

The “Nativist Turn” and the Crisis in University Education in Zimbabwe

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Abstract

National socio-economic development cannot succeed in a country with a malfunctioning education system. The adoption of nativist policies and practices in Zimbabwe since the year 2000 was met with peaceful resistance from the public university community. The purpose of the paper is to expose the impact of nativist policies on university education. A critical interpretive case study of two public universities was carried out. Thirty participants were interviewed and these included students, faculty, administrators and a government official. Document analysis and observations were also undertaken. Findings indicate that universities have been functioning amidst immense political and economic pressure from the government. While nativism has been put across as an indigenous empowering ideology, the intolerance and neoliberal (privatization) principles accompanying it have led to growing displeasure and opposition from the university community. One observes the imposition of the culture of capitalism and the accompanying reactions that equally fits into this culture. The article recommends a critical rethink of development paradigms that are responsive to the local communities in place of copying and pasting ideas developed in the global North.

Keywords: Zimbabwe university education; nativism; coloniality; national sovereignty; privatization; Africanization/indigenization; academic freedom; academic politics

1. Introduction

The ultra-nationalist developments in Zimbabwe since the year 2000 have been explained from different perspectives with varying conclusions. The unfolding processes have been described as the Africanization or indigenization of the country's natural resources, signalling empowerment of the majority black peoples (Government of Zimbabwe, 2007; Moyo & Yeros, 2011), while others see the unfolding processes as simply the domestication of the culture of capitalism (Amin, 1997) as seen by the commodification of social services such as education as the government forcefully implements privatization and marketization policies. The corporate emphasis of the programmes is further highlighted by the reluctance to Africanize formal education except in the area of ownership of profit making private institutions. It is the purpose of this paper to explore and assess the impact of the government of Zimbabwe's nationalist autochthonic policies on university education. The nativist blueprint guiding Zimbabwe since the year 2000 has seen the country being isolated and placed under sanctions by the European Community, North America and the white Commonwealth (Hwami & Kapoor, 2012) while at home the Zimbabwe African Nationalist Union Patriotic Front (ZANU PF) government responded by claiming that they are under siege from former imperialists and are therefore willing to do anything to safeguard national sovereignty.

With abundant evidence indicating that the student and worker union that culminated in the formation of the opposition Movement for Democratic Change (MDC) party was supported and funded by white commercial farmers, Britain and other western countries (Bond & Manyanya, 2003; Raftopoulos, 2003), a radical pan Africanist paradigm advocating an indigenous Zimbabwe for Zimbabweans policy was adopted by ZANU PF as a response. This change from pro-Western and international aid backed socio-economic paradigms to an African anti-Western development framework has been referred to as the nativist turn or "nativist revolution" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2006, p. 5). It denotes among other issues, the Afro-radical attempt to resolve the national question of natural resources restitution, especially land, without the support of global capital (Western nations and institutions). Articulating the philosophy behind nativist and Afro-radical discourses, Mbembe (2002) said:

Nativist and Afro-radical discourses of the self are both projects of self-regeneration, self-knowledge, and self-rule. Self-knowledge and self-rule are justified in the name of autochthony. According to the argument of autochthony, each spatio-racial formation has its own culture, its own historicity, its own way of being, and its own relationship with the future and with the past. Each has, as it were, its own certificate of origin and its own telos. In all cases, the idea is that the encounter between Africa and the West resulted in a deep wound: a wound that cannot heal until the ex-colonised rediscover their own being and their own past. (p. 635)

The idea that economic control and political power or influence are linked is convincingly presented in Marxist philosophy while coloniality in the Third World further confirms this adage. Indigenization and black empowerment policy is meant to give indigenous Zimbabweans control of the country's national resources that have been under the control of

Europeans since colonial times (Government of Zimbabwe, 2007). This is widely considered moral and is upheld in international law as affirmative policies are encouraged all over the world. However, for this process to be meaningful, some have argued that it must be guided by an African philosophy of development that is responsive to the developmental needs of the general population. At the moment the indigenization process is being implemented within a radical capitalist framework that is forcefully privatizing Zimbabwe with much chagrin from ordinary citizens whose livelihoods continue to deteriorate.

The discussion of the nativist policies in Zimbabwe has therefore occupied spaces of those who see Zimbabwe as yet another sad chapter of African dictatorship and postcolonial economic misgovernment. Another body of literature hail President Mugabe's government as one of the very few in postcolonial sub-Saharan Africa that has embarked on meaningful transfer of national resources to its citizens and therefore negating years of colonialism. Amidst this process, the university community has largely been caught in between two powerful influences, namely, neoliberal privatization that is advocating government withdrawal from higher education funding and a largely intolerant nativist government whose power base is criticized and threatened at home and abroad. There has not been much published work on the impact on education of the radical economic and political policies adopted in Zimbabwe since 2000. On the basis of this observation, this research set out to explore and understand how the nativist turn has affected university education. More specifically, the research questions that guided the study were as follows:

1. How does the ZANU PF government's nativism contribute towards the crisis in university education in Zimbabwe?
2. What is the relationship between ZANU PF nativism and neoliberalism? In what ways do these combined trajectories contribute towards crisis in universities?

