



## An Analysis of Conferences/Symposia's Contribution to National Development.

<sup>1</sup>Dr. Chipu Mutongi, <sup>2</sup>Kudzayi Chiwanza

<sup>1</sup>Phd, MBA, Msc, Dip-LIS, BA, HND-LIS, Dip-Edu, Dip-P Magnt, Dip- Salaries Admn.

<sup>2</sup>Dip-Lis, Ba, Msc, Phd Candidate

Received 29 Nov, 2016; Accepted 22 Dec, 2016© The author(s) 2016. Published with open access at [www.questjournals.org](http://www.questjournals.org)

**ABSTRACT:** *The purpose of the study was to establish the role that research conferences play in the socio-economic transformation process. The genesis of conference or symposium is traced to Plato (360 B.C.E.) who invited many people to a large gathering where a problematic social phenomenon was discussed and a conclusion reached, which was adopted and implemented by the society. The current study sought to connect the contemporary conference concept with the original concept. The researcher employed a qualitative paradigm to generate data from purposively selected participants, who were deemed to possess the requisite information. The generated data was coded and broken down into themes from which the researcher derived meaning and deduced findings. The findings were that contemporary symposia differed in that some emerged, at the conclusion of the gathering, with an agreed position on each of the themes discussed, but some conferences left the delegates to draw their own conclusions. It was, therefore, concluded that the contemporary conference still played a central role in socio-economic development or transformation. Secondly, conferences needed to re-visit their primary purpose of gathering and reiterate the necessity of becoming an engine for the generation of socio-economic transformation ideas and strategies; these ideas and strategies needed to be articulated in a concluding presentation. The issuing of a concluding statement on what would have been agreed upon and how these would assist in socio-economic transformation would move the conference from being a mere talk shop.*

### I. INTRODUCTION

Universities and institutions of higher learning host national and international conferences as a routine part of their work. At these conferences researchers present their research papers in which they announce new insights, new innovations and new research findings. Participants are involved in discussions on a variety of research methods and they are involved in both formal and informal discussions. The participants are engaged in collaborative and networking relationships. According to Gordon Research Conferences (2008) the primary function of current conferences and symposia is to present research papers and learn the work of other researchers which has not been published in research journals and other publications. Many participants stay abreast of scientific developments through attendance of these conferences.

However, Gordon Research Conferences (2008) acknowledge that conferences have traditionally attracted very little attention from historians and sociologists of science. Their analysis of scientific developments has tended to dwell on articles in scientific journals and online fora. The current conference structure is composed of short presentations, followed by brief discussion sessions and in many parallel sessions. The focus seems to be on attracting media coverage and the raising of institutional funds with which to fund the conference budget and, hopefully, remain with a surplus.

The current study seeks to evaluate conference contribution to socio-economic development. The study acknowledges that the current research conference is preoccupied with the presentation of papers and learning about new work that has not been published in order for scientists and researchers to keep abreast of knowledge in their disciplines. The study seeks to identify what it is that which comes out of the conference, the outcome or impact of the conference to the economic and social lives of the people.

#### 1.1 Background To The Study

The contemporary conference was born out of the first recorded symposium hosted by Plato (360 B.C.E and translated by Jowett). This symposium was primarily a long discussion session that was preceded by a short presentation of the topic and a contextual coverage. Plato (360 B.C.E.) presented his thoughts on 'Love'

\*Corresponding Author: Dr. Chipu Mutongi<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Phd, MBA, Msc, Dip-LIS, BA, HND-LIS, Dip-Edu, Dip-P Magnt, Dip- Salaries Admn.

and then engaged his audience in a lengthy discussion on what the thought love was, and the general topic of love. At the end of the discussion some consensus was reached on the question of love and the participants dispersed with an understanding and new insights of love. What needs to be emphasised here was the lengthy discussion and the attainment of some understanding and consensus on issues to do with love as a way of improving people's lives.

