EDUCATIONAL CHANGE AND CULTURAL POLITICS: NATIONAL IDENTITY- FORMATION IN ZIMBABWE

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Abstract

Educational change and cultural politics: national identity-formation in Zimbabwe

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The study investigates how the post-independent government of Zimbabwe, as seen through the lens of its cultural critics, used the institution of education as a focal point for nation-building and social transformation. The project examines how critics respond to the use of educational change as a way of political legitimization. Whilst a number of scholars have focused on post-colonial Zimbabwe during the post-1980 period, they did not have the chance to study it during the post-2000 era, which was a critical and dramatic historical juncture because of the turmoil and a reversal trend of the promises that were made at independence.

The qualitative research approach was formulated to collect data on education and language policy, politics and culture from a cross-section of people of the Zimbabwean society. Brief case study interviews were conducted to provide newer and richer details on Zimbabwean cultural landscape. The research design was structured to allow for the use of documentary and archival sources for the collection of qualitative and historical data, participant-observation, and for the use of the interview to solicit perspectives, viewpoints and perceptions.
The case study of Zimbabwe shows that an official historiography of national culture was imposed at independence through educational change as a way of political legitimization. The Zimbabwean education system is situated in the context of culture, knowledge and power. While the Zimbabwean official discourse on national culture includes claims to homogeneity, it also conflicts directly with the leadership elite’s maintenance of hierarchies of class. The elites actually need the heterogeneity they also deny. The postcolonial state is replicating the colonial state. English dominates as the media of instruction in schools and as the official language in Zimbabwe. The curriculum is itself part of what has been called a selective tradition. The curriculum is always the result of struggle and comprise. Zimbabwean artists, through music and literature are fighting for the creation of new political spaces and public spheres that fall outside traditional definitions of the government. Artistic expression expands discursive space and dialogue on national issues and gives us alternative stories and possibilities about Zimbabwean realities, cultures, and identities.

Approved

Stephen Howard
Professor of Educational Studies
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Figure 1 Map of Zimbabwe, Ohio University Library Documents Department
Figure 2: Map of Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe, adapted from Zinyama, Tevera and Cumming (1993)
CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Statement of the Problem

The problem of the study was to investigate how the post-independent government of Zimbabwe as seen through the lens of its cultural critics, used the institution of education as a focal point of nation-building and social transformation. The research attempts to understand the nature of the relationship among culture, education and politics in postcolonial Zimbabwe. The project examines how educational change was a point of departure for national identity-formation in Zimbabwe. At independence in 1980 the new Zimbabwean leadership attempted a grand project of using the educational system in creating a single and unitary Zimbabwean identity. Carnoy & Smoff, (1991) argue that there is a reciprocal relationship between education and social change in transitional societies. In such societies, education becomes a centre for social conflict and contestation among competing political interests. In this perspective, educational reform becomes a challenge and a threat to long-established social values and institutional interests.

According to Moyo, Makumbe, and Raftopolous (2000: xiii), “after Zimbabwean independence, there was the search for a common national identity for indigenous development policy frameworks and the perceived need to mobilize the Zimbabwean society” for the development of the new and emerging nation. The Zimbabwean leadership tried to construct an image of a national culture that is homogenous in a society that is made up of different linguistic, ethnic and racial groups. This was done through the one party state Marxist-Leninist ideology of “one people one nation”, that the liberation movement preached during the years of the war for national liberation in the
late 1960’s to late the 1970’s. The project also investigates how the creative arts have contributed to the process of national and social transformation in post-colonial Zimbabwe.

The idea of the nation, according to Bhabha (1990), is the epithet commonly used to express the ‘authenticity’ of cultural location. National identities are expected to arise from ceremonies and practices that draw citizens into the national sphere. Individuals acquire consciousness at the same time as they acquire the national language, an education and other cultural resources. The most significant proposals for change in post-independent Zimbabwe focused on the massification and nationalization of the educational system. The study attempts to explore the complicated ways in which the education (knowledge)-power (politics) nexus operates on the broad cultural/ideological struggles in the post-colonial Zimbabwean society.

At independence in Zimbabwe in 1980, Shona and Ndebele languages were made required subjects up to O-level in the respective regions where they are spoken. Soon after independence, students who had 5 O-level passes with Ndebele or Shona but without English were accepted for higher education colleges. English was no longer a requirement for entry into tertiary education. However, after one year in operation this policy was reversed. The main reason given by Zimbabwean educators was the falling standards of education. The indigenous languages of Zimbabwe, Shona and Ndebele, have become national languages in Zimbabwe but English is still the official language of the school, business and commerce. The idea of national identity ties with the idea of national languages. Language contains the philosophy and culture of a people; it also contains the discourse of oppression or liberation. Language carries the sense of the
oppressor or of one who is liberated. Thus the language question in Zimbabwe is examined as a contest between the English language and indigenous languages as media of instruction in Zimbabwean schools and how education connects with languages.

The dissertation research project thus investigates the forces or institutions that have maintained or resisted the dominant and hegemonic cultural environment in postcolonial Zimbabwe. The forces and institutions include: education (language and curriculum), literature, theatre, and music. The project analyzes how and why the present postcolonial cultural struggles for authority in Zimbabwean public life reconstruct personal and collective identities. In postcolonial Zimbabwe, the government controls the institutions which produce and legitimate culture- this includes education, media, arts, popular culture, and other agencies of cultural formation. According to Radcliffe and Westwood (1996:14), “in order for the nation to become hegemonic in the identities of subjects, elite/official versions of nationalism containing certain histories, images and representations must be shared across class or ethnic lines, in order for an imagined community to be created with shared self-awareness.”

In Zimbabwe, anti-colonial nationalism resulted in the replacement of a Western, colonial ruling class with a Western-educated, ‘indigenous’ ruling class who say they speak on behalf of the people but instead contribute to their people’s disempowerment. Representations of nationalist struggle tend to celebrate the inspirational activities of individual members of the elite and not recognize the role played by less privileged individuals or groups in resisting colonial rule. Historical particularly divisive criteria have been used as ways of manufacturing national consent and ‘unity’, criteria based upon ideas of ethnic, racial and geographical exclusivity. While this has rewarded some
people with trappings of power, others have found themselves restricted from positions of authority and condemned as second-class citizens. The study investigates how counter-narratives of music, theatre and literature have emerged to challenge the nationalized versions of Zimbabwean culture and histories that are widespread in the official education system. The research focuses on the extent to which creative artistic expression articulates an alternative narrative of Zimbabwean culture, as is the potential to mobilize the people to resist a single government definition of national culture.

Education was seen by the colonial government in Zimbabwe as a dangerous tool in the hands of Africans. The colonial system of education limited the amount, content, and quality of education that the local population could obtain to fit into the needs of the colonial administration. At independence the new government of Zimbabwe put a lot of effort on educational reform and innovation. It attempted to create a “Zimbabwean identity” by reforming the education system to meet local needs and the Zimbabwean cultural context. Schools and streets that bore colonial names have been changed and named after African “heroes”. External examinations were later banned, because, according to the authorities, they did not reflect a Zimbabwean context and identity. All these were been done in the name of national culture. Indigenous languages were made national languages but English still remains the official language. The study interrogated educationists, students, and artists (writers, musicians and playwrights) on the role of education and the arts in the process of national identity-formation in postcolonial Zimbabwe. In effect, today’s government of Zimbabwe sees education in a similar fashion as the colonial government, as the artists trained in that system constantly point
out in their novels, plays and music, the shortcomings of the post-independent Zimbabwean leadership’s definitions and limitations on what constitutes national culture.

The study examines how contending and contesting cultural forces respond and negotiate to the Zimbabwean government’s articulation of educational change as a focal point for national identity-formation. The research investigates a selected cross-section of Zimbabwean people’s everyday lives, their identities, their struggles, and how they conceptualize the role of cultural politics in their lives and contexts. Thus the contest of what it means to be Zimbabwean becomes a cultural politics. Cultural politics is not only about what counts as official knowledge but is also about the resources that are employed to challenge existing relations, to defend those counter-hegemonic forms that now exist, or to bring new forms into existence. In their continuous struggles against the dominant projects of nation building, development, and repression, people in post-colonial Zimbabwe have mobilized collectively on the grounds of very different sets of meanings and stakes against a dominant and oppressive system.

Definition of Terms

**Counter-narratives/counter-discourses/counter-stories:** Counter-narratives are stories, expressions or languages of critique, demystification, and agency capable of contesting dominant oppressive practices and ideologies.

**Culture:** Culture embodies the lived experiences and behaviors that are the result of the unequal distribution of power along such lines as race, gender, class ethnicity, age and sexual orientation (Leistyna & Woodrum: 1999: 3). Culture matters because it is the site where desire is mobilized, knowledge is formed, and identities are made and unmade. It also represents the terrain where alliances can be constructed among diverse cultural
workers who can unite in a movement for democracy, freedom, and the pursuit of
happiness, a movement that would transcend the untenable distinction between
economics and culture, and regard movements organized around distinct oppressions as
potential allies rather than competitors and antagonists (Giroux in Leistyna:1999: ix).
Culture is a political process because meanings are constitutive of processes that seek to
redefine social power. Jordan and Weedon (1995:8) posit that, “culture is a set of material
practices which constitute meanings, values and subjectivities”. In cultural studies,
culture is understood both as a way of life, encompassing ideas, attitudes, languages,
practices, institutions, and structures of structures of power, and a whole range of cultural
practices: artistic forms, texts, canons, architecture, mass-produced commodities and so

**Cultural politics:** Cultural politics are those actions that challenge or maintain dominant,
oppressive values in society. Jordan and Weedon (1995:5-6) state that the legitimation of
social relations of inequality, and the struggle to transform them, are central concerns of
cultural politics. They say that cultural politics fundamentally determine the meanings of
social practices and, moreover, which groups and individuals have the power to define
these meanings. It is Jordan and Weedon’s conviction that cultural politics are concerned
with subjectivity and identity, since culture plays a central role in constituting our sense
of ourselves. They further claim that the forms of subjectivity that people inhabit play a
crucial part in determining whether they accept or contest existing power relations.
Moreover, for marginalized and oppressed people or groups, the construction of new and
resistant identities is a key dimension of a wider political struggle to transform society.
Alvarez et al (1998:8) interpret cultural politics as the process enacted when sets of social
actors shaped by, and embodying, different cultural meanings and practices come into conflict with each other. This definition of cultural politics assumes that meanings and practices, particularly those theorized as marginal, oppositional, minority, residual, emergent, alternative, dissident, and the like, all of them conceived in relation to a given dominant cultural order, can be the source of processes that must be accepted as political. Barker (2000:382) says that cultural politics is concerned with issues of power in the acts of naming and representation which constitute our cultural maps of meaning”. Cultural politics is thus contestation over meanings and resources of culture.

**Discourse:** A discourse represents the ways in which reality is perceived through and shaped by historically and socially constructed ways of making sense, that is, language, complex signs, and practices that order and sustain particular ideologies, play a significant role in shaping human subjectivities and social reality, and can work to either confirm or deny the life histories and experiences of the people who use them. If the rules that govern what is acceptable in a particular society are exclusive, discourse can be a major site of contention in which different groups struggle over meaning and ideology.

**Dominant ideologies:** Dominant ideologies are bodies of ideas held by cultural groups that are politically, socially, and economically in positions of power and are therefore able to impose on the greater society, through various social institutions and practices, particular traditions, bodies of knowledge, discourse styles, languages uses, values, norms and beliefs, usually at the expense of others.

**Grand and master narratives:** These narratives represent any macro-theories that attempt to explain social reality in its entirety. They suppress differences into
homogenizing schemes. The modernist claims to universality and objective truth are some of the master narratives.

**Hegemony:** as derived from the work of Italian theorist Antonio Gramsci, is used to express how certain groups managed to dominate others. An analysis of hegemony is especially concerned with how the imposition of particular ideologies and forms of authority results in the reproduction of social and institutional practices through which dominant groups maintain not only their positions of privilege and control, but also the consensual support of other members of society.

**Identity:** Identity is a historical construct, and not biologically defined. Hall aptly predicates that “within us are contradictory identities, pulling in different directions, so that our identifications are continuously being shifted about. The fully unified, completed, secure, and coherent identity is seen as a fantasy. Hall states that as the systems of meanings and cultural representation multiply, we are confronted by a bewildering, fleeting multiplicity of possible identities.

**Post-colonialism:** Post-colonialism is both a historical marker and an aesthetic critical practice. The term post-colonialism is not the same as ‘after colonialism’, as if colonial values are no longer to be reckoned with. It does not define a radically new historical era, nor does it herald a brave new world where all the ills of the colonial past have been cured. Post-colonialism recognizes both historical continuity and change. On the one hand, it acknowledges that the material realities and modes of representation common to colonialism are still very much with us today, even if the political map of the world has changed through decolonization. But on the other hand post-colonialism asserts the
promise, the possibility, and the continuing necessity of change, while also recognizing that important challenges and changes have already been achieved.

Ashcroft, Griffiths, and Tiffin (1995:xv) argue that the concept post-colonial is best used to designate the “totality of practices, in all their rich diversity, which characterize the societies of the post-colonial world from the moment of colonization to the present day, since colonialism does not cease with the mere fact of political independence but continues in neo-colonial to be active in many societies”. Post-colonialism recognizes both historical continuity and change. On the one hand, it acknowledges that the material realities and modes of representation common to colonialism are still very much with us today, even if the political of the world has changed through ‘flag independence’. But on the other hand post-colonialism asserts the promise, the possibility, and the continuing necessity of change, while also recognizing that important challenges and changes have already been achieved.

Aschcroft (2001:19) says that there has rarely been a more hotly contested topic than the meaning, validity and applicability of the term ‘post-colonial’ in recent years. He argues that if we understand the post-colonial to mean the discourse of the colonized, rather than a discourse post-dating colonialism, then post-colonial analysis becomes that which examines the full range of responses to colonialism, from absolute complicity to violent rebellion and all variations in between. Ashcroft further sees any theory that analyses the post-colonial as a poetics and a politics of transformation. To him, transformation recognizes that power is a critical part of our cultural life, and resists by adapting and redirecting discursive power, creating new forms of cultural production, rather than simply to attempt to end oppressive institutional formations.
**Postmodernism:** Postmodernists are radically opposed to any homogenizing and constricting social paradigm, and reject a scientific basis for the study of culture and of possibilities of truth, certainty, and objectivity. They reject positivism’s claims to instrumental reason, one reality, one truth, and any theory that subsumes every aspect of social reality into one totalizing theory that goes unquestioned.

**Research Objectives and/or Purposes**

This project is an investigation of how the post-independent government of Zimbabwe used the institutions of education and culture in the process of national identity formation. This doctoral dissertation research was inspired by the problems that have affected postcolonial Zimbabwe, mainly the declining standards of education, the authoritarian political regime, identity crisis, lack of democracy and a decaying civil society. It tries to examine the elements or forces that have challenged or sustained the dominant political culture in Zimbabwe in the process of decolonization. The specific aims of this study are:

1) To examine the role of education reforms in identity-formation in post-independent Zimbabwean;

2) To explore the interplay of education, politics and culture in identity-formation and social transformation;

3) To investigate the role of the Zimbabwean creative artistic expression as a central aspect of the larger political, economic and social movement in post-independent Zimbabwe and an alternative to state sanctioned messages.
Research Questions

The approach used to conceptualize the research questions was informed by actual public discourses and struggles for culture and education in post-independent Zimbabwe and existing perspectives on the national cultural question. The research attempts to answer the following questions:

1. How has educational change helped in forming a national identity in post-independent Zimbabwe?

2. Why is English still the official language and medium of instruction in schools in post-independent Zimbabwe at the expense of indigenous languages?

3. As artists and critics on and of Zimbabwean culture, how is your work contributing to the development of an alternative national culture and identities in post-independent Zimbabwe?

Significance and Justification of the Study

According to Mahmoud Mamdanni, (1995) “Africa is a unity, but it is not homogenous”. The research avoids the danger of generalizing about education, cultural politics and national identity-formation in Africa by situating the study in a clear historical Zimbabwean context and paradigm. By focusing on postcolonial Zimbabwe, this study explores a particular and specific contemporary identity-formation site in transition. My theoretical framework is historical, multidimensional and interdisciplinary, drawing from politics, education, literature, and other disciplines. The question of identity is paramount in formerly colonized societies like Zimbabwe and it is the search
for a critical understanding of identity in Africa that links the colonial and post-colonial eras, their concerns and their projects. Zimbabwe is an emerging post-independent society in Africa in that it is one of the countries to gain independence at a later stage than many African countries. It thus provides a raw field of study on issues of identity, educational reform and cultural struggles. The study of educational reform provides an important lens through which to understand the politics of transition in post-independent Zimbabwe.

Post-colonial identity is a key feature of post-colonial and cultural studies. These studies stand at the intersection of debates about education reform in postcolonial societies, colonialism, gender, politics and language. Post-colonial discourse is significant because it reveals the extent to which the historical condition of colonization has led to a certain political, intellectual and creative dynamic in the post-colonial societies with which it engages. It is thus necessary for this research to investigate how educational reforms, in the context of politics and culture, have shaped the social and political identities in a volatile post-colonial Zimbabwean society. Whilst a number of scholars have focused on post-colonial Zimbabwe during the post-colonial period, their studies tended to be celebratory and congratulatory towards the attainment of independence. They also did not have the chance to study it during this critical historical juncture when there is civil unrest in Zimbabwe and when there is a reversal of the promises that were made at independence. This period is very critical for the future of Zimbabwe and it is appropriate that a research be done to see “when the rain began to beat us” especially when Zimbabwe was once being hailed as a ‘jewel’ of the African continent. This research was carried out when much of the water had passed under the
bridge, which enabled the researcher to examine the contradictions and complexities of the Zimbabwean transition which were glossed over by earlier researchers.

The study wants to draw attention to how creative artistic expression in post-independent Zimbabwe operate at the interface of culture and politics by exposing the perhaps less visible and less measurable, yet vital ways in which artists continue to contest culturally specific notions of politics. In underscoring how the Zimbabwean cultural struggles of counter-narratives over meanings and representations are deeply entangled with the government’s definition of culture, the study furthers the theoretical reflection on the political dimensions of culture. The concept of cultural politics is important for assessing the scope of the struggle of social actors like writers, musicians in post-colonial Zimbabwe for the democratization of society and for highlighting these submerged and often neglected implications of the popular creative art forms of music and creative texts. Cultural contestations are constitutive of the efforts of the Zimbabwe writers and musicians to redefine the meaning and limits of the political system itself.

This project seeks to move beyond static understandings of culture and the politics of identity by exploring and shedding new light on how the discourses and practices of counter-narratives and alternative stories might transform the dominant and exclusionary practices of the Zimbabwean government’s official historiography on culture. This research paves the way for understanding on a broad theoretical and practical basis, the trajectories of cultural politics and identity-formation in post-colonial transformations like Zimbabwe. With the political, economic and cultural dilemma that is in Zimbabwe at the moment, it is thus necessary to investigate how institutions and the
larger society have been responding to the vicissitudes of the current crisis-ridden postcolonial situation.

The results of this project are significant in the sense that there will add a fresh dimension of looking at how the education-culture-identity nexus influence the complex decolonization process in postcolonial societies undergoing change. In general the dissertation will make a contribution to the understanding of the politics of education, culture and identity not only in Zimbabwe but also in Southern Africa.

This research is not final but only fills a lacunae and contributes to the existing corpus of literature in the field of the humanities and social sciences and open up new areas of inquiry. The conceptualization and investigation of the cultural politics and national identity-formation in postcolonial Zimbabwe becomes an emerging and promising theoretical detour in that it combines multiple theories and different techniques without drawing discipline boundaries. It broadens the study by combining politics, education and culture in a single project.

The project addresses important issues of culture, education, arts, literary studies, and politics and how these disciplines help to shape the contemporary Zimbabwean society. Thus, the study sheds new light on the images, symbols of national identity, social and cultural landscapes, and boundaries of belonging in postcolonial Zimbabwe whose leadership is so particular about physical territorial boundaries and national sovereignty. An analysis of Zimbabwean national culture and institutions allows one to scrutinize the contradictions within official discourse on culture and to assess the gap that exists between the real urgency of preserving, valorizing, and reinvigorating collective spiritual heritage and identity. The moribund and critical state of the contemporary
Zimbabwean nation calls for a more subtle and nuanced historical analysis of the relationship among national politics, culture and education. The next chapter discusses the literature that is related to this study.
CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

*Literature on traditional education in Zimbabwe and Africa*

To understand the importance of education in Zimbabwe today, it is imperative to also understand the purpose of education in traditional society as it operated before the colonial period. In pre-colonial Zimbabwean society as in other Southern African societies of that period, the educational process began as soon as a child was considered able to understand the importance of functioning in his/her environment, both physical and social. Instruction was conducted in the belief that society would have experienced a transformation by the time the learner was ready to take his/her place in it. The educational process was adapted to changing conditions to make it more applicable and effective in meeting the needs of the learner and those of his/her society.

Traditional African education aimed at enabling a person to understand the bonded-ness of cosmic life and the primacy of affirming life, understand one’s place and role in the family and the community and gain various skills necessary to become a contributive member of the community (Tedla:1995:111). As a transmitter of skills and knowledge, indigenous African education aimed at teaching the various professions, technologies, sciences, art, music, and traditional laws and governance of Africa. It taught everyone the essentiality of the community for one’s survival and the formation of one’s identity as a person. Traditional African education strived to change one’s orientation from “I” centeredness to “We” centeredness, from individualism to communalism. Traditional education was intended to be a lifelong journey of preparation for communing and fusing with the whole of life, that is, community of life.
Though without schools as formal institutions, ‘traditional’ African societies had developed the means of creating and transmitting their cultures from one generation to the next. This is so because in order to survive, a society must have a way of creating useful citizens and preparing its youth for the lives they must lead in adult society by providing them with basic skills from one generation to the next. Educating the young was therefore necessary because:

The education of the youth of a community is part and parcel of the culture of the community; without education…no culture…and no community. When one talks of education, therefore, one is also inevitably talking of community culture and cultural communities (Ruperti in Nkomo:1990:19).

It is against this background that we must understand the concept, methods and practice of traditional African education. Traditions are the sum total of the beliefs, opinions, customs, cultural patterns and other ways of life that a society passes from generation to generation. In pre-colonial Africa, it was the duty of education to sort out worthwhile traditions and to transmit these traditions to the next generation. It is often wondered how traditional education performed this feat without schools as we know them today. In traditional society, skills, knowledge and attitudes were acquired and transmitted through non-formal institutions. These include parents, age-grades, secret societies, and so forth (Fafunwa:1974:19). Okonkwo (1985) maintains that traditional education in Africa was a cultural action directed at creating attitudes and habits considered necessary for participation and intervention in one’s historical process. He goes on to say that unity, love and togetherness were highly functional in traditional African societies. Indeed, African
children re taught from youth to recognize that they are members of an extended family system to which they owe loyalty, respect and affection.

In traditional African society, argues Moumouni (1968), while it was mandatory for the family, both immediate and extended, to educate its offspring in order to make them well adjusted members of society, education was the responsibility of the entire community. Hence, the African proverb “It takes a whole village to raise a child.” Thus, a child who was not well behaved was considered a disgrace to his/her family in the first instance and to his/her clan in the next, because the child bore the name of both the family and the clan. African education was not compartmentalized and was not cut off from the daily experiences of the learner, for in Africa school and life was the same. The idea that education is a preparation for life was contradictory to the African setting. It was life itself. Fafunwa maintains that the main guiding principle of African education was functionalism. Education was generally for an immediate induction into society:

African education emphasized social responsibility, job orientation, political participation and spiritual and moral values. Children learned by doing, that is to say, children and adolescents were engaged in participatory education through ceremonies, rituals, imitation, recitation and demonstration. They were involved in practical farming, fishing, weaving, cooking, carving, knitting, and so on. Recreational subjects included wrestling, dancing, drumming, acrobatic display, racing, etc., while intellectual training included the study of history, poetry, reasoning, riddles, proverbs, storytelling, story-relays. Education in Africa...combined physical training with character-
Traditional education emphasized endurance, courage and bravery as demonstrated during initiation into secret societies and during the traditional circumcision ceremonies. These rites of passage were intended to “make the young adults into fully-developed persons, capable of discharging their duties in society. Honesty was highly regarded. All parents wanted their children to be upright, honest, kind and helpful to others. They would have rather remained childless than to have children who will bring shame and dishonor to the family.

The structure of the educational system in traditional society in Africa suggests that it had relevance and application to human life far beyond itself because it was designed to train individuals to become capable of exercising social responsibility and to discharge duty in a much larger social order. Common educational experiences were considered important to uphold social institutional values. The only reason the colonial governments regarded this educational process as a product of a primitive culture is that they wanted to justify their colonial objectives.

The educational process in the Zimbabwean traditional society was quite complete and relevant to the needs of the students. Some members of the colonial government recognized the completeness and relevance of traditional education to society as a whole. F.G Loveridge, who was a senior education officer in colonial Zimbabwe with responsibility for the conduct of African education, observed that
the importance of education in traditional society in Africa was cultural in comparison with Western education. Loveridge said,

In his traditional society, the African was given all the education which he needed to function in his culture. Today, he has fallen away because Western education does not prepare him to function in Western culture. At the same time it does not prepare him to function in his own culture. Therefore, the African who goes to school in a Western cultural setting is placed in a socioeconomic limbo (Mungazi:1997:29).

Another misconception that Westerners had about education in traditional African society was their view that it lacked a defined curricular content. But an examination of what was learned would furnish clear evidence to prove that what was learned was comprehensive because it included components that were essential to seeking improvement in the conditions that controlled human life. Because the educational process entailed utilitarian purpose, it required the learners to demonstrate competencies in whatever they learned to do.

M.Gelfand, a British medical practitioner who lived most of his life in Zimbabwe and studied African culture, describes the comprehensive nature of education in traditional society in Zimbabwe as he saw it, saying,

The son watches his father make a circular hole in the ground and places in it some charcoal. Air is forced through a tunnel into the hole. The charcoal is lit with lighted sticks and embers to a high temperature. When the iron in the fire turns red, the father uses a source-shaped implement to grip the top. His son holds it firmly while he hits it with a hammer to fashion the molten iron into a desired object (Gelfand: 1975:45).
One can see that among other things, this form of education instilled in the learner a purpose that was essential to the sustenance of diverse components of society and individuality. In turn, this made diversity a critical element of human existence needed everywhere. The learning process helped transform the individual from being merely a person into being a finished product because the educational process was complete and comprehensive.

Since Africans had a tremendous respect for human life, learning to show respect for elders and children, to say prayers before a journey, to feed children or give them a bath, to celebrate the harvest, to clean the house, to fetch water from the village well, or to dig the ground all entailed the observance of religious principles and social values that had to be learned fully and acquired carefully. In a similar fashion, learning to embrace human qualities, such as integrity, honesty, truthfulness, was considered an essential component of the educational process. The educational system was being constantly reformed to make it relevant to the needs of the students and the transformation of society to ensure its development.

In 1974, an elderly African in Zimbabwe described the completeness of education in traditional society in Africa:

Before the coming of Europeans to our country, no aspect of our life, no boy or girl was ever neglected by our educational system because it was constantly being innovated to make it relevant to the needs of all students. Every person had an opportunity for education. Today, we are told that only so many can go to school. Why so many only and not all? Neither the
missionaries nor the colonial government succeeded in convincing us of the wisdom of accepting both Western education and Christianity. Do you fail to see the intent of the colonial government in the education of our children today? (Mungazi:1977:80).

Gelfand agrees with this view of the completeness of education in traditional African society and adds that the educational system covered all aspects of life, including law, religion, medicine, trade and commerce, agriculture, social ethics, language and music (Glefand:1985:217). They all formed essential components of the learning process so critical for success in life. The absence of formal education, as it is understood in the West, did not in any way diminish the quality of education. Gelfand explains why this is true:

There were no professional schools or teachers in the traditional society in Zimbabwe and Africa. But the child learned from various members of the family and community as he grew. He learned from his grandparents, parents, and members of the community. Yet, his entire education was as complete as it is in Western culture, whether it was agricultural pursuit or taking part in games (p.220).

Traditional African education was complete and was relevant to the needs of the individual and his or her society. In traditional African society education was an integral part of the social, economic and cultural fabric of society. Education connected the individual to the group and to the social environment in a kind of symbiotic relationship. K.A Busia claims that;
The essential goal of traditional education was admirable, and remains challenging. Traditional education sought to produce men and women who were not self-centered; who put interest of the group above their personal interest: whose hearts were warm towards the members of their family and kinsfolk; who dutifully fulfilled obligations hallowed and approved by tradition, out of reverence for the ancestors and gods, and the unknown universe of spirits and forces, and a sense of dependence that human life was the greatest value, and increase in the number of the members of the community the greatest blessing the gods and the spirits and supernatural powers could confer on the living (Busia:1964:17).

The ideal person in traditional African society was one who reached beyond him or herself, moved from individual self to a state of selflessness because in Africa the quality of one’s life was measured by his or her obligations to others. Traditional education in Africa emphasized, in no, unmistakable manner, values that were essential to the well-being of its society and the individuals in it. It provided access to all students and was an integral part of the entire social, economic, and cultural systems. Fafunwa (1974) argues that in Old Africa, the warrior, the hunter, the medicine man, the farmer, the nobleman, the man of character who combined and embraced features of knowledge in its comprehensive form with specific skills on a variety of which society benefited, was properly an educated person.

Traditional African education was community-oriented. There were no formal buildings or a specialized group of teachers who were removed from the productive activities of the society. Everyone was a producer and consumer, and the goal of the system was the full development of the individual into a useful and
considerate member of his/her society. The educational system was concrete and pragmatic. It was acquired through total involvement and active participation. A child learned about fishing while fishing with elders; and in the evenings he/she learned about the elements of geography, history, cultural science, morality, linguistics, and other subjects while listening to the folk stories and experiences of the elders. It was a comprehensive system of education that transmitted relevant skills, knowledge, values and attitudes for the development of the individual and his or her society.

*Colonial education in Zimbabwe*

An analysis of the contemporary Zimbabwean cultural situation renders a look at the literature that examines the colonial education system, because it is through the public education system that values and norms are disseminated. The history of formal education for Africans in Rhodesia is synonymous with the history of Christian missions' (Dorsey:1975: 39). Robert Moffat, of the London Missionary Society, opened the first school for Africans at Inyati in 1859. Although the first mission station was established as early as 1859 at Empandeni by the Jesuit Fathers and several others followed soon afterwards, missionaries only started making notable progress in both educational and evangelical work after the arrival of the European settlers in 1890 (Atkinson, 1972; Dorsey; 1975). Local traditional leaders resisted early missionary influence, including education, which posed a threat to their traditional institutions, beliefs and practices. This resulted in the rather sluggish start of educational development. This situation changed after the suppression of local resistance and the establishment of colonial rule and
political control. Thereafter, African interest in Western education increased, though slowly at first (Dorsey, 1975).

After the arrival of European settlers in 1890, missionaries found it easier to spread their influence among the indigenous people. Under the protection of colonial rule they could now reach communities that were previously inaccessible due to the hostility of local people who resisted the intrusion by missionaries into their traditional way of life. Also, the new exchange economy introduced by the settlers created an increasing demand for education among the Africans. Any hope for economic, social or political advance was possible only through the acquisition of formal European education.

As the demand for more education was increasing among Africans, the colonial government stepped in to control its provision and ensure that missionaries would not 'overeducate' them. The colonial administration did not want an educated African population that would challenge its hegemony and legitimacy. However, they could not prevent the missionaries from providing schools for the indigenous people. The 1937 Survey of African Education hinted that preventing the missionaries from providing education for Africans would not ultimately prevent the 'Natives' learning to read and write but would deprive the colonialists of a valuable means of controlling the education that the Africans were to receive (Nherera:2000). This line of thinking permeated education policies of successive administrators throughout the colonial period. White settlers needed a literate African labour force for their agricultural and industrial sectors. They also regarded missionary influence as a means of social control over the African population (Atkinson, 1972; Dorsey, 1975). The people who had been converted to
Christian faith and received some Western formal education were initially regarded by the settlers as more receptive to European influence and less hostile. The rise of African nationalism and the subsequent political confrontation by black leaders after the Second World War was to prove the opposite.

While supporting the need to provide some educational facilities for Africans, colonial administrators were critical of what they perceived as 'bookish education' which missionaries were providing. In their opinion, if Africans were to be educated at all, the education had to be of a practical nature related to agriculture and industry to fit them as labourers, but not to the extent where they could compete with Europeans (Atkinson, 1972; Dorsey, 1975). Zvobgo (1986) notes that 'power was given to the Chief Native Commissioner... to keep mission school activities within acceptable limits...' (16). As O'Callaghan and Austin (1977) observe, Africans were to be given an education, but not equal to that given to whites.

