Master of Peace, Leadership and Conflict Resolution tutors’ perceptions on how peace and reconciliation advances frontiers of knowledge in the field of development studies

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Abstract

Peace and reconciliation is a process that translates to development programmes in given countries. Properly applied processes of peace and reconciliation conceive the advancement of frontiers of knowledge in development studies. The exploration focused on the Master of Peace, Leadership and Conflict Resolution part time tutors’ perceptions on how peace and reconciliation advances frontiers of knowledge in development studies. The researcher used analytical case study method to conduct this study. Five informants, three males and two females were selected by means of critical case sampling. Data were generated using open-ended interviews with unstructured questions which sought free responses from the informants. Peace and reconciliation enables parties in conflict to appreciate the need for peace building. Peace and reconciliation associates itself with the practice whereby people let the bygones to be the bygones. Peace and reconciliation associates itself with situations whereby people, organisations and countries forgive each other. There is need for research to define the advantages, risks and obstacles connected with peace and reconciliation efforts in societies emerging from conflict. The only way to sustainable peace is through sustainable development. If people are to reduce the risk of war, then they can help impoverished people everywhere, not only in conflict areas, to meet their basic needs, protect their natural environments, and get onto the ladder of economic development. It is important to note that although people cannot change what happened in the past, they can make a better future by understanding the past. The study of peace and reconciliation is also important to development as it helps the people to move away from what happened in the past and coexist for the benefit of development. Peace and reconciliation by other countries can also be used as the reference point by other countries which are in the process of resolving conflicts. Peace is a key aspect for development to take place therefore there is need for reconciliation for peace to exist.

Key Words: Peace, leadership, conflict, reconciliation, frontiers of knowledge, development studies, tutor’s perceptions
Introduction

The world over, the most fundamental aspect in conflict situations is to accomplish peace, amity and harmony as they are a pre-requisite for development and progress. In reality, in the absence of peace there is no development and without development there is no peace (United Nations Environment Programme, 2007). Conflict is the process which begins when one party perceives that another has frustrated or is about to frustrate their concern (Deutsch, 1983). Reconciliation on the other hand, could denote the co-existence or alternatively, it could signify remorse, apology, forgiveness and healing (Bloomfield, 2003; Clark, 2008). Reconciliation entails the rebuilding or shaping of broken individual or communal relationship with the view of encouraging interaction and cooperation between the former antagonists (Clark, 2008). For Bloomfield (2003), reconciliation is an adaptive dynamic process aimed at building and healing that embraces the search for truth, justice to create conducive conditions for forgiveness. Therefore reconciliation entails much more than peaceful coexistence, it requires the reshaping of parties’ relationships, to lay the foundation for future engagement among other parties. The term “peace” according to Bloomfield (2003), takes place when people are able to resolve their conflicts without violence and can work together to improve the quality of their lives.

In search of peace in progressive nations, Dumas (2006) argues that development encourages peace as people in better economic conditions are less likely to initiate violent conflict both because they are more content and because they have more to lose from the physical danger and economic disruption that war or violence brings. According to Munemo (2016) in his thesis viewed reconciliation as the coming together of elements to produce a single unity. He further noted that the comprehension and understanding of unity should be viewed beyond the measure of quality of oneness, but should embrace the spirit of being undivided or un-brokeness that is tied together with harmony and solidarity encouraging people to work together peacefully and united as a country with the same common goals, aims, vision and aspiration. Mugabe (1980) in Munemo (2016) viewed it as a unifying factor that has the propensity to transform people from their divergent ideologies with the sole purpose of eliminating racial differences and thwarting of regionalism enabling people to be bound by national spirit which is necessary for reconciliation. An example is the Zimbabwean situation where peace agreements were signed to achieve the spirit of oneness to the people of Zimbabwe in search of peace and reconciliation and unity but to engender an atmosphere in which they can be achieved.

The present exploration dwelled on the nexus between peace and development as well as the link between reconciliation and development. Besides the preceding links, the study focused on how peace and reconciliation is an important aspect both as a tool for development and in development studies.

Statement of the problem

The absence peace and reconciliation have become high level impediments for national development, as well as for international development assistance some post conflict societies. Some countries’ leaders appear to pay lip service to peace and reconciliation at the expense of national development.

Methods and materials

The researcher made use of the post positivist research paradigm to carry out this study. It enabled the researcher to be argumentative and interpretivist in exploring the perceptions
of Master of Peace, Leadership and Conflict Resolution tutors on how peace and reconciliation advances frontiers of knowledge in the field of development studies in Zimbabwe. In carrying out the study, the researcher used an analytical case study which enabled her to look at the perceptions of Master of Peace, Leadership and Conflict Resolution tutors on how peace and reconciliation advances frontiers of knowledge in the field of development studies in Zimbabwe with a critical eye. Five Master of Peace, Leadership and Conflict Resolution tutors at the Zimbabwe Open University were selected using critical case sampling because they possessed unique knowledge (Kelly, 2011; Seale, 2011) about peace and reconciliation. They therefore, became informants for this study. In addition, they were teaching Master of Peace, Leadership and Conflict Resolution programme which covered issues of peace, conflict and reconciliation.

