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## **Nationalist historiography, Nation-state making and Secondary School History: Curriculum Policy in Zimbabwe 1980-2010**

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*Abstract: This paper studies the curriculum policy trajectories that have characterized the teaching of secondary school History as a subject that is historically enmeshed in the politics of nation-state making in post-independence Zimbabwe. Through content analysis, the paper examines the ways in which the post-independence History syllabi, namely 2166 and 2167, have drawn from recent historiographies to frame both the aims and content of school History. The argument developed is that both syllabi have been deployed to serve the envisaged nation-state project; with Syllabus 2166 associated with the socialist nation-state project of the 1980s and 2167 with patriotic history since 2000. The paper concludes that such (mis)uses of school are not unique to Zimbabwe, but represent the political instrumentalization of school History that has become prevalent throughout the world.*

**KEYWORDS:** SCHOOL HISTORY; HISTORIOGRAPHY; NATION-STATE; NATIONALIST HISTORY; PATRIOTIC HISTORY AND ZIMBABWE

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## Introduction

History education has throughout the twentieth century, been one of the most important mechanisms in the process of the establishment of modern nation-states (Carvalho and Gemenne, 2009; Darhotey, 2009; Grever, 2009). This is because history as the narrative of the nation-state has the capacity to define the nation's past and to construct its collective memory (Clark, 2004:ii). For this reason, the school History curriculum is associated with the political trajectories of nation-states both as the mode of transmission of the imagined national past (Clark, 2010; Seixas, 2009) and as a social engineering project to reshape the national consciousness of the people (Seixas, 2000; Goodson, 1988). In Eastern Europe following the demise of communism, the successor states have reimagined their pasts through history education (Korostelina, 2011; Baranovic, Jokic, and Doolan, 2007) on the basis of what Davidson (2009:204) calls 'remembered nationalisms.' Similarly, Africa has witnessed what Ranger (2009:62) calls 'a new era of state produced nationalist history.' As Triulzi (2006:15) explains, the primacy of the state as the agent of history, its main promulgator and interpreter, has brought new forms of 'memorialism' that are expressed through public history and the national school History curriculum. Such efforts serve to give new nation-states what 'undisputed diachronic presence' (Sofos and Ozkirimh, 2009:46). This results in historiographies being propagated by the state as part of what Falola (2005:508) calls the 'ideology to remake nations.' This paper with particular reference to post-independence Zimbabwe discusses the policy trajectories that have characterized the teaching of secondary school History as a subject that is historically enmeshed in nationalism and the politics of nation-state making. The study is being undertaken at a time when the nation-state building in Zimbabwe has arguably met with failure (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011; Matereke, 2011; Tendi, 2010) and the teaching of school History has come to closely resemble that which prevailed during the colonial era. It is critical that the role that school History has played in this scenario be examined and clarified through an analysis of what policy documents have essentialised.

Zimbabwe attained independence in 1980 and was at that time celebrated as the bright hope for Africa given the pragmatic policies of the newly elected government of then Prime Minister Robert Mugabe and his party, the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patritic Front (ZANU-PF). Formely, a British colony the country then known as Rhodesia had in 1965 declared unilateral independence from the British government as the white settlers refused to grant independence to the African majority. This set the stage for a protracted armed struggle that pitied the African majority against what was seen as a white settler minority regime. Thus, on the eve of independence Mugabe found it imperative to say to 'let bygones be bygones' in a conscious endeavour to lay the foundations for a cohesive nation-building process in a nation where different groups had been at war against each other. The war of liberation lasting from 1965 to 1980 had pitied a white minority regime against the majority blacks in what increasingly became a racial war. However, the nationalist movement itself had fractured along apparently distinctly Shona-Ndebele ethnic lines in 1963 with the formation of ZANU-PF, a splinter movement from the then

Zimbabwe African Peoples Union (ZAPU) which had until then been the sole representative of the African people under the leadership of Joshua Nkomo. The Shona and Ndebele constitute the majority ethnic groups accounting for about 80% and 15% of the population respectively. Following the split, ZANU-PF was viewed as predominantly Shona aligned party whereas ZAPU was seen as a Ndebele aligned party (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009). The result was that the liberation war was prosecuted by two rival parties, and on the eve of independence nation-building process was both a complicated and vexatious undertaking of how to bring together the formerly antagonistic groups into one nation-state. As Mlambo (2014:285) observes that:

*A major challenge facing Zimbabwe's ongoing nation-building project is how to mould a national identity in the light of the country's complicated and contested precolonial, colonial and postcolonial history stemming partly from the fact that, like most African countries its present configuration is essentially a product of colonialism and the nationalist imagination.*

The above assertion clarifies the ways in which the nation-state in Zimbabwe could be thought of as a 'politically imagined reality' (Anderson, 1983) in that it is an attempt to bring together a rather disparate people under a shared sense of nationhood forged in the crucible of the anti-colonial struggles. As Anderson (1991:83) explains, the nation-state is imagined in that, 'the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion'. Thus, the Zimbabwean nation-state is an ongoing project which is also a terrain of struggle in which Africans seek the right to 'define and shape their identity that was distorted by colonial experience (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009:5). In this light the government of Zimbabwe centered issues of nation-building and reconstruction within the institution of education, particularly history education, as it 'was felt that the education system was a convenient institution to build a new national culture and identity to suit the new political environment' (Mpondi, 2007). Consequently, history has been at the centre of the reimagining of the nation-state as it has been deployed by the state to influence national consciousness in specific ways (Tendi, 2010; Ranger, 2009). For example, in 2002 History became a core subject at Ordinary level (equivalent to General Certificate Education in UK) thus highlighting the state's intentions to use the subject as a tool to strengthen its hegemonic control over nation-building. Such developments confirm Carvalho and Gemenne's (2009:2) assertion that history not only functions to 'give substance' to the newly created nation by celebrating its past, but also provides a basis for the validation of the nation in what Heilser (2008:14) calls the "political currency of the past." Thus, understood as the 'triad of history, memory, and nation' (Seixas, 2009:720) school History is critically located at the centre of contestations over the nation's past and future, not only in Zimbabwe, but in many other nations as well (Carvalho and Gemenne, 2009; Darhotey, 2009). Grever (2009:47) describes such use of history as 'political instrumentalization of the past' and asserts that it represents 'an unmistakable tendency to re-ideologize national history.'

