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Relevance of Social Reconstructionism to Education in Postcolonial Zimbabwe

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Abstract: The author is agitated and perturbed by the imminent disappearance of social reconstructionism from the Educational Foundations (Philosophy) syllabus currently being designed for study in Zimbabwe's teacher education institutions. In fact, the topical Minimum Bodies of Knowledge and Skills [MBKSSs] which are purportedly consistent with Education 5.0 seem to discard most of the Western philosophies and theories like social reconstructionism. Yet it is the author's well considered view that these Western worldviews continue to inform education within a postcolonial and globalising Zimbabwe. The current textual analysis, therefore, sought to examine the relevance of social reconstructionism to Zimbabwe's contemporary education system. This strategically positions the author to assess justification for the continued study of social reconstructionism in the country's teacher education institutions within the postcolonial dispensation. Since social reconstructionism focuses primarily on socio-cultural salvation, this reflection is, therefore, conceived within a framework which incorporates globalisation, Africanisation and Unhu/Ubuntu. Social reconstructionism – whose origins are traceable to as far back as Ancient Greece (era of Plato, B.C) - has been discovered to have significant manifestations within Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education for the period 2015-2022 [known herein as Government of Zimbabwe or GoZ (2015) or simply Curriculum Framework 2015-2022]. Although social reconstructionism has been criticised mainly for calling upon the teacher to be partisan, this theory turned out to be of significant relevance to Zimbabwe's system of education as encapsulated in Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 whose architects are herein challenged to keep revising the same so that it better addresses problems like poverty, corruption, unemployment, economic meltdown, ideological bigotry and disease outbreaks, inter-alia, that are currently bedevilling the country. The continued study of social Reconstructionism in Zimbabwe's teacher education institutions is, therefore, deemed justifiable.

Keywords: Relevance, Social Reconstructionism, Education, Postcoloniality.

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INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND

Like the rest of Western theories and philosophies, the theory of social reconstructionism is already under the threat of extinction within Zimbabwe's contemporary education system. This is partly because the discourse on Zimbabwe's philosophy of primary and secondary education resonates with and revolves around the philosophy of *Unhu/Ubuntu* which gained momentum, lately. The above is substantiated by the Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education for period 2015-2022 [known herein as Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 or Government of Zimbabwe or simply GoZ (2015)], which clearly states that education in Zimbabwe should be informed by *Unhu/Ubuntu* – a philosophy to which the country's values and principles are traced. Of course, Kaputa (2011) recognises social reconstructionism as one of the appropriate epistemologies for education in Zimbabwe but he does that dimly. To make matters worse, Kaputa's reflection manifests a temporal gap in knowledge and literature since it predates the promulgation of Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 and a geographical gap as it addresses education in the broad Sub-Saharan region.

The philosophy of education module for Zimbabwe's teacher education programme(s) (as offered by teachers' colleges under the auspices of University of Zimbabwe) used to encompass both 'philosophies' and 'theories' of education, most of which were Western in origin and flavour. 'Philosophies' per-se included idealism (rationalism), empiricism (realism), existentialism and pragmatism whereas 'theories' incorporated progressivism, social reconstructionism, perennialism and essentialism. It is, however, regrettable that the future of these erudite Western theories and philosophies of education looks bleak owing to recent developments spearheaded by the Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education, Innovation, Science and Technology Development [MoHTEISTD] in collaboration with University of Zimbabwe [UZ] - developments which find expression in what is called Education 5.0.

The Education 5.0 blueprint as steered egoistically by the heritage-based philosophy has gained momentum and traction in Zimbabwe's higher and tertiary education, within which it is bound to occasion a radical review and revamp of learning experiences (content) through what are called the Minimum Bodies of Knowledge and Skills [MBKSSs]. The MBKSSs, as informed by the heritage-based philosophy (which, in itself, reclines in *Unhu/Ubuntu*), seem to negate Western theories like social reconstructionism (which happens to

be the object of contemplation herein). Thus, like the cognate Western theories and philosophies, social reconstructionism is bound to disappear from the Zimbabwean teachers' college philosophy of education syllabus. Yet it is the author's well considered view that social reconstructionism continues to inform Zimbabwe's education system substantially even in the postcolonial era.

