

SECTION II

VIEW POINT

PATRIOTISM AND THE ZIMBABWEAN SCHOOL CHILD

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The profession of training teachers is one which gets a person to think about many ways and means of ensuring that the trained teachers end up imparting correct values and knowledge to the many, many children who will pass through their hands (an obvious fact, the reader might think, and perhaps justifiably so). The different subject syllabi have been meticulously developed to ensure that this "obvious fact" gets carried through the different levels of the educational ladder from primary to secondary school.

One such document we deal with in our subject area is the English syllabus. It outlines its many aims and objectives which teachers and children should achieve by the end of a particular level, be it the primary school, junior secondary school or the Ordinary level, commonly known as form four or 'O' Level. Thereafter, some go to the Advanced Level which is really university preparatory work and which is still wholly Cambridge University controlled whileas the other three syllabi have now been Zimbabweanised. The 'O' level syllabus is important as it is the officially "terminal" syllabus, meaning that children write an examination which will determine their future educational course, whether it be vocational, technical training or Advanced Level schooling or simply the world of work. It is an aspect of this 'O' level English syllabus which we want to focus on.

In its "General Introduction," the syllabus begins by stating a number of "long-term implications" arising from the tremendous and rapid expansion of the Zimbabwean education system since 1980 when it was found necessary to initiate curriculum changes for all subjects. Among other reasons stated, this curriculum change was done in order to "incorporate within the education system values that are consistent with the social and political aspirations of Zimbabwe, e.g. the inclusion of a work ethic and the usefulness of productivity, *patriotism* [emphasis mine], co-operation and an understanding of Zimbabwean, regional and world history, culture, politics and ideology...." It goes on and on.

As a teacher and/or a teacher trainer of English, one reads this document often enough and perhaps we end up assimilating its contents and taking them for granted. But this year, 1993, I decided to find out from the current Graduate Certificate of Education (Grad. C.E.) class, how exactly they teach the concept of *patriotism* to the children at junior secondary school and 'O' levels. The answers they gave varied and in some of these, I could detect some uncertainty. Some students even indicated that teaching about patriotism would involve a discussion on politics, a subject which might turn out to be highly emotive. We did establish, however, that discussing politics in an English class may not be avoidable, particularly when dealing with the various language and literary materials that these pupils have to study. But the question remained--how to teach the concept of patriotism to these children by end of 'O' level because for some, this might be their final school year. It then dawned on us that actually, this syllabus, like all syllabi, is silent on how to do so, and it really should be because it is not a methodological document. We did eventually work out the ways and means to do this, but the question still remained lingering in my mind: how do teachers and teacher trainers out there deal with this aspect of teaching English and other subjects? In any case, what do children themselves understand by the word, "patriotism?" What does the flag of Zimbabwe and the national anthem mean to them? Leaving out teachers and teacher trainers (for a later survey), I decided to investigate what the Zimbabwean school child understands by the concept of *patriotism*.

I set six questions which were given to pupils in form one to Lower Sixth (L6) to answer. The choice of these levels was governed by the fact that I had access to the children while on teaching practice duties. It did not matter which group of children answered these questions as long as they were in secondary school. I got responses from two classes in one school (out of the three schools and several classes that I gave the questions), from a form one class and a L6 class. This was probably because the exercise was purely voluntary on the part of the student teachers teaching those classes and on the part of their pupils. Others may not have found time to administer the questions. I just wanted to have a rough idea on what children think patriotism means. The questions and instructions given were as follows:

- Please ask pupils to write a few lines on the following:
- 1. What I understand by "patriotism."
- 2. What the National Anthem means to me.
- 3. What the Zimbabwean flag means to me.
- 4. Should we have a different Anthem from "Ishe Komborera Africa?"
- 5. What the difference would be if we had a Zimbabwe-specific National Anthem.
- 6. How I learn to be patriotic through English Language and /or Literature lessons.

Each pupil was to write her/his own opinion freely without worrying about whether or not someone will like what they say. The purpose was for me to find out how youngsters understand the meaning of patriotism from a personal view point. Below is a summary of the results I got from the form one and L6 classes:

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F.1. (N. 33): 1 = 3.03% 32 = 96.97%
 L6. (N. = 31): 10 = 32.26% 21 = 67.74%

Totals: F.1.: 33 = 100%
 L6. : 31 = 100%

Question 5: What the difference would be if we had a different Anthem.

Ans. expressing Zim. Nationhood/ National pride	Ans.expr. regional/ continental unity	"Many people know" current Anthem	no diff.	wrong ans.
F.1. 0	14 = 42.42%	4 = 12.12%	1 = 3.03%	14 = 42.42%
L6. 11 = 3.48%	13 = 41.94%	1 = 3.23%	0	6 = 19.35%

Totals: F.1.: 33 = 100%
 L6.: 31 = 100%

Question 6: How I learn to be patriotic through English Language/ Literature lessons.