Gordon Research Conferences (2008) have retained some semblance of the origins of conferences by engaging in extensive discussion periods, both formal and informal, since the late 1920s. These discussions are closed to the media and the public to encourage free and frank participation of all invited participants but strict ownership of ideas by those who present them. The growth of research conference should be through internal and external factors, like the adherence to the requirement of extensive discussion and real-time peer review. The topics for the conference should be selected through a review process oriented towards new frontiers of knowledge. The Gordon Research Conference (2008) is anchored on intimacy among participants, which is premised to grow with the growth of the scientific enterprise. The sense of community should be maintained within the conference. Their desire, which they foster extensively, is to demonstrate and facilitate the open exchange of ideas, assist participants engage in collaborative relationships, engage in continuous institutional change and promote the advancement of commercial products played by conference in the scientific community. This shows that the Gordon Research Conferences (2008) retain most of the founding principles of symposia; the principles of extensive discourse and the propagation of ideas for community development.

### **1.1.1 Origins of symposium**

The origin of the word 'symposium' can be traced back to Greek history where, in 420 B.C. (Wikipedia) it is narrated that a symposium was a drinking party, where a female aulos-player entertained men at a symposium. Symposium comes from the Greek words συμπίνειν *sympinein*, which means 'to drink together', at a drinking party. The party was mainly entertained to literary works; two Socratic dialogues, Plato's *Symposium* and Xenophon's *Symposium*, as well as a number of Greek poems such as the elegies of Theognis of Megara. Wikipedia narrates that a symposium was held as a

forum for men of good family to debate, plot, boast, or simply to revel with others. They were frequently held to celebrate the introduction of young men into aristocratic society. Symposia were also held by aristocrats to celebrate other special occasions, such as victories in athletic and poetic contests. They were a source of pride for them.

The Department of Greek and Roman Art (2000) narrates that between 1611 and 1650, the symposium included slaves who waited upon the man who occasionally were involved in games, songs, slaves performing various acts of entertainment and flute-girls and boys. With the progression of time symposia were held for specific purposes or occasions, like the Plato's dialogue, held for the purpose of dialogue. The symposium was overseen by a "symposiarch" who decided on how strong the wine for the evening would be, depending on whether serious discussions or merely sensual indulgence were in the offing. The primary occupations of symposia were drinking, poetry and music, which were indulged in against the background of intense discussion and the exchange of views.

### **1.1.2 Conceptual framework**

The conceptual framework adopted for the study comes from Boston University (2015) which defines a symposium or conference as a meeting or gathering of experts, scientists and interested persons for the presentation of research papers. A conference is a gathering for discussion of research papers presented before an audience. The conference can be viewed as a collection of opinions expressed or articles presented by participants on a given topic or subject. In Greek history the convivial symposium is supposed to follow a dinner and should be accompanied by a lot of merriment.

**There are a variety of conferences, depending on the theme under which one is organised. The following are some of the varieties of conferences:**

- Academic conference, in science and academic, a formal event where researchers present results, workshops, and other activities.
- Business conference, organized to discuss business-related matters
- Conference call, in telecommunications, a "multi-party call"
- Conference hall, room where conferences are held
- News conference, an announcement to the press (print, radio, television) with the expectation of questions, about the announced matter
- Parent-teacher interview (conference), a meeting with a child's teacher to discuss grades and school performance
- Peace conference, a diplomatic meeting to end conflict.

- Settlement conference, a meeting between the plaintiff and the respondent in lawsuit, wherein they try to settle their dispute without proceeding to trial
- Trade conference, or trade fair, with wider participation and providing the opportunity for business people and the general public

A conference is usually made up of presenters who present research papers, which are concise and precise. The presentation is usually followed by a discussion and the papers are usually published as conference research articles. The conference itself normally has Keynote speakers, who are renowned academics and the keynote address is normally longer to set the mood and pace of the conference. After the Keynote speaker the conference breaks up into groups for parallel or breakaway presentations and discussions. The larger the conference the more the breakaway sessions and the more likely that academic publishing houses may have displays for which they pay a fee that the host uses towards the cost of the conference. A conference theme may be broken into sub-themes to form a themed conference, or it can be a general conference. Contemporary conferences are taking advantage of technological advancements and provide internet facilities, like Wi-Fi. Academic conferences are organised by academic bodies, like scientific societies or groups of researchers, like the Gordon Research Conferences, cited above. This type of conference is announced through a call for papers, or abstracts. The call for papers is accompanied by a full description of the requirements and the fees, including the duration of the conference.