African education was designed to foster and maintain racial distinctions between blacks and whites. It was intended to prepare black people as a semi-skilled labor-force that would work under the supervision of the colonial settlers. Accordingly, industrial training in African schools was confined to an elementary knowledge of agriculture, carpentry and building. Industrial training in African schools was confined to an elementary knowledge of agriculture, carpentry and building. The 1911 Commission of Inquiry into Native Affairs urged the promotion of agricultural instruction, demonstration plots, and industrial training limited to handicrafts and those trades needed in the rural areas or to prepare Africans as assistants to European craftsmen. Parker (1960) observes
that the country wanted the African's labour, not his intelligence. According to Chidzero (1977) African education was designed to produce, or to lead, to semiskilled employment that would maintain the master-servant relationship with the whites.

The first government school to train Africans in village crafts was opened in 1920 at Domboshawa. Tjolotjo was established along similar lines the following year. These schools, Atkinson (1972) observes, were intended to prepare black children for community development through training in rural crafts. However, pupils in both schools preferred academic education. Africans realised that the colonial government wanted them to get an education that was inferior to that of Europeans. They noticed that Europeans emphasized academic education in their own schools and therefore wanted the same for their own children. This they believed would improve their socio-economic situation. The Director of Education wrote in 1913 that 'The African takes more kindly to literary than industrial training,' and complained, '... the advantages of combining industrial and literary training are not sufficiently appreciated by many superintendents of mission schools' (Parker, 1960, p. 74). Africans wanted an education that narrowed the apparent social gap that existed between them and Europeans and that enabled them to enjoy a standard of living that differed from their traditional way of life. They perceived academic and not industrial education as a means to this end. Industrial education was therefore resented and viewed with the suspicion that it was intended to assign an inferior status to the African (Atkinson, 1972; Dorsey, 1975). This notion was reinforced by the fact that the most 'lucrative' occupations in mission stations, commercial and government bureaucratic structures were 'white-collar' and required academic rather than industrial qualifications.
Despite continuous attempts by colonial administrators to emphasize practical work, the curriculum in African schools remained largely academic. It catered almost exclusively for the needs of a minute proportion of pupils who continued into higher education. Riddell (1980) remarks that the education system in Rhodesia was elitist, highly selective, economically wasteful, and was geared to the needs of the small modern sector economy which was incapable of providing enough jobs for the growing population. Consequently, while there were skill shortages in the country, most of the black school-leavers, even those with secondary school education, remained unemployed. The white minority population and white immigrants provided most of the skilled labor and were mostly trained outside the country. This encouraged the authorities to discriminate against and shun any efforts to develop a sound indigenous skill base (Government of Zimbabwe, 1983). Rhodesia developed a distinct 'dual' socio-economic character. Its small but technologically sophisticated urban sphere existed in contrast to the vast underdeveloped rural subsistence sector. The rural peasant society increasingly depended on the urban wage economy for survival. Education was therefore regarded as a means out of a peasant existence in the rural areas, where the chances of finding profitable employment were next to nothing. The employment situation further deteriorated by the closing years of the colonial era, with an escalating war, an economy hit by sanctions and a crippling oil crisis. Murphree et al (1975) observe that for those pupils who battled through the academic secondary school, over 80% of them remained unemployed and 45% of those who obtained jobs were underemployed. Paradoxically, academic education became essentially 'vocational' since it led to better employment opportunities. The formal employment sector preferred to recruit people with academic
rather than industrial or vocational education. This situation led to what is still largely believed to be a negative attitude of parents and pupils towards vocational education and blue-collar occupations. Their attitude was mainly influenced by the employment opportunities that existed for people who had followed different lines of education. The increasing disparities in earnings between urban and rural areas and also between white- and blue-collar occupations made people prefer academic rather than vocational education.

_Literature on postcolonial Zimbabwe and other related literature on postcolonial Africa_

A considerable number of scholars have studied the post-colonial Zimbabwean political, economic and socio-cultural contexts. A plethora of these studies have been mainly educational (Chung & Ngara 1985; Chung 1988; Chanakira, 1988; Atkinson, N 1982; 1988; Chikombah 1988; Chikombah and others 1988; Gwarinda: 1985; Moyana: 1989; Mungazi: 1997). Chung and Ngara (1985) examine the education system in post-independent Zimbabwe as a barometer for preaching and promoting the ideology of socialism. The socialist system as practiced in the Soviet Union then was seen as the vehicle for nation building and social reconstruction. Chung and Ngara work celebrates the coming of independence and the potential of the new government in transforming the education system and forging a new nation. Education with production was seen as a panacea for the decolonization process as people will become self-reliant and not rely on foreign aid or assistance. Most of the studies are on the transition period in terms of educational reforms but there is a missing link between cultural politics and identity-formation.
Vambe (2000) analyzes popular songs in composed in post-colonial Zimbabwe in Shona, Ndebele and English languages. He posits that although the popular songs occur within the context of celebrating independence, the government sought to control the extent to which the singer could define the meaning of independence. He further argues that the plurality of the singers’ responses, their refusal to conform to a single definition of the idea of independence, indicates what is distinctively popular in the songs. Vambe claims that the songs became popular in accordance with the mood of the period, that is, the struggle for national liberation in Zimbabwe in the 1970s. It was difficult after independence to remain confined to liberation songs, because of the global market.

Vambe aptly captures the mood of the singers and their songs; “in the early 1980s in Zimbabwe, what made African songs by African singers “popular” was the way the songs captured and celebrated the happy mood of independence”. The State however wanted to control what the singers should sing, especially in line with national reconstruction and consolidation of independence. This also helps to explain the proliferation of war novels after independence, which poured praise on the leadership and the freedom fighters for the role they played during the liberation struggle. The ordinary person is rarely mentioned in these novels. Vambe claims that some post-colonial songs portray Mugabe’s predominantly Shona-based ZANU PF government as a natural and indisputable heir to the Shona ancestral leaders of the past and encourage anti-pluralistic tendencies in political thinking in post-independent Zimbabwe. This encourages a monolithic vision of a new society in which the leaders have a common destiny with the masses, despite the sharp differences (Vambe:2000:77).
Vambe sees the history of postcolonial Zimbabwe as that “of a nation emerging from contradictory social processes of struggle”. He concludes that the ground upon which the voices of the male and female artists acquiesce, resist, accommodate, incorporate, and challenge the views of the state and those of the ordinary citizens in the country truly defines what is popular in the songs. In terms of methodology, Vambe’s analysis relies much on the songs (texts) and documentary reviews and does not interview the singers or the people who listen to the music to hear what they say about the songs and how the government was controlling or censoring the music, be it on air or in terms of sales. The etic-emic connection is missing in his study and tends to speak for the musicians from what he interprets from their songs.

Kwaramba (1997) examines Thomas Mapfumo’s chimurenga music during the colonial period and how the protest music helped in the liberation of the country from colonial rule. Her study looks at type of music that Mapfumo also composed at independence in celebrating the coming of independence. She says that the policies that were adopted by the new government of Zimbabwe at independence, namely socialism and reconciliation, had not been debated between the leadership and the people. They were rather imposed on the people. Therefore, there was need to make the majority and all other interested parties feel part of the policies, and hence the extensive use of "we" in political discourse. It sought to build consensus by appealing for co-operation from the people, by making them feel they were part of the ruling Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) government's policies which had been implemented without their initial consent.
Kwaramba argues that in the political discourse of the period the "we" spirit was further propagated through use of other friendly terms such as "Comrade" (a term used by socialists and Marxists). Loosely translated, it means companion and fellow member of the party. In political discourse it has strong connotations of power, where it is often used to refer to people at the same power level and sharing the same ideology and goals. It was used in this sense in the political discourse at independence as a title for everyone, thus blurring power distinctions between the party ZANU(PF), the government and "the people". This would create the impression that everyone was equal in terms of power, thus making the people believe that they were also part of the decision-making process, and that the policies the government had in fact imposed on them were therefore theirs as well. This would potentially manufacture consent. Kwaramba’s study however focuses much on the colonial period and says little about the post-independence period, which is the main focus of my project.

Nherera (2000) explores how globalisation has impacted on the demand and nature of qualifications and livelihoods in Zimbabwe. He argues that while economic globalization has had an effect on the labor market, particularly through economic reforms such as the Economic Structural Adjustment Programmes, colonial legacies continue to influence education and training in Zimbabwe. The article observes that although access to education has increased phenomenally since the attainment of political independence, this has not significantly solved unemployment and the reduction of poverty as new challenges have surfaced.

Nherera’s study comes to the conclusion that while globalization has created new opportunities through liberalized economic systems, it has mainly benefited industrialized
countries with more stable economies. For developing countries such as Zimbabwe, it has had a negative impact since it has led to retrenchments, weakening of the informal sector, increased consumer prices and a general decline in living standards.

Another recent study on post-colonial Zimbabwe is Turino’s *Nationalists, Cosmopolitans, and Popular Music in Zimbabwe* (2001). The study focuses on the evolution of contemporary Zimbabwean music and how Thomas Mapfumo, along with other Zimbabwean artists, burst onto the music scene in the 1980s with a unique style that combined electric guitar with indigenous Shona music and instruments. The development of this music from its roots in the early Rhodesian era to the present and the ways this and other styles articulated with Zimbabwean nationalism is the focus of Thomas Turino's study. Turino examines the emergence of cosmopolitan culture among the black middle class and how this gave rise to a variety of urban-popular styles modeled on influences ranging from the Mills Brothers to Elvis Presley. He also shows how cosmopolitanism gave rise to the nationalist movement itself, explaining the combination of "foreign" and indigenous elements that so often define nationalist art and cultural projects. As a study of its kind that looks at the role of music in African nationalism, Turino's work delves deeper than most books about popular music and challenges any scholar to think about the lives and struggles of the people behind the surface appeal of world music. Whilst the present study also looks at contemporary Zimbabwean music’s contribution to social change and transformation, it however focuses on the counter-aspect of music to official discourse on culture.

The advent of Zimbabwean national independence in 1980 ushered in far reaching reforms in education and training based on the development needs and goals of the new
dispensation, which included democratisation of, and expansion of the provision of education and training. Despite the efforts that had been done since independence, almost eighteen years, the Zimbabwean education system was deemed to be too examinations-oriented and not supplying the job market with trained personnel thus producing half-baked graduates. In January 1998 President R.G. Mugabe constituted a Commission of Inquiry into Education and Training in Zimbabwe to review the current education and training systems in relation to present and future needs of the country.

The terms of Reference of the Commission in general looked at the inherited system of education and training; the provision of education and training; organizational capacity and management; financing of the education and training systems and any other related issues the Commission deemed appropriate.

The report attempted to address and respond to specific terms of reference and highlights the challenges and opportunities that policy-makers, planners, educators, industrialists and other stake-holders face on the eve of the Third Millennium. The Commission noted that very important recommendations of the Report of the Southern Rhodesia Education Commission (1962) and the Committee of Inquiry into African Primary Education (1974) have not seen the light of day. If they had been implemented the Commission felt that the state of Education would have been better than it is now. This observation intuitively highlighted the fear of the Commission to Mugabe, that its recommendations also might not be implemented.

The Commission also noted that education and training vote took the largest proportion of the national budget. This was as it should be because education is a fundamental strategy to prepare Zimbabweans for socio-economic well being in the new
millennium and to be competitive in the global era dominated by information technology. The Commission among other recommendations made the following recommendations, which they believed required urgent attention from President Mugabe.

The Commission recommended a nine-year compulsory basic education (Junior School) cycle for all pupils in order to cultivate the habits, attitudes, interests skills and entrepreneurial opportunities which would prepare them to be good citizens and provide them with a good foundation for training in occupations of their own choice at Senior School I and beyond.

The Commission also recommended an outcomes based curriculum which is broad-based in terms of subject offerings and which focuses on learning areas, employment related skills and other essential skills to be developed across the curriculum.

In order to improve the post-basic education, the Commission recommended three interlinked Programmes: General (Academic), Commercial (Business) and VocTec (Vocational and Technical) whose certificate carries equal weight. These Programmes are taken at Senior School I and II. In the new dispensation, with core subjects and electives, students will, if they so wish, transfer from one programme to another. Underpinning all innovations is viable resource mobilisation (funds). The Commission, therefore, recommended various strategies whereby various stakeholders support the government in resource generation to finance education and training.

Finally, the Commission strongly recommended the establishment of a permanent body of experts outside the Ministry of Education to monitor and evaluate
implementation of the recommendations and to advise government of policy changes when necessary.

It remains to be seen whether the recommendations of the Commission will be implemented with the Ministry of Education focusing on trivial issues like all schools having the same uniform throughout the country. No mention is made about the underpayment of the teachers and lecturers in Zimbabwe. The Commission is silent on the issue of the politics of education and culture in trying to revamp the education system, which is at the core of this study. These conflicts and contradictions are a reality that needs to be acknowledged for any educational reform system.

Moyo, Makumbe and Raftopoulos (2000)’s study reviews the development of Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) in Zimbabwe since independence in 1980 in respect of their nature, activities, funding, governance structures and their efficiency as channels for promoting development and managing development assistance. The authors argue that an interesting feature of the development of civil society in Zimbabwe in the 1990s is the role played by NGOs in engaging the state in dialogue for change and development.

Moyo et al argue that the transition from a controlled to a liberalized economy in Zimbabwe in the early 1990s has effectively forced most NGOs to demand that government make certain policy changes and provide certain specific goods and services to some of the major victims of that change in ideology and the direction of economic development. The authors state that “stung by the criticism leveled against his government by several civil leaders”, Zimbabwe’s President Mugabe took a swipe at
NGOs, accusing them of being puppets of imperialist design used by foreign donors to further their interests. My research is interested in the role of education and the arts in shaping identities in postcolonial Zimbabwe. The trio’s work inspires my work in the sense that they look at another aspect of civil society, NGOs in making the government accountable to its people.

A more recent study by Stephen Chan, Robert Mugabe: A life of power and violence (2003) is an informed, insightful biography of Zimbabwe’s first, and only president, which tells of his fateful path from revolutionary patriot to ruthless dictator. A revolutionary hero who came to prominence as a guerrilla leader in the 1970s, Mugabe has been a key player in Southern Africa ever since. For when Rhodesia became Zimbabwe in 1980, Mugabe became the public face of a hopeful experiment in African independence - but the next twenty-two years would tell a different story.

In this evenhanded yet unsparing study, Stephen Chan explains and interprets a freedom fighter turned tyrant, an idealist whose triumph over the forces of racism and colonialism bore bitter fruit. As a chronicler of Mugabe’s career, Chan has superb credentials. A firsthand witness to Zimbabwe’s struggle for independence and an advisor to the new nation’s early post-independence government, he gives us a masterly portrait of Mugabe: his strengths and victories - and, increasingly, his tragic flaws and destructive failures.

Chan follows Mugabe from his days as a rebel through his electoral victory, his growing influence in African politics, and his unyielding opposition to apartheid. A teacher for twenty years before he took up arms, he led his country to the highest literacy rate in Africa, at 85 percent, and his avowed socialism promised greater equality of
wealth in a new, multiracial Zimbabwe. But a darker picture emerged early with the savage crushing of the Matabeleland uprising, the ruthless elimination of political opponents, and growing cronyism and corruption that betrayed Zimbabwe’s hopes and wrecked its economy. A disastrous intervention in the Congo War, catastrophic drought, and a raging AIDS epidemic have culminated in national crisis - and a beleaguered president determined to hang onto power at all costs in the face of growing unrest.

Chan’s tightly argued and rigorous narrative depicts a triumphant nationalist leader who degenerated into a petty despot consumed by hubris and self-righteousness and driven to such desperate measures as seizing white-owned farms, muzzling the press, and unleashing violence on his political opponents. It’s a true African tragedy, with a protagonist who came to personify all that he once reviled - at a cost to his country and his continent that will be reckoned for many years to come. Whilst this focuses much on the political side of the post-independent society it does not however dwell much into the mechanisms of educational reform and how counter-narratives developed as a result of the government’s failure to deliver pre- and post-independent promises, which form a central aspect of my project.

S. A Akindes (1996) examines the cultural politics of indigenous publishing in an African context, in Benin and Cote d’voire and how publishers are interested in works that have a market already, like publishing for the schools. He says that governments also control the content of the material to be published, and when it should be published. Books are not just structures of meaning but commodities that are sold on the market for profit. Akindes’ thesis focuses on the politics of the publishing industry in West Africa
whilst this study is interested in the relationship among education, culture and politics in postcolonial Zimbabwe.

Chinweizu, Onwuchekwa and Madubuike (1983) believe that Africa’s mission is to intensify its decolonization and pursue it into liberation. They say that the cultural task in hand is to end all foreign domination of African culture, to systematically destroy all encrustations of colonial and slave mentality, to clear the bushes and stake out new foundations for a liberated African modernity. To them, this is a process that must take place in all spheres of African life, in government, industry, family and social life, education, arts and entertainment. The troika sees the necessity of rooting out imperialist rot and planting fresh African seeds. They claim that their work is “unabashedly polemical and pedagogical”, and want to rescue African prose literature from a dominant and malicious Eurocentric criticism.

Chinweizu et al (1983:2) believe that African orature is important to the enterprise of decolonizing African literature, for the important reason that “it is the incontestable reservoir of values, sensibilities, aesthetics, and achievements of traditional African thought and imagination outside plastic arts”. African orature, thus, must serve as the ultimate foundation, guidepost, and point of departure for a modern liberated African literature. To them it is the root from which modern African literature must draw sustenance. They do not see African literature as an imitation of European writing, but as an autonomous entity separate and apart from all other literatures. It has its own traditions, models and norms. Its constituency is separate and radically different from that of the European or other literatures. Its historical and cultural imperatives impose upon it
concerns and constraints quite different, sometimes altogether antithetical to the European. These facts hold even for those portions of African literature which continue to be written in European languages. The task of decolonization cannot be carried out in a vacuum. It requires an atmosphere of active nationalist consciousness. It must be conducted within the guiding parameters set by those intellectuals who have upheld black consciousness through the centuries.

Chinweizu et al believe that their study helps to release African culture from the death-grip of the West and help “scotch the modernist infection”(6). African literature’s alleged imitation (appendage) of European literature is seen as a tendentious exercise, which, to them is a “libelous defamation” of African history and historiography. Whilst Chinweizu and others’ work inspires my study, they however do not focus on the issue of cultural politics and its role in the whole decolonization process. This study takes on a viewpoint that sees reality as multidimensional and part of what we seek to understand and having many faces and possibilities.

_Literature on language education and policies in postcolonial Zimbabwe and Africa_

Language education and choice in Zimbabwean schools is also one of the aspects of educational reform and cultural contestation. Language is often a central question in education and postcolonial studies. During colonization, colonizers usually imposed their language onto the peoples they colonized, forbidding them to speak their mother tongues. In some cases colonizers systematically prohibited indigenous languages. The decision about which language should be the medium of education in Zimbabwe is embedded in
issues of power relations. H. Chimhundu (1997:129) holds that Zimbabwe has no explicit or written language policy. He argues that the “official neglect of language issues in post-independence Zimbabwe is deliberate and can be explained in terms of elitist rulership and the fear of the unknown”. Chimhundu describes Zimbabwe as a country where English is the dominating language of business, administration, politics and media and African languages continue to be down-grades in the schools and vernacularized outside in the wider community (132). According to Webb and Kembo-Sure (2000:288), the role of language in education in Africa needs urgent attention, particularly with reference to policies concerning the languages of learning and teaching, the significant development of pupils’ linguistic skills through the study of their first languages, and the learning of English, French, and Portuguese.

Zimbabwe has 16 indigenous languages- two primary languages, Shona and Ndebele, spoken by 75% and 16% of the population respectively, and 14 minority languages. Minority here refers to number of speakers than of status (Hachipola:1996). In addition, English is the official language and the mother tongue of 1% of the population (Chimhundu:1993). There are also several Indian languages like Hindi spoken by the East Indian population as well as small pockets of European settlers who speak Hebrew, Greek, or Italian.

Chiwome and Thondhlana (1992) surveyed attitudes towards teaching Shona through the media of Shona and English in the late 1980s. They found that English continued to be used in the Shona classroom, particularly in teaching language use and appreciation. Nearly ten years later, in 1997, teachers and university lecturers revealed
that grammar at both O and A-level is still taught in English, and in the department of African languages and literature at the University of Zimbabwe, English is still used in some of the teaching and examinations (Roy-Campell:2001:163).

Ngugi Wa Thiongo (1986) puts language at the base of his arguments for a decolonization of Africa,

"[t]he choice of language and the use to which language is put is central to a people's definition of themselves in relation to their natural and social environment . . . by our continuing to write in foreign languages, paying homage to them, are we not on the cultural level continuing that neo-colonial slavish and cringing spirit?" (4, 26).

Ngugi clearly affirms the crucial relation that exists between language and consciousness. *Decolonising the Mind* (1986) offers a vigorous and sustained explanation of the importance of national languages and the production of national literatures in that language. To do otherwise, argues Ngugi, is to remain complicit in the colonizer’s view of the world. In his “African Languages and the Global Culture in the Twenty-First Century” (2000) Ngugi reiterates his earlier position regarding the non-use of African languages in school and as languages of industry and commerce. He says that:

Africa has been robbed of languages in a most literal and figurative sense so that even today, Africa is still defining itself in terms of Anglophone, Francophone, and Lusophone linguistic zones. In other words, what you see at the close of the twentieth century is that Europe’s virtual linguistic hegemony over Africa is nearly total. The colonization of the means of imagination by way of languages has meant, in a way, that Africa has been
alienated from one of the greatest productions of the human mind, that is, languages themselves. Their imprisonment is what I have called, the linguistic maximum security prisons of English, French and Portuguese. Africa was made speechless (156).

Ngugi is lamenting at the dominance of foreign and colonial languages over indigenous languages in African schools and everyday life of the people as what is happening in Zimbabwe. He further says that the talk of democracy and human rights in Africa is discussed in either English or French. The ordinary African person can only negotiate with power through an interpreter or through the process of interpretation, be it in the courts or marketplaces. The point is that the majority of Africans negotiate for their space through interpreters. They are being denied by both the colonial and post-colonial state their right to name their world.

Ngugi sees it as “ridiculous” in the world today as to hear about scholars in African history, literature, music, anthropology, politics, theory and so on who do not know a single word in an African language. He has not heard of a professor of French who does not know a word of French. To him there will be no Africa to talk of; Africa will be a linguistic extension of Europe. African languages should fight back; they should fight for their space in the world and change to where the people are the center in the area of language, literature, culture, and hopefully in the area of economy and the organization of political power.

Kwesi Prah (1995) says that African policy makers have been ‘indecisive and rudderless’ on the language policy issue: ‘language policies in African countries are
characterized by one or more of the following problems: avoidance, vagueness, arbitrariness, fluctuation and declaration without implementation’ (6). He further attacks the middle class as ‘an elite which though dependent is unconvinced about the relevance of indigenous culture to social progress and which is heavily committed to Westernization in a fairly indiscriminate fashion. The interests of the elites in Africa seem to coincide with the economic interests of the former colonial powers. The right to learn through an indigenous language seems to be undermined both by the elites in African countries and by economic interest groups within the Western powers. There are Western interests like the publishing industry which profit directly from the continued use or reintroduction of the colonial languages in the schools in Africa. There is probably no strategy that could better decolonize the mind than restoring the African languages to their dignity, having them used as languages of instruction in school.

Alamin Mazrui (1997) asserts that the prospects of a genuine intellectual revolution in Africa may depend in no small measure on a genuine educational revolution that involves, at the same time, a widespread use of African languages as languages of instruction. Yet in many African countries the majority language is now treated as a minority. The Asmara Declaration of February 2000 underscores that “the vitality and equality of African languages must be recognized as a basis for the future empowerment of African peoples and that African languages are essential for the decolonization of African minds and for the African Renaissance, among other important aspects of using African languages in all spheres of life. The Declaration further urges that “democracy is essential for the equal development of African languages and African languages are vital for the development of democracy based on equality and social justice.
Tove Skutnabb-Kangas in her voluminous work *Linguistic Genocide in Education or Worldwide Diversity* (2000) strongly claims that one of the basic linguistic human rights of persons belonging to minorities is to achieve high levels of bi-multilingualism through education. She contends that education participates in committing linguistic genocide by depriving the linguistic majority of the possibility of gaining the benefits associated with high levels of multilingualism. By sidelining other languages as media of instruction, Kangas views this as linguistic genocide. She says that linguistic human rights should be seen together with other human rights, be they economic or political. Indigenous and minority children should enjoy the same linguistic and educational human rights that most linguistic majority children enjoy. Today’s educational models with calls for globalization and Otherness fail to support the diversity that is necessary for having bilingual or multilingual environments in schools. The medium of education is one, if not the most, decisive factor in the multilingualism and the school environment of the children of dominated groups. Kangas believes that all languages can be learnt alongside English and sees the notion that if other languages are used much, standards of English will fall, as a fallacy of the highest order and a misrepresentation.

The idea of one nation one language bringing unity has been proved wrong for there are a number of cases whereby one language is spoken but conflicts arise as the is the case of Somalia. Advocating one language in school or in communication over others is a way of dominating the other groups without using physical force. Gramsci calls it cultural hegemony, which is decisive in the non-
coercive maintenance of any sociopolitical system (Williams:1977:108, Kecht:1992:7). One nation, one language, one party is a way of excluding other people who have the potential to develop the country but are not conversant in the dominant language. Minority rights are part of a democratic system. Brock-Utne argues that in many development programs especially in Africa, the role of language is seldom considered. The problem of the Zimbabwean child is a linguistic one, because instruction is given in a foreign language. In Africa, where more than 85% of the people speak African languages, it is surprising that foreign languages are seen as the best suited to teach its children (Bamgbose 2000). Even institutions like the World Bank have aided in the linguistic genocide of African languages because it supports the use of these in early primary school as a strategy for a smoother transition to the European languages as languages of instruction. Most textbooks donated by these institutions are written in European languages.

Kangas recommends more than one language as a medium of instruction and suggests the following:

More than one language is necessary for greater mobility and employment opportunity within a country;

Innovativeness and creative expression of a plural society demands cultivated use of more than one language;

Combating illiteracy, which is one of the major national objectives, cannot be possible without using many languages;
Many languages provide many ways for perceiving the same reality;

Knowledge of more than one language encourages respect for other’s point of view and is conducive to national integration;

More than one language provides greater participation of greater number of people in the democratic process;

More than one language is necessary to be recognized for protecting minority languages and cultures.

Ngugi’s *Moving the Centre The Struggle for Cultural Freedoms* (1993) argues emphatically for recentering ourselves as Africans, Indians, Peoples of Color, and even White people, away from a purely Eurocentric orientation and towards a multiplicity of centers. "Moving the center," he reasons, is a two-fold process:

one is ... to move the centre from its assumed location in the West to a multiplicity of spheres in all the cultures of the world ... the second sense is even more important ... within nearly all nations today the centre is located in the dominant social stratum, a male bourgeois minority ... hence we need to move the centre from all minority class establishments within nations to the real creative centres among the working people in conditions of gender, racial and religious equality.(2)

Ngugi further argues that Eurocentrism is not only particular to language, literature, and cultural studies--although he feels it is particularly manifest in these areas--but in all political, economic, and other spheres. This is so widespread and ingrained that, as he laments, "the irony is that even that which is genuinely universal in the West is imprisoned by Eurocentrism."(3).
Ngugi’s *Penpoints, Gunpoints, and Dreams: Towards a critical theory of the arts and the state in Africa* (1998) explores the relationship between art and political power in society, taking as its starting point the experience of writers in contemporary Africa, where they are often seen as the enemy of the postcolonial state. This study raises the wider issues of the relationship between the state of art and the art of the state, particularly in their struggle for the control of performance space in territorial, temporal, social, and even psychic contexts. Ngugi calls for the alliance of art and people power, freedom and dignity against the encroachments of modern states. Art, he argues, needs to be active, engaged, insistent on being what it has always been, the embodiment of dreams for a truly human world. Ngugi counterposes the creative power of art against the absolutist state. The state, fearing for its stability, will even go so far as to persecute and imprison its artists. Ngugi unequivocally shows his commitment towards African languages and literature. He argues that a new world order demands at least that the center from which we look at the world be moved away from its current location in a group of European languages, and recognition in theory and practice that there are other linguistic centers. The questions of language and literature are central to both Afrocentricity and Ngugi's readjustment of the center and the critical role of the arts that has relevance for the Zimbabwean educational, cultural and language policies.

*Other related literature on the politics of education*

Although not specifically on Zimbabwe, Paulo Freire’s perspectives and studies on educational pedagogy have also inspired this research project. Taking it from his Latin American context and experience, Paulo Freire, in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970)
and *The Politics of Education* (1985) sees learning as a political act and has seen people struggling for learning and learning from struggles from almost all places of the world. Freire says that politics is about power, it is about taking sides, and making decisions which often favor one’s constituent, class, or group. Freire saw powerless people being excluded from and made invisible in mainstream educational histories. Dominant groups in society create situations, where, even if there are compromises and accords to include the less powerful, they are ones who benefit from such concessions. To Freire, viewing education as a neutral entity is a contradiction in terms;

First, education is a political act, whether at the university, high school, primary school, or adult literacy classroom. Why? Because the very nature of education has the inherent qualities to be political, as indeed politics has educational aspects. In other words, an educational act has a political nature and a political act has an educational nature. If this is generally so, it would be incorrect to say that Latin American education alone has a political nature. Education worldwide is political by nature (Freire in Segarra & Dobles:1999: iv).

Freire’s argument is that education and politics feed on each other. The way the curriculum is designed is political in the sense that certain material is selected that has to be taught to preserve the values and interests of certain groups. John Fiske says that “knowledge is never neutral, it never exists in an empiricist, objective relationship to the real. Knowledge is power, and the circulation of knowledge is part of the social distribution of power” (Apple: 2000:42).

Michael Apple’s works inspired my research project, especially his analysis of the politics of education and the curriculum. Apple (2000) argues that the means and ends involved in educational policy and practice are the results of struggles by powerful groups and social movements to make their knowledge legitimate, to defend or increase
their patterns of social mobility, and to increase their power in the larger social arena. Apple further argues that ‘it is naïve to think of the school curriculum as neutral knowledge’ and questions the selection of textbooks that are to be taught. Textbooks according to Apple signify through their content and form, particular constructions of reality, particular ways of selecting and organizing that vast universe of possible knowledge. As part of a curriculum, textbooks participate in no less than the organized knowledge system of society. They participate in creating what a society has recognized as legitimate and truthful. They help set the canons of truthfulness and help recreate a major reference point for what knowledge, culture, belief, and morality are (Apple:2000:46). The process of making something ‘official knowledge’ is political in itself. What counts as legitimate knowledge is a result of power struggles along class, race, gender and religious lines.

Michael Foucault in his “Discourse on Language” says that education may be the instrument whereby every individual in a society can gain access to any kind of discourse. He warns that, in its distribution, education, in what it permits and in what it prevents, it follows the well-trodden battle-lines of social conflict. To him every educational system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and the powers that carries it (Kecht: 1992:1). Educational policies and practices were and are the result of struggles and compromises over what would count as legitimate knowledge, pedagogy, goals and criteria for determining effectiveness. The most powerful economic and political groups in the US and similar nations have made it abundantly clear that for them, a good education is only one that is directly tied to economic needs (Apple:1996:5). School curriculum frequently
becomes the arena for public discussion and debate of national, social, political and even economic issues. Public schooling was established for nation building and maintenance purposes; to prepare citizens and obtain their loyalty; to provide knowledge that will enable students to participate productively in the economy and confer credentials and allocate young people to different positions in society (Cornbleth:2000:8).

George S. Counts is an American educational theorist best known for his educational philosophy of social reconstructionism which he propounded in the late 1920s and early 1930s. Counts’s educational philosophy of reconstructionism was based on his views of history and national character. The philosophy makes no sense at all apart from these views, for Counts believed that educational practice essentially reflected the society of which it was a part. He stated emphatically that education is always an expression of a particular society and culture at a particular time in history, unless it is imposed by force from without. Counts’s analysis of American society produced both a theory of social change and an educational philosophy designed to meet the needs of American democracy in a technological era. His approach to theory was basically relativistic in that education was a function of a particular civilization at a particular historical period.

Counts’s educational philosophy was based on his interpretation of social change and on the interpretations of American historians and social scientists. To him, education was conditioned by the needs of individual societies. American education and American schools were part of a unique civilization that had its own problems, potentialities, and resources. For Counts, political, social, cultural, and economic institutions, processes and
problems determined the course of American education. The democratic tradition of the United States was to be reflected in its educational philosophy. Since human history was the record of changing social, political, and economic relationships, educational policies also varied within a given historical period.

Rejecting any universal concept of education, Counts viewed it from the orientation of a culturally based pragmatist. In *Dare the School Build a New Social Order?* (1932), he said that those who conceived of education as eternal truths or in universal terms isolated schooling from political, social, and economic realities. Rather than being confined to a devitalizing set of abstractions that were remote from life, education should respond to changing human needs, problems and purposes. Again, American education needed a program that responded both to its democratic tradition and also to the emergent reality of an industrialized, technological, and mass society (Counts: 1938:357).

