

Teachers' perceptions on development and implementation of History 2167 syllabus in Zimbabwe

Walter Sengai^{a1}, National University of Lesotho, Faculty of Education Languages and Social Education Department (LASED) P. O. Roma 180, Roma, Lesotho <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4817-5649>

Matseliso L. Mokhele^b, University of the Free State, Research and Engaged Scholarship, Faculty of Education, P. O. Box 339, Bloemfontein 9300, Republic of South Africa

Suggested Citation:

Sengai, W., & Mokhele, M. L., (2021). Teachers' perceptions on development and implementation of History 2167 syllabus in Zimbabwe. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Science*. 16(3), 916-927. <https://doi.org/10.18844/cjes.v16i3.5763>

Received from December 01, 2020; revised from January 15, 2021; accepted from May 10, 2021.

Selection and peer review under responsibility of Prof. Dr. Huseyin Uzunboylu, Higher Education Planning, Supervision, Accreditation and Coordination Board, Cyprus.

©2021 Birlesik Dunya Yenilik Arastirma ve Yayıncılık Merkezi. All rights reserved.

Abstract

The purpose of this study is to examine the perceptions of teachers on the development and implementation process of the History 2167 syllabus reform in Zimbabwe. Successful implementation of syllabus reforms depends on teachers' ownership and knowledge about the reform ideas. Teachers are the closest individuals to the circumstances of the decisions made and their role as implementers gives them a significant influence on curriculum decisions. However, studies on syllabus development and implementation have often explored these processes using the input from other stakeholders while overlooking teacher perceptions. Data for this qualitative phenomenological study were generated from transcripts of in-depth interviews with five purposively sampled history teachers drawn from five secondary schools in the Glen. View/ Mufakose District in Harare Metropolitan Province. Findings showed that the success of curriculum reforms largely rests on the shoulders of teachers, since they are the ones who put reform ideas into practice. We conclude that in order for curriculum reforms to succeed, the policy-makers and teachers should work harmoniously to cultivate appropriate instructional practices. We recommend that teachers should actively participate in the syllabus development process, as well as have the power to influence the decisions about the implementation of the curriculum.

Key words: development and implementation; History 2167 syllabus; syllabus reform; teachers' perceptions.

* ADDRESS FOR CORRESPONDENCE: Walter Sengai, National University of Lesotho, Faculty of Education, Languages and Social Education Department (LASED), P O Roma 180, Roma, Lesotho
E-mail address: waltersengai@gmail.com / Tel.: +266 59817298

1. Introduction

The undisputed role of teachers in the development and implementation of curriculum reforms is unquestionable. Research confirm that teachers are key players in the success and/or failure of curriculum reforms since this requires major shifts in teachers' beliefs, understanding and pedagogical practices (Bas & Sentürk, 2019; Mathura, 2019; Marishane, 2014). Curriculum reform may not be successfully enacted if teachers' perceptions are not taken aboard when deciding novel ways to refine instructional practice. The involvement of teachers in key debates on curriculum reform is essential for their practice thereby showing the integral role of teachers' perspectives in the ultimate fate of curriculum reforms since they are the implementers of the curriculum in the classroom (Chale, 2018). However, many teachers express dissatisfaction with their apparent relegation from active involvement in curriculum reform programmes and hope for more vigorous participation by virtue of being at the 'chalk-face' (Chidiebere, Obiamaka & Nkechi, 2016). In the Zimbabwean context, teachers articulated their views about the introduction of the History 2167 syllabus in 2002. Several researchers have advanced a plethora of explanations to justify the contrasting fortunes for curriculum changes, with the usual political contestations rhetoric being preferred to explain the reforms while turning a blind eye on teachers' conceptions (Eger, 2016; Moyo, 2014; Chitate, 2010; Jansen, 2010). This study therefore seeks to consider the History teachers' perspectives on the development and implementation of the History 2167 syllabus, specifically their views, understandings and beliefs.

2. Related literature

2.1 Background of the History 2167 Syllabus

The History 2167 syllabus aimed to produce resourceful learners, capable of making reasonable judgments grounded in both past and contemporary evidence (Sengai & Mokhele, 2020; Moyo, 2014). The History 2167 syllabus aimed to provide Ordinary Level ('O' Level) learners with an objective view of the world. The syllabus would help learners to attain an informed and critical understanding and analysis of social, economic, cultural and political issues facing them as builders of a developing nation (Ordinary Level History Syllabus 2167, 2013). Moreover, the syllabus also aimed to foster an understanding and appreciation of contemporary issues about population, gender, the constitution of Zimbabwe, human rights, democracy and good governance (Moyo, 2014). Furthermore, educators were quite determined that whatever development or ideological position Zimbabweans will embrace in the future shall be based on authentic Zimbabwean philosophical consciousness (Sengai & Mokhele, 2020). Consequently, the paradigm shift due to emphasis on learner-centred approaches and the inclusion of local history would ensure that the subject would no longer be dull, stultifying and boring as is usually claimed by critics both from within and outside.

