ZJER

ZIMBABWE JOURNAL OF EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH

SPECIAL ISSUE

VOLUME 23 NUMBER 1, MARCH 2011
ISSN 1013-3445

CONTENTS

VOLUME 23 NUMBER 1, MARCH 2011

ISSN 1013-3445

CONTENTS

INTERACTIVE TEACHING METHODS IN NATIONAL AND STRATEGIC STUDIES IN TEACHER TRAINING COLLEGES: DEFEATING THE MYOPIA OF PATRIOTIC HISTORY AND POLITICAL EXPEDIENCY

Munyaradzi Nyakudya
Department of History, University of Zimbabwe

Abstract

This paper dispels the notion that National and Strategic Studies (NASS), as taught in teacher training colleges, is a tool in the service of the sectarian interests of politicians. It shows that NASS is a relevant subject whose objectives serve national interests. It helps students develop such pertinent life skills as research, critical thinking and exposes them to important issues pertaining to their political, social and economic welfare. This is achieved through use of participatory or interactive teaching methods that place the learner at the centre of the learning process. Students learn through discovery and this enables them to formulate their own independent ideas, critically interpret issues and independently formulate ideas based on their own research and findings. The paper argues that the use of these interactive methods make NASS transcend the myopia of patriotic history, a narrowly focused type of history that advances the partisan interests of a particular sector of society at the exclusion of other interpretations of Zimbabwean history which they deem subversive and unpatriotic. Instead, it is argued that NASS fits into the category of 'academic historiography', the antithesis of patriotic history, making it a relevant subject in the quest for national development.

Introduction

National and Strategic Studies (NASS) was introduced in tertiary institutions in Zimbabwe at a time when the ruling party was facing unprecedented stiff competition from the opposition. Critics argued that the subject was tailored to indoctrinate young students. There were fears that the lecturers were state intelligence agents bent on ensuring that the young are won over to the ideologies and doctrines of the ruling party. As such, NASS was derided as part of the genre Ranger (2004) has called "patriotic history." This is a genre in which a particular version of history is manipulated to serve given political interests. It is a narrow interpretation of history that centres chiefly on the ruling party's heroics during the liberation war and its handling of the land question.

It has, however, been argued that the NASS objectives are quite pertinent in the quest for national development as they particularly seek to produce citizens who are proud to be Zimbabweans, citizens who have the welfare of the country at heart and will give everything in pursuit of national goals. (Nyakudya: 2007). In short, NASS aims to produce patriotic Zimbabweans. But herein lies the problem. Self-seeking politicians can easily abuse the whole concept of patriotism by manipulating citizens into believing that criticism of government amounts to lack of patriotism. As such, those teaching the subject risk either deliberately or unwittingly falling into the political trap of making the subject a political tool for advancing selfish interests of particular politicians or political parties, and not necessarily those of the country at large. The onus is, therefore, on the NASS practitioners to ensure that the subject fulfills national objectives.

This can be achieved through the application of interactive or participatory teaching methods. These allow students free expression as they learn through 'doing.' In fact, the learners are at the centre of learning while the teacher assumes the role of a mere facilitator of that process. As Lindhard and Dlamini (1996:22) show, learners are able to think for themselves and learn by discovery. It is not the duty of the teacher to hand out ready-made information through lectures or notes. The teacher and students together participate in the learning process, with the teacher playing a guiding role to facilitate discovery. This ensures that the students are able to individually formulate their own independent ideas on any given subject.

This paper seeks to share experiences on the teaching of some selected NASS topics through participatory methods. These methods are not in any way prescriptive for the given topics. Teachers are encouraged to use as much variety as possible because variety interests and motivates students. This paper's focus on teacher training colleges is deliberate. They have a measure of autonomy in designing their syllabi unlike other tertiary institutions that obtain a ready-made syllabus from the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education.