Best ans.: "By inferring patriotism from good bks. & in General Paper (L6)"	wrong/omitted ans.
F.1. 8 = 24.24%	25 = 75.76%
L6. 4 = 12.90%	27 = 87.11%

Totals: F.1.: 33 = 100%
 L6. : 31 = 100%

The Longman Dictionary of Contemporary English (ed. Paul Proctor, 1981) defines "patriotism" as "love for and loyalty to one's country;" and defines "a patriot" as "one who loves and is willing to defend his country."

From the above results, it will be observed that more form ones were able to express patriotism in terms of loyalty to and love for one's country and a willingness to serve and dedicate oneself to it: 66,67% as compared to 38,71% of the Lower Sixth form pupils in question one. Thirty-three percent of the form ones and 61,29% of the L6 forms were unable to do that. This is rather surprising considering that the L6 pupils have gone through the form four English syllabus already where the aim to inculcate this socio-political value is expressed. One of the L6 pupils also mentioned that "In General Paper we discuss the need for patriotism." So we wonder why there is such a high percentage of pupils who could not define it. We shall comment on this observation later.

Question two asked about the meaning of the National Anthem and the best answer was provided by one form one pupil who said that it is a "hymn or song used by a particular nation to express loyalty to it." Only 18.18% of form ones and 32.26% of the L6 pupils came up with such an answer in different words. Twenty-one percent of the form ones and 45.16% of the L6 pupils had answers that encompassed regional or continental considerations, which is actually consistent with the Anthem itself since it talks more about Africa as a continent than about Zimbabwe as a nation. Examples of such answers were: "what the National Anthem means to me is proud continent [sic];" or "By the National Anthem we ask god to bless and lift high our continent" (form ones); or "it is for asking god's assistance in the development and leadership of African continent as a whole;" or "The National Anthem is significant in that it portrays the liberation of the African continent (the 'dark continent') as it is called. And with aid of ancestors and God [sic]" (L6 pupils). On the other hand, 60.61% of form ones and 22.58% of L6 pupils had answers which were completely off point.

A variety of answers were given by both classes on question three which asked about the meaning of the Zimbabwean flag. The best answer here would have been one which said it identified the country the way an identity card identifies an individual: it is the national I.D. as it were. Only 21.21% of form ones and 22.58% of L6s said so in different words. Other answers ranged from the flag meaning that Zimbabwe is a free or independent country (15.15% of form ones and 6.45% of L6s),

to answers that merely interpreted each of its colours (18.18% of form ones and 64.52% of L6s), to those that said it means "peace, love and respect (27.27% of form ones), to completely wrong answers (18.18% of form ones and 6.45% of L6s). For example, some form one pupils said, "The Zimbabwean flag means to me that the flag of our country;" or "What Zimbabwean flag means to me it means [sic] we should pray for those who dont [sic] have parents." The majority of L6 pupils interpreted its different colours and one even said, "since it has five colours, there are also five meanings!"

On whether we should have a different Anthem from the current "Ishe Komborera Africa," the majority of pupils in both classes answered negatively (96.97% of form ones and 67.74% of L6s). Only 3.03% of form ones and 32.26% of the L6 pupils said we should have a different one. Of the 32 form one pupils (out of 33) who said we should not change, one said we cannot change because "no one has come up with a suitable one to replace the current one." Exemplary reasons for wanting to change the Anthem from the L6 class were: "because most of the countries in world [sic] apart from African continent [sic] have their own Anthems;" "I think patriotism of Zimbabweans should come first and patriotism as Africans second;" and "we should have another [Anthem] that mentions Zimbabwe."

Well, what difference would it make if we had a different Anthem? "No difference!" said 3.03% of form ones. There were again a variety of answers to this question, one of which is the above. Other answers expressed the difference in terms of Zimbabwean nationhood or national pride, especially from the L6 pupils (35.48%). A sample of their answers is as follows: "It would be composed of our 'own' specific problems or prayers not for the entire Africa;" "Zimbabwe will be in a position to address its specific problems, be it to God or Spirit Medium. The present Anthem addresses problems of our region, some these problems [sic] are not in our country e.g. civil war and apartheid;" "We then could stand out as different nation [sic] from other states which use Ishe Komborera;" "People would notice the superiority of Zimbabwean people;" "It should have more to do with Zimbabwe than Africa."