To address these issues, this article will first consider the coverage of the Zimbabwean issue by focusing on the adoption and rise of nativism in the country. Secondly, the anti-hegemonic perspectives utilized in the discussion in this article will be exposed. The methodology that was employed will be described in detail in the following section. The emerging themes or findings of this study are considered in the next section. A discussion of the study findings is the second last section of this presentation and will be followed by the conclusion.

2. Review of Literature

The Zimbabwean polity including the education sector has been politicized to an extent that it is almost impossible to discuss educational issues without considering national and international political developments. This section exposes the official pronouncements representing the theoretical standpoint of nativism as explained by government officials and intellectuals providing ideological anchor to nativism in public.

2.1 The Nativist Turn in Zimbabwe

Having faced electoral defeat at the hands of a student and worker union in the form of the

Movement for Democratic (MDC) party for the first time in the 2000 referendum, ZANU PF blamed the white community in Zimbabwe, Britain and her western allies in the commonwealth and European Union, of sponsoring workers and students in opposing President Mugabe's rule. President Mugabe (2001) said:

The MDC should never be judged or characterised by its black trade union face; by its youthful student face; by its salaried black suburban junior professionals; never by its rough and violent high-density lumpen elements. It is much deeper than these human superficialities; for it is immovably and implacably moored in the colonial yesteryear and embraces wittingly or unwittingly the repulsive ideology of return to white settler rule. (p. 88)

What followed were authoritarian nationalist policies that were meant to strengthen the ruling party and to destabilize opposition support at home and abroad. It has been widely established that the authoritarian nationalist policies of the government of Zimbabwe are informed by the idea of nativism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2006; 2009; Mbembe, 2006); 'a socio-political position taken by those who consider themselves as native-born and followed by a policy favouring native-born citizens over immigrants' (Ekeh, 1975, p. 623). Nativism is also seen as a belief in the importance of asserting an authentic ethnic identity, perpetuating native cultures in opposition to acculturation and multiculturalism (Appiah, 1992). In post-2000 Zimbabwe's nativism has specifically involved:

... reforming the judiciary system that had remained manned by whites at the top who were considered to be opposed to the re-distribution of land; strengthening of state capacity to make it more interventionist into the structures of the economy for the benefit of the native African; creation of a powerful indigenous black middle-class with a nativist mandate of owning the means of production as a patriotic citizen; re-definition of citizenship in more nativist terms as a solution to the enduring problem of native-settler binaries created by colonialism; completing indigenization of the economy through a fast-track land reform programme; vigorous social and cultural engineering in the form of promotion of patriotism and a national ethos as a bulwark against the corrosive forces of globalization and cosmopolitanism; and adopting a deliberate and full-fledged nativist drive as an alternative development paradigm. (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2006, pp. 5-6)

Some have argued that nativism amplifies local Zimbabwean and global struggles for justice, emancipation and development in the contemporary neoliberal world order (Gono, 2008; Moyo & Yeros, 2011; Sadomba, 2011). Others observe nativism in Zimbabwe as a version of neoliberalism promoted by local elite nationalists (Hwami, 2011; Tandon, 2011). Its outstanding features in universities include the politicization of university governance that ensures that only party loyalists are the administrators, the total banning of student activism and political activity on campus, privatization of university amenities, notably residence and catering services. These have had devastating effect on students coming from rural areas (Student Solidarity Trust, 2009; Zimbabwe National Students Union, 2010). Accompanying these neoliberal principles has been the complete commodification of education that has

witnessed the consistent rise of tuition fees that are paid in United States dollars while there are no facilities for students to access loans or grants from the government or private sector sources. Thus the nativist revolution is being characterized by relentless authoritarianism and implementation of vicious market reforms.

2.2 Public Intellectuals' Perspectives of Nativism

This nativist perspective, as enunciated by public intellectuals (faculty members/academics who speak to a wider/public audience or one that extends beyond their professional academic colleagues as political analysts and commentators) mostly from the University of Zimbabwe allied to ZANU PF (Tendi, 2010) and the media describes Zimbabwe as a black African country and all of its problems are given a colonial explanation that blames Britain and its Western allies. Analyzing the rise of nativism in Zimbabwe, Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2006) wrote:

The Afro-radical ideology relies on a troika of rhetorical rituals that involve refutation of Western definitions of Africa; denunciation of what the West has done and continues to do in Africa; and frantic efforts to provide ostensible proofs disqualifying the West's fictional representations of Africa and refuting its claim to have a monopoly on the expression of the human in general and in that way opening up a space in which Africans can finally narrate their own fables without imitation of the West. ...Therefore, nativist struggles for autonomy must not only involve economic emancipation but consistent and systematic refutations of Western definitions of Africa predicated on anti- neo-liberalism, anti-globalisation, and anti-cosmopolitanism. (pp. 10-11)

Through the use of national institutions, specifically the media and education, the ruling party has been able to suffocate the public sphere with its ideology. Through this control of national institutions the idea of the nation being conveyed is one that is racist. A report on the ways in which Zimbabwe Broadcasting Corporation (ZBC) delivered views on the nation in 2002, concluded that:

ZBC's conceptualisation of "nation" was simplistic. It was based on race: The White and Black race. Based on those terms, the world was reduced to two nations – the White nation and the Black nation and these stood as mortal rivals. The Black nation was called Africa. Whites were presented as Europeans who could only belong to Europe just as Africa was for Africans and Zimbabwe for Zimbabweans. (Gandhi & Jambaya, 2002, p. 4)

