

REVIEW ARTICLE

“CAN FOUCAULT COME TO THE RESCUE?” - FROM DOGMA TO DISCOURSE: DECONSTRUCTING THE HISTORY OF EDUCATION FOR DEMOCRATIC SUBJECTS

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The history of South African education is still very much a suppressed and subjugated discourse hidden in the minds and experiences of the people. However, the history of education is arguably also in a state of decline. Recent publications in the field reveal little new and mainly reproduce what is already known. In this essay I will argue for a possible departure from existing ways of understanding the history of education by introducing innovative conceptual and analytical lenses to construct an alternative approach history of education. Post-apartheid South Africa is not only challenged to bring about material transformation of the foundations that perpetuate social inequalities and oppression, but also to address the intellectual grounds that (re)produced them. Dominant perspectives on the history of education are mainly fragmented and often one-sided and the historically marginalised of the pre-1994 period remain largely neglected. I suggest that in the current era, the dominant history of education lacks a democratic ethos partly because of the continued hegemony of traditional authorship that is embedded in existing theory and practice and partly due to the reticence of South Africans to tell their educational histories from where the potentially “new” could emerge.

Two recent publications by Booysse et al¹ and Kallaway² dealing with the history of education provide the intellectual material as context for my argument in favour of an alternative approach to the field. To this end I

1 JJ Booysse, CS le Roux, J Seroto and CC Wolhuter (eds.), *A history of schooling in South Africa: Method and context* (Van Schaik Publishers, Second impression, 1064 Arcadia Street, Hatfield, Pretoria), 2011.

2 P Kallaway, “The forgotten history of South African education”, *Southern African Review of Education*, 18-1: 7-23.

structured this essay as follows: a brief contextualization of the essay in the history of education at a South African institution of higher education; an exposition and application of the key Foucauldian concepts “archaeology, genealogy and technology of self” that provide the framework for a “self-reflexive historiographical method”; a critical viewpoint of the publications under review from a self-reflexive position; a comment on the limitations of dominant theory in the history of education; a conclusion that “self-reflexive historiography” as an alternative approach to the history of education can potentially offer an inclusive and democratic option to rejuvenate the field.

My current professional context is teacher education at an institution of higher education where I am teaching and coordinating the history of education module as part of the Bachelor of Education (BEd) degree. In the course of my work I often come across historical material that is outdated, long time rejected and often offensive but still persisting in textbooks and in popular discourse.³ My context demands an awareness of diversity and a relevant, inclusive and democratic approach to the history of education. An alternative approach is suggested that departs from, but recognizes the dominant schools of history of education as discursive starting blocks in a race to transform. I am of the contention that an alternative approach may break the current cul de sac in the field and open possibilities for new ideas and action.

The role that education played in pre-1994 South Africa was intricately connected with the vision of an apartheid society based on racial classification, class differentiation and exploitation. Consequently the struggle against apartheid also became a struggle against apartheid education.⁴ Paradoxically, an instrumentalist notion of education that failed apartheid survived in the post-apartheid dispensation as education is once again perceived as the vehicle to redress social ills. Needless to say, the educational discourse has been elevated to the status of dogma – an uncritical view of education

3 As a lecturer teaching in multicultural classroom situations, I have to arrest my personal discourse in a professional context to ensure an ethical and intellectual position. These challenges bring about a deep self-reflexive inward search for expressions which would demand a respect of all.

4 Michael Cross argues that by imposing a racially segregated education system on South Africa and enforcing a Calvinist and Christian National Education philosophy, whereby different cultural groups were to have different and separate schooling systems. As white supremacist ideologies dominated education policy, the ruling group came to see culture as an important fact in legitimizing segregated schooling for blacks and excluding blacks from mainstream political, social and apartheid system frequently assumed the form of opposition to apartheid education and, in particular, opposition to particular forms of discursive representation and imposed identities. Cross' book focuses on the mechanics of 'other', what Spivak called domination or struggle “in and by words”. Please see M Cross, *Imagery of identity in Southern African Education 1880-1990* (Carolina Academic Press, Durham, North Carolina), 1999.

as panacea. The history of education which was virtually part of “struggle scholarship” has arguably shown a decline in the post-1994 period. The questions I am addressing is therefore: What happened to the once vibrant history of education and given the context of a higher education teaching institution, does a “self-reflexive historiographical method”⁵ offer an alternative, more inclusive and democratic approach to the history of education? What follows next is an exposition and application of the conceptual and analytical framework to construct a history of education.