The History 2167 syllabus encouraged a variety of approaches to the teaching and learning of History, and discouraged mere reproduction of facts as well as content regurgitation. The syllabus recommended the thematic, concentric and skills-based approaches (Ordinary Level History Syllabus 2167, 2013). The methods used aimed to develop empathy and understanding in learners. The thematic approach demanded that events, developments and ideas be related to their wider themes. This sought to avoid the danger of History lessons being taught as isolated narratives divorced from the significance implied in the theme to which the topic related (Sengai & Mokhele, 2020). The development of empathy and understanding of human rights should be used as an opportunity to enhance understanding of the syllabus content by viewing situations, as far as possible, as they appeared at the time of occurrence (Ordinary Level History Syllabus 2167, 2013). To this extent, exercises that stress imagination at the expense of historical knowledge and understanding were discouraged. Case studies to illustrate themes were encouraged. The concentric approach, which involved covering historical events starting with the known to the unknown, was viewed as the main thrust in the methodologies of this syllabus.

The emphasis on the involvement of the learner was regarded as central to learning approaches as enshrined in the thrust of the 'new history' movement. Teaching of this syllabus involved problem-posing and solving, role-playing, simulation, structured written exercises, discussion, research, discovery, Socratic method, debate, job cards, process-folios, instructional media and field trips (Ordinary Level History Syllabus 2167, 2013). These were significant innovations in the teaching and learning of the subject as compared to earlier approaches. As outcomes, History learners in Zimbabwe were to have the ability to utilize the lessons gained from the subject to position themselves as active citizens in determining and shaping their future governance, including elucidating their past history, and in expressing divergent cultures (Sengai & Mokhele, 2020; Moyo & Modiba, 2013).

2.2 Curriculum Reform, Development and Implementation

Curriculum reform refers to deliberate actions to improve a learning environment by adopting new methods of presenting material to learners that includes human interaction, hands-on activities and learner feedback (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2014). Curricula usually operate within organisational and societal constraints, which sometimes lead to the desire for change (Mathura, 2019). Since the society is dynamic and keeps changing, the phenomenon of change is therefore unavoidable (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2014). The changes that occur in world events bring with them some challenges, needs and problems, that entail the use of improved understanding, technology and expertise to solve them. Education is purposefully planned to prepare people living in different societies to be able to live worthy and happy lives so it must constantly change (Fullan, 2015). Teachers are an integral part of the changes in education as their objective is to improve student learning. The active involvement of teachers in curriculum development tends to give them a more visible role in key instructional decisions thereby increasing their beliefs and courage when it comes to the implementation of the decisions made about the curriculum itself (Bas & Sentürk, 2019).

2.3 Teachers' Perceptions on Curriculum Reform, Development and implementation

Teacher perceptions and knowledge of curriculum is very important since they are the implementers of the policies that they ultimately settle for as being suitable for the classroom (Chidiebere, Obiamaka & Nkechi, 2016). The demotion of teachers' views during the decision-making phase of curriculum reform can influence them to view the whole process negatively (Chale, 2018). In their study, Bas and Sentürk (2019) reveal that the teachers pointed out that their responsibility rests more with curriculum implementation rather than its development. Nonetheless, the silencing of the voice of teachers during curriculum development could invariably lead to its detachment from the realistic classroom setting thereby leading to perennial problems for curriculum implementation since it is the teachers who are familiar with their learners and the conditions prevailing in their schools.

2.4 Teachers' Role in Curriculum Development and implementation

The active contribution of teachers in the key process of curriculum development unequivocally leads to the sustainability of educational reform initiatives (Bas & Sentürk, 2019). Teachers therefore merit recognition as influential stakeholders in the process of curriculum development rather than mere implementers of the goals and philosophies of others. Moreover, a mutual operational conceptualization of the curriculum reform process and its implications might help to create ownership, and a more realistic implementation strategy (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2014). Apparently, teachers should demonstrate their power to influence key curriculum decisions by actively taking part in the process of curriculum development (Bas & Sentürk, 2019). The teacher should therefore be involved in 'every phase' of the curriculum making process, especially the planning of goals, content, materials, and methods.

