

Peacebuilding through Language Mentorship in Rwandan Education:

Analysing Key Post-Genocide Challenges

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Abstract

Several studies have been conducted following a 2008 policy in Rwanda that made English language the medium of instruction from the fourth year of primary school. However, there is a considerable research gap regarding the links between language policy changes, positive peace and peacebuilding generally. Thus, based on existing knowledge that language introduction can harm positive peace, this paper investigates how a language mentorship programme contributes to easing teachers' worries in their working environment and therefore plays a role in positive peace restoration and peacebuilding at large. Qualitative data were collected from mentors, head teachers, and teachers sampled from four rural districts in Rwanda. The findings indicate that the School-Based Mentorship (SBM) programme contributes to positive peace restoration wherever mentors are helping teachers to regain their confidence in classroom management. Teachers are helped to feel comfortable in the language of instruction, which makes them feel safe at work, and they subsequently recover the classroom authority they had been lacking. The SBM programme yields positive results where the mentor and head teacher work hand in hand. Thus, the lack of such collaboration, a single class for all trainees, despite their different language needs, lack of adequate teaching materials, unstructured or absence of mentors' regular monitoring and evaluation, are among challenges hindering the maximum delivery of the programme.

Keywords

Mentorship programme, English as a medium of instruction, language policy, peacebuilding, positive peace, mentors, teachers.

Introduction

Rwanda is a country that was severely shaken by the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi. Over the last two decades, however, the country has made tremendous strides in mending its social fabric. The vitality of the country is observed through its economic growth (Pinon and Haydon, 2010), as well as successful mechanisms and strategies to increase citizens' social wellbeing. The education sector has also undergone considerable changes, including the shift in 2008 that made English the language of instruction from the fourth year of primary school upwards (Gahigi, 2008; MINEDUC, 2008; Lulu, 2011; Clover, 2012).

This language shift led to teachers' discomfort, especially in primary schools (Uwambayinema, 2013; Adedeji and Olaniyan, 2011; Clover, 2012; Rosendal, 2009; LeClerc, 2008 in Steflja, 2012; Munyankesha, 2004; Samuelson and Freedman, 2010; Pinon and Haydon, 2010), as most of them were initially francophones. Embarrassment resulting from the introduction of English as a new language of instruction is explained as a threat to positive peace (Barash and Webel, 2002). This concept is generally defined as an overarching framework that creates an optimal environment for human potential to flourish, promotes fair social conditions, reduces grievances and resolves remaining disagreements without the use of violence (Institute for Economics and Peace, 2015; Barash and Webel, 2002).

Thus, the emerging situation brought about a need for peacebuilding, not in the wider perspective of Rwandan society, but peacebuilding in a narrow dimension, i.e. limited to the teaching sector, so as to safeguard the threatened positive peace in that area. The change in language policy affected teachers' positive peace, as some of them expressed their worry about pursuing their profession in the new language of instruction; hence they thought their career was being jeopardised (Lulu, 2011; Clover, 2012).

Although many studies have been conducted on English as a medium of instruction to the detriment of French (Nzitatakuze, 2011; Uwambayinema, 2013; Kagwesage, 2013; Sinclair, 2012; Assan and Walker, 2012; etc.), there is a substantial research gap between the above-mentioned language policy change and peacebuilding. Likewise, there have been several studies on peace, peace building and reconciliation in the Rwandan post-genocide era (Sentama, 2009; Juma, 2005; Chi, 2005). However, no explicit research has been conducted on the impact of language policy changes on positive peace and peacebuilding at large. A change in language policy may jeopardise positive peace in the teaching sector, as indicated above, as well as throughout the Rwandan society, since teachers who are not familiar with the new language may fail to communicate in their classes through the new language of instruction. This could result in job insecurity, a guilty conscience for not delivering as they should, and latent fear of losing their job if the lack of proficiency in the new language of instruction persists. In fact, Samuelson and Freedman (2010) indicate that language policies are one of the factors that can cause conflict, and there is a close relationship between language and identity, and between language and political, societal, and economic conflicts in a society that undergoes changes in language use. In the Rwandan context, the change in language policy needs analysing to learn more about the impact of the introduction of English as the sole medium of instruction from the fourth year of primary school, on teachers' ability to communicate and interrelate between themselves in their working environment, and, more particularly, between teachers and their leaders, as well as between teachers and pupils.

Thus, the point of departure for this study is the gap observed from studying attempts to restore teachers' positive peace and their comfort vis-à-vis English as a medium of instruction. Teachers are trusted in society, since they deliver knowledge to many young people – the future leaders and parents. Moreover, teachers are key determinants of education quality (Mourshed et al.2010, in Sayed et. al., 2016) and play a paramount role as agents of nation building, identity construction and peace and reconciliation (Durrani and Dunne, 2010; Smith et al. 2011). As a result, promoting positive peace and peacebuilding within teachers' working environment will benefit the whole nation.

The study therefore aims at eliciting one of the ways in which the above-mentioned research gap is being bridged, by exploring how the School-Based Mentorship (SBM) programme contributes to reducing the tension described above. This programme was established by the Ministry of Education (MINEDUC) in 2012 and was expected to support 29,000 teachers, in developing their English language skills, as well as teaching methods, to the ratio of two hours of training a week (REB, 2013; British Council, 2014). The support occurs through observing teachers' lessons, peer teaching, and offering model lessons, and mentors are tasked with providing debriefs on lessons taught, in order to offer the mentees relevant advice (British Council, 2014). The study then looks at how the SBM programme contributes to peacebuilding by restoring positive peace among primary teachers. This study analyses the challenges faced by SBM programme key stakeholders in their duties. Finally, the research provides recommendations to mitigate identified challenges to the SBM programme.