This doctrine was drilled into the population daily through various means but in education, from elementary up to universities, a version of history called Patriotic History was made compulsory (Ranger, 2004; Tendi, 2010). Patriotic History glorified the history of the land struggle and depicts the country's narrative as dominated by conflicts between whites and blacks over national resources. To cement this line of thinking, one of the public intellectuals from the University of Zimbabwe proclaimed:

Since the value system of the Europeans, of the White man, of the Rhodesian in Zimbabwe, is exclusive, it is racist, it does not have any place for us ... we should come up with this kind of ethos: Zimbabwe for Zimbabweans, Africa for Africans, Europe for

Europeans. This is the starting point because that's what they do. (Gandhi & Jambaya, 2002, p. 8)

Citizenship became re-defined in nativist terms that excluded white races as President Mugabe proclaimed the Zimbabwe for Zimbabweans ideology. In an interview with Christine Amanpour on CNN, Robert Mugabe reiterated his government's seemingly racialist policy:

Zimbabwe belongs to the Zimbabweans, pure and simple ... white Zimbabweans, even those born in the country with legal ownership of their land, have a debt to pay. They are British settlers, citizens by colonization. (Amanpour, 2009)

The view was later cemented by the passing of Indigenization and Empowerment Act that defines an indigenous Zimbabwean as black and African (Government of Zimbabwe, 2007). It implies that no non-black person can claim to be Zimbabwean. Following this line of thinking, opposition parties and other civic organizations such as student and faculty unions have been accused of being sponsored by the West and are therefore considered illegitimate.

Johnson (2005) noted that for the new African elites nativism galvanised their push for embourgeoisement through increasing demands on the decolonized state for capital and resource accumulation. Others see leaders like President Robert Mugabe as having deployed Afro-radicalism and nativism as part of taking the 'decolonisation struggle to the further level of economic liberation from the snares of neo-colonialism' (Osaghae, 2005, p. 1). The nativist turn was explained and justified by Mugabe in the following words:

We are now talking about the conquest of conquest, the prevailing sovereignty of the people of Zimbabwe over settler minority rule and all it stood for including the possession of our land ... Power to the people must now be followed by land to the people. (The Herald, 6 December 2005)

Mbembe (2006) noted that nativism, "historically has always been about racial supremacy and the defence of immoral privilege while black nativism is a by-product of dispossession (p. 3). He further observed that:

Nativism is a discourse of rehabilitation. It is a defence of the humanity of Africans that is almost always accompanied by the claim that their race, traditions and customs confer to them a peculiar self-irreducible to that of any other human group. (2006, p. 44)

To Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2006) this type of thinking informs some African leaders and intellectuals' quest to rebuild their nations, recreate African confidence destroyed by colonialism and recreate African creativity as opposed to dependency. This view is corroborated by the way some intellectuals provide prolific and sharper formulations of nativism in support of the government. It was also a realization on the part of the government that for the success and legitimacy of the Afro-radical nativist paradigm they had embarked on, they needed an ideological anchor to promote the policies to both the local and international public. Universities were the obvious institutions expected to provide the much need theoretical justifications but this became very difficult as students and faculty were coming under enormous economic strain due to government withdrawal of financial support

and also the devastating impact of the sanctions that had been imposed on the country by the European Union, USA, Canada and most of the white commonwealth. Nativism turned universities into hotbeds of opposition politics and public government critiques.

3. Theoretical Perspectives

Many scholars from the global South have concluded that the modern world is dominated by colonial situations where some groups dominate others. These scholars observe global and local hegemonic forces inventing and sustaining re-colonization processes to exploit weaker social groups (Amin, 2011; Mignolo, 2000; Quijano, 2000). The analysis in this paper is informed by these theoretical analyses and critiques that regard decolonization and neo/anti-colonialism in post-independent African states as an incomplete task (Fanon, 1963; Nkrumah, 1965; Nyerere, 1973) as the resurgence of re-colonization or domestic/internal colonialism orchestrated by the elite is observed (Calvert, 2001; Casanova, 1965; Gutiérrez, 2004) as demonstrated by the growing dictatorial tendencies of the government of Zimbabwe, for instance, the random use of force and violence on innocent citizens that include defenceless students (Student Solidarity Trust, 2009; Zeilig, 2007). Anti-colonialists observe “traces of colonialism that exist in the present” (Daniel, 2005, p. 262) leading to the conclusion that there has been a disappointment of the “post-colonial condition” (Gupta, 1998, p. 7) or the failed promise of independence and hence the “the myth that the elimination of colonial administrations amounted to decolonization” (Grosfoguel, 2005, p. 280). Furthermore, this is guided by a critique of neoliberalism, also referred to as “Euro-centred capitalist colonial/modern world power” (Quijano, 2000, p. 218), or “hegemonic, global economic arrangement” (Borg and Mayo, 2007, p. x) whose implementation in peripheral societies like Zimbabwe has led to state/capital driven penetrations into social services illustrated by the processes of privatization and marketization of university services. The domestication of neoliberalism by elite nationalists (national bourgeoisie) who at the same time denounce the West as imperialist, and simultaneously promoting vulgar capitalism in collusion with friendly capitalist China to strengthen ZANU PF national control, has exposed nativist indigenous and black empowerment programmes as state-corporate capitalist accumulation adventures and hence the observation that there are traces of internal colonialism in Zimbabwe.