It is against this backdrop that the paper examines how the Zimbabwean postcolonial state has used (or misused) the content of history education syllabi in order to promote desired connotations of national identity consistent with the

envisaged nation-state. The central question posed is: In what ways has the secondary school History curriculum in post-independence Zimbabwe drawn on the emerging historiographies to promote a realization of the envisaged nation-state project? In an attempt to clarify the ways in which this may (or may not) be happening the following sub questions are developed:

- What new historiographies have emerged as part of the mythic nation-state making process of the post-independence era?
- How are these historiographies represented through the aims and content selection in school history syllabi?
- What historical sensibilities are being promoted through the history syllabi?
- What have been the implications of policy for the nation-state making process and the discipline of History in the schools?

In addressing the above questions the Zimbabwean school History curriculum is taken as ‘a legitimated text created under state supervision,’ (Korostelina, 2011:2) and by which the desired historiographies of the nation-state are canonized and purveyed, thus providing a lens through which to tease out the intentions of the state as projected through the curriculum. The analysis is purely theoretical in that it explores only the policy documents - the history syllabi - that have been developed by the post-colonial state and does not proceed to the classrooms to examine how policy is translated into practice. Examining these documents from the vantage point of curriculum theory as a heuristic is important because as Kanu (2003) points out, the curriculum imagination has been mediated by the nation-state such that it assumes a symbolic realm of national identity.

The paper is divided into five sections as follows: the first section presents the conceptual framework that informs the study. The second presents the historiographies that have emerged as part of the nation-building process in Zimbabwe. The third section outlines the methodological approach used in the analysis. The fourth section examines the various syllabi that have informed history teaching and relates them to the nation-state making project. The fifth section discusses the pedagogical implications for history teaching. The paper concludes by examining the possibilities for a new historiography and curriculum that could be genuinely representative of the many histories of the people who live in the nation-state. The following section outlines the conceptual framework of the study.

## **Conceptual Framework**

The conceptual framework of this study draws from post-modernist and post-structuralist theories to foreground both education and the nation-state as socially and historically constructed phenomena (Yilmaz, 2010). In rejecting the grand narratives of modernism and the narrative of historiography as one of unimpeded progress, these perspectives allow for the deconstruction of realities and the recognition of pluralism (Yilmaz, 2010). This approach enables us to view reality as not fixed but strongly tied to cultural practices that are historically and socially constructed (Peters and Burbules, 2004). In this sense, nations are ‘politically imagined realities’ (Anderson, 1983:49)

that are characterized by ambiguity, fluidity and contestations. The narrative of the nation-state is therefore not one that is fixed, but is mutable and contestable. The decentring of the canon (Yilmaz, 2010) so central to post-structuralism leads to the realization that, instead of knowledge, there are knowledges; and instead of the history of the nation there are histories of the nation. Therefore, school History curriculum has to be cognizant of the multiple narratives that inhere in a nation-state. Promoting a grand narrative such as the unitary nature of the nation-state is likely to exclude other histories thus making curriculum exclusivist. As Foucault (1980) reminds us, through his notion of subjugated realities, the histories of subjugation, conflict and oppression are often lost in a dominant theoretical framework or wiped out by a dominant history. In this context curriculum is viewed as inherently entangled with the issues of power, identity making and the nation-state. This theoretical lens is employed to examine the dynamics that are at the centre of contestations in school History policy making in Zimbabwe. The following section examines the historiographies that have emerged in Zimbabwe.

### **Nation-state making and nationalist historiographies**

The nation-state of Zimbabwe, as the territory that lies between the Zambezi and Limpopo Rivers, in Southern Africa, came into existence in 1980 after a protracted armed struggle and subsequent internationally supervised democratic elections. The elections followed the Lancaster House agreements which had brought the warring parties in Rhodesia to the negotiating table. The name 'Zimbabwe' is derived from the historic monument 'Dzimba Dzemabwe' which means 'Houses of Stone' and is believed to have been the capital of a pre-colonial state, the Zimbabwe State (Garlake, 1983; Beach, 1994). In the 1960s the name had political symbolism as the basis of imagining the future nation-state and thus willing it into existence through struggle. Successive liberation movements thus used the name Zimbabwe as an attempt to forge a common national identity as part of this imagination of the postcolonial nation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011). It thus provided the nationalist movement with what Seixas (2009:721) calls a 'foundation myth' upon which nationalists could draw to give the nation-state an undisputed diachronic presence (Sofos and Ozkirimh, 2009). However, the name on its own, no matter how historic, could not guarantee a sense of common national identity. As Tendi (2010) shows, this absence of a shared sense of nationhood has been problematic since the pre-colonial epoch; and unfortunately, independence did not usher in concord and nationhood. Instead, the intolerance and exclusiveness of the colonial period which had been fostered through the deliberate politicization of ethnicity (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011) found expression in independent Zimbabwe's political, social, economic and education arenas (Tendi, 2010). Colonial rule had exacerbated ethnic rivalries between the Shona and the Ndebele as part of its divide and rule strategy. Thus, the challenge for the postcolonial state has been how to forge nationhood out of disparate ethnic, racial, religious, linguistic, regional and sub-regional groupings. In practice this implied creating a 'nation as people' and not just 'nation-as-state' (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011:29). It is this notion of 'nation-as-people' that Homi Bhabha (1990:2) had in mind when he wrote of 'the impossible unity of the

nation as a symbolic force (in spite of) the attempt by nationalist discourses persistently to produce the idea of the nation as a continuous narrative of national progress.’ It is against this backdrop that the paper briefly examines the recent historiographies that have proliferated in the period leading to and after Zimbabwe’s independence.