Scope of the study

Although the mentorship programme operates at both primary and secondary school levels, our study was limited to the primary school level in rural areas. Our delimitation was motivated mainly by the fact that English language problems are reported more at rural primary school level (Uwambayinema, 2013; Nzitabakuze, 2011) than anywhere else. In addition, from our initial observation, the secondary level of 12-year basic education comprises many young teachers who may have studied English either in secondary schools or at university; hence we assumed that they do not face acute challenges relating to the English language.

Literature Review

The language policy in Rwanda has changed over the last two decades. This dynamism led to exponential English language growth throughout Rwandan society. More specifically, the education sector went through particular language changes. The latest development concerns the language shift in 2008 where English replaced French as the medium of instruction from primary four upwards. It is noteworthy that such a change in the language of instruction was abrupt and is reported to have been a threat to teachers' positive peace, as explained further in this section.

English language dynamics in Rwandan education

In 1995, the Government of Rwanda decided to create a 'trilingual' society, introducing English as an official language and medium of instruction in addition to Kinyarwanda and French (Kagwesage, 2013; LeClerc, 2008; Samuelson and Freedman, 2010). The introduction of English was considered necessary because of the new demographic composition of Rwandan society (Kagwesage, 2013), which included people who had grown up in English-speaking countries and did not speak French (Samuelson and Freedman, 2010).

The influence of English widened in the Rwandan education system in 1998, as this language was now taught from primary to tertiary level. This was done to enable students to better integrate into the larger society (Uwambayinema, 2013). At this point, English was taught as one subject among several in different schools. Likewise, lecturers at tertiary level could teach in either French or English, depending on the language they were comfortable with.

In 2008, the government made a major language reform in the education system. Thus, a new policy was enacted with immediate effect, requiring teachers and learners, from primary four to tertiary level, to use English as the medium of instruction in all of their academic subjects (MINEDUC, 2008 in Kagwesage, 2013). This new language policy concerned all learners, regardless of whether they had been learning in French or in English until that point. The new language policy was implemented, despite statistics showing that French predominated over English in workplaces and even more in the teaching sector (Rosendal, 2009; LeClerc, 2008; Munyankesha, 2004; Samuelson and Freedman, 2010; Pinon and Haydon, 2010). The rationale for this change was that making English the language of instruction would enable people to integrate more easily into sub-regional organisations and promote economic growth by facilitating access to international markets.

English language and positive peace in the Rwandan education sector

The implementation of the language switch posed some significant problems for a country that was originally francophone (Adedeji and Olaniyan, 2011). In addition, the abruptness of the change created problems related to the inability of teachers and students to communicate appropriately in the new language, frustration for teachers who could not communicate perfectly in the new language of instruction, all of which negatively impacted on the quality of education, as the content was not delivered as expected (Uwambayinema, 2013). Further, different corroborating testimonies indicated that some teachers left the profession after deciding that it was too late for them to learn a new language (Lulu, 2011). Others felt their job was at stake, as it was too hard for them to immediately start teaching in a new language (Lulu, 2011, Clover, 2012).

In the circumstances described above, Friedrich (2007), alongside critics of universal languages, i.e. international languages, indicates that conflict is inevitable, as people of all kinds feel threatened when they are obliged to embrace a new language and are bombarded with a variety of new language materials. They are therefore likely to react to avoid losing their identity, their cultural heritage, and ultimately their place in the world. Such tensions are therefore likely to threaten positive peace (Barash and Webel, 2002). The undermining of positive peace, in this view, results from resistance to emerging change, and the desire to maintain the status quo, for example, teaching in Kinyarwanda and French as mediums of instruction. Moreover, individuals who do not master the new language, while they are educated, are prone to feel victims of social injustice, in case their limited linguistic ability does not allow them to comfortably carry out their daily duties.

To mitigate the emerging problems, in 2012, MINEDUC launched the SBM programme to institutionalise English language support for teachers (REB, 2013). In this regard, 60 senior mentors were recruited to train and oversee nearly 1,000 school-based mentors, who worked at two schools each (British Council, 2014). The programme was expected to assist teachers and help them develop fluency with English language in their daily work, as already explained. The programme was therefore expected to create a safe and effective working atmosphere for primary teachers.

This paper seeks to answer the following research questions:

1. How do teachers of different ages interpret the SBM programme as a tool to promote positive peace?
2. Are mentors, both local and regional, using the programme as a peace-promoting tool, helping teachers restore positive peace through the English language?
3. Do leaders at school facilitate the mentorship programme with a view to promoting peacebuilding among teachers (in Rwandan education)?
4. What are the challenges faced by key stakeholders in the SBM programme and how can they be addressed to build sustainable peace?

Theoretical framework

The study adopts a socio-linguistic approach and is inscribed in the broad spectrum of studying the impact of language policy changes on positive peace and peacebuilding at large. In fact, the research was guided by the theory that a swift change in language policy and language function can lead to conflict, as particular identities and sections of society are linked to the new functional language more than others in a society (Friedrich, 2007; Phillipson, 1992). In the context of Rwanda, categories of respondents emerged, resulting from the implementation of a new language policy that made English a medium of instruction to replace French in a major portion of the education sector. On the one hand, as previously explained, there are teachers who had studied in a French-speaking environment and were subsequently teaching in French, since the latter was also a medium of instruction. On the other hand, there are some others who had studied in English, either because they had grown up outside Rwanda in an English-speaking environment, or simply because English was a major in their studies. Thus, with the new language policy implementation, non-English speaking teachers felt disadvantaged compared to the English-speaking group (Stefflja, 2012).

The resulting challenge is therefore compromising positive peace in terms of the working environment, which is specifically defined as the establishment of egalitarian working conditions and the lack of any structure that can cause people's resentment and fear for their bread-winning activities (Galtung, 1969). With this definition, Galtung argues that there is no open conflict among citizens, but there are latent grievances and dissatisfaction that could explode into open social conflict. Besides, Barash and Webel (2002) indicate that positive peace relies on respect for human rights, education, and economic wellbeing, which are crucial for long-lasting peace. Thus, these elements need to be constantly in place for the maintenance of peace, and anything likely to disturb them could bring harm to 'positive peace' and 'peacebuilding' (Barash and Webel, 2002).