By employing these critiques, the perspectives and experiences collected from the university community in Zimbabwe are considered as struggles against modern hegemonic forces and/or failure to comprehend modern depictions of colonialism. Furthermore, the paper is cognisant of the view that reactionary elements are common in almost all revolutionary endeavours (Dei, 2010) and hence the need to guard against such individuals and groupings that claim to be fighting for human rights and democracy.

4. Research Methods

Against the background of government political meddling in university business, enforcement of neoliberal prescriptions, and the conflicts and divisions among the university community, a critical interpretive case study was considered most appropriate. Critical interpretive research is an ideological critique of power and privilege in areas of education (Merriam, 2009). Critical interpretivism involves the construction of detailed, local and situated empirical interpretation of developments. It is a reflective approach that reveals and disrupts the assumptions that reinforce the status quo and connects interpretations to broader considerations of power (Anderson, 1989; Onwuegbuzie & Leech, 2007). Critical researchers recognise that research is not value free, but that the goal of the research is to actively challenge interpretations and values in order to bring about change. In such a study “the researcher builds a complex, holistic picture, analyzes words, reports detail views of informants and conducts the study in a natural setting” (Creswell, 1998, p. 15). This further implies locating research in the texts, and voices of the participants in their natural social settings. Burbules's (1992) concern for a kind of research that occurs with, rather than on, others and is thus informed by a dialogue aimed at mutual understanding, strongly guided this study. Hence it was the need to obtain “richly descriptive data” (Merriam, 2009, p. 16) from the university community that prompted me to adopt this “emic perspective” (Merriam, 2009, p. 14).

4.1 Participants

Thirty participants (14 student activists, 10 faculty members, 5 university administrators and 1 government official) were interviewed. As was observed by Rudestam and Newton (2007), in most research situations, “participants are the experiential experts on the phenomenon being studied, participants’ main criteria is experiential relevance” (p. 107). On the basis of such reasoning, participants for this study were individuals actively involved and conscious of what is happening in public universities. Consequently, I ended up administering semi-structured interviews to student activists and politically active faculty members. Considerate of the political divisions in the country I ensured to some extent that the participants represented different and conflicting views concerning the crisis in higher education.

4.2 Data Collection

Three main data collection strategies were employed for this critical interpretive case study of two public universities in Zimbabwe. Semi-structured interviews were held with 30 participants. As this was a critical interpretive case study, semi-structured interviews were employed to collect “thick and rich” descriptions of the experiences of the participants. “In semi-structured interviews either all of the questions are more flexibly worded or the interview is a mix of more and less structured questions” (Merriam, 2009, p. 90). According to Fossey, et. al. (2002) “semi-structured interviews are used to facilitate more focused exploration of a specific topic, using an interview guide. Interview guides usually contain a list of questions and prompts designed to guide the interview in a focused, yet flexible and conversational manner” (p. 727). The aim was to go below the surface of the general topic of

problems in universities, and explore what people say in as much detail as possible, and uncover new areas or ideas that were not anticipated at the outset of the research. It was because of this that stories about students' arrests, assaults and court/prison experiences were obtained though no specific question solicited for such responses. All the interviews were recorded except with the government official who declined. Documents and records about the two universities were also consulted and these included advertisements, agendas, registration records, and minutes of meetings, journal articles, books and brochures, event programs (printed outlines of graduation ceremonies), letters and memoranda, newspapers (articles), press releases, application forms, institutional reports (e.g. vice-chancellor's annual reports, student union reports and other public records). These were found in both printed and electronic forms. Observations of the two institutions were employed to supplement data collected from interviews, documents and records analysis.

4.3 Data Analysis

Data from interviews, documents and observations were analyzed using the "constant comparative method" (Boeije, 2002; Bogdan & Biklen, 2007). It is defined as "a research design for multi-data sources in which the formal analysis begins early in the study and is nearly completed by the end of data collection" (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 271). Constant comparative analysis involves thematic analysis. It is "a progressive process of classifying, comparing, grouping and refining groupings of text segments to create and then clarify the definition of categories, or themes, within the data" (Fossey, Harvey, Mcdermott & Davidson, 2002, p. 729). Interpretive researchers advise that thematic analytic procedures focus on developing categories, derived inductively from the data itself, rather than from a priori theory to enable systematic description (Ellis, 1998). However, this was a critical interpretive inquiry and "the researcher's history, social location, and specific world view, ... broader cultural milieu" (Prasad, 2005, p.32), formed acceptable "forestructures of understanding" (Prasad, 2005, p. 33; Smith, 1991, p. 193), and themes were formed around my research questions. Once I started data collection, I was heavily guided by Boeije's (2002) qualitative analysis of data from interviews and I came up with four steps and these were:

1. Comparison within a single interview,
2. Comparison between interviews within the same group (e.g. students),
3. Comparison of interviews from different groups (e.g. administrators and students), and
4. Comparison of data from interviews, documents and observations.

The process of categorization was influenced by the anti-colonial perspectives that informed this study. This made the coding process a subjective process because I chose the concepts to focus on.