Analytical framework

Considering the circumstances in which NASS was introduced, and the fact that it purports to instill a sense of patriotism through the study of topics largely grounded in history and other related disciplines, it follows that the teaching of NASS in Zimbabwe has to be understood in the context of theories that try to explain the discourses of history in the country since

colonial subjugation. The appreciation of history has been from various divergent conceptual perspectives. This study tries to conceptualize the teaching of NASS within the context of three of these perspectives. These are defined as the colonialist or Rhodesian settler discourse, the Africanist/nationalist discourse, which, for purpose of this study, falls within the academic historiography, and the patriotic history discourse.[1]

a) Colonial settler discourse

As Bull-Christiansen (2004) notes, the Rhodesian settler discourse advocated a theory of white racial supremacy that justified the politics of white domination of the majority Africans. It thrived on stressing the alleged primitiveness of the African and, therefore, a justification of the African's subjugation, subservience and subordination in relation to the whites. This discourse informed the type of history curriculum taught in the school, a curriculum that hailed the purported civilizing influence of colonialism and the alleged supremacy of the white man.

This is the thinking that propelled the Rhodesia Front (RF) to unilaterally declare independence from the British Government in 1965. The Unilateral Declaration of Independence (UDI) was carried out ostensibly to safeguard "Christian Civilization and its values and standards" (Frederickse, 1982:157). The RF pledged to ensure that the government of Rhodesia would "remain in responsible hands", that is, under the control of whites (Godwin and Hancock, 2000: 57). The colonial settler discourse was therefore racist in nature. It was primarily this racist posturing that led the African nationalists to spearhead a war of national liberation that culminated in independence in April 1980.

b) Africanist/Nationalist discourse

Bhebe (2004) has aptly traced the development of the Africanist/nationalist historiography from Ranger's publication of *Revolt in Southern Africa* in 1967. This heralded the beginning of a new discourse that celebrated the African past, the early anti-colonial wars and the African's struggle against British imperialism in general. It is a discourse that, as Alexander (1996: 176) argues, appeared to be a reaction to the racist Rhodesian discourse Africans were subjected to under colonial rule. In short, it started as an anti-colonial discourse. As a consequence, this paradigm had a far reaching influence on Zimbabwe's nationalist movement (Bhebe, 2004:3).

The forms that Africanist/nationalist historiography assumed, like the

"revolutionary/socialist anti-colonial and African cultural nationalism" paradigms (Bull-Christiansen: 2004: 51) are not within the scope of this paper. However, it suffices to say that the Africanist/nationalist paradigm has continued to flourish in independent Zimbabwe. Scholarly research and debates on a plethora of topics like the liberation war, the 1980s civil war, the land question and issues of democracy and human rights, among many others, are being conducted. One is tempted to borrow Ranger's (2004) term, "academic historiography", to describe this post-colonial nationalist historiography with its "attempts to complicate and question" and its stress on "pluralist analyses". Bhebe 2004:18) echoes this observation when he says that this nationalist "historiography expanded its perspectives as it adopted more and more analytic categories both in its rural and urban focuses". Much of it is Afrocentric and Africanist in its conception of issues.

c) Patriotic History

This is a discourse that has been initiated by the ruling elite in Zimbabwe and mainly popularized through the state media. It progressively emerged in direct response to the growing unprecedented opposition to the incumbent ruling elite from the late 1990s. The objective is basically to entrench in power the rulers through eulogizing their exploits during and after the war of liberation. While in principle there is merit in highlighting the country's history, for in history rests the country's foundation and future, the weakness of patriotic history is its narrowness and exclusion of other national histories. Patriotic history has no place for the achievements of 'others' and views any criticism of government as subversive. It is so narrowly focused that it is basically about praise-singing and the denigration of perceived enemies. In short, patriotic history is all about party politics, or party propaganda, tailored to advance the elite's interests, and is therefore largely devoid of any analysis.

Patriotic history is similar to some aspects of Rhodesian settler historiography in its narrowness. Its basic aim is to legitimize the government's continued stay in power in the face of the onslaught from the opposition in the same manner settler historiography defended white hegemony against the wave of African nationalism. The ruling party sees itself as the only legitimate representative of the people's aspirations and in embodying those ideals, "it equates itself with democracy, patriotism and Africanism" (Bull Christiansen: 2004:71). It is precisely for this reason that government introduced NASS in tertiary institutions as a vehicle for instilling a particular type of history among the youth in order to give them the "right orientation" (Nyakudya, 2007: 117), which, however, is sectarian

in focus, rather than national. The weakness of patriotic history, therefore, is its antagonism to the pluralist analysis of Zimbabwean history and the exclusion of others' contribution to the struggle and its reduction of "the nationalist movement to one homogenous unified movement..." (Mazarire, Ranger and Chipembere, forthcoming).