The data were generated by means of open-ended interviews that contained unstructured questions. The use of unstructured questions in the interviews enabled the informants to freely provided responses that were a thick description of the studied phenomenon (Flick, 2011). Informants were interviewed three times each between December 2017 and February 2018 to enhance dependability and confirmability (Gray, 2010).

Data presentation and interpretation were done at the same time using the comprehensive approach. Thematic analysis was used to analyse qualitative data. Data were presented using words rather than numbers because descriptions were consistent with qualitative research (Silverman, 2014). Data were coded using open coding. Informants were coded I1-I5 (Informant 1-5).

Findings and discussion

Bio-data of the research participants

Five informants who were Master of Peace, Leadership and Conflict Resolution tutors were three males and two females. Four of them were aged between 40 and 50 years old. On informant was aged over 50 years old. These informants were relatively middle aged and they were mature enough to understand peace, conflict and reconciliation issues. All the informants were holders of Masters degrees which were consistent with Master of Peace, Leadership and Conflict Resolution. This made them suitable for this study because they had the conceptual and theoretical capacities to provide research sought responses.

Actual research findings

With respect to how peace and reconciliation advances frontiers of knowledge in the field of development studies, the informants had this point out:

1. I feel the issue of peace and reconciliation enables warring or conflicting parties not to exacerbate tensions, but reaches a mutual compromise for the good of everyone in the country (I1).

2. Peace and reconciliation process enables countries with border disputes to know their state boundaries (I2).

3. Reconciliation is best characterised by truth and integrity. Peace on the other hand promotes the aspects of truth and integrity in a big way (I3).

4. The presence of peace and reconciliation usually marks the end of processes that perpetuate violence and hindrances to development and progress in any given country (I4).

5. Peace and reconciliation prevail
whenever political parties in a country desist from the intra and inter-party hate speech which destroys the foundation of peace, unity and social cohesion (I5).

6. Peace and reconciliation enhance justice, fairness and morality; the processes that resolve conflict. Once conflict resolution has obtained, people of an area are assured of the knowledge to develop their areas and themselves (I3).

7. Peace and reconciliation also advances the frontiers of knowledge in development studies through the practice of forgiveness and reconciliation by conflicting parties (I2).

8. Realisation of the value of peace and reconciliation enhance development through preaching the gospel of communalism (I5).

9. Exposure to conflict situations that were amicably solved through published readings and other forms of press in other countries is one other way of advancing frontiers of knowledge in the area of development studies (14).

10. Telling stories about conflict situations and their resolution strategies is one of the traditional and classical ways of advancing frontiers of knowledge in development studies (I1).

11. When a country is a member of various international bodies such as the Common Wealth, Non-Aligned Movement, United Nations and it other subsidiary bodies, African Union, and Southern African Development Community, just to mention a few, it learns how to co-exist with other member states in times of conflict. By so doing, the frontiers of knowledge in the area of development studies are advanced (I4).

12. Another effective way to advance frontiers of knowledge in development studies is through exposing people to education in the area of Peace, Conflict and Development. People can learn knowledge about peace and development in degrees so that they could put into practice what they will have learnt (I5).

13. Theatre and art is another passage for advancing knowledge about peace and development in development studies. People appreciate the values of peace and reconciliation through playway method (I2).

14. The content we teach students in the Programme of Master in Peace, Leadership and Conflict Resolution equips people with the knowledge of peace and reconciliation. Such knowledge extends the frontiers of knowledge in development studies...... (I3).


Discussion

Peace and reconciliation is also important as it helps disagreeing parties to explore their pitfalls together and iron them out with consent. Recent research in Rwanda suggests security should be included into the truth, justice and reconciliation equation. According to Izabiliza and Mutamba, (2005) in Rwanda the reconciliation process involved the issues of public testimony. Here, the village assembles to hear witnesses and the perpetrators, thus the witness is surrounded by neighbours and family members of the perpetrator. These projects bring people on both sides of a conflict together to explore their mutual fear and anger and, more importantly, to begin building bridges of trust between them. This is the bottom-up approach to reconciliation and includes...
meetings between grassroots leaders and their communities with the aim to build collaboration and eventually understanding between former enemy groups. Liebenberg and Zegeye (1998) argue that public truth telling has undoubtedly been helpful in promoting closure with a painful and destructive past also for the people of South Africa. This lesson can be easily drawn by other nations and communities striving for peace and hence fostering frontiers of knowledge in development studies.

