

Eurocentric or Afrocentric?

A Case Study on the South African Curriculum in Humanities

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1. Introduction

“We should look the way schools select subjects for the curriculum, the way they teach these subjects and the way they examine them. These things tell about the distribution of power in society. They also tell us about social control.”¹ The scholar Basil Bernstein expressed here that it is not only the curriculum that has to be assessed to tell something about education and society, but also the way the curriculum is actually implemented in the classroom itself. Education and society are very much intertwined. Particularly the way humanities are taught shed light on how society works and on which cultures it is based on.

This research sets out to explore the influence of Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism on a particular case study: the South African curriculum for history and English. The emphasis will be on comparing the national curriculum with actual classroom situations. A secondary school in Pretoria will serve as a case study to analyse the South African curriculum and classroom situations based on the idea of Euro and Afrocentrism. The results of this case study will attempt to open the discussion on whether humanities should be based on a particular culture.

2. Theoretical Outline

The idea of Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism in education reflects recent discussions on the ongoing debate of equal education in South Africa and is being described in various articles. Many scholars focus on the main principles that changed the curriculum in 1998 in comparison with the social transformation. Harley and Wedekind (2006), amongst other scholars, have been assessing the challenges involved with the implementation of the new curriculum. Christie (1991), on the other hand, focuses on the ongoing struggle for equal education in South Africa and conveys the different interest groups involved in education. While the transformation of education in South Africa has been addressed by many scholars, there is a lack of how the actual content of various subjects has been changed.

To give a single and unambiguous definition for Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism is not an easy task. The terms have been differently described and its meaning largely depends on the context where it is used. However, to insure the clarity within this research, it is important to define both terms. A Eurocentric approach focuses on Western achievements as the main objective. What has been accomplished in Europe, America and Australia is put before the achievements of the rest of the world. However, it is also a framework which allows people to compare and contrast their own culture with other cultures.² Afrocentrism is a more complex term to define as it refers to an African culture and heritage. Nevertheless, many scholars seem to agree that an Afrocentric approach in education where the students are only or primarily taught on topics concerning African history and culture. In addition, Afrocentrism is a framework from which the world is viewed from an African perspective.³

To understand the situation of South African education today, we also need to look on the history of education in South Africa. Before South Africa became a free country, education was in the hand of the white minority which decided not only on the curriculum but also on the school system in general. Therefore it was not a big surprise that the South African curriculum would

¹ Basil Bernstein cited by Pam Christie. *The Right to Learn. The Struggle for Education in South Africa*. (Johannesburg: Pinetown Printers, 1991) p. 46

² See Nordenbo (1995), Pollard and Ajitrotutu (2000) and Shohat and Stam (2003).

³ See Assante (1991) and Pollard and Ajitrotutu (2000).

serve a radically new different purpose after the democratic elected government of 1994. As Harley et al puts it “..., if the curriculum had been used to divide races, and to prepare different groups for dominant and subordinate positions in social, political and economic life, its new mission would be that of uniting all citizens as equals in a democratic and prosperous South Africa.”⁴ The curriculum underwent three different reforms. The first step was to create a curriculum that combined all the different educational departments that had existed before. Secondly, the change of content of the curriculum and the removal of unequal, sexist and outdated content. And the third reform focused more on assessment than on content.⁵ As a result, a new curriculum called C2005 was introduced in 1997. This new curriculum has three main concepts: outcome based, integrated knowledge and learner centred pedagogy. These three concepts “can be linked more closely to the general discourse of human rights, including children’s rights...”⁶ In conclusion, the general aim for a new curriculum in South Africa was linked to the political situation and the attempt to eliminate the inequalities in the post-apartheid education system.

This research sets out the idea that the South African curriculum has become more Afrocentric due to the political changes. Based on the history of the South African education it can be assumed that the curriculum underwent a tremendous change.

3. Research Questions and Hypotheses

This research sets out to research whether the end of the Apartheid era has resulted in an Afrocentric or Eurocentric influence on the South African curriculum. For that reason, the following research question was set up:

Does the South African curriculum in humanities have a Eurocentric or Afrocentric focus and to what extent does this become evident in actual classroom situations?

This research question leads to the following sub questions:

1. How Eurocentric or Afrocentric is the South African curriculum for History?
2. How Eurocentric or Afrocentric is the South African curriculum for English?
3. Are classroom situations for History mainly Eurocentric or Afrocentric oriented?
4. Are classroom situations for English mainly Eurocentric or Afrocentric oriented?