Methodology

Collection of data for this study was done through an application of interactive teaching methods emphasizing on student participation. The se methods included group work, class discussions, simulation, debate, role play, question and answer sessions, films, drama, the internet and the use of resource persons.

a) Instruments

Samples of students' views on the course were collected in two phases, first at the beginning of the course and then at the end. The first phase involved students writing a short essay o their tentative thoughts on the new course they were being asked to embark on, their attitude towards it and how, if at all, they hoped to benefit from it. The second phase was a student evaluation of the course, through a questionnaire, after a year of study using participatory methods.

b) Procedure

The study's findings mainly come from the interactive methods applied in teaching the course. The students' own assessments help in validating the conclusions arrived at on the significance and importance of the interactive methods in defeating the myopia of so-called patriotic history.

Application of Interactive Teaching Methods in NASS: Sharing an Experience

The assessment of students' initial attitude towards NASS revealed that 91% of them viewed the subject with skepticism. They expressed the fear that NASS was a discipline meant to indoctrinate them and make them amenable to the whims of the incumbent regime. After gauging students' attitude towards NASS, the students were then taken through the course through the use of interactive teaching methods. Below is an account of the lecture room experiences that emerged from trying out the interactive teaching methods on various topics. These experiences help determine the

historiographical paradigm within which NASS falls, whether it is the broad and complex academic historiography or the narrowly focused and myopic patriotic history.

Group Work and Class Discussion

Poverty Reduction/Alleviation

Maurianne Adams (1997:38), Click and Click (1990:181) and O' Neil and Kitson (1996:195) cite several advantages of group work, ranging from offering opportunities to reveal attitudes, beliefs and behaviours that allow for feedback and learning to presenting an ideal learning opportunity providing for the grasping of concepts and new learning skills. In this instance, students were placed in groups and worked on one or two sub-topics that ranged from the definition of poverty, causes of poverty, manifestations and effects of poverty to the strategies of either reducing or completely eradicating poverty. Each group had a chairperson who facilitated the discussion while a secretary took down various points that were raised. Two schools of thought emerged on the reasons for the persistent high levels of poverty in Africa in general and Zimbabwe in particular. One school put it that Africa's poverty should be blamed squarely on poor governance and lack of accountability on the part of African governments. Students pointed at the abuse of development funds notorious in most developing countries. They also highlighted the failure of African leaders to adopt appropriate ideologies at independence instead of the random experimentation with all sorts of half-baked programmes. These ideas fall within the Eurocentric school of thought that blames the post-colonial African leaders for the problems bedeviling the continent.

On the other hand, some students attributed the poverty afflicting African countries to the Slave Trade, Colonialism and imperialism in general. They advanced the Walter Rodney (1981) thesis that 'Europe underdeveloped Africa', arguing that Africa lost its critical labour force through the Slave Trade while its resources continue to be pillaged since colonial times. They also referred to the skewed balance of trade between the developed and developing worlds and particularly lamented the fact that the former determine the prices of both imports and exports from developing countries. They even touched on the hypocrisy of Western governments that refuse to transfer technology to Africa and yet preach globalization and the punitive interest rates charged by the Bretton Woods institutions

In the end, while students argued that poverty was attributable to both

external and internal factors, most wondered how a continent so rich in underground and above ground natural resources, as well as human resources, continues to experience so much poverty. They felt the onus is on African leaders to come up with concerted strategies to make the continent's resources count rather than continue to blame our erstwhile colonizers. Through the participatory method used, varied perspectives were brought out. Students did not just swallow the government position that the source of Zimbabwe's economic malaise is 'the sanctions imposed by the West'. But then, they were also not gullible enough to pretend that the causes are purely internal. The lively debate exposed students to various angles of analyzing the topic.

Other advantages derived from this participatory approach are that the chairpersons of each group had their leadership skills developed while secretaries also developed listening skills and an ability to synthesize and summarize spoken information (note-taking). Students should rotate the roles of chairperson and secretary each time they go into groups. This allows every student an opportunity to either discover and or sharpen the skills described above. Groups are also important as they promote learning through student interaction while giving every student a chance to participate because of the small number of people in each group.