As already highlighted, the introduction of English as a sole medium of instruction from primary four faced some bottlenecks. One of them was its interpretation by some francophone teachers who believed that they were going to lose their jobs to the benefit of foreigners. The latter were flocking to the country to teach English, alongside anglophone Rwandans (Clover, 2012). As a result, the socio-linguistic theory that universal languages can do more harm than good (Friedrich, 2007) started materialising. In fact, different scholars indicate that English, for example, as a universal language, may bring about tension in society, and it is blamed

for displacing and replacing other languages (Phillipson, 1992), promoting communicative inequality (Tsuda, 1997), and disrupting the ecosystem of languages by spreading its hegemonic force throughout the world (Pennycook, 1994).

Research Methodology

This study is a qualitative exploratory research focusing on the input of the SBM programme to positive peace and peacebuilding at large. The following sections indicate where and how information was collected and analysed through different methods and techniques.

Area and population of the study

The study was carried out in four rural districts, namely, Nyaruguru, Bugesera, Rulindo and Rutsiro, i.e. one per province, except Kigali City. In addition, two mentored schools were selected from each district to provide the main informants for the research population, namely, teachers, mentors, and head teachers.

Sample size and sampling techniques

In this study, a multi-stage simple random sampling, was used to identify the districts, as well as the two schools within each district. This sampling technique was used with a view to giving equal coverage to each rural district and each school to be selected.

One mentor and one head teacher from the eight sampled schools were purposively selected through convenience sampling. Hence, eight mentors and eight head teachers, one per school, participated in the research as informants. In addition, 40 teachers were purposively selected. Judgment sampling was used to select five teachers per school, who were teaching prior to the implementation of the new language policy that made English the only medium of instruction from primary four. Teaching experience was taken into account for informants to be selected. In reality, the older teachers are reportedly said to have faced more challenges related to the use of the English language in their career.

Data collection

In this study, semi-structured interviews were used with all of the above-mentioned informants. For the sake of crosschecking the information obtained, focus group discussions were used with teachers. In addition, an audio-recorder was used to preserve the collected data. Using the two data collection tools is important, as, for instance, the informant may forget to mention some interesting information during an individual interview. This was catered for by group discussion, in which informants could remind one another of any aspect of the answers they were providing. On the other hand, however, during group discussion, any informant may have felt embarrassed to reveal any information judged too sensitive. This problem was therefore solved by individual semi-structured interviews.

Regarding the rationale behind using semi-structured interviews, this was chosen simply because it appears less artificial and more natural than a structured interview and resembles a conversation between equal participants. Therefore, instead of feeling questioned, the informant felt more comfortable with the researcher and provided the information without any sense of pressure.

In addition, two class observations were also negotiated with two different teachers per school. The class observation allowed for the collecting of information about the class atmosphere in general, as well as

the attitude and behaviour of the teachers while using English. Such observation sessions also allowed the gathering of information on the extent to which the SBM programme is delivering, and how comfortable teachers are becoming with English as a medium of instruction.

Briefly, there was a combination of data collection tools complementing one another to gather valid and relevant information. To ensure this validity, the interview guides were piloted with two teachers. They were asked to comment on the length, structure and wording of the questionnaire, and questions were thereafter amended where needed. Note that this piloting phase was carried out with volunteering teachers who were not part of the selected sample. The triangulation made through the use of different data collection tools also allowed the cross checking of information from different informants, hence counteracting any threat to reliability. Also noteworthy is that informants' consent was sought and obtained. The interviews and focus group discussions were all audio-recorded to retain all details for the analysis step.

As one of the authors was a mentor during the data collection phase, we initially agreed that she would collect data from schools where she would appear as a researcher rather than a direct actor in the SBM. This investigator also tried to be neutral by avoiding any bias from knowledge in the field, and she was directed by interview guides preset by both researchers, as well as responses from informants while collecting the data. Moreover, before the data analysis, both researchers agreed upon a data analysis plan to be followed, so as to ensure the neutrality of the researcher, who was then a direct actor in the mentorship programme.

Data analysis

A thematic analysis was used to study the collected data. In this context, a list of codes was assigned to data and later sorted into emerging themes and sub-themes. The themes and sub-themes were about teachers' interpretation of the mentorship programme as a tool to promote positive peace. They also clarify how mentors use the programme as a peace-promoting tool, helping teachers to make peace with the English language, i.e. feel comfortable while speaking it. In addition, themes and sub-themes explain how head teachers facilitate the mentorship programme with a view to promoting peacebuilding among teachers, and the different challenges faced by different stakeholders of the SBM programme.

Presentation of the Findings

This article analyses the effect of the new language policy on the teaching environment and studies the contribution of the SBM programme to easing teachers' concerns regarding their working environment following the implementation of the language policy. The findings are therefore from informants' narratives on the mentorship programme itself and how it affects teachers' perception and use of the English language.

Negative effect of the new language policy on the teaching environment

The research examined the negative impact that the new language policy has had on its implementers on the ground, i.e. teachers and head teachers as the main actors in the teaching sector. In this regard, the researchers analysed teachers' responses when they learnt about the policy that made English the sole language of instruction from the fourth year of primary school, to the detriment of French. Such information was collected to check whether teachers were afraid the new language of instruction would put their job at stake. In addition, the gathering of information aimed to investigate whether the new language was compromising

job security and teachers' positive peace in their working environment.

