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Open and Distance Learning Master of Peace, Leadership and Conflict Resolution Students' Perceptions on how Economic Disparities between Africans and White Settlers Were Responsible for the End of the Policy of Reconciliation in Zimbabwe

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Abstract: This qualitative study was based on the use of explanatory case study of one Zimbabwe's Open and Distance Learning University's Master of Peace, *Corresponding author Leadership and Conflict Resolution Students to obtain perceptions on how Edith Karimanzira economic disparities between Africans and white settlers were responsible for the end of the policy of reconciliation in Zimbabwe. Sixteen students consisting **Article History** eight females and eight males were selected on the basis of judgmental sampling. Received: 07.01.2018 The research data were generated using unstructured interview guide and Accepted: 20.01.2018 Published: 30.01.2018 personal accounts. Data were analysed using conversation analysis. Personal accounts were coded PA1-PA8, while participants were coded P1-P8 in the DOI: presentation and discussion of results. Findings were presented descriptively and 10.36347/sjebm.2018.v05i01.011 interpreted with the help of direct quotes. Their presentation was done on the basis of what emerged from the interviews and personal accounts. Key findings included; 1) economic disparities refer to inequalities in the manner people acquire wealth and other enriching resources; 2) economic disparities relate to differential treatment of people of diverse backgrounds according their levels of richness ;3)the policy of reconciliation is about the practice of forgiving and reaching mutual compromise situations between former adversarial parties ;4) economic disparities retard the pace of economic development in a country such that people would end up ununited ;5) economic disparities make people view each other with suscipicion and hatred; and 6) economic disparities are a hindrance to the policy of reconciliation as they destroy the spirit of unity among people. The researcher concluded that economic disparities that existed between whites and blacks in the post-independent Zimbabwe led to the collapse of the policy of reconciliation. Another conclusion from the study was that economic disparities widened the gap between the rich and the poor, thereby, giving rise to the inevitable death of reconciliation in Zimbabwe. The first recommendation is that it is rational enough for politicians and economists with help of the industrial, business and donor community as policy makers to create conducive conditions that enable Zimbabwean people irrespective of race or other differences to wage war against economic disparities in search equality which comes as result of reconciliation. The study's second recommendation was that the government should offer equal economic empowerment opportunities to all people to ensure that there is permanent reconciliation among races in Zimbabwe. Finally, large-scale studies in this area would generate substantive knowledge regarding how curtailing economic disparities could maximise the benefits of reconciliation in Zimbabwe and probably in other countries with her similar experiences. Keywords: Economic disparities, policy of reconciliation, blacks, white settlers.

INTRODUCTION

Despite its emancipation from colonial rule in 1980, Zimbabwe's majority population which largely comprises indigenous black people remains excluded in the key sectors of development and economy. Prior to independence major mining, textile and agriculture industries were exclusively a preserve of the whites. Transnational companies which were the major foreign currency earners such as Rio Tinto, Lever Brothers and Falcon Gold, in spite of Zimbabwe getting independent in 1980, still remained under the control of the minority whites, while the majority black population supplied the whites with labour force requirements.

Economic disparities occur when individuals do not possess the same level of material wealth or overall living economic conditions [1]. The same scholars regard it as economic inequality which refers to how economic variables are distributed-among individuals in a group, among groups in a population, or among countries. Policy of reconciliation as advanced by Daniel Bar-Tal and Gemma Bennink, while acknowledging it as a process, albeit a strictly psychological one [2], also see it as an outcome, an endstate which, "...consists of mutual recognition and acceptance, invested interests and goals in developing peaceful relations, mutual trust, positive attitudes, as well as sensitivity and consideration for the other party's needs and interests [3]." From the preceding two definitions, it apparent that policy of reconciliation is hard to define as it entails achievement of values which cannot be tangible and quantifiable.

