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The Role of Peace Education on Reconciliation in Zimbabwe

VENGAI TABINGA¹

Abstract

This study focuses on the role of peace education in the reconciliation of divided societies and seeks to establish the influence of reconciliation education on the attainment of the co-existence of divided societies due to politically motivated violence. The study seeks to unearth the role of peace education in a divided society; the extent to which peace education has contributed to the reconciliation of polarised societies in the country; and the best approach to bring closure to societies that have experienced politically motivated violence in Zimbabwe. The inductive research approach, qualitative paradigm and case study design were used in this study. In-depth interviews were conducted with participants drawn from the Harare Urban District. The study established that peace education, theoretically, has a constructive role in the reconciliation of divided societies; However, because of partisan dissemination, it has, inadvertently, assumed a divisive role. The study further established that not much has been done through peace education to promote reconciliation owing to the lack of a universal curriculum and the failure to implement peace education from primary to university level education. In addition, the study notes that non-formal peace education was not being monitored, thus political parties, civil society organisations (CSOs) and faith-based organisations (FBOs) were abusing it for different agendas.

Keywords: divided societies, community engagement, public participation and civility.

INTRODUCTION

The globe has been subjected to inter and intra-state conflicts. While there are many approaches to promote healing and

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reconciliation in the realm of peace-building, the bedrock of all these is a vibrant peace education that is accessed by the whole citizenry. This allows for all concerned parties to be informed by a particular peace education philosophy, theory or concept and, to this end, the concerned parties navigate through the reconciliation process by using the same lens or point of view. To the end of achieving sustainable peace through education, the United Nations (UN) came up with Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) being pursued through Sustainable Development Goals (SDGs). Peace education, as enshrined in the Sustainable Development Goal 16 (SDG 16) seeks to create men and women who are not only in the world, but with the world, whose skills promote creative thinking and problem-solving and who are dedicated to the creation and maintenance of a peaceful and democratic society (Wanasinghe, 2020).

At the global level, the efficacy of peace education has been negated by quite a few issues to the detriment of reconciliation as has been seen in Bosnia, East Timor and others (Changemakeras, 2017; Somer, 2018). The efficacy of peace education in Africa has been put to the test in Rwanda and Sierra Leone. In the Southern African Development Community (SADC) region, the achievement of SDG 16 has been constrained by cultural, agential and structural factors (Shava *et al.*, 2021). Related to that, in Zimbabwe, the provision of peace education for reconciliation has been marred by a lot of inconsistencies to the detriment of achieving SDG 16. Since the colonial era, violent political conflicts have continued to be witnessed and, despite many initiatives to heal societies and promote coexistence, substantial or normative reconciliation remains an elusive concept in Zimbabwe.

The major problem is that, despite peace education being in existence through formal, non-formal and informal means as a tool for reconciliation, Zimbabwe has remained polarised and reconciliation has remained elusive. The era of *Gukurahundi*, a series of mass killings in the Midlands, Matebeleland South and Matebeleland North Provinces of Zimbabwe and the behest of the government and aided by its North Korean-trained Fifth Brigade, committed from 1982 until the Unity Accord in 1987, ostensibly to rid the regions of dissident activities, and the

violence that characterised most of the elections notably, the 2008 and 2018 plebiscites, are chapters in the national polity that call for reconciliation initiatives to bring closure and foster coexistence between the victims and perpetrators of such violence (Macheka, 2022; Raleigh, 2023). The problem of a divided society due to politically motivated violence has been argued to be affecting every society in Zimbabwe as shown by Raleigh's (2023) conflict mapping. The resultant effect of not resolving this problem has been seen in the extent of polarisation and hatred within communities where developmental programmes and the provision of aid or relief have been done on a partisan basis. This led to the introduction of several peace and conflict resolution initiatives in universities and teacher training colleges to educate students about peace and reconciliation, which would spread to learners and communities through their work as teachers or in other sectors. Hove and Ndawana (2017) focus on the implementation of peace education from kindergarten to university but does not interrogate its role in reconciliation. Macheka (2021) and Chivasa centre on conflict resolution approaches and practices but do not delve into the peace education-reconciliation nexus. The existence of this gap justifies the desire to establish whether peace education has asserted itself to impact positively in the gamut of reconciliation and coexistence.