Since teachers are at the 'chalk-face', they should be viewed as the primary group in curriculum reform and implementation. The teacher's role is to develop, implement and evaluate the curriculum and

therefore this supports the release of teachers from classroom activities to concentrate on the preparation of courses of study, assembling of material as well as designing syllabus outlines (Marishane, 2014). Chale (2018) proposes the participation of teachers in syllabus committees at school, district and provincial levels, up to national level during school holidays, or even as special responsibilities during the course of the term. In countries where there are centralized curriculum administration systems like Zimbabwe, the curriculum is centrally prepared and then sent to schools to be implemented by teachers (Sengai & Mokhele, 2020). Recent literature illustrates the growth in support for active teacher participation in the curriculum development process (Ornstein & Hunkins, 2014). However, reports have shown the perpetual inadequacy of teacher participation during the process (Mathura, 2019). Still, the effective achievement of educational reform goals depends on the level of teacher involvement in the curriculum development process (Fullan, 2015).

The involvement of teachers in the planning helps them to acquire in-depth understanding of the curriculum which facilitates its smooth and effective implementation by explicating the content to learners, thereby helping learners to attain the required knowledge and competences, the learning objectives and therefore improving their performance (Alsubaie, 2016). Teachers are the foot soldiers mandated with the responsibility of making key decisions on the entire curriculum development and implementation process (Chale, 2018). They (teachers) ensure that this is achieved by advancing suggestions on the syllabus contents, implementation approaches, and offering appropriate assessment and evaluation methods for the programme. Teacher participation in syllabus development directly influences the quality of classroom instruction through transforming their interface and rapport with students thereby leading to positive learning outcomes (Marishane, 2014).

3. Research methodology

This paper is part of a larger qualitative study that explored the perceptions of History teachers on the History 2166 and 2167 syllabus reforms. This particular study examined teacher perceptions on the development and implementation of the History 2167 syllabus reform in Zimbabwe. In this respect, Creswell & Poch (2018, p. 48) ascertain that “we conduct qualitative research when we want to empower individuals to share their stories [and] hear their voices”. The phenomenological design used for this study is appropriate for use during the examination of a delimited system or a case over time, which uses the lived experiences of the respondents to tell the story (Flick, 2015).

Data were generated from transcripts of in-depth interviews with five purposively sampled History teachers drawn from five secondary schools in the Glen View/ Mufakose district in the Harare Metropolitan province. Interviews that ranged from 60-90 minutes were conducted on the premises where each of the respondents worked during lunch and after work to avoid meddling in their professional duties. In some cases, the researchers had to revisit some of the respondents to seek their views on some issues emerging from the data. The interview transcripts were coded for the major themes around the development and implementation of the History 2167 syllabus in Zimbabwe. Thematic analysis was applied to sort out key themes and to cluster phenomena linked with research objectives (Creswell & Poch, 2018). Member checking with participants on key themes that emerged from the coding process as well as triangulation with field notes improved the trustworthiness of our data. Involvement in the study was voluntary for the respondents. To ensure anonymity of the respondents, they were assigned pseudonyms (Flick, 2015).

3.1 Biographical Background of the Participants

All the five participants in this study have rich experience in the teaching of History at secondary school. The most experienced participant, Ms Masara has 32 years of teaching experience after she graduated with a Diploma in Education from Gweru Teachers' College in November 1987. She now holds

Bachelor of Education and Master of Education degrees obtained in 1996 and 2001. Mr Mapfumo has been teaching History at secondary school for the past 26 years. He has a Diploma in Education, a Bachelor of Arts degree as well as a Master's degree. Mr Mapfumo's experience is quite diverse since he taught History in a lot of schools since 1994. Mrs Murakani has been teaching History at secondary school for the past 26 years. She has a Diploma in Education and bachelor's degree in education. She has taught the History 2167 syllabus for a very long time. Mr Chituku has 26 years' experience as a History teacher at secondary school. He holds a Diploma in Education, Bachelor of Education and Masters in Education. He was promoted to a deputy head in 2012 and finally became a substantive school head in November 2015. He however continues to teach a few senior History classes at his school 'so as to stay in touch with the subject'. Mr Chitondo has 25 years of experience in teaching History at secondary school after graduating from Gweru Teachers' College in 1995 with a Diploma in Education. The five respondents' colourful professional qualifications and experience as History teachers were considered ideal for the purposes of this study since their perspectives in the History 2167 syllabus were quite priceless.

