An enquiry into secondary school students’ attitudes towards the African history syllabi codes 2167/1 and 9155/4 versus European history syllabi codes 2167/2 and 9155/1: A case study of Mbare Hatfield District.

BY

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DEDICATION

This research is dedicated to my mother Ellen Takafakare and my late father David Takafakare.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am very grateful to the Lord Almighty for his grace to allow me to undertake these studies and for his protection throughout my studies in Bindura. Many thanks go to my supervisor Mr B. C Muropa who assisted me tirelessly to ensure the success of this project. May God bless him abundantly. I thank the Ministry of Secondary and Primary Education and the heads of the schools where the research was conducted. My heartfelt thanks go to my sisters Violet and Evadine, my brother Tonderai, my brothers in law Simba and Amon and my sister in law Maakupa for their goodwill messages and prayers. Special mention goes to my friends Memory and Tsitsi for their company and support throughout the studies. To all the students who participated in providing information for this study, I thank you.
ABSTRACT

The research sought to establish secondary school students’ attitudes towards African History versus European History. A qualitative research method, utilising a case study, was used to carry out the research. Purposive sampling was used to select the forty students who participated in the research. The major data collection instruments used were questionnaires, interviews and focus group discussions. The study showed that Ordinary level students preferred African History to European History whilst Advanced level students preferred European to African History. The idea of a curriculum overhaul to adopt a completely Africanised History syllabus was rejected by most students. As recommendations the study proposed that a trip fund be created to allow students to have hands on experience of our historical sites like Great Zimbabwe so as to enhance learning experiences. Accessibility to the internet also has to improve to allow students to have current information concerning other countries also Ordinary level questions should provoke critical thinking and independent judgement.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

Dedication…………………………………………………………i

Acknowledgements…………………………………………………..ii

Abstract………………………………………………………..iii

Table of Contents…………………………………………………..iv

List of tables……………………………………………………….vi

Chapter One

The Problem and its setting

1.0 Introduction………………………………………………1

1.1 Background of study………………………………………..1

1.2 Statement of the Problem……………………………………2

1.3 Significance of study…………………………………………2

1.4 Delimitations of the study………………………………………3

1.5 Limitations of the study…………………………………………3

1.6 Assumptions of the study………………………………………4

1.7 Objectives of the study…………………………………………4

1.8 Research Questions……………………………………………4

1.9 Definition of key terms………………………………………5

1.10 Conclusion…………………………………………………5

Chapter Two

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction………………………………………………6

2.1 Other countries and the question of which history to teach……6

2.2 The History syllabus and Colonialism…………………………7
2.3 Education Curriculum overhaul........................................8
2.4 Afrocentricism and Education.............................................9
2.5 Eurocentricism and Education..........................................10
2.6 Challenges of Teaching History in Zimbabwe....................10
2.7 Proposals that would help support History Teaching in Zimbabwe...11
2.8 Conclusion......................................................................12

Chapter Three

Research Methodology

3.0 Introduction......................................................................13
3.1 Research Design.............................................................13
3.1.1 Case study.................................................................14
3.2 Population.......................................................................14
3.3 Sample size.....................................................................15
3.3.1 Sampling procedure....................................................15
3.4 Data collection Methods...................................................16
3.5 Data presentation and analysis plan....................................16
3.6 Ethical Considerations.....................................................16
3.7 Conclusion......................................................................17

Chapter four

Data Presentation, Analysis, Interpretation and Discussion

4.0 Introduction......................................................................18
4.1 Objective of the study......................................................18
4.2 Demographic variables……………………………………………………………….19

4.3 Reasons why African history is preferred to European history at Ordinary level...21

4.4 Reasons why European history is preferred to African history at Advanced level…22

4.5 The necessity to teach African and European history………………………………..22

4.6 Content of the African and European history syllabi…………………………………23

4.7 Resource availability……………………………………………………………………24

4.8 Teachers’ approach and learning experiences………………………………………24

4.9 Questioning techniques………………………………………………………………...24

4.10 Adoption of an Afrocentric syllabus…………………………………………………..25

4.11 Effect of location on syllabus preference…………………………………………..25

4.12 Conclusion…………………………………………………………………………………26

Chapter 5

Summary, Conclusion and Recommendations

5.0 Introduction…………………………………………………………………………….27

5.1 Summary………………………………………………………………………………..27

5.2 Conclusion………………………………………………………………………………28

5.3 Recommendations……………………………………………………………………..29

5.3.1 Recommendations of areas for further study……………………………………….29

References…………………………………………………………………………………..30

Appendices…………………………………………………………………………………..32
LIST OF TABLES

Table 1 Respondents by gender .................................................................19
Table 2 Respondents by school ...............................................................19
Table 3 Syllabus preference by school .....................................................20
Table 4 Reasons why African history is preferred to European history at Ordinary level .................................................................21
Table 5 Reasons why European history is preferred to African history at Advanced level .................................................................22
CHAPTER ONE

The problem and its setting

1.0 Introduction

This chapter looked at the background of study, statement of the problem, research questions, objectives of the study, significance of the study assumption of the study, limitations of the study, delimitations of the study and definition of key terms.

