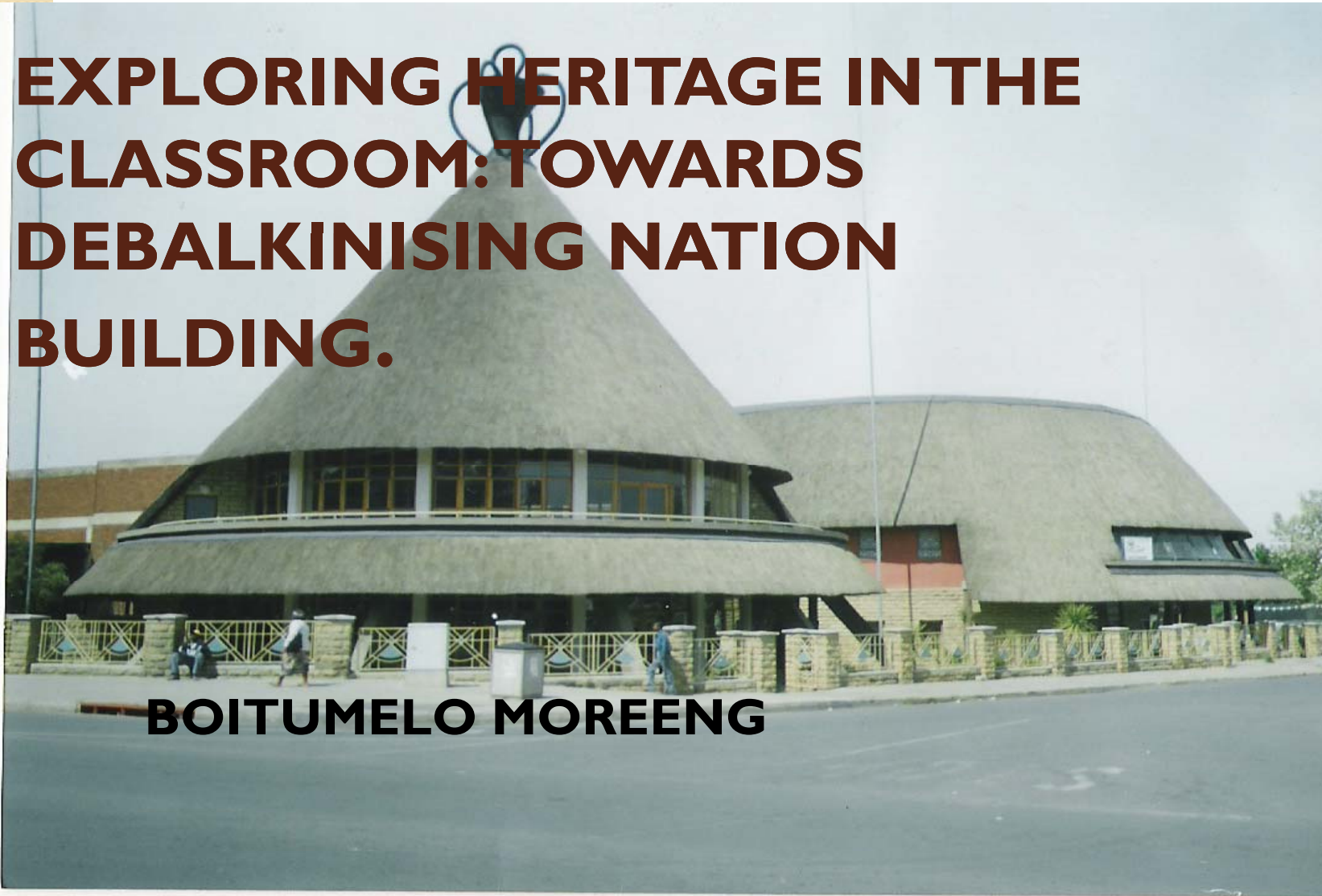




**EXPLORING HERITAGE IN THE  
CLASSROOM: TOWARDS  
DEBALKINISING NATION  
BUILDING.**

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- **Thabo Mbeki once asked**  
***“What is it that distinguishes a South African from other people, be they Chinese or American. What informs the manner in which a South African approaches a variety of matters and challenges?”***

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- **Balkanization**, or **Balkanisation**, is a pejorative<sup>[1]</sup> geopolitical term originally used to describe the process of fragmentation or division of a region or state into smaller regions or states that are often **hostile or non-cooperative** with each other.<sup>[2]</sup>



# Introduction

- Since 1994 South Africa has been striving to create itself into a new society and a nation.
- Different projects and initiative have been conducted in order to realise this objective. **Education as vehicle for social transformation** was also affected and had to be changed in order to respond to the needs of the society.
- Changes in education were driven by the need to actualise the preamble of the South African constitution that states its aims amongst others as being able **to heal the divisions of the past** and establish a society based on democratic values, social justice and fundamental human rights (RSA, 1997).




