

What happened and why? Considering the role of truth and memory in peace education curricula.

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Abstract

This paper is an exploration of challenges arising in the interplay between a standardised peace education curriculum and a localised post-conflict setting. Drawing on interview data from two Kenyan schools, the paper explores the reception of peace education initiatives implemented in Kenya following the post-election violence of 2007/08 through the voices of teachers and pupils. The analysis identifies two patterns emerging from the pupils' point of view; firstly an engagement with narratives of conflict addressing what happened during the outbreak of violence, and secondly an awareness of collective narratives of the past, centred on the question of why the conflict broke out. The data identifies a gap between the knowledge and perspectives of the pupils, and the level of engagement by the curricula and teachers in the same issues. Finally, the paper explores some implications of these diverging needs and perspectives in relation to the design and implementation of peace education curricula, particularly in relation to providing sufficient support for the teachers.

Keywords: peace curricula; education; memory; truth; teacher support; local context

1. Introduction

In this article, we analyse the reception of a peace education curriculum by two schools in a post-conflict setting. Building on empirical data from the specific research context of Kenya, the article investigates the reactions of pupils and teachers in the encounter between a standardised peace education curriculum and a localised post-conflict context. Here, pupils experience that perpetrators of the violence continue to be present in their everyday lives. However, the implemented curriculum focus on developing social skills of a generic character, with an emphasis on in-school, pupil-to-pupil relationships. Through the voices and experiences of pupils and teachers directly involved in peace education efforts in Kenya, two thematic areas emerge as particularly challenging in this encounter between curricula and context. Firstly, the aspect of dealing with what happened during the outbreak of violence at community level, and secondly an awareness of root causes of conflict at the national level, anchored in historical narratives of both recent and more distant past. The article explores what types of dilemmas might arise within the schools themselves, when the preferences of pupils and teachers in relation to how to deal with the issues of truth and memory diverge.

Guided by concepts from critical peace education theory and the fields of transitional justice and memory studies, the analysis is grounded in an in-depth empirical investigation of two localised contexts. The two case studies presented have wider relevance for several reasons.

Firstly, the specific curriculum used is international and is being implemented in a wide range of contexts. The cases speak to a trajectory often followed by post-conflict programming offered by international organisations – an importing of pre-designed projects and education materials, often turning out to be inappropriate to the local context, with following ad-hoc measures being taken to adapt to the local context as challenges arise (Hart, 2011, p. 11). Secondly, the training of the teachers in the initiative was implemented through a cascade-model, which is also common for international NGO programming, and the experiences of the Kenyan teachers in this context might accordingly have wider implications for other curriculum interventions utilising ‘training of trainers’ approaches.

Problems related to quick fix approaches, NGO assumptions and the decontextualisation of education initiatives in post-conflict settings have been highlighted on many occasions (for a summary of the main challenges, see Weinstein, Freedman & Hughson, 2007).

Educationalists mostly agree that context matters (Paulson, 2011, p. 179), but there is still a lack of studies detailing the qualitative nature of *how* the problem of decontextualisation plays out in a local setting at the pupil-teacher level, especially in an African context. The aim of this article is to present a specific and empirical example of the dynamics that appear when a standardised, international peace education curriculum is implemented in a localised post-conflict school environment, with the purpose of contributing to a wider debate on the possibilities and limitations of peace education curricula and peace building interventions in schools.

2. Literature review

Within the field of peace education theory, there is a rich and complex literature to draw on concerning the importance of context sensitivity and the importance of localised perspectives. Attempts at construing peace education as a generic concept (Danesh, 2006; Harris, 2004) have in recent years been challenged by scholars who point to the qualitative differences in social contexts and the variable nature of conflicts (Zembylas & Bekerman, 2013). Critical peace education is offered as an alternative for future research, with a need for ‘local, historicised knowledge to inform strategies’ (Bajaj, 2008, p. 140). An important aspect of this field is the rejection of universal standards and emphasising contextualised forms of peace education, and keeping constant dialogue with other traditions of critical inquiry such as critical pedagogy (Bajaj & Brantmeier, 2011; Bajaj, 2015). Critical peace educators stress the need to engage with structural issues, as well as the need for more empirically based investigation (ibid). This

study is informed by these core concerns. It is an empirical investigation of a localised context, and it attempts a dialogue with other fields of inquiry, inspired by insights from transitional justice and memory studies, particularly through employing the concepts of ‘truth’ and ‘memory’ in the discussion. In the following section we describe some central features of these two concepts, and situate them in relation to our analysis.

Truth and reconciliation

The development of the field of transitional justice in recent years, sparked by the apparent success of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission in South Africa, has led to an increasing focus on truth telling and collective narratives as central factors in successful post-conflict processes. As Julia Paulson has pointed out, there is also an emerging trend of transnational justice bodies taking an increased interest in the educational sector through various recommendations (Paulson, 2006, p. 335). Responding to a growing literature on the relationship between education and reconciliation, the discussion of the article’s findings engages with the concept of truth. The contribution of truth telling to reconciliation is often emphasised as a central component to political reconciliation processes (Rotberg, 2000; Gibson, 2006). Although a complex and many-faceted area of study, some elements are increasingly becoming ‘conventional’ within the field of transitional justice, such as the work of international tribunals, national truth commissions and various mechanisms of reparations and apology (Quinn, 2009, p. 3).