Due to the major changes in South Africa history, the national curriculum also underwent similar changes. As stated before, the South African government promotes a curriculum which advocates a rebirth of African culture. This means that the new curriculum should have a focus on topics relevant to the South African students.⁷ This observation of the South African curriculum leads to the following hypotheses:

1. The South African curriculum for history is expected to be more Afrocentric due to the major political changes in South Africa after the end of Apartheid.
2. The South African curriculum for English is expected to be equally Afrocentric and Eurocentric oriented due to English being a Eurocentric language which is being taught in an Afrocentric country.
3. The classroom situations for history will be more Afrocentric oriented as the South African government emphasises a focus on African history.

⁴ Ken Harley and Volker Wedekind: Political Change, curriculum change and social transformation, 1990 to 2002, In: South African Education in context. Reader for HBEDECS, University of South Africa: Pretoria, 2006, p. 195.

⁵ Harley and Wedekind, p. 197.

⁶ Ibid., p. 198.

⁷ South African Curriculum for the Twenty First Century, <http://www.info.gov.za/view/DownloadFileAction?id=70318>.

4. The classroom situations for English will be more globally oriented as the national curriculum does not have a specific focus on either Eurocentric or Afrocentric topics but more on global scale.

4. Method

The research was conducted at a Christian secondary school in Pretoria, South Africa. Four teachers were asked to participate in this research. These teachers were two history teachers and two English teachers, who all worked for more than five years at Cornerstone College. Each of the two subjects were represented by the head of department and a subject teacher. For history an African and an Afrikaner teacher were interviewed and for English two Afrikaner teachers were interviewed. The observations were also carried out at Cornerstone College. For history the observations were conducted at the lower classes (grade 8 and 9) and for English at the higher classes (grade 11 and 12).

To collect the necessary data, several interviews and observations were carried out. Each teacher was asked to take part in an interview. The interview questions were set up in advance to collect the necessary data to be able to answer the research and sub questions. To test the understanding and order of the questions, a pilot interview was carried out with a teacher not involved in the experiment. After the pilot interview it was decided to change the order of some of the questions to ensure the fluency of the interview.

In addition, the observers sat in three classes of each teacher and videotaped each lesson and used an observation form for each class. This observation form consisted of a list for Eurocentric and Afrocentric topics. Furthermore, the observer could also register whether a teacher discussed a Eurocentric topic by making a reference to an Afrocentric topic and the other way round. This option was included as in both subjects students are still taught Eurocentric topics and a reference to an Afrocentric topic could clarify the material. The observer would state whether this occurred in the materials used in class, in an exercise, in a classroom discussion or in the teacher's lecture. The observer noted down each occurrence and indicated the time according to the tape. After the observations the teachers were interviewed regarding what had happened in class. The observation interview questions were formulated according to what had happened in class and were not, like the general interview, designed in advance.

Each of the four teachers participated in a general interview regarding their opinion on their subject's curriculum and its practical implementation in their classroom. This resulted in four general interviews, two for each subject. After the general interviews three of each of the teachers' classes were observed. These classes were videotaped and the discussions on Afrocentric or Eurocentric topics were noted down on an observation sheet. In total six classes were observed for history and six classes for English.

After all three observations, the teacher concerned was asked to participate in an interview regarding what was observed in the three lessons. The interviewer showed the interviewee the relevant film fragments where a Eurocentric or Afrocentric topic was discussed. This was done to refresh the memory of the interviewee. The film fragments were selected on the basis of their importance for the research question and whether a Eurocentric or Afrocentric approach was used in class. The interviewer asked the teacher a question related to this fragment in order to clarify or explain why he or she dealt with that specific topic in that way. These interviews were also recorded and transcribed by the interviewer.

5. Results and Analysis

The interviews, which were collected from the school, were coded into different sections to set the prerequisites for qualitative analysis. Only the statements relevant to the research question were selected and categorised according to the different references to either Eurocentrism, Afrocentrism, centrism, multiculturalism or global scale. The definitions of

centrism, multiculturalism and global scale were added to the research as Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism did not cover the approaches that are used in the South African curriculum.