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

The study is premised on the theory of positive peace as propounded by Galtung (1996, cited in Hove and Dube, 2022). In this theory, Galtung focuses on positive peace as a conception of peace that exists when there is total absence of not only direct violence, but also structural and cultural violence. The genesis of the theory is Pluto's idealism and Kant's assertion that peace can prevail if there is cooperation of all concerned. This, therefore, brings to the fore the relevance of the Hybrid Peace-building Theory by Visoka, (2013, cited in Chivasa, 2022). The Hybridity Theory argues that for sustainable peace to exist, there is needed to combine the liberal means of reconciliation and the traditional approaches. From the two theories, one clear factor is that sustainable reconciliation is achieved through cooperation. It is imperative to note that despite the convergence of the two theories, one

emphasises the role of education, which is liberal or top, while hybridity advocates for the combination of liberal and grassroots initiatives.

Galtung (1990) critically explores two types of positive peace, direct and structural. Direct positive peace is concerned with the training of people in peace education so that whatever conflict, the reconciliation agenda can be achieved from a grounded peace education philosophy. Structural positive peace is concerned with the transformation and restructuring of societies to promote good relations, healing and reconciliation. In the context of this study, direct positive peace is handy in that it then looks at education as the pillar of all other peace initiatives, thus whatever the approach to reconciliation, it must be informed by a theory or educational philosophy. Slamaj (2020) talks of positive peace as the pillar that provides infrastructure and the necessary socialisation for people to work together harmoniously for the good of all. Peace education creates the necessary infrastructure and human resource base that is aware of the geopolitical landscape that breeds structural and cultural violence, thus in response, society can eradicate these stumbling blocks to positive peace. From the foregoing, the relevance of peace education is emphasised for sustainable peace to prevail. The implementation of such education by institutions of higher learning in Zimbabwe, the CSOs, the communities and non-governmental organisations (NGOs) versus the continued polarity of societies, brings about a conceptual and knowledge lacuna as to its efficacy. There is also a systematic or implementation gap in that it is not clear from the policy where the pedagogy of peace education must start and how it must be taught down to the grassroots level. As it stands, peace education is provided haphazardly by the state and voluntary organisations for different purposes, bringing to the fore its constructive and destructive nature as argued by Megersa (2020).

LITERATURE REVIEW

POST-CONFLICT ZIMBABWE AND RECONCILIATORY EFFORTS

Post-conflict periods require that societies embark on efforts that nurture or build peace (Mhandara, 2017). While the

ultimate aim of peace-building is to achieve positive peace, it has been noted that many of the initiatives have managed to achieve negative peace, thus societies have remained within the discourse of both structural and cultural violence. In the argument by Chivasa (2022), peace-building in Zimbabwe has been characterised by mainstream approaches that have always advocated for a top-down approach to healing and reconciliation. These approaches have not adequately addressed the peace-building challenges affecting Zimbabwe. Tapfumanaeyi (2020) adds his voice to the preceding argument, pointing out that the approaches to national reconciliation and healing have been too elitist and top-bottom. It requires acknowledgement as argued by Tshuma (2019; 2020) that the obtaining discourse has not been entirely a top-bottom approach but, rather, a binary relationship between mainstream initiatives by the government and grassroots approaches by communities. The government initiatives have continued to overlook and underappreciate the grassroots initiatives, thus shying away from successful initiatives as demonstrated by the Rwandan case (Mhandara, 2017). In a different argument, Hove (2019) notes that though prescriptive, it needs to be acknowledged that post-conflict solutions and reconciliation initiatives are not one-time fixes, but require long-term solutions that include the inclusion of peace education from kindergarten to university education. The introduction and necessity of peace education in post-conflict Zimbabwe has been lamented by Hove and Ndawana (2019) as one pivotal structure that will ensure that divided societies reconcile and co-exist. To this end, Megersa (2020) weighs in with a similar argument that the essence of peace education is to develop individual potentials so that they approach post-conflict situations from an informed point of reconciliation and coexistence.

