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## **Neoliberal Globalization, ZANU PF Authoritarian Nationalism and the Creation of Crises in Higher Education in Zimbabwe**

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**Abstract:** *This article examines the current crises in university education in Zimbabwe. Using contemporary accounts of neoliberalism and radical nationalism as practised in Zimbabwe, an analysis of higher education is undertaken. The paper argues that, on one side, existing literature tends to blame the Zimbabwean government, without taking into consideration the existing Western imperial pressures. Another set of literature is uncritically behind the ZANU PF government and apportions all the blame on Western imperialism. It is argued in this paper that a combination of these two vectors should be used to comprehend the magnitude of the crises in higher education in Zimbabwe. This demands an adoption of a critical colonial posture that enables one to see the destructive tendencies of both Western imperialism, in the form of neoliberal globalization, and outdated radical self-aggrandizing nationalist policies, employed by the former liberators, now in government. Radical nationalism and radical capitalism (neoliberalism) are ideologies fighting on many turfs including that of Zimbabwean higher education which remains in a state of crisis while the proponents of the two authoritarian ideologies prosper. The paper suggests that Zimbabweans, especially members of the university community, should consider drawing from local subaltern perspectives and traditional wisdom (as a source of knowledge), to construct alternatives to the dictatorships of neoliberalism and radical nationalism.*

### **1. Introduction**

The problems facing the formerly colonized countries today generically referred to as the “South”, have come to be associated with Western or developed nations’ agendas and projects. Colonialism, development, and currently neoliberal globalization, it can be argued, have been Western/Northern hegemonic manoeuvres to extract the much required natural

resources to satisfy hyper-consumerist aspirations and ways of living (Black, 2007; Willis, 2005). Harvey (2003) describes neoliberal globalization as the new imperialism where accumulation by dispossession is the main characteristic, and Tikly (2004) also refers to neoliberal globalization as imperialism, a form of Western global hegemony. Similarly, other scholars such as Moyo and Yeros (2007), Bond (2001) and Mamdani (2008) explain Zimbabwe's current problems, specifically in higher education, on the West and its project of domination of the countries of the South. This is manifested in the radical economic policies forced upon the South, on countries like Zimbabwe, by the World Bank/International Monetary Fund (IMF) inspired structural adjustment policies (SAPs) and more recently, the Poverty Reductions Strategy Papers (PRSPs).

On the other hand, we have critical colonial commentators and scholars such as Masunungure and Bratton (2008), Raftopoulos (2006), and Scarnecchia (2006) who view the problems in Zimbabwe as manufactured and perpetuated by the Zimbabwean government and its self aggrandizement policies. The West by virtue of its colonial past is used as a scapegoat. According this school of thought, governence is at the centre of Zimbabwe's crisis (e.g. in higher education) (Makumbe, 2002; Sithole, 2001). ZANU PF by virtue of having led the bloody and brutal liberation war in the 1970s, regards itself as having the right to rule, by right of conquest (Masunungure and Bratton, 2008), the same claim that was used by the British to exclude the majority black Africans from government during the close to a century long period of colonial rule. On the basis of this reasoning, ZANU PF does not foresee a day it will be out of power and accordingly they wish to rule till eternity (Masunungure and Bratton, 2008). The disputed land issue and elections, the selective use of the law, political violence, corruption and the consequent meltdown of the economy should be understood from ZANU PF's attempts to be the defacto ruling power in Zimbabwe regardless of holding elections after every five years.

These two perspectives provide a two tier explanation of the crises Zimbabweans and higher education are currently experiencing. Opponents of Robert Mugabe and his government, blame Mugabe while on the other hand

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Mugabe's sympathisers blame Western imperialism and the neo-liberal agenda that drives it. It should be noted that both nationalism and neoliberalism are foreign ideas with no local indigenous cultural origins and meaning to the ordinary Zimbabwean. It is against this background that this paper explores the possibility that the twin trajectories of ZANU PF nationalism and neoliberal globalization may be partially responsible for the current crisis in higher education in Zimbabwe, and that the way out of this predicament calls for the ordinary people of Zimbabwe, and more importantly the university community, to construct their own ideas outside nationalist and neoliberal thinking. Before blaming outsiders who are responsible to a significant extent, Zimbabweans should define the status of their postcolonial nation and come to a consensus over issues of governance notwithstanding policy differences. Students and faculty are currently divided into pro- and anti- radical nationalist camps and this has eroded any opportunity for finding solutions bedevilling the nation in general and the university in particular. Leadership should be answerable to and serve the people rather than itself on the basis of some historical justification, such as having participated in the war for independence. Of equally importance is an understanding of the real impacts of global political-economic processes on Zimbabwe. Some view Mugabe as a hero, while others as a dictator. The current crises in higher education, as in other areas of society, are a direct result of the policies of ZANU PF as well as neoliberal globalization policies as enunciated in Washington.