1.1 Background of Study

The teaching of History in Zimbabwe Secondary Schools have undergone three divergent periods since the country’s independence in 1980. This is largely due to the different syllabi that the Ministry of Education endorsed to be used in schools at given periods.

The first decade after independence (1980 to 1990) saw the retention of the pre1980 Rhodesian syllabus. This syllabus focused mainly on European history and the history of European settlement in Africa. Though a few textbooks with a focus on Africa were recommended, very little was done to implement the use of these textbooks in schools Tendi (2009). As a result European history continued to take precedence.

From 1991 to 2002 the history syllabus was amended and the Curriculum Development Unity of the ministry of education published a new ‘’Nationalist Syllabus’’. Tendi (2009) asserts that the syllabus simply steered clear of racism of the Rhodesian curriculum without critically interrogating race relations. The nationalist syllabus had a positive aspect in that it focused on producing academic historians who were critical thinkers and could write good essays.

The Nationalist Syllabus only lasted for a decade and was replaced by what the researchers called the ‘’Patriotic Syllabus’’. The then Minister of Education, Sports and Culture historian Aeneas Chigwedere radically modified the Nationalist syllabus. Barnes (2010) noted that the patriotic syllabus did away with the comparative economic international approach and
focused mainly on Zimbabwe and European political history. Tendi (2009) further comments that the Patriotic Syllabus extolled Zanu PF party’s political legitimacy.

In April 2014 the Minister of Primary and Secondary Education Lazarus Dokora made a statement that the history curriculum needed an overhaul because our students are being taught European history, it is time they learn their own history and culture so that they understand it and be able to continue in our cultural ways. The new Zimsec board headed by Levy Nyagura was ordered to draw up a new curriculum which was to be finalised by the end of the year. Mahamba(2014).

Given this background and the stance that the Minister has proposed, this project seeks to inquire on the attitudes of secondary school students towards African history 2167/1 versus European history 2167/2 as well as the proposed completely Africanised History syllabus.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

The research sought to investigate the students’ attitudes on the current African history syllabi for O and A levels as compared to European History. The comparison will focus on the content and questioning techniques of the syllabi in question as well as the learning experiences. Students views on adopting a completely Africanised History syllabus was also sought.

1.3 Significance of study

The research will consolidate the current Curriculum Development exercise that considers the perceptions and views of students when structuring a syllabus. In addition the research will provide information on whether the proposed completely Afrocentric history curriculum is acceptable to students.
1.4 Delimitations of the study

The study was carried out in Mbare Hatfield District of the Harare Metropolitan Province. Not all the schools in this district were selected. The researcher only worked with three schools namely Queen Elizabeth School, Prince Edward School and Harare High School. Queen Elizabeth is an all-girls school situated in the city centre and this was chosen mainly because of its convenience as the researcher is situated in the school. The fact that it is an all-girls school was balanced by Prince Edward School which is an all-boys school. Prince Edward was also chosen because of its multi-racial nature. There is an opportunity to interview the Indians, whites, and the coloured community.

The two schools above are city schools with students who are presumably from the upper middle class society. This was neutralised by Harare high school situated in the high density suburb of Mbare which brought in students from presumably the lower middle class society.

1.5 Limitations of the study

Limitations of this study were that students were biased towards the teacher, which affected their objectivity towards the subject. Some students could not separate the teacher from the subject so much that instead of giving objective opinion about African or European History, they tended to judge the teachers who taught them the respective disciplines. The researcher tried to clearly explain the purpose of the study to students so that they see the importance of being as objective as they could be. Some respondents were not interested in the inquiry, the researcher applied the principle of informed consent so that she worked with only those who had interest and were committed to give objective responses right up to the end of the interview or the questionnaire.
1.6 Assumptions of the study

The researcher is of the assumption that:

a) Students perceive African History as boring and monotonous.
b) Students tend to like European History more than African History.