Since independence, the government of Zimbabwe has put in place several initiatives to address post-violence polarisations, including *Gukurahundi*, the years 2002, 2008, 2013 and 2018 political violence. The national reconciliation policy, the Organ on National Healing, Reintegration and Reconciliation (ONHRI) of 2009 and the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission (NPRC) of 2013, are initiatives that were put in place to promote

national healing, reconciliation and co-existence following episodes of political violence. As alluded to earlier on, the structures or organs have failed to bring about positive peace because they have failed to acknowledge that peace-building is a process that must be grounded on an entrenched educational philosophy that Hove and Ndawana (2019) advocated for its inclusion in the mainstream curricula (Mungure and Mandikwaza, 2020).

Despite much of peace education being in the higher education mainstream and being accessed through formal education, the study therefore sought to interrogate the relevance of non-formal peace education. In the realm of non-formal education, not all citizens can access education for co-existence through formal curricula, but through continuing education that includes outreach programmes. This creates a synergy between grassroots reconciliatory initiatives and ad hoc educational programmes that may not require certification or pre-entry requirements. The study also sought to assess the extent to which informal peace education measures through print, electronic media and public addresses, have impacted reconciliation in Zimbabwe. The continued running battles, hate speech, demonstrations and alleged abductions as seen in the political arena through accusations and counter-accusations by the ruling party, the Zimbabwe African National Union-Patriotic Front (ZANU-PF), the Citizens Coalition for Change (CCC) and CCOs required that the efficacy of peace education be scrutinised. This continued polarisation in the country against the backdrop of existing peace education at almost all state universities, creates a conceptual and knowledge lacuna as to the efficacy of peace education as a tool for reconciliation and coexistence.

PEACE EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE

In the context of Graça Machel, cited in Hove and Ndawana (2019), education for peace is the type of education that is necessary for healing in war-torn democracies. According to the UN (1996a), education for peace has been implemented in Burundi, the Democratic Republic of the Congo (DRC), Liberia, Mozambique and many others, but with lesser impact. Mergesa (2020) argues that, just like the case of Burundi, the DRC,

Serbia, Sri Lanka and Ethiopia, peace education has failed to impact positively on the construction of positive peace because of the nature of the curriculum designed. The curriculum was designed in a prescriptive and discriminatory nature, thus creating a destructive role of the said education.

Peace education at the University of Zimbabwe was first introduced through the degree of War and Strategic Studies (WSS) at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. The programme curriculum reflected a confrontational nature to conflict resolution through military peace-keeping approaches (Hove and Dube, 2022). Thus, it was designed to cater for the needs of members of the armed forces who, because of the exigencies of the liberation struggle and other operations, were denied university education. However, due to the changing nature of conflicts, the WSS programme was split into three programmes by 2021, that is, the Bachelor of Arts History of War and Security; Bachelor of Arts Risk Reduction and Disaster Management; and the Bachelor of Arts Conflict, Peace-building and Societal Transformation (CPST). The transformation has witnessed students embarking on work-related learning, where they bridge theory and practice while working with peace organisations such as the NPRC in community engagement. This institutional participation brings convergence in approaches with the University of Brighton in the UK that attaches students to CSOs as part of university-community engagement in conflict resolution. Divergent from the Rwandan Eurocentric curriculum is the aspect that the new programmes at the Department of Peace, Security and Society have been designed to speak to the Zimbabwean context.

However, the design of the curriculum in line with Education 5.0, has not done much to improve the impact of reconciliation education since this has been left to be the preserve of university education. University peace education speaks to an institutional model which has been argued by Hove and Ndawana (2019) as being inadequate as long as it does not cover the lifelong need for peace education from primary up to university education. While Education 5.0 advocates for university-community engagement, the non-formal approaches to peace education have not been clear. Who has been providing

this kind of education and has this education been constructive or destructive? Evidence from other African countries has pointed to a situation where FBOs, CSOs and political parties have taken the lead in the provision of peace education (Kester *et al.*, 2022; Locatelli, 2023). In Zimbabwe, the non-formal peace initiatives have been seen to be fronted by CSOs such as the Zimbabwe Peace Project (ZPP), which is a coalition of NGOs and religious groupings formed in 2017. This has led to a destructive role where partisan education has been fronted, thus further polarising the already divided societies. Augmenting the argument, Mueller-Hirth (2021) argues that the reconciliation process in Zimbabwe has been and continues to be politicised. He argues that the NPRC and other organs that came before it, have remained aligned to the ruling party. The recurrence of politically motivated violence in the presence of reconciliation education being preached by all parties, be it the CSOs, the opposition or the ruling party, has been attributed to a very high level of hypocrisy by all these parties (Macheka, 2022).