4.4 Ethical Tensions and Limitations

Critical interpretive research derives from socio-political and emancipatory traditions, in which knowledge is not seen as discovered by objective inquiry but as acquired through critical discourse and debate. It falls under the family of paradigms that Mertens (2005)

called “transformative and emerged because of dissatisfaction with research conducted within other paradigms that was perceived to be irrelevant to, or a misrepresentation of, the lives of people who experienced oppression” (p. 36). In other words this concerns ethically responsible research. The first major ethical issue I considered had to do with confidentiality to individuals and this explains why the institutions have not been named. The fact that I had a theory informing this study means data interpretation had to fall within this fore-determined standpoint and others might interpret it differently. Furthermore, the study was not intended to analyze the views of the general students and faculty body but concentrated on mostly 30 politically active participants whose perspectives and experiences may not represent the entire university community in Zimbabwe. However, the crisis in university education is confidently presented utilizing these participants.

5. Emergent Themes (Findings)

From this critical interpretive case study of two public universities in Zimbabwe, what emerged from students, faculty and administrators is a unanimous view that there is a crisis in university education. The pressure to comply with the Zimbabwe for Zimbabweans nativist ideology being exerted on public education institutions by the government has so far produced largely disturbing consequences. The democratic and academic freedom ideals commonly associated with university education have been compromised as government considers such ideals as insignificant and unnecessary at this juncture in the country’s development. As was observed by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2006) on top of the intolerance, intimidation and political violence that formed the core of ZANU PF policies, attempts to defy the triumphant and global neo-liberal norms have provoked the wrath of the Northern industrialised nations who have imposed economic sanctions on the country. As a result responses from participants largely show that they are under immense strain from economic and political forces and these should be traced to the adoption of nativist policies from around the year 2000 as the situation was different before then.

5.1 Nativism and the Demand for a Patriotic University Administration

The issue of the relationship between the ruling ZANU PF party and state universities raises controversy among university stakeholders. It should be pointed out that at independence in 1980, President Mugabe, addressing a conference on the role of the university in Zimbabwe said, ‘To paraphrase that famous aphorism about generals and war: higher education is too important a business to be left entirely to deans, professors, lecturers and university administrators’ (Chideya, Chikomba, Pongweni and Tsikirayi, 1981, 6). Concomitant with this, evidence show the immense control the government has over universities with the vice-chancellor (president) appointed by the state President. The University Act appears to be giving the Vice-Chancellor arbitrary and excessive powers and it has been interpreted differently by students, faculty, administrators and government. The student union concludes that the Vice-Chancellor is endowed with un-checked powers and this has contributed to the collapse of the university (Students Solidarity Trust, 2009). Such perceptions are widely shared within the university community where some have the view that the powers of the

Vice-Chancellor are intended to control academics and stifle academic freedom. Some students and faculty members had this to say about the Vice-Chancellor's powers:

In the administration the ruling party has a very strong or absolute say. The president appoints vice chancellors who will not work at cross purposes with the chancellor/president of the country. The top five university posts are appointed by the president's office. An effort is made to have their names cleared by the president's office. This may not be a healthy situation; you may end up with people who confirm with policies that are not for the good of society. I remember former vice chancellor Walter Kamba resigned over government interference. (Faculty member, personal communication, July 13, 2012)

Also a study of university documents such as academic board and Council meetings showed that the state president is always cited under apologies for having failed to attend and there is always representative from the Ministry of Higher Education. But there were some faculty members who saw nothing wrong with this administrative structure:

Some say such a set up means government interference in the running of the institution. It is the people within the university who manipulate the system to their advantage. This was meant to allow the government at the highest level to engage in education issues. (Faculty member, personal communication, July 20, 2012)

Participants generally acknowledged the involvement of the government in the administration of public universities. The majority did not consider the arrangement as healthy for the university but those sympathetic to the ZANU PF government regarded the structure as informed by positive intentions. Student views on the administrative structure were unequivocal against the powers bestowed on the Vice-Chancellor.

Ahh... obviously they belong to ZANU PF as they are appointed by President Mugabe, the chancellor. They follow what is wanted by ZANU PF. We fight against high fees; most of our parents are civil servants.... We demand free education and academic freedom. If we hold a demonstration we are accused of having been sent by the opposition. (Student leader, personal communication, August 6, 2012)

Such sentiments from students were not surprising considering the cat and mouse relationship between Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU) and the government. The government as expected did not see anything wrong with its policy and involvement in universities. I raised the above complaints and views from students and faculty about government role, with a government official who dismissed these views as simple and naïve politicking on the part of opposition elements within the university community, and he said:

These people are against privatization of university facilities ... in other words they want government to run these facilities. But they do not want government to be involved in administrative issues. Do you see this adding up? No no no This does not make much sense to me. (Government official, personal communication, August 9, 2012)

This seemed to be the dilemma proponents of academic freedom are faced with; government

funding results in government control. Nevertheless, these views portray the widely acknowledged perception that since 2000, all institutions of national strategic importance were to be controlled by the party and government as a way of safeguarding and fortifying ZANU PF's hold on power amidst the growing influence of opposition parties. University administrators are expected or should openly pretend to be members of ZANU PF. The appointment of the university's top five administrators; namely vice- chancellor, pro vice-chancellor, registrar, bursar and librarian is done by or through the state president's office. The University Act, particularly Ordinance 30, gives absolute power to administrators to quell dissent of all kinds from staff and students to the extent that even court decisions in favour of students and staff are often not respected. Government considers students and student activists as opposition elements, misguided by western funded parties and non-governmental organizations. While the independence of higher education institutions is becoming a thing of the past throughout the world because of pressure from private and public sectors in line with neoliberal thinking, one observes a heightened presence of the state in the affairs of the university in Zimbabwe whose impact is unique and largely negative.