My notion of a “self-reflexive historiography” is based in Foucault’s methods of archaeology, genealogy and technology of self. Archaeology is concerned with an understanding of statements which are regarded as linguistic formations which according to Foucault do not comply with the normal rules of syntax and semantics. A statement signifies meaning which can only be understood as discourse. Disciplinary discourses such the history of education are regarded as discursive formations that are constructions of knowledge that came to be articulated as an effect of power. Discourse becomes meaningful statements in the context of the power relations in which its articulation is embodied. Because discursive statements are socially constructed, a self-reflexive historiographical mode of inquiry rejects history as the unfolding of a transcendental deterministic process. Its social construction takes place within the context of the author’s biography. The second concept is “genealogy”. The genealogical method insists that events must be analysed in terms of specificity and locality. Foucault is interested in the subject in its plurality in modern times. The subject is not a unified entity but rather constitutive of multiple facets formed under a plethora of historical transformations. The purpose of analysis is not merely for the sake of understanding history but rather to understand the present. Archaeology and genealogy want to understand the present as an effect of power. Foucault asserts that all societies have technologies of self which are tools to permit the individual to self-manage a certain number of operations on their bodies, souls and thoughts. The self is not fixed but rather fluid as it emerges from pre – discursive, discursive and

5 In this article I borrow extensively from the work of Roland Sinto Coloma and his “self-reflexive historiography”, *History of Education Quarterly* 51, No. 2, May 2011. Coloma employs Michele Foucault’s historical method of archeology, genealogy and technology of self. I have taken my personal and professional practice as the context in which I have constructed this essay. I used my own subjective experiences and the two publications as data to illustrate how I apply this methodology.

non-discursive practices when it articulates discourse.⁶ The embodied self can assert power which may be used as technologies to know and transform in productive ways.

A self-reflexive historiography involves Foucault's method of archaeology and genealogy with specific focus on the use of the technology of self as an insertion of the author's subjectivities and context as part of the narrative construction. I have located the use of archaeology to understand historical knowledge constructions as discursive statements open to multiple possibilities of interpretations. I used genealogy to counter historical narrative as a process of unfolding truth and progress. By inserting the subject into the construction of the narrative, all historical knowledge become social constructions of historians, and as such they are part of a network of social and institutional discursive relations. The use of the technology of self as a practical tool opens up possibilities of transforming thought and action.

In a deconstruction of Booyse et al and Kallaway with an application of Foucault's archaeological method, knowledge content concerning the history of education is regarded as selective statements taken from the vast archive of history. These statements became constructions of knowledge based on the subject positioning and context of the authors who select and omit what they want. The history of education is recorded in a complex set of discursive and institutional relationships which influences what is said and what remains unsaid. A linguistic take on discourse opens the possibilities for multiple meanings which are based on various subject positions. Why were certain explanations constructed instead of others? Or how do we choose to describe our past now in the present so that the history that we have chosen will continue to be meaningful in the future? This question concerns the ethical nature of history writing which should guard against representations that are false and constructed as grand narratives of truth. One way to avoid an unethical history is to insert the authorial subject into the archive when constructing history. What are the implications of inserting self into an ethical reading of Booyse et al and Kallaway? Put differently, what power positions influence the construction of discourse when it becomes knowledge. According to Foucault "power and knowledge directly imply one

6 Foucault's theory of discursive practices regard society as a landscape of unpredictable linguistic expressions articulated in the context of the self in relation to self which involves reflexivity, emotionality and subjectivity. This is referred to pre-discursive. The discursive in contrast to pre-discursive refers to textual and social relations that influences discourse directly and non-discursive practices include all those non-linguistic, social and economic influences that impact on discourse formation. Howarth, D Discourse. Philadelphia, Open University Press, 2000, pp. 64-66.