Student Research, Simulation and Debate

The Commonwealth

Students were sometimes tasked to do some research on a given topic before they debated their findings. Such debates generated a lot of excitement as conflicting ideas were raised on particular issues. During the period in question when material for this paper was gathered, Zimbabwe had withdrawn its membership from the Commonwealth. With students having done their research before hand, simulation was employed. The class was turned into a parliament and the students debated the merits and demerits of the government's move. Most students were critical of what they termed the government's egoistic decision in view of the Commonwealth's contribution in the field of education, in particular and economic development, in general. They argued that the action was a face-saving measure in the face of impending expulsion. In short, the leaders acted in their own personal interests, not those of Zimbabwe.

Other students, however, felt otherwise. They advanced the argument that the international body was biased in its criticism of Zimbabwe's human

rights record, They felt worse atrocities were committed by the likes of Arap Moi (Kenya), Museveni (Uganda) and the many military regimes that ruled Nigeria at one time or another since the attainment of her independence, but these were never subjected to the same kind of stringent treatment. Nigeria's suspension from the organization in 1995 after it executed 9 minority rights activists, including Ken Saro Wiwa, was regarded as an isolated case. They **opinioned** that on Zimbabwe , the Commonwealth acted under pressure from Britain, New Zealand and Australia who were all motivated by anger at the manner in which their white brethren had lost land rights in the country.

When students were tasked to go and research on given topics, it turned out that there was a lot of eagerness and enthusiasm to present their own findings. Such research enables students to formulate their own ideas based on their own findings. It helps them to develop critical thinking, as they are able to use facts to back up their own ideas.

Resource Persons

Entrepreneurship

In some instances, resource persons were invited to talk on pertinent topics. In one case, a guest presenter talked on the role of entrepreneurship in national development and employment creation, among others. After the presentation, students got the chance to engage the presenter in a discussion for further details and clarity on some of her points. Issues like self-reliance, business acumen and ethics, black empowerment, project planning, implementation and analysis and basic bookkeeping, among others, were discussed. Granted, because of the nature of the course, there was not much depth in the coverage, but at least students had an opportunity to get exposure to such pertinent issues that can go a long way in equipping them with economically-empowering skills. Such exposure enables students to venture into income generating projects to supplement their incomes, and not just rely on the pay packet at the end of the month. More importantly, after graduating, they are in a position to inculcate in their own learners such important life skills as self-reliance and the need to create employment and not always seek to be employed.

Role-Play

The Media

Role-play was another participatory method used to achieve as much student interaction as possible. This method works out well if students are tasked before hand to go and research on the topic in question. In this case, one student played the role of the Chairman of the Media and Information Commission while the rest of the students assumed the role of journalists from the various media stables in the country. The 'Chairman' was quizzed on the relevance of his commission and its role in the democratization process in the country. He was also specially asked to justify the banning of the 'The Daily News'. In fact, this issue raised a lot of debate with most students condemning what they felt were heavy handed and unjustified tactics by the government to suppress views unfavourable to it. Students had a lively debate on what they perceived as abuse of state media by the state in its quest to push across a narrow interpretation of Zimbabwe liberation war history-a 'see no evil, hear no evil and speak no evil' kind of journalism, journalism that eulogizes and immortalizes personalities.

Others, however, argued that 'The Daily News', like anybody else in the country, was obliged to follow the laws of the country. If they were unhappy with the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA), they simply had to challenge the constitutionality of that law in the Supreme Court instead of unilaterally defying it. If people and organizations were to selectively decide which laws to obey, it was reasoned, there would be anarchy in the country. All these were the students' own views and concerns, which they admirably brought out through the use of role-play, a method that also develops an important human quality, empathy.

Question and Answer Sessions and Discussion

Democracy and Human Rights

In some instances, the methodology employed helped justify the inclusion of NASS in tertiary institutions' curriculum. Experiences in teaching the topic, 'Democracy and Human Rights', shall be used as an example. The question and answer approach was employed to gauge students' levels of appreciation of such concepts that were topical in the country at the time. Students' responses to what they understood by the terms democracy and human rights were shockingly revealing. One student responded that

"democracy is the right to vote in elections" while another postulated that it was "one man one vote". Yet another described democracy as the existence of multiple political parties in a country. On the other hand, human rights were variously defined as "the right to a trial after committing a crime", "the right to do what one wants", "the right to speak one's mind" and the "the right to education and good health," and so on and so forth.