In addition Brounéus (2007), point out that reconciliation has become an important part of post conflict peace building rhetoric and practice in recent years. The majority of conflicts today are occurring within the boundaries of a state, such as Sudan and South Sudan (2003 to present); Rwanda’s 1994 genocide between the Huts and Tutsi’s and Zimbabwe’s Gukurahundi of the 1980s between the Shona and Ndebele in Matabeleland and Midlands provinces. After peace, former enemies, perpetrators and victims, must continue living side by side just as before the outrages were committed yet attitudes and behaviours do not change from genocidal to interconnected at the moment of a declaration of peace (Brounéus, 2007). Since coexistence is necessary, the need for reconciliation is profound. Hauss (2003) states that, through reconciliation and the related processes of restorative and or transitional justice, parties to the dispute explore and overcome the pain brought on during the conflict and find ways to build trust and live cooperatively with each other.

Reconciliation is therefore is a process which has elements of truth, justice, forgiveness, healing, reparation, and love (Bloomfield, 2002). Supporting reconciliation means working to overcome the division or gap and inequality between the affected people. By its very nature, reconciliation is a “bottom up” process and thus cannot be imposed by the state or any other institution. Liebenberg and Zegeye, (1998) is of the view that the most basic level, reconciliation is all about individuals hence it cannot be forced on people as they have to decide on their own whether to forgive and reconcile with their one-time adversaries. Most successful efforts at reconciliation have, in fact, been led by teams of “locals” from both sides of the divide. Thus, South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission was chaired by Desmond Tutu, a black clergyman, while its vice president was Alex Boraine, a white pastor (Bloomfield, 2002). Both were outspoken opponents of apartheid, but they made certain to include whites who had been supporters of the old regime until quite near its end. However, government can do a lot to promote reconciliation and provide opportunities for people to come to grips with the past as is the case of South Africa’s Truth and Reconciliation Commission.

Peace and reconciliation of South Africa shows that truth is the road to reconciliation, that there is no future without forgiveness and that revealing is healing. These projects bring people on both sides of a conflict together to explore their mutual fear and anger and, more importantly, to begin building bridges of trust between them. This process helps avoid feelings of revenge, anger and hatred and in turn lead to development because by strengthening and empowering local actors for peace, the foundations are laid for national reconciliation (Burton, 1990). This is the bottom-up approach to reconciliation and includes meetings between grassroots leaders and their communities with the aim to build collaboration and eventually understanding between former enemy groups. Liebenberg and Zegeye (1998) argues that public truth telling has undoubtedly been helpful in promoting closure with a painful and destructive past for the people of South Africa. This lesson can be easily drawn by other nations and communities striving for peace and hence fostering frontiers of knowledge in development studies.

Furthermore for peace to prevail, all
forms of violence must be put to an end and the structures that perpetuate violence are to be dismantled. In so doing, development is achieved Sen (1983) postulates that development is the expansion of human freedoms (this also highlight that development that does not involve social aspects of people is not development. Galtung (2002) referred to the absence of war as “negative peace”. But Galtung (2002) argued that there was a richer, more complex meaning of peace, “Positive peace” for it is not bullets and bombs alone that kill people. The presence of the conditions for a just and sustainable peace, including access to food and clean drinking water, education for women and children, presence of interpersonal peace, and other inviolable human rights, the presence of cooperation and understanding between people therefore constitutes positive peace. The author further points out people who die of malnutrition in a world with more than enough food; crippled or killed by preventable diseases; who become the targets of vicious crimes committed by desperate, marginalized people as not the victims of war. They are the victims of structural violence yet they are just as dead as those counted as war casualties. Positive peace therefore is more than just the absence of war but is the presence of decency. This idea is rooted in the understanding that a “just peace” is the only sustainable kind of peace; an approach that seeks merely to “stop the guns” while ignoring the denial of human rights and unjust social and political conditions will not work in the long run (Dumas 2006). Peace, therefore, can only last where human rights are respected, where the people are fed, and where individuals and nations are free. Therefore if peace prevails then development is sure to take place. This however points out the importance of peace and reconciliation in development studies as it points out how a people without peace are under developed.