It is against this background that the current reflection explores the relevance of social reconstructionism to Zimbabwe's system of education as encapsulated in Curriculum Framework for Primary and Secondary Education for period 2015-2022. This positions the author to reflectively appraise the continued study of social reconstructionism in Zimbabwe's teacher education institutions.

Problem Postulation

The main driving concern of this reflection is the imminent and foreseen disappearance of social reconstructionism from Zimbabwe's teacher education syllabus, coupled with the palpable silence on the applicability of this theory to the practice of education in Zimbabwe and beyond. This textual analysis, therefore, seeks to dialectically reflect on the relevance of social reconstructionism to Zimbabwe's education – an undertaking which strategically positions the author to assess justification for the continued study of social reconstructionism in the country's teacher education institutions within the postcolonial dispensation.

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

The current reflection is conceived within a framework which incorporates globalisation, Africanisation and *Unhu/Ubuntu*. Globalisation, to begin with, espouses social reconstructionism. Testimony to this claim lies in the fact that the social reconstructionist theory extols a global curriculum and exalts a global law (Ozman & Craver, 2003). Globalising the curriculum and instituting a global law are reconstructionist inclinations that are consistent with the edification of global community.

Africanisation – defined basically as the hybridisation of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Western Knowledge Systems (Shizha, 2010; & Kaputa, 2011) - has the potential to integrate new technological and scientific developments with those parts of the African culture that remain viable. According to Philos (Undated), this integration dovetails with the social reconstructionist agenda for abating possible global catastrophe.

The *Unhu/Ubuntu* philosophy undergirds the reconstructionist ideal of brotherhood through the 'oneness of humanity' principle. Through its communocentric predisposition, the philosophy of *Unhu/Ubuntu* is compatible with the social reconstructionist ideal of global-world community.

Above all, *Unhu/Ubuntu* accentuates democracy (Tirivangana, 2013), which is one of the linchpins of social reconstructionism.

As a theory that seeks to abate global calamity, social reconstructionism, thus, harmonises with and draws from globalisation, Africanisation and *Unhu/Ubuntu*.

Social Reconstructionism: Philosophy or Theory or Both?

In the majority of cases, philosophies are conflated with theories. This ill-conceived understanding of the two terms has since been legitimated to the extent that it is no longer in the consciousness of many that the two words cannot safely be used interchangeably. To untangle the former from the latter, differences are given hereunder. According to Philos (n.d.), philosophies of education are wide-ranging, systematic, complete and global, whereas theories of education are focused specifically on education, with no complete philosophical system offered. Thus, in philosophies of education, components are related to metaphysics, epistemology, axiology and logic, whilst in theories of education, components are related to specifics of education, such as curriculum, teaching and learning. Hence, philosophies of education derive from the general system whereas theories of education derive from philosophies or school contexts.

Core philosophies of education include idealism (rationalism), empiricism (realism), pragmatism (experientialism) and existentialism whereas theories of education incorporate perennialism, essentialism, social reconstructionism, progressivism and critical theory. Thus, theories of education are not philosophies *qua* philosophies. In the same vein, Zilvermit (as cited in Philos, undated) argues that rather than being a comprehensive statement about metaphysics, epistemology, axiology or logic, social reconstructionism is an educational theory which is specific to schooling, curriculum, teaching and learning. Consequently, social reconstructionism discards itself from being a philosophy *qua* philosophy. It, rather, becomes a particular educational theory just like progressivism, perennialism, essentialism and critical theory. The fact that sometimes theories derive from philosophies denotes that there is a thin dividing line between theories and philosophies of education. Hence, this article does not criminalise any reference to progressivism as a philosophy of education.