1.7 Objectives of the study

1) To investigate students perceptions of African History as compared to European History
2) To investigate the factors that contribute to the students perceptions on both African and European History
3) To investigate students attitudes on the proposed shift to a completely African centric history curriculum

1.8 Research Questions

1) What are the students’ perceptions on adopting the Afrocentric history curriculum?
2) How do the students view African History as compared to European History?
3) Why do students have the perceptions noted in question 1 on African History and European History?
1.9 Definition of key terms

**Afrocentric History Syllabus:** In this research an Afrocentric History syllabus can be defined as a syllabus that is dominated by the study of African cultures and ideologies and it deals primarily with promoting self-determination among Africans by teaching them a history that is relevant to them in terms of culture and identity.

**European History:** This research defines European History as the study of key events, patterns and figures that shaped and influenced the European continent. The most popular European events that are encompassed in the Zimbabwean syllabus include, The French Revolution, Napoleon Bonaparte and the Rise of Nationalism, The First World War and other famous European topics.

**Attitudes:** Attitudes can be defined as students’ thoughts, feelings and actions towards learning an Afrocentric History and European History syllabi.

**Secondary school students:** For the purposes of this study secondary school students are those from form four to form six who have had adequate exposure to the two disciplines, African and European History in their learning. These are aged averagely Sixteen to eighteen years.

1.10 Conclusion

This chapter focused on discussing the background of study as well as defining the statement of the problem. The significance of the study, delimitations of the study and limitations of the study were also articulated. Solutions to the limitations were also suggested. Objectives of the study were clearly stated and research questions were formulated. The key terms to be used throughout the study were contextually defined.
Chapter two

Literature Review

2.0 Introduction

In this chapter a review of literature was conducted specifically focusing on what other scholars have discovered concerning the teaching and learning of History in their respective countries. Views of local scholars on the necessity of teaching European History to Zimbabwean students will also be sought. This was then married to the students’ views on which History they prefer to learn and why; which was the purpose of this study. Review of literature focused on seven subtopics formulated by the researcher. The topics are: Other countries and the question of which History to teach, The History syllabus and colonialism, Education curriculum overhaul, Afrocentricism and Education, Eurocentricism and Education, Challenges of teaching History in Zimbabwe, Proposal that would help support History teaching in Zimbabwe.

2.1 Other countries and the question of which history to teach

The question on which History curriculum to teach is not unique to Zimbabwe alone but other countries like Canada and Australia also went through a similar research. Clark (2008) carried out a comparative study of History Teaching in Australia and Canada to find out why many Australian and Canadian students continue to write off their national history as boring. The findings of this research included factors like

i) The problem of topic repletion
ii) The need for adequate resources and professional development for history teachers
iii) The question of a national approach to history education
iv) Engaging students in the classroom.
The findings of Clark (2008) seem to deal only with pedagogical issues without looking deeper into the perceptions by students on the content of the subject. A similar study was also done by Levstik (2001) in New Zealand in a bid to find out why students were less interested in studying New Zealand History than in learning History from abroad. Amongst other findings was the fact that they find Europe more important and they feel safer about discussing distant rather than local perspectives.

Levstik admitted that it is difficult to ask students to reconsider their perspective of their own local history, he suggested that teachers must take into account what students know and what they think they know. Uncovering prior knowledge and preconceptions teach students to reconsider their own perception of local History Levstik (2001)

2.2 The History syllabus and colonialism

To bring the problem closer home, in The Sunday Mail of 4 January 2004 Ngugi Wa Miiri postulated that there are many born frees who are predominantly influenced by western culture and unfortunately our education system was not decolonised at the time of independence. As a result all these young people have gone through an education that has failed to intellectually arm them into recognising who they are and what Zimbabwe is. Steps were taken by the minister of Education Aeneas Chigwedere to make history a compulsory subject and school text books on patriotic history were produced by Aeneas Chigwedere.

In an article in the Herald of 14 May 2004 Donald Charumbira called for urgent educational reforms claiming that the whole Zimbabwe education system was still influenced by colonial assumptions. He further asserted that colonisation forced the colonised people to conform to the cultures and traditions of the coloniser. Their own history religions and educational systems would be relegated to unimportant and irrelevant. Mental control is implicated through the school system. His final call was that education has the duty of mental decolonisation by cherishing our own history.

In her article “ How to teach our children to be heirs of Zimbabwe ” Dr Ireen Mahamba (2014) laments how the Zimbabwean education still esteems the British culture thirty three years after independence. She points out that our education system has robbed our children of their sanity by denying them that which makes them who they are. Though Zimbabwe has a
very high literacy rate, it has done very little to educate its learners to stop being shadows of other people and just be part of the mass but come into their own. Mahamba (2014)

2.3 Education curriculum overhaul

Patience Rusare (2014) in her article “Education curriculum overhaul…” political will is the answer in the Patriot of 12 September 2014 contends that just as the liberation war required political will and commitment to achieve the destined outcome, the education curriculum overhaul project requires the same level of political will and commitment to succeed. She pointed out that the country needs transformational change in order for the education sector to become Afrocentric. It needs the kind of curriculum that creates children who have African morals, ethical and aesthetic attitudes, values and feelings. In order to achieve this, she proposed that Eurocentric ideology must be dismantled from our everyday life through changing the history syllabus.