This paper attempts to provide a critical examination of the crisis in higher education, specifically in Zimbabwe's universities, and both Robert Mugabe and his ZANU PF party, on one hand, and the imperialist and Western hegemonic project, euphemistically referred to as neoliberal globalization, on the other hand, will be unmasked as being behind the crisis. Any efforts to account for the crisis in Zimbabwe's education by adopting one of the above perspectives and ignoring the other will not provide a genuine and holistic understanding. Unfortunately, most of the influential works currently available can simply be described as pro-Mugabe and hence against the West and the neo-liberal agenda, or anti-Mugabe and for the Western

version of human rights, democracy and freedom. I argue that the crisis in higher education is caused by both these contradictory and inter-dependent developments; Zimbabwe is a victim of a double tragedy. While most weaker and dependent economies in the South are enduring problems due to neoliberal globalization, Zimbabweans' predicament has been two-fold, radical capitalism and radical nationalism, both feeding on the suffering of poor Zimbabweans. The paper addresses the crises in Zimbabwe's higher education, with specific reference to public universities. This is a presentation of the distinct and bizarre situation obtaining in universities, a relook at the main players involved and the way they are portrayed. A variety of written sources have been employed, including press briefings, newspaper and secondary sources on political developments and higher education in Zimbabwe. These sources are read and interpreted from personal experiences with the Zimbabwe higher education (university), both, as its product and as an instructor in the system. After considering the neoliberalization of higher education, the paper considers the crises-making impacts of ZANU PF radical nationalism. Issues of educational quality and student victimization are then raised and examined as key illustrations of a system in crises being propelled by these twin trajectories affecting the country. This is followed by a reflective conclusion calling for honest analysis of external and internal colonial explanations for the crises and the need for new approaches to addressing this situation; approaches that need to consider (*critically* consider, as opposed to blind traditionalist-observance) local/indigenous approaches (traditional wisdoms) to ways out of crises—a directional proposition that will no doubt require continued engagement, elaboration and political commitment on the part of concerned students, faculty and administration, if not all Zimbabweans.

## **2. Neoliberal Globalization, Privatization and Crises in Higher Education**

The phenomenon of globalization has been defined in various ways depending on one's standpoint. Globalization is a contested phenomenon, one that does not lend itself easily

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to any single definition or characterisation. It is said to have many faces, and is usually discussed in economic, political, social, cultural, and technological terms (Vaira, 2004), in the context of interconnectedness and supraterritoriality (deterritorialisation) (Scholte, 2005); characterised by interdependence, flows and exchanges, the role of new technologies, the integration of markets, and the shrinking of time and space (Appadurai, 1996). Thus, globalization is a dynamic hybridization of various interlinked processes operating on a planetary scale. However, Smith (2006) recognizes that the phenomenon of globalization can be seen as a Euro-American vision of an empire, which dates back to the Middle Ages. Most people from the weaker economies, because of the immiseration they endure, at the expense of the extravagant consumption culture found in the world, do not hesitate to see globalization as yet another episode in Western hegemonic development. For instance, Grosfoguel (2005) perceives globalization as capitalist and Euro-centred colonization. Along the same lines, McMichael (2005: 119-120) argues that it is a “Western imperial project, a realignment of market rule, where the iron fist of imperialism and its geopolitical imperatives is ungloved”. The relentless extraction of raw materials from the South, and the consequent destruction of both human and natural resources in these weaker economies, prompted Petras and Veltmeyer (2001: 66) to argue that “it is a strange concept of globalization that describes pillage and profit in the same breath as interdependence and stateless corporations”. Thus there is an element of unanimity among critical scholars that globalization is imperialism. It is yet another stage of Western pillaging of weaker societies’ resources. This is succinctly put across by Kapoor (2009a: 3):

Today’s neo-colonialism/imperialism (globalization), as an advanced strain of colonialism, does not require direct political rule and occupation (formal colonies are not required), as control is exercised through growing economic and financial dependencies which ensure captive labour markets (e.g. Export Processing Zones or EPZs also referred to as sweat shops) in developing countries (the colonies/Third World) producing goods primarily for export to developed countries (colonial

powers/ First World) and secures continued exploitation of resources and environments in developing countries largely for developed country consumption.

Thus as Zimbabwe adopts SAPs dictated by the World Bank and the IMF, devaluing its currency to attract foreign (mostly Western) investment, encourage production for export while Zimbabweans fail to access home made products, like sugar; as it enters into agreement with Transnational Companies in the various sectors of the economy, we are witnessing the new form of colonialism (or neo-colonialism) at play. The ideology of this new form of colonialism is described as free-market ideology and is commonly known as neoliberalism. The principles of the free market have since been adopted in higher education institutions, at the instigation of the World Bank/IMF and the government. Neoliberal ideas in Zimbabwe's universities, like in other countries, have mainly been introduced in the form of marketization. Proponents of higher education marketization (neoliberalism) have consistently argued that large scale public funding of higher education is no longer tenable and is regressive; that generous public funding of higher education undermines equitable access, efficiency and even quality (Barr, 2004; Johnstone, 2001; World Bank, 1994).