# Introduction

- The principles of the NCS.
- History as a subject also had to undergo some metamorphosis in order to respond the changes in the country (Shoeman & Mothata,2002, van Eeden, 1999, Sieborger, 1999,Asmal, 2001, Twala, 2003, )
- History is better placed to addressing most of the NCS principles as it will enable learners to explore the dynamics of change in the context of power relations in societies, and critically engage with the past and the world around them in constructing their own understanding (Moreeng, 2009, 28)

# Introduction

- Changes in history teaching through time (Sylvester, 1994, Husbands, Kitson & Pendry, 2003, Timmins, Vernon & Kinealy, 2005) –themes, perspectives, methodologies and topics
- Within the South African context focus was placed on cleansing the content from discriminatory and incriminating practices and the affirmation of the previously neglected ‘histories’. This was done through the acknowledgement of previously subdued historical perspectives and the promotion of **local history and heritage**.

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- The DoE (2003, 22) put heritage as learning outcome 4 with the aim of enabling learners to engage critically on issues around heritage
  - The Department of Basic Education(2010, 3,8) also views heritage as one of the principles upon which the curriculum is based, valuing indigenous knowledge systems, acknowledging the rich history and heritage of this country.
  - From the above paragraphs, the value of having heritage as part of schooling (history) is validated and strengthened. Its value with regard to the general educational transformation is also noted.



# Challenges in teaching heritage in South African schools

- Curriculum policy documents are vague and do not clearly indicate what should be covered and how it should be covered. This was noted as one of the issues that were diminishing the relevance of the NCS documents (DoE, 2001; DoE, 2009).



# Challenges cont. (teachers)

- In a study conducted in the Free State Province on the teaching and learning of history (Moreeng, 2009), DoE data on history teachers (2010)
- Older teachers -Their kind of training (Bantu education and the universities act). Insufficient in-service training.
- The power of one's training background and the impact this has on how he/she teachers has been acknowledged by Le Grange (2008: 400) when asserting that where a student did his or her initial and further teacher education determined how he or she was inducted into the teaching profession.



# Challenges cont. (teachers)

- The kind of teachers we have are products of a divided society which emphasised more on our differences as a people rather than on our common virtues as human beings.
- The results of this is therefore a parallel way of looking at ourselves and what we teach our children mainly because our history curriculum and the heritage component is very open and not prescriptive. Therefore teachers in different areas of our country will to a large extent cover aspects that they are familiar with under the pretext of addressing local and oral history.

## Challenges cont. (teachers)

- Thus when these learners graduate from school they know more about their differences as Basotho, AmaZulu, AmaXhosa, Afrikaners, Indians etc. than the common values and philosophies that makes them South Africans. In some cases even the Basotho will emphasise more on their differences as Bakwena, Bafokeng, Bataung, etc.



## Factors that have influenced the current conceptualisation of heritage


- During the era of **imperialism** and **colonialism** there were concerted efforts by the colonial powers to subjugate and control the people and their resources through their policy of divide and rule.

# Conceptualising cont.

- Under the colonial rule of Africa, the concept of individual identity with its corresponding (cultural and linguistic) components of distinct group confined to specific areas was deliberately introduced. In some instance people belonging together were divided further into nationalities. This fragmentation of land and resources, separation of people and restriction to access resources sowed the seed for competition and conflict between groups so that the collective strength and resistance of the black people can be fragmented (Osman, 2010, Biko, 1978), as we see it in how history teachers focused on affirming divisions rather than common aspects that might contribute towards nation building.


# Conceptualisation cont.

- **Ethnicity** has not always been historically specific or socially generated pattern of identity. In the African context, historians and anthropologist agree that the pre-colonial African population was not composed of tribes or ethnic groups with distinct boundaries and the dominant characteristics of those pre-colonial societies were “mobility, overlapping networks, multiple group membership and flexible, context – dependent drawing of boundaries (Lentz, 1995,319).