A Historical Background of Social Reconstructionism

The origins of social reconstructionism are traceable to as far back as the B.C. era. Plato [circa 427 - 347 B.C.], for instance, outlined in his *Republic* a plan for a just state in which education will become the building material for a new and better society. Thus, Plato saw education as the *sine qua non* of a good society (Ozman & Craver, 2003), which, in itself, is a social

reconstructionist viewpoint. In their concern for a World State, the Stoic philosophers who flourished throughout the Greco-Roman world as from the 3rd Century B.C. also promoted a social reconstructionist ideal with which they sought to minimize nationalist fervor and chauvinism (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Hence, the Stoics are also credited for popularising the ‘global village’ rhetoric.

Many of the Christian philosophers, such as St Augustine [354-430 A.D.], preached social reconstructionist reforms designed to bring about an ideal Christian state. Thus, they advocated the use of education as the inculcation of religious faith and ideals (Ozman & Craver, 2003). Social reconstructionist proclivities are also seen in Karl Marx [1818-1883 A.D.], who believed that education could also be used to overthrow the bourgeoisie or ruling class interests and to place the proletariat in control. Hence, he said, “the power of the state will begin to wither and eventually be replaced by true rule of the people” (Ozman & Craver, 2003, p. 168).

John Dewey [1859-1952 A.D.], the pragmatist, also exudes a social reconstructionist flavour which espouses the scientific method and problem-solving. Therefore, ideas of Theodore Brameld [1904-1987 A.D.] and George, S. Counts [1889-1974 A.D.] (leading reconstructionists) are basically pragmatic and owe a tremendous debt to Dewey (Ozman & Craver, 2003). Thus, social reconstructionism is fundamentally rooted in the philosophy of pragmatism; it seeks to reconstruct society with social sciences being used as reconstructive tools and it emphasises instruction that focuses on significant socio-economic problems (Philos, n.d.). In addition, Patsanza (1987) argues that social reconstructionism is an offshoot of progressivism. This is admissible because, like progressives, social reconstructionists believe in students having an active say in the formulation and implementation of objectives, methods and curriculum.

In the wake of modern science, technology and industrialisation which have altered social and cultural traditions, George, S. Counts (as cited in Ozmon & Craver, 2003) calls for a social reconstructionist education tailored for socio-cultural renewal, with a view to abating catastrophe. This is substantiated by Theodore Brameld (as cited in Ozmon & Craver, 2003) who views social reconstructionism as “a crisis philosophy, not only in terms of education, but in terms of culture as, well. He saw humanity at crossroads: one road leading to destruction and the other to salvation only if people make the effort” (p. 172). Brameld, thus, views education as having the manifest function of leading humanity to salvation not to destruction.

Social Reconstructionist Thinking

The theory of social reconstructionism principally aims at addressing world problems, using

education as a tool. According to Ozmon & Craver (2003), this social reconstructionist goal harmonises with the two major social reconstructionist premises: the first premise holds that society is in need of constant reconstruction or change and education should serve as a tool for immediate and continuous change. The second premise states that such social change involves a reconstruction of education and the use of education in reconstructing society.

Social reconstructionists blame education in general for perpetuating an iniquitous state of affairs and lampoon the teacher for being linked with the forces of reaction (Ozman & Craver, 2003). The social reconstructionist theory, therefore, argues that education should reconstruct society by integrating new technological and scientific developments with those parts of culture that remain viable and with the highest principles of human rights (Philos, undated). Thus, “in an age of nuclear weaponry, ecological deterioration, and pandemic disease, social reconstructionists see education as a means of preventing global catastrophe. They see an urgent need for society to reconstruct itself before it self-destructs” (Ryan, as cited in Philos, n.d., p. 61). Therefore, social reconstructionist education should be education for socio-cultural salvation.