4. Results and discussion

4.1 The Development of the History 2167 Syllabus Reform

Teachers are important stakeholders in the development of new syllabi (Sengai & Mokhele, 2020; Ornstein & Hunkins, 2014). Teachers should be actively involved in the curriculum development process, thus helping the curriculum to be implemented more effectively in the classroom (Bas & Sentürk, 2019). The researchers took time to find out the respondents' perceptions on teacher involvement in the development of the History 2167 syllabus reforms.

Mr Mapfumo pointed out that due to Zimbabwe's centrally prescribed curriculum, teachers hardly participate in the development stage of the curriculum but only come in during the implementation stage.

You see, our syllabi for all subjects are designed by the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education (MoPSE) through the Curriculum Development Unit (CDU) before being disseminated to the schools for us to implement. The participation of teachers in planning and development stages of syllabi is therefore very limited.

Nonetheless, Mr Mapfumo acknowledged that a few teachers are usually sampled to make hands-on contributions on a proposed syllabus before it is released for implementation in the schools.

Sometimes, the CDU officials select a few teachers to participate in the development of new syllabi but such opportunities are given to teachers from the so-called 'big schools' or from teachers' unions so as to give the exercise an air of being inclusive.

This was echoed by Mr Chituku who pointed out that he did not participate in the development stage of the 2167 history syllabus since he was still teaching in the rural areas:

Usually, teachers from distinguished schools or from urban areas are the ones who participate in pilot programmes so I missed out because I was still teaching deep in the remote rural areas.

Mrs Murakani concurred with the views:

Teacher representatives participated in the formulation of the new syllabus.

Mr Chitondo added that:

As part of their involvement, teacher representatives also participated in the plenary sessions to decide on the skills to be prioritised in pursuance of the thrust to equip History learners with historical skills.

According to Ms Masara:

Although not everything that the teachers proposed was taken on board, it was reassuring to see the acknowledgement that we were a key voice in curriculum reform.

So the curriculum designers acknowledged that there was need for widespread consultation of key stakeholders in order to produce an acceptable History syllabus (Ornstein & Holstein, 2014). Mr Mapfumo actively participated in the polishing up of the History 2167 syllabus final draft document. He was chosen as part of the elite group of History teachers who worked with the National History Panel and CDU personnel to help in the fine tuning of the syllabus before it was released into the schools for implementation. He said:

I was the youngest teacher to work with the team of syllabus designers at Kadoma Ranche Hotel. We were called in as practising History teachers with hands-on experience of the classroom just to panel beat the syllabus document, polish it up and fine-tune it.

Probed on the criteria used to select him among the small group of teachers, Mr Mapfumo professed ignorance:

I do not know the criteria used to choose me and other teachers but what I know is that they wanted classroom practitioners with hands-on experience of teaching History. I think it was due to my outstanding results.

The fact that Mr Mapfumo was part of this elite group of History teachers chosen to have an input in the drafting of the new History syllabus shows that he was not an ordinary History teacher, something that makes him ideal to participate in this study. However, his involvement in the development of the History 2167 syllabus was relatively minimum since he only got involved towards the end of the syllabus making process, something which policy makers do in order to give credence to the exercise (Ornstien & Hunkins, 2014). The ideal situation is that teachers should be involved right from the start of the syllabus making process (Sengai & Mokhele, 2020; Marishane, 2014).

Asked about whether the History 2167 syllabus was pilot tested, Mr Mapfumo replied thus;

I understand from what we were told that it was pilot-tested. Actually, there were many syllabus drafts such as 2158, 2160, 2166 and 2168 before they came up with the History 2167 syllabus by integrating all the other syllabi.

Mr Mapfumo was therefore not so sure on whether the syllabus was pilot tested or not. This tends to give credence to claims by some researchers that new syllabi are hardly pilot-tested since the policy makers are usually in a hurry to get them into the classroom (Sengai & Mokhele, 2020; Chitate, 2010). Taking teacher participation into account in the curriculum development process is critical since teachers are usually reluctant to implement a syllabus that does not adequately reflect their views (Alsubaie, 2016). This is because teachers' participation in the decisions made during the syllabus development process increases their commitment to the implementation of the syllabus itself (Bas & Sentürk, 2019).