Addressing truths about what happened is often promoted as essential or at least significant to reconciliation after violent conflict or mass human rights transgressions, with advocates claiming that truth-seeking fulfils several societal needs related to justice, social healing and prevention (Mendeloff, 2004, p. 356). Critics, however, protest that it remains unclear how significant truth telling really is, and warn against overstating the effect (Mendeloff, 2004). Claims to the universally healing character of truth telling is of course problematic, and strikes a difficult balance between the needs of the individual and the needs of the collective, as well as the need for culturally sensitive responses (Hayner, 2001, p. 145-6). Furthermore, there is also a risk that engaging in conflict narratives will re-traumatise both participants and facilitators (Hayner, 2001, p. 149). Finally, changing attitudes and beliefs is a long-term process, and truth telling might have little effect in the short-term (Mendeloff, 2004, p. 376). By itself, truth might not be enough - there will be little success unless truth telling is followed up by some form of apology or restitution (Barkan, 2001). These concerns are also linked to

the concept of reconciliation, the definition of which remains contested. Some argue that reconciliation should be defined as the end-point of a conflict, others understand it as a lasting process where structural acts of justice restoration are combined with policies aiming at democratisation, political restructuring and economic processes (Bar-Tal & Bennink, 2004).

Memory and reconciliation

The conceptual framework for this study also takes into account that reconciliatory processes should consider both past and future (Lederach, 1997, p. 27). This raises the question of what role the past plays in the effectiveness and impact of peace education curricula. In post-conflict societies, the issue of how to deal with a violent past is characterised by Elizabeth Cole as 'acute' (Cole, 2007, p. 1). Cole offers revisionist history education as a secondary phase, following an initial truth-telling and truth-seeking mechanism related to conflicts or human rights violations, where revised curricula could promote more inclusive or multiple national narratives and thus foster long-term reconciliation (2007, p. 20). In situations of protracted conflicts, Robert Rotberg claims that the most important function of collective memory often is to portray a truth that is "functional for a group's ongoing existence" (2006, p. 4). Creating a story that provides a meaningful image of the world becomes a mechanism for coping with the challenging situation of a conflict that seems to have no end. As a consequence, instead of letting the past explain the present social reality, a particular past is invented to suit contemporary needs (Rotberg, 2006, p. 4). Thus, as collective memory is an important aspect of sustaining group identity, survival and purpose, it is also likely that addressing and nuancing group memory could play an equally important role in the breaking down conflict barriers.

However, just as in the case of the healing effects of truth-telling, there are some dilemmas regarding the use of historical memory in connection with reconciliation. A central concern is whether individuals hold the right to forget past collective traumas of their communities and move onwards, or whether it is in any way good or healthy to engage with and learn about a traumatic past (Bourguignon, 2005, p. 64; Zembylas & Bekerman, 2008, p. 126). As historical collective memories are an inherent part of conflicted societies it is, according to Zembylas and Bekerman, unrealistic to believe that historical amnesia is a sustainable option. The issue is not whether to choose to forget or remember, but to ask *how* memory should be integrated as a pedagogical resource in connection with reconciliation and education (2008, p. 126). This is an important question in the context of curriculum studies. Research by Zvi Bekerman has suggested that curricula such as textbooks do not necessarily have the expected impact on

securing certain types of historical memory, and that teachers have a decisive influence on the outcome of challenging historical negotiations in classrooms marked by longstanding interethnic conflict (Bekerman, 2009, p. 244-5).

Previous research on education and reconciliation

Conceptualisations of how education could be used to promote reconciliation and develop peaceful societies have been criticised for remaining theoretical, with little specific and empirical assessment of the actual effect of such initiatives (Weinstein et al, 2007, p. 43.) Alan Smith is among those who have called for the development of a deeper understanding of this relationship (2005). A recent volume edited by Julia Paulson (2011) partly remedies this gap, with a range of case studies addressing the links between education and reconciliation. As Paulson points out, there is little clarity of what reconciliation means in practice, particularly in a school setting – with aspects and priorities across the field ranging from forgiveness, inter-group contact, fostering co-existence, learning to live together, encouraging dialogue, or a structural redress of inequalities (2011, p. 3).

As several of the contributions in Paulson's volume point out, many educational interventions fail to fully anticipate contextual considerations. This practice reflects a peace education discourse where the most decisive impact on young people is through the curriculum and activities they are presented with, and where potential conflicting messages from family, community and media take on a secondary role. However, as Jason Hart argues, '[t]he meaning/knowledge they [children experiencing political violence] construct from encounters with the abusive exercise of power will be mediated by innumerable factors and forces, of which classroom-based instruction may not be among the most important.' (2011, p. 17). Daniel Bar-Tal has similarly argued that peace education must be understood as a programme concerning society as a whole, and that peace education implemented as an isolated venture in school is 'fruitless and unrelated to societal reality', and will soon frustrate the students as irrelevant and/or insignificant (2002, p. 31).

This has particular implications for the development of curricula, and would suggest that there is a need to explore the exact nature of what is not working when context is not considered. There are already some contributions to this discussion. For instance, Elizabeth Oglesby analyses the implementation of a culture of peace curriculum framework in Guatemala, showing how the origins of war are framed as a generic "culture of conflict" in the country, without acknowledging victims or perpetrators as social and political actors. As a result, the

war is discussed without addressing the specific conflicts that caused it, and violence is presented as something inherent in the history of the nation (2007, p. 191-194). This is one important example, but more research focusing on the perspectives of teachers and pupils on engaging with controversial contextual issues in curricula is still warranted.

The case for addressing controversial and conflicting perspectives and issues in peace education programmes in order to develop alternative narratives about past traumas have been discussed and analysed to a wide extent, but the work done investigating this is often related to intractable conflict situations such as the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Cyprus, or Northern Ireland. Peace education in these conflicts often prioritise the contesting mutually exclusive narratives and establishing bridgeheads of contact between groups. Intractable conflict settings are in other words characterised by a particular set of challenges, and research carried out on peace education in these situations is only of “partial relevance” to other types of programmes such as conflict resolution in schools (Kupermintz & Salomon, 2005, p. 294).