Teachers' Narratives on Their Attitudes Prior to Mentorship Implementation

Describing their attitudes when they learnt that English was going to be used as a medium of instruction, informant teachers provided various testimonies. The converging points were, however: discomfort, despondency, fear of losing their job and anxiety about the overall challenging situation, as depicted in the statements below:

It was challenging for me, as I had been teaching in Kinyarwanda and French only. I had not studied English sufficiently to be able to teach in that language. I was therefore so worried that I could even lose my job, and I think I was not the only one with such concerns. I thought that if I failed to teach in English, I would subsequently be sacked from my job and have to go back home.

It is worth noting that the discomfort and fear of losing one's job were experienced more by older teachers, as represented in the following statement from one of the informants:

Regarding my colleagues, as you understand, I was working with older colleagues who were in a worse situation, since many of them were going to face English for the first time. They used to tell me that I was young and I would be able to adapt by learning the new language of instruction. On their side, they were very desperate, as they were saying that their advanced age would not allow them to learn that language. Old teachers thought they were going to be sacked and replaced by new competent teachers who could easily use English in class.

Although the arrival of English was considered a problem, a few teachers among informants reacted differently to the introduction of the new language of instruction, as in the following testimony:

I had no fear; teachers' level in English was almost the same. So I believed that the government would find the solution to the problem, and it has been so.

Thus, all teachers did not have the same perception of English as a medium of instruction, and the divergence was mainly due to their age and their study background, since there are some who had studied English, especially young teachers, while others had not.

Head teachers' perception of English as a medium of instruction

Giving their views on the use of English as a medium of instruction, the majority of head teachers, i.e. seven out of eight interviewed, recognised that they were worried, not necessarily for themselves but for the teachers under them.

According to one head teacher, it was a big problem for teachers to immediately start using English as the new language of instruction after the adoption of the new language policy. According to that head teacher, the new programme was complicated and very challenging to assimilate for someone who was used to teaching in French and had never used English in their work. This informant went on to indicate that for herself, she had no hope of continuing in her job when she was informed that English was to replace French as a language of instruction:

I felt like the job for teachers who studied in the francophone system was terminating. I thought we were going to be dismissed and the jobs would be taken by teachers who had studied in English. Then, we were surprised when they told us that we would keep working and be given on-job English language training, until we acquire the ability to teach in that language.

The atmosphere described above was emphasised by another head teacher, who indicated that the worry and fear were inevitable, as he thought that the introduction of English was going to be a hard task for head teachers and francophone teachers with no background in English. This head teacher feared the jobs of some could be jeopardised, although in practice this scenario did not eventuate.

Teachers' interpretation of the mentorship programme

The analysis of informants' narratives indicates that many teachers were happy to be involved with the mentorship programme. According to them, the programme was going to develop teachers' English language. This is confirmed by teachers' corroborating testimonies describing the SBM programme as a solution to their ordeal. In fact, the mentorship programme was meant to help them overcome the language barrier and therefore enable them teach in a language they would master, as stated in the following assertion:

When I learnt that we were going to have a mentor at this school, I felt like they were coming to assist all teachers upgrade their English language skills. Even the ones who felt frustrated, who were desperate, thinking they were going to be dismissed, could also be supported by the mentor. I pictured mentors as helpers who were coming to kindly assist teachers in their English language learning, reminding them of what they may have learned earlier.

However, a small number of teachers expressed open hostility towards the SBM programme, arguing that they do not know what the mentor is doing for them:

We have been disappointed.[...] You can't know when mentors will be with teachers, given that even on holidays, there are teachers who live in remote areas and they therefore don't attend organised training. For the time being, I actually don't know the mentor's responsibilities and duties; [...] I have never seen the mentor helping me in my science subjects.

As a result, such teachers did not actively participate in the mentorship activities, since they thought the mentorship programme did not respond to their needs.

The research findings also indicate that there is a category of teachers who manifested indifference towards the mentorship programme. In this regard, a few teachers, especially the young ones, argued that they did not have any expectations, as they were not aware of the programme before the mentors arrived at their schools: 'We didn't know what they were here for, since we were not even informed of their arrival'.

Mentorship contribution to peacebuilding

One of the salient objectives of the study was to know how the mentorship programme contributed to positive peace and peacebuilding in the Rwandan teaching environment. In this regard, we analysed informants' narratives with a particular focus on how mentors' activities and their overall performance helped teaching staff, mainly in primary schools, regain confidence and restore positive peace in their working environment. The resulting findings indicate that smooth collaboration among mentors, teachers, and head teachers helped mentees deal with the initial turmoil, and feel at ease with the English language. Teachers therefore settled down and comfortably carried out their duties.

Starting with mentors themselves, they considered their activities as peacebuilding input, because when they arrived in the field, they found that teachers were desperate. According to mentors, most of the teachers felt confused and hopeless, as they were struggling with the language in which they had to deliver the teaching content. Mentors therefore contributed greatly to restoring teachers' hope and self-confidence. In addition,

they brought about teachers' positive attitudes towards the English language. Hence, they contributed to peacebuilding, as expressed in the statement below by one mentor:

There is just a conflict between this transition from a certain language to another language. That is conflict because people will not understand why you have changed from French to English. That conflict may not come out, but inside it will be there. So peacebuilding will come when the mentor tries to reconcile both sides [...] And there is another side which has a negative attitude [...] You see, that is a conflict which needs peacebuilding, as there is no peace of mind [...]. So that is the link between mentorship and peacebuilding.

Mentors were tasked with helping teachers feel at ease with the English language. To meet their goal, mentors had to interact with teachers on a regular basis, visit teachers in their classrooms to observe their lessons, and subsequently give them feedback in a debriefing meeting. In addition, all mentors indicated that they trained teachers for two hours a week, and the training also continued for one or two weeks during holidays.