another; that there is no power relation without the correlative constitution of a field of knowledge, (n)or any knowledge that does not presuppose and constitute at the same time power relations.”⁷ A biographical contextualization of the author will dispel any notion of an objective representation of a historical narrative. An alternative history of education will be compelling as it will be embedded in authentic experiences and not just a regurgitation and reproduction of existing knowledge without genealogy. A new history of education will allow different narratives to coexist and expose multiple interpretations of the present without privileging one above the other. A self-reflexive historiography is potentially not only democratic but also ethical as the author foregrounds his/her subjective position as the basis of discourse instead of seeing her/himself as fulfilling the transcendental aspirations of others. A self-reflexive historiography would be free from the traditional work of the historian of education who, according to Le Roux, commits to “duty to his own generation.... a duty to the people of the past... a duty to search after the truth to the utmost of his capacity...”⁸

Inserting the subject into the field of knowledge requires an identification of the intellectual biographies of the authors of a publication. The author is essentially unmasked and declares his/her’s context which goes far beyond the mere institutional and professional identity. I had to insert and interrogate “deep self” to produce a technique that opened the possibility for the emergence of a new ethical subject. In practice I had to ask questions never asked before and find explanation never given before as part of my life history. While constructing this article, I opened myself to an understanding of the history of education from my own biographical position. I came to this discipline with experiences embedded in the apartheid era in which history was presented as distortions of the past, riddled with bias and ideology. There was always a suspicion about history and its official perspectives. Official history was regarded as state propaganda which was counteracted by “subversive” activities such as the reading of banned literature and attending meetings arranged by the political Left.⁹ There was a clear distinction between “us” and “them” – the oppressed and the ruling classes. Exposure to banned literature

7 Michel Foucault, *Discipline and Punishment – The birth of the prison*. Penguin Book, 1977:27.

8 Le Roux, *History of Education Research*, in JJ Boooyse, 2011. These are presumably the duties of the historian of education as pursued by the publication which a self-reflexive historiographical method would question. Also refer to footnote 12 below.

9 During my earlier days at university students would circulate copies of banned literature on the history of South Africa to get a different perspective to what was being taught. Official history was regarded as propaganda and under the influence of some teachers, alternative perspectives were discussed. Radical histories such as that produced by the Unity movement were read. These types of literature have never become popular or mainstreamed as expected due to the continuation of a suppression of apartheid’s truths.

inscribed on self a sense of power and confidence that had to be hidden from authorities for fear of recrimination. Banned history also instilled feelings of hatred for crimes such as genocide committed against innocent humans by colonialists. Self experienced feelings of humiliation and discrimination due to an unjust system accentuated by apartheid hatred.¹⁰ I am a person with historical consciousness but had to wrestle tumultuous emancipatory struggles to preserve my humanity. A self-reflexive historiography contains confessional truths that contribute to enlightened insights and new constructions of self.

When one reads “old” history as official in the post 1994 period, the reality dawns that there has been little intellectual transformation of the historical narratives. The reproduction of apartheid history presented as official literature in the present is evidence of the continuation of the power/knowledge relations that persists from the past. Through the method of a self-reflexive historiography – inserting me as author into the history brings about a new power/knowledge position based on experiences which could hopefully stimulate debate of a different kind. Previously prohibited “truths” were suppressed but emerged now as configurations of new truth. To write a different history would imply a reversal of perspectives and an incorporation of the suppressed subjectivities. The narrative should relay new insights, experiences and knowledge which should be the outcome of deep reflexive confessional action to create an ethical consideration of the past.