Less attention has been given to aspects of memory and contested narratives in settings differing from the full-blown intractable conflict – settings such as our research context in Kenya with conflicting groups coexisting in mixed-school situations in the aftermath of intercommunal violence. Overall, the role of collective memory and historical narratives is rarely considered in writing on post-conflict, African settings outside of the Rwandan context. One exception is the work of Eloie Ndura-Ouedraogo, who highlights the importance of contested narratives and memories in her research context of Burundi (2009, p. 27). Ndura-Ouedraogo proposes critical and multicultural education as a way of supporting peacebuilding, and recommends a larger focus on the perspectives of students and educators (Ndura-Ouedraogo, 2009, p. 39).

Hart (2011) echoes this argument with a call for a more ‘children-focused, ethnographic approach’ in research on education and reconciliation that allows for the central stakeholders – children – to be seen as more than a homogenous group engaging with materials and activities presented to them (p. 24). Drawing on their own analysis of interviews with refugee students in three locations as well as the perspectives from Boyden (2000), Hart, (2006) and Marshall (1999), Winthrop and Kirk (2011) argue that the voices of children are often not considered in humanitarian programming (p. 119). The lack of these practices can be partly understood in connection with a view of children as ‘innocent, vulnerable, helpless and “in formation”’ (Winthrop & Kirk, 2011, p. 119). This is not in line, however, with the children’s self-

understanding in the study, where the children saw themselves not as objects, but as subjects who actively took part in the creation of their own learning experiences (Winthrop & Kirk, 2011).

The role of reconciliation in peace education, along with a stronger empirical focus on local and historicised perspectives, is therefore not an exhausted field of study. There is a need for a more stakeholder-centred approach, giving space to the perspectives of pupils and teachers, and there is a need to give stronger consideration to the role reconciliatory elements connected to wider societal issues can play outside contexts of long-term intractable conflict. This article is an attempt to provide an empirical contribution to the outlined debate, through a thorough and stakeholder-centred investigation of a peace education programme implemented in an African context.

3. Context: Post-election violence and peace education response

Following the 2007 presidential election in Kenya, violence broke out across the country leaving more than 1000 people dead and up to 500,000 internally displaced (Human Rights Watch, 2008). In addition, thousands of women were raped, and private properties and schools burnt and destroyed (Branch, 2011; UNESCO, 2010). Although the dynamics of violence were highly complex, three types of violence can be distinguished (Harneit-Sievers & Peters, 2008). First, Nairobi and Kisumu were affected by the aftermath of mass demonstrations. Second, Rift Valley, and in particularly Eldoret and its surroundings area, were affected by both planned and spontaneous violence aimed at the Kikuyus, who were seen as non-indigenous to the area. And finally gang violence erupted in Naivasha, Nakuru and the slums of Nairobi. In Kenya, the categorisation of the post-election violence (PEV) is often as a short-term, one-time outbreak of spontaneous violence. However, the violence with all its grimness was not surprising from a historical perspective (Klopp & Kamungi, 2008; Branch, 2011). In the words of Branch (2011) ‘the symptoms of the crisis, including ethnic division and political violence, are all too often confused with its cause’ (p. 22). Drivers of conflict that can be identified in analysing the political economy include incited violence, disputed elections, political allegiance along ethnic lines, loss of state monopoly on legitimate force, political leaders motivated by personal gain, and land disputes (Author, 2013).

Following the PEV, a peace education programme (PEP) was introduced in Kenyan primary schools (MoE, 2012). The curriculum was a modified version of a UNHCR programme designed for Dadaab refugee camp (Obura, 2002). The programme was a collaborative effort

by the Ministry of Education (MoE), Kenya Institute of Education (KIE), UNICEF, UNHCR and UNESCO. Although the PEV prompted the creation of the programme, and the programme formed part of the educational emergency response, neither the policy papers from the MoE where the creation of the programme is justified, nor the peace education materials, make explicit mention of the PEV (MoE, 2012; MoE, UNICEF & UNHCR, 2008). Rather, the programme focused solely on the interpersonal relationships between pupils, covering the overarching themes of patriotism, similarities and differences, inclusion and exclusion, listening, better communication, handling emotions, perceptions and empathy, co-operation, assertiveness, problem solving, negotiation, mediation, and conflict resolution (MoE, UNICEF & UNHCR, 2008). The wider political and historical context relevant to the violent disruption that had just taken place were absent from the policies and programme materials. The curriculum can therefore not be said to have encouraged the teachers to address these questions in their teaching (Author, 2013).

The PEP was in its first phase cascaded to the areas most badly affected by the violence. In addition to training head teachers and teachers in peace education, schools were equipped with PEP lesson materials for grades 1-8, and workbooks to be used in the teaching of peace education. Peace education was then expected to be implemented as part of Life Skills, a non-examinable subject to be taught once a week for all levels in primary school.

4. Methods

The article builds on research material from a 5-month field study conducted in Kenya¹. The study, which was centred around the implementation of the PEP, explored the role the programme was playing in bringing about peace building practices in schools. This paper focuses particularly on challenges emerging when a standardised curriculum is implemented without adjusting to contextual factors, summarised in this paper as “truth” and “memory”.

In the original study, four case study schools were sampled.² A case study design was applied as this design allow for in-depth studies of phenomena (Bryman, 2008; Denscombe, 2010), and multiple cases were chosen to strengthen the theory building (Merriam, 1998; Yin, 2009). Originally, the sampling criteria were based on maximum variation (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 230); including urban and rural, more single-ethnic and more multi-ethnic school populations,

¹ The data was collected October 2011-March 2012, four years after the PEV.