## **1.2 Statement of the problem**

The first recorded symposium by Plato (360 B.E.C.) introduced the world to the concept of the presentation and intense discussion of socio-economic problems with a view to identifying solutions to the problems. The practice caught on very well and has been transformed into national and international huge gatherings where a large number of presenters take to the stage to present research papers. What seems not to have been demonstrated conclusively is the contribution to socio-economic development by these conferences. The current study seeks to evaluate the outcome of the conferences and determine what impact they have on the socio-economic development paradigm.

In short, the study seeks to establish if the dictum "Education for empowerment" has room in conferences.

## **1.3 Research questions**

**The primary research question reads:**

**Why do institutions of higher learning host national and international conferences?**

**The subsidiary questions are:**

1. How do presented topics and themes at conferences feed into the socio-economic development agenda
2. How do conferences contribute to socio-economic transformation?

## **1.4 Purpose of the study**

The study seeks to evaluate the impact of conferences on the socio-economic development of both national and international players.

## **1.5 Significance Of The Study**

First and foremost, the academic community needs to know the role played by the conferences that their institutions of higher education play in the development of their communities. This study should open their intellectual vision to that reality.

The institutions of higher learning and other organisations would like to know the contribution, or lack of it, of the conferences they host to the development of the communities in which they reside. The current study is likely going to educate them on this important area. The findings of the study would either strengthen the outcomes of the conferences, or they would end up re-focusing their conferences in order for them to be responsive to socio-economic developmental thrust.

The researchers have a vested interest in the study; they would want to determine the extent to which conferences contribute to issues of socio-economic development. The knowledge is likely to persuade them to work closely with institutions of higher learning in the area of conference planning in order for each planned conference to have well articulated objectives and ensure that the objectives contribute to the socio-economic development of the communities in which they operate.

## **1.6 Assumptions of the study**

It is assumed that the institutions of higher learning have documented aims and objectives for hosting conferences.

It is further assumed that the institutions of higher learning are receptive to new insights in order to continuously improve the quality of the conferences they host.

### **1.7 Delimitations of the study**

The study is confined to the evaluation of the reasons of hosting conferences, their aims and objectives and how these contribute to socio-economic development.

Secondly, the study covers local international conferences, hosted by Zimbabwe Open University.

### **1.8 Review of related literature**

A review of related study is undertaken in order to learn what other researchers have come up with in similar or comparable situations. It will seek to know what historical material is available on conferences and how the tradition of hosting conferences evolved from the initial practice of hosting drinking parties, primarily hosted for merry-making, to the current practice where there is rarely any drinking and merry-making. The review also assists the researchers to relate the research to those done by other researchers and determine areas of similarity and those that are different.

The review starts with definitions of the words 'conference' and 'symposium' and establishes how the two terms evolved to mean the same thing. The other synonyms and antonyms are going to be considered, as well. The Online Etymology Dictionary (2015) defines symposium, which became popular in the 1580s, as a derivative e from the Latin 'symposium', which meant a "drinking party" and from the Greek word "symposion", which means a "convivial gathering" of the educated people. These two words are an assimilation of 'syn', which means 'together' and '+posis', which means 'a drinking', itself coming from the stem 'Acolic pone', which means 'to drink' and the Latin 'potare', meaning 'to drink'. A symposium, in the Greek sense, usually came or followed a dinner because they did not drink during meals. The drinking was made more enjoyable and entertaining by accompanying it with intellectual discourse and agreeable conversation and through the introduction of poetry and music. The music was accompanied by dancers. The Online Etymology Dictionary (2015) says from 1784 the symposium was started to meet on a given subject, giving birth to the current format of the symposium and it was led a symposiarch, who managed the discussion proceedings. When the English borrowed the tradition in 1600s they used the word 'conference' more than the word 'symposium' and both have assumed international fame and popularity. The emphasis of the symposium shifted from merriment to intellectual discussion.