University education in Zimbabwe has become a casualty of neoliberal policies imposed on highly indebted countries of the South. Soon after attaining independence, most African governments, including the Zimbabwean government, seeking national development, borrowed money from the International Monetary Fund (IMF) and the World Bank. The Bretton Woods Institutions turned these national debts into an opportunity to impose SAPS. Indebted governments, like the government of Zimbabwe, were required "to reduce spending, to privatise industry and services, to cheapen labour, to open up markets to multinational companies, to relax controls on capital movements, to devalue their currencies etc" (Levidow, 2002: 8). With reference to higher education, the government was called upon to "relieve the burden on public sources of financing higher education by increasing the participation of

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beneficiaries and their families (World Bank, 1988: 77). The above position was reinforced in 1994 when the World Bank pointed out that “the extent of government involvement in higher education (in Africa) far exceeded what is economically efficient” (World Bank, 1994: 9). Universities in Zimbabwe were called upon to generate revenue for their operations. Government funding started dwindling as prescribed by the World Bank (Altbach, 2004; Wangenge-Ouma, 2008). Marketization strategies have been adopted and includes, among many others, formation of university owned for-profit companies, co-ventures with proprietary non-university institutions, farming, petty trade on campus and admission of full fee-paying students (Nafukho, 2004). Fee-paying students are enrolled in courses invariably referred to as parallel programs. These are normal degree courses offered in the evenings, weekends and holidays when formal university business has closed. Students in parallel programs pay full fees with no government subsidy. The introduction of parallel programs has been witnessed at the University of Zimbabwe, Midlands State University, Great Zimbabwe University and National University of Science and Technology. Parallel programmes fit in with neoliberalism’s treatment of higher education as a private commodity; a traded commodity to be purchased by a consumer, a product to be retailed by academic institutions (Altbach, 2004; Levidow, 2005). The reality is that only those from the rich socio-economic backgrounds attend parallel programmes.

The reduction or absence of government funding in universities ushered in an era of cost sharing. The World Bank wanted education services to be brought into the market place, through increased private provision and cost sharing (World Bank, 1988, 1994). According to Johnstone (2003: 351) “cost sharing is the assumption by parents and students of a portion of the costs of higher education- costs that, in many nations, at least until recently, have been borne predominantly or even exclusively by governments, or taxpayers”. The effects of marketization have seen food and accommodation services on university campuses being privatised.

### **3. ZANU PF Radical Nationalism and the Creation of Crisis in Zimbabwe**

The ZANU PF government has always publicly portrayed itself as patriotic, nationalist and pan-Africanist, and has always turned to nationalist rhetoric to arouse the people's feelings and obtain political support, both nationally and outside Zimbabwe's borders. According to Gellner (2006: 1), "nationalism as a sentiment is a feeling of anger aroused by the violation of the political principle which holds that the political and the national unit should be congruent or a feeling of satisfaction aroused by its fulfilment". Guibernau (1996: 47) defines nationalism as "the sentiment of belonging to a community whose members identify with a set of symbols, beliefs and ways of life, and have the will to decide upon their common political destiny". In the case of Zimbabwe, geographical location, language, and colonial experience that ended after a brutal war, are some of the common uniting factors that define a people as Zimbabweans, and thus arouse the sentiment of nationalism.

It is important to briefly trace the history of nationalism and then locate the particular strain of nationalism being practised in Zimbabwe today. According to Anderson (1991), the first truly modern nationalism, developed as anti-colonial nationalism, in the various Creole-led independence movements that were found throughout the Americas in the latter half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century. It later spread to Western Europe and then Asia, and Guibernau (1996) observes that the models of nationalist development historically generated in this process became available for pirating by later nationalist activists (like those in ZANU PF). ZANU PF appealed to nationalist feelings and succeeded to gain power. But Glover (1997: 14) observes that "while nationalism provides a series of goals- the creation of a state, the reconstruction of a nation, the development and encouragement of the national culture and interests, it does not indicate the direction to be taken or the methods which should be adopted to achieve them". In other words it does not provide directions on how a nation can develop

Nationalism, at its extreme is sometimes equated to



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racism or ethnocentrism, which define nationhood from social egocentrism, implying that loyalty towards the macro culture is more important than the wishes of its individual members (Hall, 1992). In Zimbabwe, since 2000, the demand for civil and political rights has been viewed and dismissed by the ruling party and government as minority and foreign concerns aimed at unsettling majority political will and reversing the gains of national independence and sovereignty (Raftopoulos, 2003). Zimbabwean nationalism cannot be divorced from Mugabe's policies, with Mugabe having been at the helm since 1980 when the country gained independence from Britain. This nationalist doctrine is termed Mugabeism by Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009: 154) and is described as follows:

at one level it represents pan-African memory and patriotism and at another level it manifests itself as a form of radical left-nationalism dedicated to resolving intractable national and agrarian questions. Yet, to others, it is nothing but a symbol of crisis, chaos and tyranny emanating from the exhaustion of nationalism.