The statements taken from the interviews were divided according to the findings of the general interview and the classroom observation interviews. The reasoning behind this is that the interviews were carried out for different purposes. The general interview emphasised more the general opinion of the interviewee and the national curriculum whereas the classroom observation interviews were directed towards practical classroom situations.

The following *codebook* clarifies the definition of the several categories used in the coding process and was set up to provide a quality check with regards to correct categorising of the different statements taken from the interviews. There are five categories:

Term	Key words	Example	Definition
Eurocentrism	Eurocentric approach, Western, exposure to English, Europe	“I mean, really, if you study English Home Language, you need to study Shakespeare.”	A Eurocentric worldview entails that Western development and culture are the most important. Eurocentrism, however, also serves as a framework for people to compare and contrast other cultures. In education this means that the teacher or the curriculum puts an emphasis on Eurocentric topics or provides a Eurocentric context for the students.
Afrocentrism	(South) Africa, own culture, relate to, understanding, enjoyable, context, background	“Show the students that they should be proud of their own language and culture and to promote African culture and language.”	Afrocentrism is a concept where the people and culture from Africa are the general focus, it represents an African worldview. In education this means that the curriculum or the teacher puts an emphasis on Afrocentric topics. In addition, when a Eurocentric topic is discussed, the teacher will provide the students with an Afrocentric context to increase their understanding.
Centrism	Society, familiar, personally, accessible, enjoyment, frame of reference, link, students.	“I think it is important that you refer to topics which are in the students’ frame of reference.”	Centrism refers to an approach that addresses the students’ own context in education. Centrism can relate to cultural backgrounds but is also applicable to a personal level. The focus is on how teachers use the students’ personal context to explain or familiarise them with the lesson material.
Multiculturalism	Diversity, cultural identity, ethnicity, society	“Africa after colonialism. And you can link that to European countries that there are also colonies like America, India or you can say the Eastern European countries after becoming independent.”	Multiculturalism refers to, in this context, connecting, for example, South African topics to what is going on in other countries. This means that a particular situation is compared or contrasted to what is going on in another part of the world. This means that the students receive a full picture and not just a one-sided story from one country’s perspective.
Global scale	Broadening horizons, the world, to make them aware of, community, society, to be a part of.	“If it is common for the whole of mankind then I do not see the need to make any cultural reference. In that case I focus on people in general and it does not	<i>Definition:</i> Global scale refers to connecting the world. In education this means making students aware of the world around them and, more importantly, showing them that they are part of that global world.

	matter where they come from.”	
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5.1 General Interview Results for English

The categorisation of the different statements shows that the English curriculum is a more or less general combination of Eurocentrism, Afrocentrism, centrism and global scale. Eurocentric works play a significant role in the English curriculum. However, African poetry is becoming more important as well as making a connection between Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism in the classroom. It is significant though that the centrist and global scale approach is also taking in a major role in the South African curriculum for English according to the English teachers at Cornerstone College. The interviewees put a lot of emphasis on making personal references related to their students when they are discussing literature. Also the approach of making the students aware of global issues such as hate and jealousy takes in a prominent part.

5.2 General Interview Results for History

It becomes evident from the general interview results, that the new national curriculum and the classroom practice tends towards a more global and multicultural approach with slight tendencies to Afrocentrism. The various quotes under the category Afrocentrism indicate a focus on Afrocentrism in the national curriculum. South Africa as a history topic has become a major part in the curriculum with the idea to “promote indigenous knowledge” and the “importance of heritage” It seems obvious that the political changes in South Africa brought major changes in the curriculum as well. Thus, Eurocentrism has become less important in the curriculum. Nevertheless, this does not necessarily mean that Eurocentric topics are not part of the history class anymore. On the contrary, European topics are still a main component in history, but the idea is to link European topics not only to other countries but to the importance to South Africa as well. The subject history follows a more multicultural approach. The category global scale becomes one of the most important coded in this interview. The students learn about current issues and the knowledge of the world around them. Several topics such as Nazi Germany or the Civil Rights Movement are linked to world issues and the idea that these things can happen all over the world.

5.3 Observation Interview Results for English

According to the statements in the observation interview, Eurocentrism and centrism are the leading elements in an English classroom situation. The interviewees show in their statements that Eurocentric topics such as Shakespeare take up a significant part of the English classes. The Eurocentric topics are explained, however, by putting them in a Eurocentric context and the emphasis lies on making the students familiar with that context. Equally important is the centric approach in classroom situations. The topics in the English classroom are most of the time explained by references the students can relate to from their own personal lives. In addition to these two approaches, global scale is also a frequently used approach in the classroom. The interviewees emphasise the importance of broadening the horizon of their students. Therefore, the context of the literature is placed in the world and not in a specific country or area.

