



**TRANSFORMATION EXPERIENCES OF THE FIRST BATCH OF MAPD
STUDENTS OF THE BANGSAMORO AUTONOMOUS
REGION TRAINING CENTER**
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Abstract

The study described the transformation experiences of the MAPD students as they journey towards completion of the academic degree, given that they have had so much exposure experiences with communities, had been exposed to many forms of conflict in the camp and the wider community and to ethnic groups that had been marginalized.

The transformation experiences considered were analyzed based on the six elements of the culture of peace, namely: Compassion and Social Justice; Dismantling of the Culture of War; Protecting and Promoting Human Rights, Living in Harmony with the Earth; Intercultural Solidarity; and, Building Inner Peace.

The most important of the changes that led to the transformation is the changed in values. These values were aligned with the elements of the Culture of Peace. The researchers sees all the changes as leading to transformation. I am not saying everyone has totally transformed. But they are on the right track. Complete transformation is a very long process. They have properly begun the process.

Keywords: Transformation, MAPD Students, Bangsamoro Autonomous Region in Muslim Mindanao, Training Center

INTRODUCTION

Peace is everyone's pursuit. It is also the general goal of many country governments all over the world. However, conflict has become pervasive. One who has taken peace and development education could easily map out conflicts in the local, regional, national and global levels. Master of Arts in Peace and Development (MAPD) is a newly developed academic degree and it is offered in very few schools around the world. In Australia, there is one University of Peace but it does not offer the degree as Master's degree program. The same is true with the Costa Rica University of Peace. It is not offered as a graduate degree program. The United States Institute of Peace offers extensive trainings but only along specific peace subjects such as Conflict Transformation, and others.

In the Philippines there are only three schools that offer MAPD; Notre Dame University and Cotabato City State Polytechnic College of Cotabato City

(CCSPC) and The Mindanao State University-Maguindanao Campus, all of Mindanao, Philippines.

In 2016, the Cotabato City State Polytechnic College in partnership with the Philippine Public Safety College (PPSC) of the Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (BAR) Training Center but now under the Philippine National Police Training Institute (PNPTI) established a partnership for the offering of Master of Arts in Peace and Development to Uniformed and Non-uniformed Personnel of Police Regional Office BAR and to the Uniformed and Non-uniformed Personnel of the BAR Training Center at Camp Brigadier General Salipada K Pendatun, Parang, Maguindanao. This Master's Degree course was intended to educate and train the personnel on peace and development so that later, in turn, they would do the same to their fellow personnel, since peace and development has been made an integral part in the education and training of the police recruits and the regular members and officers who work for promotion.

A memorandum of Agreement was signed between Dr. Dammang S. Bantala, President of the Cotabato City State Polytechnic College and PLTCOL GREG A SOLIBA, Regional Training Director of the ARMMTC but now change to BARTC. The signing was witnessed by Dr. Norodin D. Salam, Director of CCSPC External Affairs Office.

There are eleven (11) who compose the first batch. Three of them are non-uniformed personnel of the PNPTI-BARTC, three are PCOs and five are PNCOs of PRO BAR. They took the required entrance examination at the CCSPC Guidance and Testing Center before they enrolled at the Graduate College.

The curriculum used is the same as those used by the regular students but the professors put more emphasis on the realities of the context of the Philippine National Police whose image has been tarnished by Police scalawags. One of the purposes was for the students to develop the "peace eye" so that they could immediately spot instances that trigger conflict because as living in a camp of diverse cultures, they are bound to participate in the conflict resolution and conflict management activities. Focus is also given to bringing the contexts in immediate communities because as uniformed and non-uniformed members of the PRO BAR, they are bound to establish police community-relations, being one of the major tasks.

This study intends to describe the transformation experiences of the MAPD students as they journey towards completion of the academic degree, given that they have had so much exposure experiences with communities, had been exposed to many forms of conflict in the camp and the wider community and to ethnic groups that had been depressed and marginalized.