That new historiographies had to emerge in Zimbabwe was a political and pedagogical imperative given the racist nature of Rhodesian discourses. What was however unclear were the grand narratives that would underpin the new historiographies. The historiographies that have emerged have tended to repackage old myths of the nation-state while creating new heroes out of liberation war leaders to promote the narratives on which the nation-state is being reimagined. According to Ranger (2009; 2004), Zimbabwe has experienced three historiographies that are explicitly linked to the post-colonial nation-state project. First is nationalist historiography which dates from the 1960s to the 1980s; then second is the history of the nation which dates from 1980 to around 2000, and third and final is patriotic historiography which dates from 2000 to the present. These historiographies are examined below.

## **Nationalist historiography**

The propagation of nationalist historiography was ‘work that had to be done’ as a concerted reaction to Eurocentric perceptions that Africans had no history prior to the arrival of Europeans on the continent (Ranger, 2009:66). To this end, nationalist historiography was primarily concerned with demonstrating that ‘Africa had produced organised polities, monarchies, and cities, just like Europe,’ (Zeleza, 1997:1). In doing so however, nationalist historians eulogized Africa’s past without subjecting it to critique. In Zimbabwe, for instance, nationalist historiography took the form of tracing the roots of African nationalism, its connections with with the uprisings of 1896-97 and the 1960-70s anti-colonial struggles inspired by mass consciousness now called the First and Second Chimurenga, respectively (Ranger, 2009). Nationalist historiography coincided with what Msindo (2007:276) calls the ‘golden age’ of nationalism because at that historical juncture, nationalism easily transcended the divisive tendencies of ethnicity and united all Africans in a politically imagined reality called Zimbabwe. With the benefit of hindsight, Ranger (2009:67) has noted that the dangers of such a historiography have been to canonise the wars of liberation as ‘the total significant history of Zimbabwe’ to the exclusion of other socio-political dynamics that have been central to the nation-state. In presenting such a linear narrative from the First Chimurenga to the Second Chimurenga, historians gave birth to a narrative of the nation-state that would in future, be called upon to give the new nation-state undisputed diachronic existence. After 1980 this historiography was supplanted by the history of the nation whose primary concern was to both celebrate and legitimate the new nation-state that came into being with the advent of independence in 1980 (Ranger, 2009). The following section explores this historiography in greater detail.

## History of the nation historiography 1980-2000

The first two decades of independence were characterised by the history of the nation as a form of historiography that celebrated the birth of the new nation-state and sought to legitimate its chosen ideology of socialism. This historiography is not markedly different from the nationalist historiography of the nation. Rather, it represented the fulfilment of those aspirations that the nationalists envisaged in the 1960s. For them, the attainment of independence was the apogee of the nationalist struggles. As such, this historiography was largely celebratory of the nation state and was characterized by what Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2011:14) refers to as 'praise-texts.' In his view:

*This narrative celebrated the independence struggle and in the process glossed over the epistemological limits, ideological poverty and realities of the Zimbabwean nationalist struggle as an avenue for the retribalisation of politics, as the key nationalist actors competed for dominance through ethnic mobilisation (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2011:14).*

The narrative of the history of the nation foregrounded the class struggle as socialism was then the espoused ideology of the nation. ZANU PF, as the triumphant liberation movement, enjoyed hegemony in such narratives. Similarly, Shona metaphors and cultural artifacts became the symbols on which the nation-state was being re-imaged. Its two pronged approach to nation-state building was to embrace the policy of reconciliation extended to the white settlers by the new government while on the other hand, ignoring Ndebele/Shona ethnic rivalry or merely dismissing it as the exaggerations of Western historiography (Ndlovu-Gatsheni 2011, Tendi, 2010). As already explained the Ndebele and the Shona constitute the major ethnic groups along which the fractures in the nationalist movement had occurred in 1963. Thus, the nation-state promoted by such historiography was an unproblematic one that was deeply rooted in a primordial empire. Its social constructedness was a taken-for-granted reality that could only be unpacked by mischief makers keen to foment discontent in the country. This resulted in what Brewilly (2009:21) calls the 'naturalization' of the nation-state a process which 'takes it (nation-state) out of the realm of argument and refutation'. This historiography served the purpose of legitimating the new state and its rulers to the people ruled but remained fairly open to challenges by alternative views especially as the euphoria of independence waned. But the nation-state remained fairly open to challenges by alternative views, especially as the euphoria of independence waned. The collapse of socialism in the Soviet Union and other east European countries negatively affected the socialist rhetoric that had been the hallmark of the history of the nation. Furthermore, the state had to appeal to a new historiography to legitimate its incumbency in the wake of growing unpopularity following the economic decline that was concomitant to adoption of Western inspired economic adjustment programmes in the 1990s and the post-2000 Crisis. This historiography pleaded for a sense of patriotism and at the same time blamed the West for the country's worsening economic crisis. To justify the post-2000 invasions of formerly white owned farms by the landless blacks, historiography re-narrated how

the settlers had violently dispossessed the African indigenes of their land during colonial conquest. Thus, patriotic history was inspired by a resurgent nationalism.