According to Foucault ethics of the self involves moral conduct which is a self-forming technology that says something about the kind of being that we aspire when we behave in a moral way.¹¹ A technique of self involves the realization that a new history of education should accommodate the multiple subject positions that emerged from the past. Different power/knowledge relations produce discourses of different experiences and practices. The enunciation of discourse becomes an effect of power which creates the object that it speaks. The views expressed in the publications under discussion are representational discourses, subjectively constructed in specific timeframes. A genealogical perspective reduces history that is seen as grand narratives to subjectively constructed and biographically inspired statements. This is contrary to a read of the same history as objective reports that present history as an unfolding process of progress. The genealogical approach opens possibilities for change and transformation of diverse

¹⁰ These are random selections of memory from my biography just to illustrate the potential of the method.

¹¹ R Coloma, *Who is afraid of Michele Foucault*, 2011.

experiences which form part of a common history of education constituted by multiple voices inspired by a sense of ethics. It goes without saying that the insertion of a “self-reflexive historiographical method” would potentially bring a new ethical dimension to the work of Booyse et al and Kallaway that could redefine their scholarship in unprecedented and exiting ways.

Kallaway argues that the neglect of the history of education has been noted as a characteristic of the times. In a local context the notion of time in a historical frame implies the post 1994 period and on a global scale, timeframes converge roughly with the post-Cold War period. Higher education restructuring in post-apartheid brought a (re)categorization and regrouping of different disciplines. A notable change has been the combination of previous independent disciplinary departments into lesser and larger units which arguably promote interdisciplinary teaching and learning. The continuous rearticulation of teacher education would have to take some position on the place of the history of education in teacher education as a subject in need of transformation. I am of the opinion that the new discipline ought to be written from the perspective of archaeology and genealogy which places self as a guide towards greater knowledge but fully aware of the ethics of self and the power to produce new discourse. The new regime of truth creates opportunities for technologies of self to produce new subjects through confession which would construct their own versions of truth as part of a democratic history of education. The following section critiques the publications under discussion from a self-reflexive position.

As a comprehensive text in the history of education, Booyse et al defines the aims, methods and scope of the history of education. As a trustworthy publication, it is supported by the peer review process that it underwent and its claim to have adopted the guidance provided by Aldrich’s three duties of a historian alluded to earlier.¹² The last two duties are concerned with scholarship in historical research and will remain open for future development but the first; duty to own generation, is in need of some clarification. South African historiography is known for its bias and marginalization of blacks. In light of the fragmented nature of historiography, a fair question to ask is whether the historians operationalized their “own generation” in a racially

12 R Aldrich, A contested and changing terrain. *History of education in the 21st century*, D Crook and R Aldrich (eds.), *History of education in the 21st century* (London: University of London, Institute of Education), pp. 63-79. According to Aldrich the three duties of the historian are: the duty to their own generation, the duty to research and interpret history as “fully and accurately as possible” and to search the truth to the utmost.

exclusive way, or was the historical narrative inclusive of all South Africans? A post-apartheid history should be different to the history of the past. It should be a history of the present that aims at transforming the present by grasping its meaning more comprehensively. With reference to Booysse and co-authors, it remains to be seen whether old historical identities have transformed into democratic identities or whether traditional scholarship merely reasserted its power position and reproduced itself as old discourses in the new. An uncritical view of the way South Africans have been presented in the past takes a minimalist position on changing perspectives which hardly resonate with the requirements of our time. Therefore, a reasonable question for debate is suggested: Would a “self-reflexive historiographical” lens if adopted by Booysse et al, not transform the current debate in the history of education and make a positive contribution towards democratic scholarship?

The first two chapters of the book deals with scholarship and historiography. Chapter one by Wolhuter covers the historiography of South Africa from its earlier scholarship to post 1994. What is noteworthy in this chapter is the categorization of some scholars as those who embrace and those who reject the new political dispensation. This distinction is significant as it acknowledges that scholarship, subjectivities and politics are inextricably linked. It is also a useful distinction in light of the alternative analytical approach that I suggest in this essay: a closer link between the history of education as discipline and the historian’s subject position. Chapter one identifies globalization as a potential context to write a “pan-human historiography” of the history of education. The chapter also cautions historians to be critical of: all contextual factors shaping education: guard against a-historicism; and guard against presentism. While Wolhuter suggests these three features of good history, they merely serve as guidance as there is little evidence that the book as a post-apartheid project offers anything significantly different from what is present in known texts.