² The data applied in this paper is sampled from a larger study. The programme and its implementation are discussed in depth in Lauritzen (2013), Lauritzen (2016a) and Lauritzen (2016b).

and locations that would represent both sides of the conflict. All cases had in common that they were located in the conflict-struck Rift Valley, and that they had been trained in, and received copies of, the PEP. Out of these four case study-schools two schools were selected for further analysis for this particular paper. In this second round, we did an ‘information oriented selection’; we selected the cases we expected to give the richest data on the areas we were researching (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p.230). In the first round of analysis we discovered that contextual issues related to truth and memory were particularly prominent in two of the schools - ‘Logos’³ (Eldoret) and ‘Macheleo’ (Nakuru). As we were interested in generating knowledge specifically related to such contextual factors, these cases were selected for in-depth study. Both of these schools are multi-ethnic, urban schools. Pupil and teacher perceptions were explored through interviews conducted in the two schools. 7 teachers and 35 pupils were interviewed in Macheleo, and 9 teachers and 29 pupils in Logos (Eldoret). Following the same principle as when selecting the schools, teachers and pupils were also selected according to ‘information oriented principles’ (Flyvbjerg, 2006, p. 230). It was seen as important that the pupils were old enough to remember the PEV, and the age group was accordingly narrowed down to standard 7⁴. In Macheleo there was a peace club⁵, and assuming members of such a club would have had more opportunities to reflect on the questions related to peace building, the members of this club were sampled. Unfortunately there was no peace club in Logos. The pupils were therefore chosen randomly from standard 7. The teachers trained in the PEP were sampled, and accompanied by teachers from standard 7 who were teaching Life Skills and Social Studies, as these subjects have elements of peace and conflict as part of the curricula.

The interviews were semi-structures, and the interview schedule was based on five themes: the impact of the PEV on the community; the role the school played during the PEV; the role of the school in rebuilding the community after the violence; what the school had put in place after the violence; and what had been put in place as a result of the PEP. The pupils were interviewed in groups of 3-5, and the teachers were interviewed individually. The interviews lasted approximately 30 minutes.

In the initial analysis, template analysis was found appropriate, as it allows for the combination of top down and bottom up styles of analysis (King, 2012). Following standard practices in template analysis, some a priori themes were initially derived from the research

³ The names of the schools are changed for ensuring anonymity

⁴ The pupils in standard 7 were approximately 13 years old

⁵ Establishing peace clubs were initiated by UNICEF following the PEV.

questions and the interview guide, followed by an inductive reading of a sample of the total material⁶. During this coding process a range of new themes were discovered. In the third step of the template development the a priori themes and the codes deriving from the set of interviews were merged into one final template. The template developed through these steps was then applied to the whole set of transcripts, including a total of two head teachers, two deputy head teachers, 16 teachers, and 64 pupils. In cases where new themes of crucial importance emerged during the main data coding, these themes were integrated into the template⁷.

It was during this process, and especially in the writing-up of the findings that we became aware of a particular engagement in contextual issues in the data from both Macheleo and Logos, addressing aspects of historical memory and truth-telling. Wanting to explore this aspect further, we therefore approached the material a second time. Taking an abductive approach, we returned to the material and looked specifically for issues related to truth and memory in the two schools. This analysis was therefore very targeted; we were looking specifically for data that would provide insight into these aspects. The case studies presented in this paper cannot be generalised from, nor can they be reproduced, as the findings were constructed by interactions taking place in a specific time and space. We do believe, however, that the questions raised in the study could be of value for other, comparable, settings. We have therefore, guided by the principles of transferability and dependability, provided the reader with thorough contextual descriptions. As it was practically impossible for us to discuss our findings with the participants in the research, we believe it is important to include a rich representation of quotes in order for the reader to be able to participate in the analysis.

The study was approved prior to data collection by the ethics committee at the university from where the initial study was carried out. Local school authorities and head teachers gave their consent for research to be carried out in their schools. In addition, all participants gave informed consent to participate in interviews.

⁶ As the dataset was larger than the data included in this particular paper, the 16 interviews included interviews with national stakeholders, DEOs, teachers head teachers, parents, SMCs, and pupils.

⁷ Final template: 1. From violence to peace (Attitudes towards peace building; Healing and settling back in; Rationale for peace; Reconciliation and bringing back together; Understanding peace), 2. Peace building (Peace building in community; Peace building in school; Potential peace building in school; School influence on community; UNICEF peace education), 3. Post-Election Violence (PEV and community; PEV and school; Reasons for PEV), 4. Situation today (Haag and ICC; Negative situation today community; Negative situation today school; Next election; Positive situation today community; Positive situation today school), 5. Additional comments, 6. Other

5. Analysis and discussion

The two case-study schools were situated in the Rift Valley, where the violence had been particularly severe (Harneit-Sievers & Peters, 2008). All the pupils interviewed had therefore witnessed or experienced violence and displacements. In Kenya, the PEV was in many ways localised and communal, affecting the families and communities of the pupils. As the pupils had been exposed to both the violence and the discussions in their communities over what had happened, they were as such 'experts'. However, when returning to school, they were met with counselling programmes and a PEP that did not engage directly in their emerging knowledge construction. In this section, we will discuss two thematic areas where the data showed a gap between the pupils' awareness and the school approach.

4.1. Addressing or ignoring narratives of violence?

In this first case study, we draw on interview-data from the school 'Logos' in Eldoret. In this school the thematic area of truth-telling stood out as particularly interesting, and will therefore be the focus of the discussion. Even though the concept of truth-telling often is employed in analysis at the societal level, we make use of it in this paper as a means of analysing the data, and as a way of engaging with existing literature on the relationship between reconciliation and education. Narrowing the perspective down from the broader societal view, and focusing on the classroom, this study engages with truth-telling (understood as the sharing of different narratives of violence) as a topic emerging as relevant for the pupils themselves. We argue that whereas the pupils were in a process of constructing knowledge on what had happened in the community during the violence, the teachers were not ready to engage in such truth-telling, and the PEP was not providing the scaffolding they would have needed to do so.