5.4 Observation Interview Results for History

In comparison to the general interview, the classroom observation interview is more obvious to regarding tendencies towards Afrocentrism. The emphasis on African culture and heritage is one of the most important aspects mentioned by the two interviewees: “to show the students that they should be proud of their culture and language.” Topics such as the Civil Rights Movement and Apartheid strengthen the Afrocentric approach. South African students learn about their local culture and the importance of promoting their language and heritage. Following the general

interview, Eurocentric topics are used in the classroom by linking it to other countries in the world. Historical topics such as industrialisation and revolution in Europe are closely linked to other parts of the world but also towards the influence on South Africa. In connection to that, the most important category is global scale. It is also the category with the most quotes coded from the interview. A major emphasis here is laid on the issue of Ubuntu, which was mentioned by both teachers several times. Ubuntu is a word coming from the Bantu language of South Africa and defines truly human. It means that we affirm our humanity when we acknowledge that of others. This kind of philosophy is a very new approach also for education. It simply means that certain things can happen all over the world, which can be at the same time linked to the study of humanities. It implies the connection of certain topics with the global world. An example for this would be the study of human rights and its implementation or violation in different parts of the world.

5.5 Observation Results for English

In the six classes observed for English, the main topic was Shakespeare. In Grade 12 the teacher discussed *Othello* and in Grade 11 this was *Julius Caesar*. This meant that only Eurocentric topics were discussed during the observations. However, this does not mean that only Eurocentric topics are discussed in a South African English classroom. After Shakespeare both grades will focus on an African novel later in the year. It was noticeable, however, that the teachers did not refer to Afrika much to clarify Shakespeare's plays. Instead the teachers used a more centric approach. This meant that they would explain a scene from the play by relating it to something in the students' life. For example, a reference between the authority of Julius Caesar and their school principal or introducing your boyfriend to your parents like Desdemona did with Othello. The reason for this is that Shakespeare is written in difficult language and students have the idea that Shakespeare is old fashioned and thus incomprehensible to them. As an English teacher it is important to bring Shakespeare alive for your students and show them what we can read in Shakespeare is still applicable to today. For that reason, both teachers used a centric approach when they are teaching Shakespeare.

5.6 Observation Results for History

In all classes observed the topics dealt with varied between South African and European history. In three of all classes examined, the main topic was Industrialisation in Europe with a connection to the impact in South Africa and the students specifically. All the other classes dealt with the Civil Rights Movement in the United States followed by Apartheid in South Africa. In the classes, which mainly focused on European history, the teacher attempted to connect the topic with situations in South Africa as much as possible. In particular, the impact on the student's life was very striking. The teacher used various authentic examples in South Africa to make the history of industrialisation more accessible to the students. In comparison, the classes on South African history focused mainly on South Africa itself. The actual reason for that lies in the fact that the history on South Africa has been part of the students as well as how their parents have experienced it. Nevertheless, the teacher made various remarks on events that happened in other parts of the world, mainly the Civil Rights Movement in the United States and the violation of Human rights in general.

Regarding the implementation of the National Curriculum, both teachers followed the procedures of the actual curriculum. They did not only focus on the actual content of history but also on the outcome based and skills requirements stated in the national curriculum.

6. Discussion

In this chapter the results and analyses presented in the previous chapter will be discussed with regards to the questions and hypotheses stated in chapter four.

6.1 The South African Curriculum for History

The National curriculum of history is very precise in which topics students should learn and which skills they need to acquire. As mentioned in the previous there is a major emphasis in the history curriculum towards African and world topics. Additionally, the promotion of the African culture has been a major accumulation to the national curriculum. According to this the research question and hypothesis was stated as following:

- 1) How Eurocentric or Afrocentric is the South African curriculum for History?
- 2) The South African curriculum for history is expected to be more Afrocentric due to the major political changes in South Africa after the end of Apartheid.