Thus, at best, students could only give examples of what democracy and human rights entail. And this was in 2004 when issues of human rights and democracy dominated debate in the country. It was inconceivable that these students, who were aspiring to be teachers, upon whom the future direction of national development rests, were ignorant of such fundamental, topical and contemporary concepts that have a lot to do with the critical issue of governance. The implications for the country's democratization process are not encouraging. There could, therefore, not have been a better reason to justify the inclusion of NASS in teacher training institutions.

At this stage, students were then exposed to various definitions propounded by different scholars and or organizations. For example, Nzongola-Ntalaja and Margaret Lee's (1997:12) sociological definition of democracy as;

> a continuous process of promoting equal access to fundamental human rights and civil liberties for all, ... a process through which people strive to expand these rights, together with the political space necessary for promoting and defending them effectively,

was used. This was buttressed by The Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe's (1992) definition that says democracy is about people's choices, their control and participation in the process of government, political, legal and social equality. It entails participation by the people in everything that affects them. The people elect their government and it is answerable to them. They are free to go about their everyday lives without fear, intimidation and harassment. And quite significantly, they are free to criticize their government and its leaders and make suggestions on their governance. In short, democracy cannot exist where there is no freedom since democracy is characterized by respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.

Through discussions, students began to realize that the concept of democracy is closely associated with the quest for freedom, a better social order and the notion of fundamental human rights. It thus became necessary to discuss the whole concept of human rights. Donnelly's (1982:

308) explanation that human rights are basic freedoms that everyone is entitled to by virtue of belonging to the human race was used as the staring point. These entitlements, as spelt out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (UDHR), are freedom of movement and residence, freedom of thought, conscience and religion, freedom of opinion and expression and freedom of assembly and association. Students realised that these freedoms are meant to secure the life and dignity of individuals, allowing them to participate fully in societal development to their fullest potential. It was agreed that it is perfectly in order to limit these rights because we cannot exercise our own rights in a manner that limits or interferes with the rights of others. Law, in the interest of national security, public safety and the freedoms of others, can thus restrict rights (Donnelly, 1982: 308-312).

In light of such definitions, students began to appreciate that the fundamental freedoms that guarantee democracy can only thrive in an environment where the rule of law is respected and upheld. This resulted in a whole debate about what the rule of law entails, the crafting and application of the law and therefore, the role of each of the three organs of the state and the separation of their powers. Again, Zimbabwe was used as a test case. Some students were of the view that the country failed to live up to the generally accepted parameters for measuring the existence of the rule of law in a country. The raid on the Supreme Court Building by war veterans in November 2000 after the court had ruled that land resettlement policy was unconstitutional was particularly cited as an example of lawlessness and interference with the judiciary. Students lamented what they felt were too much powers wielded by the Executive given the State President appoints no less than 20% of the Members of Parliament as non-constituency members, a situation Mair and Sithole (2002:12) describe as a move "from parliamentalism to presidentialism". The alleged selective application of the law by the police was cited by the students as an example of the government's lack of respect for the rule of law.

However, there were other students who felt the claim of human rights abuse in Zimbabwe was a cover used to disguise the real issue at stake, land dispossession of the whites. Their argument was that Zimbabwe was targeted for attack as a punitive measure for having authorized the forced seizure of predominately white-owned farms. In short, the accusation of human rights abuse was racially motivated. After all, they argued, the whole concept of human rights and democracy was being universalized from a western perspective. This class of students deplored what Bhebe and Ranger (2001: xvi) have cautioned against, the "globalization of human tights ...(that) will only be interpreted as renewed western cultural imperialism".

These students subscribed to such scholars as Zeleza (1997) and Shivja (1998) whose radical or materialist conceptualization of human rights (and democracy) rejects the universality of human rights and instead advocates for concepts of democracy and human rights that emanate from the people's past experiences and present needs.