A lot of the pupils in both classes though, expressed the difference in terms of regional or continental solidarity or unity (42.42% of form ones; 41.94% of L6s). Examples of such answers were: "If we had a different anthem we would have to show that we dont [sic] want to be Africans;" or "the other countrys [sic] will think that we are selfish" (from form ones); "It would not show that Zimbabwe is willing to unite with the whole of Africa;" "The difference could be that if we had a Zimbabwean-specific Anthem we will be committing the Zimbaweans only into the hands of God. Now by Ishe Komborera Africa we will requesting [sic] God to bless and protect the whole of Africa" (L6 pupils). One form one pupil even thought that by changing the Anthem, "we will have new rulers," thus equating the Anthem with a ruling political party in government.

Twelve percent of form ones and 3.23% of L6 pupils thought that many people know the current anthem already, so it would be a problem to learn a new one if we changed, and 42.42% of form ones and 19.35% of L6 either omitted the question or had completely wrong answers, such as, "we would not be able to acquire the knowledge that we now have in Zimbabwe;" or "we have change anthem [sic]" (from form ones).

On the last question of how one learns to be patriotic through studying the English language or through literature lessons, 24.24% of form ones and 12.90% of L6 pupils had answers that indicated that one learns by inferring patriotism from good books: in the pupils' words, "Literature lessons and English language inject a spirit of patriotism in the sense that by studying patriotic books, like *Devil on the Cross*, patriotism is matured and keeps on growing up to a point of being a true patriotic [sic]." Another pupil said, "Through literature lessons I learn to be patriotic since with mostly [sic] discuss the causes and weakness [sic] which disintegrate unity of a country." However, the majority of pupils in both classes either omitted the question or gave wrong answers (75.76% of form ones and 87.11% of L6s). This indicated that they had no idea how one learns to become patriotic through these two subjects. One L6 pupil even asserted: "I don't think someone has to learn to be patriotic. It is a natural feeling which was created together with man." An example of a wrong answer is where

a L6 pupil said, "I learn to be patriotic by speaking in fluent language." A number of form one pupils said, "I learn to be patriotic through English language and/or literature lessons by listening [sic] to the radio or newspapers;" or "by concentrating in class."

IMPLICATIONS OF THESE RESULTS:

What the results of this mini survey reveal is that the school pupils in this sample, not only have varied ideas, but also vague and sometimes, wrong ideas about what patriotism, the National Anthem and the Zimbabwean flag mean to us Zimbabweans. The confusion on the Anthem is understandable because while we call it a *national* anthem, in reality we proceed to sing a *regional or continental* anthem. This confusion was highlighted by one L6 pupil who said, the National Anthem 'is a prayer to God that he may help the *nation, Africa* [emphasis mine]. That God may protect the nation and its people." For this pupil, there is themisunderstanding and misinterpretation of Africa as one nation rather than one continent with several nations. The implication here is that the aim of curriculum developers to instil or inculcate the spirit of patriotism in our school children is not being achieved in a coordinated and systematic manner. The above results testify to this conclusion even though we cannot generalise them to include pupils outside the sample. Worse still and more unsettling is the aspect expressed by one pupil who believes that we Zimbabweans are superior and so we should have our own anthem to proclaim this superiority (see above).

Thirteen years after independence, Zimbabwean school children should be fully conversant with what the Zimbabwean flag and the anthem stand for and all children should be able to articulate this together with what patriotism means. To get 61.29% of L6 pupils failing to articulate this meaning therefore, is an indictment of our efforts, particularly that we have it provided for in the syllabus and that it is "talked about" in the English General Paper lessons. Here are some samples of wrong answers from the L6 group: Patriotism "means the uniting of different races in a country;" "I understand patriotism is a feeling of oneness within a specified group of people, especially those of the same race. They usually tend to have similar sentiments albeit

their different characteristics;" "unity with your country's army by showing them respect and support," etc.etc. This is the kind of misunderstanding that caused the University of Zimbabwe students in 1991 to burn down the Zimbabwe flag during a demonstration against the Vice Chancellor of the time and the Government, especially the ruling party, Zanu (PF). They failed to differentiate between a group of people in government and a particular person heading the University with whom they were in disagreement, from their own country as represented and identified by the flag. It is the flag and so the country which needs to be defended against marauders whoever they may be and whatever colour they may be. So if one is angry with the rulers, one cannot burn down the flag because then one is actually burning down the country! It is also this kind of misunderstanding which caused one lady President of an opposition party to say that if her party came to power, it would change the flag of Zimbabwe! That party is equating the flag and so Zimbabwe, with the rulers of a country who come and go: a gross error, for the country will always remain.

WHAT IS TO BE DONE?