5.2 Nativism, Patriotism and Academic Freedom

Students, faculty and administrators portrayed a picture of ZANU PF's indulgence in the affairs of universities. The academic community is expected to be patriotic and loyal to ZANU PF. There is a general sense emerging that universities have been singled out as breeding grounds for opposition politics and the government is bent on silencing and preventing the development of such a critical view. Top university administrators are perceived as state security agents, employed to silence the restless university community. Consequently, such a policy is singled out as one of the main contributing cause of crisis in university education. The following were some of the responses from faculty members on their perception of how ZANU PF's control of and influence over universities is causing crisis.

You have someone who has never been a dean becoming the Vice-Chancellor or pro-vice chancellor. I would have wanted a situation where the Vice-Chancellor is appointed by fellow members of staff on collegiality basis. It would change the politics of running the institution where administrators would be answerable to the people they lead. At present they do not listen to lecturers' or students' views. We have a Vice-Chancellor who does not listen to the people he leads because he owes his allegiance to those who appointed him. (Faculty member, personal communication, July 22, 2012)

Another faculty member said:

The state has failed the university. In trying to pursue key result areas the university has been found in collision with the state. Universities should be guided by charters, allowed to criticize the state president and when they can invite anyone regardless of political standing, but now they have to support the state. They have been whipped to support even bad policies. (Faculty member, personal communication, August 14, 2012)

When one observes the charges and frequency of student arrests and court cases, and the

failure of universities to protect their students, it gives credence to these allegations (see Student Solidarity Trust, 2009, pp. 44-46). The numerous arrests of students on campus, with the complicity of university authorities, for noble and widely acknowledged student grievances, is abundant evidence for some, that the Vice-Chancellor's office is protecting and furthering the internal colonial interests of the ruling party.

ZANU PF nativism does not tolerate arguments and debates, and consequently critical views from students and faculty are labelled treasonous and are met with disproportionate force from the state. University leaders have ceased to be superintends of education but party activists and agents employed to silence those who dare speak against the government. Sentiments as the one captured below were common from the interviews and corroborate the above assertions.

The Vice Chancellor is beholden to the state president; he throws away academic freedom for the convenience of keeping his post. He enjoys the benefits and those who appointed him expect patronage. (Faculty member, personal communication, July 15, 2012)

The emergence and rise of local bourgeoisie as these top university administrators through politics of patronage in return for giving support to the leadership is a trend that has been observed in the post-colonial era. As noted by Fanon, for the bourgeoisie, nativism and its associated policies of nationalism signifies the transfer into indigenous hands of privileges inherited from the colonial period. Student and faculty analyses and political activity have exposed and highlighted the economic dimensions of nativism and these basically involve the enrichment of the elite as they adopt black empowerment programs. A study commissioned by the Zimbabwe National Students Union confirmed this observation. It said:

As government tightens its grip on students to avoid their possible activism, students have lost several of their liberties, especially the freedoms of association, assembly and expression because of POSA (Public Order and Security Act) and AIPPA (Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act). For example, campus security guards reportedly harass any student they see associating with Mr. Bere, the Students Representative Council President, because of his activism. The powers that campus security guards have assumed to discretionally assault the very students they previously guarded has left students appearing like high school students (Makoni, 2007, p. 30).

To further illustrate the absence of academic freedom and the absence of tolerance, it was one faculty member's story that firmly confirmed the way universities are used to silence critics of the ruling party and consequently bring about a situation of crisis. He told me that:

When I applied for my tenure, whereas the department and external examiners recommended that I should be granted tenure, the vice-chancellor decided that I was not an academic and should be taught about the ethics of research. This is because I had written an article about the death of Hebert Chitepo that highlighted the different elements involved in the death and these included some presently in ZANU PF. This was seen as unacceptable. The vice-chancellor said a university where the chancellor was the

president could not be seen to harbour lecturers with such minds. I also wrote another article that considered the situation in Zimbabwe, looking at whether Mugabe had become an asset or a liability to the nation. Again to my surprise this was deemed to be dangerous and I was seen as an academic terrorist who was criticising the president. I was given 48 hours to leave university accommodation. I used the law to get more time (a notice of three months). The university guards also broke into my office and took my key texts ...those that are critical of ZANU PF. (Faculty member, personal communication, August 14, 2012)

The net effect of ZANU PF's control is widely recognized as the death of professionalism on the part of the vice-chancellor's office. The perception from faculty members is that vice-chancellors have since ceased to be an academic but a politician employed to ensure that students and faculty comply with the ruling party's ideology and policies. Some interviewees observed the intimidating atmosphere that has engulfed the institution:

We have lost professors and those with PhD's and now they are appointing anyone and in some cases staff is appointed along political lines. But we also see students who are analytic and critical in class but passive or dull in society or outside the institution. They have come to realise that they are living in a society that is not permitting critical ideas, one that wanted you to parrot a certain view or else you will be a victim of political violence. (Faculty member, personal communication, July 20, 2012)

Universities are generally acknowledged to be society's centres of knowledge creation and critique for the good of the majority (Bollinger, 2003; Harkavy, 2003). Though this has come under heavy strain from corporate demands dominating the contemporary neoliberal order, public universities in Zimbabwe have to further contend with ultra nationalist policies demanding explicit patriotism.