Further, some mentors indicated that they applied some other strategies to help teachers. In this regard, songs, charts and videos – for listening activities – among others, were used to connect with teachers, and increase their facility with the target language. All of these strategies were described by mentors as a means to develop teachers' communication skills. The mentors were successful in reviving teachers' self-confidence and helping them fully integrate with their working environment. Teachers' grievances disappeared, hence they gained positive peace. In fact, teachers did not feel any more resentment, once they were comfortable with English in their career, as reiterated one of the mentors:

I think with peacebuilding you don't mean the lack of bullets or war, but that kind of positive atmosphere [in which] there is no tension with yourself, there is no pressure. You can carry out your duties peacefully without any problem. It is in that context that we help teachers; first of all, to make them feel comfortable. In addition, to live in peace with the language because there was initially that kind of conflict: conflict between the teachers, who are the key stakeholders in the mentorship programme, and the new language which was coming.

Describing the benefits of the SBM programme, different teachers came back to the importance of the programme to their positive peace. Teachers declared that the kind of fear they had before the arrival of mentors then faded away, owing to mentors' support in the use of the English language. Teachers added that, unlike before, when they were visited by Rwanda Education Board (REB) officials, they were no longer afraid, since they had acquired some English speaking skills. In fact, they could manage to run classes independently, owing to the mentorship programme.

Regarding the contribution of SBM programme input to peacebuilding, one older teacher stated that teaching in a language they had never used before was troublesome. She added that initially teachers were upset: some resigned, while others struggled to adapt to the change. According to that informant, however, the mentorship programme helped teachers regain the internal peace they had lost. She said that she now feels useful in the community and can once again act as a role model in the society: 'I met some Europeans in a market, and they were speaking English only. Sellers were unable to understand their needs. So, I became a mediator, and both sides managed to understand each other, and they were very happy'. Thus, by regaining the feeling of usefulness in society, teachers overcame the attitudes of social injustice and rejection that had been haunting them, as reported by some writers (Lulu, 2011; Clover, 2012).

However, even though the majority of teachers affirmed that they had gained a lot from the mentorship, there were some others who indicated that much still needs to be done. They argued that the mentorship programme can lead to positive peace when English knowledge increases and teachers feel free to speak English, which has not been fully achieved. This corroborates what we observed in classes, as we observed that some teachers were unable to deliver their lesson in correct English and had to embarrassingly resort to Kinyarwanda, their mother tongue. Thus, teachers reiterated that mentors must work hard in order to help every trainee, according to his/her level.

During group discussions, a few teachers also mentioned that they considered their mentor irresponsible, as he sometimes disappeared before time or stayed at home. Commenting on this point, another teacher added, *‘If I get a good mentor, I can feel peace. I even today teach in Kinyarwanda most of the time. If I knew English and were able to teach in this language, I could feel peace and job safety, but I’m not happy today, given that I can’t deliver as I wish.’*

In short, teachers from all eight schools indicated that mentors’ contributions to peace building reside in upgrading teachers’ level of proficiency in English. Positive peace is therefore attained as teachers gain self-confidence in carrying out their duties. The end result would be not only teachers’ inner peace and comfort with the English language, but also an improvement in quality education, which would positively impact the entire Rwandan community. Thus, teachers’ ease and comfort in their working environment would ultimately affect children and the future of a nation, since it has been proved that teachers’ behaviour shapes what young people learn, influencing their identities, as well as providing them with skills for peacebuilding (Barret, 2007 in Sayed et al., 2016).

Mentors’ role in peacebuilding was also stressed by head teachers, who argued that language trainers build peace when they are fulfilling their duties, and therefore help teachers to overcome challenges related to the English language. They went further, explaining that the mentorship removed the teachers’ resentment that materialised when English became the language of instruction. In short, the mentorship was generally praised by informants, in terms of ending teachers’ frustration, their inferiority complex and their fear of losing their job.

Influence of mentors’ origin on the mentorship contribution to peacebuilding

School-based mentors to support teachers included both regional and local specialists. In this regard, out of eight target schools, three were assisted by foreign mentors, and the remaining five by local mentors. The study therefore explored whether the origin of the mentors affected their contribution to peacebuilding. Thus, to achieve this aim, we analysed the narratives from teachers and head teachers, describing how they worked and collaborated with mentors.

To begin with, informants’ narratives indicated that there are some teachers and head teachers who consider mentors’ nationality or origin irrelevant, regarding their contribution to peacebuilding as reflected in the following statement: *‘The nationality doesn’t play any role in instilling confidence in teachers to use the target language and thereby get out of worries and despair, likely to be a threat to peace, but, rather, the mentor’s personality and teaching methods.’*

However, the majority of informants indicated that they benefited more when working with someone who

shared their mother tongue: ‘Our mentor is Rwandan; we have the same mother tongue, he is humble, supports every teacher coming to him and when necessary, translates incomprehensible English into Kinyarwanda’.

Emphasising the greater value of working with local mentors, informants often advanced the view that foreign mentors, mainly from Uganda and quite a few from Kenya, did not accurately know the level of proficiency of teachers’ English. They therefore focused on advanced skills, which made it difficult for teachers to follow:

Based on time spent with both mentors, I have realised that local mentors are more effective in terms of helping teachers become familiar with the English language. For instance, foreigners’ pronunciation of English sounds different from what we had learnt at school or what you have learnt from a Rwandan mentor, and that becomes confusing and sometimes misleading. Moreover, Rwandans focus on grammar, while foreigners seem to be superficial and focus on a few advanced skills, instead of starting from basic skills that can be considered to be like a starting point to embark upon more advanced skills.

Furthermore, while interacting with the informants, it was noted that teachers expressed a preference for local mentors because they often failed to communicate with foreign mentors – who did not speak teachers’ mother tongue – due to mentees’ low skills in English. This is explicitly expressed in the following statement:

In my opinion, a local mentor is much more helpful than a Ugandan mentor, for instance. In fact, a Ugandan mentor may come here thinking that we are at the level of Ugandan teachers who were born and grew up in an English speaking environment. However, a Rwandan mentor is aware of our weaknesses and we start from the low level and move upwards. Maybe in the near future, we would have no problem with a foreign mentor, but at the very beginning we felt comfortable with a local mentor.