Following the hypothesis it can be argued that a political transformation in South Africa changed the whole idea of society, economically, politically, and socially. In this context education has played a vital role in the change of society. The value of world history and the history of South Africa were given some clear attention in the new curriculum. The question arises whether this means that the curriculum is more Afrocentric. Following the curriculum itself and the practical research at the school, the answer is neither 'black nor white'. The research clearly indicates that the curriculum in history has become more Afrocentric, but with a major emphasis on Europe and the global world. The political change brought the importance of African culture and heritage which has long been neglected during the Apartheid years. This was clearly indicated by both teachers interviewed at the school.

Besides the focus on more Afrocentric topics, the interview indicated that the curriculum reflects a new approach that makes history more accessible to the students. It reflects a multi diverse approach that is supposed to appeal to the various South African cultures known as the "Rainbow nation". Thus there is a good balance between African and European topics in the classes with slightly more importance on South African history.

The idea of focusing more on African history lies in the concept of balancing African identity in the SA curriculum. The idea is to involve students in the classroom with topics they can relate to. The curriculum specifies this with the idea of promoting human rights, equality, nation building and indigenous knowledge. Various answers of the interview question highlight the importance of the African culture in the curriculum. One of the teachers mentioned: "from the political changes we brought that focus much more on Africa which they haven't had before, a bit more on South Africa. The content has changed a lot. It is still not more African history but it is more in a sense that they added more African history but before we had a section of European history and a section South African history but they added more section of Africa as such." Thus the importance is not only put on the history of South Africa as such, but also the history of Africa as a continent. Important topics that have been added here to the curriculum included the history of Africa before and after colonisation. South Africa in particular is then been taken as an example of how people tried to fight for their freedom.

Besides the addition of Afrocentric topics it can be noted that the world as such plays a major role in the new curriculum. Within the context of globalisation, the history curriculum emphasizes the importance of global history to the students as one of the teachers says: "it explains their world to them in relation to the rest of the world". Related to this are topics which have become transdisciplinary in the history curriculum. Certain historical events are compared to other parts of the world. For example, one of the main topics in grade 9 is a whole chapter on Human Rights issues before and after World War II. On the basis of Nazi Germany, the Civil Rights Movement and Apartheid in South Africa, the students study the violation of Human Rights in these different countries. According to the interviewee "it explains their world to them in relation to the rest of the world." Additionally it explains that "things are also happening all over the world and you can link it to human, it is actually a study of humanities."

In summary, the hypothesis is only correct to a certain extent. There is a higher emphasis on Afrocentric topics. However, as the interviewee argued “the curriculum itself tries to be balanced.” Additionally, other concepts such as global issues have been added to the curriculum and were observed in various classroom situations

6.2 The South African Curriculum for English

Under the Apartheid regime the English curriculum consisted of only Eurocentric works. However, after 1997 more and more African literature was included into the curriculum. The teachers in South African schools are provided with a list of Eurocentric and Afrocentric works from which they can choose their material they want to use in class. This observation of the national curriculum for English has led to the following sub question and hypothesis:

- 1) How Eurocentric or Afrocentric is the South African curriculum for English?
- 2) The South African curriculum for English is expected to be equally Afrocentric and Eurocentric oriented due to English being a Eurocentric language which is being taught in an Afrocentric country.

The results and analyses discussed in the previous chapter show that there is an equal distribution of Afrocentric and Eurocentric topics in the national curriculum. It is clear from the data that in the English curriculum there is a strong emphasis on the works of Shakespeare. However, as the interviewees pointed out, South African novels such as *Maru* and *Buckingham Palace: District Six* and South African poetry are equally important nowadays and receive a lot of attention in class. English teachers find it important to teach great English authors, such as Shakespeare, but are also given now the opportunity to teach African literature. It is important to point out, however, that it is not only South African literature that is available to the teachers and students but also other great works of literature from other parts of Africa.

A close analysis of the data show that there two driving forces behind the equality within the English curriculum. The English teachers address the necessity of important English authors: “I mean really, if you study English Home Language, you need to study Shakespeare,” and the South African Department of Education the need of African literature: “[...] the department encourages us to use as many African poems as we can.”

Before the radical changes in the curriculum after Apartheid, the Eurocentric approach took in a major role in the curriculum. However, the data show that Afrocentrism is slightly becoming more significant as teachers also use African examples and references when they are discussing a Eurocentric novel: “If there is something I can in my explanation, if I can use an example from Africa I will do that. Just so to help them to understand the context.”