5.3 Nativism and Student Activism

Most students are of rural backgrounds and therefore most of their grievances represent the marginalized poor. However, the price of opposing ZANU PF nativist policies has been costly to many students, some have been killed by security forces during demonstrations (Guma, 2010), arrested and imprisoned, beaten and suffered permanent body damages, suspended and expelled. Student narratives capture the level of intimidation and curtailment of basic freedoms in universities.

I have been beaten many times. The other time I was taken by a fellow student who was an underground Central Intelligence Officer. I was accused of insulting the President. He dragged me out of my room and I was thoroughly beaten. On the 14th of January 2010 we had a demonstration against high fees and 28 students were arrested, spent three nights in cells and later released on free bail. When I returned to campus I was suspended and they were citing section 30 of the University Act or Ordinance 30 which gives the Vice Chancellor powers to suspend anyone. I was accused of bringing the name of the institution into disrepute. On the 30th of July we were acquitted because the witnesses could not prove a prima facie case against us. I then went to the university to negotiate

my reinstatement as a student but unfortunately they are refusing to take me back. I am on a two-year suspension. (Student activist, personal communication, August 21, 2011)

The story and experience of this student leader is repeatedly narrated by many others. At the National Students Constitution Convention that was held in Harare, it was rare to meet a student who had not been arrested or suspended. The Vice-Chancellor's office repeatedly ignores court rulings without facing any contempt of court charges. This is seen as further evidence of the political powers behind this office. Students have been singled out as the major consistent critique of the government and students' alliance with other civic organizations in the country, notably trade unions, has shaken the authorities. This was well explained Zeilig (2006):

In October 1989 Mutambara was arrested with fellow student leader Munyaradzi Gwisai, for organising a demonstration that had compared the regime with the apartheid government across the border. Student leaders were thrown into the maximum security prison Chikurubi. There was general outrage. Morgan Tsvangirai, the young leader of the ZCTU, issued a denunciation of the arrests and the victimisation of students. His act of solidarity was rewarded with imprisonment. The student movement had become the seed bed for an emergent civil society. By 1990 Zimbabwe was permanently changed and ZANU-PF had become the sullied party of liberation. Students had, to a large extent, pierced the regime's aura of invincibility, and other groups emerged to voice their own grievances. It was the first time people criticised the legitimacy of these heroes. It showed you can make noise and not get killed. (p. 96)

It appears the authorities have not forgiven the students for exposing the human nature of the liberation heroes. Though these kind of crises in universities are dismissed by some as not unique to Zimbabwe but common in the Third World, when one considers the promise of the post-independent state in the 1980s and 1990s and the strategic position of the country in sub-Saharan Africa, the crisis and all the peaceful struggles being taken by Zimbabweans, in a region prone to civil wars and coups d'état, make the case study of this country's universities unique and of significance to Third World struggles against local and international political and economic dictatorship.

6. Discussion

Nativism as unfolding in Zimbabwe can be summarized as a hybrid of nationalist authoritarianism and localized (indigenous) neoliberalism. Elite nationalists in the government and party are getting richer through interlinked policies of indigenization and privatization. Nativism is dictatorial and is helping the spreading of neoliberalism (privatization and marketization of university education) without having to deal with student or worker union protests. The crisis in higher education illustrates this observation. Those sympathetic to the adoption of nativism in Zimbabwe argue that like in most other African countries, the political leadership is searching for space to determine the destiny of the country. From this standpoint, nativism is seen as an option to launch an autonomous national

development agenda without policy prescription from the IMF and other institutions from developed nations (Cohen, 1998; Herbst, 2000). The authoritarian approaches being implemented by the authorities and the consequent suffering the people have endured have drawn the attention of critiques from the human rights perspectives. Equally problematic has been the unrelenting privatization of university education that has culminated in many students failing to access public institutions. This is being witnessed against a backdrop of massive wealth accumulation by the nationalist elite who are exploiting black empowerment programs. Clearly it is from the human rights standpoint, a camp that includes non-governmental organizations, student and faculty bodies as well as opposition parties that most participants enunciated their experiences and perspectives as illustrated above.

In his culture of capitalism thesis, Samir Amin observes that the dominant view is based on a refusal to accept the principle that the centre-peripheries contradiction constitutes the fundamental contradiction of the modern world (1989, p. 113). It is noted that the centre-periphery binaries are not only observed between the developed world and countries of the global south, but also within the former colonized countries where the developed centres (urban areas) and largely undeveloped rural/communal areas seem to be heading for different destinations. Elite nationalists in Zimbabwe claim to speak on behalf of the majority of the people but others accuse them of enunciating selfish political and economic policies that have helped them take over the spoils of colonialism. Anti-colonialists observe recolonization processes in supposedly independent societies. Mignolo (2003) points to elite natives taking power and reproducing the patterns implanted by colonial rulers. Similar observations have been made by Grosfoguel (2005), Nyerere (1973) and Fanon who described it as internal colonialism and also predicted that nationalism would be articulated by a bourgeois dictatorship in racial terms when the “native bourgeoisie” claimed land, mines and jobs as part of indigenous entitlement (1963, p. 101). Others have argued that nativism is aiding ZANU PF elites’ accumulation by dispossessing whites of their properties. Consequently, a patriotic and compliant university population is demanded by the government to provide an ideological anchor to the nativist Afro-radical Zimbabwe for Zimbabweans paradigm. Unfortunately, by nature universities are supposed to be critical and inevitably clashes between the government and university community have developed.