Logos had a total enrolment of 2,734 pupils and was located in a large slum area in urban Eldoret. There was no record kept of the ethnic communities in the school, but Kikuyus, Luos and Kalenjin were claimed to be the largest. During the violence the school closed, and despite many pupils leaving the area during and after the PEV, the school had an influx of pupils following the violence, due to IDPs settling in the area. The school had received training in the PEP, and had access to PEP materials. However, these materials were not frequently used in teaching, as neither Peace Education nor Life Skills was scheduled in the timetable.

At Logos the violence was described by the interviewees in crude terms. A large number of the school population had been displaced during the violence. And because the violence had happened within the estate where the school was located the pupils had witnessed acts of violence such as stealing, looting, burning of houses, murder, and sexual abuse. Dead bodies and body parts were described as lying around or hanging in trees:

But even the children saw it[...] It was horrible, because you could even pass, you get a body, the head is hanged, the body is not there, and you are trying to pass and go very quickly and you have children. They saw what happened. They ask: mummy who are killing these people? (teacher 23 interview).

I lost a friend. As we were trying to go to the police station, we met a group of people with pangas. I told him that we should go back, but he didn't listen. I went home. After two days I was told that he was murdered. They waited until there were no more clashes, then they were taken where the body was. They found that his head was separated from the body. They buried him in Logos (pupil 10 interview).

As the quotes illustrate, the majority of the interviewees knew someone who had been killed in the violence, either family, friends or neighbours. Consequently, the trauma became evident in classes. The following quotes give accounts of this:

their [the children's] minds were not upright. You could tell them even to write a composition, and the message they give in their compositions was just about violence. [...] 'We saw some places burning', 'we decided to run away from home', such stories. [...] Even a nursery school child, you can tell to draw something for you, the child could draw burning houses, people holding guns or bows and arrows (teacher 19 interview).

Due to the clashes some people were so much traumatised, such that they became rebellious. It was very hard for teachers. Sometimes you could be in a class, you were teaching, and then some pupils stand up and start yelling, as if somebody is chasing, or as if that child has seen something very bad (teacher 21 interview).

Similar stories were narrated by other teachers, describing how the pupils were terrified, fainted in class, screamed, or showed other signs of post-traumatic stress. When asked how the school had helped the pupils to settle back in, and what they were doing to build peace in the school, the pupils largely focused on help with material things in their interviews. The following quote illustrates a typical response from the pupils:

They provided for us a uniform. And then they give us small money for building a house (pupil 7 interview).

However, the trauma experienced urgently called for counselling in addition to material help. Although some pupils were provided with individual counselling, most counselling took place in class. During class counselling teachers reported to have addressed issues such as peace-building, reconciliation and anti-tribalism. These efforts, which also made use of the PEP materials, were said to have had a soothing effect on the pupils, and were mainly aimed at distracting the pupils' attention from what had happened during the PEV. Although issues of peace-building and anti-tribalism were claimed to be taught, the reports given by the pupils did not give evidence of deeper understandings of peace building. Rather, the quotes indicated that the pupils were told by the teachers to be in peace rather than being provided with skills necessary to build peace.

They made us learn together in one class. And told us that we should sit in peace. Because a by-gone is a by-gone. And even some times you could find them giving us text-books so that we should share. They didn't give one pupil one book because they wanted us to share and be in peace (pupil 11).

They taught us peace, to maintain, to love our friends, and even to forgive them what they don't know (pupil 1).

It was a traumatised school population that returned to school following the violence. In response to the signs pupils showed of post-traumatic stress, the school provided some level of counselling. However, the pupils interviewed emphasised that the school had cared for them materially, and that they had been encouraged to forgive and live in peace. The living in peace was particularly related to sharing – the sharing of material goods such as school books, and sharing of space, being prepared to sit next to fellow pupils of any ethnicity. On some level, this shows a coherent story of a school returning to normalcy following conflict.

However, some interview data suggest that the trauma was not completely in the past although the violence had stopped and the pupils were back in school, and that the approach taken to counselling and peace building did not meet the needs of the pupils. Different ethnic groups representing both sides of the conflict were in the same school and in the same classrooms. The two following quotes describes what this could lead to in class:

Because we realised, even a child was scared to sit next to a Kikuyu. A Luo was not ready to sit with a Kikuyu. And saying 'you people', and 'the Kalenjins were abusing the kikuyu' saying 'you people you cut us', and the Kikuyus were scared of Kalenjins that 'you burnt our homes'. [...] Children were fearful. [...] Talking you realise that in

the same class the child maybe notice that it was the father of so and so who cut my uncle. It is the father of so and so, or the uncle, who burnt our house. So it was not very easy. We did even find as we were teaching, a child getting those hallucinations screaming ‘they are coming, they are coming to burn’ (teacher 17 interview).