But others are very clear with their prognosis of Zimbabwean nationalism as practised by ZANU PF. It is seen as a policy that includes deliberate defaulting on foreign debt; pursuit of an anti-imperialist foreign policy; increased state intervention and regulation of business and a fast-track land reform programme (Moyo and Yeros, 2007). Mugabe's nationalism is also viewed as championing justice for the majority who were denied justice during the colonial period (Mamdani, 2008). But the question remains: why are the peasants and ordinary Zimbabweans opposed to Mugabe's rule, in other words, ZANU PF nationalism, if it has indeed brought previously denied justice and land? The portrayal of Mugabe nationalism or Mugabeism, as dictatorial and without the support of the ordinary peasants in Zimbabwe, is well documented by Ranger (2008). The 2008 national elections, for both the parliament and President, showed a rejection of ZANU PF by the people of Zimbabwe, and more importantly the rural peasants. Others expose the authoritarianism and violence hidden behind the pan-

African and anti-imperialist rhetoric of Mugabe's nationalism (Phimister and Raftopoulos, 2004; Raftopoulos, 2006; Ranger, 2008).

It can be derived from Anderson's theory of nationalism, as well as from any genealogical analysis of world nationalisms, that ZANU PF's brand of nationalism, and any other form of African nationalism, was created by European colonialism. Colonialism did not introduce nor promote democracy, human rights and freedom, "rather it was a terrain of conquest, violence, police rule, militarism and authoritarianism" (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009: 1144). Colonialism therefore is seen reproducing itself, but in another form, within the nationalist political movements, such as ZANU PF. The brutality of the Zimbabwean police force, even towards unarmed citizens like university students has been widely documented, and has been equated to Ian Smith's Rhodesian system (Makoni, 2007; Megan, 2006). This paper argues that colonialism did not end in 1980 when Zimbabwe obtained its independence. This was just an end of a stage in European/Western colonialism. An equally dictatorial and brutal form of colonialism exists today, and this is manifested in neoliberal globalization as authored and driven by the rich countries of the world and their Transnational Companies (TNCs) (e.g. see Munrozi, 2009 and partnerships between indigenous Zimbabweans and TNCs in the case of Marange diamonds). Mugabe and his ZANU PF's leftist or radical dictatorial nationalism feeds on current Western hegemonic tendencies and provides this brand of nationalism with ready support from disgruntled people who have borne the brunt of IMF-designed immiseration.

Unemployment in Zimbabwe is currently at 80 percent, the rate of inflation hit record world levels in 2008 as shown in the table below. The abandonment of the Zimbabwean dollar at the beginning of 2009 and the resultant adoption of foreign currencies, though it has reigned in price increases, many people, especially the majority in the communal areas, have no access to foreign money, and it is reported that barter trade has been adopted in some circumstances, such as in the payment of school fees.

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**Table 1: Rate of Inflation**

Year	All Items CPI	Year on Year Price Increases
1990	29.6	15.5
1991	36.8	24.3
1992	52.3	42.1
1993	66.7	27.5
1994	81.6	22.3
1995	100.0	22.5
1996	121.4	21.7
1997	144.3	18.9
1998	190.1	31.7
1999	301.3	58.5
2000	469.6	55.9
2001	100.0	71.9
2002	233.2	133.2
2003	1084.5	365.0
2004	4880.3	350.0
2005	16486.4	237.8
2006	184101.4	1016.7
2007	12562581.7	6723.7
2008	35500566912457.9	231150888.87%
2009 July	91.3	1.0%

**Source:** Adapted from the Reserve Bank of Zimbabwe: Inflation Rates (2009)

School dropouts due to high fees, especially in universities, spread of diseases because of no clean water, or no water at all, as was the case at the University of Zimbabwe (Makoni, 2007; The Sunday Mail, 2009; Zimbabwe National Students Union, 2009) paint a grim picture of the situation. Prostitution (propelled by hardship) and consequently high risks of contracting HIV/AIDS among university students is yet another problem (Makoni, 2007). Faculty and other highly skilled personnel are leaving Zimbabwe in large numbers (Chetsanga and Muchenje, 2003; Makombe, 2009; Zimbabwe National Students Union, 2009). The fact that Robert Mugabe capped only 612 out of the 4000 University of Zimbabwe students who were scheduled to graduate at the 2009 graduation ceremony illuminates the extent of the

crisis in Zimbabwe, both, in general and specifically in higher education (Gumbo, 2009).

#### **4. Exploring the Intersections: Neoliberalism-ZANU PF Radical Nationalism and the Erosion of Higher Education**

The period 1980 to 1990 is referred to by some as one of developmental nationalism, when the government of Zimbabwe adopted policies that aimed to satisfy the nationalist demands that had helped it galvanise people's support for the war (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009). The rationale of developmental nationalism was rooted in the imperative need to redress colonial racial inequalities and the uplifting of the majority blacks to a status of dignified human beings. Colonial governments had consistently treated indigenous black Africans as sub-humans, not capable of governing themselves. The first decade was therefore characterized by phenomenal quantitative expansion in higher education.

The adoption of IMF/World Bank sponsored reforms in 1991, however, ushered in a new era in education and specifically university education. The guiding principle was the reversal of government support and the adoption of what the World Bank (1988: 77) referred to as "relieve the burden on public sources of financing higher education by increasing the participation of beneficiaries and their families. It should be pointed out that the ZANU PF government was forced to adopt or was arguably perhaps even in favour of the SAPs that were adopted in higher education, as the party/officials if not Mugabe/ZANU PF radical nationalism also stood to gain (materially and politically) from some of these neoliberal interventions.