PEACE EDUCATION AS A TOOL FOR PEACE-BUILDING

At his appointment as chairperson of the Truth and Reconciliation Commissions in South Africa, Archbishop Desmond Tutu, asserted that the process of reconciliation, as provided for by the government and the community, entailed the opening of wounds to clean them and facilitate their healing. He argued that reconciliation was expensive and entailed the acceptance of having done wrong because one cannot forgive what he or she does not know (*ibid.*). Evidence from Zimbabwe reveals that at the dawn of the new dispensation in 2017, the government, led by President Mnangagwa, acknowledged that the grievances of the victims of *Gukurahundi*, political polarisation since 2008, required to be addressed (Rwodzi, 2018).

The President has since preached the need for reconciliation and asked the affected parties to forgive and forget but in the context of Macheka (2022). However, the 'let bygones be bygones' narrative has sparked debate from victims of political violence across the country, who argue that the perpetrators of politically motivated violence need to be unmasked and publicly

apologise. Therefore, the fundamental ingredients to the reconciliation mantra that have been lacking are a holistic peace education policy and political willpower by the political parties to the violence (Mungewari, 2019; Pettersson and Oberg, 2020).

In Seke District, Chivasa (2021) notes that while communities have embarked on local peace-building initiatives, the leadership of different political parties have not been forthcoming to support such. Taking a leaf from the Bosnia and Rwanda conflicts, the Zimbabwean context has failed to have open platforms where the perpetrators of violence come forward and assure the victims that such acts will not be committed again. One victim of the August 01 2018 political violence, highlighted the need for the perpetrators of the violence to come forward and acknowledge their wrongdoing, seek forgiveness and assure the victims that they will not be subjected to the same treatment in future (Macheka, 2022). In Rwanda, the Gacaca courts used the open platforms and worked for post-genocide reconciliation. In the extracts made by Macheka (*ibid.*), victims of political violence lamented the need to know the identity of those who injured them, those who killed and maimed their relatives so that they could find peace. The problem militating against reconciliation of political violence is the protection of perpetrators of political violence since 2008.

PEACE COMMITTEES AND PEACE EDUCATION IN ZIMBABWE

Peace committees in Zimbabwe emerged in the 1980s and sought to address the political violence of the liberation struggle as well as the effects of the *Gukurahundi*. What has been noted since this time is the liberal inclination to reconciliation by these committees (Giessmann, 2016, cited in Chivasa, 2021), Peace committees have been known to be created in response to a particular conflict, the closure of which would be necessary for a particular society to heal, co-exist and move forward (Chivasa, 2019). Two types of peace committees are the Formal Peace Committee (FPC) and the Informal Peace Committee (IPC). The FPC created by a legislative framework, includes such initiatives as the ONHRI and the NPRC. These are liberal and prefer a top-down approach to reconciliation with much manipulation by the central government. Between May and

June 2019, through a non-formal peace education drive focusing on reconciliation, the government of Zimbabwe formed FPCs through the NPRC in the country's 10 provinces and these structures have cascaded down to district and village levels. However, the concept of reconciliation has remained elusive as the FPCs have remained elitist in nature, too prescriptive and devoid of the context of the political violence and the compatible approaches necessary for such (Chivasa, 2015; 2019; 2021).

