need to..., ‘give credit to their past’, and take a positive look at their history as not having been a nightmare from which colonists rescued them”.

In line with the above, it is argued that Africanised history education has its foundations in African philosophy which largely has to do with African experiences, concerns, aspirations and how Africans construct knowledge. For example, if history learners are familiar with the people, buildings, customs and traditions of their local village, town or township, the familiar background can be easily used to introduce new historical concepts such as ‘cause and effect’ to them.

In this study, the authors use the Vredefort Dome region to help learners realise that history is not simply a matter of pages in a textbook, but that, “history consists of events, and people once as real as learners themselves, and all that took place in and around them”.

The community (all cultures in their diversity)

The Africanising/Africanisation project has currently become a very important issue for people in search of unity, a sense of belonging and a sense of pride in who and what they are and what they stand for as Africans. The Africanised approach of teaching history will also help learners to see not only the political milestones of the Vredefort Dome region, but its economic, educational, military, multicultural/traditional and social legacies.

Along the hills of the Vredefort Dome region, there are ample footprints and remains of African Stone Age and Iron Age people, Dutch settler houses, British and Boer soldiers’ graves and several monuments. All these cultural remains represent different cultural groups who inhabited this region before and are important historical sources for effective teaching and learning of South Africa’s history. These different cultural remains mentioned above, represent ‘historical heroes’ of this region. As expressed by Ki-Zerbo, “Historical heroes are those who teach by example and the historian sees them as sources of edification for the public”.

The region is also home to other well-preserved and outstanding cultural phenomena such as the Khoi-San rock art paintings, including objects, the remains of Sotho-Tswana hut structures, animal stone kraals and smelting-furnaces. For example, through the analysis of Khoi-San rock paintings, learners can determine the type of animals that were found and killed for consumption by the Khoi-San tribes in the Vredefort Dome region. The learners can use the landscape of this region as a picture of comprehensive histories of different cultures found here.

Other cultural historical sites also contain the remains of abandoned homesteads due to Difaqane wars, outbuildings and other structures such as water furrows, irrigated gardens, the orchards and graveyards of immigrant colonial farmers. The acknowledgement of these cultural remains resonate well with the view of Callinicos, who regards the Africanised teaching of local and regional history as a way of “recovering previously suppressed alternatives, and a means of returning people to a knowledge of their forgotten past”. Africanising African history teaching using the Vredefort Dome region offers several diverse methods for focusing on distinctly African modes of historical discourse in academic historical research.

Through this approach, history learners are afforded an opportunity to appreciate and acknowledge that, besides its geological significance, the Vredefort Dome region is culturally significant. There is ample evidence that there was human interaction dating back to the Middle Stone Age, through the Late Iron Age to more recent historical periods such as the Anglo-Boer (South African) War (1899-1902) and Tumahole Township Rent boycotts 1984, to mention but a few.

Acknowledge, on a larger scale, local/regional community/ies and their IKS

Recently, many scholars believed IKS provide for an opportunity to develop an inclusive approach in teaching and learning of history. In this context, its inclusion in the history classroom becomes a viable and relevant tool in the decolonisation and Africanisation of the curriculum. Battiste posits that students can through culture since IKS is “stored in various cultural forms, for example, folk stories (oral tradition), songs, folk drama, legends, proverbs, myths, etcetera”.

Therefore, to rewrite the history of the marginalised African people of the Vredefort Dome region and correct the centuries old Eurocentric myths of Africa as a ‘heart of darkness’, the two studies of Motumi, mentioned in Section 4 of this discussion, heavily relied on oral history, (John Lofafa and Meisie Ranchu, Vredefort Native United School,

1927-1933).

For example, John Lofafa's oral history revealed that one of the pioneers of the Communist Party of South Africa (CPSA) JB Marks was his teacher at Vredefort United Native School. However, in 1931 Marks was forced to resign as a teacher and was banned by the South African government from teaching in this country due to his political affiliation. The oral history as narrated by John Lofafa was corroborated with local and national written sources, in this case housed in the Free State Archive Depot (FAD). This approach is embraced by historians such as Ki-Zerbo who said, African history is multidisciplinary, experiential through oral tradition alongside written sources.