This discussion is guided by the seminal contribution in modern economic literature addressing explicitly the issue of economic inequality was developed by Kuznets [4]. Basing on empirical evidence, Kuznets maintains that inequality tends to rise in the early stages of economic development, as a consequence of industrialisation, and then it declines in later stages, as capitalism matures. In this way income inequality presents the classical inverted-U shaped trend in time. In this stream of analysis, Kuznets' hypothesis has been questioned, especially in empirical economic literature, and the most relevant conclusion [5] states that it is not growth per se, which gives rise to economic inequality but it is the nature of economic growth which determines the development of inequality. More precisely, Fields claims that the effect of growth on inequality depends on the factors which characterize the economic environment such as the structure of output, the degree of economic dualism, the structure of employment, the distribution of land, the operation of capital markets and the overall level of human capital. In addition to that, more recently, Kuznets' approach has been even more radically questioned reversing the causation relation between growth and inequality, underlying Kuznets' seminal contribution. Basically, the idea is that economic inequality affects the pace and the nature of economic growth and not the reverse as in Kuznets' analysis [6]. This stream of the economic literature provides neither a direct causal link between inequality and rate of growth, nor a unique explanation. Actually, different theoretical frameworks point to different factors explaining the reason why inequality can affect economic growth [7, 8]. There seems to be a wide consensus on the ideas that inequality can hinder economic growth and that country specificities matter in order to understand through which channels inequality slows down the pace of economic growth.

On the issue of how ideology perpetuates economic disparities, Ding (n.d.) advances two relevant arguments. First, turning to the capitalist countries, competition with socialist countries forced countries on the front line (i.e. western European countries) to adopt a relatively equitable economic policy, building up a welfare state with a generous system of social redistribution. Second, but in other countries, growth was often accompanied by increasing social disparities, with rich groups gaining the lion's share of national wealth, while the poor saw their living standards declining.

Ding (n.d). gives three relevant positions regarding the topic under discussion. First, reducing income inequality and narrowing social disparities have for several years been the focus of public opinion. Second, governments of developed countries as well as of developing countries have had to pay attention to the reduction of poverty and a more equitable social distribution. Third, all this is because people have suddenly realized that despite a relatively rapid and sustained economic growth rate in the world, social disparities have increased in many countries.

Inequality affects growth drivers which in turn indicate that economic disparities between Africans and white settlers were responsible for the end of the policy of reconciliation in Zimbabwe. Why would widening income disparities matter for growth? Higher inequality lowers growth by depriving the ability of lower-income households to stay healthy and accumulate physical and human capital [7, 9]. For instance, it can lead to underinvestment in education as poor children end up in lower-quality schools and are less able to go on to college. As a result, labour productivity could be lower than it would have been in a more equitable world [6]. In the same vein, Corak [10] finds that countries with higher levels of income inequality tend to have lower levels of mobility between generations, with parent's earnings being a more important determinant of children's earnings. Increasing concentration of incomes could also reduce aggregate demand and undermine growth, because the wealthy spend a lower fraction of their incomes than middle- and lowerincome groups.

Economic disparities are a sources of conflicts in many a developing country. Extreme inequality may damage trust and social cohesion and thus is also associated with conflicts, which discourage investment. Conflicts are particularly prevalent in the management of common resources where, for example, inequality makes resolving disputes more difficult; see, for example, Bardhan [11]. More broadly, inequality affects the economics of conflict, as it may intensify the grievances felt by certain groups or can reduce the opportunity costs of initiating and joining a violent conflict [12]. In Zimbabwe, the land reform that began in the year 2000 is a typical example of the above phenomenon because the whites were more economically affluent than blacks [13].

Economic disparities can lead to policies that hurt growth. In addition to affecting growth drivers, inequality could result in poor public policy choices. For example, it can lead to a backlash against growthenhancing economic liberalization and fuel protectionist pressures against globalization and market-oriented reforms [14]. At the same time, enhanced power by the elite could result in a more limited provision of public goods that boost productivity and growth, and which disproportionately benefit the poor [15, 16].

Related to the above two points, economic disparities which hamper poverty reduction. Income inequality affects the pace at which growth enables poverty reduction [3]. Growth is less efficient in lowering poverty in countries with high initial levels of inequality or in which the distributional pattern of growth favours the non-poor. Moreover, to the extent that economies are periodically subject to shocks of various kinds that undermine growth, higher inequality makes a greater proportion of the population vulnerable to poverty. When such disparities emerge, the poor will not have any kind words regarding the rich, especially, the ones who previously oppressed the majority. Under such circumstances, the writer is persuaded to side with opinion that economic disparities between Africans and white settlers were responsible for the end of the policy of reconciliation in Zimbabwe.