I told my friend a story that her parents are very dangerous. Parents are very dangerous. Because there was my friend who was called John and was killed. He was murdered (pupil 27)

Treating a conflict as over and something that belongs in the past, which can be forgotten, is a challenging approach where the whole community is entangled in the events. The above quotes illustrate this. The incidents of direct violence had calmed down, and the community was peaceful enough for the pupils to return to school. However, the conflict was not over, as new evidence and new connections kept emerging. This picture became more complex after they returned to school and discovered how their peers were entangled in their own story. As a consequence, returning to school led to re-traumatizing and fear, and it is likely that the chaotic situation made things worse for some pupils. Connections kept emerging, which made it hard for the pupils who constantly had to negotiate their position among the peers. For the pupils the conflict was not over; there had been no reckoning. Truth telling, understood as the sharing of stories from both sides of the conflict, was explicitly banned at this school following the PEV. This policy, enforced by the head teacher, was put in place based on a fear that engagement in political discussion would bring about further division among the school population. The head teacher argued that since it was disagreement that had caused the PEV in the first place, it was important from now on that teachers and pupils agreed independent of tribal belonging. As the teachers were not allowed to voice their opinion or raise the questions they had, the pupils were in turn silenced, and left on their own in their search for understanding the ‘truths’ around what they had experienced. They were consequently deprived of an opportunity to come to terms with and leave behind what they had gone through during the violence. In addition, this practice undermined the position of the pupils. Having lived through the violence and listening to adult discussions in their respective communities the pupils had formed their own opinions about what had happened. Their knowledge was, however, not recognised.

Engaging in truth-telling would understandably have been a difficult task for the teachers who had themselves lived through the trauma. Their response, merely focusing on

helping pupils with school materials, and encouraging them to live in peace, must be understood in connection to this. Therefore, the point of this analysis is not to criticize the teachers at this particular school, but rather to point to a problem which is likely to be recognisable in several post-conflict contexts. In identity-based localised conflicts, whole school populations are affected. The teachers responsible for traumatised pupils are themselves often traumatised, and in urban settings such as this, several sides of the conflict are also represented among the teachers. Although the conflict might be over at face value, the negotiation around what happened is likely to continue to take place within classrooms among the pupils – and cause re-traumatisation for some.

In Kenya, the main support given to this school and others, was through the introduction of the PEP. This programme, which was not specifically designed for the Kenyan context, did not provide teachers or pupils with tools for addressing pupils' lived experiences and questions related to truth and reconciliation. Rather, it merely addressed conflict resolution skills at a micro-level in child-to-child relationships. This approach did not help school populations with the conflict of interest described above: traumatised teachers who were not allowed by their head to talk to the pupils about the conflict, and pupils who were in need of help to conceptualise and explore what they had actually experienced. The programme could therefore be argued to have failed the teachers in providing them with necessary tools for engaging with the knowledge and preoccupations of their pupils. It is likely that teachers in other similar situations would need similar scaffolding in their follow-up of pupils after conflict.

The findings from Logos raise some broader questions related to the development of curricula and materials in similar research contexts. The awareness revealed by the pupils certainly shows that there is a considerable gap between the articulated needs of the pupils and the perception of teachers and school structures, as well as the level of support offered by the implementation of the PEP. The reservations of the teachers also suggest that simply to add contextual issues as part of the curricula would be an unfruitful approach, and would have to be supplemented by an integrative scaffolding and training of teachers on a far more comprehensive scale than the current cascade approach often offered by international agencies. The concerns of the teachers also echo some of the concerns regarding truth-telling as a concept, that engaging in conflict narratives exposes the various participants to the risk of re-traumatisation (Hayner, 2001, p. 149). However, if children are to be taken seriously as actors with a right to participate in, and inform their own educational experiences, we believe the aspect of addressing controversial, emotional and difficult topics should be pushed further –

with all the implications for curriculum design and teacher training this would imply. On the other hand, if teachers are to be taken equally seriously, it would be important in curriculum design processes to accommodate participatory discussions about how teachers can be supported to a larger extent.

4.2 Addressing or ignoring causes of violence?

This section draws on interview-data from the school 'Macheleo' in Nakuru. In this case study, patterns similar to the ones discussed in the 'Logos' case study emerged, but with deeper contextual layers related to perceptions of the political backdrop of violence at the national level. In this case study we therefore pay particular attention to perspectives related to historical memory, and awareness of political issues at the national level. With the pupils relating these aspects to the question of why the violence broke out, we use the concept of 'memory' as a shorthand to refer to the awareness of the political and historical backdrop of the violence. We argue that the pupils were in a process of verbalising how the violence interconnected with the wider societal context, while the teachers were not prepared to respond to or guide this analysis, and were furthermore not supported by the peace education curricula to do so.

Macheleo is located in urban Nakuru, and had a total enrolment of 1108 pupils in 2012. A record of ethnic representation was not kept, but the population was mixed. According to the head teacher, the school composition had changed slightly during and after the PEV. She claimed that the school lost pupils originating from Nyanza in 2008, but that many of these pupils had returned by 2010. She further claimed that there was an influx of pupils from the central province; particularly Kikuyu coming from Eldoret and Kisumu.

Having lived through the violence and having been exposed to adult discussions and media output during and following the PEV, the pupils in the case study school Macheleo showed an emerging ability to see the violence in connection to the political economy of the country. The teachers, on the other hand were reluctant to engage the pupils in political discussions, arguing that they were too young. The PE materials and the conflict resolution materials in them were therefore largely used for discussing every-day life conflicts on a micro level.

Nakuru was heavily affected by the PEV (Harneit-Sievers & Peters, 2008). Two particularly important factors stood out from the accounts given in the interviews. First, the narrative descriptions of the violence unambiguously asserted that the perpetrators were mainly 'outsiders' rather than neighbours. The Nairobi-based Mafioso group Mungiki was regularly

mentioned as the main negative force involved. Second, the PEV was interpreted as an ethnic conflict. Nakuru was commonly described as a cosmopolitan city with a wider range of ethnicities represented. Although the interviewees at Macheleo were generally positive in their descriptions of the multi-ethnic community, there were also critical voices, pointing out that mixed ethnicities could make the community more prone to violence. The whole city was affected by the violence, and narratives of fear and trauma reoccurred repeatedly in the interviews. Many of the interviewees had witnessed violence at close quarters, and a majority of the pupils interviewed had experienced displacements.