Chapter two by CS le Roux sketches the professional scholarship within the history of education. The chapter provides some practical guidelines such as research resources and methodologies. Chapter three by J Seroto discusses African indigenous education in the pre-colonial era which arguably may be a welcomed contribution in a university textbook. The chapter implicitly (un) balances the predominantly white South African history of education with some indigenous content. The chapter presumably challenges the dominant western perspective of education by recognizing pre-colonial educational

systems as part of the history of education. It rejects the traditional view held by most scholars of history of education that an indigenous people were savages, pagans with no history and culture to transmit, based on the lack of formal schooling.¹³ To dispel this obnoxious piece of racism that pervades in some literature¹⁴ and in the popular imagination, Seroto could have drawn on recent research on African civilization such as the Malian civilization as evidenced by the Timbuktu manuscripts and the older Great Zimbabwean, not to mention the rich Northern and East African history of civilization that have not been mentioned. The chapter however, assists in moving towards a new history of education.

Chapters four to chapter eight are mainly reproductions of known histories of British and Afrikaner education in South Africa. These chapters mainly deal with the segregated histories of colonial education and remained Eurocentric. Wolhuter's final chapter addresses the post 1994 curriculum changes and challenges. Post-1994 South Africa was inspired by the new liberal democratic constitution. The chapter covers the period of reform until the announcement in 2009 by the Minister of Basic Education, Ms Angie Motshekga, that outcomes-based education curriculum would not be abolished, but that in some ways, the curriculum would revert to the way certain things had been done in the past.¹⁵

The nine chapters are wrapped between a prologue and epilogue describing sensitivities to the past and future of the field. The epilogue contextualizes the publication as a scholarly contribution to "a grossly neglected field of study". The epilogue keeps the "window" opened to allow for contemporary issues in the history of education to flourish. Issues identified in the epilogue are: the complex nature of historical theory and causality; education as not a panacea to all problems; educational reproduction and transformation;

13 J Seroto, Indigenous education in the pre-colonial era. In Booysse et al 2011, pp. 37-52.

14 To illustrate that "social history" is characterized by debate, C S le Roux in chapter two, p 18 discusses its nature with reference to the different views held on the impact of the National Party's rule on black education. She asserts that while historians would not dispute that the National Party came to power in 1948, they could argue about the impact this had on the provision of, for example, education for black people. Some could argue it was positive because for the first time there was an organized strategy to provide formal education for black children whereas others would argue that the education proposed was aimed at further subjugating the black population to white dominance. This example used by le Roux is an appropriate one to illustrate Seroto's intellectual struggle to dispel pervasive racist beliefs amongst historians of education. While the example is not intended to reproduce antiquated National Party apartheid philosophy, but rather to present an example of "social history", its selection in a post 1994 publication should have been reconsidered given myriad possibilities for its interpretation as part of the text.

15 I Meyer, Epilogue. In Meyer et al, *Outcomes-based assessment for South African teachers* (Pretoria: Van Schaik), 2010. In 2011, the Curriculum and assessment policy statement (CAPS) became the most recent version of educational reform that were implemented since 1997.

education as instrument of control and power; education and ideology and lastly education as a site of struggle. The scholarly nature of this contribution is beyond doubt however, in light of the demands imposed by a democratic South Africa it falls short as an inclusive history of education as it expounds selective perspectives of mainly the Afrikaner nationalist and liberal schools in the history of education. To comply to a history that is true to its “own generation” as “accurately” as possible and in “search of the truth”, as proclaimed in the prologue, would require a major intellectual project which should be debated by all stakeholders in democratic South Africa.