The Department of Greek and Roman Art (2000) say the symposium of the Greek was a preserve of the aristocratic males who gathered to make merry and engage in agreeable intellectual discourse. Participants sat on couches, which averaged seventeen to a room, where they enjoyed themselves through drinking or listening to poetry and music or watched dancers performing in front of them. In due course, in the late sixth century, the symposium had peculiar vessels like jugs, wine coolers, mixing vessels, drinking cups and was decorated with scenes of drinking parties, since drinking was the main preoccupation. Lessons gleaned from Plato's symposium show that they conducted intellectual conversation on specific topics, recited poetry and played music, played some games that required skill and balance, cracked jokes, and gossiped. Apart from the merrymaking, the symposium became the centre of the passing down the generations of traditional values and was an event that liberated people from daily restraints in a well managed environment.

Your Dictionary (2015) defines a symposium as a conference or a meeting to discuss a particular subject. The plural of symposium is either symposiums or symposia; the plural symposia is adopted for the current study. A symposium or conference can also be defined as a collection of research papers or essays on a particular topic or subject written by a number and variety of contributors. The original meaning that included drinking and merry making has been relegated to the past; the contemporary conference involves the presentation and discussion of research papers at a public national and international gathering. However, the importance of a symposium cannot be relegated to history; the fact that Plato titled his banquets a 'symposium'.

A conference is also defined as a meeting for the discussion of a given subject or topic, an intellectual conversation. In the Greek version of the symposium the discussion was a preserve of the elders and, later, the scholars or intellectuals (Norris, 2000). It is a meeting where the participants are the audience and make the presentations. It is no longer a convivial meeting, like the Greek one, for merriment, involving drinking, music, dancing and poetry, but has assumed a sober countenance where intellectuals are involved in discussion of presented topics. The current conference places focus on the sharing of ideas through engaging in intellectual discourse on some particular subject. This is a wide assemblage of synonyms of symposium and some of them are convention, forum, meeting, panel discussion, seminar, congress, convocation and argumentation.

Norris (2000) defines a symposium as also moved away from the Greek version which saw it as a convivial party or banquet where music and dance were the main preoccupations. The contemporary definition is that a symposium is a gathering of subjects' specialists who deliver short addresses on a topic or topics

through which the participants share new ideas, opinions and insights into a subject or related subjects. The collection of ideas and opinions can then be published in a journal or periodical. The contemporary symposium or conference is a gathering of academics to discuss some given subject or topic or a social problem to come up with recommendations for solving the problem. It is a collection of scholarly works on a given subject or topic, normally published together. Several speakers are asked to address the audience, lead in the discussion of the presentation or address, and express opinions on the topic discussed.

### **1.8.1 Theoretical framework**

The study adopts The School of Athens theory (Raphael, 1509) as the theoretical framework. The symposium by Plato is a philosophical text premised on the genesis, purpose and nature of love, which gave rise to the concept of Platonic love, according to a translation that surfaced much later than the symposium.

In the symposium a gathering of men examined love, through presentation and discussion. The men who were present were required to give their speeches in praise of love, as a way of examining love. One speech asserts that the purpose of love is to allow one to become a philosopher, or in literary sense, love allows someone to be a lover of wisdom. It is from this symposium that the contemporary concept was born and the discussion helped social historians to illuminate social life in ancient Athens, with special reference to its sexual behaviour. This came from the intense discussion that the participants were involved in.

Various theories of love are explored in the symposium by each participant when they give their own speeches and this builds into a solid understanding of love, from a variety of angles. At the end of the symposium a conclusion was delivered to the symposium on the deliberations which had progressed over a length of time. However, the love that most of the participants refer to happens to be homosexual love, a reflection of the social reality in classical Greece. The theory of forms is well indicated in the symposium, as a way of understanding the discussion on love; all phenomena are perceived to be copies or imitations of internal or external forms, which reflect reality. The symposium seems to have agreed that beauty, upon which love is related, belongs to this group of forms.