On the other hand, foreign mentors were praised by a few teachers and head teachers for being more creative, more motivating, and even more cooperative than local mentors:

I think foreigners’ methods are better than Rwandans’ because when we are with local mentors we tend to use the mother tongue during training. However, given that foreigners don’t speak our mother tongue, we are obliged to speak the target language during training, so as to communicate with the trainer. So when you make a wrong sentence while addressing a mentor, and then you get corrected, you thereby learn and can’t repeat the same error. In addition, regarding the social side and peacebuilding aspect, I think foreign mentors take the lead over local ones. You realise that foreign mentors seem to be more empathic with the trainees than local mentors, and so they are much more beneficial than Rwandans.

From the narratives of teachers and head teachers about the performance of mentors, we noted a striking pattern. We realised that, on the one hand, foreign mentors were more appreciated by younger teachers, who, most of the time, had more advanced English language skills, compared to informants of a more advanced age. On the other hand, Rwandan mentors were praised more by older teachers because they often communicated in Kinyarwanda in order to understand one another. This implies that all trainees’ aspirations had not been catered for, wherever all school teachers were trained by a single individual in the same classroom, where their language needs were different. However, while collecting data, we observed that all trainees had been treated equally, regardless of the discrepancy in their language proficiency levels. Thus, there may be some teachers, who, despite having undergone the mentorship programme, are still in a difficult situation because they have not been adequately helped to run teaching activities in the English language. This situation may be a threat to positive peace, given that they cannot comfortably run their classes; hence, they may still feel frustrated and

think that their job is at risk.

Challenges faced by the mentorship programme and solutions towards peacebuilding

Informants' narratives show that the mentorship programme faced a number of challenges that obstructed the maximum gain for the beneficiaries. Challenges mentioned include teachers' heavy workload and their inferiority complex, which caused them to be silent when learning a language. In addition, a single class for all learners, regardless of their language proficiency level, and the conflicting responsibilities of mentors and head teachers are other challenges revealed in this study. Furthermore, the limited number of mentors, holiday training centres in remote areas, and insufficient teaching materials, also handicapped the mentorship programme.

Starting with teachers' heavy workload, all informants raised this issue, indicating that teachers are busy in their classroom from 7.00 am to 5.00 pm. They subsequently had no spare time to attend the collective face-to-face training session with the mentor, which was supposed to take place twice a week. The following assertion illustrates how teachers are seriously short of time to undergo training;

The programme is poorly conducted, since there is no fixed timetable indicating the time the mentor will be with teachers. The latter are actually busy with their classes anytime they are at school. Hence, the mentor may arrive here and doesn't find any teacher to talk to, given that everyone will be teaching.

Thus, due to that hectic timetable, head teachers tried their best to arrange for the requested two hours devoted to language training. However, this sometimes created conflict between the head teacher and other teachers, when the latter were required to attend training after 5.00 pm when they were exhausted after long hours teaching. In addition, the arrangement to find time for the training was also reported as causing conflict between the mentor and the head teacher.

In fact, some stubborn head teachers refused to provide the two hours for the training. Informants reported that the excuse of head teachers was sometimes that the training appeared nowhere on the weekly teaching timetable. Hence, mentors had to look for extra hours, either over the weekend or on any of the weekdays after work, which was often difficult for teachers to attend.

Mixing all learners in a single class, regardless of their proficiency level, was also raised as a challenge to the SBM programme delivery. Thus, teachers and head teachers argued that training should be conducted according to trainees' level of proficiency.

Another challenge confronting the mentorship programme, as stated by the informants, concerned the conflicting responsibilities between the mentor and the head teacher. In fact, some head teachers, who proved to be in conflict with their school-based mentors, indicated that they did not know the mentors' responsibilities. Hence, they sometimes were in disagreement regarding the information they provided to teachers. This conflict was also expressed by teachers, who indicated that their relationship with the mentor was often fraught, since the latter sometimes behaved like a teaching inspector rather than a language trainer.

Supporting the above point, some teachers and head teachers argued that mentors may have enjoyed excessive freedom, and no one had monitored the achievement of their mission. Some informants went

beyond that to say that it looked like their mentors did not have a fixed timetable to follow, since they arrived at school any time they wanted. Informants therefore suggested that to make the mentorship programme more fruitful, it would have been better if mentors had been supervised by the district instead of the REB.

Moreover, the number of schools catered for by one mentor was also reported by almost all informants to be a challenge to the success of the mentorship programme. Given that each mentor has two schools to look after, time to interact with teachers was limited. The result was that needy teachers could not get the desired support when the mentor was away, for instance, taking care of another school. According to informants, this could affect teachers' expected comfort with the English language and therefore jeopardise positive peace. Thus, informants suggested that each mentor be given a single school to follow up, as this would benefit both teachers and pupils.

Furthermore, holiday training centres in remote areas were also identified by teachers and mentors as a hindrance to the mentorship programme. In fact, informants indicated that over the holidays, teachers from two schools meet at one centre. The school was obviously very far for some of the teachers; hence some of them did not regularly attend.

The last challenge mentioned by the informants concerns inadequate and insufficient teaching materials. Informants pointed out that they were short of teaching and learning materials and that the few that existed did not always reflect the rural environment. A mentor at one school reported that, for instance, there were some telephone applications recommended for class use. An example provided for telephone application was a petrol station, yet nowhere in the district in which the school was located was there a petrol station. In addition, examples used zebra crossings and traffic lights, while there is no tarmac road in certain areas, and teachers therefore struggled to explain to children items that learners often failed to conceptualise, things that are not connected with rural areas.