In *The Principles of Education* (1924), Counts argued that every age needed its own restatement of educational philosophy. Rapidity of social change, advance of human thought, and changing conceptions of human psychology rendered any final formulation educational philosophy impossible. As society changed, educational aims, values, and purposes evolved; educational objectives and methods required reconstruction to meet the needs of changing times. Occupying a strategic location, education was at the very heart of the process of cultural reconstruction. To cope with the myriad problems of cultural transition, Counts urged the formulation of an educational philosophy adequate to social demands. Reflecting great historic choices, the formulation of an educational philosophy
would embrace analysis, selection, and synthesis. It involved making choices among possibilities, the selection and affirmation of values, and the framing of policies. These decisions were conditioned by the requirements of time and situation. Education could not occur in a transcendental vacuum that was devoid of historical and social reality.

In the past, Counts argued, educators had neglected social and cultural problems and had confined their activities to superficial and mechanical solutions. They had failed to deal with the central task of educational theory—the problem of relating education to American civilization. In restating the task, Counts argued that a great conception of education could proceed only from a bold and creative confrontation with the traditions, conditions, and potentialities of civilization. Counts urged educators to reconstruct a concept of American civilization and to formulate a philosophy of education that would help to build a society that enriched the lives of the common people by affirming the democratic impulse. For him, the central task of American educators was to apply the ideas, values, and processes of democracy to a technological society.

Counts regarded education as an important instrument of social and political philosophy. Profound social change had occurred as the United States moved from the old, agrarian, rural neighborhood into a society that was highly complex, industrialized, scientific, and technological. While rapid change was most evident in the material dimension, social, moral, political, economic, religious, and aesthetic patterns were also being transformed. The crisis of American civilization, according to Counts, was produced by the society’s unpreparedness to deal with and direct the processes of social change. He said that American educators had failed to equip the nation’s citizens with the
outlook and methodologies needed to solve the problems of social change. Severe social crisis and disintegration occurred because of man’s inability to reconstruct his environment rationally and efficiently. For Counts, a cultural lag had developed as human practical inventiveness surpassed social organization and ethical consciousness. He believed that the crucial educational task was that of formulating a philosophy of education that would face the problems of social change and that would contribute to the reconstruction of ideas, beliefs, and values in light of an emergent technological society. In The Social Foundations of Education (1934), Counts expressed his relativistic orientation when he argued that education was always a function of time, place, and circumstances. The creation of a comprehensive philosophy of education encompassed the entire range of human activities. Economics, politics, international relations, aesthetics, recreation, literature, family life, and the mass media all had to be considered in formulating an educational philosophy. An educator who integrated all of the above elements of American life into his/her policies would truly be an educational statesman. Counts reserved this term for that minority of educators willing to recast educational goals in line with the civilization’s changing demands. The educational statesman Counts envisioned would assume responsibility for formulating educational goals and policies rather than acceding to the dictates of powerful special-interest groups. Counts dismissed in advance any philosophy of education that would disregard the influence of the democratic ethic and modern technology.

Although Counts believed that the school had been a potent force in shaping American culture, Counts did not exaggerate the school’s power. He felt that Americans had tended to overemphasize the power of organized education and often regarded the
school as being capable of solving all problems. Some educators erroneously thought that
the school was an omniscient agency capable of reconstructing society without the
intervention of social institutions. By neglecting the educative role of other social
institutions such as the family, the media, and the community, these educators had
isolated the school from its cultural context. An educational philosophy that was based
solely on events that occurred within the school was doomed to be vitalized and
unrealistic in its programs (Counts:1930:18). For Counts, the school was not an isolated
agency but instead part of a complicated web of institutions. Educators, if they were to
lead society rather than follow the dominant interest groups, needed to base their
educational programs on knowledge of social and technological change. In other words,
Counts argued for a philosophy of education that was committed to preserving and
extending the democratic ethic in a society that was technological in character. Counts’s
educational philosophy has relevance for educational systems and reforms in Africa, in
that most of them follow or replicate Western models which do not suit their cultural
context. Children are taught unfamiliar subjects and concepts that are distanced from
their immediate environments. Regrettably post-independence Zimbabwean and African
education systems have continued the colonial legacy of entrenching the tenets of the
very system that they were against. This is overt in the curricula content, the textbooks
used and the primacy of colonial languages as media of instruction in schools. Chapter
three analyzes the research methodology used, the analysis of the data and the
researcher’s fieldwork experience in Zimbabwe.
CHAPTER 3: RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research methodology, experience and my philosophy of research

Chapter three presents the methodological framework, the researcher’s philosophy and experience during fieldwork in Zimbabwe. The methodology is based upon an examination of how education, culture and politics interact to shape the structures and processes of struggles for nation-building and cultural rebirth in post-independent Zimbabwe. It entails understanding how culture and education are valued politically, socially, economically and academically in public policy making in terms of their relative use among the actors. The chapter also narrates the researcher’s selection of participants, the art and politics of interpretation, the experiences and itineraries during fieldwork in Zimbabwe. The researcher’s personal and professional background forms part of this chapter as the researcher has his philosophical orientations and underpinnings, worldviews, sensibilities and theoretical interests which help to shape the collection and interpretation of the data.

The Insider Researcher’s Philosophical and Theoretical Biases

I do not pretend or intend to offer an objective or even agreed perspective to the understanding of the politics of education and culture in postcolonial Zimbabwe. I had envisaged a study that would draw upon the views, perceptions of those people who were intimately involved in the education and culture industries in Zimbabwe. The status of an inside researcher researching one’s own community concerns the issues of bias, impartiality and the treatment of familiar things to become strange. The outside researcher tries to make the strange familiar.
My strength as an insider researcher lied in the critical perspective that the situation afforded me, one that was inseparably linked to my cultural location as a participant-observer, and entrée into my own locale was easier as compared to that of an outsider. There could of course be some elements of subjectivity in my observation as an insider, because no social activity is completely value-free. Our cultural biases as researchers and the pre-occupations of our time and place are extended into our observations as so much prejudice. As an insider researcher I was familiar with the meanings attached to words, acts and symbols of the researched community and the local language used and its accompanying euphemisms. This familiarity with the contemporary Zimbabwean situation made me more sensitive to the research participants’ perspectives. Mazrui (2002: 7) argues that “in order to understand fully some aspects of a society, it is not good enough simply to observe it; you have to be a member of it”. On the other hand, all researchers are in a sense, outsiders, since they have an agenda that is over and above any participation, which they have in the activities that are the subject of their research. The temporary outsider status of the insider-researcher would need to be recognized and accepted by the research subjects, if the activity is not to be compromised.

The point of my research was to be aware as to how the process of research and writing could well reshape the questions I asked and also reshape my most intimate projections about the relationship among education, culture and politics in post-independent Zimbabwe. Different value orientations will produce different research questions. One’s interest in a research topic or area may be influenced by a commitment to a particular cause. As a person who was born and grew up in Zimbabwe, I have my own conceptualization of the interchange of politics, culture and education in Zimbabwe
since independence in 1980. As a US-based Zimbabwean I have an agenda of seeing a culturally tolerant and diverse Zimbabwe. I have been following the decolonization process in Zimbabwe closely, and as an observer and participant in the process, I have my own worldviews about the Zimbabwean transition.

As a student at the University of Zimbabwe in the early 1990’s, I was involved in student demonstrations, boycotts and defiance campaigns against the government’s intolerance of alternative ideas and police brutality on demonstrators. I have an academic background in African literatures and languages. I did my undergraduate work on novels and literatures that depicted the liberation struggle in Zimbabwe. As a lecturer at the University of Zimbabwe, I taught literature that examined Zimbabwe’s transition from colonialism to independence to the post-independent era. I also studied the role played by Zimbabwean music in the liberation of the country from colonial rule. I have studied both African and Western theories of literature and criticism. I am a protégé of Paulo Freire whose works call for a continuous revolution and the need for a critical awareness. Freire has recognized that research has a lot to do with power and would not work with oppressive governments. He believes that research has the potential to empower people if it gives them the benefit of knowledge that will enable them to control their destinies. On the other hand, research has also the capacity for disempowerment if it ignores the subjects of research’s knowledge. I am against the school of thought which institutionalize change, a problem most African governments found themselves after gaining independence. Independence was seen as a journey that ends and not a destination which will never be reached.
According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998:23) ‘every researcher speaks within a distinctive interpretive community, which configures, in its special way, the multicultural, gendered components of the research acts’. They further argue that biographically-situated researchers enter the research process from inside an interpretive community that incorporates its own historical traditions into a distinct point of view. The levels of research activity, or practice, work their way through the biography of the researcher. Greene in Denzin and Lincoln (1998:381) claims that there is no place or time outside the observer from which he or she can objectively view and judge the validity of knowledge claims. All observations are imbued with the historical, theoretical, and value predispositions of the observer.

Critical research can be best understood in the context of the empowerment of individuals and groups. Inquiry in critical research is an attempt to confront the injustices of a particular society or sphere within the society. Research thus becomes a transformative endeavor unembarrassed by the label “political” and unafraid to consummate a relationship with an emancipatory consciousness. Whereas traditional researchers cling to the guard rail of neutrality, critical researchers frequently announce their partisanship in the struggle for a better world. Kincheloe and Mclaren (1998:265) believe that research in the critical tradition takes the form of self-conscious criticism, self-conscious in the sense that researchers try to become aware of ideological imperatives and epistemological presuppositions that inform their research as well as their own subjective, inter-subjective, and normative reference claims. Interpretation is political and subjective. Chabal in Werbner and Ranger (1996:50), making reference to the difficult issue of the relationship between analysis of reality and its enunciation says
that, “what we see, or what we think we see, is not objectively identifiable but depends in part on how we apprehend and enunciate it”. Thus critical researchers enter into an investigation with their assumptions on the table, so no one is confused concerning the epistemological and political baggage they bring with them to the research site.

Burton (2000:1) posits that;

Philosophical assumptions on human nature and how society is conceptualized are directly related to issues about social research, whether that be the nature and status of data that is collected and the validity of the methods by which data is analyzed, interpreted and understood. There is no way a researcher can present information that is free of theoretical and cultural baggage.

Most research is political, value-laden and researchers take sides in research. Objective reality can never be captured. There are no objective observations in research, only observations socially situated in the world of the observer and the observed. According to Denzin and Lincoln (1998:23), subjects or individuals in the research process, are seldom able to give full explanations of their actions or intentions, all they can offer are accounts, or stories, about what they did and why. They say that because of the ethical and political considerations of the research process, the era of value-free and neutral inquiry for the human disciplines is over, and researchers now struggle to develop situational and trans-situational ethics that apply to any given research act. The process of interpretation, according to Habermas (1990), is inevitably tied to the horizons or value judgments of the interpreter. Bocock in Hall et al (2000:181) says that in accordance with the critical theory of the Frankfurt School of thought of the 1930s, “value-neutrality was a dangerous illusion, a chimera, something to be avoided, not to be treated as a guarantee of academic respectability”.

The researcher is a committed participant and learner in the research process, not a distant observer. To understand other people’s social worlds;

One would have to take the role of the actor and see his [sic] world from his standpoint. This [qualitative, interview-based] methodological approach stands in contrast to the so-called objective approach so dominant today, namely that of viewing the actor from the perspective of an outside, detached observer. The actor acts toward his world on the basis of how he sees it, and not on the basis of how that world appears to the outside observer. (Blumer, 1966, cited in Burgess, 1991)

The notion of self-reflection is central to the understanding of the nature of critically grounded qualitative research and the understanding it brings to the struggle for self-location in the net of larger and overlapping social, cultural, and economic contexts. Burgess (1991) says that many of the characteristics of the researcher such as age, sex, social class and status, and ethnicity, can and do have an important impact on whether access is granted or withheld. During the research process it is inevitable and important that the researcher will come to know some individuals better than others. Friendships made during the research project can significantly affect which avenues of access are opened and closed during the research process. Undoubtedly a convincing self-presentation is crucial. Difficulties arise when one cannot determine in advance what image to present of oneself.

My encounter with post-colonial theory, African-centeredness, post-modernism in literary and educational studies gave me the conviction that these theoretical orientations and underpinnings could well apply in my study of education, politics and culture in contemporary Zimbabwe which experienced colonialism for almost a century.

Ahluwalia and Nursey-Bray (1997:3) argue that the existence of post-colonialism as a body of theory indicates the continuing nature of the problem of empire and identity and
shows how intractable are the problems of culture and identity in an era of globalised cultural formation. Post-colonialism presents a challenge by reading history discursively. Post-colonial theory recognizes that colonialism is an on-going process which necessarily factors in with Kwame Nkrumah’s work on neocolonialism. Walder (1998:59) says that post-colonial theory is necessary in analyzing the marginalized since it is a literary and cultural study that came into being as part of the decentering tendency of post-1960s thought in the West and identifies itself with the oppressed. An important aspect of post-colonial theory has been its engagement with nationalism and anti-colonial resistance. This concern arises from the decolonization processes which witnessed the rise of nationalism in the colonies paving the way towards independence.

Post-colonial theory brings questions of subjectivity to the foreground. It illustrates the complexities of post-colonial identity, particularly at a time of intense globalization. Post-colonial theory offers a way to break down the tyranny of the structures of power through which hegemony is maintained and continue to entrap post-colonial subjects. As Said (1995:350) has pointed out, the strengths of post-colonial theory lie in its attempts to grapple with issues of local and regional significance whilst retaining an emancipatory perspective. By reconfiguring and challenging dominant master narratives, post-colonial theory is able to ‘write back to the empire’ or in Said’s terms make the ‘voyage in’ (1993:261). It is in this way that it is a particularly empowering discourse of those who have been marginalized. Post-coloniality is a voice that is against other voices dominating others.
Research Design

The research was formulated to collect qualitative information on education, politics and culture from a cross-section of the Zimbabwean society. My prior involvement in the institution being researched, the Zimbabwean education system, and personal knowledge of some of the key respondents facilitated my entrée into the field. The research design that I used was the one suggested by Yin (1989; 2003) for case study research, although with some modifications (Fig. 1.0). It outlines the operational procedures used to collect the data as well as the sequence of and the relationship between these procedures. The design of the research and the collection and analysis of data are in continuum and feed into each other as illustrated in the diagram. Various mini or brief case studies were conducted in order to provide newer and richer details on Zimbabwean cultural landscape.

Figure 3- The case–study research design. Adapted from Yin, R.K (1989; 2003).

The case–study research design. Adapted from Yin, R.K (1989; 2003).
The research design was structured to allow for the use of documentary and archival sources for the collection of qualitative and historical data, participant-observation, (though at a lower scale) and for the use of the interview to solicit perspectives, viewpoints and perceptions. The multiple techniques used to collect data had the important advantage of pointing to gaps in the data which an insider-researcher could easily have glossed over. Some of the data could only be accessed from documents or archival sources because they were either so detailed or related to events that happened over a period of more than twenty years, that it was not reasonable to have expected these issues to have been dealt adequately within the course of the interview or during participant-observation.

The case study of Harare, Zimbabwe, as the research site was theoretically constructed prior to research being undertaken. A case study can neither refute nor prove any general proposition or theory, but it can perhaps serve to modify some overly strong or covert beliefs and purported universal ‘truths’ that frequently emerge in social science analysis. Zimbabwe’s colonial and post-colonial experience is different from other African countries, and thus necessitates an inquiry on its own. The choice of the qualitative method was deliberate and political in that the research itself intended to solicit people’s stories and narratives about educational and cultural reform in Zimbabwe.

I worked with two student research assistants from the University of Zimbabwe, a male and female (for gender balance) to help in the collection of data in the short time that I was doing my fieldwork. As a result of time constraints, I was not going to be able to collect enough information for the project on my own. Research is a collaborative and
collective process. Although these two research assistants had prior experience in fieldwork, I had to train them again and assess their capabilities as most of the fieldwork they had done involved the use of the questionnaire method and little interviewing. I paid the student research assistants for their help and effort, on top of the research training that they gained. It is a research ethic that research assistants should be paid for their work commitment and collaborative effort.

The research techniques that I employed varied according to the situation: in-depth open-ended interviewing, participant-observation, review of documentary and archival material. Interviewing gives the researcher intimate contact and interaction with informants and respondents, and also with co-researchers. It gives the researcher the room to understand people from their frames of reference. Denzin and Lincoln (1998:3) argue that; ‘Qualitative research is multi-method in focus, involving an interpretative, naturalistic approach to its subject matter. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural setting, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. Qualitative research involves the studied use and collection of a variety of empirical materials - case study, personal experience, introspective, life story, interview, observational, historical, interactive and visual texts that describe routine and problematic moments and meanings in individuals’ lives. Qualitative researchers deploy a wide range of interconnected methods, hoping always to get a better fix on the subject matter at hand’. The choice of the qualitative method was thus subjective. Qualitative researchers stress the socially constructed nature of reality, the intimate relationship between the researcher and what is studied, and the situational constraints that shape inquiry. The political and value-laden nature of research is emphasized. Qualitative research seeks answers to
questions that stress how social experience is created and given meaning. Denzin and Lincoln (1998:10) state that;

Qualitative researchers are committed to an emic idiographic, case-based position, which directs their attention to the specifics of particular cases. Qualitative researchers believe that rich descriptions of the social world are valuable, whereas quantitative researchers, with their etic, nomothetic commitments, are less concerned with such detail.

Kincheloe and McLaren (1998:279) argue that critical researchers do not search for some magic method of inquiry that will guarantee the validity of their findings. Giroux (1983:17) states that “methodological correctness” will never guarantee valid data, nor does it reveal power interests within a body of information. Traditional research argues that the only way to produce valid information is through the application of a rigorous research methodology. The methodology follows a strict set of objective procedures that separate researchers from those researched thus neglecting the dynamics of the lived world, not to mention the pursuit of justice in the lived world (Kincheloe and McLaren (1998:286). The purpose of qualitative research methods is to produce what Geertz (1973) famously described as ‘thick descriptions’ of ‘the multiplicity of complex conceptual structures’ including unspoken and taken-for-granted assumptions about cultural life.

As a result of critical research’s agenda of social critique, special problems of validity are raised. To a critical researcher, validity means much more than the traditional definitions of internal and external validity usually associated with the concept. Traditional research has defined internal validity as the extent to which a researcher’s observations and measurements are true descriptions of a particular reality. External
validity has been seen as the degree to which such descriptions can be accurately compared with other groups. Kincheloe and McLaren (1998) claim that trustworthiness is a more appropriate word to use in the context of critical research. They argue that one criterion for critical trustworthiness involves the credibility of portrayals of constructed realities. Critical researchers reject the notion of internal validity that is based on the assumption that a tangible, knowable, cause-and-effect reality exists and that research descriptions are able to portray that reality accurately. Credibility is only awarded when the constructions are plausible to those who constructed them.

Qualitative methods are a sensitive way of exploring meanings and understandings. According to Eyles (1989:207),

“Qualitative methods [are] ways of examining the social world, whereby central importance is given to the actor’s definition and behavior. While different methods vary in their precise detail, and while there are important differences in the conceptual derivations and backgrounds of the methods, all share the view that it is the task of research to uncover the nature of the social world through an interpretive and empathetic understanding of how people act and give meaning to their own lives”.

The depth and richness of the findings of qualitative methods compared to the breadth of data produced by quantitative approaches do not lend themselves, nor do they require, a statistically representative sample (Brannen, 1992; Bryman, 1992; Hammersley, 1992, 1993). The relatively small number of interviews in a qualitative project could not provide an adequate basis for inferential statistics. The inferences that can be drawn from qualitative data are termed ‘common sense’ or logical rather than statistical (Cook and Crang, 1995; Mitchell, 1983, Wallman, 1983). Qualitative approaches do not aim to produce ‘laws’ or generalizations in the same way as quantitative methods. Current thinking on generalizability sees it as a concept which is at odds with qualitative
approaches, and relies on the vitality of thick descriptions. A multi-perspectival approach holds that the more theories and methods a researcher has at his/her disposal, the more tasks one can perform and the more specific objects and themes one can address. The more perspectives that one brings to bear on a phenomenon, the better one’s potential grasp or understanding of it could be. This means one should have a basket of techniques and not rely on one method or theory.

Amy Stambach’s Lessons from Kilimanjaro: Schooling, Community and Gender in East Africa (2000) is an ethnographical study that looks at life in post-colonial Tanzania in the area of Mount Kilimanjaro and how the school interacts with issues of gender, modernity and post-modernity, culture, both traditional and Western. She focuses on how life outside the classroom influences what happens in the school. The school and the home are examined as inseparable entities. I got some cue on how to use a ‘basket of techniques’ to fill some gaps in data collection. Stambach uses multiple techniques to collect her data. In my research on educational reform in Zimbabwe I was interested on things that happen outside the classroom but having a bearing on what happens inside it. In other words, I was looking at how educational policy issues have shaped the idea of a national identity and culture in postcolonial Zimbabwe.

The Research Participants

My research’s agenda was to collect data on issues of the politics of educational change, culture and national identity-formation in post-independent Zimbabwe. The case study of Harare, Zimbabwe, enabled me to get different and comprehensive narratives about the nature of culture, politics and education in post-independent Zimbabwe than I would have if I had conducted my research nationally. Data collection procedures in case
studies are frequently not routinized, unlike a highly structured survey where consistency in the delivery of the questionnaire is crucial. Case studies often require the interviewing of ‘key informants’ such as professionals, public officials, and other stakeholders and power holders. My research participants and key respondents were teachers, government officials, writers, theatre artists, musicians, journalists, high school and college students. I felt that these were the experts on the issues of the relationship among culture, politics and education in postcolonial Zimbabwe. Interviews lasted between 25-40 minutes.

The respondents were selected from wide range of occupations. In recruiting participants, I exploited my contacts within the academic community, journalists, musicians, teachers, students, and the generality of the Zimbabwean people. I am a university of Zimbabwe lecturer and former student and teacher, so access and entrée to most of the respondents was relatively easy. I was introduced to prospective participants by my initial contacts, so this had a snowball effect. Securing access to people, organizations and data is necessary for the successful completion of any research project.

I selected my research participants purposefully to represent diversity and variety within certain parameters, of occupation, location, social class, age and gender. The dramatic political situation in Zimbabwe helped to determine the selection of cases or participants and the conditions of studying them. These parameters were also generated from the literature and from the objectives and significance of the project. Burgess (1984), Hitchcock and Hughes (1989), Vulliamy et al., (1990) among others, emphasize the need to seek out people who possess knowledge about specialized interests and concerns in the social setting, people whom the researcher feels are integral to the scenes and situations being investigated. This demands that the researcher has knowledge of the
situation that is to be studied in order to evaluate the individual’s position in a particular setting and their knowledge of that setting. I used this knowledge to draw up my preliminary interview guide which matched each respondent against the areas that I wanted to investigate.

From this interview guide, a pool of questions was compiled for my personal use during interview sessions. This shortened the time spent in the field by eliminating the hit-and-miss element associated with random selection from a pool that may or may not be familiar with the issue under investigation. Participants were also grouped as a result of what happened in the field. I had to design two focus group interviews with students from Mount Pleasant High and Harare High Schools after I realized that one student was shy or felt intimidated to give me information so I had to try a group interview. I thought the student focus group was the best way to get young people who did not have research experience to participate in my study.

I decided to select only those participants who had the lived experience in the education and cultural arenas. My research participants were not a representative, typical sample, but they did allow me to interrogate a number of subject positions with a diverse group. The participants were thus selected, not because of their typicality, but because of their expertise, diversity and variety of lived experiences and different interpretations of Zimbabwean education, politics, and culture.

During the research process a lot of listening rather than talking needs to be done and with the ‘turmoil and tenacity’ that was in Zimbabwe during my fieldwork it was imperative to have ‘big’ eyes and ‘big’ ears in order to discern the contemporary mood,
which sets the research in motion. You know what type of questions to ask and not to ask, you begin to interpret the signs and taboos of the society. Although I am Zimbabwean, the society has changed since the year 2000, especially politically, thus I become an outsider in another sense. You also know how to approach prospective respondents.

Respondents were interviewed to assess the emerging perceptions of educational reform and national culture in post-independent Zimbabwe and how cultural struggles are organized politically. Since few researchers have specifically focused on the politics of education and culture in Zimbabwe, the collection of data was deliberately exploratory and aimed to establish emerging conceptualizations of national culture against the government’s single and monolithic definition of Zimbabwean culture. The study, thus used multi-disciplinary approaches to collect mainly qualitative data using various methods including; open-ended interviewing, participant observation, informal interviews and secondary data sources. National policy documents and official administration procedures and practices related to the promotion and preservation of culture and education were reviewed and interviews held with various government officials, artists, students, teachers, private players and agencies involved in the educational and cultural arenas in Zimbabwe.

Informal talks were done during my attendance of theatre performances, and other informal gatherings. Through note-taking some information on the politics of education and the arts were gathered during these informal interactions. In Zimbabwe, it is easier to find people who are ready to share information informally at soccer matches or music
shows than in their offices or work places. Zimbabweans even enjoy music that depicts their suffering. This music is therapeutic because it identifies with the people’s problems and they feel that there is someone concerned about their plight. Existing and archival media reports and sources provided further insight into the complex relationship among education, national culture and politics in post-independent Zimbabwe.

The fortunes of Zimbabwe have for the past two decades been tied to President Robert Mugabe, who wrested control from a small white community and put the country on a stable course (Meredith: 2002). However, he now presides over instability, a land crisis and a faltering economy. Mugabe played a key role in ending white rule in Rhodesia and he and his Zimbabwe African National Union Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF) party have dominated Zimbabwe's politics since independence in 1980. He has only recently faced any serious challenge to his authority, in the form of popular protest and substantial gains for the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC). Mugabe was declared winner of the 2002 presidential elections, considered seriously flawed by the opposition and foreign observers. Ideologically, he belongs to the African liberationist tradition of the 1960s - strong and ruthless leadership, anti-Western, suspicious of capitalism and deeply intolerant of dissent and opposition. His economic policies are widely seen as being geared to short-term political expediency and the maintenance of power for himself.

On paper, Zimbabwe is a democracy, but in practice, it is a de facto one party state. The Parliamentary and Presidential elections, held in June 2000 and March 2002 respectively, were preceded by a government-sanctioned campaign of violence directed
towards supporters and potential supporters of the opposition. The judiciary is generally independent, but the Government often refuses to abide by court decisions, frequently questions the authority of sitting judges, and most white judges have been forced to leave the bench as there are deemed biased towards the opposition.

Harare, the research site, is home to almost three million people from different ethnic and racial backgrounds. A lot of schools, for girls or boys only, mixed, multiracial, expensive, in urban townships, and low density areas form the landscape of Harare and pupils from different corners of the country enroll in these schools. Cultural institutions like the National Art Gallery, National Heroes Acre, National Arts Council are housed in Harare. International events like the Zimbabwe International Book Fair (ZIBF), Agricultural Show, Harare International Festival of the Arts (HIFA), Theatre in the Park, the Jenaguru Festival of Musicians are held in Harare in the months of July and August every year. This is the time when one can meet a lot of people and be able to attend some of the events. I visited these sites and talked to artists and other professionals who shared with me their views on culture and education in Zimbabwe.

Harare, the capital city of Zimbabwe, is a center of many events and activities, be they cultural, social, economic or political. I selected my participants based on their knowledge and experiences about educational reform and national culture in postcolonial Zimbabwe. It was the conviction of the researcher that the selected participants were the experts of what I sought to understand and they had the best knowledge of what was happening on the ground in contemporary Zimbabwe. According to Bogdan and Biklen (1998), gathering data in a historical context has the advantage of getting first hand
information and limit the biases that researchers have on the people being studied. Case studies are grounded in the research context.

Equipped with my Zimbabwean background, biases and subjectivities towards the Zimbabwean context and its people, I was in a relatively better position than an outsider in terms of gathering information because I had the social and linguistic advantage. Although I conducted my interviews in English, the fact that I speak and understand local languages makes me understand people’s informal conversations and could discern the contemporary mood as a result of my experiences of Zimbabwean culture. During my doctoral coursework at Ohio University, I also received considerable theoretical and practical research training on how to conduct fieldwork in developing societies like Zimbabwe. My project required research in the Zimbabwean community and its institutions, because I wanted to hear selected informants’ experiences of cultural politics, and educational change in their everyday lives. It is through the people’s narratives that one can gain insight into the pains, joys and tribulations of a silenced people.

Relationship of the researcher and the participants

In some of my interviews, the only precondition placed upon me was that the respondents should remain anonymous and confidential. I was aware of this because during my coursework, I had studied research ethics on issues of privacy, anonymity, confidentiality, and informed consent. Providing feedback is a matter of research etiquette and good professional practice. I told my participants that the results of this project would be publicized by putting the thesis in the university library. It is difficult to
give a full copy of the results to all respondents and participants. It may be possible to tell interviews after interviews what is going to happen to the results of the study they are taking part in, and how they can find out about them if they wish.

I had sought permission from the Ohio University Institutional Review Board (IRB) for approval to carry out my research in Zimbabwe and had a letter from Dr Stephen Howard, my advisor and dissertation director, notifying all concerned the intent of my research visit to Zimbabwe. It is Ohio University practice that students carrying out research seek approval from IRB. This concerns the issues surrounding consent of prospective participants to participate in a research study. Sometimes this is called ‘informed consent’ or ‘real consent’ and sometimes ‘valid consent’ (Kent:2000:81). Whatever the term used, the intention is the same, to achieve a position whereby people agree to take part in a research program know what they are agreeing to and authorize you to collect information from them without any form of coercion or manipulation. While it might seem at first that these conditions are easy to meet, there are actually a number of complex and difficult issues involved in the field. How, for example, can a person fully understand what is involved until he or she actually participates in the study. What I have realized is that a person might initially agree to take part in an interview, for example, but later encounter questions which he or she finds too personal or controversial to respond to. However, research participant’s consent has to be obtained first before carrying research. Consent is needed to protect the important ethical principle of autonomy, the right to exercise self-determination. There are elements that need to be met, in order to protect the participant like voluntariness, the participant’s understanding of what will be involved, competence of potential participants, actual consent to
participate and full information. The information given to potential research participants ought to include anything that would bear on their decision to participate. This is information which is important from the researcher’s and the participant’s points of view and would include facts about the purpose of the study, the procedures involved and the risks and benefits which might result. The letters that I wrote to prospective participants are included in the dissertation as Appendices.

The interview process as data collection

The data for this study was gathered through in-depth individual interviews; participant observations, informal interviews and secondary data sources. I did an extensive content analysis of government documentary sources from the University of Zimbabwe Library, different media houses libraries, National Archives of Zimbabwe, National Arts Council of Zimbabwe (NACZ), Zimbabwe Association of Community Theatre (ZACT). The analysis of documentary sources was undertaken on a continuous basis. I believed that information that I could not obtain in interviews could be found in documents. This research strategy gave a rounded and multi-dimensional account of the politics of education and culture in post-colonial Zimbabwe.

I took extensive time carrying out interviews. The interview stage of the project was the time that I was most visible to the participants as it was a face-to-face interaction. Interviewing is a research strategy that aims to move away from fixed answer questions, which one finds in questionnaires and surveys. Interviews provide answers to the ‘why’ and ‘how’ questions rather than just the ‘how many’ or the ‘how often’ of the questionnaire approach.
Interviews aim to be conversations that explore issues with participants, rather than to test knowledge or simply categorize. Most of the questions that I asked during the interview process were open ended, which allowed for more dialogue between the interviewer and the interviewee. Open ended questions are questions that demand long responses. Rather than allowing the participant to respond with a ‘yes’ or ‘no’, they require the interviewee to respond to the question more extensively. It is important to bear in mind the difference between open- and closed ended questions and to be aware of the potential effect of leading questions when devising questions in an interview.

Interviews should be seen as ‘conversations with a purpose’ (Burgess:1991).

A vital part of planning research must be the interview schedule. The conduct of interviews, like much of the fieldwork process is a ‘messy’ business. To give order to this ‘messiness’ and unpredictability and to provide structure and guidance to the interviewer, the interview should be based on an interview schedule which acts as a prompt. This prompt is a series of topics to be covered rather than a formal list of questions. My project needed me to access issues about education, politics and cultural identity-formation in post-independent Zimbabwe. It was at times difficult to talk about personal cultural issues because most people identify themselves not in terms of individual identity but group identity. Accessing theoretical and academic issues in a way that is meaningful to the participants is the challenge of preparing the interview schedule. To devise a schedule, I listed all the topics in which I was interested and then tried talking them through with research assistants to see whether and in what ways it is possible to introduce them into a ‘normal’ conversation. I kept a log of these conversations and used
them as a basis for preparing a list of themes that I took into each interview, in case a free flowing conversation fails.