Plato's symposium discussed in an intense manner the speeches given by individual participants in order to arrive at a conclusion.

### **1.9 Methodology**

The researchers adopted the qualitative research methodology. The authors were the instruments of data collection as noted by Borman, (1986) and Guba and Lincoln, (1985). The methods of collecting data in this research were interviews, document study and focus group discussions. In this study, the interpretive ethnographic research paradigm was used. The concept "interpretive" was used here to distinguish the ethnographic research approach that the authors as researchers employed, from other ethnographic designs such as narrative ethnography.

#### **2.9.1 Interviews**

Interviews are considered to be very important in qualitative research, especially interpretive ethnography because they give valuable data in the form of perceptions of participants about research conferences. Interviews are important in qualitative research for the following reasons:

They are more important because they provide some background information that is crucial in ensuring the reliability of data. Interviews also provide access to information that cannot be easily accessed through observations and document study, for example, feelings and intentions (Yin, 1986; Nyarawanda, 1998). In this study, the interviews were both formal and informal. Researchers were interviewed individually in the formal conversations. In the formal interviews, researchers were talked to in groups. The authors used an interview guide structured as shown in table 1 below.

1. From your own perspectives, what is the purpose of a research conference/symposium?	2. What activities prove that the conference has achieved its goal?
3. How have research conferences contributed to national development?	4. How has your institution benefitted from research conferences?
5. To what extent has the new knowledge been added to the normal practice in all the conferences you have attended?	6. How can research conferences be carried out objectively?

The number of questions were low in order to allow participants much of the time to talk about their experiences and how they viewed the research conferences. This way the researchers avoided a scenario whereby they would end up imposing their own views on the symposia situations of the participants. This approach ensured that the findings of the research would emerge from the data of the research sites.

All the participants voluntarily agreed to participate in the study and they gave the researchers permission to take notes during these interviews. The researchers deemed it necessary to write detailed notes as field notes are also important in qualitative research because they can be useful to resort to when the transcription messages are not clear.

### 2.9.1 Document analysis

Document analysis is essential in ethnographic research as a complement of interviews. In the study document analysis was meant to shed some more insights on what conference organisers could put on the table as the outcome of the conference. Document analysis was the primary method of data generation, aided by interviews, which were meant to provide background information to some of the conferences and they could provide insight into the underlying values of the community of participants with regards to conference hosting. In this study, the documents that were analysed were conference reports.

### 2.9.2 The conference analysis reports

The use of document analysis and interviews was meant to achieve to some extent, what Lincoln and Guba (1985) call triangulation of methods and sources of data collection. In qualitative research, validity and reliability of data, what Lincoln and Guba (1985) call trustworthiness, is partly achieved through triangulation of sources and methods of data collection. The other means of achieving validity and reliability which were used in this study, being “thick” descriptions of data (Wolcott, 1987), prolonged stay or engagement on the site of study (Ary, Jacobs and Razavieh, 1990), and member-checking, whereby the researcher submits his/her interim observations or perceptions to the participants in order to give them the opportunity to comment on those researcher-imposed perceptions (Ary, et.al., 1990 Robinson, 1993).

### 2.9.3 Analysis and interpretation of data

Analysis and interpretation of data in qualitative research are two concepts applying to a single process of treating data. However, qualitative researchers do make a distinction between the process of analyses and that of interpretation. According to Wolcott (1994), analysis takes a cautious scientific approach, restricting the processing of information to observational data. In the study interpretation sought to make sense of data, or impose meaning by reaching out for understanding or explanation beyond the limits of what could be explained with the degree of certainty usually associated with analysis. Wolcott further argues that both analysis and interpretation use the mechanism of thick description. In this study thick description was a technique in which the researcher presented data using the participants’ own words wherever possible and whereby the researcher described the situation studied as it was and as vividly as it was possible. In this study, the researchers followed Wolcott’s (1994) advice of separating analysis from interpretation and used the technique of thick description of data.