History curriculum should account for 75% Zimbabwean and African History and only 25% European history. This according to Rusare will see schools teach more of Zimbabwean and African history right from Iron Age, to King Lobengula, Mbuya Nehanda, Sekuru Kaguvi and their role in the First Chimurenga and Josiah Tongogara, Joshua Nkomo, Robert Mugabe and other gallant fighters in the Second and Third Chimurenga. Rusare also proposed that History as a subject should be made compulsory because in the past it was optional with European history accounting for about 54 percent of the content. Her final call was that for all this to change, political will and commitment is essential. Decolonising the mind is the Fourth Chimurenga.

In her article “Strides in curriculum transformation: 1980 to 1989” Dr Irene Mahamba expounded on how after independence they set to transform the curriculum, to develop new syllabi and review textbooks that were in use during the colonial era. She explains how on transforming the curriculum the emphasis had to be on the ideological axis of the curriculum. The ideological axis had to dethrone capitalism, its ownership relations of the means of production and its ethos, the individualism, selfishness and exploitative mindset, the curriculum had to positively reflect the collective consciousness which was the direct result of the armed struggle, born of collective and selfless commitment to liberate the country even at ones peril.

Dr Mahamba explains how for the first time in the school system they wrote about Mbuya Nehanda and sekuru Kaguvi as the heroes they are, and Cecil John Rhodes as the villain he is. She also stated how as a teacher after explaining the role of Allan Wilson in the colonisation of Zimbabwe students protested that the school named after him be renamed
Tongogara High. The young Zimbabweans were only able to arrive at this kind of reflection after being exposed to the new history curriculum which was syllabus 2166.

In an interview with Danielle Johnstone in 2011 the then minister of Education David Coltart admitted that there is such a terrible gulf in the teaching of history because in private schools there is a focus on Western, American and European History and very little on Zimbabwe or African History, the other extreme is that the government history is very partisan and in fact its racist in some respects. He then advised that the country needs a history syllabus that is far more objective and less divisive.

2.4 Afrocentricism and Education

Afrocentric education is a notion that was developed to empower people of the African diaspora. The key proponents of this notion argue that many Africans have been demeaned by the type of education which they received. The education which is designed to limit an awareness of who they really are, and indoctrinate them with ideas that work against them. They argue that what educates one group of people does not necessarily educate another. One of the tenets of Afrocentric Education is decolonising the African mind. This can only be achieved through removing Eurocentric ideologies from everyday African life.

Decolonising the African mind seeks to mentally liberate Africans from the authority and control of foreign traditions. The tool that can be used to achieve this is to deliberately control the type of education that the Africans receive.

Dr. Carter G. Woodson (1933) coined the term miseducation to describe the process of systematically depriving African Americans of their knowledge of self. Education is understood to be a process of harnessing the inner potential of the youth and thus it is important to equip the youth with an awareness of their identity.

The problem of formal education is seen by Afrocentrists to be that African students are taught how to perceive the world through the eyes of another culture and unconsciously learn to see themselves as an insignificant part of their world.
2.5 Eurocentricism and Education

Franzik (2012) postulates that the term Eurocentricism denotes a world view which implicitly or explicitly posits European history and values as normal and superior to others. It esteems the European society as progressive, modern and civilised whilst undermining the African society as underdeveloped, traditional and barbaric.

Eurocentric viewpoint treats European society and history as a point of reference in imposing external definitions of other societies so that they are considered backward or stagnant if their history doesn’t contain specifically European features like feudalism. Franzik (2012)

2.6 Challenges of Teaching History in Zimbabwe


1. The economic crisis has instigated a decline in secondary education.
2. Inadequate history materials inhibit quality teaching in schools.
3. Severe lack of funding from government for books, desks, chairs and for the remuneration of teachers. In 2009 the Minister of Education, Sport, Art and Culture David Coltart described the state of the education sector thus:

   When I took office in February 2009, I knew that the education sector was in a mess, but could not anticipate just how bad it was… On the day I took office almost 7000 schools were effectively shut because over 80000 teachers were on strike. In the 8 months since I’ve taken office, up to the end of September 2009 the entire ministry received from Treasury the princely sum of US$1 962 057 to run over 7000 schools and educate some 3 000 000 children.