In short, many challenges were identified as a hindrance to positive peace through the mentorship programme. Therefore, various suggestions were provided, but only common and major ones are reported in the recommendation section of the policy brief which accompanies this research paper.

Discussion of the Findings

The study on the SBM programme input to peacebuilding provided some important insights into the use of English language as a medium of instruction in Rwanda. The research also attempted to establish a link between English language mentoring and peacebuilding in the education sector, while this was overlooked in previous research activities. In this regard, the research findings represent the experience of teachers, mainly in primary schools, when they learnt that English had to be used as a medium of instruction, while they had been used to teaching in French. The findings also indicate how teachers behaved vis-à-vis the new language and how they felt about their jobs. Such information is crucial, as it also reflects informants' expectations of the mentorship programme. In addition, teachers' comfort or discomfort with their jobs in connection with the English language and the mentorship programme, is much more associated with peacebuilding input, which is a core concept in this study. Thus, teachers' attitudes and reactions towards the English language, before and during the mentorship, are the cornerstone of the discussion of the findings with regard to the existing relevant literature.

The research discussion is undertaken through three dimensions. First, the discussion is centred on the positive peace gap resulting from abrupt language policy implementation. Second, the discussion focuses on teachers' resilience and various attempts towards positive peace restoration. Finally, the discussion scrutinises the mentorship programme as interpreted as a tool for positive peace restoration in the teaching environment.

Language policy implementation and positive peace gap

The link between the English language and peacebuilding is based on the abruptness of the new language policy that made English the medium of instruction from primary four upwards in Rwanda from 2008, as already explained. This posed problems, as many teachers struggled to proceed with duties due to poor proficiency in the new medium of instruction (Le Clerc, 2008 in Steflja, 2012; Munyankesha, 2004).

Expressing their grievances, teachers and head teachers did not contradict the above cited writers. They rather indicated that all stakeholders should have been better prepared to use English as a medium of instruction. In this regard, informants argued that English already existed as a subject at all levels of education, but the new policy implementation should have started with a transition period. In such a stage, English as a subject could have been allotted more hours in the timetable. This could therefore have allowed teachers to acquire more vocabulary and become conversant with English before using it as a medium of instruction.

Based on informants' narrated experiences, we agree with Samuelson and Freedman (2010), Adedeji and Olaniyan (2011), Clover (2012), and Rosendal (2009) that the implementation of the new language policy was too abrupt. It was therefore inevitable for implementers to face challenges that could directly affect their working style and their daily teaching activities at large.

Further, as regards teachers' lack of readiness to embrace English as a language of instruction, informants also indicated that education leaders should have organised English language training sessions for teachers before they started teaching in English. This could have prepared them to teach in the new medium of instruction, and helped them obtain some English language skills prior to the implementation of the new language policy.

The lack of readiness is also evidenced by the lack of teaching materials. Thus, some teachers did not have any point of reference and were therefore left on their own, more often than not in total confusion. Such an atmosphere contributed to more anxiety, as expressed by the informants. That situation brought about despair and a feeling of job insecurity for teachers, which, in this paper, is described as a threat to positive peace in their working environment.

The discomfort described above therefore supports the theory that universal languages can do harm, as argued by Friedrich (2007). Moreover, as Barash and Webel (2002) point out, the resulting tension is likely to be a threat to positive peace, since fair social conditions will be affected. Hence, based on that effect of universal language theory, we argue that the abruptness of the new language policy implementation created a positive peace gap in the Rwandan rural primary teaching environment, that needed bridging.

Teachers' resilience and attempts at positive peace restoration

As indicated in the above section, the change to replace French by English as a medium of instruction was abrupt. Therefore, teachers with a francophone background had to try their best to adapt to the new situation. Contrary to reports that some teachers completely failed to conduct their duties and left the job, as they could not teach in English (Clover, 2012, Lulu, 2011), informants' narratives reflected most teachers' extraordinary

resilience. In fact, when they were subjected to the new teaching directives, teachers tried to look for their own solutions to keep up with their teaching duties. Thus, some of them had to look for a part-time coach to improve their English basic skills, hence becoming teachers and learners at the same time.

Furthermore, some other teachers indicated that they had been working in groups when planning their lessons. With that approach, teachers with more advanced English language skills compared to their colleagues, had to assist co-workers who were almost true beginners in terms of English language use. Some other teachers simply used their existing materials and translated directly from French into English to acquire content in the new medium of instruction. It was therefore a massive challenge for some teachers to embrace the new language of instruction, but collective work and individual resilience helped to surmount it, although there was a need for further supporting actions.

However, the emerging situation, in which teaching cohesion and standardised guiding materials were lacking, led to teaching anarchy. Teachers would conduct a class depending on language skills they had and the available teaching materials. Thus, from the fear of losing their job, as argued by Clover (2012), and the resulting conflict with the new language of instruction, teachers forged a way and managed to save their jobs until the SBM programme came in. However, informants' narratives indicate that teachers' own solutions to handle teaching in English also had some bottlenecks. It was argued that teachers were in a hurry to demonstrate their capacity to teach in English, but the teaching quality was jeopardised. Thus, as professionals who aim for a job well done, teachers put the blame on the English language, as they were not satisfied with the quality of their delivery. This confirms the argument by different scholars such as Friedrich (2007), Barash and Webel (2002) that introduction of a language into a society inevitably alters the usual course of life and sometimes leads to tension amongst new users, hence the hindrance to positive peace as well.

Mentorship programme as a tool to peacebuilding through positive peace restoration

Teaching in a new language was a struggle, as all informants explained. There had been initial English language training sessions over the holidays, but teachers were still weak in this regard and they expressed lack of self-confidence to conducting their daily duties. In fact, teachers had to read books when planning their lessons, but this was a difficult task, as they witnessed, due to poor vocabulary and inability to understand the content.

