

# EDUBASE

## Education for Black South Africans

### Key Points

- Open data in niche subject areas can help spread awareness of those subjects and promote future scholarship.
- Even very old data on legacy storage devices may still be able to be curated and published openly.
- Storage systems and publication platforms change over time, but the foundational principles of good curation and rich metadata remain relevant.

### About Peter

Professor Peter Kallaway is an emeritus professor in the School of Education at the University of Cape Town. This study explores the EDUBASE collection, a decades-long, multi-format bibliography of research on education for Black South Africans, containing content stretching from 1806 to 1994, and the process of making this collection openly available.



Professor Kallaway's passion has always been understanding the history and legacy of education in South Africa. His studies have included the interactions between missionary educators, philanthropists and colonial governments in the development of South African educational policy in the inter-war years, vocational and teacher education, and since 1994 the role of globalisation on SA educational policy.

Since the 1970s, Professor Kallaway has been associated with a group of researchers who have engaged with those aspects of South African educational history that are not focused on the roles of flagship mission schools or the legacy of particular colonial administrators. This engagement led to the publication of several books, such as *Apartheid and Education: The Education of Black South Africans* (Johannesburg: Ravan Press, 1984); *Education after Apartheid: South African Education in Transition* (Cape Town: UCT Press/Juta: 1997); *The History of Education under Apartheid 1948-1994* (New York/Cape Town: Peter Lang/Pearson, (2002) and *Empire and Education in Africa* (New York: Peter Lang, 2016).

A core component of these publications was the gathering and curation of numerous historical documents, paper records and other sources dealing with or referring to education, particularly as regards Black South Africans.

The output of this process, A Bibliography of Education for Black South Africans (1984), was circulated as an informal publication of the UCT School of Education. Subsequently a fellow colleague, David Hiscock, created a detailed database specifically focusing on education in the Transkei area of South Africa's Eastern Cape Province. These materials became known as the EDUBASE collection, and contained missionary correspondence, diaries and journals gathered from university libraries and provincial governments, newspaper articles, published governmental documents such as White Papers and reports, books, and numerous other library and archival records from a variety of sources.

The first iterations of EDUBASE were created and stored on the UCT servers in the 1980s, with dot-matrix printouts serving as the paper versions circulated within the School of Education. Over time and as data storage technology developed, the database migrated from the servers



to 5¼ inch floppy disks...



to 3½ inch stiffy disks...



to CD-ROMs...



and finally to a flashdrive...

... before, at last, being uploaded to Figshare. Alongside its physical transformation, the database migrated formats several times, from .dat files on the floppy disks to an MSAccess .mdb file in the late 90s, and finally to a .csv spreadsheet in 2018.

These changes led to a number of curatorial strategies for the preservation of the richness of the content, with custom forms being produced for the MSAccess database to facilitate user-side search functions, to the use of Python scripts to reconcile and merge the different spreadsheets produced over time into consolidated, open tabular data. These processes were facilitated by the richness of the original metadata collection and ascription processes, allowing for the limited information available on many of the older sources. Many people were involved in this process over time, and Professor Kallaway would like to recognise the contributions of Jackie Kallaway, Debbie Sheward, David Hiscock, Deidre Birch and Vera Hudley in making EDUBASE what it is today.

The major driver behind making the dataset open was Professor Kallaway's belief that making this bibliography available to the world would enable further scholarship in this under-represented area of South African educational research.

*“Research in the field of history of education is a much-neglected field of African Studies and it is our hope that access to this bibliography will promote interest in this fascinating and important field which provides a laboratory for understanding the complex and contested field of educational policy in Africa.”*

As a decades-long curatorial endeavour, EDUBASE is demonstrative of how far we've come in our ability to share large, complicated databases with progressively wider audiences across a variety of physical media and digital formats. Simultaneously, it reminds us that the most modern curatorial systems are still reliant on a bedrock of solid curatorial practices that are as relevant now as they were in 1984.

Professor Kallaway still has un-ditigised materials relevant to the EDUBASE collection sitting on paper catalogue cards in his desk, so watch this space – EDUBASE may yet be updated in the future!

[Find out more about EDUBASE](#)