4. History teachers especially in the rural areas have come under attack from ZANU PF youth militia and war veterans who have accused them of being MDC supporters guilty of teaching students to be disloyal to ZANU PF. In the violence surrounding Zimbabwe elections in 2008, 2700 teachers had fled or had been evicted, dozens of schools had been closed and 121 were in use as militia bases, 123 had been charged with election fraud and 496 questioned by police.
2.7 Proposals that would help support History teaching in Zimbabwe

Miles Tendi(2009) did not only point out challenges in History teaching but he also proposed suggestions as to how History teaching can be improved in schools. Some of his suggestions include:

1. Zimbabwe must do away with an examination focused History curriculum in secondary schools where students are encouraged to learn by rote and focus more on developing critical thinking skills and interpretative skills among secondary school students. Hence exams must be written at the end of each year and students must be encouraged to write critical essays at secondary school level.

2. History teaching in secondary schools must have intended social outcomes. For example History students must be allowed to interrogate how heritage is interpreted and presented in schools and public domains by public intellectuals, media and politicians. They should be left to explain ideologies and debates around heritage issues without fear of victimisation.

3. Citizenship and nation building must not sacrifice the development of students’ academic skills as trained historians.

4. Formation of History Teachers associations which will be a platform to share ideas, air grievances as well as coming up with suggestions that can influence policy making in favour of their subject.

These were recommendations suggested by Tendi after carrying out his research. This study gave its own recommendations after considering the findings of chapter 4.

2.8 CONCLUSION

This chapter focused on reviewing literature from other scholars on the issue of the History curriculum as well as tracing how colonialism influenced the history curriculum. It also expounded on the progress and efforts made so far in revising the history curriculum. The chapter also showed that the question of which History to teach is not unique to Zimbabwe, but other countries also encounter such a dilemma. The chapter also pointed out the challenges of teaching History identified by other scholars and solutions suggested.
Chapter three
Methodology

3.0 Introduction

This chapter is going to focus on the research design, sampling techniques, data collection procedures, data analysis and ethical consideration

3.1 Research Design

The researcher used the qualitative research paradigm. Neumann (2000) and Schumacher (1993) described the qualitative research design as being attractive because of the massive use of words. Gall, Borg and Gall (1996) also referred to qualitative research design as an approach to social science research that involves watching people in their own terms. The researcher had the opportunity to interact with secondary school students at their schools. She was also personally involved with students to the extent of sharing views and ideas.

The relationship of the researcher to the subject is also different. In qualitative research the researcher deliberately interacts in a personal way with each individual in the study. This makes the researcher’s data collection procedures open to modification. Borg et al (1993) affirms that the researcher is free to use her intuition and judgement as a basis for deciding how to frame questions. In quantitative research the investigator’s goal is objectivity. This means they seek to keep their personal values, beliefs and biases from influencing the data collection and analysis process. Instead they administer tests and other paper and pencil measures which involve minimal personal involvement between them and research participants.
3.1.1 Case study

In this study a case study was chosen. Qualitative research requires a plan for choosing sites and participants and for beginning data collection. Bogdan and Biklen (1992) stated that a case study is an in-depth study of instances of phenomenon in its natural context. Robson (2000) proposes that a case study is a strategy for doing research which involves an empirical investigation of a particular contemporary phenomenon within its real life context. This can be used through the use of multiple sources of evidence.

Borg and Gall (1996) echoed the same sentiments when they said that a case study is done to produce detailed descriptions of the phenomenon so as to develop possible explanation of it and evaluate the phenomenon.

The researcher chose a case study because of its characteristics which are:

a) It involves the study of phenomena by focusing on specific instances that is, the cases.
b) It is an in-depth study of each case.
c) It is the study of a phenomenon in its natural context.

These characteristics of a case study enabled the researcher to collect and analyse data from secondary school students at the specific high schools in Harare.

3.2 Population

Fraenkel and Wallen (2000), states that a population is a group to which the researcher would like the results of a study to be generalised. Population includes all individuals with certain specific characteristics. Schumacher (1993) contends that a population is a larger group to which one hopes to apply results. In this study, the population consisted of 40 students from the three schools in Harare. Queen Elizabeth, Prince Edward and Harare High school.
3.3 Sample Size

Nesbary (2000) suggests that a larger sample size enhances the probability that the sample will reflect the general population. Accordingly, the sample comprised 15 students from Queen Elizabeth, 15 students from Harare High and 10 students from Prince Edward. Prince Edward being a boys only school the number was neutralised by taking 5 girls at Harare High School so that at the end of the day we have 20 girls and 20 boys in the sample. Of the 40, five were interviewed, ten took part in focus group discussions and twenty-five filled in questionnaires.