##### **Inaccessibility, Privatization of Services, Financial Duress for Students and Employment Implications for Faculty**

The privatization of university amenities such as catering and accommodation services benefitted those with connections within the government or the ruling party (Muronzi, 2009). They became the new entrepreneurs in the name of black empowerment or indigenization. Foreign

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companies were also encouraged to invest in Zimbabwe. Thus the post 1991 Zimbabwe witnessed what some have described in other contexts as “state-corporate developmental collusions” (Kapoor, 2009b: 62), as the government of Zimbabwe and neoliberal policies derived from Washington, worked together in promulgating policies that marked the beginning of the crisis Zimbabwe has been enmeshed in for more than a decade now. Though the Zimbabwean government later dropped the IMF/World Bank driven structural adjustment programmes at the beginning of the new millennium, in principle the new homegrown policies that were introduced were still very much neoliberal policies. The difference was that they were now authored by Zimbabweans but the business mantra found in IMF/World Bank development prescriptions had a huge presence in the so called home grown programmes. The consequences for the people, such as those witnessed in higher education, were the same--privatization, marketization, cost recovery (Slaughter and Leslie, 1997).

Thus, since 1991 to the present, the population of Zimbabwe has been under siege from the neoliberal agenda, at the behest of the ZANU PF government. The introduction of fee-paying policy in universities together with the privatization of basic amenities such as accommodation and food catering has brought untold suffering to the students, the majority of whom are from rural/peasant and working-class parentage. Studies have shown that students are finding it difficult to pay for university education. For instance a study of university students in Zimbabwe states that:

The largest proportion of the respondents depended on their relatives or met their own educational costs. Sixty-one percent of these relatives relied on their salaries, which predominantly have been overtaken by inflation. It is not surprising that the largest proportion of students across all institutions (54%) reported that they were sacrificially capable of meeting their educational costs. Twenty percent of the relatives used business profits and 13% transfers from acquaintances outside Zimbabwe. Most students relying on such relatives were comfortably or

moderately capable of paying their dues. Interestingly, female students, more than half of them single, who constituted 7% of those relying on relatives, were receiving support from their 'spouses' or 'lovers', illustrating the existence of loose intimate relationships as a way of coping with high educational costs. The remaining group of relatives obtained income from vending (2%), other informal trade (1%), pensions (1%) and miscellaneous activities (3%) and all of them were sacrificially capable of supporting students under their guardianship (Makoni, 2007: 22).

The crisis is also seen in the drop in salaries of university employees and this has affected the working morale of academics. There has been a mass exodus of academics, resulting in plummeting standards. The flight of lecturers has hit crisis levels (Makumbe, 2009). Makombe (2009), citing Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education documents, reported that public universities have been hard hit by understaffing with the University of Zimbabwe having 385 out of the required 1171 academic members, Harare Institute of Technology has a 70% vacancy level with only 37 academic staff members out of a possible 123. Major push factors were low pay for academics in a collapsing economy with 165,000% inflation - the world's highest - poor working conditions, lack of transport and computers, and problems finding accommodation (Manyukwe, 2008). To add to this plethora of problems, there have been consistent increases in fees since 1991 and universities have been losing crucial donor funding, especially from the West. Only the Chinese seem to be supporting the University of Zimbabwe and in return, the Chinese language is being taught at the institution.

World Bank and International Monetary Fund's macro-economic principles of budget deficit reduction and restricted social spending (Johnstone, 2001; Nafukho, 2004) forced the government to stop financing higher education and leave that responsibility to individuals. The adoption of the homegrown development blueprint by the Zimbabwean government did not change this policy. With the abandonment of the valueless Zimbabwean dollar and adoption of multi-currencies, especially the US dollar and

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the South African Rand, higher education became even dearer and more out of reach (Share, 2009; Sunday Mail, 2009; ZINASU, 2009). Universities are largely underfunded and this forced universities to close doors for the whole of the second half of the 2008 academic year (Manyukwe, 2008). The University of Zimbabwe, the flagship of higher education in Zimbabwe, failed to open at the beginning of the 2009 academic year and only opened in August, and when it did open it could not accommodate first year students. Very few students turned up on opening day because of high fees ranging from US\$403 to US\$600. Only 68 out of 12 000 students at the institution had paid tuition fees while grants from traditional sources such as the government had either not been released or were not adequate (Share, 2009). Another worrying trend is that students are being forced to seek alternative accommodation as the college authorities cannot reopen the halls of residences citing water shortages (The Sunday Mail, 2009). The official government owned Herald newspaper quoted a university student in Harare describing their accommodation situation as follows:

About 20 students share a guestroom in the main house and there are 11 illegal wooden cabins, which house more than 45 students. Most house owners collect between US\$20 and US\$40 in rentals a month from each student. These landlords are making a killing from the students' predicament. Our landlord collects over US\$3 200 every month, as there are more than 80 students each paying US\$30 (Share, 2009).