As confirmed in the informants' narratives, the communication skills of teachers were not enough to adequately engage in their usual teaching activities. This therefore affected their inner peace and self-confidence. There was a need to fill the gap and re-establish adequate conditions for teachers to smoothly conduct their classroom activities. In this regard, MINEDUC established the SBM programme to support teachers, mainly in primary schools, so that they could develop fluency in English and thus teach effectively in that language.

The analysis of the teaching platform indicates that there were conflicting expectations and conflicting interpretations of the mentorship programme. Here we also argue that different perceptions of the mentorship programme resulted from teachers' initial conflict with the English language, manifested when English was made the medium of instruction from primary four. Such conflict was stressed by head teachers in their interviews. They indicated that teachers could be ashamed, for example, in case they failed to communicate in a language they were supposed to master as role models, not only in class, but also in society at large. Thus,

according to head teachers, teachers were not at ease with English, and they felt that their jobs were at risk in case their English language skills did not improve. This also matches with scholars' views on the negative effect of the introduction of a new language in society (Phillipson, 1992; Muhlhausler, 1996; Tsuda, 1997) and the inevitable subsequent conflict.

However, despite diverging teachers' attitudes vis-à-vis the mentorship programme, all informants from the four country regions we sampled agreed on the importance of the programme to restore teachers' self-confidence and positive peace in their working environment. In this regard, for instance, all head teachers mentioned that, owing to the mentorship programme, teachers are growing in confidence and they try their best to deliver, although there is still a lot to refine. This echoes with Dladla and Moon's view (2013, in Sayed et al., 2016) indicating that teacher training is obviously seen as a fundamental element of post-conflict reconstruction, and their skills and working environment will ultimately impact on the entire nation.

Generally, various informants indicated that the SBM programme helped to dissipate the worry, despair, and fear of losing their job that teachers felt at the beginning of the new language policy implementation. This is, indeed, one of the expectations of mentorship beneficiaries if the programme is properly conducted. We therefore argue that meeting that expectation is linked to positive peace and peacebuilding, as teachers with no background in English were enabled to overcome the negative feelings caused by the new language of instruction. Thus, wherever SBM is properly conducted, teachers' inner peace is restored, or is on its way to being regained, as they become comfortable to teach effectively in the language as required, and feel safe regarding their jobs.

Conclusion and Recommendations

Below are the conclusion and recommendations for further research, based on the study limitations. Note that part of the recommendations also suggests what can be done to obtain more positive results from SBM vis-à-vis positive peace in the education sector and the society as a whole.

This study investigated challenges inherent in the introduction of English as a sole medium of instruction from the fourth year of primary school upwards in Rwandan education. The research indicated that the new language policy disturbed teachers' comfort with their duties, hence action needed to be taken so as to restore the endangered positive peace in the teaching environment.

The study also analysed the impact of the SBM programme on positive peace prevalence among primary school teaching staff. In this regard, a great number of informants found the establishment of the above-mentioned programme to be a contribution to positive peace and peacebuilding in general, since it appeased teachers' worry about their teaching career. However, working in a peaceful atmosphere depends on the relationship that exists between key stakeholders. A positive working environment is also boosted by the capacity of mentors to motivate teachers and help them develop their English language skills. Furthermore, the study indicates that major challenges for the mentorship programme resulted from teachers' timetables, that do not allow them to learn English conveniently. An SBM bottleneck also came from training all school teachers in a single class, which leads trainees with a low level of English to develop an inferiority complex. In addition, lack of materials, assigning two schools to one mentor, misunderstandings between head teachers and mentors, and remote location of training centres during holidays also handicapped the success of the SBM programme.

Recommendations

This paper identifies research areas that need further investigation, and provides recommendations to fix the observed gaps and overcome the challenges indicated. Recommendations are therefore addressed to the Ministry of Education, the REB, head teachers and mentors, as well as teachers themselves.

Starting with the Ministry of Education and the REB as national public education authorities, adjustments should be made to teachers' timetables so as to accommodate hours for teachers to have face-to-face training sessions with the mentor at the school. This can be done, since the SBM programme is still being carried out in Rwandan primary schools. An adjustment to teachers' timetables could allow mentees to adequately attend English language training, as this would not take place during extra hours, i.e. after work, as was the practice. Further, modules of English should be prepared separately, according to teachers' level of English, and relevant materials should be provided. Additionally, teachers delivering the same subjects should be trained together, so as to enable them learn technical terms. The above-mentioned education authorities should also look for means to provide incentives to flexible and best performing teachers at school and during training.

In addition, each mentor should take care of only one school. Moreover, mentors should be efficiently supervised and regularly monitored. Thus, stronger and well-organised supervision of mentors and the regular monitoring of their training activities would result in more productivity and maximum benefits for trainees.

Regarding head teachers, they should take on the mentorship programme as their own, working hand in hand with a mentor through effective communication and in a friendly atmosphere. Mentors should carry out their duties with focus, i.e. guided by goals to achieve an outcome within a specific period of time. In this regard, mentors, as the main stakeholders in teachers' progress to English language mastery, would play a prime role in promoting positive peace in the teaching environment.

As for teachers benefiting from mentors in their everyday activities, they should consider their mentors as supporters and helpful advisors. Furthermore, teachers who had not learnt English before are advised to practise English as much as they can, especially whenever they are with their mentors, to improve their language proficiency.

Further studies are advised, to carry out longitudinal research on the SBM programme. As this research report was being prepared, it was learned that the programme had been reviewed and some of its facets might have been changed. Thus future studies should examine if amendments to the SBM programme have increased teachers' positive peace vis-à-vis English language as a medium of instruction. Moreover, given that our study was limited to the primary school level, more research needs to be conducted to explore the effect of the mentorship programme on mentees in the secondary level of education. The emphasis would then be put on how the SBM programme is contributing to mentees' positive peace in their working environment.

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