## Patriotic historiography

Patriotic history was invoked in Zimbabwe partly as a response to Western sanctions imposed on Zimbabwe following the country's controversial land invasions of post-2000. This was after Britain's failure to provide funds for the compensation of white farmers as had been agreed upon at the Lancaster House Conference which ushered in independence. An emerging opposition in the form of the labour-backed Movement for Democratic Change party (MDC) that drew its support from a growing national discontent also needed to be combatted ideologically if ZANU-PF was to remain in power. Thus, patriotic history is perhaps the most controversial form of historiography to emerge in post-independence Zimbabwe as it represents an 'extreme version of nationalist history' that is averse to critical academic history and general contestation. Thus patriotic history is deployed in the public arena as a weapon to reimagine national problems as being externally induced by the West, a West that is supposedly the enemy of the Zimbabwean people since the days of colonialism. In these circumstances, history was seized upon by ZANU-PF and re-interpreted as a means to re-justify a legitimacy that was under threat. It is against this trajectory of events that this paper examines how school History curriculum policy has drawn on these historiographies in an attempt to address issues of 'representability and the difficult problem of plurality' (Grever, 2009:47) which are at the heart of national history and nation-state making. Table 1 below summarizes these historiographies.

TABLE 1

### *Historiographies in Zimbabwe's history*

<b>Period</b>	<b>Nation-state phase</b>	<b>Historiography</b>	<b>Grand narratives</b>	<b>Nation-state project</b>
1960s-1980	Struggle for independence	Nationalist history	Glorification of primordial empires and resistance	Foundation myth of ancient states to ensure diachronic existence
1980s - 2000	Triumph of nationalism	History of the nation	Praise text of the nation-state ZANU-PF hegemony	Pluralistic and inclusive ; unproblematic given transmuted from the past
2000-2010	Crises in Zimbabwe	Patriotic history	National Sovereignty Afro-radicalism	Exclusivist to the indigenes

## **Methodology**

The research design of this study combined both the quantitative and qualitative paradigms, as it employed what Mertens (2005) refers to as the transformative paradigm (Mackenzie and Knipe, 2006; Creswell, 2003). This transformative paradigm provides a framework through which to address what Foucault (1980) calls the 'histories of subjugation,' through an inquiry that intertwines politics and a political agenda in the educational enterprise. It was therefore possible to focus on the contextual and historical factors that have been central to issues of marginalization and oppression as represented by the selective discourses of History curricula.

This study targeted school history syllabi on the basis that they represented state intentions on history education, since the state is the principal shaper of the education policy in a highly centralized education system as prevails in Zimbabwe. The data was gathered through qualitative methods, namely content and discourse analysis (Leedy and Ormrod, 2001). These methods enabled the coding of data in order to identify patterns and themes that could be discerned on the basis of the content and aims presented. Discourse analysis (Fairclough, 2005) was employed to tease out the policy intentions and assumptions as presented in the syllabi documents. Examining these helped clarify the connections among the aims, topics and the nation-state project. It also highlighted the schisms between school History as inquiry and as an instrument of nation building.

## **Data analysis**

The data was analysed using an approach to 'discourse analysis' influenced by Fairclough (2005). This enabled the researcher to unearth the assumptions and perceptions of history and of the nation-state that are embedded in the history syllabi. It was also possible to identify the recurrent patterns that constitute the prevalent discourses and how they produce 'reality' by providing structures of meaning that make particular objective and subjective positions appear. As these positionings emerged they were related to the nation-state project. The following section presents the findings and discussion.

## **Findings and discussion**

This section combines the findings and discussion sections of the study. The section is organised thematically so as to juxtapose the two syllabi that have been central to school history teaching. The discussion teases out the implications of these findings for the nation-state project and the practice of history education.

## **Development of History syllabi**

The development of history syllabi in Zimbabwe must be understood in the context of the political trajectories of the nation-state as represented by ZANU-PF and the historiographies that have characterized history education. This development took the

form of introducing new history syllabi that would reflect the political narrative of the new political elite as delineated in the emerging historiographies. The Ministry of Education of the newly independent Zimbabwe provided the ideological and political cues for the reform of History curriculum when it stated that ‘the old historiography was essentially an apology for colonialism, exploitation and the resultant economic, social and political underdevelopment’ (MoE, 1982). In 1992, it was announced that Zimbabwean schools, particularly History teachers, should teach Zimbabwean content and Zimbabwean history (MoE, 1992). Following these policy pronouncements, History curriculum development has occurred in three distinct periods as follows: the independence decade (1980-1989) which used the pre-1980 Syllabus 2160; the structural adjustment decade (1990-1999) associated with Syllabus 2166, as the first post-independence syllabus; and the period covering the onset of the Zimbabwe crisis and patriotic history, (Barnes, 2007) Syllabus 2167 associated with Syllabus 2167 emphasising knowledge and values of patriotism the onset of the Zimbabwe crisis and patriotic history, (Barnes, 2007). Table 2 below summarizes these developments. A significant development was the move to make History compulsory up to Ordinary level from 2002.