Inequality can also influence growth positively by providing incentives for innovation and entrepreneurship [17], and, perhaps especially relevant for developing countries, by allowing at least a few individuals to accumulate the minimum needed to start businesses and get a good education [18]. The Zimbabweans got educated enough to compete for the same jobs with the after independence. Their desire was to reduce the economic disparities between them and the whites as such. Also, their wish was not realised because the whites had the control of resources and means of production. While inequality can also influence growth positively by providing incentives for innovation and entrepreneurship, the thinking that economic disparities between Africans and white settlers were responsible for the end of the policy of reconciliation in Zimbabwe still stands.

The policy of reconciliation appears to be attainable on paper than in practice, given the implications of economic disparities. As Susan Dwyer forcefully observes, the notable lack of any clear account of what reconciliation is, and what it requires, justifiably alerts the cynics among us[26]. Reconciliation is being urged upon people who have been bitter and murderous enemies, upon victims and perpetrators of terrible human rights abuses, upon groups and individuals whose very self-conceptions have been structured in terms of historical and often state-sanctioned relations of dominance and submission [19].

The second implication concerns black man rising against black man along tribal lines. For example, during the early 1980s there were dissident problems in Midlands Matabeleland North and South Provinces [13]. The study's focus is on the extent to which the author agrees with the claim that, 'economic disparities between Africans and white settlers were responsible for the end of the policy of reconciliation in Zimbabwe.

Statement of the Problem

The study's statement of the problem is best put across by the following question; How were economic disparities between Africans and white settlers responsible for the end of the policy of reconciliation in Zimbabwe?

METHODS AND MATERIALS

The study was rooted in qualitative research approach, which according to Creswell [20] enables researchers to explore phenomena from the settings familiar to the participants. The researcher applied the explanatory case study of one Zimbabwe's Open and Distance Learning University's Master of Peace, Leadership and Conflict Resolution Students to obtain perceptions on how economic disparities between Africans and white settlers were responsible for the end of the policy of reconciliation in Zimbabwe. Explanatory case study facilitates the generation of data that provides meaning to emerging data [21, 22]. Sixteen students consisting eight females and eight males were selected on the basis of judgmental sampling. They were chosen on the basis of the researcher's judgment [23]. The research data were generated using unstructured interview guide and personal accounts. Unstructured interview guide helped the researcher to obtain narrative data [16], regarding how economic disparities between Africans and white settlers were responsible for the end of the policy of reconciliation in Zimbabwe. Personal accounts enabled researchers to freely express themselves regarding phenomena under study [24]. The researcher was able to get thick description of how economic disparities between Africans and white settlers were responsible for the end of the policy of reconciliation in Zimbabwe. Data were analysed using conversation analysis. Personal accounts were coded PA1-PA8, while participants were coded P1-P8 in the presentation and discussion of results. Conversation analysis permits researchers to interrogate themes that would have emerged from the data [25]. Findings were presented descriptively and interpreted with the help of direct quotes. Their presentation was done on the basis of what emerged from the interviews and personal accounts.

RESULTS AND INTERPRETATION

A two-fold result namely, research characteristics of the participants and the real research results are put across under this section.

Research Characteristics of the Participants

Sixteen (16) participants comprising eight (8) males and eight (8) females took part in the study. Ten (10) participants were aged between 30 and 39 years, four (4) were aged between 40 and 49 years, while two (2) were aged at least 50 years. All of them were holders of a first degree in social sciences. Three of them were studying a second Masters degree. All of them had at least fifteen (15) years working experience. All participants were family people who had interests with family people.

RESULTS

Economic disparities Interview Data

Participants were asked to respond to the question that required them to perceive economic disparities, and some of them in the interview and personal accounts had this to say:

> The way I see economic disparities is that they refer to inequalities in the manner how people access wealth and other resources that enrich people (P1).

> According to me, economic disparities denote a situation whereby people of different races experience unequal distribution of wealth such that one race benefits at the expense of the other (P5).

> According to my own opinion, economic disparities indicate how bad a situation of unequal distribution of wealth and other resources will obtaining among people of different races, sex, tribes, religion and creed in one community, village, town, district, province or country (P7).