4.2 Implementation of the History 2167 Syllabus Reform

Teachers are actually the ultimate intermediaries of classroom practice so their active involvement and collaboration empowers them to take ownership of the curriculum changes to integrate them effectively into instructional practice (Ornstien & Hunkins, 2014). Any curriculum innovation will end up in the classroom where decision-making is the responsibility of the teacher (Mathura, 2019). The significant role teachers should play in curriculum reform must not be overlooked if successful implementation is to be achieved.

Asked about what was done to promote the successful implementation of the History 2167 syllabus, Mr Mapfumo said:

The policy-makers appeared to appreciate the integral role of teachers in curriculum implementation so there was commendable involvement of teacher's right from the beginning of the History 2167 syllabus design.

The respondents claimed that they greatly benefitted from the staff development initiatives which prepared them to deal with the History 2167 syllabus. Mr Mapfumo observed that:

Workshops were held to effectively prepare teachers for this new syllabus. The in-service equipped History teachers with ideal teaching methods to use in their lessons to ensure that pupils derived maximum benefits from the subject.

According to Mr Chituku:

An interesting dimension to the workshops was the thrust towards making the subject more interesting to learners. This was kick-started by the new-found emphasis on more pupil-centred and interactive teaching methods such as out-of-school visits, quiz, seminars, projects and debates among others.

In the opinion of Mr Chitondo:

This made History lessons very pupil-centred, interactive and interesting for both teachers and learners.

This was in line with the 'new history' thrust which emphasises the primacy of learner-centred and interactive methodology in the teaching and learning of history.

One of the interesting aspects of the History 2167 syllabus was that it introduced new topics on democracy and good governance, human rights and the constitution of Zimbabwe. However, such topics were controversial but key in helping History pupils to confront contemporary challenges in modern politics (Sengai & Mokhele, 2020; Tendi, 2010). Mr Mapfumo explained thus:

In the past, learners just like the general citizens of Zimbabwe were not aware of their rights so the inclusion of human rights education in the History 2167 syllabus was worthwhile. However, the topics were rather politically sensitive and during the old Mugabe regime some teachers were victimised for teaching issues on constitutionalism, democracy and human rights.

This is a testimony to the dangers that confronted the History teachers who were often misconstrued as teaching politics when they delivered lessons on controversial contemporary topics. Probed about how he handled such topics, Mr Mapfumo pointed out that:

I was more academic and objective in my tackling of such issues so I stayed out of trouble. Sometimes, I even used war veterans as resource persons to illustrate some concepts especially on the liberation war.

According to Mr Chituku, some teachers even got into trouble after being labelled as political activists when they taught those topics:

According to Napoleon Bonaparte, history is very dangerous because it opens up the minds of people. There was lurking danger for History teachers teaching some topics in the new History 2167 syllabus since sometimes people failed to distinguish historical facts from modern politics. Me, in order to stay safe I assigned people like war veterans as resource people or other teachers such as renowned examiners from other schools to come and deliver the topics on my behalf but one good thing is that I did not skip those topics.

This confirms Barnes' (2007) research which reported that History teachers were choosing not to teach contemporary Zimbabwean history due to its closeness to contemporary politics. Such politically sensitive topics made it difficult for History teachers to freely express their views as well as entertain radical learners' views (Barnes, 2007). Topics on democracy, human rights; structural adjustment; land

resettlement; national political unity, dictatorship and even the Second Chimurenga were all considered as dangerous topics for the classroom (Tendi, 2010).

The researchers were also eager to find out respondents' position on the issue of assessment with regards to the History 2167 syllabus. The participants concurred that the History 2167 syllabus appeared to place emphasis on low order skills since its three assessment objectives dealt with simple recall, description and analysis skills. This was said to have been the brainchild of Dr Chigwedere, the former minister of education who set out to spruce up the image of History as a subject (Moyo, 2014). The History syllabus was revised since the subject was not doing well and results were very bad and the subject was getting very unpopular with most learners (Sengai & Mokhele, 2020). Mr Mapfumo viewed the new syllabus as being very straight forward since its public examination papers were relatively easy to attempt:

They tried to make History a bit interesting and user friendly for the students to like it so they had to revise the syllabus. If we look at the type of questions in the History 2167 syllabus external examinations they were very user-friendly. Part (a) required simple recall skills such as stating the names of countries which took part in World War 1, listing or naming foods eaten during the Stone Age period or identifying human rights provisions in the Constitution of Zimbabwe and had 5 marks. Part (b) asked the candidates to describe bla bla bla . . . then get a maximum of 12 marks and this was really easy to follow. Part (c) had the analysis question and candidates could get a maximum of 8 marks.