3.3 Sampling procedure

Non probability sampling is a sampling technique that is commonly used in qualitative research designs. In that regard, the researcher employed purposive sampling technique. Patton (2002), notes that purposeful sampling is a non-random method of sampling where the researcher selects “information rich” cases for study in depth. With this in mind the researcher collected information largely from A level and O level students who have had enough exposure of the two disciplines in question i.e. African and European History. The history teachers at the respective schools were used to pick up students who are rich with information.
3.4 Data Collection Methods

To elicit data from students the researcher utilised focus group discussions, in depth interviews and questionnaires. Focus group discussions were chosen because rich data can emerge through interaction within a group. Interviews were used mainly for the advantage that they promote direct contact with participants allowing the interviewer to pursue specific issues (Heady 1985). Questionnaires were also chosen since they allow respondents to express their sentiments about issues independently. (Heady 1985).

3.5 Data presentation and analysis plan

Data becomes useful when it is properly organised and analysed. Data analysis involves reducing accumulated data to a manageable size, developing summaries, looking for patterns and applying statistical techniques.

In this research data was presented qualitatively to a larger extent and quantitatively to a very limited extent.

Questionnaires were manually counted and results from the questionnaires were displayed in tabular form.

Findings from interviews and focus group discussions were captured qualitatively, which enabled the researcher to come up with detailed findings.

3.6 Ethical Considerations

The researcher employed the following ethical considerations:
1. Informed consent: Students were informed about the research and its purposes before they were interviewed or given questionnaires.

2. Confidentiality: The researcher informed both the school heads and students that the results obtained from the research will be used for purposes of this study only and no names will be mentioned in the results. In that regard the researcher coded the three schools that participated, schools A, B and C in no particular order, for the purposes of data presentation in chapter four.

3.7 Conclusion

It can be concluded that the design chosen, sampling techniques, the instruments and the data collection procedures, analysis and presentation allowed the researcher to achieve the intended goals of the study. Participants provided rich information through the use of interviews and focus group discussions.
Chapter 4

Data presentation, analysis, interpretation and discussion

4.0 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher reports findings from the assessment conducted to compare student’s attitudes towards African History against European History. The chapter will present the data interpretation, analysis and discussion on the syllabus preference of the students and the factors affecting it. Among other things, the researcher will describe the characteristics of the students which responded to the focus group discussions, questionnaires and interviews. It is hoped that this chapter will present the answers to the following research questions raised in Chapter 1:

4.1 Objectives of the study

1. To investigate students perceptions of African History as compared to European History
2. To investigate the factors that contribute to the students perceptions on both African and European History
3. To investigate students attitudes on the proposed shift to a completely African centric history curriculum
4.2 Demographic variables

Table 1 Respondents by gender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sex</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
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<tr>
<td>Male</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Female</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>50</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 2 Respondents by school

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Location</th>
<th>Number of respondents</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Close to CBD</td>
<td>10</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Close to CBD</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>High density</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The respondents were composed of 15 students from each of the two and 10 students from the other school making a total of 40 students. Those interviewed were 5 boys and girls with an average age of 17 years. Focus group discussions were held separately with 10 participants. Participants were from 16 to 18 years of age. This was done to get insights from the older and mature teenagers who were in the lower and upper sixth form. For the questionnaires they were 25 boys and girls with an average age of 17. Ordinary Level students had an average age of 16 years while Advanced Level students were between 17 and 18 years of age.
### Table 3 Syllabus preference by school and level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>School</th>
<th>Level</th>
<th>Syllabus</th>
<th>Syllabus Preference (%)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A</td>
<td>Ordinary</td>
<td>African 2167/1</td>
<td>48</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ordinary</td>
<td>European 2167/2</td>
<td>52</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>African 9155/1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>European 9155/4</td>
<td>62</td>
</tr>
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<td>B</td>
<td>Ordinary</td>
<td>African 2167/1</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Ordinary</td>
<td>European 2167/2</td>
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<td></td>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>African 9155/1</td>
<td>70</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>European 9155/4</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