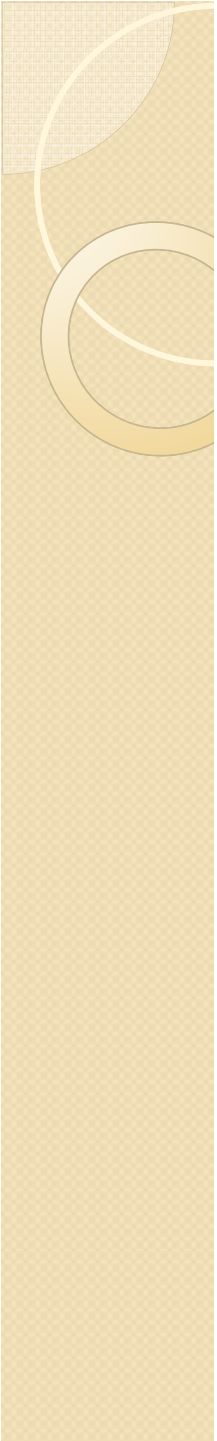


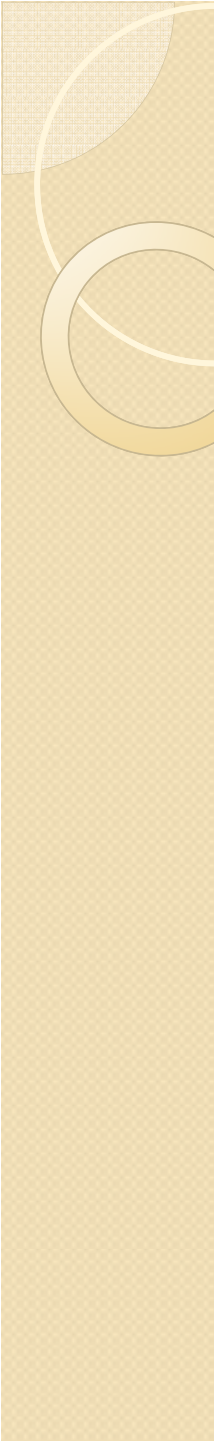
## Factors that have influenced the current conceptualisation of heritage

The foundations of such an approach by the teachers can be seen in the **apartheid** government's acts such as the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act of 1959 which suggested that the Bantu people of South Africa do not constitute a homogenous people but separate national units on the basis of language and culture (Howard, undated).

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- Steve Biko (1978.83-84) became critical of the Bantustan policy and viewed it as being meant to create a sense of hope amongst the black people so that any further attempt by blacks to **collectively** enunciate their aspirations should be dampened.



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- Post apartheid government to take a concerted effort in pursuing a unifying approach aimed at identifying the common grounds and not the differences.
  - In the current draft document, heritage is not put as a topic for any of the three grades- it is written in grade 10 heritage investigation with a research component to teach research skills. The content /methodology detail is not specified in order to provide the choice of studying local, regional or national examples of heritage (DoE, 2010, 34).

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- This non-committal stance from the department will unfortunately perpetuate the current status core of learners being exposed to different ‘heritages’ because we have to acknowledge what is referred to as local or regional histories,
  - What kind of heritage knowledge and understanding will our learners take through to their adulthood, to their places of study, places of work, and pass down to their children?



# Complexities of South African Heritage: Dilemma for teachers.

- OBE is to teach learners for real life.
- use museums, historical sites, ..... to make teaching meaningful. (emphasising on our differences rather than common aspects).
- What learners are exposed to should help them in becoming better citizens and people with better understanding of the society in which they live.
- Alexander, Van Wyk, Bereng and November (2009: 46) alludes to this when they state that knowledge that is not socially beneficial cannot be defined as knowledge, but rather a collection of information that is inert and useless.



# Complexities of South African Heritage: Dilemma for teachers

- The ANC government inherited a one-sided heritage industry celebrating white history in sculpture, architecture, museums and street names.
- The negotiated settlement manner through which South African democracy was ushered
- South African is an environment where culture and identity is highly contested (Crooke E, 2005: 135)
- The present government seem not to be having a prescriptive agenda when it comes to the renewal of public past as a result few cross- community initiatives were initiated and there has been little guidance from the government to personnel at existing heritage sites about exactly how to enact change (Flynn, 2007, 462,465).