I started the interview process with a very general question that was very helpful to ease the situation and made the conversation a bit relaxed than starting with specific questions as if you are testing the interviewee. Interviewing need considerable skill, tact and practice on the part of the interviewer. It is very instructive to listen carefully to the interviewee in order to participate in the conversation to enable you to pose questions on topics that have not been covered or need developing. It is also important not to interrupt the person or persons who are being interviewed or talk more than the interviewee(s). I reminded my research assistants not to do much talking during the interviews or give their opinions to the interviewee(s), which would reduce the amount of information to be obtained from the respondents. As a researcher and interviewer, you need to monitor your own comments, gestures and actions as these may convey particular meanings to those who are interviewed which may advance or impede the interview.

With so many pressures in the interview, it is almost impossible for the interviewer to record the content of the interview directly onto paper. Most of the interviews were tape-recorded which facilitated less interruption in the interview for extensive note-taking. As well as convenient and labor saving, Pile (1990:217) suggests that a verbatim transcript is the only way to achieve a full qualitative analysis:

Any analysis of language can only be carried out with confidence if there is an entire record of a conversation. Hastily scribbled notes…are not accurate enough to be used in this way. Tape-recorded sessions provide the only viable data for this kind of analysis. Interviews were conducted with key informants during the day and at night we met with research assistants and listened to the interviews and transcribed them and arrange for
follow-up interviews. We went back to the interviewees the following day and make follow-up interviews on critical and gray issues that I felt needed more clarification. The responses from earlier interviews helped me to narrow my focus and formulate interview questions for subsequent interviews with different informants. According to Burton (2000: 223) “good researchers use a strategy of feeding information from earlier interviews into questions for subjects who are subsequently interviewed”. I realized that whilst most respondents talked about the education system in Zimbabwe, they were also made reference to how politics was affecting the education change. Further interrogations revealed that Zimbabwean music, theatre, literature were beginning to articulate divergent views from the official versions of understanding the reality in post-independent Zimbabwe. At this point of the research I pondered on how I can investigate how the arts were counter-narrating the government’s official definition of culture. I had not thought of examining the role of creative artistic expression in social transformation in my initial proposal but when I realized that most of my participants were referring to politics, arts and change, I had no choice but to investigate how the arts have responded to the issue of national identity formation in post-colonial Zimbabwe. It helped me have a focus, and I was excited about that and having a background in the arts made the detour and interdisciplinary nature of the project an exciting undertaking.

Taped interviews provided more quotations that were very enlightening. They provide a far more reliable record of the interview than note taking. While tape recording is undeniably helpful and economic, it cannot record mannerisms or other non-verbal events during the interview. Therefore it is important to note such events and to spend some time after each interview completing a research diary in which comments on the
interview’s mannerisms or other non-verbal communications can be stored to be used later in the analysis.

I applied Beebe’s emic perspective and used different methods (triangulation) to gather my data and used an interactive process, whereby data collection simultaneously goes with data analysis to produce the desired result. I was flexible in my data collection and analysis and invented, improvised and adapted according to the field. I did not put much attention to trivia. The emic understanding, according to Beebe (2001:168) is based on the categories the local people use for dividing their reality and identifying the terms they use for these categories. Documents, archival or contemporary, helped me have a clearer picture on cultural and educational issues like national cultural policy, the role of institutions in culture and development.

Advantages of including the interview approach

Face-to-face interviews are perhaps the most sociable way to collect data, unlike surveys and questionnaires. One can enlist the co-operation of respondents and there is room for probing and prompting, and the facility to use complex question sequence. Face-to-face interviews are a multi-method of data collection. The interviewer can note down observations whilst tape-recording the interview and in effect build up a contextual analysis and respond to visual cues (gestures) of the respondent. I found that it is easier to build up a rapport and a relationship of trust with subjects on a face-to-face basis. Longer interviews are possible on a face-to-face than by telephone and they are preferable for asking open-ended questions. Material that needs to be shown, (like photos or newspaper articles) can be presented during face-to-face interview. In a face-to-face interview, interviewers can usually persuade respondents to complete an interview and the quality of
data generated is usually superior to that obtained by other methods if the interview is conducted well.

A researcher’s appearance affects interactions with subjects or entrée into the research site and it was therefore best practice for me to conform to the dress code, norms and values of professional men working in my research sites. In Zimbabwean schools, an adult male without a tie and jacket looks a stranger for it is mandatory for them to wear these all the times when they are at work. I had to dress formally, no T-shirts, jeans or caps. If one dresses in a similar style as the people you are researching, it becomes easy to gain entry and blend with the participants.

Limitations of including the interview-based research

Interviewing provides a wealth of rich data. The data can allow access to people’s opinions and attitudes. There is the difficulty of recruiting people. I have found that people have had difficulties understanding the worth of their contribution as participants in a research study. The time it takes to recruit interviewees can be far longer than anticipated. It is difficult to know whom to recruit, knowing which people will suit the research aims most appropriately and how to convince people that their contribution is worthwhile and important. From their point of view, a doctoral student coming to their offices and workplaces to talk about educational and cultural issues in post-independent Zimbabwe was often a problem, particularly when they did not see themselves at all as experts of the academic concerns of education and culture.

Time, is thus the main constraint to the number of interviews a researcher can conduct. Interviews are time consuming, that is, arranging for the interview, the actual interview.
Actually conducting the interviews can be time consuming, but the analysis and transcription also needs to be taken into account.

There was also the problem of having suitable accommodation or in which to conduct interviews. In offices, phones, relatives and friends visiting will always disrupt the interview but one has to be used to such interruptions for they are part of the research process. The ideal situation is to have a confidential setting which the researcher can build the trust of the respondent. While researchers can request an office or other place in which interviews can be conducted without being overheard by others, a suitable setting is not always available. During the interviews that I conducted, phone calls were an interruption so did relatives and friends who wanted to see my respondent. This is part of the research process, for interviews cannot be conducted in a vacuum. Some interviewees refused to be tape-recorded because they were skeptical of who were going to listen to the tapes, so I had to do some note-taking which is tedious and produces sketchy transcripts as compared to recorded tapes. Writing comprehensive notes at the time of the interview is difficult and is certainly a skill which one needs to cultivate. Some interviewees were not comfortable discussing issues that they felt were personal or political thus limiting the amount of information one is supposed to get from such respondents.

Data Analysis

Devising an analysis system before the research is underway is a good research approach (Burgess, 1991; Cook and Crang 1995). It is thus crucial to consider the analysis of the data before they are collected. Most proponents of qualitative research advocate for the simultaneous conduct of data collection and data analysis (iterative process). This
type of process produces a better quality analysis but coming back and forth in checking your findings. Whilst I was in the process of collecting data, I was thinking of how this data could fit into my research agenda, which I think is part of the data analysis. I did not wait to finish collecting data and then start analyzing it.

Data analysis is the process of bringing order, structure and meaning to the mass of collected data. Qualitative data analysis is a search for general statements about relationships among categories of data and according to Marshall and Rossman (1989:112), “it is a messy, ambiguous, time-consuming, creative, and fascinating process”. In this research, I identified the salient categories that emerged from the data and developed concepts and categories. Further analysis was done to identify additional patterns and meanings. Strass and Corbin (1990) postulate that using the grounded theory method, phenomena is discovered, developed and provisionally verified through this process of systematic data collection and data analysis.

Qualitative data is non-numerical and therefore conclusions cannot be drawn which will be based on statistical inference. What qualitative research can offer is an understanding of people’s life-worlds, trying to understand situations from the perspective of those being studied or researched. The sheer amount of unstructured data means that an organizing system is needed into which material can be broken down into manageable chunks. This is usually done through a coding procedure in which chunks of text are labeled, or coded, and then stored by these codes. I analyzed my data by using the coding technique, looking for terms used by people I studied. Codes are tags or labels attached to chunks of data, words, sentences and phrases (Howard: 2002). Beebe (2001:167) says that “coding can be thought of as cutting the log of an interview into
strips and placing the strips into piles”. He further argues that codes are based on threads that tie together bits of data.

Codes should be allowed to emerge from the data, rather than being established before the research is conducted. This is a crucial difference between interviews and questionnaire approaches. With a survey, the ‘codes’ are pre-set into the questionnaire before it is distributed rather than emerging from the data later in the process. For qualitative data analysis, a process is required that can draw these codes from the material at various levels; from what people say, in terms of argumentative structure, the words they use and in the interview as a whole. For the research that I conducted, participants’ perceptions, understandings of meaning and interpretations were the most important, which required a detailed analysis even down to the level of the use of images, metaphors and structure of argument. There is also need to compare and contrast among interview texts.

My analysis is inductive, that is the integration of data, yielding an understanding of people and settings under study. The analysis was inspired by my experiences in the field and the people’s stories and narratives. I transcribed the interviews verbatim on a word processor, so as not to lose the main stories of the interviewees. The process of transcribing is a long and tedious process but rewarding in that you get to know and ‘feel’ the participants’ stories and experiences. I read each interview over again to get an overall idea of its whole content and what the concerns of the participant were. I used different color markers to highlight words and phrases that seemed to recur in the texts. I then linked these together.
I began the theory-building stage of the research as I began to link the codes together, in order to ascertain what general themes were emerging from the texts. It is vital to allow codes to emerge from the data. It is then important to check the substance of these emergent codes by constantly referring back to the original interview texts.

I tried by all means to quote my informants verbatim so that I will not distort their views and sensibilities. There are themes and concepts that emerge in importance over a number of interview texts. To me analysis is like a winnowing process, collecting relevant information from a lot of information, examining closely in order to take away the chaff and remain with the good. The review of archival and documentary analysis also formed part of my data analysis, for I did not only rely on interview material but other sources of information.

Limitations of Data and Sources

The greatest difficult is that data on culture and education in Zimbabwe is scattered, not well documented and inconsistent. While the government of Zimbabwe has a politically charged interest in the ‘indigenization’ of education and culture, there is little support for more detailed scrutiny of the arts as a viable industry in socio-economic terms. A top official of the National Arts of Zimbabwe (NACZ) told me during an interview that the money they receive from the government is very little and there is little research going on about the development of the arts in Zimbabwe.

As a result of political tension and economic crisis in Zimbabwe, which culminated to serious levels since the year 2000, some respondents were not ready and willing to divulge information that they thought was political and ‘dangerous’. Laws have been enacted which makes it a crime to criticize the president and the government of the
day. Other respondents during informal interviews at the market asked me how my research was going to solve the problems in the country. When I went to Zimbabwe in June 2002, there was a “queuing culture” in the shops and streets. There were acute shortages of basic commodities including salt, bread, mealie meal, sugar not mentioning fuel and foreign currency. This tends to make people restless and insecure and suspicious of any person who wants to ‘waste’ their time when they do not have food on their tables. Some teachers were not willing to reveal information about government policies on education that they thought was controversial for fear of victimization although I had assured them that I was not going to reveal their names.

Government bureaucracy was problematic. Besides having a letter from my dissertation supervisor from Ohio University that I was carrying out research about educational and cultural issues in Zimbabwe, some organizations insisted that I write another letter seeking permission. Some officials would need an appointment, two weeks in advance. Instead of narrating their experiences, other respondents were suspicious of my questions and went defensive, protecting the government’s autocratic policies. Gatekeepers also played their part although it was not as serious as I had earlier anticipated. This was also eased by my selection of participants. I did not want to select Ministers and other top government officials when there are people who can give me maybe better information in a relaxed atmosphere.

Despite the limitations, the multi-method to the collection of data approach allowed me to tap into the real-life experiences of those who were the subject of my research. The approach meant the enrichment of both researcher and participants. It provided the opportunity for the acknowledgement of ‘first voice’ experiences and
facilitated the visibility of those normally outside the mainstream of culture and politics. During the research process, power rests with the researched, not the researcher. The following two chapters discuss the findings from the field and the entire analysis of the data.
CHAPTER 4: DATA ANALYSIS

Introduction

This chapter discusses how the issue of national culture helps in forming a postcolonial identity in Zimbabwe through the institutions of education and cultural industries (literature, media, theatre and music). Through an analysis of cultural politics, the study examines how cultural relativism has been used by the Zimbabwean government to impose an official version of a Zimbabwean identity through the education system. The essential function of cultural relativism is to rationalize the maintenance of a repressive system by giving it a “philosophical”, “legal”, foundation and an “intellectual” framework (Monga:1996:48). The government refuses to accept foreign ideas claiming that they do not belong to the reality of ‘our culture or our history’. Culture is the central issue in identity politics. This project is an investigation about the clash between a single Zimbabwean government official narrative built around the idea of education and national culture and an infinite number of counter-narratives from Zimbabwean artists, who use their creative capability to challenge the government’s definition of national culture as well as the government’s view on how people should lead their lives.

The analysis and winnowing (coding) of collected data resulted in categories, themes and concepts emerging which are related. These include: education (curriculum and language), national culture industry (arts, media, music). The participants of the research included were cross-sectional; government officials, students, teachers, workers, musicians, writers, the clergy and journalists. The methods used to collect data include
interview with key respondents, observation, participation, and documentary review of archival materials.

The post-independent government of Zimbabwe centered issues of nation-building and reconstruction within the institution of education. It was felt that that the education system was a convenient institution to build a new culture and identity to suit the new political dispensation. In an essay on “Education and African Modernities”, the African Studies Center at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign (2002:2) summarizes how central education was to the issue of nation-building in the immediate post-independent Africa;

“At the center of it all was education, seen as a vehicle for intellectual enlightenment, social engineering, cultural production, and political participation. Thus, education as a process and project through which social and cultural capital is acquired and reproduced, and the nation and the world are productively imagined, has dominated African discourses about development, nationalism, and globalization for a long time. At independence, virtually all African governments put great stock in education as one of the engines of social transformation, economic development, and nation-building”.

Education was seen by the government of Zimbabwe as one of the most useful means of restoring the lost senses of connection with the past, purpose and civil possibility which could not be made possible by the colonial system. Thus education reform meant transforming the colonial curriculum and replacing it with one that had a Zimbabwean cultural content and orientation. Zimbabwe was hailed as having better access to schools than most African countries. Hall (2000:612) states that in European modernity, the formation of a national culture helped to create standards of universal literacy,
generalized a single vernacular language as the dominant medium of communication throughout the nation, created a homogenous culture and maintained national cultural institutions, such as a national education system. The post-independent Zimbabwean leadership seemed to have followed the same thought when they embarked on the reformation of the education system.

I realized from the different stories in the interviews, that at independence, the Zimbabwean leadership, through the process of educational reforms and nationalization imposed an official historiography of national culture as a way of forming a new national identity. In the process counter-narratives emerged from artistic creative expression resisting the government’s perception of defining Zimbabwean culture. Musicians, theatre artists, novelists rejected the government’s power to represent, name, and define uniform aspirations on behalf of the people and having exclusive knowledge about how to obtain them. The power to name official versions of culture bestows the far more reaching capacity to construct human identity.

Counter-narratives emerged to challenge the government’s definition of national culture. Thus the artists are resisting the government of Zimbabwe’s pursuance of a certain autocratic vision of the national interest that expresses narrow and localized interests based on ethnic, class, gender, and racial lines. This heavy use of Marxist-Leninist rhetoric of ‘national interest’ was a way of disguising the regime’s failure and selfish interests thereby clinging to power. Thus no significant institutions were developed by the Zimbabwean government to express the interests of the African majority.
Educational reform in post-colonial Zimbabwe

We examine educational reform in post-independence Zimbabwe against the social, political and educational policies of the former Rhodesia. The seeds of post-colonial exploitation and oppression were planted by the colonial masters in that the new political environment is not different from the colonial set-up. Segregation between whites and Africans formed the basis of the economy, social order and consequently of providing education. Moyana (1989:8) posits that the value system of African education in colonial Rhodesia was designed to complement the socio-economic imperatives of white domination. Its emphasis on Christian values and devotion to manual labor, on habits of discipline, neatness and punctuality and insistence on things British and alien to the child’s experience were all intended to produce out of an African, a loyal labourer and a loyal middle-class: this cultural invasion always leads to cultural “unauthenticity” of those invaded. Moyana further argues that the education provided for Africans was inferior to that for whites and was aimed at producing a humble and subservient student who could serve the colonial system and entrench the privileged position of whites.

At the time of its relatively late political independence in 1980, it was thought that Zimbabwe might be able to avoid some of the pitfalls of other countries' experiences of educational development. For instance, it was hoped that the quantitative expansion necessary to meet the demands of mass education could be married to the high quality of what had been an elite educational system. Additionally, some saw the promise of transferring nascent, socialist educational practices from the camps in Mozambique to a new, mass Zimbabwean education system.
Soon after the attainment of political Independence in April 1980, the Zimbabwean government declared education as a basic human right and sought to remove impediments that had prevented most of the majority black children from attending school throughout the 90 years of colonial rule. The successive colonial governments had used restricted access to education as a means to marginalize the majority black population in economic activities. There was a general belief that increasing access to educational facilities would open opportunities that would lead to an improvement in the livelihoods of the majority of the population. Mungazi (1997) claims that the rate of expansion that was embarked on by the new Zimbabwean government in the education system ranked as one of the highest in the world. The newly elected government embarked on a wide range of reforms in all sectors.

The first black government formed by the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF)-adopted the transitional government's Education Act of 1979. Most of the post-Independence educational reforms were, however, based on the ZANU-PF Party Manifesto. Among the key goals of the Manifesto was the eradication of extreme disparities that existed between African and European education. Education was regarded as a basic human right and a key to economic growth and development along socialist lines. According to the March 1980 Election Manifesto "a ZANU PF government would introduce a uniform educational system and abolish immediately the distinction between African education and white education so that there would be a single system for all students……A ZANU PF government would also introduce a system of education that would meet the needs of the individual students and at the same time, fulfill the development objectives of the nation". This type of education was meant to
inculcate in the Zimbabwean student “a non-racial attitude, a common national identity and loyalty based upon the fundamental freedoms of the individual (Mungazi:1993:164).”

The Manifesto further points out that, “the new system of education would be established so that free and compulsory primary and secondary education would be introduced in stages beginning with the primary sector. Education was viewed as a basic right that belonged to all and because education was viewed as a major instrument for the transformation of society. The Zimbabwean government had the conviction that education was going to liberate people from the tenterhooks of the colonial segregationist mentality that undermined the potential of the African student. Schools were seen as cultural, social, economic and political transformation sites because education is a powerful instrument for social reconstruction.

The new education policies had to respond to the expectations of the majority black population in Zimbabwe. The independent government immediately embarked on a massive expansion of educational facilities. Enrolments at both primary and secondary levels increased phenomenally. Even university and other tertiary colleges’ enrolments increased. Since the main objective was to redress imbalances created by the colonial governments, most of this expansion went into the opening of new secondary schools in rural areas. The target was to provide a secondary school within walking distance of all rural pupils, wherever the geographical and demographic factors permitted (Moyana, 1989; Zvobgo:1996). The ZANU PF government kept the promise it had made during the campaign for power to initiate a fundamental educational innovation as it had specified in the manifesto. According to the statistics cited from the Parliamentary debates of August 1983 by Mungazi (1993:173) “by 1983, only three years after it had achieved
independence, Zimbabwe, had a total school enrolment of 2.4 million students out of a population of 7.1 million, which meant that the government was educating more than 33% of its citizens. A top government official echoed these sentiments in an interview,

“A lot of Zimbabweans were denied access to education during the colonial period. Only a few were educated to serve the colonial system. Now that Zimbabwe is independent, we are saying, here is your chance. And we proved it. It is not that the government can not provide employment for all those who finish school, but that we produced so many graduates in a short period”. (Transcript of Interview, July 18 2002)

Thus the Zimbabwean government of the early 1980s was concerned with giving access to education to those who had been denied in the past. This shows the commitment the government had towards educational expansion and access to the Zimbabwean people who were denied education as a result of the segregationist policies of the colonial system.

While the excitement that characterized this independence euphoria and enthusiasm is understandable, it was sobered by financial limitations and the inadequacy of economic growth. Mungazi (1993) says that the reality of the situation was that to expand secondary education, the government had to borrow money from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and to heavily recruit expatriate teachers. This was exacerbated by the unexpected economic difficulties resulting from the extended drought, which hit Zimbabwe and other countries of Southern Africa beginning in 1981. The new developments, especially de-linking the colonizer-colonized relationship helped to
explain the correlation between political independence and educational reform in that most educational policies were towing the ruling party agenda of matching Zimbabwean culture with educational innovation. It was a quest to achieve a new national identity through educational innovation in which the recognition of the Zimbabwean national culture in the curricula was *sine qua non* to the realization of this new dispensation.

Thus education was not only the central issue in reclaiming a Zimbabwean cultural identity but a convenient point of departure for a modern Zimbabwean society. Local communities faced up to the challenge and showed total commitment in providing the educational facilities. This demonstrated how strong the desire for education was among Africans. Not only had their demands for schools been frustrated throughout the colonial period, but a large proportion of the few schools that had been built were destroyed and closed because of the escalating war for independence. The participation of parents in the massive building program was motivated by their belief that education would bring about better employment and socio-economic advantages for their children. The disparities that existed throughout the colonial era were largely attributed to the fact that most of the Africans were denied education. The independent government considered education as one of the key ways to redress colonial injustices and establish a democratic and egalitarian society. The new education policies were based on the following goals:

(a) the expansion of educational facilities and school places;

(b) the abolition of racial segregation;
(c) a new emphasis on scientific and technical education, particularly at secondary school level;

(d) localisation of the 0- and A-level examinations and revision of syllabi, to make them more relevant to local conditions and requirements (Nherera: 2000 5-6)

Educational innovation in the immediate post-independence Zimbabwe was viewed by the government as a way of fulfilling one of the goals of national liberation. Independence in Zimbabwe came with national prescriptions about how to transform education, politics and culture. Mungazi (1993:171) believes that reforming the educational system was part of the Zimbabwean government’s efforts at national innovation and its quest for a new national identity. The quest for individual self-actualization that formed the idea of universal literacy through compulsory and free primary education was seen as a manifestation of a new national identity.

The Zimbabwean government also recognized that the diversity of the educational program, the relevance of the educational curriculum to the Zimbabwean context, and the utilization of the best resources possible, all combined to meet the needs of individual learners out to give new meaning and direction to the purpose of a new nation and national identity. Mungazi further argues that when the individual person is given an opportunity to learn according to his/her interest and talent, there emerges a fulfillment of life, a satisfaction, and a yearning to produce what the country needs thus helping to create a truly liberated society. To him this is where literacy becomes important to national purpose and justifies the government’s efforts to eradicate adult illiteracy in the
formative years of independence. As a matter of strategy, the government launched the adult literacy campaign in Zimbabwean villages in conjunction with the development of the primary schools and secondary schools.

The problem that the Zimbabwean government faced with the adult literacy education programs in the villages was the shortage of teachers, and most members of the rural councils did not have the sufficient education needed to make adult the literacy efforts successful. In towns and cities adults were now attending night schools in order to gain literacy. The main focus was the kind of education that was designed to help the individual recognize himself/herself as the most important factor of national development and also as a way of attaining self-actualization and national identity. Education was seen as promoting a new cultural enrichment, which is a product of a national pride which surfaces from a deep sense of self-worth that education can bring about.

Memmi (1965:129) argues that, for the recently colonized “the important thing to do is to rebuild, to reform, to communicate, and to belong” as a fulfillment of themselves. It is this definition and conception of liberation, both political and mental, which gives birth to a new society, a true symbol and a manifestation of the search for a new social system. In the quest for educational reform along cultural lines and as an embodiment of independence, the Zimbabwean government has been attempting to launch a new cultural and social revolution which required the reconstructing of the total society by utilizing the knowledge that Zimbabwean people must cling to their own cultural traditions which make it possible for them to reject the educational practices of their erstwhile colonizer.
The rigidity which the Zimbabwean African politicians cited as the injustice of the colonial educational system did not disappear suddenly under the new ZANU-PF government. This became one of the major problems that Zimbabwe faced during the first five years of its independence and one that was likely to remain in place for some time to come. In the thrust for educational innovation, Zimbabwe hoped that it was introducing a system of education that would inspire the citizens with confidence for the future, and one that would seek to resolve the conflict that often existed between the learner and the school during the colonial period. Public examinations, which became a hot political issue during the colonial period, remained in practice after Zimbabwe became independent. This is a situation where all schools in Zimbabwe take the same examinations regardless of their value systems and structures.

Mungazi (1993) states that, in 1983, the Zimbabwean government announced its intention to redesign a national syllabus that would be in tune with Zimbabwe’s national development plans. It felt that the reform was necessary because the entire system of education inherited in 1980 was a colonial imposition. The mammoth task was to eradicate the colonial nature of the education system to suit the new Zimbabwean cultural environment. This was the Zimbabwean government’s definition of national liberation, for it to make an effort to liberate itself from the educational chains of its colonial past, for it to advance progressively towards the future, and for it to develop its full human and national potential, all the citizens must have demonstrated an understanding of the importance of equality of educational opportunity in all its aspects. Ndabaningi Sithole, founding father of African nationalist movement in Zimbabwe, during an interview with
Mungazi, said that “Education provides an individual a mechanism of articulation and self-expression. It gives one a wider scope, a depth to one’s thinking, a comprehensive grasp of who one is (identity) and the problems that one faces. Adjustment to a new social and political is impossible without educational innovation”. In this sense, education becomes an act of national culture (Cabral: 1970).

The school system in Zimbabwe is centralized, and with the establishment of the Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council (ZIMSEC), all examinations were to be conducted by this board and all foreign examinations have to be abolished (Fingaz: August 2001). According to the Director of ZimSEC, Dr I. Sibanda, ZimSEC was set up to reform the Zimbabwean educational system in terms of localizing the schools examinations which had been done by the University of Cambridge Examinations Syndicate. Whilst economic reasons come into consideration, Dr Sibanda said political decisions were behind the change;

“Zimbabwe Schools Examination Council (ZimSEC) was set up as an examination authority in order to localize exams in this country. What had happened … was that the curriculum which we inherited from colonial period was gradually changed at independence to reflect local conditions, in other words, more relevant to an independent country like Zimbabwe. Therefore the body to run examinations test and curriculum had to be set. So ZimSEC was set up. Clearly ZimSec could not have the skills- examinations skills - so we entered into an arrangement with Cambridge who have been… examining here to train our people in the skills of testing our own curriculum. So we started with Ordinary level (Form 4) in 1984 and as many of our people got qualified as examination setters or markers we took more and more of that load to ourselves so that by 1990 virtually we were testing our own O’ level examinations. All it being moderated by Cambridge on principle of testing and then 1996 when ZimSEC actually took root, I
personally was appointed as Director. We were running our own O’ level exams. Then we did the same with A’ levels because that was the logical thing, you can’t localize at ‘O’ level and ignore ‘A’ Level. We also look at A’ level and designed our own syllabi to have a Zimbabwean outlook. These syllabi …with local conditions but at the same time maintaining standards of what we call A’ level. So we today have our examination questions set in Zimbabwe”. I was in the system at independence when we wanted to expand the education in the early 80s. There were no laboratories in the rural areas. We started what we called Zim-Science which was Zimbabwe Science programme.

(Transcript of Interview, Harare, Zimbabwe, July, 4 2002)

The government of Zimbabwe has localized the examination system to replace the colonial syndicate which was administered in Cambridge, England. Since the establishment of ZimSEC there have been numerous reports about examination leaks which led at one time to the resignation of a Minister of Education when his daughter was found in possession of question papers which were yet to be written. The Ministry of education in Zimbabwe emphasized that Zimbabwean schools should teach Zimbabwean content and Zimbabwean history. The minister of education made Zimbabwean history a compulsory subject, with students having to read books written by the same minister. We see those in power defining official and legitimate knowledge.

Schooling has been the site of numerous contests over community and societal values and priorities. Thus curricular content’s exclusion of other voices serves to legitimate and sustain a group’s or class’s interests or views or positions by having the schools endorse and transmit them via curriculum policy and practice. The question of what knowledge is most worth is not only an educational issue, but also inherently ideological and political.
The curriculum in Zimbabwe was never simply a neutral assemblage of knowledge, somehow appearing in the texts and classrooms of a nation. It was always part of a selective tradition, someone’s selection, some group’s vision of legitimate knowledge. It was produced out of the cultural, political, and economic conflicts, tensions, and compromises that organize and disorganize a people. The selection and organization of knowledge for schools in Zimbabwe is an ideological process, one that serves the interests of particular classes and social groups. According to Apple (1996), the differential power intrudes into the very heart of curriculum, teaching and evaluation. What counts as knowledge, the ways in which it is organized, who is empowered to teach it, are part and parcel of how dominance and subordination are reproduced and altered in society.

Sylvester (1991) aptly sums up the contradictions and dilemmas facing Zimbabwe in its efforts at national transformation;

    Zimbabweans are experiencing pressures to assert and at times to invent cultural authenticity through ethnic identification, traditional religion, racial politics, and artistic themes. Ironically, this is an aspect of modernity’s engulfment of difference by submerging it in a discourse of integration, unity, and commonality. Yet positions in between and marginal to old and new also struggle for space in Zimbabwe’s inherited matrix of identities, as does a state that is itself multi-centered and cross-pressured (p. 160).

According to Raftopolous (2000), the immediate post-independence period in Zimbabwe was characterized by a government which, though it had a fairly broad basis of
legitimacy founded on both the legacy of the liberation struggle and a general developmentalist program, it still faced the task of establishing its domination both in the state and in those parts of the country where its support was weak. Thus the form of its rule was characterized by both a popular level of consent, however conditional and uneven and a distinctive coercive strain that sought to enforce unity and compliance where this was not immediately forthcoming. In political terms this has meant the introduction of political structures, which have marginalized dissenting voices and counter-narratives.

The legacy of the war for national liberation in Zimbabwe had established an uneven support and ‘imagined’ pattern of support from and control over the African population in post-independence Zimbabwe. The first order of business was therefore not only to “Africanize” the state, in terms of personnel, a task which was largely completed after the first five years of independence (Rafropolous:1986), but also to extend the breadth of its control, not only to confirm existing support but to dominate areas of opposition and uncertainty. The expansion of educational and health facilities with the announcement of establishing a one-party state was the most concerted attempt to establish and extend support of the state. With the complete state control over the electronic media especially radio transmission, the space for alternative political perspectives was extremely limited in the 1980s. This is particularly the case since most of the rural population receive much of their information through the radio and the issuing of licenses is done by the Minister of Information in the President’s Office.
According to Saunders (1996), for most of the 1980s, ZANU PF provided the most important broad framework for political and social organization in Zimbabwe. In this equation of community development enacted largely from above- the partisan, monopolized ‘institutionalization’ of civil society as it were- the state and its agencies stood as the primary organizing instrument in the hands of the ruling party”. The government has introduced National Service for students, where they are supposed to learn about patriotism. This is a compulsory "patriotism" course for all prospective and current tertiary students in what is seen as a full-blooded attempt to indoctrinate youths. No student will be awarded a certificate or diploma unless they pass the compulsory subject. Part-time students and those attending evening classes at government institutions will also be required to take the course. This has been condemned as it is seen as a way of forcing the youths to align themselves with the ruling party;

"Recruiting children into National Service camps make them savages. Look at how they are terrorizing people in the townships. National service is not a national agenda but a political party agenda. We are copying Ian Smith’s call up theme. The spirit behind National Service is wicked. Why now? It further enslaves the spirit of the youth. You cannot kill a people’s spirit by indoctrinating them dubious things. National service will end, one way or the other. At our universities, students have become scavengers because of hunger. National service is very political. You cannot control these kids. Not one of the Minister’s children is going for national service. They want to indoctrinate our children about political violence”(Walter Mparutsa, Harare, Zimbabwe22 August 2002).

Teachers have not been spared either. They are also required to attend the National Service course on patriotism. Zimbabwe’s government is looking at ways in which it can ensure that only "patriotic Zimbabweans" work for the civil service. According to
The Public Service Commission, anyone working for or wanting to join the civil service will be tested on their level of loyalty to the ruling ZANU-PF party. Prospective entrants who fail the test will not be employed. Those who are already employed could be dismissed. The government feels that there are too many people working in the civil service who are not committed to the ruling party and government of the day (Zimbabwe independent:29 November 2002). Teachers have been intimidated by the war veterans to attend this course or they face dismissal from the service;

“Without this orientation (national service), the government will always treat you with suspicion. To be honest with you, headmasters and teachers present here, those who fail to do this training will not get some of the benefits which those who will have undergone the training will receive. We discovered that most of you teachers have been sympathizing with the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) and are still drilling MDC politics into our children. So for you to be in harmony with the government you must go for the training. You can only be patriotic if you undergo this course.”(Zimbabwe War Veterans leader: Sunday Standard: 8 Dec 2002)

In an interview group discussion with students from Mount Pleasant High School in Harare, the issue of National Service, was seen as a way of the government to seek patronage from the students and force them into these institutions;

Going for National Service will not improve our education system or patriotism. If you look at the National Service you also have to look at the past few years in the run-up to the 2002 election when the Border Gezi Training Centre was established. We also have to take the people that were trained as a case study to see how far have they fed well in terms of reintegrating the youth into the culture what have they done. Most of us know
that those youths did nothing but terrorized people, raped people, killed people. They didn’t do anything constructive to our society. So with that in mind you begin to question what kind of culture are we trying to cultivate to our youth by sending them for National Service. Youths have been trained to be thieves, murderers and rapists. I will not go for that training. If I finish my high school, I am considering going overseas, if my parents and relatives can fund me. Does the government has enough money to cater for the millions high school students who are going to graduate this year if we are to go to the training centers? Never mind those that graduated the past years that have not found themselves anything to do. What is the government going to do about those people, because at the moment its failing to even upgrade the standard of living later on the educational standards at its highest learning institution the University of Zimbabwe for instance. So with all its failures where will it get the money. Right now we are running short of sugar, salt, cooking oil where will it get the money. Our parents are sick and tired of poking out money. They don’t have money any more. (Transcript of interview with Mount Pleasant High School Students, July 2002)

Other students from Harare High School felt the national training centers were a waste of money and a way of victimizing them;

Who is going to fund our education when we go to those Border Gezi centre.