The marketization policies adopted under the neoliberal doctrine adopted from the West, and the continuation of these policies by Mugabe's government have brought university education down on its knees. Some blame Western nations, as well as the International Monetary Fund and the World Bank for Zimbabwe's crisis because they have been refusing to extend balance of payment support, while the government of Zimbabwe argues that it is under Western sanctions. However, critics of the government perceive it differently.

Of course the blame must rest squarely at Robert Mugabe's door. He is the Chancellor of the University of Zimbabwe, yet he is also the primary cause of most of the institution's woes. It is his stealing of the presidential vote in March 2008 that effectively ruined this nation and made it difficult for any well meaning nations and donor agencies to continue to assist this country. It was also as a result of the deception associated with the presidential elections that forced the national economy to take a rapid tumble into the doldrums. That economic collapse eventually led to the dollarization of the economy, with serious consequences for the students and their parents who simply could not afford the US dollar fees being charged by the University of Zimbabwe (Makumbe, 2009).

Neoliberalism regards higher education as a private commodity, a traded commodity to be purchased by a consumer, a product to be retailed by academic institutions (Altbach, 2004). University vice-chancellors and faculty deans have been turned more into business executives than the usual superintendents of pedagogical issues. In an attempt to generate revenue and fund their activities marketization has been adopted by some universities in Zimbabwe as part of the neoliberal model of privatization. Full fee-paying students are admitted over and above the students who come in with government subsidy. These students are enrolled into courses invariably referred to as parallel programmes. In most cases students enrolled in these programmes come from families of good socio-economic status and in most case they are already professionals seeking upward mobility within their trades. This explains why at the Midlands State University, Great Zimbabwe University, National University of Science and Technology and the University of Zimbabwe, parallel programmes started in the Faculty of Business before other areas joined in. Parallel programmes help bring in much required revenue, but some perceive it as a degree buying venture that has led to the deterioration in the standards of degrees being awarded in Zimbabwe. Government considers it as empowerment of the people and a vindication of its



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progressive policies of educating the nation, a need the black majority Zimbabweans were denied during British colonial rule.

The policies of Robert Mugabe's government have precipitated the crisis (Raftopoulos, 2006) and Mugabe bases the rationale and justification of his dictatorial policies on Western imperialism as manifested by neoliberal globalization schemes dominating the contemporary world (Moyo and Yeros, 2007). Neoliberal policies, as first imposed by the International Monetary Fund and later adopted by the Mugabe regime cannot be absolved. Mugabe's leftist nationalism (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009), radical and exhausted nationalism (Raftopoulos, 2003) also characterised as dictatorial power grab nationalism (Meredith, 2007) is seen to be at the centre of the crisis. The suffering and crisis in higher education can be located at the vortex of neo-liberal globalization and Mugabeism, which is:

a creature of colonialism operating according to the latter's immanent logic. Its reproduction of ethnic and racial features is a reflection of its progenitor, which is colonialism. Its representation of many issues and its operation as a nest of contradictions is part of its character and survival strategy, through totalising and articulation of various longings, demands and claims of different constituencies either as aspects of decolonisation or as a politics of victimhood and redemption (Ndlovu-Gatsheni, 2009: 1154).

### **Quality of University Education**

According to Mbembe (2002), Marxism and nationalism as ideologies gave birth to two narratives on African identity: nativism and Afro-radicalism. Mbembe (2002: 629) defines nativism as:

a discourse of rehabilitation and a form of defence of the humanity of Africans predicated on the claim that their race, traditions, and customs confer to them a peculiar self irreducible to that of any human group, and there to chart what might or should be the destiny of Africa and Africans in the world.

Mugabe's version of nationalism has been described by some as nativist. Ndlovu-Gatsheni (2009: 1147) argues that Mugabe's nationalism:

Despite its self-projection as 'democratic', 'radical' and 'progressive', Mugabeism is interpolated by nativism. It is indeed appropriating and mobilising Marxist and nationalist rhetoric to develop an imaginaire of culture and politics in which a manipulation of the rhetoric of autonomy, resistance, and emancipation serves as the sole criterion for determining the legitimacy of an authentic African discourse.

To attain this African (Zimbabwean) reclamation or rehabilitation and renaissance, expansion in higher education was embarked upon to accommodate as many people as possible. In 1980, there was only one university, the University of Zimbabwe with a student population of 2,240 (Nherera, 2005). Currently there are nine public universities with a total of 55,548 students, using 2007 statistics (Southern African Regional Universities Association, 2009). This expansion has been quantitative and the qualitative dimension has been ignored or cannot be attained under current circumstances. With the neoliberal doctrine from the World Bank and the International Monetary Fund dictating to the indebted governments to reduce higher education funding, and the absence of corporate funding, universities in Zimbabwe were faced with the problem of undercapitalization. The impact of this has been the mass movement of faculty to other countries, particularly to South Africa and Botswana where conditions are better. Some of the new universities do not have staff at the grade of professorship except the vice and pro-vice chancellors. The natural sciences and business fields have been hard hit and most universities make use of teaching assistants with just first-degree qualifications (Makombe, 2009). They are supposed to operate under experienced professors but in some instances they are found to be in charge of courses. Due to the high demand for university education, most universities have introduced graduate programmes. It is common to find holders of a masters