At School A most students at both Ordinary and Advanced Levels preferred European History as compared to African history. At School B there was a balance at Ordinary level between African and European history at 49% and 51% respectively. However the gap widened at Advanced Level with a greater number of students (60%) preferring European history as compared to African history. A completely different scenario was recorded at School C. A greater number of respondents at both Ordinary and Advanced Levels preferred African History as compared to European history.
4.3 Reasons why African history is preferred to European history at Ordinary level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>African History</th>
<th>European History</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>It is easy to understand as the topics can be broken down into simple terms.</td>
<td>It is too complicated and the topics are broad</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Students can relate to the events in African History and it has more meaning to their livelihoods for example the Chimurenga wars.</td>
<td>Events are too abstract therefore difficult to comprehend.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>There is enough exposure with African History topics since they cover the same topics from form 1.</td>
<td>Completely new concepts introduced at form 4 or form 3 levels and only learnt for a year before sitting for exams.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resources are readily available and there are many texts to promote referencing.</td>
<td>Very few texts available in schools.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Teachers seem to be more comfortable with the content</td>
<td>Teachers not very confident with the content.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From the results above it implies that Ordinary level students prefer learning about their own local History which is very contrary to the study carried out by Anna Clark (2008) where many Australian and Canadian students dismissed their own history as boring. The study by Levstik (2001) also showed that New Zealand students were not interested in studying New Zealand History as they felt safer to discuss distant rather than local perspectives.

4.4 Reasons why European History is preferred to African History at Advanced level

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>African History</th>
<th>European History</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
Questioning techniques promote learning by rote. | Questioning techniques provoke critical thinking, interpretative skills and independent judgement.

Problem of topic repletion as the same topics were learnt since form 1. | A variety of new topics which invoke excitement and enthusiasm.

Resources limited to mainly text books. | A variety of resources available especially online up to date information on the internet.

The above findings imply that Advanced level students prefer learning European history to African history. The reasons forwarded augment the finding by Miles Tendi that Zimbabwean history is examination oriented which promote learning by rote.

### 4.5 The necessity to teach African and European History

Over 80% of students in all the schools had the view that it was very necessary to teach both African and European History at Ordinary and Advanced Levels. Most students felt that learning African history gave them a sense of identity. It would help them know their roots, their current position and thus be able to project into their future. Learning European History was also deemed very necessary by 75% of the students in all the schools. They highlighted the fact that as a nation, sub region or continent we don’t exist in isolation. There is a need for interaction with others and this is consolidated through knowledge and information of their history. In addition through this knowledge common values can be shared and build upon. However, a considerable percentage of the Advanced Level students (30%) highlighted that through history they learnt of how the Africans faced discrimination which stirred up anger and remorse towards the whites.
4.6 Content of the African and European History syllabi

At Ordinary Level, 90% of the students expressed interest in African History topics. This applied to schools B and C. The students viewed African History topics as simple and easy to learn. A different scenario was encountered at school A. A greater percentage (52%) of the Ordinary Level students expressed interest in European history topics as compared to 48% for African History topics. This can be attributed to the fact that it is a multi-racial school with whites, Indians, coloureds and thus some were not interested in learning African history topics.

A different trend was noted for Advanced Level students. The majority (76%) felt that African History topics were monotonous and boring since most of the content was covered at Ordinary Level. A greater number of students (85%) had interest in European History topics especially those at schools A and B. They felt that European History topics were more dynamic and broad thus developing the necessary interest. At school C the majority of students (87%) preferred the content of the African History syllabus.

4.7 Resource availability

Resources for students for both African and European History within the schools are scarce. Textbooks are few to such an extent that one textbook is shared among 3 students at Ordinary Level at school B. In addition African history textbooks are not available for Advanced Level students. The textbook to student ratio increased to 1:6 at school C for Ordinary Level students and 1:4 for Advanced Level students. The ratio is much better at school A where its 1:2 textbook to student ratio for both Ordinary Level and Advanced Level students. Most textbooks within the schools are obsolete and this is further worsened by limited internet access by the students where they can get updated information.
4.8 Teacher’s approach and learning experiences

Monotony and boredom came out as the learning experience of 95% of students in all the schools. They highlighted that they were just confined to the classroom and that there was no creative use of technology to make the lessons interesting. The students revealed that the teachers were not creative, innovative and motivated enough to come up with better and interesting teaching methods.

4.9 Questioning techniques

Over 50% of students predominantly at school A and B noted the difference in questioning techniques for Ordinary and Advanced Levels. Questioning at Ordinary Level was considered to be more narrative and requiring recalling of events. Some of the students at school C were happy that the questioning techniques at Ordinary Level made it simple and easy to answer questions. At Advanced Level the general trend that came out in all the three schools was that questioning techniques were perceived to promote critical thinking and independent judgement especially in European history.

4.10 Adoption of an Afrocentric syllabus

Whilst 78% of students in the Ordinary and Advanced Level categories realized the need to learn about their history, culture and ideologies, the idea of a predominantly African syllabus seemed farfetched. The students highlighted that the world is now a global village with the emergence and spread of technology and the internet. It is increasingly becoming more difficult to live in a vacuum. People of diverse backgrounds, races and cultures interact more through social media, technology and the internet. The necessary implication is that if
European history is removed from the curriculum, the students would still learn it through use of the internet, technology and social media. Students had a general consensus that they had to be a balance of both African and European History. However, the greater number of students at Ordinary Level had a bias towards African History whilst the Advanced Levels had a bias towards European History.