So I think this cultural rhetoric vis a vis, the training centre, reintegration is just nonsensical it is nothing. What the government should do is to improve on what is currently on the ground. Improve on the current universities and embark on national dialogue about national service. Before you make a
decision you consult the people who are involved. I certainly don’t want to
go to Border Gezi Training Centre later lone to be seen wearing that green
uniform of theirs I don’t want to do that. The government and the minister
should also realize that people are different and unique. Its generation has
got its own unique talents. So it’s not right for anyone to impose on anyone
what they feel is right on their part because what they may feel is right on
theirs it is not necessarily on mine. What I think is another very important
point is those ministers who are busy clamoring for national service to us
who are in Zimbabwe. We the poor, poverty stricken ones, their children one
may want to ask there are out there in the West. What are they doing in the
West? Running away from poverty back at home. They know that the living
standards are poor. They are far below the standards and who is responsible
for making the standards poor, is the government. Because they are not
doing anything. It hasn’t improved at least on what Smith left out for us.
They destroyed the education system all together. In order to avoid their kids
to be exposed to this they send their children away to UK where they know there
won’t be any national service. If you were to call a minister’s son or daughter
and ask them where they go to school they would tell you that there are at
expensive schools like Heritage. An affluent school in Mount Pleasant a far
outcry from a school you find in Glen View there. And the same person tells
me to go to national service. Is it a crime to be poor? (Transcript of interview
with Harare High School Students July 2002)
The national service program was not welcomed by students who felt that the educational system was inadequate in other areas like school textbooks and other learning equipment. The well-known government critic, Roman Catholic Archbishop Pius Ncube (2003) in an interview with the *Financial Gazzette* said,

At least in 1980 we had hope that our government would respect our culture and give us real freedom of expression, association and other liberties that we fought for, but we are being repressed by our own people. We have a government that has made it its daily business to silence civil society and all forms of opposition. It is very difficult to call for celebrations on Independence Day from an oppressed people who have no money, no food, no cooking oil and who struggle every day to survive.

Another member of the Zimbabwean clergy during an interview, referred to be identified as Brother Emmanuel expressed his concerns about culture, education and politics in Zimbabwe;

Politics is formulated from culture. Politics is controlled by culture. In the United Kingdom, or in Zimbabwe culture rules politics. Christianity should be controlled by culture. Western music is one damaging our culture. Music is not maintaining our cultures, it is doing more damage to the language and the instruments. Zimbabweans are imitating the West, including the dance. Rhumba was once banned by the President. It’s African but un-Zimbabwean. National service as an identity-giver should be introduced only in the curriculum and not at specific places like the Border Gezi Training Centre. To have same uniforms for all schools in the country is a bad idea because
schools have different values and spirits. National dress is bad. Who will we be imitating? Whose dress? We have got many cultures in Zimbabwe, so we can’t have one dress. Who designs the dress? Whose tradition will we be following? There should be a consensus on promoting all cultures including minorities. Rich black people associate with whites, so they imitate all aspects of white people, dressing, language, Western culture and way of life. Banning of foreign examinations was good, if they had allowed them to continue, the distortion of culture would have continued. Education is the one damaging our culture. Almost all books are from the West. How many writers do we ourselves have in Africa? If we want a complete Zimbabwean identity as Africans, let us destroy all Western-inspired civilization and start from our point of view. [Transcript of Interview: Harare 6 August 2002]

The voices coming from the church shows the ambivalent, paradoxical and equivocal nature of the Zimbabwean transition from colonialism to an independent nation-state. People want to define and/or identify with their cultures freely without being controlled by the government. At the same time, while the ruling elite seem not to like things Western, they like to live the Western way, be it music, dress, food, furniture and many others.

The language question in post-colonial Zimbabwe

At independence in Zimbabwe in 1980, Shona and Ndebele languages were made required subjects up to O-level in the respective regions where they are spoken. Soon after independence, students who had 5 O-level passes with Ndebele or Shona but without English were accepted for higher education colleges. English was no longer a requirement for entry into
tertiary education. However, after one year in operation this policy was reversed. The main reason given by Zimbabwean educators was the falling standards of education. A more likely explanation would appear to be found in the fact that even with the abolishment of the English language requirement; English remained, and continues to be, the de facto language of power and economic advancement in Zimbabwe.

When Shona was initially introduced as a subject at the O-level, it was taught through the media of both Shona and English. The testing of Shona composition and summary writing and comprehension were, from the inception, done in Shona, but appreciation and usage, and literature could be tested in either Shona or English. Although since 1980, there have been efforts to minimize the use of English in teaching and examinations; the English medium has continued to be used alongside Shona. The importance of education in the context of a developing country like Zimbabwe seems too obvious to require any elaboration. Bamgbose (1991:62) states that education is not only the basis of mass participation, it is a means of upward social mobility, manpower training, and development in its widest sense of the full realization and utilization of human potential and the nation’s resources for the benefit of all. Discussing education makes the question of language unavoidable, since it is mainly through language that knowledge is transmitted.

A Harare High School student felt that indigenous languages like Shona should be recognized as national languages but not as media for instruction;

It’s a good thing to make Shona an official language but to use it to teach other subjects than Shona, I don’t agree. It has to take time. I think it does not make sense to teach science subjects in Shona because there are some terms that are used in Biology which are very difficult to express in Shona. It is
better that we use English. By using English doesn’t mean that we are not being cultural. We are doing it because it is the best way of learning physics and biology. I think certain terms used in biology and physics are difficult to translate to Shona. Some of the terms are not even available in the Shona dictionary. Biology, physics and chemistry cannot be taught in Shona or Ndebele. These subjects have a lot of things that cannot be expressed in indigenous languages like Shona. So it is difficult to teach students natural sciences in the medium of Shona. Everything that is used there is English-related. We might want to preserve our culture but you can’t be concerned about your culture when you don’t have a job. You don’t have a way of living. You don’t have anything in this world except your culture it doesn’t bring you anything at the end of the day. (Transcript of Interview with Harare High School student, 16 July 2002)

However, Mrs Moyo, a female school teacher felt that it was possible to teach other subjects in indigenous languages;

We encourage that other subjects like Mathematics be taught in Shona, so that everyone can get a clear picture and understand what these subjects mean. You can’t tell a child who is at the rural area school to start spelling those deep words used in Biology. They cannot understand so we are saying that they should taught in language that can benefit Zimbabwe Shona, Ndebele and English all those languages that are used in Zimbabwe. The curriculum should be the same because we are all Zimbabweans. I like the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation they for introducing National FM where old languages could be heard. Yes but however it will be disadvantage to those who want to create opportunities in for themselves in other countries.
You cannot communicate in Shona with somebody in Botswana, it will be a disadvantage. Talking about our country is an advantage to those old people. English must always be available because it makes us easy to communicate. If you go to England, America even here in Zimbabwe people who come from for example Botswana or Nigeria they don’t understand our languages, Ndebele or Shona. So English should be made a possible language to be available on 5 O’ levels. On that matter of making History a compulsory subject, it is good because people should know where they came from they should know their roots. Like who brought about the independence of the country, Mbuya Nehanda, people like Mugabe. People who sacrificed for this country. Changing school names and roads to names of Zimbabwean heroes is part of reform and brings out our identity as Zimbabweans. Imagine school names like Prince Edward, St Johns, we don’t even know these people. They are not Zimbabwean or African. We want names like Tongogara, we know he fought for this country, Mbuya Nehanda, Sekuru Kaguvi Joshua Nkomo, Robert Mugabe, those people who sacrificed their lives for this country. We should name our schools using Shona names. If you go to England you won’t see a school named after Joshua Nkomo, but if we come here we have names like Queen Elizabeth Girls School– what’s that. (Transcript of Interview with Mrs Moyo, Harare July 8 2002)

In Zimbabwe like in most African countries, the imported official language is the major medium of education even from primary level. Negative results from this practice show that there is perhaps a need to try alternatives. It has always been felt by Zimbabwean educationists that the Zimbabwean child’s major problem in school is a linguistic one. Instruction is given in a language that is not normally used in his/her immediate environment, a language that neither the learner nor the teacher understands and uses well enough. In an interview with a male teacher who wanted to be identified as
Mr Ncube, the veteran teacher who has taught in high school for twenty years was so passionate about Zimbabwe’s language policy;

“I fail to understand what the government is waiting for to recognize our indigenous languages in schools. I have been teaching for twenty-four years now and I know what I am talking about. You need to review the examination results from Grade 7 to Form Six at random before and after independence and you will notice that the highest pass rate is in the indigenous languages, Shona and Ndebele. So why should we not teach other subjects using these languages that our pupils understand because they are failing terribly in these subjects that are taught in English? (Transcript of interview with Mr Ncube July 11, 2002)

The challenge in language use in Zimbabwe is not only to ensure a meaningful mother tongue education, but also to evolve a viable program in which both mother tongue and other teaching reinforce each other. Brock-Utne (2001:3) sees the question of the language of instruction in relation to questions of poverty, power and partnership. She argues it is not the poor who benefit from the continued use of the colonial languages as the languages of instruction but those who have power. To her the language question is all about power. Choosing as the language of instruction an indigenous language, a language people speak, are familiar with and which belongs to their cultural heritage would redistribute power from the privileged few to the masses. Language choice cannot be divorced from the question of power and knowledge production in a society. The decision about which language should be the medium of education in a particular country
is embedded in issues of power relations. The politics of language in schools cannot be separated from the social problems facing society.

The choice of a language of instruction in Zimbabwe is a political choice, a choice that may redistribute power in a global context as well as within an African country, between the elites and the masses. Choosing as the language of instruction an indigenous language, a language people speak, are familiar with and which belongs to their cultural heritage would redistribute power from the privileged few to the masses. Language choice cannot be divorced from the question of power and knowledge production in a society.

Many Zimbabwean Africans prefer to use their mother tongue for most communicative purposes. This can be borne out by casual observation of language use among many, including some university educated Africans when they are communicating with each other. Yet, they function in an educational, social, and economic system that emphasizes the importance of English. In order to get a ‘good’ job in Zimbabwe, an O-level pass in English is required. Language use in Zimbabwe is very much a class issue. Those Africans who have “made it” have absorbed a lot of culture in the medium of medium of English and their Shona has been left behind in the village (Chimhundu:1987). This situation has affected attitudes in Zimbabwe about the desirability for Shona or Ndebele as languages of schooling. The government, according to policy makers, does not appear to acknowledge the importance of indigenous languages. Although either of the two primary languages, Shona or Ndebele, is a required subject in the respective regions where they are spoken, students do not need to have
Shona or Ndebele in order to move on to further education or get a job. However, they must have at least a ‘C’ Grade in English to go on to higher education. Even at the level of parliament, where most of the members speak Shona, or Ndebele, English remains the working language.

In early 1997, the government confirmed the continued use of English as the official language of parliament, the language through which the debates are recorded (Fingaz:24 March 1997). Award winning Zimbabwean author, Chenjerai Hove, laments the neglect of indigenous languages by policy-makers,

“Illiteracy is a form of censorship. Our country is run in the English language. Too bad for those who do not understand the language. The road signs are in English. Bank transactions are in English. Every legal document is in English. Parliamentary speeches, even by semi-literate Honourable (should I say horrible?) members of parliament, are in English. The whole idea is to block the peasantry out of the country’s official systems and institutions. Radio Two broadcasts Chakafukidza dzimba matenga, and the programme is popular in the countryside. Let alone the "kwaziso/ukubingelelana/greetings" programme. As if to say the only thing the villagers would concern themselves with is to send messages to their relatives out there in some far-away place or to reveal how witches and some other god-forsaken forces invaded their homes.”(Financial Gazzette: August, 20, 2000)

Whilst the government seems to be promoting indigenous languages, most information from radio and television continue to be relayed in English to the detriment of its efforts of inculcating national culture and identity to its people.

One of my key informants, Ngugi Wa Mirii, founded the Zimbabwe Association of Community Theatre (ZACT) in 1986 and is the current director. Ngugi is an artist par
excellence and with a desire to stand on his own feet burning inside his heart, he founded and launched ZACT, a non-profit making organization. A prolific writer, researcher, filmmaker and educationist all folded into one, Ngugi has passion for the arts. A staunch Pan Africanist, Kenyan artist Ngugi wa Mirii, has not only found a home in Zimbabwe, but has also dedicated his life to the development of the arts in this Southern African nation, as he had done in his home country, Kenya, before he was forced into exile in 1982. He spoke passionately about African indigenous knowledge systems and development and thinks that local languages should be promoted especially in schools;

If we look at what makes nations great we shall note that it is the recognition and pride of who and what they are. This includes first and foremost their languages and culture and appreciation of their history. Indigenous languages should be given recognition by elevating them to official languages and schools should make it compulsory for students to learn at least one local language. Shona and Ndebele should be used as media of instruction in schools alongside the English language. The government has to stick by its independence promises, that indigenous languages should be used for commerce and industry. Zimbabwean culture can only be revived and reconstructed by respecting the languages of the people, the languages that the majority of the people speak. The youth are fascinated by Western cultures and languages and do not want to be associated with anything local and Zimbabwean. Our elders and leadership are also not doing enough in promoting local languages and cultures. We tend to look to our former
oppressors, yet, we are very much aware that all they want from us is not just
to give us charity, but to make money out of us and out of our country. We
must learn to look from within and draw our strength from there. (Transcript
of interview, Harare, August 28, 2002)

The extensive use and status of English in post-independent Zimbabwe is an
indication of how colonial identities have found their way in the post era and brings into
light the questions of power and language. The language of power becomes the language
of wider communication and benefits those who have the means to communicate in that
language. In essence the separation that is made between the politics of education and the
politics of the larger society is not all that useful. The choice of English over the
indigenous languages in Zimbabwe as the medium of instruction is a power struggle
between those who have power and those who have not.

In Zimbabwean urban areas, particularly Harare, some students have adopted very
specific attitudes towards English accents and these are popularly known as “nose-
brigades”. These are Black Zimbabwean students who attempt to emulate the speech of
native speakers of English with a strong nasal accent and tend to look down upon Shona
language and those who speak Shona. They see themselves as belonging to their own
linguistic class that is outside “rural Shona”. Another description, “SRB” (strong rural
background), refers to students who speak English with a pronounced Zimbabwean
accent that reflects some influence from their mother tongue.
Even at the University of Zimbabwe, there is a negative attitude towards those students who study Shona or Ndebele as specializations. This researcher was even asked by his contemporaries why he was doing an Honors degree in Shona. They could not imagine someone “doing Shona at University”! To them it is like a waste of money, time and resources. Even those students who specialize in indigenous languages at Colleges and Universities would not want to say it openly or even go to the extent of pretending not to speak Shona in the company of certain students. These attitudes are indicative of the manner in which Shona or Ndebele is perceived by some of the so-called “educated” Zimbabweans.

Some Zimbabweans have even suggested that Shona is a dying language. It is interesting to note that despite the seemingly negative sentiment expressed towards Shona and Ndebele, the subjects with highest performance over the years both in primary and secondary school, were Shona and Ndebele. Also, considering that English is the medium of instruction for Mathematics, one may surmise whether or not the performance in Mathematics was not also an indirect reflection of the pupils’ inadequate command of the English language. If students are not performing adequately through the medium of English, it would appear more logical to switch to a medium that the students understand than to retain the inefficient medium.

Mr Ncube expressed concern in an interview about the double standards from the government about the issue of indigenous languages and local content in Zimbabwean schools;
“The government has controlled education since independence. The leadership wants to control education and curricula to suit their selfish agendas. They talk of local Zimbabwean content in our education system but their children do not attend school in Zimbabwe. They want to fool us. They like Western things but attack things from Europe. ……A curriculum is a political tool. You follow the religion of those who rule” (Transcript of interview with Mr Ncube, Harare, July, 11, 2002).

There is always a politics of official knowledge, a politics that embodies conflict over what some regard as simply neutral descriptions of the world and what others regard as elite conceptions that empower some groups while disempowering others. Society either validates or sustains hegemony, or resists and transforms it. The whole social process is, according to Gramsci, organized by particular and dominant values that reflect a specific distribution of power and influence which can be covert in a school curriculum.

Domination and subordination are interrelated constitutive aspects of the hegemonic process, which constantly attempts to modify, neutralize, accommodate, and integrate threatening forms of counterculture (Kecht:1992:7). Thus, cultural hegemony is decisive in the coercive and non-coercive maintenance of any sociopolitical system. Hegemony has continually been renewed, recreated, defended and modified. It is also continually resisted, limited, altered, challenged by pressures not all its own (Williams:1977:108). This is part of the cultural politics in the Zimbabwean education system in relation to educational reform to serve the national cause or identity.

Language in education in Zimbabwe provides a common illustration of what has come to be known as an inheritance situation: how the colonial experience continues to shape and define post-colonial problems and practices. Thus, while it would seem that
African nations like Zimbabwe make policy in education, what they actually do is carry on the logic of the policies of the past. Nowhere is this more in evidence than in the very languages selected, the roles assigned to them, the level at which languages are introduced and the difficulty of changing any of these. The colonial legacy seems to determine current educational practices as it has proved to be virtually impossible to break away from the inherited practices.

In an interview with this researcher, Dr. Sibanda, had this to say about the primacy of the English language in the Zimbabwean education system,

“English is a language of wider communication. Your interview with me here is based in English. You did not interview me in Shona. The question is why? Is it because I may not express myself well in Shona? If I answered you in Ndebele and you ask me in Shona the whole thing would be a confusion I think. So we use that language which is widely spoken. A language of commerce, a language of business, a language of politics in the parliament although in parliament there is room to talk your own language because there are translators there. But English has become a language with a wider coverage in as much as when you go to West Africa, French is part of local languages there. French is bigger language of communication so that countries can communicate easily. When we communicate with Mozambicans or Namibians we use English because if we use Portuguese for the Mozambicans and the Angolans I think there will be a bit of a problem there. So I think that we insist on English so that we will know that when we get into business with other people who are not indigenous we are able effectively communicate with them”.(Transcript of interview, Harare, Zimbabwe, July, 4, 2002)

The emphasis given here is not in local context but that people will fail to communicate with outsiders if they rely wholly in their indigenous languages. English is thus emphasized by the policy-makers as desirable for business and communication hence it has to be started at a lower
level. Those poor children who do not have access to English reading material at an early age will be at a disadvantage. This is because a selective tradition exists within the education system,

Thus, “[C]urricula can either affirm or exclude certain voices….it can demean, deny, or disfigure the lived experiences of a great many people who are not part of the elite group. Pedagogy and curricula are not only composed of particular experiences and interests but also represent a site of struggle over whose values and versions of authority and history will be central to the educational process” (Leistyna & Woodrum: 1999:4).

The educational system in Zimbabwe reflects the social and political philosophies of its leadership, whether or not those philosophies are clearly stated. Given these realities, in Zimbabwe teachers are oriented toward certain political messages and educational structures, and education decision-making often comes under political influence Mrs Moyo confessed in a follow-up interview that;

“Teachers are not allowed to teach politics or what is happening in Zimbabwe politically. We were told not to teach ‘young’ children about politics because they will become bad citizens. Teachers and civil servants in general are also not allowed to run for political office. (Transcript of Interview with Mrs Moyo, Harare, July, 8, 2002)

By not allowing civil servants to run for political office, teachers in Zimbabwe have been silenced for allegedly teaching “political messages”. Thus education in Zimbabwe has become a means of social control by transmitting and preserving the beliefs of the educated ruling elites. Teachers are treated as civil servants and are subject
to civil service rules, and they are completely excluded from the decision-making process. Thus every educational system is a political means of maintaining or of modifying the appropriation of discourse, with the knowledge and the powers that carries it. Educational policies and practices in Zimbabwe were and are the result of struggles and compromises over what would count as legitimate knowledge, pedagogy, goals and criteria for determining effectiveness.

According to (Giroux:1990:xv), whenever power and knowledge come together, politics not only functions to position people differently with respect to the access of wealth and power, it also provides the conditions for the production and acquisition of learning. According to Lakoff (1990), language is politics, politics assigns power, and power governs how people talk and how they are understood,

Politics is the game of power; politics allocates power and utilizes it.

Language drives politics and determines the success of political machinations. Language is the initiator and interpreter of power relations.

Politics is language. At the same time, language is politics. Language allocates power through politics, defines and determines it, decides its efficacy (p.12-13).

The selection and organization of knowledge for schools is an ideological process, one that serves the interests of particular classes and social groups. In postcolonial Zimbabwe, the preference of English over indigenous languages is not a problem of terminology on the latter, but that elites would want their children to acquire the
English language, as they see it as a gateway to success. They would fight any idea that would want to change the present system for it will be against their class interests and values. Most of the elites’ children go to schools abroad for their secondary and higher education where most of the instruction is conducted in either English or French.

Powerful people in society have access to certain knowledge that the less powerful cannot get. In post-independent Zimbabwe, there are former white schools now attended by children of affluent blacks in government that charge exorbitant fees as a way of excluding the poor and entrenching the colonial segregationist policies but now on class lines. Such type of schools prohibits lower classes either by high fees or sports requirements, or language requirements, so that they can preserve and protect their middle-class values and interests. The curricula in Zimbabwean schools, stress hegemonic social values and students are made to accept values, rules and attitudes of the ruling elites as though such values are gospel truths that are predetermined, neutral and unchangeable. Knowledge is socially produced and thus always determined by strategies of exclusion and containment. In Zimbabwe, poor children are disenfranchised because of the continued use of the language of the former colonial masters in schools.

Language serves as the intermediary in knowledge distribution because accessibility of a certain knowledge base is determined by the medium of instruction. Most children fail to do well in school because they do not understand the language of the school and schools do not address their needs. The Zimbabwean school system, through
the curricula, tacitly reinforces and rewards middle-class values, attitudes and behaviors, including the way of talking, acting, socializing, values and style of dress. Social inequalities are transformed into academic inequalities. Poor children are silenced in the school system because they lack the background of their higher-class peers but are expected to perform as their richer peers. They do not have material to read at home as their middle-class peers. According to Freire (1993:21) students who lack familiarity with written words may have difficulty with writing in school. Class-based differences are also expressed in the curriculum content as well as in the cultural and linguistic preferences hidden in the curriculum. Language is related to socioeconomic and to some extent political processes, and is associated with the distribution of knowledge, and therefore power in society. It determines access to these, job opportunities, power and prestige. In Zimbabwe, most rich parents send their children to schools that teach English and French and not indigenous languages. These schools are very expensive and are bent on protecting their middle-class status and values.

Henry Giroux (1993) claims that educators need a language that makes students sensitive to the politics of their own locations. Language must identify its own truth. In Zimbabwe, such truths have been identified by the language of others, but “language will never liberate if it spoken by others to others” (Lintner:1996:7). It is linguistic human right for the Zimbabwean child to be taught in his/her own mother tongue. Foreign languages have alienated the Zimbabwean child from his/her immediate environment.
Education has been discussed in the context of nation-building in post-independent Zimbabwe. Indigenous languages have become national languages but they are not officially recognized as media of instruction in schools and as official languages. English is still the official language and language of wider communication. The institution of education was used by the government of Zimbabwe as a starting point and site of departure for nurturing a modern Zimbabwean culture. However the attempt failed as the government used the idea of national culture as a way of legitimizing their continual stay in power. Counter-narratives emerged opposing the government’s definition of culture, education and politics. The next chapter examines the emergence of artistic expression as a counter-narrative to the government’s perception of the Zimbabwean reality.
CHAPTER 5

The emergence of counter-narratives in post-independent Zimbabwe

This chapter discusses the emergence of counter-narratives to the Zimbabwean government’s official discourse on culture. These counter-movements have challenged and continue to challenge established territorial orderings of the post-independent Zimbabwean state. Whilst access to education was hailed as one of the best on the continent, the situation deteriorated in Zimbabwe in the late 80’s and early ‘90s. People lost faith with the government that came to power in Zimbabwe in 1980 through a popular vote. It was time for change but the government developed means to silence popular dissent. Thus new counter-narratives and stories emerged outside the educational system to challenge the government’s idea of a national culture and a presumed national unity and monolithic society. These voices challenge the government’s project of trying to homogenize the Zimbabwean society through culture using a de facto one party system of governance.

Under colonial rule, political, cultural and economic institutions in Rhodesia were shaped primarily by European settlers and members of the colonial administration. When Africa gained its independence from colonial rule in the 1960s, the euphoria that swept across the continent was infectious. All over the continent the new national leaders, in their inaugural addresses, thanked and praised their people for their support in united common struggles, stressing that the victory belonged to every one of them, and pledged their governments to economic self-reliance through indigenous control of resources, to the rehabilitation of African cultural identity, and to programs of detribalization, democratic modernization, and equal opportunity (Wright:1997:1).
With independence, therefore, there was an effort by the Zimbabwean leadership to rid themselves of colonial structures and establish more participatory political and economic institutions by restoring a sense of self-belonging and community after all those years under the yoke of colonialism. Zimbabwe experienced colonialism for almost one hundred years, far much longer than most African countries. The coming of independence was a time for reconstructing what was destroyed during the period of colonial rule and struggle for national liberation, be it cultural, political or economic.

Walter Mparutsa, a leading Zimbabwean theatre guru and controversial actor is against the purported de-linking of colonial culture by the post-independent Zimbabwean leadership, because to him, it is a legacy which has to be negotiated and navigated;

Culture is dynamic and in most cases you find that the government brings in policies even to control culture, which is very unfortunate because culture is very dynamic. What is it that we are looking at? We are looking at our culture, the politics of culture and there are lots of contradictions because trying to detach ourselves or the culture of our people from the colonial link has got its own problems. The educational system, to some extent, tried to do away with the colonial content but the links with Britain are still prevailing in the education system. They want to destroy the whole syllabi to make it in such a way that it suits the new political environment, educational reform going hand in hand with land reform? But you cannot. I cannot see this happening because there is a basis on which this whole thing was built. If anything, you diversify or you adapt, change some of the things that you don’t like, drop them and enhance those things which you think are progressive for the culture or the people, the education system, the religion, and
everything, all aspects of their lives.(Transcript of Interview, Harare, Zimbabwe, 22 August 2002)

In Zimbabwe, as in many other African countries, the nationalist leaders who were vehemently against capitalism soon turned to out to be “crocodile liberators, Swiss bank socialists, quack revolutionaries, and grasping kleptocrats” (Ayittey:1998:7).

After independence true freedom never came to much of Africa nor did development. For many Africans, the “paradise” promised them turned out to be a starvation diet, unemployment, and a gun to the head. Disaffection and alienation set in. Ngugi wa Thiongo, the prolific Kenyan writer has always been skeptical of African independence; “African independence was like independence with the ruler holding begging bowls and the ruled shrinking bellies. It was independence with a question mark” (Ngugi:1990:15). The age of independence had produced a new class and a new leadership that often was not very different from the old one. The post-colonial African experience is a grisly picture of one betrayal after another: economic disintegration, political chaos, inane civil wars, and infra-structural and institutional decay. The new leadership was a new company, a company of African profiteers firmly deriving their character, power and inspiration from their guardianship of imperial interests.

In Zimbabwe, those in power oppose the very idea of democracy on the grounds that it is a threat to “authentic” African culture and a challenge to the secular values of respect to the head of state. By the late 1980s, the government of Zimbabwe came under increasing pressure from the labor movement, students and other dissenting voices like musicians and writers, members of the middle class, to democratize its functions. This heralded the emergence of
counter-narratives to the government official interpretation of national culture. Monga (1996) says that,

There is a strong tendency among those who dominate the game to eliminate competition or to maintain a limited number of participants, since any enlargement is likely to disturb the prevailing equilibrium and to force all the actors into new struggles. One has to think about the challenges facing African authoritarian regimes as a situation of monopoly, in which the dominant player is unwilling to accept new entrants. (p.3)

Monga further argues that in spite of the monopolistic resistance of governments, African people have always tried to voice their concern or enter the political arena as a means of participating. In their continuous struggle against the dominant projects of nation-building, development and repression, popular actors mobilize collectively on the grounds of very different sets of meanings and stakes (Alvarez et al:1998: 5). Thus, collective identities and strategies are inevitably bound up with culture.

Numerous techniques invented to escape dictatorial enslavement in the name of national culture eventually led to the emergence of an informal way of voicing concern over the control of people’s lives by a regime that wants to cling to power in the name of the people. Jellin in Alvarez et al (1998: 407) argues that “when power relations are extremely hierarchical and asymmetrical, subordinate people develop hidden forms of action, alternative social spaces where they can express their “dissidence”. In such spaces, in novels, plays, halls( for theatre), in nightclubs (for music), backyards, in the invisible shapes and shadows, hidden transcripts, a sense of autonomy and dignity vis-à-vis domination and power is constructed and construed. Jellin refer to these forms as “the proto-forms of politics, the infra-politics of the powerless,
through which dignity and a sense of community are constructed. She says that such hidden forms and practices show some degree of autonomy and reflexive capacity and it becomes difficult to recognize them and distinguish them from apathy or subservience, until they become more explicit in having influenced people to act.

Artists, intellectuals, trade unions and civil society in post-independence Zimbabwe have resisted the official discourse in various ways, attempting in their works to circumvent the mainstream historiography of culture and challenge the grand or master narratives of official discourse on national culture. At independence in 1980, the Zimbabwean leadership gave an impression of the cultural sense of ‘the nation’s homogeneous people’ (Mcleod, 2001:119). Mcleod further states that the ‘pedagogical representation of the people as ‘object’ constructs an idealized image of unity and coherence in the past.

**Literature and music as counter-narratives in contemporary Zimbabwean society**

A striking feature of Zimbabwean artists’ struggle against the government’s absolute truth on national issues is that they have developed an impressive set of overt and covert informal frameworks to conceptualize their propensity to create counter-narratives against the prevailing official discourse. Their quest for recognition has occurred on unusual social and cultural terrain. Authoritarian uses of culture to prevent people from discovering the charms of their liberty have required persistent ways to hold pessimism and self-contempt at bay. The cultural politics of counter-narratives often attempt to challenge or unsettle dominant political cultures, shaking the boundaries of cultural and political representation and social practice, calling into question even what may or may not be seen as political (Alvarez:1998 :8).
Counter-narratives wrestle with the question of political culture. They do not seek or demand inclusion into the oppressive system they are trying to expose, but seek to reconfigure the dominant political culture and see a new system as an imperative in fostering alternative modernities, not necessarily defined within standard paradigms of Western modernity as the establishment in Zimbabwe would like to think. Counter-narratives remind people to fight for the right to define that in which they wish to be included.

The violence, lawlessness and confusions in Zimbabwe, has prompted writers and musicians to try to capture the post-colonial Zimbabwean dilemma and condition. Zimbabwe’s exacerbated authoritarianism after the failed 2000 constitutional referendum and then parliamentary elections in which the opposition nearly unseated ZANU PF transformed political exclusion into political elimination through state repression and systematic violence. Appiah (1992):157) underscores the importance and resilience of African cultures, even in times of crisis;

For all the while, in African cultures, there are those who will not see themselves as Other. Despite the overwhelming reality of economic decline; despite unimaginable poverty; despite wars, malnutrition, disease and political instability, African cultural productivity grows apace; popular literatures, oral narrative and poetry, dance, drama, music and visual art thrive.

The worsening of the crisis in Zimbabwe has seen the proliferation of protest novels, poetry, drama and music, depicting and exposing the oppressive nature of the Zimbabwean nation.
Achebe has articulated the responsibility of the writer in Africa as an essentially pedagogical one, in which the writer in addition to writing about the issues of his day also has to assume the role of teacher and guardian of his society (Amuta: 1989: 114). In a similar vein, the Chinweizu (1980) group has reaffirmed the necessity of the African writer to be concerned with public issues;

The function of the artist in Africa, in keeping with our traditions and needs, demands that the writer, as a public voice, assume a responsibility to reflect public concerns in his writings, and not preoccupy himself with his puny ego (p.19).

