

An Assessment of Primary School Instructional Processes in Promoting Peace, Harmony, and Conflict Management in Government Primary Schools of the City of Addis Ababa, Ethiopia: Implications for Teacher Education

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Abstract

Ethiopia has been suffering from absence of peace and recurrent conflicts emanating mainly from lack of tolerance of ethnic and religious differences. The purpose of the current study, therefore, is examining the contribution of primary school instructional processes to the prevalence of peace and harmony and reduction of conflicts and the implication it has for teacher education. A descriptive study design using quantitative method was used in view of its being concerned with the situation prevailing in schools. Questionnaire was used as a tool for collecting data. 50 per cent of the population of teachers undergoing in-service education in the Addis Ababa University in the 2016-17 Academic Year was taken as the sample of the study using subject taught as a basis of stratification. The validity of the instrument was determined using expert opinions and reliability was established by administering the questionnaire to 10 non-participating teachers. Data were collected by the researcher and an assistant and analyzed using statistics. Outcomes suggested that the contents of harmony and conflict, although asserted by teachers as having been somewhat sufficiently taught in schools, the persistence of conflicts and relative lack of harmony among students in universities and ethnic conflicts observed here and there suggest that the contents were not adequately taught and, consequently, lacked sufficient internalization by students. As a result, in part, of this, the absence of tolerance of differences, feeling of bitterness, perpetuation of age old animosities is observed particularly in higher education institutions. It is, therefore, suggested that topics related to harmony and conflict should be more extensively taught in the various subjects of the curriculum and teachers should be encouraged to pay more emphasis to the teaching of the concepts of harmony and conflict. At last, the implication of all these is that since teaching about harmony and conflict are essential, the teacher education curriculum should

include these same contents and teachers need to be trained in the ways they could better teach the concepts and promote cooperation and collaboration among students.

Key words: Peace, harmony, conflict, education

I. INTRODUCTION

The fall of communism towards the end of the 20th century resulted in accelerating the pace of globalization and dissemination of the ideas of human freedom and rights. This and the ideological gaps left following the end of division of the world mainly into two camps may be said to have paved the way for the rise of national, ethnic, regional, and religious-based feelings and aspirations. These differences and the drive to have more control over resources and power may be taken as some of the most important causes for the various conflicts among people within a country and those living in different countries (Mohamedbhai, 2003). The conflicts witnessed in Nigeria, Democratic Republic Congo, Libya, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Yemen, Myanmar, Somalia, Israel, Palestine, etc. are but a few of the examples that could be cited in relation to people who are suffering from lack of peace, harmony and tolerance of differences and equitable distribution of resources and power.

One basic cause for strife, hatred, hostilities and violence among human beings is lack and inadequacy of knowledge and attitudes essential to understand others and skills needed to craft ways of dealing with differences. It is in this context that the need for and significance of education comes to light. What students learn in school about harmony, global understanding, others, diplomacy, and conflict management will have a very great role in promoting peace and harmony in addition to managing conflicts, and enhancing

cooperation for development. As indicated by Hamburg and Hamburg (2004), education can teach children the necessary pro-social and other skills needed to cope in the face of fear, uncertainty and danger.

If education is to promote harmony and mutual respect and contribute to progress, teachers should teach these values and ideals. Therefore, what teachers do to disseminate these contents, and help students understand the significance of peace and harmony should be investigated. Moreover, teachers should teach the contents effectively and demonstrate that in the ways they handle conflicts among children, themselves and between them and children. On the whole, studies need to be conducted on the role instructional processes play towards fostering peace and harmony among students as a basis for enhancing cooperation and peaceful co-existence among the people of the world at large.

When it comes to Ethiopia, the country has been facing problems emanating from internal lack of tolerance of ethnic, regional and religious differences and conflict over resources with its neighbors. There have also been conflicts among students in the various universities of the country. It is, thus, necessary to study if instructional processes are conducted in ways that promote harmonious growth of children and, through that, peace and harmony among students of universities, people of the country and its implication to peace in the world and teacher education in particular. It is these conditions that provided background and justified effort to conduct the study.

II. STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

Ever since the existence of human beings in this world, there have naturally been harmony and conflicts. The harmony is because of similarities and the conflict is due to the presence of differences. Thus, the problem to be studied is the deterioration of peace and harmony and the rise in the prevalence of conflicts and hostilities in the country at large which needs to be studied in the light of teaching and learning of contents of peace, diplomacy, harmony, conflict management and development in primary schools which are the bases for cultivation of the young for future understanding and diplomacy among groups and peoples in Ethiopia and the world as a whole. Hence, the study attempted to answer the following basic questions:

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- How frequently are peace, harmony and conflict taught by teachers of primary schools?

- Is there any difference in the frequency of teaching about the importance of peace and the effects of conflict by subject?
- How are pupils taught to deal with conflicts in primary schools?
- What is the implication of the presence/absence of teaching and learning about contents of conflict and harmony to teacher education?

IV. OBJECTIVES OF THE STUDY

The objective of the study is to investigate in primary schools of the magnitude and ways instruction is conducted to promote peace and harmony as well as resolve conflicts and its implication on teacher education.

V. DELIMITATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study was conducted in the years 2016 and 2017 in order to make it more recent and current. The areas of investigation consisted of teaching and learning practices in primary schools consisting of grades 7 and 8 since it is they which are primarily supposed to lay the basis for pupils' future personality by instilling in them the values of harmony and peaceful coexistence and develop mechanisms of conflict management. Addis Ababa was selected for the study considering the existence of relatively large segments of diverse population subscribing to different religions, ethnic and regional backgrounds. The subjects analyzed were English Language, Civic and Ethical Education, and Social Studies since their contents lend themselves more to the discussion of peace, harmony, conflict and related concepts. Government schools were included considering that it is they which provide for the majority of pupils in the City Government of Addis Ababa. Since the objective is the ways and extent to which concepts of peace and conflict are taught in different subject areas, comparisons are not made based on grade level and sex.

VI. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

Schools are social institutions whose major functions may be condensed as socialization and professionalization. As they prepare students for some sort of job to earn a living, they also prepare them for a life of some kind in which they live as socially desirable members. However, this is not enough. As argued by Coleman, Morton and Marcus (2014), in recent years, it has been increasingly recognized that schools have to educate children so that they are for rather than against one another and that they develop the ability to resolve their conflicts constructively rather than destructively.

Given the present day conflicts and violence taking place here and there in an almost daily basis, it is important for schools to preach peace. In support of this, Betty Reardon (1988) claims that schools should offer peace education which transforms the thinking and values of students around social interdependence and social justice. Students should also learn about cooperation, conflict, and constructive as well as non-violent approaches to the resolution of conflict. The concepts of peace and harmony should be given appropriate place in the instructional processes of schools (Deutsch, 1993; Kriesberg, 1982).

Understanding conflict and its consequences is even more important in countries faced with political divisions. In this connection, Merelman (1990) argues that, in societies with contested political regimes, children should learn a great deal about managing conflict and violence. They should develop knowledge, inclinations, and skills in how to resolve conflicts. Kathy Bickmore (2004) asserts that schooling is one social institution that simultaneously facilitates, shapes, and impedes conflict management. She argues that because relatively little attention is paid to actual instances of social conflict, violence, or marginalization, students' opportunities to practice constructive democratic conflict management and peace building is limited. Thus, she claims that public schooling should be organized in ways that help it contribute to young people's preparation for roles in society's inevitable conflicts, including redress of injustice.

Conflict and its effects are also observed at home, school and community. Thus, as indicated by Dietz (1989:45), young people should learn about conflict and means of resolving it inside the school environment. To use his own words

As young people develop and learn about the intersecting social systems of which they are a part, conflict is all around them. Inescapably as children grow, they develop understandings about interpersonal and social conflict, about procedures for handling it, and about the violence and war that may emerge when conflicts are not resolved. In school, official curricula guide children's and adolescents' development of understanding about war, conflict and peace. At least as powerfully, young people also learn about conflict from the implicit curricula of student activities, teacher and peer responses to political events, school governance, and discipline practices.

Although Dietz (1989) claims that young people learn about peace and conflict in both the official curricula and the hidden one, many others cited above

argue that they are neither adequately included in the curriculum or taught by teachers in classrooms.