In this example, John Lofafa, who was a student at the time, experienced the event which correlated with the written source in the form of a dismissal letter banning JB Marks from teaching at Vredefort United Native School. Again, this example resonates with Ki-Zerbo, who suggested traditional African history education should be "more pragmatic". According to Ndlovu-Gatsheni, curricula were still too Eurocentric while "Africa-centred knowledge remained marginalised". However, with the Vredefort Dome region case, elders' oral testimonies, previously marginalised Africans are regaining their voice.

In addition, through the richness of the oral history as a tool, it was also revealed that AM Lembede, a co-founder of the African National Congress Youth League (ANCYL) of 1945 left his legacy in the classrooms of this region as the first principal of Parys United Native School in 1934. The oral testimonies discussed above were corroborated and combined with Eurocentric historical methods (written sources) regarding the political contribution of both JB Marks and AM Lembede in this country. In line with Makgoba's thinking with the Vredefort Dome region as an example, reclaiming Africanised history teaching is that the "African outlook merges what is originally African with what is foreign (European) and thus improves the African outlook which is not necessarily exclusive to the world".

Apart from investigating written accounts on local and regional history, oral history is another highly recommended and suitable historical method that was used to recover and uncover the unwritten histories of the Vredefort Dome region. Oral history allows the lives of ordinary people (Lofafa, Ranchu and others) who were formerly unrepresented in the historical annals of the community, to be given their proper space and place in the overall rewriting of the history of Vredefort Dome region. In the context of this paper, Africanising requires reforming curriculums to accommodate African oral traditions, ... and teaching

methodologies, should also be enhanced to “ensure real life experiences are brought into the class and not just borrowed concepts”. The integration of IKS, as demonstrated above, resonates with some authors calling for the need for an African centred critical education theory, and the need to reclaim lost African identity.

In the case of the Vredefort Dome region where there is a lack and absence of written accounts about African communities, the oral history project became a valuable exercise to record the stories of older members of the community while they are still alive. The envisaged “*Save our Stories*” history project in collaboration with the Fezile Dabi Education district, social sciences/history teachers is one example of recording and saving all the previously neglected (hi)stories of the people of this region. The oral history approach mentioned above is practically relevant to the study of the historically disenfranchised and marginalised African people of this region. Therefore, for the older people of the Vredefort Dome region, oral history has offered them a means of preserving not only their individual lives, but also many different African ways of life from vanishing into obscurity.

Experiencing/observing environment

Community-centred and or environmentally-based education experiences answer the question of disconnect raised by Dewey in the late nineteenth century about the unrelatedness of children’s school lives to their home and neighbourhood lives. To practically apply and practice Africanised pedagogy in the teaching and learning of history, it is argued that the child’s physical environment is one of the core factors which determine the skills the child would need to acquire to “adapt to, survive and develop the environment in return”.

For example, the Boer women who were kept at the Vredefort Road concentration camp during the South African War (1899-1902) used their knowledge of the local environment to occasionally supplement their food rations from the veld. Camp records reveal that “these women dug up a root, like a large, sweet potato, known locally as Gamma”. Essentially, these women’s knowledge and experience of their local environment assisted them to adapt and to survive the harsh daily conditions of inadequate food supply at the Vredefort Road camp.

In the same vein, the black women’s experience of their local environment at the same Vredefort Road camp was also used to identify suitable land to grow their own food and produce enough surplus to sell, to offset the costs of camp administration. According to JK Derry, the minister of the Wesleyan Church for black congregants, “the natives were

very clever at selecting land for ploughing, perhaps some of the most experienced used to identify suitable ground". In this example, again the experience and observation of the environment becomes a determining factor for black women and their families to adapt and survive the inadequate food supply at the Vredefort Road concentration camp.