Thus writers cannot pretend to be unaware of what happens in their societies. Ngugi (1981) talks of “writers in politics”, the notion of every writer taking sides, the political and non-neutrality of works of art. Every piece of art thus confirms or challenges the status quo. Writers have responsibilities to their societies. Literature does not grow or develop in a vacuum: it is given impetus, shape, direction and even area of concern by social, political and economic forces in a particular society (Ngugi: 1981: xv). Ngugi’s works are united by their humanistic vision and concern. For at home and in exile, Ngugi continues to believe that in its search for a “genuine homecoming,” African literature will truly reflect the universal struggle for a world which truly belongs to all of us. Art for art’s sake is a deeply political position. Criticism cannot assume that its province is merely the text. It must see itself, with other discourse, inhabiting a much contested cultural space, in which what has counted in the continuity and transmission of
knowledge has been the signifier, as an event that has left lasting traces upon the human subject (Said: 1983:234).

Cooper (1994) claims that African novelists were the first intellectuals to bring before a wide public inside and outside the African continent profound questions about the corruption within postcolonial governments and the extent to which external domination persisted. Growing disillusionment made increasingly attractive the theories of underdevelopment that located the poverty and weaknesses of peripheral societies not in the colonial situation but in the more long-term process of domination within a capitalist world system (Cooper: 1994:1524). What was wrong with Africa? What had gone wrong? The mood of disillusionment engulfed the African writer and the literature of the period. Political independence was not a panacea. The new political class proved unequal to the challenge of nation-building and incapable of providing moral and civic leadership. The result has been the alienation of the intellectuals, especially writers and artists, from politicians and the bureaucratic class that run the post-independence political and administrative machinery. Faced with the new realities of power and politics in Africa, writers have had to reappraise their role in society. The preoccupation with the past had to give way to concern with the pressing problems of the present. This reversal of direction has been accompanied by feelings of guilt and self-reproach. Some writers thought that preoccupation with the past provided a cover for post-independence elites to carry on irresponsibly and corruptly.

Art has always been conceived as the expression of an idea, as the spiritual transfiguration of new truths (Mbonga:1996: 96). Refusing to fit themselves into pre-
established molds, Zimbabwean artists eagerly embrace their role and seek to convey the specificity of their doubts and emotions. Whether writers, actors or musicians, they draw inspiration from the need to change the order or the disorder of things. Strengthened by the force of their convictions, they try to make an impact and leave an imprint of their values and beliefs on society. They believe that art should be a reflection of both social realities and human dreams. That is why the main themes that drive their work are striving for a better world, criticism of the prevailing sociopolitical order, and resistance to any kind of authoritarianism. According to Serote in Herreman (1999:13), “art is the voice of a nation. It expresses the state of the soul, the state of the spirit of a people, it is, this art thing, a record of the past, present, and future of the people, articulating their culture and the culture of the nation.” Art expresses consciousness, action, and the life activity of human beings.

There is an intimate, close, pedagogic, and pragmatic relation between art and life. Freedom is enshrined in creativity, imagination, and dreams and people seek it in literature, in films, in art, in music, in theater, as we either cry, or laugh, or are sad. We seek it in what liberates life. Economic and political bondage means poverty, disease, illiteracy, subjugation, oppression, and exploitation for the countless children, men and women in Zimbabwe. Sachs in Herreman (1999) posits that the power of art lies in its capacity to expose contradictions and reveal hidden tensions, hence the danger of viewing it as if it were just another missile firing apparatus.

In oppressive environments like Zimbabwe, creative art and expression can play the role of mediator, as interpreter of reality, as presenter of alternative truths. Ngugi (1998)
argues that “any state is conservative by its very nature as a state. It wants things as they are, for it is constituted in the first place to ensure stability in a society with contending social forces and interests. Even in times of revolution the emerging state, after settling scores with the old regime and institutions, soon relaxes into safeguarding the gains and the new institutions from further changes. To Ngugi, there is no state that can be in permanent revolution. He says that art, on the other hand, is revolutionary by its very nature as art. It is always revising itself. Even in the work of the same artist there is a constant struggle to find new expression, a continual striving for self-renewal.

Art has more questions than it has answers. Art starts with a position of not knowing and it seeks to know, hence its exploratory character. The state sees itself as the holder of absolute truth and such a state regards those who ask questions as rebels, subversives, and madmen. Ngugi says that Socrates defined art as conscious dreaming in words, music, or colours. Questions can be a form of criticism, and this is as irritating to the state that thinks it knows everything like the Zimbabwean one, that wants to cut all ties and links with the outside world and even with its own people. Ngugi views art as a keeper of our dreams but warns that an oppressive post-colonial state crushes those dreams and turns people’s lives into nightmares. Dreaming becomes a crime of thought and imagination. Art and literature are full of ironies, and what happened to the book in real life has already taken place inside the fictional world of the novel.

Walder (1998:xiii) states that “literature is necessary to politics and culture above all when it gives a voice whatever is without a voice, when it gives a name to what as yet has no name, especially to what the language of politics excludes or attempt to exclude. Music is tied to society. The function and place of music and musicians in society have
been greatly modified in the course of time. As old forms disappear new ones are created. The modern musician is heir to all the musical traditions that existed before, and for the first time he utilizes them fully, adapting them to the needs of the present.

Given the gravity of events in post-colonial Zimbabwe and Africa since independence, the collapse of optimism for the African writer is understandable, as well as the feeling of guilt and self-reproach among writers that more was not done to warn and admonish. In some instances, the optimism has not been present, especially the Zimbabwean writer, Dambudzo Marechera, who has been pessimistic about the African leadership in Zimbabwe even before independence (Veit-Wild:1993). He talks of ‘people inflicting their dreams on other people’ referring to the leadership and their idea of socialism in post-independent Zimbabwe.

In accessing the commitment of the post-colonial Zimbabwean and African writers in general, one must allow for the historical and personal pressures operating on the writers and influencing them to articulate current aspirations. Their perception of the problems of their societies during the struggle for political independence was dominated by nationalist assertiveness. At a time when the nationalist movement called on the corporate energies of the colonized people, the writer had to throw in his lot with the people; he had, as Soyinka expressed it, to submit his integrity to the monolithic stresses of the time (Obiechina:1990:123). As a creative member of his community, his function was to use his art to advance the “cause,” and this took form of a cultural nationalism by which he tried to help his people regain their lost dignity and identity by recreating and interpreting for them their cultural heritage. The breakdown of this solidarity has been
vitalizing to African prose creative writing. It has infused within writers, a certain radicalism, as well as a sharpening of their social instincts.

For Zimbabwe, the first phase of the liberation struggles is characterized by writers who attempt to capture in their pamphlets, poems, novels, and plays, the revolutionary impulse of which they are inalienably, a part. The second phase is characterized by writers who register not only the pains and joys of national rebirth but begin to constitute an important source of critical consciousness for the nation (Nkosi:1983:161). Dambudzo Marechera is a Zimbabwean writer who has been very pessimistic about the gains of the liberation struggle even before independence. He is very skeptical about the black leadership that was fighting for independence. In his book, *The House of Hunger*, the young narrator speaks of his generation’s sense of the future as an engulfing power: ”we knew that before us lay another vast emptiness whose appetite for living things was at best wolfish” (3). Marechera’s writing augurs well with the moribund state of Zimbabwe’s economy and the corrupt leadership. He says instead of change, he saw ‘ignominious stasis’, we will drive through to the independent countries where….original thoughts veer and crash into ancient lamp-posts building new towns crowded with thousands of homeless unemployed, whose dreams are rotting in the gutters” (p.79-80). Marechera’s writings in the early 1980s echoes Mugabe’s regime’s destruction of Zimbabwe’s economy. He has presided, in the last 23 years in power, a crumbling economy, degenerating healthy delivery system, unaffordable education, rampant violence, lawlessness, runaway inflation, massive unemployment, shameless cronyism, pervasive corruption, a deliberate and systematic disruption of viable
agriculture and the resultant chronic food shortages in country that was formerly the breadbasket of the region (Daily News: Zimbabwe: 9 March 2002).

Shimmer Chinodya’s novel *A Harvest of Thorns* (1989) is colored by post-independence political disillusionment and sees the Zimbabwean political leadership as having “harvested thorns” out of the struggle and giving it to the people. To Chinodya, Zimbabwe is a wounded nation governed by nepotistic influence used to disadvantage ex-servicemen and the army is besieged by fraudulent claims from civilians posing as ex-combatants. His main character Benjamin Tichafa says “the worst thing is to come back and find nothing has changed….we won the war, yes, but it’s foolish to start talking about victory. All this talk about free schools and free medical treatment and minimum wages is just a start. The real battle will take a long, long time; it may never even begin (*Harvest of Thorns*: 1989: 243). The novel’s multitude of fragmented voices of identity also creates a sense of the thoroughly hybridized, multifaceted, and pluralistic nature of life in modern Zimbabwe and resists an authoritative, monolithic view of the postcolonial Zimbabwean condition where there are new voices challenging the old political establishment.

Chenjerai Hove, the award winning Zimbabwean author of the novel *Bones* (1986) is vocal against the prevailing situation of control and violence by the Zimbabwean government as a way of cowing people to the ‘party agenda’ of crushing dissenting voices. According to Zhuwarara (2002), Hove is a writer who grew up acutely conscious of the injustice meted out to Africans during the colonial era. In an unpublished essay entitled "African literature: What shall we read?" Hove says:
I seek to write books that remind us of what it is to be powerless or, indeed, to be powerful, and at the same time, strive to retrieve our historical conscience in an age when the worst can happen to both the weak and the strong in our societies made fragile by so many political and cultural forces.

Like other Zimbabwean writers such as Zimunya and Mungoshi, Hove continued to distinguish himself in his writings in English as well as in Shona. In almost all these writings he seems to be haunted by the plight of the weak and vulnerable members of society, those who find themselves pitted against more dominant historical and social forces but are powerless to define and defend their own interests.

Hove does not condone violence, especially forcing people to do what they do not like;

Violence is a serious form of censorship. "Vote for me or else I will kill you. I will go back to war. I have guns hidden all over the place," says a so-called former liberator. There are not many who will not succumb to that threat, especially if they have gone through it not so long ago. For violence is, as the lawyers say, a threat to your physical person as well as your psychological person, threatening you with death as well as threatening you and me with loss of psychological freedom of thought and knowledge (The Standard: August 2000)

Hove believes that Zimbabwe has multiple identities and is not a homogenous society;

We all have multiple identities. We are poly-cultural. We became cultural coloreds as soon as we met others from other lands. We became richer, and at the same time we found another mirror in which to see ourselves while they also had another mirror to see
their ugly and beautiful faces. With a combination of knowledge and wisdom, we soon discover that in all of us, there is ugliness and beauty. The human choice is to know what should be allowed to dominate, the gold in us, or the dust in us. Sometimes people allow the dust to dominate the rainbow. That is why, at the ugliest of our history, I wrote a poetry collection called Rainbows in the Dust. For, at that point, our beautiful faces could hardly be visible in the dust. The rainbows of our hearts and souls had been hidden by the dust. No nation deserves that. (*The Standard*: August 2000)

Hove is calling for a transparent leadership which accounts for the different multiple, racial and ethnic identities in the country. He goes on say that the Zimbabwean government has always wanted to stifle alternative truths by not developing certain areas, especially rural areas so that information will not reach the people;

I discovered that, indeed, ignorance is a form of censorship, a powerful one. The physical road along which buses and cars and donkey carts travel is also a form of censorship. I mean the absent road to your home. On the road travel buses which carry people. People carry ideas with them. The best way to keep the nation ignorant is to deprive the people of roads so that no new ideas cross certain boundaries. That is why the ruling party’s strategy included beating up those who were able to move from city to country at ease. They carried new ideas about bread, butter and the new prices of cooking oil and bus fare. Knowledge cleanses the mind of fear. It clears the little states of emergency which reside in the mind. But knowledge alone is far from enough. It needs a dash of wisdom, and another dash of humility. Gudo guru peta muswe, vaduku vagokuremekedza (Big baboon fold your tail in humility so that the small baboons can respect you).(*Financial Gazzette*: August 2002)
Thus knowledge becomes, in the Freirean sense, a weapon of oppression. The national political agenda in contemporary Zimbabwe is never among those things which try to report, at least factual issues which eventually affect the nation. Hove also believes that knowledge can liberate in the Freirean dialectical approach;

“Knowledge is good as a weapon of liberation, but wisdom is better where judgment is needed. With a good blend of knowledge and wisdom, no political leader can transform his country into a concentration camp. The tragic ironies will always be clear for any human body with a conscience inside it. For it is wise to think and know that a wise and knowledgeable political leader does not spend more money on prisons, research in the development of instruments of torture, guns and army salaries than on education, social welfare, health and the healing of wounds inflicted on the people by the state. The hypocrite is a prisoner of his own unbelievable beliefs. The knowledgeable person is a free person humbly searching for other new spaces of freedom for others, not for himself.

The rich and politically powerful say, according to the folk tale: to know is good, but to have is better. The wise and politically weak say: to have is good, but to know the dangers of any form of power is better. (The Standard: July 2000)

Hove has the conviction “that knowledge, true knowledge, is a fight, a struggle against personal and collective impotence, to unfold the various layers of reality is to conquer impotence at all levels.” He makes reference to the media in Zimbabwe;
“You will discover that sometimes our media tries hard to make us all impotent, the art of creating and shaping imbecility in which we are told that he who has military might and the instruments of torture is right. The media sometimes forces us to wear false masks so that we can glory in them and think that we are in charge of our destiny. Illusions are sold to the general population as reality. Democracy begins to be measured in corpses littering the political streets behind our footsteps. False identities. Ignorance. Lack of knowledge. Malnutrition in the area of wisdom. And when the readers of a newspaper read what is supposed to represent their hearts and souls, they turn to look at each other and say, silently: "We are none of those!" Trouble begins. The public conscience has been disturbed”. (Transcript of Interview: August: 2002)

As a writer Hove gives an account of his experiences and the responsibilities of artists in society, especially in hard times as in Zimbabwe at the moment;

I have the opportunity to traverse all the cultural and political boundaries of our society. There are those who think that they own the truth, the only truth. There those who believe that the truth is a mirage. I tend to believe the mirage lot. There is nothing like the definite truth in the world. As a writer, I have discovered that to write is to search for the many veins of truth which the heavens gave us. To write is to search for the numerous streams of knowledge, to discover the confluence of ideas, and to live them as an expression of human freedom. The ignorant think that the coin has only two sides. The knowledgeable think that the coin has three sides. The wise know that the coin has as many sides as you can imagine because it is in space. Knowledge is a search for all those truths, a multitude of them, not a
monolithic one. If you find one truth and then go to sleep about it, you are no longer a human being; you are a corpse.” (The Standard: August: 2000)

Zimbabwean people are warned that they should think critically and change their oppressive situation. Zimbabwe has many ways of defining its existence and not the one defined by government as official. It has failed to work and people are suffering in the name of a unique Zimbabwean culture. Zimbabweans have a regional culture and there is nothing so special about being Zimbabwean (confined to the geographical boundary) and living in an island detached from the outside world.

The Stone Virgins (Weaver Press, 2002) is a novel that has seen Zimbabwean woman writer, Yvonne Vera, moving into more controversial and contentious territory than most writers, be they men or women, have dared to write about. In The Stone Virgins, she delves into the experiences of women during Zimbabwe’s two-decade war of Liberation, the ethnic violence of the early 1980s, and the current political violence, narrating the hardships, the pain, and the courage of women who still bear the brunt of men’s conflicts. Once a silenced subject in Zimbabwe, this recent novel confronts the killings by the ruling party’s black soldiers of Ndebele people in Zimbabwe in the years after white rule ended in 1980. As in her earlier work “Under the Tongue”, Vera speaks for women who have not been heard who have lost their voices through trauma and force. The intense relationship between women who give a voice to the next generation is at the core of the life force and the writings of Yvonne Vera. She names the feelings and sensations for herself and for others. It is the sister and the aunt who have this power. Thus, The Stone Virgins is a counter-narrative to the official version of ‘normalcy’ that has prevailed in some novels about contemporary Zimbabwe. Vera is speaking against
both a culture of silence and a culture violence that has prevailed in post-independent
Zimbabwe and tries to capture an alternative story about the real situation in her
motherland. With language at once delicate and sensuous, Yvonne Vera evokes the
passion that people feel for their country as they seek to balance personal histories against
national and conflicting ones.

Once a quiet place of peace, in just a few months and for the next few years, Zimbabwe
was to be transformed into a place of betrayal and a naked cemetery where no one is
buried. Human bodies were left to rot where they fell. From 1982 to 1987, birds stopped
singing songs of hope and happiness, young men felt cursed, young girls were violently
turned into bitter young women and the whole community which turned against each
other shrivelled and withdrew into shells. This, the darkest period in the political history
of Zimbabwe, will forever be etched in the minds of the people of Kezi in Zimbabwe’s
Matabeleland South province. According to Mutandwa (2002), it was an era of violent
deaths, of rape and of general mayhem. It was a time that turned the government against
its own people and built a great wall of distrust between the ruled and the rulers.
Everyone is scarred; everyone experiences death. What happens to those left behind,
those left with the memories of murder, love unfulfilled, abandonment, betrayal? Perhaps
the most direct passage in the novel keys us into the national disaster…

“The team of soldiers who had congregated on Thandabantu Store had
demonstrated that anything which had happened so far had not been random
or unplanned. Atrocious, yes, but purposeful. They committed evil as though
it was a legitimate pursuit, a ritual for their own convictions. Each move
meant to shock, to cure the naïve mind. The mind, not supposed to survive it, to retell it, but to perish. They flee, those men who witness Thandabantu burn. They flee from a pulsing in their own minds….Kezi is surrounded by fast-pace soldiers, their minds evaporating.”(p.124)

The ethnic cleansing in Matabeleland was one of the government’s acts of crushing all those dissenting voices against its project of reconstructing a national culture based on common identity and destiny. Vera is telling us that the people in Matebeleland were sacrificed for the selfish ends of politicians, who according to another Zimbabwean writer, Dambudzo Marechera, ‘inflict their dreams on other people’. Werbner (1991) depicts the emergency of the Zimbabwean nation with its quasi-nationalistic sentiments and vengeance;

The catastrophe of quasi-nationalism is that it can capture the might of the nation-state and bring authorized violence down ruthlessly against the people who seem to stand in the way of the nation being united and pure as a body. In such times, agents of the state, acting with its full authority, carry out the violation of the person. It is as if quasi-nationalism’s victims, by being of an opposed quasi-nation, put themselves outside the nation, indeed beyond the pale of humanity. They are dealt with ferociously, not merely for the sake of political dominance by one part of the nation over another, but importantly also for the sake of moral renewal of the nation as a whole. The attack by the state on the victim’s bodies, in the present instance [in western Zimbabwe by the Fifth Brigade in the 1980s] by starvation and torture, even to death, seems to fulfil the objective of purifying and cleansing the body of the nation (p.159-60).
The catastrophe and horror of both ethnic and racial cleansing in post-colonial Zimbabwe left many alienated from their nation-state, some deeply convinced it proved that the war for the liberation of Zimbabwe had failed to make it a nation. White commercial farmers are seen as enemies of the state by challenging the legitimacy of the land redistribution exercise which has benefited Mugabe’s cronies and closer relatives. Some farmers and opposition supporters have been killed in the violent and chaotic land reform program. Zimbabwe is a living example of a country that has inherited the living force of colonial racism as a heritage and instigates state violence on internal ‘enemies’. This violence is channeled along ethnic, party and racial lines.

Vera, in *The Stone Virgins* is not only speaking from a gender perspective through the voice of the female narrator, but also from a national perspective. She is breaking the taboo that women should not challenge men, in a patriarchal Zimbabwean society.

In an article entitled “Zimbabwe and the politics of torture” (August 2002) the US Institute of Peace and the Center for Victims of Torture (CVT) relates the widespread use of torture as a political tool by the Mugabe regime in Zimbabwe. The report says that “the purpose of torture is to control populations, by destroying individual leaders and frightening entire communities” (1). The media has not been spared the control from government as a way of stifling diverse views. Independent journalists in Zimbabwe operate under severe restrictions on what they can report. Journalists who write articles that criticize Mugabe or otherwise offend the government are officially subject to arrest and imprisonment and unofficially subject to torture. A new law entitled the Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act (AIPPA) effectively criminalizes free speech. The Public Order and Maintenance Act (LOMA) outlaws the publication of anything deemed “likely to cause alarm and despondency”. “Every time you write a story, you are
likely to be arrested, because of the way the law is worded”, said Ray Choto, formerly chief writer, for the Zimbabwean weekly, *The Standard*. He was arrested in 1999 under LOMA for refusing to reveal the source of his alleged coup story by the Zimbabwean military. He and his editor, Mark Chavunduka, were turned over to the military and tortured. Besides them being civilians, they were tried by a military tribunal, which defied the courts by refusing to hand the journalists to a civil court. The Choto-Chavunduka case illustrates the cynical way in which the Mugabe regime has tried to repress free speech, frighten and injure its opponents, and undermine the process of democratization.

Yvonne Vera, in her award-winning novel *The Stone Virgins*, tells in a disarming turn of phrase the story of two sisters, Thenjiwe and Nonceba, caught up in the dissident war of the early 1980s. But well before that, the two sisters had lived through the 1970s war of liberation, going through troubled years but hoping for a better future under a new political dispensation. At independence in 1980, Thenjiwe and Nonceba like everyone else in the country were filled with hope and excitement of freedom. But then soon after, all hell breaks loose as turmoil brews within the ranks of freedom fighters who came back from the bush as heroes but are unhappy with the government of the day. Suddenly the people of Kezi are wildly thrown into the center of a bitter and murderous feud that sweeps through every home like a veldt fire. Every family stares death in the face and everyone is left scarred for life.

According to Muponde and Maodzwa-Taruminga (2002: xi) Vera’s writing,
paints powerful and unique facets of the post-colony, and presents multi-layered portraits shored up by an empire of imaginative signs. The result is a deconstructed notion of the African novel, one that often challenges the more conventional views of post-colonial literature and poses new vistas of imaginative, spiritual and psychological space in the post-colony.

Muponde and Maodzwa-Taruvinga further argue that in *The Stone Virgins*, Vera depicts ‘women who quietly defy the nationalistic, patriarchal master narrative of heroic acts and gives voice to previously suppressed narratives and brings into focus fissures in the nationalistic discourses of power’. Vera, reflecting on her life narrates on what gave her the courage to write *The Stone Virgins*:

"When I was growing up, I often felt too short for any great tasks. Too female. Too kind. Too apologetic. My voice was not loud enough. One teacher said to me in Form Two, 'Speak loud enough. I am not your mother-in-law!' He was a great teacher but these words were shocking to me. But the mind has its own limitless horizons and I am glad. I am against silence," Vera says. The books I write try to undo the silent posture African women have endured over so many decades? What comes out in the novel really is the conflict of the beauty of this landscape and the horror and violence of the different wars that people went through. I feel very close to my community and I am humbled to realize that I have served it well. This book has made me love this land more than I ever dreamed possible. I feel very close to my community and I am humbled to realize that I have served it well (Interview with Guthrie Munyuki of the Daily News: August 2002)
The little girl who could not speak loud enough has found a way of speaking so loud and so effectively that her voice echoes and reverberates, not only in Zimbabwe, but throughout the peace-loving world. According to Mcleod (2001:144)

“We must not forget that literary texts are always mediations: they do not passively reflect the world but actively interrogate it, take up various positions in relation to prevailing views, resist or critique the dominant ways of seeing the world”.

_The Stone Virgins_ is about a loss of both a personal and national voice. The background is the reign of terror in Matabeleland, the perpetrators of the massacres pensioned by the taxpayer’s money, and historical reports lost. The voice and ambience of a region, the community and thus the time and place have been dislocated. The increased strength of _The Stone Virgins_, over Vera’s other works is the intensity of the local. As she walks the reader back and forth from Thandabantu store in Kezi, which seems to be the heart of all developments, she makes you a part of the life that is now better not remembered. The dissident era is a period politicians in Zimbabwean government would like to forget and many people have tried to push to the back of their minds. But those who went through it learnt to live with brutal death, betrayal and sub-human treatment. It was and it remains an uneasy walk back to normalcy.

The fact that Vera’s fiction is rooted in critical and decisive moments of Zimbabwean history reveals that value of an alternative psycho-social signage by which herstory of the nation maybe told (Muponde and Maodzwa-Taruvinga: 2002:xii). _The Stone Virgins_ is a novel that will help many Zimbabweans to deal with the turmoil of the independence struggle, the dissident war and the current political violence that has
silenced a lot of people in the name of one common destiny for the enrichment of the political elite. It is a counter-narrative of pain but it is also a book of hope. In this gentle but fearless book, Yvonne Vera enables Zimbabweans to respond truthfully to the catastrophic depths of unspoken wars.

_Protest theatre as a counter-narrative in post-independent Zimbabwe_

The resurrection of protest theatre in Zimbabwe in the new millennium was welcome as it enables Zimbabwean society to scrutinize itself and ascertain whether it is moving towards the goals sought by a people aspiring to be a democracy. It relays a message that a docile society is now rejuvenating itself to embark on a fresh journey towards overcoming and removing the burdensome culture of silence that had prevailed in Zimbabwe since independence.

Ngugi wa Mirii who has written over 30 plays, has facilitated and directed some plays by other theatre groups. Ngugi, who has been heavily involved in training young people in community theatre for the last twenty years, added that as a Pan Africanist, he strongly believed in the African identity and self-expression. A father figure, he said he took pride in the catalogue of successes scored by some young people who had passed through his hands to the pinnacle of glory. He however conceded that translating community theatre into a viable business was no stroll in the park. About the role of theatre arts in developing and changing the Zimbabwean society, Ngugi said;

“Zimbabwe has a great future in theatre. Here community theatre is very advanced and has grown since independence. In the sub-region we have pioneered in many areas and made a major contribution to theatre development. Theatre as literature should play a role
in analyzing society and helping people become aware of their environment. Recent plays like *Ganyau Express* and *Rags and Gabbage* explore sensitive political issues, that is theatre, people laugh at the characters but that is what is happening in society. Our people are not used to paying for national theatre, and it is difficult to turn it into a viable business. The government’s effort to ensure that 75 percent of broadcast has national content reflecting and celebrating Afro-centric culture and values would go a long way in promoting community theatre and inspire growth in Zimbabwe cinema. Zimbabwean music has also done a lot in making society aware of its problems. You at least know what I am talking about, your university has awarded Thomas Mapfumo for his sterling work in music. Our institutions fail to honor their own sons and daughters, and it is the foreign institutions that are doing that for us. As part of our community efforts to reach the people, we have at times provincial tours of our plays which people can watch for free but it has to be sponsored first. People like theatre that depicts their problems and joys and theatre is a way of communicating to the people and transmitting cultural values. Theatre thrives even in times of crisis. There is a lot of protest theatre coming up in the country these days and people are free to interpret them the way they like. Ours is a theatre for the development of the community.(Transcript of interview, Harare, August 28, 2002)

Ngugi uses theatre as a tool to push for societal development as the themes that theatre groups under ZACT explore are wide-ranging, touching on basically all facets of society. The wide-ranging array of thematic concerns he deals with in his works includes sustainable development, environmental conservation, human rights, good governance and democracy, health and policy issues on HIV/AIDS.
Walter Muparutsa’s one-hander and solo play, *Rags and Garbage* (2002), brings back to the Zimbabwean stage this hard-hitting genre. The play, written by Raisedon Baya, directed by Dylan Wilson-Max and produced by Daves Guzha is frank about topical political and social issues. Such matters are considered taboo by many as issues that cannot be discussed openly. In the one-hour one-man drama, Muparutsa assumes the persona of a madman, saying the unspeakable and evoking prominent personalities such as Dambudzo Marechera and Josiah Tongogara, Joshua Nkomo and Ndabaningi Sithole in the play. He even proposes the exhumation from the National Heroes Acre of those with dubious credentials for re-burial in the resettlement areas. Such national cultural institutions like the National Heroes Acre are being abused by the ruling party by installing heroism to people who do not deserve. Only heroes are found from within the ruling party. Heroes are products of history and historical necessities but in Zimbabwe some people are bestowed the honor of heroism for killing people and preaching violence. The definition of heroism in Zimbabwe thus becomes partisan and monolithic. One becomes a hero because of the party that he/she affiliates.

Theatre should reflect the true inner feelings of a people and bring out their frustrations and anger at unresolved concerns. The play *Rags and Garbage* seeks to convey the message that silence does not pay. The piece depicts a pseudo-world of protest speech in which a people experience and articulate what they would rather not say in the real world. Unfortunately such plays will never be shown on the sole national television station, Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation and -Television. Zimbabweans are irate over a number of issues, most of them unexplained to them by those in authority. Such plays as
Muparutsa’s Rags and Garbage, which are society’s mirrors, will hopefully spur politicians and civil leaders into action aimed at addressing vital questions of the nation as Zimbabwe tumbles into the dustbin of history.

Muparutsa’s *Rags and Garbage* is an apt rendition of a furious lunatic clamoring to remind his countrymen of an unconscionable and ruthless government that has ruined everything, including sport. *Two Cheers for a Patriot*, is another piercing work of art that dwells on sensitive issues and is controversial and scornful of those who believe they are the unique repository of power and knowledge. The play portrays those who believe that they alone can brutalize, harass, and torment the electorate at random. A theatre producer and director said in an interview about the play *Two Cheers for a Patriot*:

“We have always wanted not only to tell a story, but a relevant one. The protest movement is growing rapidly. Worried police and governments the world over are stepping up efforts to crack down on protesters with increasing brutality Is the right to peaceful protests becoming a thing of the past?” (Transcript of , Harare, September, 2, 2002)

Another protest play, which I watched in Harare’s Mannenburg Club as part of my participant-observation exercise in July 2002, *Ganyau Express*, The Bus of Laughter, features several actors who speak their minds in an atmosphere of thought-provoking, unfettered speech. *Ganyau* in the Shona language means excessive use of force. Ganyau-Express is a bus, plying the Harare-Chitungwiza route. “War” or “Force” is not part of the play. It is a pure comedy and rib-cracking laughter in a bus full of passengers from the time it takes off, up to the time it reaches its destination. *Ganyau*
Express is a witty drama and a daring theatrical effort. With Zimbabwe adapting to the reality of empty bellies day and night, the characters in the play reveal their inner feelings in a bus.

In Ganyau-Express no social and political discourse is taboo. Three passengers open the journey, dominated by a well-read, drunk who is comical, loud-mouthed and witty character whose moods are unpredictable. His conceit does not go down well with most commuters on board and he is almost arguing with the civil servant, who he constantly refers to as the man from the brown pastures, who should think of “his brown files and sorry budget.” In any conflict situation like the one in Zimbabwe, there is need for people to seek help from the “Almighty God.” As the bus shuttles down the pot-holed route, with the passengers almost engaging in a fist of fights, a bible bashing rabble-rouser joined the journey of “horror”. “Why should we be made to pay for refuse that is never collected?” winked the drunk who also says he does not have to apologize for being born after the war was over. The bible-busher storms around preaching that “thou shall not covert thy brother’s wife.” What happened next? Before he closes his mouth, his mobile phone rings. Guess who is the caller? It is from his mistress.

Ganyau Express is an “Express” of a mixed bag. The play touches on several issues presently afflicting Zimbabweans, political violence, student harassment, prostitution and AIDS and bogus Christian preachers, among others. As more and more actors are conscientized, the ground they tread on is also becoming dangerous. According to Muperere (2002:17) “one is left in stitches, sometimes in tears as the passengers take their turns to narrate their various triumphs, ordeals of sufferings, love, gossip, tragedies and even politics. Davies Guzha, the Director of the play, quoted by Muperere, says that
“the play is not your run of the mill theatre piece but a work that reflects on the thinking of people experiencing their worst socio-economic ever”. *Ganyau Express* is a comic and satirical play that defies the Zimbabwean government’s normalization of abnormal realities.

Muparutsa is aware his latest play *Rags and Garbage* may invite trouble, but he courageously says in an interview, “but that is my work. I am a liberator and I liberate the mind through my art. I will defend my work.” The veteran theatre artist and controversial actor, in an interview, attacked the government’s education reform system, the land reform program and other institutional changes since independence;

“We have cultural contradictions in Zimbabwe. We cannot succeed in culling colonialism and its vestiges. National Ethos says curriculum should be destroyed to suit the new political thrust, but we have no national identity. In post-independent Zimbabwe, people moved to urban centers. People were de-villagized, no relation with rural areas. Media system has no linkages with kumusha (rural areas). The government of Zimbabwe has no cultural policy, culture week is the only link. Culture syllabus in the Ministry of Education has a strong link with the West. Cultural bridges have been demolished, so we have no way back. Children have no direction because elders have gone out of the way. We are more British than the British themselves. Parliament has colonial vestiges, check the Parliament opening, it has colonial rituals. The law is still Western, Roman, Dutch, British. Judges attire has colonial links too, look at their hood. I have never used my Shona name. Chiefs, who are supposedly custodians of national culture, have been commercialized to a certain point where it is meaningless. Mugabe is not consulting chiefs on the land reform program. He is uprooting people from their roots with his
villagized land policy. People are being displaced, dislocated and transferred to far away places from their kin because of the so-called land reform, which is chaotic. Chiefs were the custodians of our land but our political system does not our chiefs. People get land on political affiliation. Mugabe has no respect for the chiefs. The education system in the rural area has been destroyed. Pupils have been displaced. The dilemma will not end (Transcript of Interview, Harare, Zimbabwe, 22 August 2002).