Despite describing the community as being at peace in 2012, the interviewees were also pointing to drivers of conflict which were still present in the community. One of these issues was regarding justice – the fact that the violence had never been thoroughly dealt with, and that the perpetrators had not been held accountable for their crimes: ‘Our neighbour, [...] she used to wanting to cut us because we were the Luos’ (pupil 30 interview). ‘And the thing that is disturbing me is that our neighbour wanted to destroy us’ (pupil 23 interview). These quotes resemble the above discussion on pupils’ vulnerability and knowledge, and the pupils’ need for truth telling. However, this section of the paper will deal with a slightly different aspect of the emergency response – namely dilemmas related to engaging pupils in an interpretation of the PEV which goes beyond the understanding of the outbreak as spontaneous and random to incorporating the historical and political background.

To a certain extent, the pupils had an understanding of the violence which placed what was mostly seen as spontaneous acts in a greater context; political disagreement, poor governance, incited violence and ethnic tension were all named as reasons in the interviews. In the following quote a pupil describe how the violence came as a result of lack of trust in the election procedures: ‘They said that the votes were stolen, and they did not have peace there. No, they started fighting saying that the votes were stolen’ (pupil 31 interview).

That the fight came as a result of a rigged election was a common explanation. However, one pupil in particular pointed to electoral violence as being a reoccurring problem in Kenya: ‘People were afraid of giving out their votes because they thought they will again start that issue of fighting. [...] Some of my family members they refused to vote because of that’ (pupil 10 interview). Further, a number of pupils indicated in their accounts that they thought the violence had been incited: ‘They would come to every house and say that if you are a man, you get out,

you help us to kill the others' (pupil 5 interview). The incited violence was by some pupils linked to high-stake politicians:

When the day for election arrived the lights went off, but I think they paid the Kenyan power to take the lights off, [...] and then they stole the votes. [...] He just used his money to pay the Kenya Power (pupil 28 interview).

Uhuru Kenyatta saw that the Kikuyus were really suffering. He tried to help them by letting the Mungiki out so that they can help us because we were killed a lot. Now the Mungiki were free. [...] They want to kill people. They just kill you (pupil 25 interview).

The incited violence was commonly mentioned in connection with the ICC-process, which was going on at the time. As one pupil put it: 'We did not know which person who was causing the violence, but now the ICC, I hope they will be able to find the people who were responsible' (pupil 19 interview). Not only does this show a beginning analysis of violence as more than spontaneous, but it shows that the pupils were aware of the present political debates in the county.

The school leadership and teachers at Macheleo were actively engaged in activities proposed in the PEP. However, despite these efforts, there was reluctance among the teachers to address the political backdrop of the violence in teaching. This reluctance is in line with the picture drawn by national and international media, where the violence was mainly described as spontaneous ethnic clashes without any explanation of the historical and political background. The unanimous understanding among the teachers was that the pupils were too young to learn about politics:

When we are in school we really don't talk about politics. Remember they are twelve years old so their minds have not been opened up about politics and all that. So we don't talk about Politics. We only talk touch about [it] in Social Studies; maybe we talk about the day-to-day activities that take place within the parliament, the government, within the local council and all that. But if you mean the word 'politics', politics doesn't come in (teacher 1 interview).

The quote illustrates an attitude found among the majority of teachers. Although the Social Studies curriculum addressed topics such as the political system of Kenya, peace and conflict, and governance, the teachers seemed to be of the opinion that the pupils were too young for discussing the connection between politics and the PEV. As discussed in the above

section, engaging in the ‘what’ and ‘why’ of the conflict is a challenging task for teachers who are themselves in a process of coming to terms with their own experiences. However, the empirical findings suggest that the pupils were already engaging in these questions, without the support of curricula. The pupils at Macheleo had like the pupils at Logos first-hand experience with violence and discussions between adults. Due to this they had formed opinions on what had happened, and had started an initial analysis of why.

The pupils interviewed at Macheleo were members of the peace club, and seemed passionate about peaceful conflict resolution. As one pupil expressed:

They could have sat down and think about the problem. [...] From every constituency they could just select a person from there to go and sit down with the other people all over the country and discuss with them what the problem was all about and then they find out the solution rather than fighting (pupil 29 interview).

That the above pupil suggested dialogue as an alternative response to the electoral procedures and response can be seen in connection to the wider focus on conflict resolution in the school. The PEP-materials were actively used, where different dialogic practices play a central part. The PEP was designed to be integrated into Life Skills, a subject largely focusing on the everyday lives of the pupils. Through this, a connection was made between conflict mediation in the everyday-lives of the pupils, and in a wider political perspective. The same dialogic approach was argued to be applicable for both solving conflicts related to the ownership of a book in the classroom and disagreement over electoral results on a national level. Although this approach certainly makes the content taught relevant and tangible, and could be a valuable starting point for understanding complex political affairs and processes, we wonder whether equating these two conflict levels in the PEP could lead to reducing the issue of national-level conflict-solving to a question of promoting peaceful co-existence, with issues of social justice, human agency and historical drivers of conflict not being addressed⁸

This concern is reflected in the gap between the pupil and the teacher perceptions. On the one hand the teachers present the PEV as an unfounded and spontaneous act of violence to the pupils, arguing that they are too young to engage in the wider picture. On the other hand, the pupil interviews show that they are in a continuous process of analysing and trying to understand how the violence is related to the wider political economy. As this process

⁸ These tensions are also connected to the policy aspects of the creation of the programme and the subsequent implementation process. For a more in-depth discussion of this, see Lauritzen (2016a, p. 323-326).

continues, and the children become adults, they will encounter a reality where ethnic groups are systematically discriminated against, manifesting itself in areas such as land ownership and access to social services such as education and health. This reality is deeply entangled with the history of Kenya and the political system, and when faced with this, it is questionable whether the skills and attitudes related to conflict resolution taught in school are sufficiently transferable. After all, the conflict resolution taught in school has been largely connected to unfounded disagreement, not disagreements and conflicts that will have a profound impact on the pupils' lives.