The transformation experiences considered were analyzed based on the six elements of the culture of peace, namely: Compassion and Social Justice; Dismantling of the Culture of War; Protecting and Promoting Human Rights, Living in Harmony with the Earth; Intercultural Solidarity; and, Building Inner Peace. Some elements and indicators of the Transformation Theory were also used.

The study begins with citing of learning experiences in and out of the classroom and proceeds with the changes that take place in their knowledge, skills and behavior and which are the springboard to the general transformation.

Research Objectives

The study aims to describe the transformation experiences of the MAPD students based on the Culture of Peace Framework. Mainly, this intends to:

1. Cite instances of the teaching-learning activities undergone in and out of the classrooms and document some of the students' personal views of how the specific activities done made them learn;
2. Describe the changes among the MAPD students which they believe are leading them to a major change in their personal and professional lives and generally to their transformation;
3. Identify the challenges they faced and the strategies they employed to address these; and,
4. Elicit from the study participants their recommendations for policy formulation.

Theoretical Framework

The researcher adapted the transformation theory to support this study. Transformation is defined as Transformation – In the context of the study, this refers to the changes among the MA PD students in terms of the knowledge attained, their thinking or perceptions and understanding of the peace and unpeace-related realities and in their attitudes and behaviors.

The Transformation Theory is intended to be a comprehensive, idealized, and universal model consisting of the generic structures, elements, and processes of adult learning. Cultures and situations determine which of these structures, elements, and processes will be acted upon and whose voice will be heard. The theory's assumptions are constructivist, an orientation which holds that the way learners interpret and reinterpret their sense experience is central to making meaning and hence learning.

Critical reflection and rational discourse are processes of adult learning emphasized by those cultures experiencing rapid social change in which old traditional authority structures have been weakened, and in which individuals must be prepared to make many diverse decisions on their own.

Further, this theory says that the process of perspective transformation has three dimensions: psychological (changes in understanding of the self), convictional (revision of belief systems), and behavioral (changes in lifestyle). To transform means to change in forms, appearance or structure. Transformation is a change in mindset. It is based on learning a system of profound knowledge and taking actions based on knowledge and courage. Transformation happens when people managing a system focus on creating a new future and based on continual learning and new mindset, take different actions than they would have taken in the past.

This is deemed appropriate because the study would look into the psychological, convictional and behavioral changes among the MAPD students along the six elements of the Culture of Peace.

METHODS

This study uses qualitative research design, employing the exploratory method. This allows the participants to narrate or tell small stories of their experiences as students since the first day that they attended classes including the community exposures that are required in some courses like the Intercultural Solidarity where they have to go out and visit Indigenous Communities.

The study was conducted at Bangasamoro Autonomous Region Training Center (BARTC) situated at Camp Brigadier General Salipada K. Pendatun, Parang, Maguindanao inside the Camp of Police Regional Office Bangsamoro Autonomous Region (PROBAR). Classes were also held at this training center.

The BARTC formerly the ARMMTC was reactivated in 1993, after the operation was suspended for several years. The center conducts trainings for the recruits and the regular personnel and officers on schooling. This caters to the training requirements of police personnel of ARMM comprising the provinces of Lanao del Norte, Lanao del Sur, Maguindanao, North Cotabato, Sultan Kudarat and Marawi City.

The BARTC is a training school. It is the seat of the MA PD first batch classes. This was made legitimate by the Memorandum of Understanding between PLTCOL GREG A SOLIBA, Regional Training Director and Dr. Dammang S. Bantala, President of the Coabato City State Polytechnic College (CCSPC) with support from Dr. Norodin D. Salam, CCSPC Director for External Affairs.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

Learning experiences of the students that led to their transformation

There are four core ideas expressed by the students in the interviews on the learning experiences: (a) The students were amazed of the subject matters in the Peace and development curriculum; (b) The policies were not so rigid but the objectives were still attained; (c) Learning is not dependent on what could be read in books or internet materials. They also come from personal sharing and personal observations; and, (d) Learning is not confined in the classroom.