Furthermore, the Vredefort Dome region with its unique and hostile physical environment is testimony that every child in the pre-colonial society was supposed to learn to combat the dangers of their immediate environment like the Vaal River. Therefore, the contents of educating children would include the art of fishing, net making and mending, boat making and the art of fish preservation, to mention but a few. Scholars such as Mazonde agree that the Vredefort Dome region provides an excellent example of an Africanised education by the "indigenous people which can be structured in relation to the needs of the local community".

Another feature that can enhance an Africanised approach in the teaching and learning of history is the experiencing and observation of the social environment of the learners. Some scholars have identified that in the pre-colonial education system, "children were taught to respect elders, to appreciate their social obligations and responsibilities and, above all, to subordinate their individual interests to those of the wider community". This Africanised pedagogy is also about the attainment of self-determination and social justice, that is, seeking legitimacy for methodologies embedded in histories, experiences, ways of perceiving realities and value systems.

In essence, this practice of experiencing and observing the social environment using the Vredefort Dome region as a case study, is an indication that the knowledge in pre-colonial education was unique to the socio-cultural values of the local community. Pre-colonial observation and experiencing of the social environment, serves as "a reflection of the everyday social-cultural realities of the indigenous African people to the history learners".

Similarly, Falola and Fleming share the view that African societies could maintain "certain spiritual, social and economic structures over time, by transmitting their belief system, skills, and socio-cultural values from one generation to the other". Therefore, relating to experiencing the social environment by the learners in a deeper and spiritual way is one of the aspects that our formal Western education has omitted from the curriculum, by the subjugation of our African values.

The framework of experiencing and observing the environment centred the learners on the investigation of local events and situations of the Vredefort Dome region using the

surviving evidence and modes of explanation rooted in the concepts of change, causation and empathy. In line with Harmsworth's views, the importance of physical remains of the past as sources of historical evidence in the local environment, was central to this study, with a "visit to a historical site chosen by the learners". Indeed, for thousands of years, people all over the Vredefort Dome region have left signs of their existence, aspects of their every-day life and experiences on the landscape they occupied. As a result, everyone is surrounded and touched by the past, remnants of history, in the Vredefort Dome region of the Free State, South Africa.

Cajete posits that many indigenous cultures recognise Earth as a provider and a giver of life and, therefore, "it is the duty of the human beings to respect and honour that relationship". In the context of the Vredefort Dome region, the fertile land along the banks of the Vaal river provide for excellent grain and stock farming, while water from the same river gives life to people and livestock.

Through this debate on the experience and observation of the Vredefort Dome region environment (physical, social and spiritual), teachers and learners all learnt how the Earth cares, provides and protects us. Therefore, when history learners are made aware of the importance of an ecologically maintained balance, the relationships in the system will be sustained, and history will continue.

Through the experience and observation of the environment history learners connect with and serve the community, demonstrate to "ordinary people that, their lives, and the place in which they live are also important". The approach provides learners with an opportunity to discover the history of the environment in which they and their families live, and to understand its effects on past lives and memory. For example, Tumahole township near the town of Parys, in the Free State province, South Africa, was previously known as *Diperekising* (place of peaches) due to the abundance of peaches and two jam canning factories which provided employment opportunities to the community.

However, what remains today, especially at Shoemansdrift, are only dry peach trees, while the two jam canning factory buildings at the industrial area between the town of Parys and Tumahole township, are abandoned. Later the name *Diperekising* was replaced with *Dikausing* (ladies' stockings) due to the establishment of the German owned ARWA Hosiery factory in the 1950s which created more employment opportunities for the inhabitants of the Vredefort Dome region. Again, what remains of ARWA today are empty buildings due to the global economic meltdown of the 1990s leading to the closure of the

business with the result of an increased unemployment rate especially in the township of *Tumahole*.