This was confirmed by Mr Chitondo who revealed that he enjoyed teaching the History 2167 syllabus since it was rather passable and more user-friendly. This helped him to get more passes thereby popularising the subject as well as boosting his professional reputation. He observed that the History 2167 syllabus was straight forward and posed lesser challenges and clearly tested pupils on expected skills so he got lesser problems in interpreting this syllabus to his learners:

The grasp and response that I got from my pupils was outstanding and I got more passes from external examinations since the questions were quite straight forward.

Probed on whether there was no deliberate effort by the policy makers to make learners pass History easily as a way of advertising the subject, Mr Mapfumo said:

The History 2167 syllabus 2167 was not designed to be passable but to make pupils understand and like History as a subject. They came up with three specific assessment objectives of simple recall, description and analysis. Students could pass examinations without applying the more challenging skills of analysis since by doing very well on the first two parts of the question they could scratch a 'B pass'. By doing very well on part 'a' and 'b' on simple recall and giving a very good description then fail the analysis, a candidate could still get a good pass.

Mr Chitondo added that the questions in the History 2167 syllabus examination papers were straight forward and therefore more geared towards producing more passes from the candidates.

Either the syllabus was more passable or probably it is me who had developed more experience in teaching the History 2167 syllabus. The questions were structured in such a way that Part (a) was state/ list; part (b) describe/outline while part (c) was on the extent/ analysis part. With the level of our pupils such questions were manageable even with poor resources.

The History 2167 syllabus also proved to be quite popular in the country due to its holistic approach to the teaching and learning of the subject. Mrs Murakani had this to say:

In fact, allow me to say that the History 2167 syllabus was more user-friendly and it appealed to both History teachers and the learners.

Mr Mapfumo observed that the History 2167 syllabus thrust was very different from other subjects where the correct use of grammar is considered during external examinations. He however expressed his reservations about such an approach:

When they came up with the three easy to follow objectives, they disregarded the issue of specific dates, English grammar and spellings but to me it does not make sense since giving wrong factual information leads to wrong historical statements.

He observed that older syllabi emphasized correct facts but the History 2167 syllabus allowed pupils to get away with half-truths such as:

'Germany was supposed to pay twenty million pounds as reparations,' which is accepted as a correct historical fact on the basis that the candidate at least remembered the idea of Germany paying some damages after World War 1 although the amount is wrongly stated since Germany paid a figure of 5,5 million pounds sterling.

This may be inferred to mean that some learners produced from the History 2167 syllabus were not articulate with the exact historical facts.

Asked about her views on the role of teachers during the implementation of the History 2167 syllabus reform process, Mrs Murakani observed that the History teachers were in-serviced on how to teach the new syllabus, thereby equipping them with the necessary skills to impart to the learners. She said:

Workshops were held to effectively prepare the History teachers for this new syllabus. CDU officials were tasked with the mandate of moving around districts in-servicing History teachers on the most ideal teaching methods.

This shows that there was a concerted thrust to ensure the smooth implementation of the History 2167 syllabus. Evidence from the interviews show that there were significant benefits for the learners due to the user-friendly approach by the curriculum designers. Mrs Murakani added that:

History workshops were held regularly to apprise teachers on the latest teaching approaches as well as to unpack the themes in the new syllabus.

The staff development efforts were premised on the thrust towards making the subject more interesting to learners. Mrs Murakani pointed out thus:

This was kick-started by the newfound emphasis on more pupil-centred and interactive instructional methods such as out-of-school visits, quiz, seminars, projects and debates among others.

Such interactive methods had the critical advantage of bringing the history learners face-to-face with historical facts thereby preparing them for future utilitarian roles in the subject. Mrs Murakani pointed out that the History department was the first to organise an educational trip at her school when they took their Form 3 and 4 pupils to Great Zimbabwe in 2003.

According to Mrs Murakani, during syllabus reforms the policy-makers should strive to communicate with teachers who are on the ground not to exclusively rely on officials who left teaching a long time ago and may be out of touch with the situation prevailing in the History classroom:

Let us work together, with the curriculum planners or syllabus designers and History teachers so that there is a hybrid of ideas on how best to improve our subject in order to make it more appealing to learners and other stakeholders.