Realising the failure of FPCs, the communities have come up with IPCs that are flexible, gender-sensitive and consist of people who are privy to the conflict and embrace the traditional and customary approaches to conflict resolution, as has been the case in the Rwandan context (Macheka, 2022). However, the IPCs cannot often deal with politically motivated violence, since it is instigated by political leaders outside the society (Chivasa, 2017). Nganje (2021), therefore, asserts that the success of IPCs in Africa continues to be hampered by the fact that they would always require the institutional powers of the government and the national political leadership of parties to reconcile polarised societies. As noted by Chivasa (2021), the success of the IPCs in the Seke District has been, to a greater extent, made possible through the macro-micro synergic approach to reconciliation where both the liberal means have been combined with grassroots initiatives for functional overlaps. To this end, Mazamabani and Tapfumaneyi (2020) argue that peace education cannot work when there is no collaboration between the government and the affected communities. Macheka (2022) weighs in with almost a similar argument where she posits that the failure to reach closure from 2008 up to the new dispensation, has been due to uncoordinated approaches to reconciliation where IPCs and FPCs have run parallel to each other. So, from the foregoing, it can, therefore, be seen that reconciliation in Zimbabwe suffers from a collaborative gap, a holistic conceptual gap or theory and a contextual gap where measures are prescribed without considering the conflict context. The situation serves to confirm the recommendation by Hove and Ndawana (2019) in that they advocated for a unified approach to peace education rooted in a holistic and all-encompassing curriculum to avoid disparities depending on who is spearheading the reconciliation agenda. This, therefore,

brings to the fore the need for a peace education curriculum from primary education to university education and beyond.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The study was informed by interpretivism philosophy. Interpretivism is a philosophy that guides the construction of knowledge and meaning through interaction with those who have lived experiences of the phenomenon and their attitudes, opinions and beliefs as they relate to the problem (Saunders and Thornhill, 2019). In the study, the lived experiences of the participants gave insights into the contributions of peace education in reconciliation. The inductive approach, as informed by interpretivism, was adopted to solicit multiple realities from victims of political violence, policy-makers, academia and the CSOs. In line with the qualitative research approach adopted, the study employed the case study design. The rationale for adopting the case study design was that politically motivated violence from the year 2008 up to date, has been a common phenomenon across the country and the context in which the violence has been occurring is more or less the same. Be that as it may, the conduct of research across the country was going to be a cumbersome exercise, thus the case of Harare Urban District was chosen on the basis that the findings could be generalised to other areas and communities with similar contexts. The data for the study was collected through in-depth interviews with data-rich participants using the interview guide. The interview allowed for an in-depth understanding of the lived experience of victims of political violence, perpetrators, policy-makers, CSOs, academia, security sector and peace commissioners. This was made possible through follow-up questions to the participants.

DATA ANALYSIS

A significant amount of qualitative data were collected from 10 participants. The data were presented in verbatim extracts. The research questions formed the basis for the generation of universal themes. Given the central themes as informed by the research questions, these then formed the priori codes for Thematic Analysis (TA). For confidentiality and anonymity, the participants were numbered alphabetically from 'A' to 'J'.

SAMPLING PROCEDURES

From the sampled case, Harare Urban District, the participant sample size for the study was ten (n=10). The participants were selected based on convenience and purposively sampled as data-rich from the living victims and perpetrators of political violence, political leadership, police, academia, CSOs, commissions and the government within the district.

FINDINGS

On the role of peace education in divided societies, the study found out that just like other approaches to peace and conflict resolution, peace education was necessary for knowledge, skills and attitudes relevant to peace-building. In this context participant H said:

Whatever conflict, the prime basis for its resolution is a sound peace education, that provides approaches and practices that have been developed and implemented successfully in other countries.

An example is Rwanda where the university has been found to provide public lectures under the Rwanda Genocide Memorial education. In the same context, participant B asserted that peace education provides skills for proactive and reactive conflict resolution. Peace education provides a theoretical perspective on reconciliation.

On the role of peace education in Zimbabwe's divided societies, the study found out that not much had been done to bring closure since the *Gukurahundi* epoch, through the political violence of years 2008, 2018 and other isolated cases, though efforts are currently underway to establish *Gukurahundi* hearings, scheduled to commence towards the end of the year 2024. The problem noted by most of the participants was that the government lacked a clear policy on the implementation of peace education. First and foremost, peace education in Zimbabwe has remained the purview of universities, whereas it is supposed to start from kindergarten. The other problem relates to other providers of non-formal peace education. This problem has been noted by participants to be common in most African countries. In this regard, participant A had this to say: "The provision of peace education in Zimbabwe just like in the DRC, Ethiopia and Nigeria has been spearheaded by faith

organisations, political parties and CSOs.” In the Zimbabwean context, this peace education by CSOs and political parties has had a destructive role, where the facilitators would go beyond the constructive role and promote hate and retaliation through toxic speeches in what could be described as a political party or CSO aggrandisement. The other problem that has led to very little contribution to peace education has been the lack of universally accepted minimum bodies of knowledge (MBK). This has led to different curricula being dumped on societies with certain borrowed concepts not in sync with the local context.