### 1.9.5 International Research Conference reports analysis

An analysis of the data was done and the findings clearly showed that the purpose was to improve future international research conferences. The outcome, in this regard, was a list of areas in which improvement was required and the strategies that could be employed to improve the conferences. The improvement ranged from the improving logistical processes, like the allocation and easy identification of breakaway rooms to the quality of presented papers.

**2011 and 2012 Theme:** Knowledge frontiers for sustainable growth and development

**2015 Theme:** Research for Empowerment and Socio-Economic Transformation (RCZ)

### 1.9.6 Findings of the study

The conference was succeeded by a report that detailed the proceedings of the conference. The reports for the last three conferences were divided into five core business areas, which were: conference preparation, logistical arrangements, breakaway presentations, the quality of papers and the recommendations for the improvement of future conferences. A total of 59 general comments were presented and they were slotted into appropriate core business areas, as outlined in the table below.

**Table 1.** International research conference analysis 2011, 2012 and 2015 (RCZ)

Conference preparation	Logistical arrangement	Breakaway presentations	Quality of papers	Post- conference improvement
Conference was well organised	Poor room allocation	Some presentations were not very good and some inappropriate	Presentations should be quality controlled	presenters need to include recommendations on way forward
Better than last year	Some aspects of the		topics presented were not conducive	Chairpersons use a common guideline

Conference preparation	Logistical arrangement	Breakaway presentations	Quality of papers	Post- conference improvement
	conference arrangements seem to favour others		on sustainable growth and development	towards personal biases.
A well organised conference	You should perish the idea of being biased. You were biased	International presenters were of high quality.	The presentations ranged from poor to below standard in certain instances.	In future conferences we need knowledge assessors who are conversant with all issues concerned.
Font used on the programme needs improvement	conference was generally well organised	Chairpersons tend to prolong discussions	PowerPoint presentations should be properly constructed.	conferences we need knowledge assessors who are conversant with all issues concerned
A well organised conference	Room smells dust	Increase the amount of time for presentations in thematic groups.	The conference was educative	need to allocate sufficient time to both presenters and participations in order interrogate the topic presented
day 2 presenters' time was rather reduced as compared to day one's presentations	Time management was very poor	Presentation time for papers in parallel sessions was little	papers presented during the two days were great	give priority to outside presenters
More thorough and professional review and assessment of abstracts.	The time allocated to parallel presentations on the second day was inadequate as a result some presenters failed to present.	presentations in parallel sessions were a little bit too many	Opportunity for research to upload into best practice.	allowing foreign presenters to present first
Programme print was however, too small to read	Co-authors were not indicated on the programmes	Plenary session presenters were academic and not practical.	papers from the OUM were good	manage time more effectively
Little was done on issues that affect the nation	Starting time was uncertain, staff looked like they were at a loss, materials were not ready for distribution to delegates	can equally contribute to the creation of knowledge for sustainable development	Discussion especially in African Metaphysics rather highly politicised leading to less attention to other issues.	Improve on time management
Communication to ZOU employees on requirements to be specific and flow without hitches		Improve on PowerPoint operation by some of the technical people – blackouts during a presentation disorient the presenter.	There wasn't adequate thorough screening of some papers presented.	A thorough review of abstracts is necessary to improve quality of papers.
			Some papers lacked substance and did not address the relevant sub-themes	Need to improve on selection of papers.
			Improve quality of papers.	ICT could be more perfected
			some of the presentations for transformational	Research presenters need to be capacitated in research skills especially

Conference preparation	Logistical arrangement	Breakaway presentations	Quality of papers	Post- conference improvement
			leadership were far below expectation	use of SPSS and PowerPoint presentation.
				Call for papers should be done 8 months ahead of the conference
				More time should be made available i.e. three days or more

**Source:** International research conference reports

Second, the university produced and published a journal dedicated to the conference under its International Open and Distance Learning Journal flagship; entitled “Special Edition of the International Research Conference”. The special edition journal contained all the papers presented at the international conference for that year.