Such sentiments show that teachers strongly feel that curriculum reform should start and end with them since they are at the 'chalk face' of the implementation phase. As the closest people to the students,

teachers are very familiar with their interests and needs (Bas & Sentürk, 2019). Involving teachers in curriculum planning means those learners' interests are represented, resulting in the development of a curriculum which is relevant and meaningful to the learners (Chale, 2018). Failure to observe these conditions may lead to resistance of the innovation by teachers (Sengai & Mokhele, 2020). Mrs Murakani advised against the tendency by government to pick only a few teachers from the so called 'big schools' to participate in the syllabus-making process at the expense of the majority of teachers.

The interviewees also cited the involvement of the public examiner as another key reason for the successful implementation of the History 2167 syllabus. Mrs Murakani observed that the Zimbabwe Examinations Council (Zimsec) was actively involved in the curriculum reform process right from the beginning. She explained thus:

The involvement of Zimsec was a landmark decision. Particularly interesting and beneficial to the learners was the new thrust to address the dictates of Bloom's taxonomy in the setting of examination items. The questions were therefore ranked starting with the easiest questions up to the most challenging. Part (a) tested simple recall skills, part (b) tested narration or descriptive skills while part (c) tested higher order skills of analysis, synthesis and judgement.

The teachers and learners became aware of the expectations of the public examiner. Nonetheless, the revelation that a History candidate could pass the examination without responding to the higher order question impacted negatively on the History 2167 syllabus. A study by Mapetere, Makaye & Muguti, (2012) in Zaka district in Zimbabwe concluded that the tri-segmented structure of essay questions gave prominence to factual regurgitation and prevented History students from developing genuine higher order skills.

The key finding in this study is that the involvement of History teachers during the development stage of the History 2167 syllabus led to their active support during its implementation thereby facilitating its relative success. This study also advances the argument that the involvement of the Zimbabwe School Examinations Council (Zimsec) as the public examiner was another key reason for the success of the History 2167 syllabus. This ensured that the learners and the teachers became aware of the expectations of the public examiner in preparation of the public examinations (Sengai & Mokhele, 2020). The History 2167 syllabus appeared favourable to the teachers and their learners (Moyo & Modiba, 2013). The problem with this curriculum innovation was that some of the topics covered were too politically sensitive for teachers to freely express their views as well as entertain radical learners' views. Topics in the History 2167 syllabus such as dictatorships, democracy and human rights were not very popular with the teachers but were key in helping history pupils to confront contemporary challenges in modern politics. Such topics were associated with the prevalent trends in Zimbabwe and during the old dispensation of Mugabe's regime, teachers and their learners could not openly talk about issues such as human rights since it evoked memories of the Gukurahundi massacres (Barnes, 2007).

4. Conclusion

The above findings have prompted the researchers to conclude that in order for curriculum reforms to succeed, the policy-makers and teachers should work harmoniously to cultivate appropriate instructional practices. This study established that this was the case with the History 2167 syllabus since teachers and other stakeholders were involved to ensure the harnessing of all the necessary ideas in order to facilitate the smooth implementation of the reforms. Particularly important was the involvement of teachers since they are at the 'chalk face' stage during the implementation of the curriculum reforms. Teacher involvement in any curriculum reform will facilitate the addressing of their concerns, which are pivotal in curriculum implementation. Above all, this study found that the success of the History 2167

syllabus according to the data of this study was mainly premised on teacher involvement, which had been overlooked during earlier post-colonial curriculum reforms such as the History 2166 syllabus.

5. Recommendations

In view of the conclusions discussed in the preceding section, we therefore, recommend the active participation of teachers during curriculum development and implementation. Policy-planners should strive to involve teachers during curriculum reforms to capture their concerns and interests during the reforms since they oversee the implementation of the curriculum reforms. Teacher involvement in any curriculum reform will facilitate the addressing of their concerns, which are pivotal in successful curriculum implementation. Although the scope of this study was limited to one province out of ten in the country, one district out of the seven in the Harare Metropolitan province and five schools out of the thirteen in the Glen View/ Mufakose, it may contribute necessary insights into the curriculum reform literature especially considering syllabus changes in the teaching and learning of History at secondary school in developing countries.