This research was set up to discover the influence of Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism on the South African education. However, during this research it became clear that there are also other approaches that also have their effect on English education, namely centrism and teaching on a global scale. This centric approach seems to be very characteristicly for English. According to the interviewees it is important “that you refer to topics which are in the students’ frame of reference.” They clearly stated that, to make literature comprehensible to the students, it is important to make the material more modern or to relate it to the students’ interests. This can naturally be done with an Afrocentric approach but in the English classroom the teachers and the students also seem to prefer a more centric approach. One of the interviewees argued that the literature “becomes more accessible” to the students when it is placed in a familiar context. An example would be of the connection between Machiavelli and Tupac in one of the classroom situations observed. The interviewee argued that “[t]he kids like it that there is a link between Shakespeare and hip-hop.”

In conclusion, it can be said that the hypothesis formulated above is correct. There is an equal distribution of Afrocentric and Eurocentric works in the English curriculum. Shakespeare

still takes in a significant role but, for example, African poems are almost the only poetry the students receive in class. Additionally, the centric and global scale approach takes in an important part of the education in the English classroom.

6.3 Classroom situations for History

Whereas the previous paragraphs focused mainly on the actual curriculum, the classroom observation presents a clear picture on how the curriculum is actually implemented in certain classroom situations. Within this context the hypothesis states:

- 1) Are the classroom situations for History mainly or Afrocentric oriented?
- 2) The classroom situations for history will be more Afrocentric oriented as the South African government emphasises a focus on African history.

All of the classes observed at the school followed clearly the national curriculum of history. Topics such as Industrialization, Revolutions, and Human Rights issues before and after World War II followed the history curriculum for the different grades. All lessons utilised the approach of local and global history. The lessons varied regarding European and South African topics. Nevertheless, all classes were more Afrocentric oriented. European topics were always linked to a South African event in history. In the classroom observation interviews both teachers made various statements regarding the importance of South African history. One argument in particular stands out of the classroom observation interview: *In your last class you talked mainly about the different ethnic groups in South Africa and the way they were treated during apartheid. Could you explain why you did these specific references?* “I wanted to show the students that they should be proud of their own language and culture and to promote African culture and language” This answer in particular brings about an evidence of Afrocentrism in the classroom. However, this is also due to the fact that in two of the three classes observed were based on South African history. Nevertheless, the Afrocentric approach also becomes evident in classes with mainly European history content. As one of the interviewer explained “to involve the students in the topic so they feel it on themselves. And eventually I can tell them what the Industrialization did for them, their Life changed as well. What happened at that time influenced their life today.” This is also a very new approach in the classroom that one of the teachers clearly used several times. The approach of centrism, to make history more accessible to the students, was used to relate it to their own personal life. One of the examples was the relationship of the Industrialisation to the student’s life today. As the interviewee explained “urbanisation is still part of their life, squatter camps are something that started during the Industrial Revolution and has not disappeared yet.”

As analysed in the previous paragraph on the South African curriculum in history, the global scale also played a major role in the classroom observation. In most of the classes the teacher pointed out the importance of a history based on a global scale. As one of the interviewee argued students have to know “that they do not live in isolation; they are part of the world as well.”

Having said this, the hypothesis is correct according to the analysis. The South African government focuses on African history and this becomes evident in the classroom situation. The idea behind Afrocentrism is the promotion of African culture and heritage. Nevertheless, the global issues and a centric approach to history have become equally important. Students are supposed to understand South African historical events in relation to other countries in the world. They are prepared to become global citizens and understand where South Africa has its place in the world. Additionally the idea of identifying history with their own personal life is presumed to make history more accessible to the students.

6.4 Classroom situations for English

One of the major changes in the English curriculum is the equality between Afrocentric and Eurocentric literature in the curriculum. However, the emphasis on African achievement is not the only change in the national curriculum. It is noticeable in the curriculum that there is a strong focus on globalisation. The curriculum states that it wants to prepare its students not only for South African society but also for the world around them. This statement in the national curriculum has led to the following sub question and hypothesis:

- 1) Are classroom situations for English mainly Eurocentric or Afrocentric oriented?
- 2) The classroom situations for English will be more globally oriented as the national curriculum does not have a specific focus on either Eurocentric or Afrocentric but more on global scale.