Social reconstructionists concur with the utopian approach to change (Ozman & Craver, 2003). They also argue that in as much as the world cherishes the industrial revolution, pre-industrial ideas have persisted into the modern era. Some of these values, such as individualism and competition, are ill-suited to solve modern problems (Philos, undated). Correspondingly, social reconstructionist education should expose socio-economic inconsistencies (inequality and maldistribution of wealth) and work to resolve them. This is in line with the Freirean principle of critical consciousness.

“Social reconstructionists see the technological era as one of tremendous interdependence. Events in one area of the globe will have an impact on other areas. The depletion of the ozone layer, for example, is not restricted to a single place but endangers the entire planet” (Philos, n.d., p. 61). Thus, catastrophes threatening humankind should not be viewed as existing in isolation. Therefore, “with ever-increasing interdependence, the inherited patterns of education that stress individualism, isolationism or nationalism are dangerously obsolete” (Philos, n.d., pp. 61-62). This calls for a globalised curriculum which harmonises with the global village rhetoric. However, this sounds a tall order.

The social reconstructionist programme of education critically examines culture, cultivates a planning attitude, and enlists students and teachers in social, educational and economic change as a means of total cultural renewal (Brameld & Counts, as cited in Philos, n.d.). Hence, Ozmon & Craver (2003) recognise

social reconstructionist teachers and students as the vanguards of the whole renewal process, and argue:

Reconstructionist philosophy on the whole is strongly inclined towards utopian or futuristic thinking. Reconstructionists have a penchant for utopian thinking, which manifests itself in their desire for an ideal world free of hunger, strife and inhumanity. They believe that planning and thinking about the future is a good way of providing alternative societies for people to consider, and they believe that this kind of thinking should be promoted in schools, where teachers can encourage students to become future-oriented persons (pp. 174-175).

Thus, social reconstructionism envisages the building of a good future society using education as a tool because the future lies in children.

Social reconstructionism is also seen to have underpinned and sparked cries for relevance and innovation (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). In the Zimbabwean context, for instance, social reconstructionism is seen to inform the innovation drive embedded in the Education 5.0 philosophy which, among other things, seeks to industrialise and commercialise the nation, with a view to ending poverty and pauperism.

Aims of Social Reconstructionist Education and Zimbabwe's Education System

“Reconstructionists would like to link thought with action, theory with practice, and...education should be for social change and social action” (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 183). This social reconstructionist agenda is of utmost relevance to Zimbabwe's education system, which should correspondingly aim to practically involve the youths in addressing national challenges that include poverty, unemployment, corruption, bigotry, high crime rate and disease outbreaks, because the future lies in their hands.

It is also argued that social reconstructionist education's overriding goal is to create a world order in which people control their own destiny by applying their practical intelligence (Philos, n.d.). Thus, education should target to churn out graduates who are critical of their conditions. Therefore, Afro-Zimbabweans also need to live and practically manifest the emancipatory and critical mind-set, in accordance with the dictates of social reconstructionism. This concurs with *Unhu/Ubuntu*, which, in itself, is a decolonising philosophy of education proclaimed by Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022.

“Reconstructionists would like to see an end to the ‘Ivory Tower mentality’, with everyone involved in some way in social action” (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 186). Thus, social reconstructionist education detests the churning out of individuals with an escapist attitude marked by an aloof lack of concern with urgent

problems. Correspondingly, Zimbabwe's education system is aimed at cultivating interest in learners to participate in issues of national interest, with a view to contributing to national prosperity. The said education system, thus, aims at orienting learners to the dictates of innovation, industrialisation and job-creation for eradication of poverty, as emphasised in the Education 5.0 philosophy (Murwira, 2019; & Tagwira, 2018).

“Reconstructionists do not think that school can be separated from the rest of the society or individuals from each other. They strive for unity rather than fragmentation” (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 186). Likewise, the curriculum review process which birthed Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 aimed at upholding the social reconstructionist principle of community engagement. Moreover, as the said Curriculum Framework places emphasis on national unity and oneness through *Unhu/Ubuntu*, it also assumes a social reconstructionist outlook.