Indeed, Peace and Development education is not tied up to the classroom and it is not using excessive lecture. Paulo Freire insists that the banking method is a traditional method that perpetuates the power of the rich over the poor. In a banking method, the teacher delivers and the students take down what the teachers say. The test would be about what the teacher delivers as lecture. If the students cannot give back what the teacher said in the lecture, the students get low grades. In the Peace and Development pedagogy, the students contribute by bringing is fresh learnings out of their experiences and observations which are discussed and critiqued by others who also add to the experiences cited.

Going on exposure trips makes a difference between other programs and that of Peace and Development. It enables the students to learn by themselves, and learn from current realities, find out for themselves and pick up lessons that they think would be more relevant to them.

Changes Experienced By the Students

The process of transformation involves changes in the knowledge, skills, values and behaviors along the line of the elements of the Culture of Peace.

The specific changes experienced by the students and which spell out their process of transformation: (a) Tremendous knowledge was gained; (b) The exposure trips has changed perspectives and attitudes towards the indigenous people and gave the students an opportunity to be face to face with environmental situations in IP communities; (c) Development of skills in conflict resolution and in conflict management; (d) Development of skills to understand the written text; (e) Better understanding of the phenomenon of poverty; (f) Improvement of the spiritual life; and, (g) Change in values.

Indeed, the knowledge one gained has been tremendous especially we are now writing our thesis and we were advised to read as many as 50 books or journals. In the study of the environment, for example, we delved on history because we had to find out the historical events that led the Filipinos to extract so much from the environment so that there could be products sent to Manila and later to Spain and the United States. So it is not simply current studies of environmental principles for preservation, we had to go deeper to what caused the environmental unpeace.

In Peace and Development education, the communities are considered the best laboratory for learning so the group had several exposure trips such as the one to the Manobo community in Libungan and the Tiboli community in Lake Sebu. Because of the visits, the students saw the conditions of the people and made them understand why many of them have abandoned some of their cultural practices.

Conflict resolution is an important skill. It begins with the skill to spot situations that may cause conflict. As law enforcers, the skill to resolve and manage conflict is very important. The students did not have a formal training in the camp on this. In the classroom at least there is guidance on what to do.

Improvement of the understanding of the written text is one great change and the effects are far reaching. The students can now read extensively any written text in any field of study. This expands their horizon and make knowledge access limitless.

Improvement of spiritual life contributes to personal peace or inner peace. Spiritual life involves harmony with God. Our belief and trust in Him gives us peace of mind.

Change in values are crucial to peace and development education. For example, decrease in being materialistic. Materialism contributes to conflicts and also to environmental degradation. People who are materialistic would prefer materialism to relationship with others. Materialism also means being fond of buying or using luxury goods and this contributes to excessive use of natural resources. Another values developed is compassion for the beggars. This was shared by one and agreed also by the others. Law enforcers on the streets look at beggars on the streets as disturbance to the flow of traffic. However, while taking MA PD, the students realized that there are many reasons why these people cannot help but beg. Now they have become compassionate with them.

Still on change of values, one among the students is in-charge of the meals for the recruits and for the police officers on schooling. She has hired ten assistants. She said she had become compassionate with them. The police officers heading offices in the camp said they also have become compassionate with their personnel.

One student shared that she has changed perception on religion. She believed that Christianity was a better religion. While taking MA PD and learning about relativity of culture and religion, she has changed that perception. The other students said, they feel the same way. This change in perception is very significant especially for Christians assigned in the PRO-BAR. Actually, religion is not an issue in the Mindanao Conflict because it is not because of differences in religion that there is war. The Mindanao Conflict is more social, economic and political.

Challenges they encountered and how they faced the challenges

The challenges all boil down to the same thing, the schedule and some emergency tasks. There were only few who shared but the experience of the challenges were agreed by many of them. For example, the case of attending to a sick aunt. The others were also absent to take care of sick spouses, children, parents or close relatives living with them in their homes. These were a great challenge to them because right at the beginning, they were told that first and foremost is their job as law enforcers. That is what they did.