The data and analysis show that in classroom situations the teachers use significantly less the Afrocentric approach but are more directed towards Eurocentrism. This can be explained for various reasons. Firstly, at the time when this research was conducted all English classes were studying a play by Shakespeare. The Afrocentric element becomes thus significantly less when no African literature is discussed. Afrocentric novels would be discussed later in the year, which could have resulted in a different outcome. Secondly, English is originally spoken in Eurocentric countries. This means that in an actually Eurocentric subject, it would seem logical that Eurocentric topics are mostly discussed. As one of the interviewees argued: “[...] it is the role of the English teacher to bring them the love for Shakespeare and to appreciate the language. They need to know about the genius of Shakespeare to write these beautiful plays and it is to praise his genius.” Thirdly, the Department of Education decided that for the Matric exam this year, students had to study *Othello* by Shakespeare whereas last year this was a South African novel. The decision of the department, therefore, could have also influenced this outcome. Thus the results show a clear tendency for a Eurocentric approach in the English classroom. This could mean that in actual practise, English teachers still mostly fall back on Eurocentric literature and approaches. However, the research itself and several outside factors could also be the cause of this result.

Nevertheless, the results of the observation interview also show that besides a Eurocentric approach, there is also again a strong focus on the use of a centric and global scale approach. The effect and explanation of a centric approach was already discussed in a previous paragraph but the use of a global scale approach has not been highlighted yet. The frequent use of the global scale approach ties in with the goals in the national curriculum. The national curriculum tries to make the South African student a global citizen and tries to make them aware of this. The interviewees also find this important as they state: “[...] they need to know a little bit about the big world out there.” Additionally, it is important that students are aware of the fact that what happened in a Shakespeare play of more than a hundred years old is still present in today’s society: “To show that many of the topics that are discussed in literature today, are topics that will be with us forever.” Once students understand that a theme as jealousy is an emotion that they and the people around them also still feel, it will get them closer to the literary characters and thus increase their understanding.

In conclusion, it can be said that the above stated hypothesis is not entirely correct. Classroom situations show that there is a tendency towards Eurocentric works over Afrocentric literature. However, the global scale approach that is stated in the curriculum is also strongly evident in a classroom situation. Teachers find it important the students are aware of that the main issues in literature are still main global issues today. Globalisation is thus an important element in forming the minds of students but also to increase their understanding of the lesson material.

7. Conclusion

In the discussion it was pointed out that the hypothesis regarding Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism, meets the expectation of the South African curriculum as well as the implementation in the classroom. Additionally it was indicated that besides Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism the South African curriculum follows other approaches that affect the humanities education. The centric and global scale approach has been used both in history and English. The idea of the new curriculum is to prepare the students for the global world. It becomes important to not only learn about African writers and history but about global issues as well. South Africa has achieved a transformation in its history curriculum towards a balanced history embracing local South African, African, European and global history.

The South African curriculum tries to be balanced regarding Eurocentrism and Afrocentrism. The reason for this lies in the idea of a South African society that is not only based on African cultures but was also influenced by Western European culture. It is a matter of teaching students the pleasures to be gained from living with diversity and this can only be fulfilled with teaching them about the own culture in the context of the global world. Thus the South African idea of the “Rainbow nation” seems to be accomplished with the new South African curriculum. Yet the research itself only shows a small section of the rainbow nation, a South African private school with black students. This does not mean that the research can be applied to all South African schools. It is assumed that other schools have different ideas of the implementation of the South African curriculum.

Even though the South African curriculum has received many criticisms, especially the outcome based approach, the multicultural and global model represented in English and history have set forward a debate in other countries as well. Several scholars have neglected a nation-centred approach in history and English but at the same time have emphasised the importance of identity in humanities education. One of the goals in humanities is to prepare students for life and in doing so the need to make humanities more accessible has been a successful approach taken up by the South African curriculum. A possible question still open to further research is the idea to what extent the idea of Eurocentrism or Afrocentrism is suitable for various classrooms. There has been various concepts implemented in the United States, for example, where it was examined to what respect African Americans become better students when humanities are taught from an Afrocentric point of view. Another idea is the South African philosophy of ubuntu which is the belief that there is a universal bond that connects all humanity. As ubuntu is a new founding principle of the new Republic of South Africa it too could be used as a new approach of teaching humanities in schools. This new approach which guides towards a unity between all humans is a concept which could supplement various history and English classes around the world.

8. Bibliography

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