> Economic disparities occur when people of different socio-economic and political backgrounds do not have equal access to wealth such that society would have haves and havenots (P6).

Personal Accounts Data

In the personal accounts supporting interview data, the participants remarked the following:

Economic disparities refer to inequalities in the manner people acquire wealth and other enriching resources (PA4). Economic disparities indicate inequalities associated with how different people have access to richness and resources that enhance and promote wealth (PA6). Economic disparities relate to differential treatment of people of diverse backgrounds according their levels of richness (PA7).

The foregoing positions regarding economic disparities tend to dovetail with Alkire et al. [1] who established that economic disparities occur when individuals do not possess the same level of material wealth or overall living economic conditions. In that regard, individuals would have classes according to one's level of richness. Other people would become dependent on those who are more economically affluent. The researcher exhorts that the richer people have lots of savings when compared to the poor. In a bid to address this anomaly, Zimbabweans tried to introduce the Affirmative Action policy through Affirmative Action Group and the policy of indigenization and economic empowerment in the government. These policies saw the rise of the black people's appetite to takeover industries and mines, despite the fact that they had no capacity to do that. As a result of the black people showing such interests, the writer contends that economic disparities between Africans and white settlers were responsible for the end of the policy of reconciliation in Zimbabwe. Furthermore. In Zimbabwe, the Economic Structural Programme in the early 1990s lacked a human face as it worsened black people's poverty levels. Many of them were retrenched and they became loafers without income, yet they were previously bread winners. Also, basic goods were on short supply on the market. Furthermore, the majority people had their quality of life inclusive of living standards and nutritional standards grossly eroded, while the whites were basking in economic glory. On the basis of these economic disparities, the writer largely agrees with the view that economic disparities between Africans and white settlers were responsible for the end of the policy of reconciliation in Zimbabwe.

Policy of Reconciliation Interview Data

In connection with the participants' perceptions on the policy of reconciliation, the following lines of thought arose from the study:

The policy of reconciliation is about the practice of forgiving and reaching mutual compromise situations between former adversarial parties (P8).

The concept of the policy of reconciliation relates to a situation whereby enemies forget about the past and look ahead into the future by working together in peace, amity and harmony (P4). The policy of reconciliation is about opening up of hands as wide as possible in a bid to accommodate erstwhile foes so that you can sit down together with the intent to forgive each other and agree to move

forward together on a positive note

(P2). The policy of reconciliation entails the act, process and practice of shooting down the ills of the past that occurred between previous enemies who are on the verge of understanding each other (P3).

Personal Accounts Data

The above interview data were corroborated with personal accounts data in the following manner:

The policy of reconciliation occurs when different races, tribes or ethnic groups square off and understand each other with the hope to work together (PA1).

The policy of reconciliation takes place when former warring people reach a mutual compromise in order to promote unity, peace and development (PA5).

I associate the policy of reconciliation with a national process that involves previously antagonistic people forgetting about their past differences and ills with a view to begin a new chapter about development and economic prosperity (PA7).

In the light of the above stated results, the policy of reconciliation is similarly viewed by Daniel Bar-Tal and Gemma Bennink, while acknowledging it as a process, albeit a strictly psychological one [7], also see it as an outcome, an end-state which, "...consists of mutual recognition and acceptance, invested interests and goals in developing peaceful relations, mutual trust, positive attitudes, as well as sensitivity and consideration for the other party's needs and interests [2]." In the context of this study, the policy of reconciliation is therefore referring to how well whites and blacks, and the Shona and Ndebele people forgave one another in the interests of promoting peace, wealth and development.

How economic disparities between Africans and white settlers were responsible for the end of the policy of reconciliation in Zimbabwe

Regarding how economic disparities between Africans and white settlers were responsible for the end of the policy of reconciliation in Zimbabwe, participants reported some of the following positions:

Interview Data

Economic disparities generate disagreements among people of different races, tribes, creed, religion and ethnic backgrounds (P1).

Economic disparities have a tendency of creating unnecessary tension among people of different backgrounds (P3).

Economic disparities create apprehension among otherwise peaceful people (P4).

Economic disparities destroy trust that otherwise would exist in an egalitarian society (P7).

Economic disparities create a class society on the basis of wealth, thus, people would be classified as either poor or rich (P8).