Pine (2011), in a presentation at a world partnership conference in Kuala Lumpur, highlighted the importance of ending a conference with an agreement on a given issue. The same conference ended with a shared understanding among the participating senior officials and practitioners of the urgent necessity to improve legal frameworks, operational guidelines and lines of communication to achieve better inter-agency collaboration. This type of conclusion to conferences contributes to the socio-economic development; the conference contributed to the empowerment of people e through education.

The conclusion reached in the empirical findings was not reflected in the conclusions reached in studied conferences.

### 1.9.7 Summary Of Findings

According to the research findings, the International Research Conferences have been success stories, but they could be improved in a few areas.

1. Conferences continue to generate developmental ideas and strategies. These are documented in conference reports as the position of conference and the contribution of conference to socio-economic transformation.
2. The common practice in most conferences is to engage Rapporteurs who record proceedings in both plenary and breakaway presentations. The reports represent the agreed position of conference on any issue discussed. At the end of the conference the Chief Rapporteur presents to conference reports for adoption from all the discussions and the positions taken on themes discussed.
3. However, it was also evident that some conferences were short-circuiting the process, maybe due to time constraints. In some conferences a lot of papers are presented but there is no common position taken on any of the issues discussed. There may even be Rapporteurs to record the proceedings. In a few of the documented proceedings in the study the Rapporteur reports were not presented for conference adoption.

A clear indication was that there was a slight deviation by most conferences from the practices established by Plato (B.C.E) and handed down through the generations. Participants felt that the founding practices of conference should be restored. A summary of the areas that needed improvement in order to enhance the quality of the conference were summarised below.

- 5.1 The whole University should be involved in the planning and implementation of the conference. This is done to improve communication, coordination and support by members of staff.
- 5.2 The call for papers should be done at least 8 months in advance. Some papers lacked depth, in future there is need to screen all papers on time so as to improve the quality of the presentations.
- 5.3 The conference package, the programme, the identity cards and any other important materials should be ready at two weeks before the conference.
- 5.4 The conference should be placed in such a way that it accommodates all the academics, at a time it did not interfere with other university business, like examinations.
- 5.5 There should be a separate budget for an International Conference.
- 5.6 The conference package, the programme, the identity cards and any other important materials should be ready at two weeks before the conference.
- 5.7 In-house training and rehearsals for technicians, photographer and ushers should be done at least a week before the conference.
- 5.8 The conference should take at least three days so as to allocate more time to presentations.
- 5.9 Presenters should be introduced formally before they present, and co- authors should also be introduced and put on the programme.



**5.10** There is need for aggressive marketing for future conferences in order to increase the number of participants.

### ***1.9.8 Conclusion and way forward***

The Special Edition of the International Research Conference journal was the object of the conference which the organisers put on the table. Plato (360 B.C.E) summed up the conference discussions and concluded the conference by outlining the outcome, the one point of consensus for the benefit of society and its development. Because the current conference had a theme, which was divided into a number of sub-themes, it was not possible to reach consensus on one issue; a journal was published to reflect the contributions of presenters on each of the themes. The new knowledge and new insights were in many sub-themes.

The researcher concluded that the tradition of Plato was being extended by the current university; the conference presentations were published in a special journal and new insights and new knowledge contained in the presentations could be accessed. These contributed to the development of the people.

There was room for extending this discourse further and determine what outcomes other institutions of higher learning came up with in terms of their conferences. Interested researchers could undertake similar studies and then compare the findings of the current study to those of their studies in order to authenticate the conclusion drawn here that conferences contributed to socio-economic development.