As a result of the chaos in Zimbabwe, artists have become political analysts and actors. Playwright Denford Magora was not at all lucky when he wrote *Doctor Government* and *The Cabinet Minister Is Sweating*. According to the *Zimbabwe Standard* (July, 2002), the plays were considered to be subversive and Magora was visited by the Central Intelligence Organization (CIO) when the plays were shown in Harare more than 10 years ago. But no one can silence actors and playwrights forever.

*A play of giants*, a Zimbabwean Rooftop Theatre company regional production, is a play adapted from Wole Soyinka ‘s 1984. Its production in Zimbabwe in 2002 was a thorn in the establishment's flesh, as it depicts real Zimbabwean scenarios and events. It revolves around four African dictators who lounge around at the United Nations bragging to each other about how they keep their nations beholden to them. The powerful drama, written by one of Africa’s greatest writers, Wole Soyinka, relates the story of real-life political tyrants. Soyinka’s new play presents a savage portrait of a group of dictatorial African leaders at bay in an embassy in New York. The resemblance between them and recent historical characters in Africa South of the Sahara is only too pronounced. In an interview with the Daily News, Cont Mhlanga, a prominent Zimbabwean theatre producer, said apart from protest theatre, Zimbabwe was also
witnessing what he termed “theatre of oppression”, theatre meant to maintain the oppressive status quo. Mhlanga said: Theatre must reflect society’s mood. It has to portray things as they happen, be they social or political. (August 2002).

Mparutsa attacks the government for sponsoring artists to sing in favor of the government’s chaotic land reform program;

75% local content on radio and television is a political gimmick by a bankrupt government. They are exploiting the poor artists. 75% is controlled by people with a Western feeling. The Minister of information is messing up artists, musicians and dance groups. Some musicians have been singing in favor of the chaotic land program, Hondo yeminda (Third chimurenga /war/struggle). Maybe this is the local content they refer to. 75% local content kills the creativity of the artists, because you are told what to sing or what to say on stage. You will be lying to the people, art should transcend national political lines. We stage plays to depict what will be happening. It doesn’t matter who is wrong, we have to say it, loudly (Transcript of interview, Harare, Zimbabwe, 22 August 2002).

Most of this music was played time and again on Zimbabwean radio as part of promoting Zimbabwean artists and the government’s drive to have 75% local content on radio and television. In an interview with a Theatre Arts lecturer and music critic, the researcher was made to understand that;

“Zimbabwean art is not art for art’s sake. It is about life. People have developed an appetite for theatre because the artists depict real situations of oppression that identify with the people. It takes brave artists like Thomas Mapfumo, Walter Mparutsa, Cont Mhlanga to produce works that confront and debunk the myths of one people one nation
and the ills of the leadership. We are also writing and teaching political and protest theatre, to ignore the crisis in our teaching would be failing the nation. We have been accused of teaching politics in our classrooms. How can we teach of pleasure when people are hungry and being beaten in the streets, when there is a culture of violence and intolerance? In class we look at how theatre and music are responding to the current situation. (Transcript of interview: Harare August 21, 2002)

The resurgence of protest and anti-oppression theatre in Zimbabwe is an indictment on the leaders of any society, for it means that a nation is now seeking sanctuary in the world of make-believe, where at least the tongue is not seen as posing a hazard to national security.
Musical politics in post-independent Zimbabwe

Throughout the African continent, music is now considered a legitimate and effective way to get one’s message across, that is, a counter-narrative to the official cultural politics. An increasing number of artists have begun to engage themselves publicly, in order to defend their rights, but also to address concerns of a political nature. (Monga:1996:105) is incisive in articulating the role and function of African music;

“If political scientists and sociologists wish to understand the way African societies function, they need to go beyond statistics and macro-economics in order to decipher the sounds and the music of Africa. The rates of inflation and unemployment may allow for the calculation of a fictive gross domestic product, but only music can help us measure the per capita anxiety rate and gross domestic happiness- fundamental underpinnings of culture”

Popular music in Zimbabwe is indeed very popular and has taken over the airwaves and some being banned on radio as it is viewed as subversive. In touch with the problems of daily life, in tune with today’s atmosphere of disorder, the music is often syncretic, but nevertheless contributes to the development of a new social order. Though fumbling and repetitive, though it sometimes appears neurotic or lost, popular music has never stopped playing an essential role, that of, recording the frenzied chronicle of the collective meanderings, ambitions, pains, joys and dreams.

Zimbabwean musicians have also joined the counter-narrative train of artists depicting alternative truths against the official and single government version in post-
independent Zimbabwe. The refusal to conform and the desire to rebel is prevalent in Zimbabwean music even before the attainment of independence. Kwaramba (1997) argues that in a situation where Zimbabwean people were systematically excluded from the formal means of political representation during the colonial era, music became an alternative means of articulating their experiences. Richard Wagner, gives us a refreshing perspective on the importance and perennial nature of music: "It is a truth forever that where the speech of men stops short, there, music's reign begins" (Wagner, in Pongweni 1982: 1). According to Kwaramba, this was particularly true of the popular music that emerged in Zimbabwe in the mid 1960s to the late 1970s. The coming of independence saw musicians especially Thomas Mapfumo celebrating the victory of the liberation movement and the birth of a new Zimbabwe after all those years under colonial rule. Mapfumo played alongside the legendary Bob Marley at Harare’s Rufaro stadium in April 1980 when Mugabe was sworn into power.

This was however to be short-lived as musicians like Mapfumo criticized the same government that he had helped come into power. Thus from the late 1980s to the present, a new type of protest music has emerged in Zimbabwe, with even virtually unknown musicians speaking out against the corrupt practices of the present government. Thomas Mapfumo’s music laments the destruction of a promising country by the selfish leadership.

Mapfumo’s initial protest music attacked the government indirectly, thus avoiding direct confrontation with the government but as problems escalated he became more direct and open. Thomas Mapfumo's commitment to speaking his mind on the political and
sociological aspects of life in Zimbabwe adds a whole other dimension to his music. The label of his music “chimurenga” means struggle. According to oral tradition the tag Chimurenga was coined after a great Shona traditional warrior and legendary hero, Sororenzou Murenga who was renowned for his fighting prowess. Great fighters after him were therefore believed to be possessed by his spirit. Thus they were believed to be fighting Chimurenga, which when translated means "fighting the Murenga style". Hence the liberation struggle of the late 1960s came to be the second Chimurenga, and the genre of music that emerged from this spirit of struggle naturally acquired this name tag, and according to Pongweni (1982), won the liberation war. Chimurenga music was therefore a music that emerged from the tensions and conflict between the African people and the white colonial system (Kwaramba:1997).

Popularly known as the “Lion of Zimbabwe” or the “Bob Marley of Zimbabwe” Thomas Mapfumo has demonstrated unique humane, social and community commitment through his music. Since the 1970s Mapfumo has been the eyes, ears and mouth of Zimbabwe’s oppressed and underrepresented people, lifting his voice and leading his people against the racist regime of Ian Smith to liberation in 1980 and continuing his stark criticism of the current government under Robert Mugabe with its chaotic land reform program. He was jailed in the late 1970s for his music which the colonial government thought was subversive and revolutionary. Thomas Mapfumo did not believe in the rhetoric of independence and continued to warn the Black government that they should serve the people and deliver the pre-independence promises. He believes in the economic empowerment of the less privileged and the downtrodden.
There was rampant corruption in the government in 1988 that was later codenamed Willowgate Scandal. Some ministers were charged and later pardoned, one committed suicide over the issue. Mapfumo came up with the blockbuster of a song “Corruption” condemning the corrupt practices of those in power;

_Everywhere there is corruption,
Some of us are corrupt,
Everywhere there is corruption,
Something for something, nothing for nothing x 4
Corruption, Corruption
Corruption, in the society,
You can’t get away with corruption
You can’t run away from justice
I work hard for my living but get a little
Come what may there will be change_

The song “Corruption” was a direct attack on the excesses of the leadership who had developed a penchant for easy money and nepotism.

Mapfumo has sent his message through his music and is still doing that. His albums “Chimurenga Explosion”, “Manhungetunge”(Hard Times), “Chimurenga Rebel” laments the damage that has been caused by the current black government. He is the voice of the voiceless and the message, vibrancy, urgency, and militancy of the songs is synonymous with the political nature of Mapfumo’s orientation of the 1970’s against the oppressive regime of Ian Smith. In the song “Mamvemve” (torn clothes) Mapfumo tells people that the country, Zimbabwe, that you were crying for during the struggle has been reduced rags by the current leadership. This song was banned on Zimbabwean airwaves for its overt attack on the Zimbabwean leadership’s messing up of the economy.
The song “Marima nzara” (you have cultivated hunger) Mapfumo tells the leadership that it is not wise to chase away the productive white farmers from the farms. The result will be hunger and misery, which Zimbabwe has experienced since the farm invasions in 2000. Mapfumo sings about the everyday battles for survival his people have experienced and are still experiencing, from the struggle for independence to the present economic and political confusion of Robert Mugabe’s Zimbabwe. He has been seen as an enemy of the state by both the Ian Smith and Mugabe regimes. He was active in his determination to overthrow Ian Smith’s racist regime, yet quick to identify similar injustices in Mugabe’s ZANU PF government. Only a few musicians have accomplished such a feat.

Mapfumo’s music has always been about liberation and emancipation of the Zimbabwean people. Although his music was originally written to defeat the country’s white minority rulers, his latest freedom songs have been banned in Zimbabwe for criticizing President Robert Mugabe’s ZANU PF party’s mismanagement of the economic and torture of opposition supporters and white farmers. Mapfumo urges the Zimbabwean people to fight against the oppression that they experience from their leadership. In an Interview with Mark Hellenberg at Ohio University, USA, in October 2001, Thomas Mapfumo overtly tells the Zimbabwean audience that;

“It’s for the Zimbabwean people to decide their own destiny. They have been suffering for quite some time now. They fought in the last struggle, thought they had liberated themselves, that wasn’t to be. Today, they have got another struggle against the black government, they will have to fight another struggle…..They should decide their own
destiny, because they are the oppressed and they are the ones who are suffering and they have a right to change that government. It’s up to the Zimbabwean people to do that.” (Transcript of Interview, October 2001)

Thomas Mapfumo has always identified with the oppressed and this unwavering commitment for human betterment has made his music not only for Zimbabweans but is played in far away places like Canada, Germany, UK and the USA. His latest album, *Toyi Toyi* (a protest march in the streets) is a continuing call for Zimbabweans to liberate themselves from the bondage of the present government. In an interview, Mapfumo said “Zimbabwe is independent now, we thought we were liberated, **but we were not, the struggle is not yet won.**” According to Guthrie Munyuki (2003);

*Toyi Toyi* comes hard on the heels of the of the stinging and politically-loaded *Chimurenga* Rebel album which had eight of its songs banned by the Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) for containing “politically incorrect” lyrics. Showing the attributes of a matador, Mukanya as Mapfumo is affectionately known, has trod on ground where others fear to venture.

Mapfumo says *Toyi Toyi* is a culmination of people’s expectations and desires for a better life. One of the songs, Mukoma J, (Elder Brother J,) profiles a destroyer and a cruel man who drives a once prosperous home to destitution. *Vechidiki* (the youths) is a song that bemoans the devilish actions of overzealous youths who are used by politicians to kill and harass their own people in the streets. Mapfumo has maintained role as a mirror of the society and a true evangelist who has given too much and earned his place in the annals of Zimbabwe music industry. No one disputes his beliefs and his open ways in highlighting the ills of contemporary Zimbabwean society. Mapfumo puts whatever is
taboo and indespicable in the eyes of the majority and does not regret his iconic stature as the ‘voice of the voiceless’ for his music carries the true Zimbabwean reality.

I interviewed Mapfumo when he came to Ohio University in June 2001 to receive his honorary doctorate degree in music and he expressed concern about the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe and he said that he will continue to fight for the freedom of the people of Zimbabwe. Mapfumo said: “People in Africa are facing a lot of problems, and that is the cause that makes people write songs against systems where the people are being oppressed by their own people.” Mapfumo’s songs and music give voice to the concerns of a downtrodden people who battle for daily survival and continue a fierce struggle for independence and security. They are a true reflection of what is happening in Zimbabwe and the inner feelings of its people.

Mapfumo is not the only Zimbabwean musician voicing concern about the deteriorating state of affairs in Zimbabwe. Another prominent musician, Oliver Mtukudzi is also fighting alongside the people by the social commentary from his music. Mtukudzi was initiated into the world of professional music in 1977 when he joined the now legendary Wagon Wheels which also featured Thomas Mapfumo. With Zimbabwean independence in 1980, Tuku and the Black Spirits produced "Africa", one of the most important albums of its time, and with the two hits it spawned, "Zimbabwe" and "Madzongonyedze", (perennial problems) the fledgling country founded one of its first great voices. From independence to 1997, Mtukudzi released two albums every year, establishing himself as a producer, an arranger, a prolific songwriter and, with his famous "big voice", a formidable lead singer. Mtukudzi has, in fact, been so innovative in these
various fields that his music is now widely referred to as 'Tuku Music', being quite distinct from any other Zimbabwean style. It is his dedication to the live music scene in Zimbabwe, playing to enthusiastic audiences in even the remotest parts of the country that has earned him the place in people's hearts that he holds today.

Most of Mtukudzi’s songs focus on the social and economic issues that govern people's daily lives and, with an infectious sense of humor and optimism that prevails through all his music, his appeal extends to young and old alike. In the past five years, his popularity has risen extensively in the Southern African region and together with his band The Black Spirits, he regularly ventures cross borders into Botswana, South Africa Malawi and Zambia. I talked to Mr. Mtukudzi during my fieldwork stint in Zimbabwe in July 2002. Asked whether his music is about politics, the veteran musician out-rightly denied the political link but said that; “I sing what I see happening in society and my music has always been for peace’. This speaks volume of his music’s responsibility, as political violence and lawlessness have become the norm in post-2000 Zimbabwe.

Mtukudzi’s hit album 'Bvuma (accept) - Tolerance' released at the end of 2000, has created more than a few waves in the media. The lyrics on a couple of the tracks have created much debate, especially from the title track 'Wasakara' (you are old) which has been adopted by opposition parties in Zimbabwe as a 'party anthem'. It reminds the old to step down and let the young assume leadership. It is a satirical attack on the ZANU PF leadership which clings to power even when it has lost popularity with the people. Mtukudzi himself denies that his song has political overtones and says that it is people’s right to judge the meaning of his music;
"I cannot help it if people interpret my songs to mean whatever they want, but this song is not political. In the song I am talking about elderly women and men who do not want to accept the fact that they are now old, for example, old men who continue to propose love to girls young enough to be their own daughters. A lot of people have come to ask me about the song (Wasakara). I don’t know whether they were policemen or not." (Transcript of interview, July, 7, 2002)

People have interpreted Wasakara (you are old) as a politically motivated piece, as a direct attack on President Robert Mugabe to step down as a result of his advanced age. The controversial publicity has succeeded in making 'Bvuma - Tolerance' the biggest seller ever in the course of two months in the history of the local record company, Zimbabwe Music Corporation (ZMC). Unconfirmed reports in newspapers in Zimbabwe said that the police had impounded Oliver Mtukudzi’s Bvuma-Tolerance cassettes at flea markets when it became a hit with the people. Mtukudzi’s 1998 hit Todii, a question, originally about AIDS, but now so relevant to all of the country's crises, whether political, economic, natural or spiritual: "What shall we do?" Questions are a form of criticism and this is irritating to a Zimbabwean government that thinks it knows everything. Art is thus a keeper of the people’s dreams and possibilities, and an authoritarian state crushes those dreams and turns them into nightmares.

Even emerging Zimbabwean musicians, like Tongai Moyo, of the Samanyemba fame, have also commented about the deteriorating situation in Zimbabwe. In his 2002 song, “Rugare” (Good living), the young musician says Zimbabwe is now like worn out clothes, and is no longer habitable, “nyika (Zimbabwe) iyo ino yave mamvemve” (this
country Zimbabwe is now like torn clothes). The worsening economic and political crisis in Zimbabwe has seen a mass exodus of people, skilled and unskilled, seeking greener pastures in South Africa, the United Kingdom, USA, Canada or any other destination as long as they have left Zimbabwe. Moyo’s song reverberates around this thematic frame of running away from the misery caused by the leadership.

Female musicians are also part of the struggle for change in Zimbabwe. They have their own vision about an alternative society in post-independent Zimbabwe, which is different from that espoused and defined by the leadership. Portia Gwanzura is an outspoken female Zimbabwean musician, dubbed the "Madonna of Zimbabwe" for being the most powerful businesswoman in the country’s music industry. She has abandoned her life’s work to seek political asylum in Britain. She inspired awe in imitators, alarm in rivals, and named her band Hohodza (or "woodpecker") because she relishes the challenge of cracking the hardest opposition. "People who speak out in Zimbabwe get silenced, one way or another. The ones who leave are the only ones with a chance to tell the truth."

After the Zimbabwean government’s failure to win a constitutional referendum in February 2000, Gwanzura began to believe that the opposition could win in the elections in June that year. She wrote a highly provocative song, Zvinhu Zvaoma, which has an irrepresible, danceable beat but means "things are tough". The lyrics are an angry indictment of the ZANU PF regime;"People cannot afford to buy food, they are walking miles to find work, children are fainting in schools, when is it going to end?" The song was quickly removed from the play-list at the government-run Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation, and a disc jockey who played the song, was sacked. Gwanzura says of this
song, "People wanted to hear it, but if they played it at home it had to be done quietly, because you wouldn’t know if your neighbours were ZANU PF and would get you beaten up. The only safe place to put the song on was in your car, with the windows rolled up."


The female voice in the Zimbabwean music scene against the government’s misrule helps to explain the growing dissent within the arts and the hope for a plural society in which alternative ideas are tolerated.

There are some Zimbabwean musicians who have composed music in support of the government and the chaotic land reforms. One great musician is Simon “Chopper” Chimbetu. In an interview with the government-controlled Sunday Mail newspaper, the formerly avowed musician says,

"People have short memories — they are dismissing me as a spent force simply because I released Hoko, which they perceived to be apologetic to the Government, forgetting that of the more than 14 albums we have released, we have always included a revolutionary song on each album. The same people are forgetting where we came from, that my band, the Orchestra Dendera Kings, was named after Dendera Camp in Mozambique where we were based during the liberation war. The same people are forgetting that as Marxist Brothers, alongside Kasongo Band and Sungura Brothers, we played songs that reminded the people of our cause, our identity and our heritage. They want me to sing that whites are good — I won’t do that and I don’t regret it. If they are comfortable with attending shows where whites are praised then they better go there. I would rather sing for four or five people who know their identity — I have my genuine fans who understand me and who won’t let me down, come rain or sunshine. Those who don’t know their identity
should not come to my shows, they can keep their dirty money. I don’t need it. *Mari yemunhu ane brain dzisina kuita mushe handiide*, (I don’t want money that belongs to people with sick minds who oppose the government) that’s dirty money."

Chimbetu, alongside other musicians who have supported the government’s violence have lost popularity and their fan base has waned. Even music promoters have since stopped promoting their music. People seem to like music that identify with their problems and achievements and it is suicidal for a musician to openly declare that he/she supports a political party that is infringing the people’s freedom and civic liberties.

After Thomas Mapfumo’s controversial protest albums, Chimurenga Rebel and Toyi Toyi, another emerging Zimbabwean poet-cum-musician Chirikure Chirikure, takes centre stage with his new 2002 music release, *Napukeni* (Napkin/Diaper), which has ruffled some feathers. The album was released through Tuku Music Production, Oliver Mtukudzi’s recording company. Chirikure calls his album "a package of reflective poetry". Speaking to Peter Moyo of the Zimbabwe Standard, the renowned Shona poet says;

I am trying to spread the broad message that if you have messed up you should not deny this but accept responsibility and seek solutions. I am suggesting the way forward. The current political situation is such that politicians are busy blaming everyone else, including teachers, but themselves for the current crisis. But again, let's be careful not to narrow the message to the political situation alone as there is a danger of it becoming irrelevant when the situation changes. I used the words *chinja napukeni*
(change the diaper) as protest against the silly legislation being passed in parliament today. Some parliamentarians even suggest the banning of political symbols while a law against citizens making gestures to the presidential motorcade has been passed. As artists, we are forced to use the word *chinja* (change) to make a point. It's a call to change the situation as we realise we are in trouble. There is a lot of confusion in our society today which is full of greedy and ambitious people. Things are out of control like the situation on the invaded farms and the HIV/AIDS problem. Confusion reigns supreme in government as we have ministers, like that of education, making decisions before consulting stakeholders only to change their decision later. We had done quite well over the years as far as the curriculum is concerned, but now there is an attempt to indoctrinate children. Children have a right to decide their own future and we should only guide them. Decisions being made today are very short sighted and do not have people at heart; it's now political expediency first and everything else later.

Chirikure is thus bitter about the prescriptions that the government impose on the people and neglecting urgent problems like hunger and the HIV/AIDS issues affecting the country.

In the song “*Raka-kwira Mawere*”, (the baboon climbed the hill) Chirikure sings about resistance and sacrifice in the face of bullies;
“During my school days bullies used to give me a torrid time because I have always been slightly built. Today, as an artist, I have experienced situations where people follow me to the toilet (restroom) after a performance and warn me to stop talking politics or I would get hurt. Some threaten my engineers during our performances. There are also many cases of police brutality today as these people take advantage of their jobs to harass others. Teachers were severely assaulted in the build up to the presidential election and continue to be harassed, but is political orientation a crime? The state machinery is being used to intimidate people everyday”.

Asked on why he had to compose a song called “Hondo Iyi” (the war is coming) 23 years after independence, the soft-spoken author and musician bravely says that;

“’There has been much talk about who really fought the Chimurenga, or war of liberation, and this song is a response to that. No one has a sole claim to the struggle. The challenge we have now is to move the country forward. However, the whole country has been reduced to a refuge camp and we yearn for the life of the 80’s.”

In a song called “Hakurarwi” (we will not sleep) Chirikure challenges people to fight for their rights;

“Gore rino hakurarwi, tisina kuzvipedza. Hatingaregi uchibvoronga takangodzvondora...gore riya wakapisa dura tikangonyarara...nhasi woisa tsvina mutsime!”

This year we will not sleep, without finishing the task. We cannot let you mess up whilst watching…that other year you burnt the granary and we kept quiet….today you put shit in the water-well where people draw their water for consumption.
This is a warning to the Zimbabwean leadership that they have destroyed the economy and the country for too long while people were watching passively. Time has now come that the people’s patience cannot be taken for granted. It is a call for people to be active players in the destiny of their lives, a call that Thomas Mapfumo agitates in his 2003 album Toyi Toyi.

The Director of the National Arts Council of Zimbabwe, (NACZ) Titus Chipangura, articulates the role of arts in society. In an interview, the soft spoken director said:

I have learnt that the arts thrive when there are socio-economic problems, when times are tough revelers go to music concerts, that offer the arts a window to grow. But our growth has not been matched with growing perceptions. We are struggling to have duty on goods, or rather tools, meant for the arts industry, removed. Guitars, like any other instruments, are not luxury goods, yet for tax purposes are classified as such. They form the backbone of the industry. We also proposed to the relevant ministry that there be a syllabus in schools that treats culture as a core curriculum. If we do not support our culture we lose our identity and values. There seems to be a tendency to be self-negating and being Euro-centric. We are our own liberators, especially if we look at countries like China and Japan which have deliberately allowed their languages and culture to take centre-stage. (Transcript of interview: July 26 2002)

In an interview with a female gospel musician, the singing bird that whilst they sing about God they also express what happens in the country everyday;

Although our music is about God we also talk about politics. Who cannot sing about politics with what is happening in the country? Only that we try to
avoid confrontation with the authorities as Christians. We are also affected by what is happening in the country, food, clothes and even musical instrument have gone. There is no fuel, no foreign currency and this also affects our work as musicians. We appeal to God to intervene in what is happening in the country. We also have to spread the word for people to live peacefully in Zimbabwe, as so many people have died because of violence and blood has been spilt. So those people who say that gospel music is about God only are mistaken, we are also helping other musicians who sing openly about the political situation in the country. If you come to our gospel concerts, a lot of people who are not church-goers come to our shows and they dance because we sing what touches their hearts. They are many ways of telling the government to address our problems and we hope that people listen to our music which calls for tolerance and peace. (Transcript of interview with female gospel musician, Harare, August, 30, 2002)

Zimbabwean music, as part of the counter-narratives in contemporary Zimbabwe, gives an alternative interpretation of post-independent Zimbabwean culture and history against the official, linear and partisan historical view articulated by those in power. Zimbabwean music was also anti-colonial and played a significant role during the war for national liberation in Zimbabwe. It inspired those who were participating in the struggle. Thus the song is continuing its role of contributing to national development by trying to define an alternative conception of nation-building and cultural rebirth.

Music serves as a vehicle to amplify protest and consolidate community on deeper levels. Music defines alternative frames of reference for political thinking linked to new ways
of articulating the body and means of experiencing and defining the world. In offering listeners
the opportunity to join in the performance by dancing and singing along or participating in
other ways, the distance between performer and audience is diminished, along with the
passivity implied. In this respect, it might indeed be speculated that part of the excitement of
live concerts in crisis-ridden Zimbabwe lays the audience’s perception of belonging to a group
that actively creates meaning through collaboration on stage.

The counter-narratives discussed in this chapter represent the drama of the
Zimbabwean consciousness of the Zimbabwean leadership’s prescriptions of a national
culture. It could be political or social, beset as it is today by the realities of the
postcolonial situation, which imply not simply immediate problems of creating a viable
national community but a comprehensive acceptable order of life and values on the
Zimbabwean society. Hidden messages through allegory, images, metaphors, innuendos,
(in the music, novel, play, poetry), against the Zimbabwean leadership are coded
allusions conveying messages otherwise forbidden.

It is a protection for unofficial voices to keep on speaking publicly yet in dissent, or they
could be held responsible for subversive utterances or being labeled ‘enemies of the state’
or puppets of the British’ who are bent on recolonizing Zimbabwe.

Zimbabwean music and literature have greatly helped us understand the politics
of civil society which the dominant ideology tries to hide from view. This sort of effort or
standpoint, is, according to Apple (1996), “a conscious collective attempt to name the
world differently, to positively refuse to accept dominant meanings, and to positively
assert the possibility that the world could be different and seen with different lenses. Thus, selective appropriation and reinterpretation of official ideologues, have been some of the strategies employed, transforming public discourse into new, at times silent yet powerful vectors for collective insubordination. The voting pattern in the country testifies this. All the cities and small towns in Zimbabwe are controlled by the opposition in parliament.

It is the ability to carve out spaces of individual and collective freedom that defines the informal nature of resistant counter-narratives in post-colonial Zimbabwe. People are resisting the government’s move to define their identities and what it means to be Zimbabwean. At the same time the government is in a dilemma in that whilst it claims to be sovereign and independent, it still needs help from foreign countries. Another dilemma is that the Zimbabwean education system is still Western oriented and the elite would also be happy sending their children to Western countries for education but at home they are preaching against British curriculum.

Official discourse in post-colonial Zimbabwe has exalted a virtually mythic ‘national culture’ kept alive by the inflamed rhetoric of politicians and the attendant establishment of national institutions like the Zimbabwe War Veterans Association and the National Service Training Centers where the Zimbabwean youth are taught ‘nationalism’ and ‘patriotism’. Teachers are also taught to be loyal to the government through an induction at the institutions. Designed to organize and disseminate national culture, these ‘institutions of terror’ have actually done nothing more than manage violence and force people to vote for the ruling party. The graduates from these
institutions have been used by the government as militias alongside the war veterans (Fingaz: April:2002; Zimbabwe Independent: February 2002). Zimbabwe has become a political laboratory and battlefield where systematic repression legitimizes a culture of violence.

The myth of prosperity and the image of Zimbabwe as “a land of milk and honey” fostered after independence contributed to the government’s increasing rigidity and further strengthened its reflex to shut down thought, debate and dialogue on issues of national transformation. The attainment of independence in 1980 has failed to improve the living conditions of Zimbabweans, and the population exhibits a clear loss of confidence in the idea of the state and hence a lack of interest in the official cultural discourse. They however still want to belong to political parties. People distinguish themselves politically by the political discourse; either defending the establishment or supporting the emergent opposition.

Through the use of slogans (“The land is the economy; the economy is the land”, Third Chimurenga” Hondo yeminda (War for land) to justify unpopular practices and the creation of the so-called national institutions designed to celebrate the Zimbabwean past, its heroes and inculcate ‘patriotism in the youth, the Zimbabwean government has tried to reshape people’s understanding of politics. As a result of shortages of almost all basic commodities including salt, there has developed in Zimbabwe ‘a culture of queuing’ and a ‘black market culture’. People buy food in shops with ruling party political cards in hand. In situations of hunger and starvation as in Zimbabwe at the moment, people are cautioned to vote with their ‘bellies’, that is, knowing who is feeding them, and where the
food is coming from. Votes are bought by food. Food is given people for free during voting time. Thus cultural politics is conducted as a set of narratives championed by those in power. Cultural politics are also enacted when movements or individual artists and activists intervene in policy debates and attempt to re-signify dominant cultural interpretations of politics, or challenge prevailing political practices. It turned that Zimbabwean writers and musicians were at the same time, developing some counter-narratives, that is a broad range of means by which they would contest the dominant reality of national culture.

The state of consciousness that the Zimbabwean artists and their literatures and texts translate derives from the Zimbabwean experience and dilemmas at the present time as that experience presents itself in the discerning mind of each of these artists and touches the deepest reaches of human conscience. These texts can be said to represent a variety of individual forms of response to a lived reality. Whatever the quality, they all afford parables of the present condition in Zimbabwe, the sum of whose meanings amounts to a negative appraisal of that condition and a judgment upon the human impulses that are behind its making. They are giving us alternative stories about Zimbabwean cultures and identities. Counter-narratives subvert the traditional givens of the political system; state power, political parties, formal institutions by contesting the legitimacy and apparently normal and natural functioning of their effects within society. To the extent that a political consciousness is central to these literatures, the artists continue a tradition of protest writing and articulation, of committed literature, which prevailed in the course of the development of modern Zimbabwean expression during the colonial period. The imprecision of the ideological postures revealed in these works
raises the issue of the effects they can be expected to produce in the general society which forms both the reference for their fictional and real constructions and the object of their meditations. The interrogations regarding the place and purpose of writing in postcolonial Zimbabwe and Africa calls for a commitment and engagement on the part of the writers. The writers signify a movement of consciousness within the writer’s creative impulse, and this gives all these works a general significance that is inestimable, one that points to the passionate quest for a new order in contemporary Zimbabwe. The last chapter summarizes the findings of the project and recommendations for further study.
CHAPTER 6: SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION

This chapter summarizes the study and how data was collected and analyzed. It reviews the problem and the purpose of the study and the major finding as they relate to the relationship among education, politics and culture in post-colonial Zimbabwe. This dissertation is an investigation of how contrasting forces in politics, education, and the arts contest the process of national reconstruction in post-colonial Zimbabwe.

The Problem and the Purpose of the Study

The problem of the study was to investigate how the post-independent government of Zimbabwe as seen through the lens of its cultural critics, used the institution of education as a focal point of nation-building and social transformation. The main purpose of the study were three-fold; 1) to examine the role of educational reforms in national identity-formation in post-independent Zimbabwe; 2) to explore the interplay of education, politics and culture in identity-formation and social transformation; 3) to investigate the role of the Zimbabwean creative artistic expression as a central aspect of the larger political, economic and social movement in post-independent Zimbabwe and an alternative to state sanctioned messages.

This project was mainly inspired and informed by the need to give voice to the people who are directly affected by the deteriorating social and economic conditions in contemporary Zimbabwe. These people are not passive actors but active subjects in the struggle to change their condition. Through this project the joys and tribulations of a silenced people can be heard. By providing new insights into the emergence of counter-stories from the artists, this study contributes to debates about the role of art in post-
colonial societies. It also contributes to the growing literature on the emancipatory role of art as a central aspect of contemporary political struggles. The struggle for the economic, political, and cultural empowerment of people is also a necessary task for the artistic endeavour. Ngugi (1998) argues that the state and the arts struggle for the voice of the community; one to silence it and the other to give it to silence. He further states that art tries to restore voices to the land and it tries to give voice back to the silenced. Thus any narrative may create a situation in which people are debating the very issues forbidden in real life by the state. The Zimbabwean narratives from various artists in their very existence, and in the voices represented within them, are actually breaking the code of silence.