According to Van Eeden, the two examples above, clearly demonstrate to learners that the history of our local environment, towns and townships, can shed light on the “changes, movements and developments seen by society over time”. It is suggested that, for African education to be truly useful and relevant to African children and the world, it must be grounded in African communities, cultures and their experience and observation of their local environment. Indeed, the notion that children learn more with their eyes (experience and observe first hand), than with their ears, and children listen more with their eyes than with their ears, has proven to be an educational reality.

Thinking about inclusivity, diversity and multiversity, collaboration and a decolonised sustainability

The main objective of Africanising the teaching of history is to integrate that which is originally African with that which is foreign and produce something new that portrays an African outlook in the global context. As a result, Makgoba’s definition of Africanisation is used within this context as “a process of inclusion that stresses the importance of affirming African cultures and identities in a world community”. On the other hand, Masaka is also rejecting the “curriculum that deliberately excludes the philosophy paradigm of the indigenous people of Africa”. Therefore, the education communities in Africa such as the Vredefort Dome region must accept that there diverse knowledge paradigms exist.

For practical purposes, for example, in the CAPS FET phase, learners are required to investigate the heritage of their Vredefort Dome region and are also expected to engage in critical and reflexive thinking about problem-solving issues. The Boer and black people’s memories and the heritage of the South African War (1899-1902) as well as the hardships they experienced at the Vredefort Road concentration camp, encourage history learners to view history from multi-diverse perspectives.

History learners were engaged in critical and reflexive thinking regarding Pretorius’ claims that the British did not keep “proper death records for the camps, in particular the deaths of Africans”. History learners were also required to debate the issue about Africans who did not leave any traces of written records or memories in the form of gravestones at the Vredefort Road concentration camp and cemetery. The First World War (1914-1918) and the Second World War (1939-1945) monuments located in this region (Parys) provide opportunities for history learners to explore ideologies, and debate the influence of the colonial past, through their conversations and appreciation by the local inhabitants.

Where colonial teaching methods encouraged passivity and the acceptance of predefined knowledge, an Africanised history methodology as displayed above, offers opportunity for critical teaching approaches and alternative ways of presenting learning material to learners. Through the Africanised type of engagement between the teacher and learners, the pedagogy on the Vredefort Dome region's cultural remains becomes a collaborative process rather than a Eurocentric teacher-centred approach. The collaborative heritage teaching approach enables teachers to develop critical pedagogy and critical thinking among the learners—a multi-perspectival process.

Many scholars often complain that there is a disconnectedness between what they learn in the classroom and praxis. Therefore, the choice of the Vredefort Dome region's cultural heritage remains through a learner-centred approach, is specifically aimed at enabling students to use contextualised theories to engage in best-practice work. An Africanised and decolonised classroom using the Vredefort Dome region is to empower teachers and students to develop their own understanding of the African context and to enable them to deliver culturally sensitive debates.

Therefore, a collaboration of a bottom-up trans-disciplinary approach and contextualisation are key ingredients leading to an Africanised history classroom that will “empower students, include them in exploring solutions for societal problems and guide them to become effective facilitators of community development”. Giving the students a voice was achieved by employing border pedagogy; a process that involves a multiplicity of voices that typify the cultural dynamics in our history classrooms today. Border pedagogy informs classroom activities by giving everyday culture back to its owners (learners) using cultural knowledge to offer possibilities for alternative symbolisation of the cultural experiences of different students' populations in this region.

Conclusion

This discussion aimed to provide a past historiography of Africanise/Africanisation, contextualising its original understanding and to provide a way for de-ontologising and reconceptualising Africanising in education, but specifically engaging with its positioning in history teaching and learning on all levels. In debating some reconceptualising and de-ontologising features, it was accentuated that a scholarly emphasis on the regional and microspatial knowledge of all communities should require more considerations in the transformation of education in Africa. In doing so considerably, it is possible to progress towards a transformative education facilitating African features and African thought

alongside transnational and global perspectives.

The case of the Vredefort Dome region of South Africa demonstrates how in education an Africanised history teaching has the potential to be taught by departing from microspatial examples and experiences, while considering the suggested features of Africanising educationally.