“World community, brotherhood and democracy are three ideals that reconstructionists believe in and desire to implement in schools and in society” (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 186). The social reconstructionist notion of world community is evident in Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022, which targets the development of new skill sets that enable citizens to live and work competitively in the global village. The social reconstructionist brotherhood is manifest in the principle of communalism (which accentuates oneness of humanity) as embedded in *Unhu/Ubuntu* – a philosophy proclaimed by Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022. The social reconstructionist democracy is also visualised in *Unhu/Ubuntu*, where this philosophy says “A leader who has *Unhu* does not lead but allows the people to lead themselves. Forcefully imposing his or her will on his people is incompatible with *Unhu*” (Tirivangana, 2013, no page). Therefore, with its penchant for the three ideals as articulated in the foregoing, social reconstructionism is compatible with the aims of Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022.

Ozmon & Craver (2003, p. 193) submit that, “concern for social values, human justice, the human community, world peace, economic justice, equality of opportunity, freedom, and democracy – things in which the world is sadly lacking – are all significant goals for reconstructionism.” Likewise, the Zimbabwean society lacks most of the above-said virtues and, hence, Zimbabwe's education system aims to achieve and/or preserve these social reconstructionist virtues.

Social Reconstructionist Curriculum, Instrumentalist View of Knowledge and Zimbabwe's Education System

Like pragmatists and progressives, social reconstructionists see knowledge as an instrument to be used for a purpose (Philos, undated). This teleological

social reconstructionist view holds that knowledge imparted by the school should be used as a tool for socio-cultural renewal. The knowledge areas that social reconstructionists consider as particularly useful are the social sciences, including anthropology, economics, sociology, political science, and psychology (Philos, undated), world history, contemporary issues, citizenship / social studies, multi-culturalism, *inter-alia* (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). These disciplines provide insights and methods for planning social change (Philos, n.d.). Although Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 seems to place emphasis on Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics [STEM] subjects, this principal document manifests some social reconstructionist proclivities, as it recognises favourably such social science subjects as History, Sociology, Social Studies and Citizenship, among others, which could be instrumental in effecting a socio-cultural renewal.

According to Ozmon & Craver (2003), "Brameld recommends that as much as half of a student's time be spent outside the traditional school structure, learning at some place other than the school" (p. 187). Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 seems to partly adopt this social reconstructionist standpoint where it urges learners to "present their work to other people, beyond their classmates and teacher" (GoZ, p. 43). However, Zimbabwe is yet to fully realise this vision, as most of the learning still happens at school.

"Brameld thinks that the reconstructionist curriculum is a centripetal and a centrifugal force. It is centripetal because it draws the people of the community together in common studies and centrifugal because it extends from the school into the wider community" (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 187). Thus, Zimbabwe's education system manifests the social reconstructionist centripetal curriculum structure as people from diverse backgrounds converge to learn common ideas *exempli gratia* in Maths and Science, whereas the social reconstructionist centrifugal curriculum structure is evident in the said education system as it is designed to plough ideas back to society.

The social reconstructionist would globalise the curriculum so that men and women will learn that they live in a global village (Philos, n.d.), a predilection towards a global curriculum. Thus, "reconstructionists favour a 'world' curriculum with an emphasis on truth, fellowship and justice" (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 187). The relevance of this social reconstructionist view of curriculum finds expression in Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022, where it aims at preparing learners for life and work in an increasingly globalised and competitive environment.

Social Reconstructionist Methodology and Pedagogics in Zimbabwe

Social reconstructionists are wary of bookish learning and they advocate active learner participation.

Hence, they are characteristically opposed to indoctrination, learner passivity and teacher dominance (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Like social reconstructionists, Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 is sharply opposed to the above-mentioned manifestations of the lecture method, as it puts primacy on learner-involvement, discovery learning, experiential learning, experimental learning, problem-solving, Socratic dialectic and inquiry-based learning, *inter-alia*.