Economic disparities generate hatred among different people. They end up viewing each other as eternal enemies (P5).

Economic disparities make people to resort to hate speech as a means to compensate for their frustrations and economic deprivations (P2).

Economic disparities disadvantaged people by denying them access to resources such as land, accommodation, good education, good health facilities, and other investment opportunities (P6).

Personal Accounts Data

Supportive of interview data, participants' personal accounts revealed the following findings:

Economic disparities retard the pace of economic development in a country such that people would end up ununited (PA1).

Economic disparities make people view each other with suscipicion and hatred (PA2).

Economic disparities are a hindrance to the policy of reconciliation as they destroy the spirit of unity among people (PA3).

Economic disparities defeat the whole purpose of the policy of reconciliation as they create boundaries between the rich and the poor (PA4).

Economic disparities degrade one class of people such that they end up hating the other class privileged to have wealth (PA5).

Economicdisparitiescloseopportunitiesfornationalreconciliationbecausepeoplewould

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not trust each other in terms of distribution of wealth (PA6). I feel that economic disparities are a danger to any efforts of national reconciliation because the have-nots are always a disgruntled lot, while the haves are too proud to associate with the poor (PA7). The way I perceive economic

disparities as a roadblock to reconciliation is that they create barriers to effective communication and co-operation among people in the spirit of trust, harmony and peace (PA8)

Conflicts are particularly prevalent in the management of common resources where, for example, inequality makes resolving disputes more difficult; see, for example, Bardhan [11]. More broadly, inequality affects the economics of conflict, as it may intensify the grievances felt by certain groups or can reduce the opportunity costs of initiating and joining a violent conflict [12]. In Zimbabwe, the land reform that began in the year 2000 is a typical example of the above phenomenon because the whites were more economically affluent than blacks [13]. The minority whites owned large tracts of arable land, while the majority blacks owned small semi-arid and arid pieces of land which were infertile. This economic disparity infuriated the blacks to such an extent they were content that the solution to this inequality was to settle in white owned commercial farms. The blacks were no longer in a mood to maintain and sustain the policy of reconciliation that was declared by the then first Prime Minister of an independent Zimbabwe in 1980. In that regard, it can be argued that economic disparities between Africans and white settlers were responsible for the end of the policy of reconciliation in Zimbabwe. The fact that the policy of reconciliation requires heavy reading and understanding, it means that it is subject to misinterpretations which undermine peace, love, social cohesion and communal development initiative by people of different race; and economic and social stati. The researcher agrees with conception that economic disparities between Africans and white settlers were responsible for the end of the policy of reconciliation in Zimbabwe. This is because the blacks were forced to reinvent the mistrust and distrust they held about the whites before independence. The whites continued to have a higher status, better incomes, better paying jobs, better medical facilities, better education and better access to all kinds of resources than the majority Zimbabweans. Black man was used to rise against black man along tribal lines. For example, during the early 1980s there were dissident problems in Midlands Matabeleland North and South Provinces [13].

CONCLUSIONS

The researcher derived five conclusions from the findings. Economic disparities that existed between whites and blacks in the post-independent Zimbabwe led to the collapse of the policy of reconciliation. Another conclusion from the study was that economic disparities widened the gap between the rich and the poor, thereby, giving rise to the inevitable death of reconciliation in Zimbabwe. Economic disparities also polarised relations between the haves and have-nots, at expense of reconciliation in Zimbabwe. the Furthermore, economic disparities created a conflicting stratified Zimbabwean society. The irrevocable economic disparities between blacks and whites in a post-independent Zimbabwe were largely responsible for the demise of reconciliation.

RECOMMENDATIONS

five-fold Consequent upon aforestated conclusion, the researcher drafts three recommendations. First, it is rational enough for politicians and economists with help of the industrial, business and donor community as policy makers to create conducive conditions that enable Zimbabwean people irrespective of race or other differences to wage war against economic disparities in search equality which comes as result of reconciliation. Second, the government should offer equal economic empowerment opportunities to all people to ensure that there is permanent reconciliation among races in Zimbabwe. Third, large-scale studies in this area would generate substantive knowledge regarding how curtailing economic disparities could maximise the benefits of reconciliation in Zimbabwe and probably in other countries with her similar experiences

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