As the discussion progressed, it emerged that a discourse on democracy cannot be complete without mention of economic democracy in which all the people have a reasonable share of national wealth and social services. In the wake of the harsh economic conditions that were already prevailing in the country at the time, it was not surprising that some students argued that their democratic right to economic well being was not being fulfilled. They felt the government's policies were at the root of their economic woes. However, others argued that the economic woes were a result of the 'illegal sanctions' imposed on the country by the Western world under the instigation of Britain and their local allies, the Movement for Democratic Change. This inevitably shifted the debate towards the question of whether the state of Zimbabwe was indeed under sanctions simply because some of its political leaders were subjected to travel bans by some Western countries. Some students argued that subjecting a country's leadership to any form of sanctions is tantamount to subjecting the whole country to sanctions. The argument was that, under sanctions, the leadership's ability to freely execute their duties is severely curtailed. But others countered that it is the duty of government to find ways of circumventing such challenges "like Smith did during UDI".

Other Methods

Examples of other engaging methods employed included the use of film and drama. Coppen and Lee (1970:39) have argued that films can stimulate the imagination while Brown, Lewis and Harcleroad (19983:233) add that motion pictures have the advantage of communicating directly to the mind and emotions through sight and hearing. The same goes for drama which has the added advantage of the direct participation of the students. Topics on AIDS, Entrepreneurship, Poverty Alleviation and the Land Question lend themselves quite easily to dramatization. Other highly complementary methods that can go a long way in achieving participatory learning include brainstorming and guided tours. The Internet should also be considered as another complementary method in interactive learning. It enhances research and exposes students to a whole plethora of sources of knowledge 'at the click of a button'. However, like all other sources of data, internet sources should also be analysed and scrutinized critically. As Branscomb (1998:1)

advises, students simply need to realise that researching on the internet is the same as using print or other sources. All collected information/data has to be analysed and synthesized and not treated as sacrosanct. All critical forms of treating and handling information have to be upheld.

Analysis and Discussion of Findings

Interactive Teaching Methods, Patriotic History and Academic Historiography

These interactive methods and many others teachers can choose from should be used to complement each other. A class presentation or even a tour should be followed by a discussion or debate, for instance. As the above discussion has shown, this interactive approach has the important effect of making the subject transcend the narrowness and myopia of patriotic history, a monolithic type of history that is very narrowly focused. The patriotic history discourse revolves around the theme that 'Zimbabwe shall never be a colony again' as propounded by the ruling party. The pursuit of this theme in turn centres on a celebration of the party's exploits in the liberation struggle, an attack on the Western powers and their alleged local stooges and a spirited justification of the land reform programme and its purported success.

This discourse thrives on the struggle to control the people's minds under the guise of preserving Zimbabwe's sovereignty. This happens through immortalizing the person of the state president. It creates a personality cult around him. As Mahoso puts it, "Mugabe is now every (*sic*) African who is opposed to the British and North American plunder and exploitation" ('The Sunday Mail', 16 March, 2003). Any criticism of the state president is deemed subversive, hence the furore that followed the launch of Tekere's autobiography, *A Lifetime of Struggle*, in January 2007. Tekere was vilified by the president's loyalists for making some seemingly unpalatable remarks about the president. In short, patriotic history has no place for any other interpretation of Zimbabwean history outside the official version.

It is this myopic interpretation of Zimbabwean history for political expediency that the interactive methods highlighted above seek to circumvent. The participatory methods in NASS allow students to adopt an analytical approach to issues. Critical thinking is fostered through research and subjecting views to debate and discussion. Ideas are formulated on the basis of facts rather than emotions. In the process of interactive learning,

essential life skills are also developed in the learners. The learners appreciate the importance of solving problems collectively and also agreeing to disagree when there are divergent views on given issues. During the discussions, even when students differed strongly, it was purely on matters of principle rather than personality. Perhaps most significantly, such differences are healthy as they allow for an exploration and analysis of all angles to a problem.

This places NASS squarely within the Africanist/nationalist academic historiographical discourse with its ability to question, analyse and broaden perspectives. This is important for educationists and academics since this approach to the teaching of NASS makes it transcend the narrow interpretation of history as merely "a body of knowledge" that is content based and only focuses on the student's ability to recall facts. Instead, it perfectly fits NASS in the conceptualization of history as "a form of knowledge" which is skills based and striving to develop thinking skills (Chitate, 2005: 239). These are qualities that can only benefit the country in its quest for national development.