In the analysis of the interview data from Macheleo it thus became clear that the near past and the slightly more distant past both are present in the consciousness of the pupils. As mentioned, Elizabeth Cole (2007) argues that revised history curricula could foster long-term reconciliation is interesting in this respect. However, negotiating such a pedagogical practice is an immense challenge for the teacher, and the picture drawn of the context in Macheleo is similar to that of Logos in that whereas the pupils showed an emerging understanding of the connection between the wider political economy and the local violence, the teachers were reluctant to engage in these narratives. These tensions within the conflicting perceptions are worth considering in wider discussions of the design of peace education curricula. When non-violent conflict resolution strategies taught in schools are detached from the historical and political background that fuel the violence, will these carry less legitimacy among the school population than if they were taught with an explicit reference to this context? On the other hand, if critical peace education approaches to knowledge construction in the classroom is more widely implemented in post-conflict settings, these might face large challenges if the needs of the teachers required to implement these strategies are not sufficiently considered.

6. Conclusion

Drawing on analysis of interviews conducted in Kenyan primary schools following the PEV, this article has discussed some challenges arising in the implementation of standardised peace education curricula in primary schools. A main finding of the study is a gap between the need to address context-related issues as articulated by the pupils, and the lack of opportunity for them to do so within the confines of the peace education curriculum provided. Secondly, the article illustrates the difficult position of the teachers, who are caught in-between the needs of

the pupils and their own challenges. The data shows that teachers are reluctant to address contextual issues related to truth-telling and historical memory in their teaching. They are worried that it could create more conflict, and they feel the pupils are too young to be involved in political discussions. There is of course a risk that curricular contents can worsen a conflict. In the case of Rwanda the historical narrative expounded through the education system was found to have fuelled the 1994 genocide (Bijlsma, 2009; Obura, 2003). Fear of stirring up conflict was also found to be a factor for why the schools did not engage in the contextual issues described above. However, a complete absence of context in educational materials is not the only alternative. Davies (2004) argues that rather than ‘sanitising’ the curricula, as was done in all the case-study schools where teachers refused to discuss the conflict and its historical context with the pupils, education can be ‘sensitised’.

The process of sensitising in this case would involve exposing the pupils to a nuanced account of the political economy and engaging them in fruitful discussions, where their expertise on the communities’ understandings of the violence were taken into account; the pupils could then develop critical thinking and analytical skills. However, the structural framing of the PEP as an additive and decontextualized programme, limited the teachers’ opportunities for rethinking their pedagogical practices. As Author (2016a) has discussed, choosing an ‘additive approach’ for the programme meant that educational system was not structurally altered - as advocated by critical peace education (Bajaj & Brantmeier, 2011; Bajaj, 2015). To put it bluntly: the programme did not provide the teachers extra skills, just extra work. It is also worth noticing that serious involvement of children in truth telling and engaging in the historical narrative is practiced in other arenas of peacebuilding in Kenya, for instance through active participation in the work of the Kenyan Truth, Reconciliation and Justice Commission. Although the report of the TRJC has been criticised for a series of shortcomings, analysts give the report credit for its acknowledgement of children as a special group of victims, and facilitating the involvement of children in commission hearings (Ndungú 2014/ICTJ briefing May 2014).

Consequently, consideration should be given to the ability of teachers to fulfil this need without sufficient support and scaffolding. Teachers should not be required to teach issues that are too challenging for them to handle, or narratives that they themselves do not recognise or acknowledge. The responses of the teachers in the case study schools are not surprising, as experiences from the context of Northern Ireland revealed that teachers might resist the notion that their pupils have any awareness of sectarianism in their local community, and feel that to address these issues in school will only heighten negative awareness (McIlwaine, 2013, p. 122).

Similarly, studies from Cyprus show that teachers have a positive view of addressing peace and conflict in their teaching, but feel pedagogically uncomfortable in doing so (Zembylas et al., 2011; Zembylas et al., 2012). Accordingly, curricula and methods by themselves are not sufficient in order to achieve transformative results, teachers also need training and support to build the necessary understanding and skills to address conflict-specific issues and historically rooted conflict narratives. It would seem that for the case of Kenya, training teachers through a cascade model might be insufficient. The extent to which peace education curricula could function as scaffolding for teachers would therefore be an important area for future exploration. It is our view that the voices of both teachers and pupils must be taken seriously. Their shared knowledge should therefore be taken into consideration in the development of peace education curricula. In the Kenyan PEP, neither of these perspectives were properly considered. Teachers were consulted through workshops, and their voices were to some extent integrated in the development of the curricula, but the process was still predominantly top-down. The voices of the pupils were not involved in the process whatsoever. Such a top-down process might end up producing a programme built on an understanding of peace education that is significantly different from what school populations understand peace education to be (Author 2016b). This is part of the reason why we mainly focus on pupils' voices in the article, with the perspectives of teachers taking on a secondary role.

The empirical example presented in this article illustrates some challenges arising from top-down approaches to curriculum development. The actual teaching of the teachers, the articulated needs of the pupils and the actual content of the PE curricula are pointing in three different directions, and the support offered through the peace education curricula thus falls short of covering both the needs of the teachers and the pupils. Echoing the findings of Zvi Bekerman (2009, p. 244-5) the data from the Kenyan schools suggest that an even stronger focus on the role of the teacher in relation to programme design is warranted, both in peace education and in wider aspects of curriculum studies related to the teaching of challenging, emotional and controversial issues.

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