TABLE 2

*Evolution of History Syllabi in Zimbabwe*

<b>Time frame</b>	<b>Name of Syllabus</b>	<b>Descriptor used</b>	<b>Historiography promoted</b>
Independence Decade 1980-1989	2160	Independence Syllabus	Eurocentric historiography
Adjustment Decade 1990-1999	2166	Nationalist Syllabus	Nationalist history and history of the nation
2000-2010 Crisis Decade	2167	Patriotic Syllabus	Patriotic history

### **Political climate preceding the launch of syllabi 2166 and 2167**

Syllabi 2166 and 2167 were launched under vastly contrasting political circumstances. The former was ten years in the making and resulted in Barnes’ descriptor ‘the long wait for a new syllabus’ while the latter was a hurried affair (Barnes, 2007:634). The making of Syllabus 2166 was presided over by a nationalist leadership that was riding on a wave of mass popularity as the party of liberation. Having won the 1980 and 1985 elections by large margins, the ZANU led government enjoyed an unquestioned mandate from the people and could therefore afford the luxury of a long drawn professional process of syllabus making. Apparently, the prevailing historiography posed no threat to the legitimacy of the nation-state and its rulers. In contrast, the launch of Syllabus 2167 was presided over by what Ndlovu-

Gatsheni (2011:8) refers to as a 'beleaguered nationalist leadership' that faced a crisis of legitimacy following the rejection of the government sponsored referendum of 2000. The political climate that overshadowed syllabi making in each stance is significant. The political atmosphere that preceded the launch of Syllabus 2167 was an unhappy one (Barnes, 2007) as the leadership felt that not enough had been done to change the school curriculum to ensure that the young citizens were aware of the nation-states' significant past and its heroes. The President of Zimbabwe, R.G. Mugabe articulated this view thus:

*Measures will be taken to ensure that the History of Zimbabwe is rewritten and accurately told and recorded in order to reflect the events leading to the country's nationhood and sovereignty. Furthermore Zimbabwean History will be made compulsory up to Form Four. (Mugabe 2001:65).*

The above statement with its call for the rewriting of the history of the nation was significant in several respects. First, it was an expression of disillusionment with the existing historiography hence the need to re-write it. Second, was the rather ominous conflation of the nation-state with the political fortunes of the ZANU-PF the ruling party since independence. It thus became apparent that henceforth school History would assume greater responsibility in engendering a consciousness that would be sympathetic to the status quo.

It is the argument herein that both syllabi were developed under politically charged circumstances. In each instance, the need for a new syllabus was initiated by a government eager to ensure that the desired historical consciousness was embedded in the school curriculum. The state was the principal arbiter in the syllabus making process, given the centralized nature of the education system. For instance, Syllabus 2166 drew its cues from the socialist philosophy which was the ideology of ZANU-PF and the nation-state. As Chitate (2010) argues, the intention of Syllabus 2166 designers was to replace capitalism with socialism in language and in writing, through the teaching of history that is predicated on the materialist analysis of human development. It embraced nationalist historiography and the history of the nation in which the nation-state was celebrated, often uncritically, as the fruition of the struggles that dated from the First Chimurenga. Similarly, Syllabus 2167 was born out of a political process. This time, however, it was a beleaguered nationalist leadership that presided over the process. It was a leadership that was eager to use the past to 'demonstrate their own historical significance and their fidelity to national traditions' (Clark, 2010:120). What has become unmistakable in this trajectory of events is that school History, as has happened in many other countries, would be used to promote the nation-state project, however narrowly imagined.

The scenarios that were being played out on the Zimbabwean educational terrain had occurred elsewhere, for example in the Ukraine. Korostelina (2011) observes that following Ukraine's independence in 1991, history education in public schools was completely revised. In addition, the Ukrainian Institute of National History was established and charged with the responsibility to study and publicise the Ukrainian path to independence, with specific attention given to the national liberation movement, the Famine of 1932-33 (Golodomor) and political repression suffered during the twentieth century' (Korostelina 2011:2-3). Thus, Ukraine, like Zimbabwe

has to varying degrees deployed school history as ‘*an apparatus for the social reproduction of national identities through [linking] the development of the individual to the images and narratives of nationhood*’ (Popkewitz, Pereyra and Franklin, 2001:17).

## **Aims and content of Syllabi 2166 and 2167**

This section focuses on the aims and content of the 2166 and 2167 syllabi in order to distil the political and pedagogical assumptions that influenced the choices that were made. Syllabus 2166 was predicated on the history of the nation in which the nation-state was envisaged as inclusivist being a member of the international socialist community of nations. Thus, its key aims were to help pupils:

- acquire an informed and critical understanding of social, economic and political issues facing them as builders of a developing Zimbabwe;
- develop ‘historical skills and tools of analysis within the conceptual framework of historical and dialectical materialism (Syllabus 2166, 1996, 2).

The earlier version had included the phrase ‘Socialist Zimbabwe’ which was dropped following the collapse of communism in Eastern Europe. Barnes (2007: 639) describes the syllabus as ‘a child of erstwhile ‘socialist’ Zimbabwe’ as it presented explanations of social change in Zimbabwe, Africa and the industrialized nations from a Marxist perspective. Topics for Paper 1 of the examination were phrased as follows:

- Comparative pre-capitalist modes of production in East and Central Africa
- Comparative industrial capitalism (Britain, Germany, USA, Japan)
- Imperialism, capitalism and resistance in Zimbabwe, 1890–1950
- Revolution and socialist transformation (Marxist ideas; Russian and Chinese revolutions to present-day).