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degree teaching masters courses. Statistics show that close to 3.5 million people have left Zimbabwe since 2000 when the economy went into decline and political persecution heightened and out of these 500,000 are skilled professionals, who given the right environment, would prefer to return home (O'Dea, 2006). The Ministry of Higher and Tertiary Education has since formed the Brain Drain and Human Capital Mobilisation Committee whose mandate is to deal with the issue of skills shortages wrought about by the brain drain (Jongwe, 2009). As part of this brief, the committee is tasked with exploring various ways in which, this brain drain can be turned into a brain gain. The goal of the committee is to keep more professionals here while reaping the benefits of expatriate Zimbabweans. At independence such similar shortages of teaching staff were alleviated by bringing in expatriates but today Zimbabwe is a pariah society and very unattractive even to its own citizens, let alone to foreigners.

The problem of inadequate teaching staff has led to heavy teaching loads with instructors having to teach all year without a break. Since the introduction of parallel programmes, almost all the universities have programmes running throughout the year, in some cases including evenings and weekends. University vacations have been made to coincide with school holidays so as to allow school teachers enrolled in the parallel or part-time programmes to attend lectures. The only time some lecturers have a break is when universities are forced to close due to strikes by students or industrial action by staff. These have been very frequent in recent years. Such closures are usually followed by crash programmes to make up for the lost time and money. The Great Zimbabwe University calendar for 2009 has three 'semesters'. Midlands State University students complained of not holding tutorials and being starved of lectures by being constantly referred to the internet for more information (Makoni, 2007). Under such stressful circumstances, and the large numbers involved, many cases of plagiarism go unnoticed and students engaging the services of others for a payment make the quality issue even worse. Similar issues of quality were noted in Kenya where cases of students taking previous research projects and slightly altering the titles and changing names, then

presenting the projects as their original work have been reported (Wangenge-Ouma, 2008).

Besides the poor economy and the consequent depressing conditions in Zimbabwe's universities, academics have faced persecution from Mugabe's increasingly dictatorial government. With the government facing challenges and growing unpopularity, the critical voice from academe has been labelled the voice of the opposition and perceived as agents of the West aiding and seeking regime change. Such has become the politicization of the university that academic freedom does not exist. The law governing universities gives government, through the Minister of Higher and Tertiary Education control over the running of the institutions. According to Cheater (1991: 202), "the Minister's involvement in choosing the nominees of the organisations represented on Council, the reduction of the university's autonomy and its conversion into a politically-controlled university comparable to a secondary school", are some of the main features of the laws that govern universities in Zimbabwe. Faculty members at that time, as cited by Cheater (1991: 204) tried to oppose the law and the Association of University Teachers released a press statement saying:

We reject the central intention of the Bill, which is to impose direct political control over the University: to transform it from an autonomous institution of learning into a state university. Given the dominance of a single party in the Government, the University could effectively become ... merely a party university.

It should be pointed out that at independence in 1980 Mugabe, addressing a conference on the role of the university in Zimbabwe said, "To paraphrase that famous aphorism about generals and war: higher education is too important a business to be left entirely to deans, professors, lecturers and University administrators" (Chideya, Chikomba, Pongweni, and Tsikirayi, 1981: 6). This meant academic freedom was not going to be recognised and Mugabe's administration has been relentless and consistent.

The denial of academic freedom in Zimbabwe has nothing to do with neoliberalism. Its genealogy can be traced

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to the 1960's when ZANU PF was formed, an era characterized by European colonial dictatorship, and later the failure of the party to transform itself from a liberation war movement into a governing political party. In an attempt to instil patriotism among the youth there has been pressure exerted on education institutions to teach what ZANU PF calls patriotic history whose rationale is to ward off Western criticism and protect national independence and sovereignty. According to Sikhumbuzo Ndiweni, ZANU-PF Information and Publicity Secretary for Bulawayo, "the mistake the ruling party made was to allow colleges and universities to be turned into anti-Government mentality factories" (Ranger, 2004: 218). Such ideas are premised on the fact that the opposition parties in Zimbabwe, such as the MDC, have former student leaders and faculty members among their ranks. And by being universities, the nature of their business involves critiquing their society. Krigger (2006) observed that historians in Zimbabwe have deplored how the ruling party, ZANU PF, has been propagating a distorted version of the history of the nationalist struggle to legitimate its violent confiscation of land and repression of the opposition since 2000. Ranger (2004: 218) further noted that:

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

Universities are faced by a paranoid dictatorship, which defines every episode in its history as a war against

the West. Western neoliberal globalization, much criticised and condemned in the South, has become cannon fodder on which ZANU PF feeds on. Sloppy post-colonial theorists see Mugabe as an example of a pan-Africanist, an indomitable “lion” who possesses the temerity to name Western oppression and empower Africans by dispossessing European farmers of the land they held since colonial times. But the suffering that the ordinary Zimbabweans go through is ignored and all blame is heaped on the West. Within such an intimidating atmosphere, it is difficult to find any scholarship that is critical of the government. Those that have openly criticised ZANU PF, for example, John Makumbe and Takavafira Zhou, have been labelled enemies of the state and have faced persecution in the form of arrests while those who praise the government are found sitting on various boards of parastatals. The net result of all this has been a decline in the standing of university education.