On strategies that can be implemented for effective peace education towards reconciliation, the participants argued that the first consideration by the government was to ensure that peace education is taught from the primary level to the university level. Beyond institutional learning, the government was to monitor the provision of non-formal peace education to ensure that providers remain within the constructive role. Over and above, there was need to design a universal curriculum of peace education. The other contribution made by participant C was that, “Instead of the liberal strategies for reconciliation, such as the use of the National Peace and Reconciliation Commission, the government also allowed for grassroots initiatives through Informal Peace Committees.

DISCUSSION

The study sought to address three objectives: to examine the role of peace education in the reconciliation of a divided society; to assess the extent to which peace education has contributed to the reconciliation of Zimbabwean societies; and to determine a holistic approach to reconciliation in Zimbabwe. These objectives formed central themes to the inquiry and gave rise to the generation of research questions that then generated data that either refuted the reviewed literature or concurred with it. In this regard, the findings of the study are presented in line with the research questions that were addressed.

THE ROLE OF PEACE EDUCATION IN THE RECONCILIATION OF DIVIDED SOCIETIES IN ZIMBABWE

The objective sought to solicit the role of peace education in polarised societies. The majority of the participants

acknowledged that peace education, if directed towards national healing and co-existence, would ultimately reconcile societies because it then acts as a confounding variable to the process of reconciliation. Peace education according to the participants, provides knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for youth, political parties, victims, CSOs and perpetrators to develop a conscience of what is wrong and right in the spirit of *Ubuntu*. This argument by the participants is in sync with Mergesa (2020), who acknowledges the constructive role of peace education in the process of reconciliation and peacebuilding.

The constructive role of education for co-existence is also in agreement with Hove and Ndawana (2019), who advocate for the need to have peaceful education from kindergarten to tertiary education so that conflicts can be avoided and when they occur, the parties to the conflict must then use the skills, knowledge and attitudes to reach out to each other and reconcile. This brings to the fore the convergence with Galtung's (1990) Theory of Positive Peace, as cited in Hove and Dube (2022), in that peace education is taken to be the fundamental basis for the attainment of positive peace. The destructive role of peace education as highlighted by participants C and A, also acknowledged by Macheke (2022), who argue that the failure of peace education to bring closure to the political violence of *Gukurahundi* and the subsequent years lies in the hypocrisy that the education curricula has been designed and implemented. She further acknowledges the political abuse of peace education to suit the needs of those in power as submitted by participant H. The destructive role of peace education and the partisan effects, as argued by Mhandara (2017), Chivasa (2021), Macheke (2022), were lamented by participants D and J, then brings a convergence between the reviewed literature and the participants' views. The need for a coordinated approach to the provision of reconciliation education and its subsequent praxis is lamented by the participants and confirms the application of the Hybrid Peace Theory by Kent *et al.* (2018, cited in Chivasa (2022) that advocates for the cooperation of all parties to the conflict as well as the state and non-state actors to bring about a constructive role of peace education in reconciliation.

THE EXTENT TO WHICH PEACE EDUCATION HAS CONTRIBUTED TO THE RECONCILIATION OF VICTIMS AND PERPETRATORS OF POLITICAL VIOLENCE IN ZIMBABWE.

The objective sought to ascertain or evaluate the extent of progress made since 2008 up to date in Zimbabwe concerning the reconciliation agenda. What is glaringly clear from the submission of the participants is that, unlike in other countries where there has been progress on the reconciliation agenda being driven by peace education, the Zimbabwean context has remained stagnant because much of the initiatives are marred by hypocrisy by the government, CSOs, political parties and the security sector. This assertion by the participants defeats the existence of positive peace in Zimbabwe and points to the existence of negative peace. Though others argued for marked progress, the lack of a curriculum, as lamented by Hove and Ndawana (2019), has negated the progress since the frontiers or scope of reconciliation have been manipulated for partisan politics. The provision of such education by commissions has been described as being too prescriptive and liberal to address the different contexts of violence. This argument resonates well with Chivasa (2021), who posits that the use of FPCs in the Seke District to promote reconciliation failed and the process recorded progress only upon combining FPCs with IPCs from the grassroots. This is in sync with the Hybrid Theory of Peacebuilding by Kent *et al.* (2018), which advocates for a synergic approach to reconciliation by state and non-state actors.