4.11 Effect of location on syllabus preference

The researcher noted that there was a correlation between syllabus preference and location of the school. At School A located close to the CBD an average of 80% students at both Ordinary and Advanced Levels preferred European History as compared to African History. At school B which is also close to the CBD the trend was the same. The average percentage of students who preferred European History at both Ordinary and Advanced Levels was 70%. However, more Ordinary Level students (65%) preferred African History at school B than at school A which had 48%. At school C which is located in the high density suburb an average of 85% preferred African History for both Ordinary and Advanced Levels. Only 20% on average for both Ordinary and Advanced Levels preferred European History.

4.12 CONCLUSION

In this chapter it was noted that students at Ordinary level preferred learning African history to European history. However syllabus preference differed from school to school depending on location. Those at Advanced level preferred European history to African history. The idea of adopting an Afrocentric history syllabus was predominantly rejected by most students who felt that they are global citizens and need to learn about other countries other than their own.
Chapter 5

Summary and Recommendations

5.0 Introduction

In this chapter the researcher discusses the conclusions obtained tied to the objectives of the study. The researcher provides the recommendations which emanate from the conclusions and finally highlight on the implications of the study in terms of future research.

5.1 Summary

Students deemed the study of both African and European History in secondary schools as very necessary. However various factors affected the attitude of the students towards the subject. These factors include content of syllabus, questioning techniques, resource availability, teachers’ approach and learning experience.

Advanced Level students prefer European History as compared to African History. The content of the African history syllabus was viewed as monotonous and boring because of repetition of content taught at Ordinary Level. European history was viewed as more dynamic, challenging and broad thus developing interest in the students. Questioning techniques for Advanced Level were viewed as promoting critical thinking and judgement by the students.

Ordinary Level students preferred African history as compared to European history. African history was considered to be easy to learn. European history was viewed as difficult and more challenging. The questioning techniques at Ordinary Level were viewed as more narrative and requiring recalling of events thus making it easy to answer questions.
Resources for the students in schools are not adequate. The student to textbook ratio is very high, the information is obsolete and access to the internet is limited. In addition the teachers approach lacked the necessary creativity. Students were not exposed to some of our most important heritage sites like Great Zimbabwe by means of school trips. The students felt that the teachers were not motivated enough to create an interesting learning environment.

The idea of a completely Africanised syllabus was rejected. Students felt that learning European history was necessary in this modern world that has now become a global village through the internet, social media and technology.

Students learning in town preferred European history as compared to African history. Those in the high density suburbs preferred African history as compared to European history.

5.2 Conclusion

The findings show that it is very necessary to teach both African and European History at both Ordinary and Advanced Levels. African history gives a sense of identity. It enables the students to understand their roots, their current position and be able to project into their future. On the other hand European history gives the students a global perspective. The world has become a global village through the use of social media, technology and the internet. Thus learning about other races and cultures enhances interactions and allows common values to be identified and build upon.

Schools are inadequately resourced in terms of textbooks, internet access and funding of trips. The textbook to student ratio is high in most schools. Internet access is limited and financial resources to fund trips are scarce. Students are generally confined to learning in the classroom. The learning environment is not creative and exciting enough to build interest
among the students. Teachers on the other hand are not motivated and enough to create such learning environments because of a largely low remuneration.

5.3 Recommendations

1. European History needs to be introduced at form 1 level to create more exposure and awareness among the students.
2. African History topics at Advanced level must be diverse to avoid monotony.
3. Improve the student to textbook ratio to 1:1 for both European and African history syllabi. Improve availability and accessibility of internet to enable students to be up to date with current information.
4. Create a trip fund to allow students to have hands on experience of our historical sites e.g. Great Zimbabwe, Matopos, Chinhoyi, Chimoio and Nyadzonya military camps. This enhances the learning experience.
5. The remuneration of the teachers needs to be reviewed upwards to motivate the teachers. This will enable them to create an exciting and interesting learning environment.
6. The idea of having a completely Africanised syllabus is not recommended as the world is now a global village, thus learning European history remains necessary.
7. Ordinary level questions should provoke critical thinking and independent judgement.

5.3.1 Recommendations of areas for further study

1. The study was done on secondary school students; it can therefore be extended to university students.
2. Only three schools in Harare were used; the research can be extended to other schools and even rural schools.
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