### **State Victimization of Students**

The deleterious impact of ZANU PF radical and dictatorial nationalism on one side and neoliberal interventions on the other has also been witnessed in the welfare of the students. Cases of students demonstrating in relation to Zimbabwean universities are not new as they date back to the Rhodesian days. Unfortunately, since independence, opposition to Mugabe’s dictatorial practices has brewed mainly in universities, with the University of Zimbabwe being in the lead. Students are squeezed in between teething economic challenges and a government that wants them to remain silent and soldier on under the banner of nationalism and patriotism. Megan (2006) cites numerous cases of student victimization. According to a study by the Zimbabwe National Students Union (ZINASU):

As government tightens its grip on students to avoid their possible activism, students have lost several of their liberties, especially the freedoms of association, assembly and expression because of POSA (Public Order and Security Act) and AIPPA (Access to Information and Protection of Privacy Act). For example, campus security guards at NUST reportedly

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harass any student they see associating with Mr. Bere, the Students Representative Council President, because of his activism. The powers that campus security guards have assumed to discretionally assault the very students they previously guarded has left students appearing like high school students (Makoni, 2007: 30).

The laws in Zimbabwe today threaten the academic freedom of students and consequently promote student victimization. One of them is the University Amendment Act of 1999 that gives the Vice Chancellor of an institution the right to expel students for life. 101 students have been expelled since 2001 for political reasons (ZINASU, 2009), while hundreds have been victimized in the form of torture, arbitrary arrest and unlawful detentions. Several of them have had to finish their education abroad. It is a clear violation of the freedom of expression and academic freedom of students, that they can be expelled for expressing political views. While administrative authorities at tertiary learning institutions expel, fine or suspend students, the riot police, state security agents and campus security guards spearhead the physical and emotional torture of students. State security agents reportedly break into rooms of student activists or union leaders at late night or early morning hours to kidnap them for questioning or torture in order to silence them (Universities World News, 2008; ZINASU, 2009).

## **5. Concluding Reflections**

Colonial/post colonial studies on Africa, are generally anti-colonial and consequently, and rightly so, blame African ills on Western hegemonic projects, namely colonization, development and neoliberal globalization. The intentional result of such positioning has been to ignore the problems inherent within African governance since the end of direct European political rule. This stream of scholarship ignores the rise and development of dictatorship, especially within the former liberation movements. To such scholars, criticizing fellow Africans is unpatriotic and reactionary, leading to labels such as “an agent of neo-colonialism”. This

paper distances itself from such a blend of post-colonial African writing. Equally biased is the critical writing, mostly written from the developed world, by those, mostly sympathisers of commercial farmers whose land was taken without compensation by Mugabe's government. These have considered Mugabe's government as dictatorial, racist and fail to acknowledge the effects of Western hegemonic policies, particularly poverty caused by neoliberal globalization. Neoliberal globalization feeds Mugabe's nationalist rhetoric and the subsequent portrayal of Mugabe as an African pan-Africanist hero in some quarters of the African community and generally with blacks in the diaspora.

In this paper I argued that both ZANU PF government and neoliberalism are responsible for the plight of the suffering people of Zimbabwe and those in the country's universities. Consequently the response to the crises in universities cannot be located in either of these two ideologies. Universities and other concerned scholars are being called upon to engage in what is described as "border gnosis; knowledge from a subaltern perspective conceived from the exterior borders of modern/colonial world system" (Mignolo, 2000: 11). Peters (2007: 48) echoes the same opinion when he states:

In non-European cultural traditions the task of the post-colonial university, in a different cultural time, may be precisely to focus upon the question of national cultural self-definition and to do so as a means of coming to terms, confronting, engaging with, or resisting forces of cultural homogeneity which threaten to erode indigenous traditions in the wake of a globalization which commodifies both word and image.

Local indigenous ideas need be promoted—ideas that are not only opposed to the rich First World's continuing and sustained pillaging of weaker nations' raw materials and natural resources, but also critical of the breed of African leadership that has become as oppressive and dictatorial as the former European colonisers. Mignolo (2000: 67) called such an approach "a double critique, a border thinking, since to be critical of both Occidental and Islamic



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fundamentalism (authoritarian nationalism in this context) implies to think from both traditions and, at the same time, from neither of them". As succinctly expressed by Grosfoguel (2005: 287-288), some form of colonialism is still present in Zimbabwe today:

Coloniality does not refer only to classical colonialism, or internal colonialism, nor can it be reduced to the presence of a colonial administration... I use coloniality to address colonial situations in the present period. I mean the cultural, political, sexual, and economic oppression and exploitation of subordinate racialized and ethnic groups by dominant racial and ethnic groups, with or without the existence of colonial administrations.

To turn a blind eye to African leaders' excesses, including the persecution of university students and faculty and the near total collapse of universities is irresponsible scholarship. Ignoring coloniality and all the forms of suffering that accompany colonialism of all strands is unacceptable and can not be a viable foundation from which to build higher education and indeed, Zimbabwe.

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