Paper 2 of the Syllabus 2166 had the following topics:

- Comparative pre-capitalist modes of production in East and Central Africa (late Stone Age to Iron Age)
- Comparative industrial capitalism (Britain, Germany, USA, Japan)
- Nationalism and Imperialism (colonialism in Zaire or Ghana; Algeria or Kenya); WWI
- Capitalism in crisis (Great Depression; Fascism; WWII)
- Imperialism, capitalism and resistance in Zimbabwe, 1890–1950
- Revolution and socialist transformation (Marxist ideas; Russian and Chinese revolutions to present-day)
- World anti-imperialist struggles and neocolonialism (Namibia, Tanzania, Algeria, Uganda, Ghana, Nigeria, Angola, Mozambique, Guinea-Bissau, South Africa, Palestine, Cuba, Vietnam, Zimbabwe)
- Post-1945 international relations (UN, Warsaw Pact, non-aligned movement, European Community, OAU).

The above selection of topics reflects the classic Marxist theory of the evolution of society from capitalist modes of production to the emergence of socialist revolutions. In addition, the emphasis on ‘comparative’ aspects was intended to ensure a broad internationalist approach to understanding historical phenomena. Pedagogically, the topics call for a comparative analysis, classified among the higher order cognitive skills according to Bloom’s taxonomy (Anderson and Krathwohl, 2001). To ensure a multi-perspectival approach to historical issues, industrialization in both the capitalist and socialist countries had to be studied in comparative terms. Tendi (2010) acknowledges these progressive aspects thus:

*To its credit the nationalist syllabus promoted diverse methodology to history teaching. ‘Problem-posing, problem-solving, role play, written exercises and discussions’ and critical thinking were encouraged in what was the antithesis to the Rhodesian syllabus’ rote-learning.’*

The syllabus certainly focused on Zimbabwe, as a way of familiarizing the students with the history of the nation as any other national history syllabus ought to do. However, it did so within a broad context in which the nation-state was presented as a player in the international community of nations. Unfortunately, for all its merits, the syllabus proved to be unsuitable to the Zimbabwean educational paradigm (Chitate, 2010). A combination of local and international forces also rendered the socialist thrust of the syllabus untenable following the collapse of socialism in Eastern Europe. Additionally, its epistemological concerns with critical thinking on the basis of New history proved challenging for both teachers and students in Zimbabwe. As a result, the syllabus was phased out in 2001 to be replaced by Syllabus 2167. It is in this context that the aims and content of Syllabus 2167 must be understood.

Syllabus 2167 is structured thematically and emphasises that ‘topics and areas must, therefore, be studied in relation to the major historical themes and not a series of isolated narratives.’ Its aims include the need to help learners:

- develop an interest in and enthusiasm for the study of historical events;
- develop an understanding of local, national and international historical events;
- develop skills and appropriate tools for analyzing historical events; and
- understand and appreciate population, democracy and human rights issues as well as the responsibilities and obligations that accompany them (p.2).

Like its predecessor, it declares as its goal the need to ‘provide ‘O’ level pupils with the means by which they would develop an objective view of the world,’ (Syllabus, 2167: 2). Furthermore, it states the need to help learners ‘acquire an informed and critical understanding of social, economic and political issues facing them as builders of a developing nation.’ While it states the imperative for critical understanding as a key aim, the syllabus does not foreground the teaching of history as inquiry. Rather, in its objectives it privileges simple recall and comprehension skills and eschews the higher order skills of analysis, evaluation and synthesis that are central to an understanding of history as contested and contestable. It is these skills that are essential to the fostering of a historical consciousness that empowers students to go beyond a ‘deliberate blinding, or the choosing of only one selective historical representation to understand the past’ (Seixas, 2004:6). In in this sense that it may be

argued that Syllabus 2167 has limited scope for promoting historical consciousness as envisaged by Seixas (2009).

The Syllabus 2167 is divided into two parts and has 15 themes. Paper One is entitled Southern Africa and has 11 themes as follows:

- Development of Early Societies : Great Zimbabwe, Mutapa, Rozvi and Ndebele States
- The Nguni incursions: Ndebele under Mzilikazi, Kololo under Sbetwane and Shangaan under Soshangane
- Early European Colonial activities: The Missionaries and the Portuguese
- The Scramble for and Partition of Southern Africa
- Colonization and Early Resistance in Colonial Zimbabwe up to 1923
- Chimurenga I
- Economic Development During The Colonial Era: Colonial Zimbabwe up to 1980 and South Africa up to 1910
- The Federation Rhodesia and Nyasaland
- The Struggle for Independence in Colonial Zimbabwe: 1890-1980
- Chimurenga II
- The Constitution of Zimbabwe
- Post Independence Zimbabwe
- The Struggle For Majority Rule and Democratization: Mozambique and South Africa

Paper Two of the 2167 syllabus is entitled World Affairs and has the following topics:

- The World In Crisis: 1900 to 1945
- Democracy and Human Rights
- Socialism in China
- International Co-operation: United Nations, Organisation of African Unity and the Commonwealth Unity and the Commonwealth

In its presentation of topics Syllabus 2167 abandons completely the comparative approach which had been central to Syllabus 2166. This narrow focus reflects intentions to focus purely on Zimbabwe as a sovereign state and not a member of the community of nations. The inclusion of China is also indicative of the nation-states' growing bilateral relations with China as evidenced by the 'Look East Policy.' Understandably, patriotic history has been deployed to present China as the perennial friend of Zimbabwe since the days of the struggle for liberation.