In addition, social reconstructionists set a premium on creativity, objectivity, evaluative skills and critical thinking (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 seems to adopt this social reconstructionist instructional methodology as it purports to promote creativity through Continuous Assessment Learning Activities [CALAs], uphold objectivity and evaluative skills through its commitment to raising a level-headed individual capable of reasoning logically, and cultivate critical thinking through the study of History and Literature.

Social reconstructionists also welcome learning through attachment (Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 seems to be inclined towards adopting this social reconstructionist tradition through the Life Skills Orientation Programme which encompasses general and specific life-skills training through placement in various work-related programmes in the private and service sectors, and outward bound the uniformed forces for a period of five months (GoZ, 2015). This is said to afford learners some exposure to the work and enterprise environment whilst they wait for either Ordinary Level or Advanced Level results.

Above all, social reconstructionists are of the conviction that democratic principles should pervade the educative process (Philos, n.d.; & Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 seems to manifest this social reconstructionist tradition of democracy through *Unhu/Ubuntu* (its underpinning philosophy) which exalts democratic leadership and through citizenship which again revolves around and resonates with democratic principles.

Social Reconstructionist Teacher and Teacher in Zimbabwe

Social Reconstructionist teachers encourage students to diagnose the major problems confronting human beings on planet Earth – problems which include poverty, pollution, warfare, famine, terrorism, violence, disease epidemics, discrimination and prejudice, *inter-alia* (Philos, undated). These problems require solutions. Correspondingly, the Education 5.0 philosophy, which, according to Murwira (2019), is currently informing Zimbabwe's teacher education institutions is predisposed towards raising a social reconstructionist teacher endowed with innovative and problem-solving skills. The graduating social reconstructionist teacher is,

therefore, supposed to impart these innovative and problem-solving skills to learners, with a view to eradicating unemployment and poverty, which are some of Zimbabwe's debilitating challenges.

For cultural wars over national identities, social reconstructionist teachers would encourage students to share their cultural heritages and to build a knowledge base incorporating the contributions of many diverse ethnic, racial, social and language groups (Philos, n.d.). Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022, therefore, adopts this social reconstructionist multicultural inclination through its principle of "inclusivity," which, "refers to an education system that takes into account and addresses the different learners' needs and abilities without disadvantaging any group or individual" (GoZ, 2015, p. 15). Thus, as teachers in Zimbabwe are supposed to tap into cultural plurality and diversity in class, they are deliberately or otherwise called upon to manifest social reconstructionist proclivities.

Social reconstructionism believes that teachers should stress the use of democratic procedures (Philos, n.d.; & Ozmon & Craver, 2003). Therefore, as Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 decrees *Unhu/Ubuntu* to be the underpinning philosophy of education, it manifests a social reconstructionist democratic predisposition because, as stated earlier, the *Unhu/Ubuntu* philosophy is suffused with a strong democratic acumen. So, as teachers in Zimbabwe stand guided by the said curriculum document, they should adhere to democratic principles in class.

Social reconstructionists are of the understanding that "teachers need to be freed from passivity and fear of working for change. They need to focus on critical issues not generally found in textbooks or made a part of the school curriculum. They also need to make students more critical about the knowledge they receive" (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 190). This finds testimony in Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 (GoZ, 2015), which holds it imperative for teachers to impart critical thinking skills in learners.

In a social reconstructionist set-up, "rather than being passive dispensers of knowledge, teachers would become facilitators of analysis and change" (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 190). Thus, a new social order will be created only when educators challenge obsolete conceptions of knowledge, education, schooling and instruction - in order to develop alternatives to the *status quo* (Philos, n.d.). The author, however, rationalises that it is an uphill struggle for teachers in Zimbabwe to challenge the *status quo* and bring about change because they are not significantly involved in crafting the curriculum as the country's curriculum development process is centralised (core-periphery). The other impediment is that teachers do not wield political and legal power.