In order to remedy this situation and to succeed in inculcating this value of patriotism in our students, with all its trimmings, my view point is that, first, we begin by composing a verse *similar* to what the United States have and which is recited by all their school children from grade one upwards. I write its words below:

- I pledge allegiance
- To the flag of the United States of America
- To the Republic for which it stands
- One nation under God indivisible
- With security and justice for all

The above expresses an *ideal* to be achieved: the individual pledges to the flag and therefore, to the country, the Republic which in turn promises to give security and justice to all its citizens through its rulers or the government. Now we all know the racism, the segregation, the sexism, etc. that plague this great American nation and how security and justice are not really delivered to *all*. But that is where we begin indeed. That ideal of affording security and justice to all people becomes something to struggle for, till it is achieved. The people, from generation to generation, have a goal to fight for and everyone is aware of what they should have and will not rest until they actually have it. What is patriotism then? It is loyalty and faith "to the Republic" symbolised by "the flag," not merely what its colours stand for. It is fighting to protect the Republic from marauders of any kind. People who plunder the country's or the Republic's resources, human and material, whoever they may be, should therefore be fought against in order to preserve those resources for posterity. As children grow older, they begin to critically analyse their material conditions and to question whether or not there is security and justice for all people in their country. This way, one grows up without a confused understanding of one's nation, what its flag means and the role of a government in protecting and nurturing freedom, justice, equality and security for its citizens.

Secondly, I believe Zimbabwe should have her own national anthem. Admittedly it is rather late in the day not to have managed to come up with one, thirteen years after independence. National anthems are sacred and they help to buttress this whole concept of patriotism and loyalty to one's country. We would not have a situation where children confuse Africa, the continent with a nation, but would be "like other countries in most parts of the world [who] have their own anthems in praise of their own particular achievements" (L6 pupil). This would not mean that we would give up our regional and continental solidarity and unity. However, as some L6 pupils have correctly pointed out, we need an anthem that mentions Zimbabwe as a nation to be blessed etc.etc. "Ishe Komborera Africa" is perfect for singing at O.A.U., SADC or PTA conferences where one is now thinking globally about all of us Africans with all our different nations together.

As for the *kind* of anthem it should be, one L6 pupil commented that the recent one played on television was "more churchish...they were church songs" (meaning the two tunes and the words). I think the pupil here forgets that "Ishe Komborera Africa" itself is "churchish:" almost all anthems are "churchish" and they have to be that way because they appeal to a higher power than man's or woman's powers. For instance, no computer or other scientific gadget in the world, no matter how sophisticated, can make rain fall. So anthems tend to appeal to these invisible powers, be they those of Allah, Ja, God, Mwari, Umlungu, or Spirit Mediums to bless one's nation so as to continue to survive. A look at all other country's anthems will confirm their "churchish" nature; so Zimbabwe would not be unique here.

SO, IS ALL THIS TO BE TAUGHT IN THE ENGLISH LANGUAGE OR LITERATURE CLASSES ONLY?

The answer here is no! That would be too limited a scope. This concept or idea of patriotism should be a school rather than a classroom agenda. It should be taught in all classes and not necessarily as a conventional "lesson." At the beginning of each day, about five minutes or less could be taken to recite the one verse (similar to the American one above) which we would have composed, and then as time goes on, that recitation becomes routine and everyone internalises the habit, the verse and its significance. The new anthem too can easily be learned with minimum fuss. Each subject area such as English, History, Geography, Science, Mathematics, Literature, etc. can then reinforce these concepts as they cover related material. At least there would be a general base on which to build up one's awareness.

In my view, this is the only way to develop internal discipline and a sense of responsibility towards Zimbabwe and its government; a discipline and responsibility we all need if we are to avoid corruption and other such vices which are brought about by pure individual selfishness and greed; greed that leads to endless swindling at one's work and other places because people feel that they are not personally responsible. Here I am reminded of stories in *The Herald of June 11, 1993*: "Zimpapers Workers' fund defrauded of \$80 000;" *The Sunday Mail, June 13, 1993*: "Management 'inefficiency' costs CSC \$48

million," *The Herald*, June 15, 1993: "Clerk gets 5 years in \$3,2 million fraud case;" June 18, 1993: "Ranch alleged to be missing 20 000 cattle [and do not tell me that they were just tired of their paddocks and took a leisurely walk out!];" and "MD charged with attempted murder" of an accountant who "had discovered that [the MD] had defrauded the company of more than \$3 million." The real question is, who repays these institutions for all these stolen monies?

It is my contention that such corruption, swindling and fraud, also called "white collar crime" (*The Herald*, June 21, 1993), is brought about because people have no loyalty to their institutions and by implication, to Zimbabwe. They do not steal like this because they are hungry, but mainly because they are selfish, thinking only of themselves. What heritage then do we leave the children? In any case what do the children think when they read about such heinous crimes and plunder being committed by their elders who are supposed to hold in trust, those institutions which make up the financial backbone of Zimbabwe? It seems to me that we need to address these issues which I believe to be linked with our own concept of patriotism, as a matter of urgency, before things get too much out of hand.