### **Significance of content selection in the two syllabi**

Curriculum content selection is never a neutral process but a political undertaking in which certain knowledges are included as legitimate while other knowledges are delegitimated through exclusion (Apple, 2008). Thus the central questions of curriculum really ought to be: "Whose knowledge is this? How did it become "official"?" (Apple, 2008:241). With regard to Zimbabwean history curricula, the questions are whose history is this? And how did it become official? The focus in both

syllabi is on Zimbabwe, with the obvious intention to promote an awareness of Zimbabwe's past. As Clark (2009:745) asserts, 'there is a wide spread popular understanding that history education comprises the essential facts about the nation and should play a positive and uplifting role in national life.' It could be argued that this is what the two syllabi achieve so well in terms of the broad content selection. However, this creates a 'canon' as not all histories are presented. For example, it is argued that Zimbabwe's 'historiography is riddled with variation, not only when examining pre-colonial history, but also with regard to the colonial era and the history of the liberation war' (Bhebe and Ranger, 1995:6). This selective account of history which gets legitimated as official knowledge then becomes the narrative of the nation. While in Syllabus 2166 students were exposed to the industrial development of the USA, UK, Japan, Russia and China, in Syllabus 2167, only China is studied. This privileging of Chinese history vindicates Parker's (2004) assertion that those who have the power to control the official historical narrative in support of a dominant ideology of the state exercise this power through the content that gets selected and deselected. Thus content selection as Parker (2004:48) puts it, not only marginalizes as 'not real' those events that do not make it into the historical canon, but 'it leads us to believe that what is presented to us is necessarily "real."' In the case of Zimbabwe, not only do such practices close space for alternative readings of the nation's past, but they also label others as having been inconsequential to the liberation struggle.

It may therefore be argued that in nation-state making school History curricula are at the service of identity politics that promote exclusivist tendencies by the content choices that they make (Ahonen, 2001). In the context of Zimbabwe's past it is necessary to examine how power and control are exercised through a formal corpus of knowledge which the school distributes through curriculum, rules and regulations. This is because schools are said to not only control people and meaning but also confer cultural legitimacy on the knowledge of specific groups (Giroux, 1983) and in the case of History education, shape the national narrative.

## **School History as academic practice in Zimbabwe**

From the arguments developed above, it is evident that school History, as a curriculum subject in Zimbabwe has been characterized by political and ideological imperatives, whose teleological goal is both one of the nation-building process and of cultivating a modern dimension of national identity in the global culture (Zajda and Whitehouse, 2009). Yet, as Barton and Levstik (2004) and Barton (2006) remind us, history teaching should be directed at critical inquiry and dialogue about crucial historical events. As Collingwood (1946/65) states, the ultimate aim of history is not to know the past but to understand the present. This is what Seixas (2000) theorizes about as historical consciousness - a state of mind that allows students to realize their own particularity in time, as players in a continuous process of historical meaning making. It is also about one's awareness of the past as it is about understanding how the past is presented and the extent to which the past is understood as acting upon the present. Thus, school History should also be about what Parkes (2007) calls 'critical historical engagement' which empowers students to use the past responsibly for future

purposes. Table 3 below summarizes what policy appears to essentialise as the main concerns of school History in Zimbabwe.

TABLE 3

*Comparative Analysis of Syllabuses 2166 and 2167*

Analytical concept	Syllabus 2166	Syllabus 2167
Historical sensibilities promoted	Interpretation and critique hence multiple readings of history. History as a mode of inquiry Empathy and value-judgment	History as recall of facts An uncritical reading of issues hence mono-perspectivity Explanation and critique
Epistemology/ grand narrative promoted	New History philosophy	Traditional History
Positioning of pupils	Interpreters of history and writers of their local histories	Uncritical readers of given histories
Nation-state promoted	Internationalist player in revolutionary fraternity with brother states	National sovereignty
Content focus	Comparative study of human development	Zimbabwean focus with emphasis on sovereignty
Teaching approaches encouraged	Document study Problem posing Learner inquiry and critical engagement with sources	Rote learning and memorization of facts Uncritical reading of text
Genres of historical writing promoted	Interpretation of sources, Development of reasoned argument Writing local histories	Recall and comprehension Explanation and limited argument development

The above analysis reveals that both History syllabi in Zimbabwe have embraced the traditional role of history as an instrument of defining and promoting the nation. This has been achieved through subordinating the pedagogical goals of History education to the political need for consensus through historiographies that foregrounded grand narratives. Syllabus 2166, by embracing history as a mode of inquiry sought to promote a historical consciousness that ‘allows pupils to see historical knowledge as contingent; and open to multiple interpretations,’ (Parkes, 2007:384). Thus, to a limited extent it tried to create space for an alternative historiography to emerge. In contrast, Syllabus 2167 marked a return to an uncritical reading of historical issues that promoted mono-perspectivity. Syllabus 2166 had privileged a comparative approach to historical development with higher order cognitive skills of interpretation, analysis, judgement and empathy presented as the primary goals of history education. These goals are undermined by Syllabus 2167 which has embraced a narrow and traditional approach to history. Whatever space may have existed for alternative readings of the country’s past has been eroded by

patriotic historiography. By privileging a mono perspectival approach to school History Syllabus 2167 proved so amenable to the dictates of a selective rendition of the nation's state. Methodologically Syllabus 2166 necessitated the use of document study and group work. These practices have the advantage of allowing students to think historically as they employ skills of a historian. In addition, students get to realize the mutability and contestedness of history as they subject it to interpretation and reinterpretation. On the other hand, Syllabus 2167 is to a large extent a reincarnation of rote learning practices that were encouraged by a colonial regime that was determined to perpetuate its rule through the mental subjugation of Africans. That such practices have found their way back into post- independence curricula is evidence of the resilience of colonial educational practices. This view is echoed by David Coltart, a Minister of Education between 2009 and 2013 as follows:

*the way that history has been taught in Rhodesian and then Zimbabwean schools over many decades has contributed to the notion that political leaders are demigods. That was certainly what was taught in white Rhodesian schools: Cecil John Rhodes and Ian Douglas Smith were elevated to the status of cult heroes. Little has changed since the advent of independence save for the fact that these political leaders have been replaced by Robert Gabriel Mugabe and other nationalist leaders, (Coltart cited in Tendi, 2010).*

The above critique of history teaching and curriculum in Zimbabwe is also evidence of failure to deliver an education for liberation that the people of the postcolonial state yearn for. What this has meant in practice is that the function of school history as a legitimizing narrative has remained the same - to give legitimacy to the new rulers of the nation-state. Thus History teaching in Zimbabwe has swayed from the mono-perspectivity of the Rhodesian curriculum to the brief interlude of critical historical engagement in the second decade of independence, and then back again to mono-perceptivity of patriotic rhetoric in the third decade of independence. These pedagogical trajectories are deeply implicated in the politics of the nation-state.

There are laudable achievements that have been made in History education policy in Zimbabwe, despite the apparent reversals that have been made to the progressive approaches to school history. For example, Barnes (2004:146) argues that Syllabus 2166 was a watershed in the educational landscape of the country as it was 'Zimbabwe's first concerted attempt to write its own, new history for its own people.' Hitherto, the nation-state had operated on the basis of a historiography that had essentialised a Eurocentric world view as well as rote learning methods of historical study. The period 1991 to 2001 in Zimbabwe represents a phase during which, while school history was not divorced from the politics of the country, it nevertheless served as what Parkes (2007:384) calls "critical pedagogic practice." Such teaching of history allowed pupils to see historical knowledge as contingent; and open to multiple interpretations.

## **History syllabi and the failure of the nation-state project**

This section makes sense of the ways in which the trajectories outlined above have impacted on the nation-state project. It is undeniable that Zimbabwe is in ‘the list of postcolonial states whose recent history is a tale of failed nation-building project,’ (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009:189). To what extent this failure may be attributed to the historiographies and the role that History curricula played is a moot point. What is clearly discernible, however, is that both postcolonial History syllabi have been at the service of the nation-state in so far as they were crafted to promote an imagined nationhood. A notable difference is that Syllabus 2166 is associated with a more progressive notion of the nation-state as well as the teaching of history while Syllabus 2167 is associated with both the regression of the nation-state and the progressive teaching of history. However, both have drawn from the emergent historiographies to foreground grand narratives associated with the nation-state as it has evolved. It is this tendency to ideologize school history that places history curricula at the service of identity politics as Ahonen (2001) remarks. For example, a consequence of such uses of school history, was that while the nation-state sought to be inclusive and pluralistic, it at the same closed space for alternative historiographies that were critical of either the grand narrative of Marxism or the hegemony of ZANU-PF. Also, what Foucault (1980) calls the histories of subjugation could not find voice in mainstream narratives thus resulting in the silencing of the marginalized.

The nation-state project enshrined in Syllabus 2167 was bound to be different from that promoted by Syllabus 2166. Informed by patriotic history, Syllabus 2167 was likely to foster a blind patriotism to a “Zimbabweanness” that is heavily bifurcated along race and loyalty to a particular rendition of the liberation war. Public discourse in Zimbabwe has become saturated with a rhetoric that deliberately propagates a favourable view of ZANU-PF and the nation-state it has created. This rhetoric has permeated the school curriculum directly and indirectly as patriotic history has made inroads into the public examinations and its metaphors have become official knowledge through the types of questions asked. For example, Moyo and Modiba (2011) demonstrate that presenting examination questions in a manner in which the land reform is a taken-for-granted reality, precludes students from engaging in alternative readings of the nation’s past. As they put it: ‘the seemingly formal, non-judgmental language, which does not allow varied interpretations, could be deliberately used to nurture a particular state of mind or consciousness towards land reform. This is what patriotic history seeks to achieve as regards attitudes towards ZANU-PF’s policy of land reform’ (Moyo and Modiba, 2011:152). On the basis of such observations Tendi (2010) concludes that the patriotic history curriculum like its predecessors, does not offer opportunities for inclusive nation-building and reconciliation. The nation-state in Zimbabwe, remains as is the case in many other states, a ‘work-in-progress’ that calls for alternative historiographies that would be inclusivist while also allowing for the voices of the subjugated to emerge and be heard.

## Conclusion

This paper has argued that the politicization of school history curriculum as part of the nation-state project is a widely practised phenomenon the world over. The historiography of school history in Zimbabwe has been drawn on to explicate in greater detail the ways in which successive school syllabi have drawn upon the nationalist historiographies to promote the narrative of the nation-state. The results have been less than flattering with Zimbabwe becoming another ‘failed’ African nation. Epistemologically, there has been no fundamental difference in the functions of school History as a legitimizing device. History as inquiry and as contested has been sacrificed at the altar of political expediency first by the colonial state and more recently by the postcolonial state. What is yet to be learnt by politicians and curriculum policy makers is that teaching history well requires the demythologizing of the past as much as it requires rescuing it from the mercy of politicians. Teaching history in order to develop a historical consciousness in our students requires that history curricula foreground critical thinking that transcends what Seixas (2004:6) has termed a deliberate blinding, or the choosing of only one selective historical representation to understand the past. This historical consciousness will provide students with the ability to deconstruct the taken-for-granted political formations bequeathed to Africa by colonialism. Only thereafter will they be able to reconstruct durable and cohesive nation-states that celebrate the differences and pluralities of the people of the continent.

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