The conditions described by students and faculty portray a situation similar to oppression whereby one dominant group controls another. Grosfoguel employs the term colonial situation to refer to “the cultural, political, sexual and economic oppression and exploitation of subordinate groups by dominant groups with or without the existence of colonial administration (2005, p. 288). Others have said the situation in the country since 2000 demonstrate that there are processes of re-colonization underway and this is perpetrated by elite locals against their own. The situation at the two universities appears to be confirming this observation. But how can ZANU PF nationalist (liberators) be categorized as colonialists? Anti-colonial critiques and analytics have pointed out that in post-independent societies, “a version of colonialism was reproduced and duplicated from within” (Kapoor, 2009, p. 4). Fanon (1963) warned that with time people will discover “that the iniquitous phenomenon of exploitation can assume a black face” (p. 94). This seems to be the conclusion one can draw

from the sentiments that came from students and faculty.

The position of the government and some university administrators resonate with the pan-Africanist argument that foreign interference in the affairs of African countries mostly by former colonial powers is at the centre of the crisis. This neo-colonial thesis proposes that “The essence of neocolonialism is that the State which is subject to it is, in theory, independent and has all the outward trappings of international sovereignty. In reality, its economic system and thus political policy is directed from outside” (Nkrumah, 1965, ix). The transfer from foreign to indigenous local control of the country’s natural resources is one of the main tenets of ZANU PF nativism that are intended to undo neocolonialism. However, Hwami and Kapoor (2012) concluded that the neo-colonial proposition underscores the continued control of ex-colonial powers and new prospectors (e.g. China) over Zimbabwean sovereignty today through, for instance, the IFIs, TNCs and NGO-led supports for an opposition party (the MDC) that is prepared to go further than ZANU PF in terms of implementing the current policy prescriptions of neoliberal globalization in higher education and across the policy scape. The revolt against the government as illustrated by the views of the participants further demonstrates the challenge faced by the government in adopting a different development paradigm. Elites like academics and university students find issues of sovereignty and land ownership of secondary importance. They are exposed to Western schooling and this may explain their reluctance to accept suffering and sacrifice as the country goes through a period of change.

As faculty and students demand academic freedoms and political rights, the government accuses them of being agents of regime change sponsored by foreigners, mostly whites from Western countries who are against the indigenization of national resources. Many believe that student activists and politically active faculty are supported by western non-governmental organizations and embassies (Moyo & Yeros, 2011; Sadomba, 2011). These activists point to the continued adoption of neoliberal privatization and marketing policies in universities (Hwami, 2011; Hwami & Kapoor, 2012) as evidence that nativism and its associated policy of indigenization is meant to enrich the elite in ZANU PF and government.

7. Concluding Remarks

This is the state of university campuses in contemporary Zimbabwe. They are being shunned by foreign students, foreign professors, and experienced Zimbabwean nationals who have gone abroad. Nativism is benefitting the elite and with its intolerance and violence against fellow natives, it ceases to be liberative as some left leaning scholars have argued (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2006; 2008; Parry, 1994). Its association with neoliberal principles of privatization and marketization exposes its identification with the rich and elite and not the ordinary poor people.

Under the auspices of nativism and black sovereignty, we have witnessed unprecedented student and faculty victimization and impoverishment, against a capitalist transformation by an alliance of the state and an indigenous corporate (modernization/colonization). Basing on

the experiences and perspectives emanating from students and faculty, nativism is a continuation and perpetuation of neoliberalism though driven from the local centre. Its impact on university education has largely been deleterious to date and consequently, this paper finds it appropriate to end by capturing Zimbabwe's renowned historian, Terrance Ranger's view concerning nativist demands on his department at the University of Zimbabwe.

In the History Department ... Some of the senior academics, whose examples had been so important, have left or are leaving for universities elsewhere. Much of this is the result of Zimbabwe's dire crisis, which affects academics in all subjects. But there is a particular challenge for academic historians. There has arisen a new variety of historiography.... This goes under the name of 'patriotic history'. It is different from and narrower than the old nationalist historiography, which celebrated aspiration and modernisation as well as resistance. It resents the 'disloyal' questions raised by historians of nationalism. It regards as irrelevant any history that is not political. And it is explicitly antagonistic to academic historiography. (2004, p. 218)

While its tenets are generally acknowledged as the promotion of formerly disadvantaged blacks, the reality is that it has been harnessed by the elite, 'black skins in white masks' (Fanon, 1952), those in government or linked to the government, who are utilizing the principles of self-rule and sovereignty to accumulate capital. The voices from universities are being silenced under the pretext of patriotism and sovereignty, and the demand for responsible academics sensitive to national interests. There is need to tame the radical wealth accumulation culture dominating indigenization and black empowerment and make social services such as education, affordable to the challenged social groups.

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