Kallaway laments the “forgotten history of South African education”. A key concern in this article is “to access the role of recent history in an age of forgetting” when historians struggle to make sense of the past century and takes lessons from it.¹⁶ Kallaway prefaces his views on Judt’s (2008) critique of the notion that we are living in a time without precedent and that the post 1989 world marks the end of the Cold War. A market driven economic approach which subjects politics to enable economics, has replaced the welfare state. The welfare state is universally characterized as inefficient, ineffective and costly. Kallaway traces the history of modern mass education in critical international scholarship. The post-apartheid project aims at the eradication of a painful historical past which ought to be replaced by something with utilitarian value. Kallaway asserts that the history of education was abandoned in the post 1994 period as part of the neoliberal environment in which educational reform emerged following the structural adjustments prescribed by World Bank and the capitalist world.

While Kallaway’s explanation for the decline of the history of education should be seen as part of the international capitalist crisis, Martin Legassick and Gary Minkley explained its decline as the consequence of the negotiated political compromise of the 1990s between the African National Congress and the white minority rule.¹⁷ Legassick and Minkley explained that the transfer of power in South Africa was different from the decolonization of tropical Africa thirty years before when the African National Congress (ANC) accepted a liberal democratic constitution and agreed to work within a capitalist framework. Kallaway and Legassick’s perspectives are complementing each other but do not offer any way out of the perceived deadlock in which the history of education finds itself today.

16 Peter Kallaway, 2012: 8.

17 W Visser, 2004:16.

Kallaway's article also presents findings of a quantitative literature survey on the role of education in recent scholarship. He concluded that none of the schools of history – Afrikaner nationalist, liberalist, Africanist, revisionist or social history – have placed education at the center of the historical picture. He identified six dominant themes in the work of educational researchers: historiography, vocational education, gender, language, education in exile, curriculum, economics and adult education. All this, argues Kallaway, can be seen as the outcome of “policy culture” which Stephen Ball (1999) calls “performativity” in policy. Performativity emphasizes an efficacious and instrumentalist implementation of policy rather than critical engagement with local context and meaning.

Kallaway presents a challenge to educators to explore a deeper understanding of the history of education and its usefulness to improve policy. The perception of the current “state in an economic crisis” sounds very familiar to Kallaway's scholarship in the mid-eighties when the apartheid state was experiencing another “economic crisis”. Unlike the lively status of the history of education at that time, the apartheid state was resisting the rationality of the market and persisted with its racial perspective on the future. While Kallaway's critique provides an economic explanation for the decline of the history of education, he implicitly demonstrates the theoretical philosophical underpinnings of his scholarship which will be discussed below.

Having explained some central features of each publication, and why history of education declined in popularity, I will briefly discuss the main theoretical schools informing the history of education: Afrikaner nationalism, liberalism and Neo Marxian revisionism. A project that is designed to contemplate a reconstruction of the future of education in a transformed South Africa cannot deny its “genesis, evolution and the nature of the current educational arrangement and the crisis it produced.”¹⁸

In the pre1994 period South African historiography was preoccupied by lively debates contesting the nature of the past, present and the future. These different views developed into different historiographical schools each taking a theoretical subject position. One of the earlier publications on South African historiography was Harrison-Wright's “The burden of the

18 Mokubung Nkomo, “Post-apartheid education: Preliminary reflections,” In Michael Cross, *Imagery of Identity in South African education 1880-1990*.

present”¹⁹ who analysed South African historiography in terms of its liberal-radical traditions. Wright’s publication provided references and evidence for his categorization and he identified the historical epochs which contained conflicting ideologies.²⁰ However, a more recent review on the trends in the writing of South African history was done by Visser.²¹ Visser provides a contemporary classification of historical schools and provides specific space for previously marginalized historians. He asserts that traditionally, historical writing on the history of South Africa has been divided into broad categories or historiographical schools, namely a British imperialist, a settler or colonialist, an Afrikaner nationalist, a liberal and a revisionist or radical school, thus reinforcing broadly Harrison-Wright’s earlier categories. According to Visser, the emergence of social history is generally regarded as a by-product of the revisionist school, while some historians argue that the emergence of a black nationalist historiographical tradition stemmed partly from the radical approach during the years of apartheid. Visser refers to less referenced work and often ignored histories such as *The All-African Convention: The Awakening of a People* by IB Tabata,²² Hosea Jaffe’s *Three hundred years: A history of South Africa*, under the pseudonym “Mnguni”, and Dora Taylor, under the pseudonym “Nosipho Majeke”, who published *The role of the missionaries in conquest*. JK Ngubane’s *An African Explains Apartheid* and Govan Mbeki’s *South Africa: the Peasant’s Revolt* were seminal critiques of South African history,²³ acknowledged by Visser. These historical works were regarded as essential readings for black intellectuals during the apartheid era.