"For educators to make real changes in society, social reconstructionists urge them to become involved in affairs outside their classrooms and schools," as "Counts suggested that teachers run for political office and engage in social issues outside the classroom" (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 181). This social reconstructionist predilection seems to be incompatible with Zimbabwe's education policy, as encapsulated in GoZ (2000), which prohibits the teacher as a civil servant from running for political office. "Reconstructionist educators tend to think of themselves as radical educational reformers rather than as reactionary conservatives, timid moderates or weak-hearted liberals" (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 182). This seems inadmissible within the Zimbabwean situation where radicalism in any of its forms is not tolerated.

"For educators to engage in educational reform effectively, they must perform a dual role: educator and social activist. For the social reconstructionist, those two roles should not be separated, for educators should be committed enough to act on those things they teach in the classroom" (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 182). This, again, does not harmonise with the situation of a teacher in Zimbabwe because any activism which is perceived to challenge the *status quo* is highly discouraged by the state, which, in any such eventuality, is fond of retrieving from its armory the repressive state apparatus to quell any such activism.

Nevertheless, social reconstructionists want teachers to be internationally-oriented, humanitarian in their outlook, futuristic and morally upright (Ozmon & Craver, 2003), and Zimbabwe's Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education seems to share the same vision.

Social Reconstructionist School and Zimbabwe's School System

Social reconstructionism submits that humankind has reached a serious cultural crisis of global dimensions. Hence, it argues that if schools continue to reflect traditional concepts and values, they will transmit the social ills – exploitation, war, violence – that are symptoms of man's cultural crisis (Philos, undated). Thus, social reconstructionists implore schools to become the social reform institutions and change agents of the society (Patsanza, 1987). Therefore, social reconstructionists maintain that "a movement to better the society demands a school institution freed from the traditional ideological framework so that it can project new goals and values" (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 183). However, this does not readily harmonise with Zimbabwe's school system directed by the country's national ideology, which is mainly a concoction of Oriental proclivities, liberation history, national heritage and indigenisation, among others.

Social reconstructionists believe that "education in schools must be directed toward humane goals that result in better social consequences for all"

(Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 184). Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022, thus, appears to concur with this standpoint as it calls upon schools to uphold *Unhu/Ubuntu* (a philosophy which abundantly expresses humanness from an African viewpoint), wherein education for *Unhu/Ubuntu* seeks to build a humane society.

Some social reconstructionists alleged that "educational institutions have become too domineering and manipulative, hence what is needed is a 'convivial' system of education that promotes, rather than selectively controls, educational access by helping learners arrange for their own education" (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 184). This affirms democratic ideals and the disestablishment of formal schools, resulting in people learning more through the internet and World Wide Web, *inter-alia*. Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 is predisposed towards this democratised but remote system of education. Social reconstructionists, thus, maintain that "many paths lead to education and formal schooling is not the only or even the best way in every instance" (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 184). However, with the palpable backwardness of the country's remote learning regime, this social reconstructionist agenda for enhanced remote learning may not be germane to Zimbabwe.

"Reconstructionists criticise the traditional concept of education in which learners just memorise information presented by the teacher, hence they argue that schools should be involved with the real and current everyday problems of people" (Freire, in Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 185). Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022, thus, appears to concur with the above as it detests rote learning and exalts the Deweyan problem-solving as well as the Freirean problem-posing approach to instruction.

In the Social Reconstructionist view, schools must help reduce the cultural gaps so that values can catch up with technology (Philos, n.d.). Thus, social reconstructionism is activism for socio-cultural renewal, a penchant readily accommodated in Zimbabwe's system of education. Additionally, as located on the cutting edge of change, social reconstructionist schools will always be centres of controversy. When this happens, conflict resolution should be carried out according to the agreed upon democratic processes (Philos, undated). Therefore, Zimbabwe is compatible with the idea of having schools as hubs of argumentation and allowing democratic principles to pervade the schools, though relatively.