In an interview with the professors on the attitudes and capabilities of the students to learn, they said that they have the intense interest and that is what matters most. She said this interest made them resilient so that they were able to surpass the challenges.

What is unique is the difficulty understanding the printed page. This was agreed by most of the students. They also had the same predicament in the first semester of their studies. What they did to face this predicament squarely was to follow the advice of their professor, to read and read and to consult the dictionary for the meanings of unusual words.

An interview with a professor yielded an information that the MA PD students never showed abuse of privilege. They submitted on time the assignment they were asked to do in lieu of the hours or days that they could not attend classes. Besides, during the time that they were in the classroom, they would always make up for their loss. This same professor said that she could detect the difficulty to understand the lecture in the first semester. But in the second semester, they were fast in catching up.

Recommendations for Policy Formulation

Still through interviews, the students were asked what they could recommend for the improvement of the program of offering of MA PD by CCSPC at the BARTC. The following were the groups' recommendations:

(a) With the "new normal" being the trend, lessons may be delivered through the modular approach. The professors shall be required to prepare modules. Each module shall constitute one major lesson such as "Pedagogy of Peace Education" shall constitute one lesson and one module shall be prepared

only for this. History of Peace Education shall be another. It is here where the contribution of founders peace philosophers, researchers and professors be discussed such as, Paolo Freire, Johan Galtung, Toh, Swee-Hin, Betty Reardon, Ian Harris, and many others shall be discussed.

(b) Offering of PhD PD (Doctor of Philosophy in Peace and Development). The first batch, upon completion of their degree, would enroll in PhD PD. There are other police officers who would like to enroll but hesitate because of their work. But if it would be delivered through modular approach, they would have time to read and answer the questions in each module. The modules are numbered. They could not proceed to the next if they would not be able to accomplish the previous.

(c) All fees and the entrance exam shall be done at the main campus.

(d) All students shall be required to attend special gatherings (if required by CCSPC such as Foundation Day, Graduate College Day and others.

(e) A new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) shall be signed by the Regional Training Director BARTC and the President of CCSPC. The MOU shall indicate the room assigned and the days and time that the rooms could be used by the classes.

Observations

The learning experiences led to the desired changes. For example; discovering the wide range of issues involved in peace education was beyond their expectations. They have experiences of interdisciplinary approaches before, but they did not expect the exhaustive treatment for each related discipline was like what they have experienced.

The perceptual changes were crucial to the transformation. There were changes on how they perceived those people in other religions, the beggars on the streets, the poor people whom they thought were lazy, and others.

The most important of the changes that led to the transformation is the changed in values. These values were aligned with the elements of the Culture of Peace. For example, development of the interest in planting by someone who did not have the interest before; change of attitudes towards the beggars, and which falls under the element "Compassion and Social Justice". The others did the same to their personnel, workers and others. This is also realization of their rights as workers.

The researchers sees all the changes as leading to transformation. I am not saying everyone has totally transformed. But they are on the right track. Complete transformation is a very long process. They have properly began the process. They are not set for the journey.

Insights

Peace and development education aims at transformation, at least, the first steps and the first manifestations. Massive COP-related positive changes could not be expected in two to three years. When students in a batch are few, it is easy to determine or identify the different areas in which they have changed. Classes should be small.

The COVID issue has come up during the writing of this paper. The modular approach is appropriate for the "new normal". This is even better because the students who are mostly law enforcers have tasks to do even on

Saturdays but there were times that they were lax during the week days. This means, this course could transcend difficulties if delivered in alternative manner.

Recommendations

The researcher has asked the participants their recommendations. He recommends the same. Also the researcher would like to add the following:

1. Campaign be done so that the next batches would be MA PD and PhD PD students.
2. There should be an assessment after two semesters on what changes have there been among the students along COP.

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