Finally, this brief testimony by a pioneer student of NASS at Belvedere Technical Teacher's College (BTTC) sums up the importance of the subject and the interactive methods used in its teaching:

> *Now I am very conscious about institutions that help construct and transmit ideologies....For example, it heightened my consciousness in regards with the media. Now I am always critical about who writes what and why. Perhaps in the future I will add a paragraph to say look, NASS served as stimulus for these writings. Because I got a lot of insight on perspectives and their presenters...and am now conscious of the need for young Zimbabwean to study 'herstory' (history). I believe all this was possible because of the participatory nature of the sessions we had. Our lecturer managed to retain our interest through employing participatory methods such as focused group discussions, debates and role playing. All this broke the monotony of sessions. Sometime drama was even made use of. (Talent Jumo-Former student at BTTC).*

Conclusion

This study has shown that NASS, as taught in teacher training colleges, does not fit into the category of patriotic history. This is a narrowly focused monolithic type of history that revolves around a celebration of the ruling party's execution of the liberation war and the claimed successes of the land

redistribution exercise. This discourse has no place for 'other' interpretations of history as it is purely for political expediency. This makes patriotic history very similar in thrust to the Rhodesian settler historiography that was basically in the service of the colonialists in their quest to justify and entrench their dominant and exploitative position over the indigenous people.

Instead, NASS has managed to transcend the myopia of patriotic history through the use of interactive student-centred teaching methods that include role-play, question and answer sessions, class discussions and group work, among others. These methods, which are complementary, help foster critical thinking skills within learners, a reading and research culture and other important life skills, very important assets in the quest for national development. NASS, therefore, easily falls into the category of nationalist academic historiography, a discourse that has an analytical and broad perspective of issues.

Therefore, while patriotic history is "explicitly antagonistic to academic historiography" as it lacks the broadness, complexity and tolerance of alternative discourse (Ranger, 2004: 19), the hallmark of academic historiography, NASS should not be viewed with the same skepticism. Unlike patriotic history, NASS is a much broader and more complex subject tailored by academics to produce patriotic citizens guided by "a strong desire and motivation to serve their country" and not the self-serving interests of politicians (Nyakudya, 2007: 120). As this paper demonstrates, this noble objective can be achieved through the application of interactive teaching methods that place the learner at the centre of the learning process.

Notes

1. These terms have been adopted from the works of Lene Bull-Christiansen, (2004) *Tales of the Nation: Feminist Nationalism or Patriotic History? Defining National History and Identity in Zimbabwe*, Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet, Ranger, T. (2004) "Nationalist historiography, patriotic history and the history of the nation: The struggle for the past in Zimbabwe" in *Journal of Southern African Studies*, Vol. 30, Number 2, June and Bhebe, N., "The Golden Age of Zimbabwe's Historiography and its Decline from 1967 to the Present," Unpublished paper presented in Japan, June 2004.

2. See Raftopoulos, B., "Crisis in Zimbabwe" in Raftopoulos, B and Mlambo, A.S. (eds.) *Becoming Zimbabwe: A History from the Pre-colonial Period to 2008,* Harare, Weaver Press, 2009, pp. 201-02 for a nuanced discussion of the

circumstances that gave rise to this contest over "the history and meanings of nationalism and citizenship" and RangerT. (2004) "Nationalist historiography"for details on the emergence of Patriotic History.

3 See Mtisi, J., Nyakudya, M. and Barnes, T., "War in Rhodesia, 1965-1980" in Raftopoulos, B and Mlambo, A.S. (eds.) *Becoming Zimbabwe* for a discussion of the pluralistic nature of the Zimbabwe struggle for liberation.

4. See Greenberg, K. E. (1996) on the importance of empathy.

5.See, for instance, Kurebwa, J. (2000) "The Politics of Multilateral Economic Sanctions on Rhodesia during the Unilateral Declaration of Independence period, 1965-1979" (DPhil. Thesis, University of Zimbabwe and Strack, H. R. *Sanctions: The Case of Rhodesia,* Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press on 'sanctions busting' by the RF government.