References

- Alsubaie, M. A. (2016). Curriculum development: Teacher involvement in curriculum development. *Journal of Education and Practice*, 7(9), 106-107. <https://www.iiste.org/Journals/index.php/JEP/article/view/29628/30421>
- Apple, M. & Apple, M. W. (2018). *Ideology and curriculum*. Routledge.
- Barnes, T. (2007). 'History has to play its role': Constructions of race and reconciliation in secondary school historiography in Zimbabwe, 1980-2002. *Journal of Southern African Studies*, 33(7), 633-651. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/03057070701475740>
- Bas, G. & Sentürk, C. (2019). Teachers' Voice: Teacher Participation in Curriculum Development Process. *i.e.: inquiry in education*, 11(1), 5. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/333434569_Teachers'_Voice_Teacher_Participation
- Chale, W. (2018). Teacher participation in curriculum development process: Views of teachers from selected primary schools in Mwanza City. A dissertation submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education (arts) in Curriculum Design and Development of the Open University of Tanzania. <https://www.semanticscholar.org/paper/Teacher-Participation-in-Curriculum-Development>
- Chidiebere, R. O., Egbo, O. & Onyeneho, N. (2016). Demographic and Cognitive Factors in Teachers' Perception of Curriculum Innovations in Enugu State, Nigeria. *Mediterranean Journal of Social Sciences*, 7(2), 331. <https://pdfs.semanticscholar.org/c0f0/904aed39b6f3b7b77085fce18db6a15a>
- Chitate, H. (2010). Post independent Zimbabwe's new 'O' Level history syllabus 2166: A crisis of expectations. *Zimbabwe Journal of Educational Research*, 17(3), 1-12. http://41.175.146.201/bitstream/handle/10646/627/History_Syllabus_2166.
- Creswell, J. W. & Poth, C. N. (2018). *Qualitative inquiry & research design: Choosing among five approaches* (4th. ed International student edition.). SAGE Publications, Inc.
- Eger, K. (2016). *An Analysis of Education Reform in Sub-Saharan Africa*.
- Flick, U. (2015). *Introducing research methodology: A beginner's guide to doing a research project*. SAGE.
- Fullan, M. (2015). *The new meaning of educational change*. New York: Teachers College Press.

- Sengai, W., & Mokhele, M. L., (2021). Teachers' perceptions on development and implementation of History 2167 syllabus in Zimbabwe. *Cypriot Journal of Educational Science*. 16(3), 916-00. <https://doi.org/10.18844/cjes.v16i3.5763>
- Jansen, J. D. (2010). Political symbolism as policy craft: Explaining non-reform in South African education after apartheid. *Journal of Education Policy*, 17(2), 199-215. <https://www.tandfonline.com/doi/abs/10.1080/02680930110116534>
- Mapetere, K., Makaye, J. & Muguti, T. (2012). Teachers' perceptions of the assessment structure of the O level history syllabus (2167) in Zimbabwe: A case study of Zaka district. *Greener Journal of Educational Research*, 2(4), 100-104. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/313316699_Teachers'_Perceptions_of_the
- Marishane, R. N. (2014). Perceptions of Rural South African Teachers on the National Curriculum Change: "Are We Chanting or Marching?" *International Journal of Educational Sciences*, 7(2), 367-374. <https://files.eric.ed.gov/fulltext/EJ1158054.pdf>
- Mathura, P. (2019). Teachers' Perspectives on a Curriculum Change: A Trinidad and Tobago Case Study. <https://infonomics-society.org/wp-content/uploads/Teachers-Perspectives-on-a-Curr>
- Moyo, N. (2014). Nationalist historiography, Nation-state making and secondary school history: Curriculum policy in Zimbabwe 1980-2010. *Nordidactica: Journal of Humanities and Social Science Education*, 2, 1-23. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/268815692_Nationalist_historiography
- Moyo, N. & Modiba, M. M. (2013). "Who does this History curriculum want you to be?" Representation, school History and Curriculum in Zimbabwe. *Yesterday and Today*, (10), 01-24. https://www.researchgate.net/publication/260839391_Who_does_this_History_cu
- Ordinary Level History Syllabus 2167. (2013). Harare: Curriculum Development Unit.
- Ornstein, A. C. & Hunkins, F. P. (2014). *Curriculum-foundations, principles, and issues*. Pearson Education Ltd.
- Sengai, W., & Mokhele, M. L. (2020). Teachers' Perceptions on the development and implementation of History 2166 syllabus reform in Zimbabwe. *e-Bangi*, 17(6). <https://ejournal.ukm.my/ebangi/article/viewFile/41249/10761>
- Tendi, B. M. (2010). *Making history in Mugabe's Zimbabwe: Politics, intellectuals and the media* (Vol. 4). Peter Lang. <https://www.amazon.com/Making-History-Mugabes-Zimbabwe-Intellectuals/d>