Major Findings

Through the lived experiences of diverse people data were gathered using various methods to solicit their views about the nature of education, politics and culture in post-independent Zimbabwe. The case study of Zimbabwe offers an in-depth analysis of educational change in areas such as curriculum policy, language education, cultural and literary studies and educational management. This study also examines the emergence of counter-stories to the government’s concept of a national culture. It combines different disciplines in its analysis; the literary, the political, the educational and the cultural dimensions of the struggles for national reconstruction. The project is historical, explanatory, and exploratory. It describes how various cultural institutions have evolved in post-independent Zimbabwe within education, politics, and the arts. Education, culture, and politics are central institutions which are embedded in the processes of
domination, struggle, contestation, compromises and consensus formation in structuring public spheres. They are also basic in the construction, projection and reshaping of individual and collective identities.

Case study data were derived from multiple sources: interviews with teachers and students, artists, literary critics, education managers, and policymakers; content analysis of textbook and policy documents. A number of interviewees felt that it was necessary to reform the education system in Zimbabwe to cater for the less privileged. They however expressed concern about the government’s manipulation of the education system to implement a nationalization project through a one party state.

There were mixed views from participants of this study on the use of indigenous languages such as Shona and Ndebele as media for instruction in schools. Some felt that these languages should be used in schools whilst others said that English should remain a *lingua franca* as it is a language of wider communication. English remains and continues to be the language of power and economic advancement in post-colonial Zimbabwe. The dilemma however is that English is serving a very small percentage of those who make it to colleges and universities. The majority of school-leavers without the English language are excluded from participating in the mainstream development sector when they could have done better things outside the English language discipline.

The issue of the choice of the language of instruction in Zimbabwean schools is a contentious issue and a cultural politics. It relates to the issue of power relations in society, the politics of official knowledge, for in language comes meaning and identification. The curriculum is itself part of what has been called a selective tradition.
That is, in the vast universe of possible knowledge, only some knowledge, gets to be declared legitimate as opposed to simply being popular culture. The curriculum is always the result of struggle and comprise. The powerless are excluded in the mainstream culture; differential social, cultural and economic impact and capital does count. In essence, the separation that is made in Zimbabwe between the politics of education and the politics of the larger society is not all that useful. The politics of the society overlap into the schools and manifest itself in the choice of school parents send their children. Thus the choice of English over the indigenous languages in Zimbabwe as the medium of instruction and the language of industry and commerce is a power struggle between those who have power and those who have not. The bottom line is that pupils can only be empowered by teaching them in a language they understand and it is their linguistic right to be taught in their mother languages alongside other languages like English.

The artists interviewed expressed concern about the government’s tight control on their freedom of expression but they see themselves as having a responsibility to contribute to the construction of a great Zimbabwe. We see the postcolonial state replicating the colonial state. While the Zimbabwean official discourse on national culture includes claims to homogeneity, it also conflicts directly with the leadership elite’s maintenance of hierarchies of class and culture. Thus the Zimbabwean leadership and other dominant classes actually need the heterogeneity they also deny. These are Frantz Fanon’s pitfalls of national consciousness. The artists see art as a way of expressing protest and disillusionment and bringing about change. The narratives by the Zimbabwean artists are expressions and outcomes of disillusionment at the state of decay of the Zimbabwean society. Ngugi (1998:132) argues that in such situations of repression ‘art has the right to take up pen-points, to write down our dreams for a world in which, at the very least, there are no prisons and gun-points. The pen gives visible form to the words of a writer; the gun visible authority to the words of the ruler; thus pen-points and
gun-points stand in confrontation’. From the various interviews conducted and the continuous analysis of secondary data, the recurring issue was that the government of Zimbabwe imposed an official historiography of national culture at independence through education reforms as a way of political legitimization.

From a personal perspective and experience, the government and leadership in Zimbabwe has taken its nationalist legacy as a license to privatize the national interest, defining it as the interests of the governing rather than the governed. The current nationalist government has failed to see the people of Zimbabwe as politically mature citizens who know what is best for them. The government of Zimbabwe replaced a white autocracy with a black autocracy. The lack of a clear-cut agenda beyond being black and proud has caused wholesale suffering to hundreds of thousands of people in Zimbabwe who are indeed black and proud but also thoroughly poor. The romanticization of the land issue is tragic in the sense that in most countries with growing economies, people are moving from rural areas to urban areas. Zimbabweans cannot continue to labor under a fatalistic pseudo-nationalist illusion of a country that survives on raw materials at the expense of the productive sector which has been shrinking. The economic logic of an agro-based economy without corresponding development of agro-industries and mainstream industry is totally misplaced in a fast moving global economy. What is needed is a new socio-economic paradigm which seeks to go beyond the current discourse of wealth redistribution. This new paradigm should not only be redistributive, but also maximize wealth creation. There is nothing noble about moving the country’s wealth from a few white industrialists and farmers only to place it in the hands of a few wealthy blacks, who have benefited from economic empowerment. Black empowerment has become a euphemism for selective black enrichment.
The Zimbabwean government has developed an almost pathological drive towards cultural conformity in a society that is heterogeneous. Such an obsession with a common culture becomes synonymous with the idea of one people one nation and with the integrity of national identity itself. The critique of a single definition of culture and single public sphere by the Zimbabwean artists holds significance as it undermines any rigid notions of what culture is and the public mean. The fragmented, decentred, multiple identities might well be construed as living proof of the end of the modernist tradition of grand master narratives, common culture and universal truths. The contesting forces, according to Said (1993: xxv), “is between advocates of a unitary identity and those who see the whole as a complex but not reductively unified one”. Said further states that as a result of the empire, all cultures are involved in one another, none is single and pure, all are hybrid, heterogeneous, extraordinarily differentiated, and unmonolithic. Zimbabwe is a post-colonial nation seeking to come to terms with its own identity. It is a country full of ambivalence and dilemmas as it seeks to identify its own culture.

Postmodern and postcolonial research and critiques of centralized power have lent support to an expanding range of social movements around issues such as gender, race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, nationality, race, age and disability. Not so coincidentally, these identity-based movements are emerging at a time when the authority of oppressive and bureaucratic states like Zimbabwe, are increasingly under siege. This study implies a fundamental rejection of monolithic cultural politics in favor of different cultures. Zimbabwean identities are too varied to be a unitary and homogenous project.
The need to reclaim and celebrate a culture denigrated by colonialism was at the heart of the nationalism that led to the fight for independence in Zimbabwe. At independence in 1980, this nationalism was used to forge a new Zimbabwean national identity and the nation had to be reconstructed not only to survive but also to re-imagine and reconfigure its past. Said (1993:50) notes that, ‘nationalism is an assertion of belonging to a place, a people, a heritage. It affirms the home created by a community of language, culture, and customs’. Thus nationalism was seen as an important means to attain unity and became a central part of the dictum of a new Zimbabwean national thought which assumed that homogenization of diverse ethnic and racial groups would occur with the nationalization project of nation-building. The educational system had to transmit a homogeneous perception of the cultural, social and political character of a new Zimbabwean nation. For the achievement of such a purpose teachers had to be trained in such a way that they would be capable to evaluate and promote the sense of nationality, to encourage the knowledge, the respect and the love for the country and its history, traditions and culture. The nation-state thus serves as a powerful model of configuring identity through its idioms of political representation and citizenship and through its organs, be they administrative, legal or educational systems. These systems project ground rules for the negotiation of identities and entitlements, of representation and legitimacy. This provides an avenue for the expression and appropriation of identities and has constrained the space in which negotiation and evasion of identities took place, with institutional implications for public life and ideas. Minorities are expected to assimilate into the core national entity. Those who resisted were not only excluded from the nation-building project but also turned into outcasts and ‘enemies of the state’. While the expansion of education and training has largely been a success in post-colonial Zimbabwe, the country is faced with an increasing number of pupils who take their O-level
examinations or attain higher qualifications but have no immediate employment prospects (Nherera: 2000). The economy, currently manifested with the adverse effects of the World-Bank-prescribed Economic Structural Adjustment Program (ESAP) and the current wave of 'globalization', is failing to cope with these demands. The industrial and commercial sectors are actually shrinking. Future employment prospects generally, and for school-leavers in particular, remains bleak.

Post-independence policies in Zimbabwe have been marred by rhetoric and presided by a government that preached socialism but lived capitalism. The stated objective of the ZANU PF party was to establish a one party state with a Marxist-Leninist doctrine. In 1991, after opposition from within his own party, Mugabe announced that he had abandoned his plan to establish a one-party state, but the ideals of establishing a Marxist-Leninist state were retained (Nieuwenhuis:1996:77). Whilst government officials are eager to see the current Zimbabwean education system decolonized, they send their children to acquire education abroad in countries like the US, Britain, Canada, whose educational models they are trying to reform.

The government of Zimbabwe used the institution of education as a central and starting point to reform the colonial imbalances by giving access to the previously denied black majority. However meaningful national dialogue on culture was frustrated by the post-independent Zimbabwean government’s effort to establish a one-party state and its imagination of a homogenous Zimbabwean society. The government did not allow divergent and dissenting voices to be heard. Counter-narratives or counter-discourses to the official version of the post-colonial Zimbabwean condition emerged, challenging the
government’s definition of articulating people’s perception of independence and nation-building.

The nationalized curriculum in Zimbabwe legitimates inequality in that it creates an illusion that whatever the massive differences between elite schools and poor urban and rural schools, they all have something in common. They are supposedly all equal culturally, because they have a “common culture and a common curriculum”. This was meant to disguise the differences between the rich elite who had benefited from the ‘national cake’ and the poor, who fought the struggle but were denied the proceeds of the struggle. English is still the official language in Zimbabwe, not for the benefit of the non-black population but for the benefit of the black elite who send their children to private schools where indigenous languages are not taught at all. This issue of language thus becomes a terrain of contestation and struggle between those who have power and those who are weak. Rather than asking people to surrender their identities in the interest of a national consensus, this study stresses the primacy of cultural differences in Zimbabwe. The researcher’s subjective standpoint is that people are not simple creatures of a single ideology but comprised of complex histories, needs, cultures and values.

This study acknowledges that Zimbabwe was immensely affected by the almost one hundred years of colonial rule, especially in the economy and education sectors. At independence in 1980, it was thus imperative for the new black government to reform education so that the previously denied black population could have access to the education system. Education was seen as a convenient way of giving people access and equity in the Zimbabwean society. However, the leadership used this institution of education to try and create a homogenous society by prescribing what had to be taught in
these schools which was in line with the Marxist-Leninist political ideology that was adopted at independence. National cultural transformation in post-independent Zimbabwe was initiated and guided through the formal education system. In contrast, Bhabha (1990:300), argues that the nation reveals, in its ambivalent and vacillating representation, the ethnography of its own historicity and opens up the possibility of other narratives of the people and their difference. He further says that counter-narratives of the nation that continually evoke and erase its totalizing boundaries, both actual and conceptual, disturb those ideological moves through which ‘imagined communities’ are given essentialist identities.

The government of Zimbabwe has defined what it means to be Zimbabwean, on the other hand people have their own ways of defining their experiences and what it means to be Zimbabwean. What defines Zimbabwean culture is a matter of continuous and stimulating debate. The culture of any nation is moulded by its history. A nation and its culture are shaped by events, the many peoples who have inhabited and do inhabit it, their influences, value systems, beliefs, art, religion, for culture is no a static phenomenon. It responds to and is altered by changes in ideas and beliefs over time. Culture's very mobility, mutability and dynamism make it completely fascinating, and changes in cultural perceptions greatly enrich and expand the arts. In Zimbabwe, culture has been defined in fixed terms and it is the history of those in power that has to be remembered. The Heroes Acre as a national shrine and cultural institution owes its existence and legitimacy to the ruling party, for ‘heroes’ and leaders are only borrowed from the past, not from the future. Shaping consensus through rhetoric and coercion
reinforces the concept of a strong state, while it weakens the potential for the construction of new multiple social identities.

Colonial continuities are still rampant in the Zimbabwean society and benefiting those who claim to be the champions against colonialism and oppression. The way the elite amassed wealth in the post-independent era is an anti-thesis to what they were fighting for, equality. Education was and remains a political subject, a matter of access to political power (or closure from that power) at all levels, from the primary school to university. Nationalizing culture through teaching and learning makes education an instrument of assimilation, normalization and class stratification.

The creation of official versions of national culture in post-independent Zimbabwe serves the further consolidation of state power. Those who hold power equate national identities to personal identities. Asserting that persons have one and single national identity and that this identity is readily recognizable, distorts the very processes by which cultures are constituted by presupposing the static and necessary character of cultural differences. While national identities are undoubtedly a part of the cultural experiences of many individuals, they are not equivalent to cultures in general. Neither, are, they the stable reference points for individual identities that Zimbabwean nationalists assume them to be. While the Zimbabwean official discourse national culture includes claims to homogeneity, it also conflicts directly with the leadership elite’s maintenance of hierarchies of class and culture. Thus the Zimbabwean leadership and other dominant classes actually need the heterogeneity they also deny.

Nations are formed from the ascription of one of many potential identities to individuals. It cannot be assumed that particular national identities will necessarily
always serve as the basis for people’s self-identification or mutual recognition, especially if such national identities are regarded as excluding cultural syncretism, hybridity or personal transformation. Post-colonial reality is located in the excess of hybridity. Nonetheless, the Zimbabwean leadership actually enhances just those aspects of culture (and only those aspects) that ratify its power.

In Zimbabwe government narratives justify political self-determination and this type of nationalism glorifies the attainment of statehood and identity and turns neighbours into strangers, turns the permeable boundaries of identity into impassable frontiers. The common imagination of the Zimbabwean leadership of a single national identity by different identities has resulted in a great deal of conflict and turmoil. At independence in 1980 in Zimbabwe, national unity was identified by the leadership with unanimity, a trend that limited the impingement of diversity on the construction of national identity.

The post-colonial Zimbabwean state and civil society grew out of the nationalist project, in which nationalism served a hegemonic function of effecting decolonization. According to Chartejee (1993:203) the post-colonial state ‘represented the only legitimate form of exercise of power because it was a necessary condition for the development of the nation. The Zimbabwean government’s control of culture leads to a situation of Antonio Gramsci’s cultural hegemony, whereby the government defines and creates people’s identities and destinies. This is done through coercion and manipulation, and in the process, it is those who have control on culture who benefit from the economy and the distribution of wealth in society. Cultural hegemony in post-independent Zimbabwe legitimizes and maintains the economy of wealth distribution in favor of those in power
and authority. Cultural struggles and conflicts are real and crucial in the battle for hegemony.

The official version of the Zimbabwean government’s definition of national culture and the power to name and give meaning to the world seeks to protect or maintain a distinctive society in an imagined, confined territorial boundary. From the view of the leadership, Zimbabwean identity is connected to the liberation struggle only and heroes are those who fought during the liberation war and selected by the ruling party. The transfer of power in Zimbabwe at independence was just a change of leadership benches, black elites replacing white elites. History as linear progress has nothing to do with what happened in Zimbabwe after independence. There are colonial continuities within the post-colonial. This study takes the colonial legacy in Zimbabwe, its nature and its impact to be problematic, for it is contested, sometimes with nostalgia for an imaginary past of the immediate post-independent period with everything in the face of a deepening crisis and social inequality in contemporary Zimbabwe. According to Werbner (1996), the shifting multiple realities in the postcolonial encompasses contradictory complexity and times out of time.

The study has explored the culture-education-politics nexus and the formation of identities in transition within postcolonial Zimbabwe. Identity-formation is central in examining the nature of society in postcolonial Zimbabwe in that as a new nation, new identities were formed and forged in tandem with the new political dispensation. Identity is a concern of cultural studies in that it explores how people come to be the kinds of people they are, how they are produced as subjects of history, and how they identify with descriptions of themselves in terms of diverse forms of power which include; sex, race,
class, ethnicity, gender, and age. Thus culture becomes a political struggle because it is constitutive of meaning that are related to who holds and defines power in society.

The study has explored the emergence of a new politics of identity and belonging, one which centers within postcolonial Zimbabwe, on who represents whom, and to or for whom. It delves into the issue of naming and defining what it means to be Zimbabwean in both postcolonial and global contexts, and how people should conceptualize and redefine the coming of independence.

Zimbabwe’s political leadership, throughout its long era of rule since 1980, has coerced its subjects through terror, intimidation by the state agents or ‘ideological apparatuses’, and everyday controls. These measures also include carrying and producing the ruling ZANU PF party membership cards and demonstrating one’s articulation of the party slogan and forced attendance of the ruling party’s political rallies and the subsequent ban on opposition parties’ gatherings. Political differences that are supposed to be solved with ideas and symbols are being fought with guns and bullets. This has limited the expansion of national conversation and dialogue about cultural pluralism and values but induced heightened levels of divisiveness and antagonism among ethnicities, social classes, gender and racial groups. While the government always responds to popular pressures through violent means, it has also organized a fraudulent electoral process, using patronage, intimidation and vote buying, in order to keep control over the polity, its institutions and resources. Phenomena of discrimination on racial and ethnic lines, social marginality, corruption, a fragmented and polarized civil society, and human rights violations have continued to reappear, which in turn affect the ways of constructing collective identities and models of self representation. Shaping consensus through such
means reinforces the Zimbabwean leadership’s concept of a strong state, while it weakens the potential for the construction of new individual and collective social identities. Cycles of violence since 1980 have left the Zimbabwean society in a long and contested process of trying to redefine its identity, recovery of collective memory and the search for the soul.

The government’s control of the media has left the electorate increasingly uninformed and misinformed. In this way, public media and culture themselves have remained exclusionary and to a certain extent unrepresentative. However, people react in different ways, showing modes of local resiliency to misrule, the cultural assertion of social identities for survival, the recuperation of moral and political agency. Such struggle takes place over the definition of categories that are imposed on individuals who seek alternative ways of governance and over the gate-keeping function of the state as representative of the imagined collective thought and identity.

Counter-narratives, identity-formation and resistance politics

The study has discussed the strategic role of the arts (literature, music, theatre) in shaping human identities and influencing politics in post-independent Zimbabwe. Zimbabwean artists, through music and literature are fighting for the creation of new political spaces and public spheres that fall outside traditional definitions of the government. These counter-narratives have their own way of defining Zimbabwean culture. To the artists, cultural institutions and associations like the National Heroes Acre and the War Veterans Associations have lost meaning as they have been manipulated by those in power for personal gain, political mileage and patronage. The emergence of counter-narratives to the government’s official version of national culture expands
discursive space and dialogue on national issues in post-independent Zimbabwe. By challenging existing patterns of exclusion and institutional control by those in power, counter-narratives politicize identities and mobilize the people for change through dialogue and action. Assumptions that were previously exempt from contestation or from public view are now publicly said or argued out. Thus the proliferation of counter-narratives means a widening of discursive contestation, a good thing in stratified and diversified societies like Zimbabwe. The increased development of alternative counter-narratives widens political and policy contestations within institutions of political society and the state in Zimbabwe. Artists and their counter-narratives and discourses have played an active role in advancing their interests and those of their constituents and audiences and, by interacting discursively, they have also shaped collective and individual visions and ways of interaction in society. The mobilization of both components of individual and collective identities, are expected to alter the homogenous discourse and the centralizing tendencies on national culture that had been imposed by the authoritarian Zimbabwean leadership.

While the counter-discourses through music and literature are not a panacea or solution to the Zimbabwean political and cultural identity crises, they offer the possibility of generating an innovative response and possibility to the need for new, mediating identities and forms of governance and of political, moral and social authority. There is in Zimbabwe, an active engagement in the contestation and in the production of images of the nation and leadership. What is at stake in Zimbabwe is a transformation of the dominant political culture, which in turn will affect how cultural institutions operate. Collective identities and strategies inevitably are bound up with culture. The cultural
politics of social movements can be seen as fostering alternative modernities, new ways of seeing and naming the world. The emergence of alternative, non-official accounts of nationhood and national identity by Zimbabwean artists means that ‘rival versions of national identity are produced, on a terrain of contestation’ (Schlesinger: 257). It is on this terrain of contestation that Bhabha (1990:5), identifies, as ‘ambivalence’ in the definition of national society. This ambivalence arises as the groups defining themselves and others as ‘the people’, the constituent subjects of the nation do so, not only on the basis of affiliation, but also crucially by disavowal, displacement, exclusion and contestation.

The different narratives in the study show how diverse identities have been formed in postcolonial Zimbabwe and how other personal and collective transformations are made in and through political violence and gross violations of human rights in the name of sovereignty and cultural relativism. The cultural politics of identity maintain, negate, renegotiate, or playfully compromise present authority. In turn, it also reaffirms and legitimizes authority or its possibility, by counteracting or valorizing the traces of colonial and pre-colonial sociality within the postcolonial. In Zimbabwe reference is made by the leadership of how they fought against colonial oppression to restore the wishes of the spirits. In Zimbabwe, be it a struggle for identity or a shortage of a commodity, the leadership collapses it into the reactive response to Western imperialism, for ‘Zimbabwe will never be a colony again’. Political and economic problems are defined in racial terms and blamed on the West.

Zimbabwe cannot survive or live in isolation or be a homogenous society. 'Diversity' is a ‘buzz’ word in today's world, where the excesses arising from mankind's
history of suspicion of those peoples perceived as 'other', leaves modern man with feelings of intense discomfort and collective guilt. A growing shared value system, spreading globally, exerts a pressure upon all humankind, to embrace diversity. Embracing diversity requires Zimbabweans to remain open to learning about cultures and values which differ from their own, not to pre-judge these, and instead to celebrate the very fact that the world is so rich in these differences between people, their beliefs, their art, their ways of life. Instead of fearing what is unknown or different, more appropriately, Zimbabweans need to foster their curiosity about other cultures. Since the early days of colonization in the late 1890s up to independence in 1980, continuous processes of culture contacts and hybridity have taken place in the country and in the region. There are multiple patterns of constructing identities like in terms of communities, ethnicities, social classes, local and other identities. Even in countries like Somalia which have been seen as homogenous in many ways, a multiplicity of visions of history, values, society and culture have developed.

With the complexity of Zimbabwe's often painful history and the diversity of backgrounds and ethnicity of the many different peoples who live in that country, it is no easy task to encapsulate its culture. Many ethnicities and races, both from within the African continent and outside it, reside in Zimbabwe, and have made it their home, whether many centuries ago, a few generations ago, or even more recently. A plural population can never be converted into a singular people, be it through education or propaganda, because plurality and difference can never be entirely banished.
The idea of ‘indigenous’ is deployed in a way that masks an important heterogeneity that lies within the Zimbabwean society and the Southern African region in general, despite Zimbabwe’s supposed national sovereignty, which has a pre-given territorial integrity and impermeability. The diversity of the Zimbabwean people and nation means that the pedagogical ideal of a homogeneous people can never be realized. Those placed on the margins of the society’s or regime’s norms and limits (ethnic, class, gender, age) intervene in the signifying process and challenge the dominant representations with alternative counter-narratives of their own.

The inevitable influences of colonization on Zimbabwe, like an inherited education system and cultural hybridity remain. Zimbabwean people, in their wide diversity, have common threads, which bind them together in a coalescence of certain values, beliefs and characteristics, today, such as patriotism, hospitality to one another and to strangers, to the honour and reverence for ancestors, traditions, and family. Zimbabweans are an artistic and creative people, and in the realms of art, Zimbabwe abounds with rich colour, vibrant music and dance, passionate, innovative theatre, intricate craft made with infinite patience, imaginative sculpture, and many more ingenious, inventive manifestations of creativity.

The trans-nationalization and globalization of information and capital has meant that cultural borders are becoming amorphous and blurred. As national cultures become more exposed to outside influences, it becomes difficult to preserve cultural identities intact, or to prevent them from becoming weakened through cultural bombardment and infiltration. Zimbabwe is not an exception. Everyday life and experiences are leaning
towards cross-cultural exchanges and moving in a continuum. Because of the local-global nexus, it is increasingly becoming difficult to draw cultural boundaries using physical national territorial parameters. Robins in Hall et al (2000:622) posits that what is being created now are not physical nation-states but “new electronic cultural space, a “placeless” geography of image and simulation….This new global arena of culture is a world of instantaneous and depthless communication, a world in which space and time horizons have been compressed and collapsed”.

Hall (2000:621) argues that “cultural flows and global consumerism between nations create the possibilities of “shared identities” as “customers” for the same goods, “clients” for the same services, “audiences” for the same messages and images, between people who are far removed from one another in time and space. The more the social life becomes mediated by the global marketing of styles, places, and images, by international travel, and by globally networked media images and communications systems, the more identities become detached, disembedded, from specific times, places, histories and traditions and appear “free-floating”. Hall further claims that within the discourse of global consumerism, differences and cultural distinctions which hitherto defined identity become reducible to a sort of international lingua franca or global currency into which all specific traditions and distinct identities can be translated. Rather than one gigantic public cultural arena, the Zimbabwean leadership should envision the Zimbabwean nation in terms of numerous conversations among different groups and around different issues.

The spread of global culture produces new challenges for Zimbabwe’s national sovereignty. Culture has been the particularizing, localizing force that distinguished
societies and people from each other. At the same time culture is a complex and contested terrain today as global cultures permeate local ones providing new local hybrid forms of identities. It is indeed impossible to resist or ignore globalization, which is influencing every aspect of life. It involves the dissemination of new technologies that have tremendous impact on the economy, polity, society, culture, education, and individual experience (Kellner:2000:306). Kellner aptly states that time-space compression produced by new media and communications technologies are overcoming previous boundaries of space and time, creating a global cultural village and dramatic penetration of global forces into every realm of life ion every region of the world. This project adds a new dimension by its deliberate political analysis of culture in Zimbabwe from a cultural studies perspective, which is missing in the literature focusing on post-colonial Zimbabwe. Hall (1992) argues that, cultural studies, situates culture within a socio-historical context in which culture promotes domination or resistance, and criticizes forms of culture that foster domination.

The continual celebration of Zimbabwe’s liberation struggle in this belated era by the establishment (whenever there is a crisis or when the government fails to perform its obligations) is mainly designed to articulate the hegemonic discourse of domination and disguise the failures of the leadership elite. Suggestions to change the status quo, is seen as a sabotage of the achievements ‘of our hard won struggle’. The ideologues of the single party always justifies the government’s assertion that because the people are not yet ready for pluralism, the maintenance of national unity, “patiently won” at the price of a long struggle, required sacrifices in the realm of human rights. Reference is made to the sacrifices of those who fought, whose achievements should be guarded jealousy. Even political office needs
liberation war credentials. However there is always a strong response from below, even in the face of violence. Zimbabweans are resisting anything perceived as a symbol of a dominating state and see through even the most subtle techniques for the appropriation and re-articulation of official discourse on culture, especially the very existence of War Veterans Association and National Service Training Centers.

Zimbabwe, like many decolonised nations has undergone the painful experience of ‘seeing nationalisms of liberation turning into nationalisms of domination’ (Balibar 1991:7). Counter-narratives interrupt the nation’s smooth self-generation at the level of the performative, revealing different experiences, histories and representations which nationalist discourses depend on excluding (Monga:1996:62). There can never be any one, coherent, common narrative through which a nation and its people can be adequately captured. The nation remains a site of heterogeneity and difference. Narratives which claim otherwise can do so only through the marginalisation of certain groups. Artists are employing their creative prowess to express their anger and disillusionment about the debilitating condition of post-independent Zimbabwe. They are actually against any forms of oppression. Once the ‘jewel’ of the continent and the ‘bread basket of Southern Africa’, Zimbabwe has been reduced to a ‘basket case’ by the current leadership in the name of ‘national sovereignty’. This research study challenges the validity of the concepts of and notions of the government’s definite hegemonic public discourse on national identities in postcolonial Zimbabwe which is not overt in literature on post-colonial Zimbabwe.
Recommendations for further study

My study was a general examination of the politics of education and culture in post-independent Zimbabwe.

1. Other researches could be done to look at each aspect, as my study wanted to understand the political aspects of education and culture at a time when the crisis in Zimbabwe was affecting every aspect of the society.

2. A comparative analysis of the politics of education and culture in Zimbabwe and South Africa can be done for the following reasons. Comparative researches between and among countries, yield a lot of information than focusing on one country. The cultures and governments of Zimbabwe and South Africa are ‘known’ to each other, and lessons drawn are more instinctively understood, and less clouded with the remoteness and speculation of, for example, the West, or North African experience. Zimbabwe and South Africa are emerging societies in Africa in that these countries gained independence at a later stage than many African countries. This provides a raw field of study on issues of social transformation, higher educational reform and cultural struggles.

Other areas of research that are interesting would be to explore;

3. How are national cultures in Africa being affected or displaced by the process of globalization?

4. Are national identities in Africa really as unified and homogenous as they represent themselves to be?
References


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The Herald-www.herald.co.zw
Appendices

Appendix A: Oral Interviews

Interview with Harare High School Students July 2002
Interview with top government official, July, 18 2002.
Interview with Director of Zimbabwe Schools Examinations Council, Dr I. Sibanda, Harare,Zimbabwe, July, 4 2002.
Interview with Walter Mparutsa, Harare, Zimbabwe, August 2002.
Interview with Mount Pleasant High School Students, July 2002
Interview with Brother Emmanuel: Harare August, 6 2002
Interview with Mrs Moyo, teacher, Mount Pleasant High School, Harare, July, 8, 2002
Interview with Mr Ncube, teacher, Mount Pleasant High School, Harare, July, 2002
Interview with Mrs D, teacher, Harare High School, Harare, July 18, 2002
Interview with Vera, Daily News: August 2002
Interview with theatre producer and director, September 2002
Interview with Thomas Mapfumo, Mark Hellenburg, Ohio University, October 2001
Interview with Thomas Mapfumo, Ohio University, June 2001.
Interview with Thomas Mapfumo, Kenyon College, September 2002
Interview with Oliver Mtukudzi, Harare, July, 22, 2002
Interview with Titus Chipangura, Director of the National Arts Council of Zimbabwe (NACZ): July 26 2002.
Interview with Yvonne Vera, Harare, ZIBF, August 2002.
Interview with Zimbabwean female gospel musician, Harare, August, 10, 2002
Interview with Guthrie Munyuki, Entertainment Editor, Daily News, August-July 2002
Interview with Ngugi Wa Mirii, Harare, August 2002.
Interview with a Theatre Arts lecturer and music critic, August 21, 2002
Appendix B: Reference Protocol #02E048 Informed consent letter

June, 2002

Dear prospective participant,

The purpose of this study is to collect data for research on cultural and educational issues in post-colonial Zimbabwe. This study intends to elicit your opinions about educational reform and cultural rebirth in post-independent Zimbabwe.

This study is carried out as a dissertation fulfillment for my doctoral program, but the results of the study might help future educational and cultural leaders in Zimbabwe in mapping the way forward for a better and culturally-diverse Zimbabwe. Thus your participation in this study will be acknowledged and appreciated. A considerable amount of anonymity and confidentiality will be taken into account to protect your privacy and any harm that might be caused as a result of your participation in this study. I will also not force you to participate in the study as it is your inalienable right not to participate, but if you agree to participate, your patience will be needed as I will always call you over the phone or come to your workplace or school or make appointments for interviews.

Thanks for your co-operation in advance.

Sincerely,
Douglas Mpondi

Doctoral Student,

Ohio University

U.S.A

I ________ (name of prospective participant) agree that I will participate in the study.

I ________ (name of prospective participant) do not agree to participate in the study.

____________________
Signature of prospective participant
Appendix C: Reference Protocol #02E048- Informed consent letter

June, 2002

Dear parent/guardian,

I intend to interview your children or children under your custody for a research on education in post-colonial Zimbabwe. The purpose of the interviews is to collect data for research on cultural and educational issues in post-independent Zimbabwe. The study intends to elicit your children’s opinions about educational reform and cultural rebirth in post-independent Zimbabwe.

The study is carried out as a dissertation fulfillment for my doctoral program, but the results of the study might help future educational and cultural policy-makers in Zimbabwe in mapping the way forward for a better and culturally-diverse Zimbabwe. Thus your children’s participation in this study will be acknowledged and appreciated. A considerable and high degree of anonymity and confidentiality will be taken into account to protect their privacy and any harm that might be caused as a result of their participation in this study. I will also not force the children to participate in the study as it is their inalienable right not to participate, but if you agree that they participate, their patience will be needed as I will always call you over the phone or come to your home or to their schools for interviews.

Thanks for your permission and co-operation in advance.
Sincerely,

Douglas Mpondi
Doctoral Student,
Ohio University
U.S.A

____________________Signature of parent/guardian

I ________ (name of parent/guardian) agree that my child/children should participate in the study.

I __________ (parent/guardian) do not agree that my child/children should participate in the study.

________________________Signature of parent/guardian