In practice, the researcher argues that without reconciliation, the conflicts end up in standoffs such as the one seen in Cyprus for nearly 30 years. A case in point is that in 1964, the rival Turk and Greek forces agreed to a ceasefire, a temporary partition of the island, and the introduction of United Nations Peacekeeping forces. According to Hampson (1996), since then, little progress has been made toward conflict resolution; in fact, it is all but impossible for Greek Cypriots to visit the Turkish part of the island and vice versa. At worst, without reconciliation, the fighting can break out again, as seen since the tragic beginning of the second Intifada in Israel or Palestine since 2000. Despite Oslo and other agreements and despite some serious attempts at reconciliation at the grassroots level, the parties made little progress toward achieving stable peace until 2000 when Palestinian frustrations finally boiled over in a new and bloodier round of violence (latent conflict). In addition, because Catholics and Protestants have not made much progress toward reconciliation, every dispute between them since 1998 has threatened to undermine the accomplishments of the Good Friday Agreement which put at least a temporary end to “the troubles” in Northern Ireland (Rummel, 2002). According to Hampson (1996), reconciliation is of great importance all because of the consequences of not reconciling can be enormous to the development of any area because too many peace agreements are “orphaned.” In that regard, the parties would reach an agreement that stops the fighting but does little to take the parties towards stable peace, which can only occur when the issues that gave rise to the conflict in the first place are addressed to the satisfaction of all. All things being equal, it should be noted that the signing of peace agreements does not give birth to peace, reconciliation and unity.

The researcher is of the view that because extreme poverty has several effects on conflict as it leads to desperation among parts of the population as competing groups struggle to stay alive in the face of a shortage
of food, water, pastureland, and other basic needs. Besides the preceding position, the government loses legitimacy and the support of its citizens and then use violent means to suppress rivals. Darfur region, a hotspot between Sudan and South Sudan fits that dire pattern. In that conflict torn region, livelihoods are supported by semi-nomadic livestock-rearing in the north and subsistence farming in the south. Declining rainfall contributed directly or indirectly to crop failures, the encroachment of the desert into pasturelands, the decline of water and grassland for livestock, and massive deforestation. More to it, rapid population growth made all of this far more deadly by slashing living standards. The result has been increasing conflict between pastoralists and farmers, and the migration of populations from the north to the south. After years of simmering conflicts, clashes broke out in 2003 between rival ethnic and political groups, and between Darfur rebels and the national government, which in turn has supported brutal militias in “scorched earth” policies, leading to massive death and displacement.

Through peace and reconciliation studies from experiences elsewhere in Africa, The UNEP report, suggests how to promote economic development in Darfur. The report suggests that while international diplomacy focused on peacekeeping and on humanitarian efforts to save the lives of displaced and desperate people, peace in Darfur can be neither achieved nor sustained until the underlying crises of poverty, environmental degradation, declining access to water, and chronic hunger are addressed. Stationing soldiers will not pacify hungry, impoverished, and desperate people (Brounéus, 2003). The people of Darfur, Sudan’s government, and international development institutions should urgently search for common ground to find a path out of desperate violence through Darfur’s economic development, helped and supported by the outside world. With outside help, Darfur could increase the productivity of its livestock through improved breeds, veterinary care, collection of fodder, and other strategies. A meat industry could be developed in which Darfur’s pastoralists would multiply their incomes by selling whole animals, meat products, processed goods (such as leather), dairy products, and more. The Middle East is a potentially lucrative nearby market. To build this export market, Darfur will need help with transport and storage, cell phone coverage, power, veterinary care, and technical advice. Hence it can be established that peace and reconciliation is an integral part of development.

The importance of dealing with these issues is further underlined by an appreciation of how the individual and collective trauma left behind by large scale violence is passed from one generation to the next, perpetuating cycles of violence. Galtung (1998), for instance, argues that violent conflict over real stakes, (i.e. root conflict) generates a “meta conflict” (a conflict that comes out of, or after, the root conflict forming the over layer). The meta-conflict has its own dynamics and can become deeply embedded in a group’s culture, perpetrating militarism (the glory of killing the other), and the legitimacy of violence as a means for dealing with conflict. Thus, violent attitudes, and their consequences, need not be perpetuated if the right peace building strategies can be implemented but they will persist if nothing is done to counter their influence. Also through studying such cases and coming up with recommendations before conflicts erupt.

**Conclusion and recommendations**

In the light of the above findings, the researchers came up with five conclusions. Firstly, there is need for research to define the advantages, risks and obstacles connected with peace and reconciliation efforts in
societies emerging from conflict. Secondly, the only way to sustainable peace is through sustainable development. Thirdly, if people are to reduce the risk of war, then they can help impoverished people everywhere, not only in conflict areas, to meet their basic needs, protect their natural environments, and get onto the ladder of economic development. Fourthly, it is important to note that although people cannot change what happened in the past, they can make a better future by understanding the past. This involves reconciliation which takes in different parties coming to the same position, and it always involves change because if enemies are to be reconciled, there must be some kind of change, or friendship will be impossible. Fifthly, the study of peace and reconciliation is also important to development as it helps the people to move away from what happened in the past and coexist for the benefit of development. Sixthly, peace and reconciliation by other countries can also be used as the reference point by other countries which are in the process of resolving conflicts. Peace is a key aspect for development to take place therefore there is need for reconciliation for peace to exist.

References