While historians remained loyal to interpreting the past and search for the “truth” to the utmost of their capacity, they did so within a specific theoretical framework that contained its own features. The nationalists would theorize their fragmented history on the basis of common identity, experiences and future aspirations. The nationalist school of history is selectively represented

19 Harrison M. Wright, *The burden of the present: liberal-radical controversy over Southern African history*, David Philip, Cape Town, 1977.

20 C Gordon, *Michel Foucault*, “Truth and Power,” In *Power/Knowledge: Selected Interviews and Other Writings, 1972-1977*. Colin Gordon, New York: Pantheon, 1980, 109-33.

21 W. Visser, Trends in the history of South African historiography and the present state of historical research , University of Stellenbosch, Paper presented at the Nordic Africa Institute, Uppsala, Sweden, 23 September 2004

22 The reader is referred to CS Rasool’s PhD thesis, University of the Western Cape, *The individual, auto/biographical history*, 2004. Rasool provides a rare history of resistance and political biography in which an alternative perspective to the official historical narrative is provided. A new history of South Africa would draw extensively on this thesis for resources and critical perspectives on political processes and biographies.

23 Visser regrettably classified these works as “propagandistic” while no such reference is made to works in mainstream historiography. This kind of bias are often undetected and passes as authoritative views on historiography of South Africa.

in the work of Booyse et al. The liberal school emphasized in their scholarship the liberalizing consequences of market rationality and the eventual disappearance of race as a determining factor in the social hierarchy. The liberal school's economic trajectory is further challenged by incessant inequality and unemployment, suggesting a possible threat to, at least, the quality of democracy in the country.²⁴ In the post 1994 period, Crankshaw argues that deindustrialization²⁵ has not produced a large class of black low-wage service-sector workers but instead it produced a professionalization occupational structure alongside high unemployment.²⁶ While the traditional schools of the history of education are inextricably connected to a political ideology, a new pathway may want to reject this kind of determinism and depart from such affinities and remain open to new ideas in an uncertain future.

As in the case of the liberal school of history, the revisionist-radical school espoused certain limitations and contradictions. Deacon²⁷ criticized radical-revisionists Bozzoli and Delius²⁸ who arguably adopt a “logocentric and essentialist” view of the class struggle in South Africa. Deacon asserts that the notion of class in South Africa emerged as part of working class consciousness of the oppressed but the working class appeared to be oriented towards nationalism than socialism. The construction of a hegemonic discourse as a particular interest masquerading as general interest, says Deacon, is a violent suppression of diversity in its attempts to close off discourse and debate.

Deacon's argument is that a regime of truth that is discursively constructed should be embedded in practice and located in the subjectivities of those involved. Consciousness of one individual cannot be transferred to the consciousness of a group. Collective consciousness which is associated with a common idealistic awareness of the working class is an ideology that is not rooted in practice. The Marxian notion of a class-in and a class-for itself becomes an ideological and not practical construction. According to Deacon discourse cannot stand outside practice – discourse is practice, a position that neo-Marxists have neglected in favour of ideology.

24 H Bhorat and C Van der Westhuizen, *Poverty, Inequality and the nature of economic growth in South Africa*, 2012, Development Policy Research Unit, University of Cape Town, November 2012.

25 Deindustrialization refers to the closure of previously vibrant economic sectors such as the textile industry in the Western Cape that was significantly reduced when South Africa became part of the global economy.