## **REFERENCES**

- [1]. Boston University (2015). The Graduate Student Symposium
- [2]. <http://www.bu.edu/ah/students/graduate-student-history-of-art-architecture-association/the-symposium/> (Retrieved 12.11.16).
- [3]. Department of Greek and Roman Art. (2000). The Symposium in Ancient Greece. In *Heilbrunn Timeline of Art History*. New York: The Metropolitan Museum of Art. [http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/symp/hd\\_symp.htm](http://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/symp/hd_symp.htm) (Retrieved 12.11.16)
- [4]. Gordon Research Conferences (2008). The Gordon research conference as scientific infrastructure. In 94 bull. hist. chem., volume 33, number 2
- [5]. Arthur Daemrrich, Harvard Business School, and Leah Shaper, Freelance Science Writer
- [6]. Norris, M. (2000). Greek Art from Prehistoric to Classical: A Resource for Educators. New York: Metropolitan Museum of Art.
- [7]. Raphael (1509). Symposium (Plato). In Wikipedia, the free encyclopedia. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symposium\\_%28Plato%29](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symposium_%28Plato%29) (Retrieved 11.11.16)
- [8]. Wikipedia. Symposium; An article about the social custom in ancient Greece. <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Symposium> (Retrieved 10.11.16)
- [9]. Wikipedia. Online Etymology Dictionary
- [10]. <http://www.etymonline.com/index.php?term=symposium> (Retrieved 11.11.16)
- [11]. Your Dictionary. Definition of *symposium* in English
- [12]. <http://www.yourdictionary.com/symposium> (Retrieved 11.11.16)
- [13]. Wiktionary. Definition of *symposium*. <http://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/symposium> (Retrieved on 11.11.16)
- [14]. Pine, D (2011) UNODC and Southeast Asia Regional Centre for Counter-Terrorism (SEARCC) launch partnership initiatives. New Zealand High Commissioner to Malaysia, Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
- [15]. <http://www.unodc.org/southeastasiaandpacific/en/2011/06/kl-workshop/story.html> (Retrieved on 14.11.16)

### **Profile of Authors and Photographs**



**Dr. Chipo Mutongi:** A part time lecturer and a PhD/DPhil research thesis supervisor/ under study at the Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU), with more than nine years lecturing experience; Research Supervisor for all levels of education; member of the International Board of Reviewers for the International Journal of Doctoral Studies (IJDS); Journal Reviewer-Journal of Information and Knowledge Management (JIKM); published over twenty articles in International Journals; DCIZ board member-Marketing and Communication, published more than ten modules with Zimbabwe Open University (ZOU); is in the process of co-authoring a book entitled: International Politics Corporation and Integration: Problems Facing Modern Day Africa; A Talent Development Officer in the City of Harare, worked as a Librarian at the City of Harare with more than eleven years experience in library, information and knowledge management; attained the highest and most prestigious degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Information and Knowledge Management (ZOU); Master of

Science in Library and Information Science (NUST); the more professional degree of Master of Business Administration (ZOU); Media Studies Degree (ZOU); Higher National Diploma in Library and Information Science (Harare Polytechnic); Diploma in Library and Information Science (Bulawayo Polytechnic); Diploma in Education (UZ); Diploma in Personnel Management (IPMZ); Diploma in Salaries Administration (Stallone Consultancy); Certificate in Desk Top Publishing (CCOSA); Certificate in Web Designing (People's College); Certificate in Computer Repairs (People's College).



**Kudzayi Chiwanza** (Ms), born on 25/12/72, is a senior lecturer, and the current Chairperson, in the Department of Information Science and Records Management at the Zimbabwe Open University, National Centre in Harare. She is the Chairperson of the Faculty of Applied Social Sciences Journal (ZOUJASS). Kudzayi is a current Dphil candidate with UNISA, holds a Master of Science in Library and Information Science (MScLIS) from the National University of Science and Technology (NUST); a Bachelor of Arts in Media Studies; a Higher National Diploma in Library and Information Science; a Diploma in Library and Information Science; and a Certificate in Library and Information Science. She has published more than 25 and presented research papers and articles in Library Management, Indigenous Knowledge, Records and Archival Preservation, Information Literacy and Quality Management. Kudzayi worked as a Librarian in different institutions in Zimbabwe, including the Zimbabwe Open University.