To social reconstructionist, "schools should foster the three ideals of World community, brotherhood and democracy (mentioned earlier) through curricular, administrative and instructional practices" (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, pp. 185-186). Patsanza (1987) endorses these democratic and communalistic ideals where he says "the emerging, becoming society must be democratic: it

should be based on communalism rather than individualism" (p. 56). Correspondingly, Zimbabwe's school system commits to preparing learners for life and work in an increasingly globalised environment, puts primacy on oneness of humanity through the communalistic principle of *Unhu/Ubuntu*, and cherishes democratic leadership again as embedded in the *Unhu/Ubuntu* philosophy.

"Reconstructionists argue that democratic procedures should be at every level of schooling, with the student having an active say in the formulation and implementation of objectives, methods and curriculum" (Brameld, as cited in Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 190), although the teacher remains a useful facilitator. Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022 is consistent with this social reconstructionist position of having the teacher remain as a useful facilitator. However, the said Framework deviates from the social reconstructionist conception of democracy, especially that of allowing the student to have an active say in the formulation and implementation of objectives, methods and curriculum. Currently, this social reconstructionist-progressive ideal of democracy does not obtain in Zimbabwe.

A Critique of Social Reconstructionism

According to Ozmon & Craver (2003), social reconstructionist analyses of social problems and the accompanying remedies suffer from shallowness and superficiality. Moreover, social reconstructionists are precipitous in their recommendations for reform. Hence, social reconstructionists have a romantic notion of what schools can do. Thus, they expect too much from schools and teachers yet it is questionable whether teachers could ever obtain such transformative power or use it any better than others. The social reconstructionist notion of 'world law' (centralising the regulation of human behaviour) is way too ambitious as it contradicts the multicultural and democratic ideals which the reconstructionists subscribe to. Social reconstructionism calls upon teachers to be partisan, which makes the social reconstructionist teacher's position precarious. However, "if it is true that reconstructionists are impatient and precipitous in their desire to eliminate social evils, then it is understandable in a world still filled with hate, greed, bigotry, poverty and war" (Ozmon & Craver, 2003, p. 193). This secures the centrality of social reconstructionism as a theory informing contemporary education.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

It has emerged from the foregoing that social reconstructionism manifests significantly within Zimbabwe's Curriculum Framework 2015-2022, which is currently the principal document articulating the country's system of education. Although some social reconstructionist ideas are deemed to be at variance with the *status quo* in Zimbabwe, this theory is largely

relevant to the country's system of education as encapsulated in Curriculum Framework 2015-2022, whose architects are herein challenged to keep revising the same so that it gets better capacitated to address problems like poverty, corruption, unemployment, bigotry and disease outbreaks, among others, as these are challenges currently vexing the country. Even though social reconstructionism has been criticised mainly for calling upon the teacher to be partisan, its continued study in Zimbabwe's teacher education institutions is deemed justifiable. This reflection, thus, constitutes a strong exhortation for the MoHTEISTD and UZ to revisit their position (that of wanting to expunge Western theories) with due sobriety so that they consider restoring social reconstructionism in particular to its rightful place in Zimbabwe's Educational Foundations (Philosophy) syllabus for teacher education. It should also be understood that the author has no misgivings with *Unhu/Ubuntu* and heritage-based philosophies. What the author recommends is the hybridisation of Western theories of education (like social reconstructionism) with the African worldview of *Unhu/Ubuntu* which incorporates the heritage-based philosophy. This is bound to see social reconstructionism being studied in context, which is in the best interests of Zimbabwe's primary and secondary education sector. The suggested hybridity of philosophies and theories manifests the highly cherished ideal of eclecticism and the thesis of complementarity, ideals which have the vast potential to deliver a viable and vibrant system of education in a postcolonial and globalising Zimbabwe.

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