26 O Crankshaw, *Deindustrialization, professionalization and racial inequality in Cape Town*, *Urban Affairs Review*, 48, (6), 836-862.

27 R Deacon, “Hegemony, Essentialism and Radical History in South Africa”, *South African historical journal*, 24 May 1991, pp. 166-184.

28 B Bozzoli and P Delius, “Radical History and South African Society”, *Radical History Review*, 46/7 (winter 1990), p. 13.

A new approach to the history of education has to take into account the lessons of the past. While Afrikaner nationalist have seen apartheid being dismantled, the liberals are witnessing the growth of inequalities and unemployment, the radical - revisionists miscalculated the endgame in South African politics. These projects in the history of education have a number of common features which expose their limitations and which should serve as lessons of history.²⁹ Firstly they were all products of established ideological schools with equivalents elsewhere. Thus, histories written from a nationalistic, liberal or radical perspective were informed by theoretical foundations which subjected practice to theory. They all expound a local version of a meta-narrative claiming context as frame of reference. Secondly, they all present their perspectives as grounded in an empirically based social science. The notion of social science views the production of knowledge as expressions of truth and took for granted the power positions of those who expounded the knowledge. Thirdly, their expressions of truth are couched in totalizing and essentialist language which neglect the complex meanings of words and concepts when expressed as discourse. The possibility of multiple linguistic meanings is often ignored. And lastly the development of their ideas is informed by an assumption of rationality that underplays the complexities of subjective meaning in discourse and practice. Based on Foucault's archaeology, genealogy and technology of self, I have illustrated above the potential of a self-reflexive historiography as a possible rescue from the theoretical intransigence in the history of education.

Lastly, I summarize and conclude this essay. I approached the historiography of South African history from the perspective of Michele Foucault's notion that all societies construct their own regimes of truth. The dominant theoretical discourses on the history of education have been presented and analysed as historical projects that have expounded contending and contesting discourses as "regimes of truth". As a historical moment, the negotiated political settlement that marked the beginning of the post-apartheid period represent in Foucault's terms a major rupture and discontinuity in the history of South Africa. I have critically engaged with the three major schools of history of education and argued for recognition of subjectivities of authors through the insertion of self to understand these schools as socially constructed historical narratives. A self-reflexive historiographical approach would be a departure from the dominant teleology and instrumentalism that became a common feature in historiography.

²⁹ Peter Kallaway refers to possible lessons to be learnt from history such as to "understand the perennial complexity of the questions" in the words of Judt.

This essay sought to explain the suppression of discourse when a new regime of truth emerged in the post 1994 period. The hurry-scurry of the TRC to paper over the cracks of centuries of oppression and injustices, subverted the intellectual project of the history of education into its present *cul de sac*. The new regime of truth and reconciliation perplexed the critical senses of the intellectual class that was caught up in the euphoria of a democratic dispensation perceived as the triumph of political struggle. Having positioned myself in an authorial role my biographical experiences provided a lens to critique the intellectual foundations in the two publications discussed above. I came to realize the subjective and multiple nature of truth in the history of education and the ethical considerations necessary for other perspectives to transform their thought and practices. A Foucault's methodology does not only provide a way to break the silence that dominates the history of education, it also creates new possibilities to construct a transformative history of education that is inclusive and democratic and relevant to the present.

To answer the questions set at the beginning of this essay: what happened to the once vibrant history of education, and does "self-reflexive historiography" offer an alternative approach to the history of education; I argued that the history of education went through a period of decline with the emergence of a new regime of truth. By using a "self-reflexive historiography" methodology, the deconstruction of existing meanings of historical events can be used to produce new discourses of truth. While there may be a need to resuscitate the broad field of history and education, it should not follow the prescriptions of the old narrative, informed by ideology and power abuse. A history of education should be guided by self-reflexivity to transform self to become new ethical subjects in an inclusive and democratic society. As there are multiple accounts of the past and the modern lecturer in the history of education may have to create space for the student to engage with different narratives at the same time, the question remains: Can Foucault be called to the rescue?