The level of data interaction from the participants points to the conclusion that reconciliation education and initiatives in the classroom or the non-formal context, are done haphazardly to the loss of trust by those who look up to the government to spearhead the initiatives. The reconciliation agenda has been marred by the government, political parties and the security sector, denying victims and perpetrators an open and public forum for reconciliation as has been the case in East Timor, Bosnia and Rwanda. This is in line with Megersa's (2020) Ethiopian experience where, despite a good peace education for co-existence, the parties to the conflict lacked the commitment to effect theory into practice.

STRATEGIES FOR EFFECTIVE RECONCILIATION IN ZIMBABWE'S HARARE URBAN DISTRICT

The level of interaction and convergence of the participant's views point to the fact that for reconciliation education to be effective, the first port of call is to come up with a national philosophy-driven peace education that is implemented in the gamut of lifelong learning (LLL). This argument is in sync with the proposition of Hove and Ndawana (2019), who propose the design of such a curriculum to cover kindergarten to university education. There is a consensus as noticed from themes 1 and 2 that the need to depoliticise peace education has been lamented in line with Macheke's (2022) assertion. Macheke argues that what has negated the role of peace education in Zimbabwe has been the toxic politics that capitalise on whatever the ordinary citizenry is a recipient of. The need to have a monitoring board that regulates the provision of reconciliation education in line with the national curriculum was also raised in the submissions, in line with Chirimuuta and Chirimuuta (2017, cited in Hove and Ndawana, 2019).

The need to have functional overlaps in that the government initiatives combine with grassroots initiatives as the panacea to the efficacy of peace education in reconciliation was also raised. To this end, this assertion relates well with the argument by Chivasa (2021), who argues that the combination of FPCs and IPCs, spearheaded by the locals of Seke District, Mashonaland East Province, has proved effective in reconciliation education. The general sentiment of willpower and the need to avoid hypocrisy has come across and emerged in all the themes and is argued as one of the best ways to improve the efficacy of peace education in the reconciliation agenda. This is in sync with Macheke (2022), who accuses government, NGOs, CSOs, political parties and the security sector of hypocrisy in the dissemination and implementation of reconciliation education.

CONCLUSION

The role of peace education, as the panacea to peacebuilding in polarised societies, has been studied by many researchers but very few have focused on the role of reconciliation education in divided societies. Theoretically and ideally, the role of peace education in reconciliation must be constructive, but the actors

involved have to find ways to use reconciliation to further their partisan or political agendas, thereby projecting a destructive role. The government has been seen to be actively participating in hiding the perpetrators of political violence but at the same time preaching peace. The opposition and CSOs are deliberately using peace education to preach hate against the government. This is made worse by the absence of a well-defined curriculum informed by a national philosophy of reconciliation. The provision of reconciliation education remains a challenge in that the agencies to the provision are not coordinated and what they provide is not scrutinised.

The commissions which have been put in place as part of the provision of reconciliation education and implementation thereafter, remain conflicted as the government continues to give directions, thus compromising the independence of such. It is recommended that the country should have a national philosophy of peace education upon which the curricula for LLL can then be designed. A coordinated approach to the provision of reconciliation education and associated praxis where FPCs and IPCs combine for functional overlaps, will go a long way in ensuring the efficacy of peace education in reconciling polarised societies. The depoliticisation of reconciliation education will go a long way in ensuring that reconciliation is achieved in Zimbabwe, not only from 2008 up to the present day, but even the era before.

RECOMMENDATIONS

- The government of Zimbabwe should introduce peace education from primary to university level.
- Reconciliation efforts should combine grassroots initiatives (IPCs) and government liberal strategies (FPCs) in line with the Hybrid Theory.
- The provision of non-formal peace education by the CSOs, faith organisations and political parties must be monitored and regulated to dissuade the destructive role of peace education.
- There must be political will by the different conflicting political parties to promote positive peace.

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