REFRENCES

Newspapers

'The Sunday Mail', 16 March 2003.

Secondary Sources

Alexander, J. (1995) "Things Fall Apart, The Centre Can Hold: Processes of Post-War Political Change in Zimbabwe's Rural Areas" in Bhebe, N. and Ranger, T. (Eds) *Society in Zimbabwe' Liberation War,* Vol. 2, Harare, University of Zimbabwe Publications.

Alexander, J. and McGregor, J. (2001) "Elections, Land and the Politics of Opposition in Matebeleland," *Journal of Agrarian Change,* Vol. 1, No 4, October.

Bhebe, N. (2004) "The Golden Age of Zimbabwe's Historiography and its Decline from 1967 to the Present," Unpublished paper presented in Japan, June.

Bhebe, N. and Ranger T. (eds) (2001) *The Historical Dimension of Democracy and* Human Rights in Zimbabwe: Pre-colonial and Colonial Legacies, Vol One Harare, University of Zimbabwe Publications.

Branscomb, H. E. (1998) *Casting Your Net: A Student Guide to Research on*

the Internet, Boston, Allyn and Bacon.

Brown, W. J., Lewis, B. R. and Hacleroad, F. F. (1983) *AV Instruction: Technology,* Media and Methods, New York, McGraw-Hill Book Company.

Bull-Christiansen, L. (2004) *Tales of the Nation: Feminist Nationalism or Patriotic* History? Defining National History and Identity in Zimbabwe, Uppsala, Nordiska Afrikainstitutet.

Catholic Commission for Justice and Peace in Zimbabwe (1992) *The Fundamental Rights* Enshrined in The Constitution of Zimbabwe, Harare, CCJPZ.

Chitate, H. (2005) "Post-Independent Zimbabwe's New 'O' Level History Syllabus 2166: A Crisis of Expectations" in *Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 17, Number 3, November.

Coppen, H. and Lee, W. R. (1970) *Simple Audio Visual Aids to Foreign Language* Teaching, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Donnelly, J. (1982) "Human Rights and Human Dignity: An Analytical Critique of Non-Western Conceptions of Human Rights" in *The American Science Review*, Vol. 76, Number 2.

Godwin, P. and Hancock, J. (1993) *Rhodesians Never Die: The Impact of the War and* Political Change on White Rhodesia, c.1970-1980, Oxford, Oxford University Press.

Frederickse, J. (1982) *None But Ourselves: Masses versus Media in the Making of* Zimbabwe, Harare, Zimbabwe Publishing House.

Greenberg, K. E.(1996) "The Essential Art of Empathy" in Barbara Benton (ed), *Soldiers* for Peace: Fifty Years of United Nations Peacekeeping, New York, Facts on File.

Lindsay, N. and Dlamini, N. (1996) *Lifeskills in the Classroom*, Cape Town, Maskew and Miller Longman.

Mair, S. and Sithole, M. (2002) *Blocked Democracies in Africa: Case Study Zimbabwe*, Harare, Konrad-Adenauer-Stiftung.

Nyakudya, M. (2007) "The Rationale for National and Strategic Studies in Teacher Training Colleges: Fostering a Sense of Patriotism in Trainee Teachers" in *Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research*, Vol. 19, Number 2, July.

Nzongola-Ntalaja, G. And Lee, M. C. (eds) (1997) *The State and Democracy in Africa*, Harare, Africa World Press.

Ranger, T. (2004) "Nationalist historiography, patriotic history and the history of the nation: The struggle for the past in Zimbabwe" in *Journal of Southern African* Studies, Vol. 30, Number 2, June.

Shivji, I. (1998) *The Concept of Human Rights in Africa*, London, CODESRIA Book Series.

Zeleza, P.T., (1997) *Manufacturing African Studies and Crises*, Dakar, CODESRIA Book Series.

This work is licensed under a
Creative Commons
Attribution – NonCommercial - NoDerivs 3.0 License.

To view a copy of the license please see:
http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc-nd/3.0/

This is a download from the BLDS Digital Library on OpenDocs
http://opendocs.ids.ac.uk/opendocs/

Institute of Development Studies