## Complexities of South African Heritage: Dilemma for teachers

- In pursuit of 'new South African' society, the government sought to promote multiracialism and multiculturalism.
- Preamble of the SA constitution
- Sobukwe's (1959) criticism of multiculturalism - *multi-racialism implies that there are such basic insuperable differences between the various national groups that the best course is to keep them permanently distinctive in a kind of democratic apartheid*



## **Complexities of South African Heritage: Dilemma for teachers**

- Progler, (1999) viewed multi-culturalism as a response towards constant subjugation which culminated in most communities trapped in the design of perpetuating their own subjugation.
- Hence the themes of tribalism, primitivism and ethnicity are dominant the display of South Africa's past (Soudien, C. 2005).



## **Complexities of South African Heritage: Dilemma for teachers**

- In pursued and promotion of multiculturalism, it was forgotten that some groups had benefited in the previous dispensations and the impact of this on how the country is represented.
- As a result South Africa's heritage is reflected in a skewed and biased manner. White heritage is dominating and is continuing to receive public money even under the new dispensation (Flynn and King, 2007: 462).



## **Complexities of South African Heritage: Dilemma for teachers**

- Protection of minority rights -contested terrain which is usually settled in courts, where those with financial resources are able to go all the way to protect what has been a treasured past irrespective of whether it is representative or not.
- A case of changing names of towns and cities such as Pretoria to Tshwane, Louis Trichard to Makhado, etc, has been met by opposition which further resulted in confused relation with South Africa's past and heritage.





# Complexities of South African Heritage: Dilemma for teachers

- The ANC government policy stipulates that the conservation of the past must be allied with economic development objective, (Marschall, 2008 ,255, Mazel, 2008, 42, Chidester,2008, 283).
- Heritage is seen as a strategic resource for socio economic development and less as the fibre of our national identity in South Africa.
- This resulted in many initiatives by the different provinces and municipalities focus on heritage in order to achieve the development objectives. Unfortunately some of these initiatives resulted in a shift towards modernity and commodification,.



# Complexities of South African Heritage: Dilemma for teachers

- The revived **indigenous cultural villages** - mainly tribal display based on romanticised, simplified and sometimes distorted images of 'primitive' black South African culture.
- The cultures are then signified by a few stereotypical attributes, usually visual, that are upheld as representing and encompassing the grossly simplified 'tribal culture' in its entirety. Through stressing their uniqueness rather than emphasising their shared features or interdependence, the brokers of ethnic culture continue to define them in competition with other ethnic cultures (Hayward, undated).
- This emphasis on tribal heritage leads to tribalism and thereby compromise patriotism and nation building.



## Complexities of South African Heritage: Dilemma for teachers

- Commercialisation of South Africa's heritage also played itself in the hands big companies who believed that what gives heritage its force is not its antiquity but its immediacy and givenness. Some of these company presented distorted views of South Africa's heritage by manipulating heritage purposefully to satisfy contemporary consumption (Mager, 2006. 160)
- White heritage being presented as progressive and black heritage as static thereby promoting a heritage of power relations that mapped race, class and gender in ways that disabled black South Africans as interlocutors and agents.


# Conclusion

- South Africans have more things in common than the emphasised ethnic divisions that the previous government and to a certain extent the current government is seeking to promote.
- Some lessons from African traditional education
- The other area of confusion about the African way of doing things is also evident in how the African traditional education is perceived. Okoro (2010, 147) when commenting about African Traditional Education identified that:

*“it emphasised communal living centered around the themes of **moderation, solidarity, respect** of the truth and willingness to work and strive for **self and community advancement, respect** for authority, sense of **honesty, modesty, tolerance**, sense of **goodness and kindness, love of ones neighbour**, respect for life etc. Major contents of African community education are couched in some of these concepts namely: Ibuanyi Danda/Umunu bu ike (**Social solidarity**), **Ubuntu** and **Ujamaa**.”*

# Conclusion

- *How do we respond to Thabo Mbeki's question?*
- *What kind of heritage are we suppose to leave behind for our kids so that the incidents such as Reitz incident and the xenophobic (Afrophobic) attacks.*
- **Paradigm shift – DoE, teachers and schools = DeBalkanise our knowledges**

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- **Paradigm shift – DoE, teachers and schools = De-Balkanise our knowledge**
  - **Understanding of the SA heritage complexities**
  - **Retraining and in-service training.**
  - **National building should become a priority.**
  - **Unifying values, philosophies and practices in a cosmopolitan society.**