VII. METHODS USED TO TEACH ABOUT CONFLICTS AND CONFLICT RESOLUTIONS

Schimmel (1997) argues that classroom conflicts matter to students. Young people learn a great deal about conflict from the ways they and their peers are treated in school when they are engaged in conflict. However, they may be taught more in the following ways:

A. Intensive instruction (curricular). This includes building student-centered activities around four intersecting themes that build students' capacity for handling conflict namely affirmation (appreciating oneself and others), communication (sending and interpreting verbal and nonverbal cues), cooperation (working and playing together to do things one could not do alone), and conflict resolution (involving a repertoire of skills for handling problems and creating win-win solutions).

B. Facilitating the exercise of management by students through providing them with such roles as monitors, members of discipline committees, etc which would increase the magnitude of student inputs and involvements in management, decision-making processes, and understanding and resolving conflicts.

C. Simulation could also be used to teach about conflicts and conflict resolution. Morton (1986) claims that this strategy can encourage students to develop a more complex understanding of conflict and its costs, as well as handle and solve local problems. Students may play the roles of various interest groups in relation to management conflicts, involving control and use of resources, or choices in energy development (Borad & Fagerstrom, 1985).

D. Inviting resource persons to classrooms to share their experiences with students.

E. Negotiation and mediation: Pupils would obtain opportunities to develop understandings of conflict and peacemaking through practicing effective communication in groups, recognition of differing viewpoints, persuasion, identification of shared interests, and invention of problem-solving procedures (Hepburn 1983, Leatt 1987).

VIII. TRAINING OF TEACHERS

As it is teachers who are supposed to teach students about peace and conflict, teacher education

needs to prepare teachers in the contents and mechanisms of harmony and conflict resolution (Mohamedbhai, 2003). Teachers need to be equipped with the skills which would enable them create harmonious, empathetic, compassionate, forgiving, relationships among students. They must also be trained to understand the concepts and practices of pluralism, tolerance, social justice and harmony through various in-service programs. Through these, they must be enabled to address social concerns with higher degree of knowledge and promote unity among students. This may be achieved by conducting seminars, workshops and short-term training. The curriculum of teacher education should also include contents which promote the significance of peace and tolerance of differences as a way out for stability and development.

IX. MATERIALS AND METHODS

The study employed a descriptive design using survey as an instrument of data collection.

A. Population and Sampling Techniques

The population of the study consisted of teachers teaching civic and ethical education, social studies (History and Geography), and English language in grades 7 and 8 and undergoing in-service education and training in 2017/18 Academic Year in the Addis Ababa University. Of the total number of 97, 103 and 66 teachers, 50% of them were selected as samples using simple random sampling technique. Accordingly, 51 49

and 33 teachers teaching social studies, civic and ethical education, and English participated in the study respectively. Of these, 34, 33, and 22 were male while 17, 16 and 11 were female respectively.

B. Instrument of Data Collection

A self-constructed questionnaire consisting of 12 items was developed to collect data and answer the research questions of the study. The questionnaire required respondents to give their responses to each of the items from among the choices provided. The questionnaire was given to three professionals in the area of education, social sciences and English language from the Addis Ababa University to establish face and content validity. Based on their comments, important modifications were made on the instrument. Reliability was established by administering the questionnaire to 10 teachers who did not participate in the final administration of the instrument. The reliability index (Cronbach alpha value) obtained using SPSS version 20 was .7 which was adequate for the purpose.

C. METHOD OF DATA ANALYSIS

The data analysis techniques used for this study were frequency, mean and one-way ANOVA.

X. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

In order to know whether they taught about the importance of peace and harmony, a question was asked whose responses are presented in TABLE I.

TABLE I
Percentage of Teachers who Taught the Importance of Peace and Harmony

Subject Area	Taught		Not taught		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%
Social Studies	38	29	13	10	51	39
Civics	35	26	14	11	49	36
English	23	17	10	7	33	25
Total	96	72	37	28	133	100

The majority of respondents (72 percent) reported that they taught about the importance of peace in their classes. It is encouraging to know that students are taught about the importance of peace and harmony. However, teaching about peace and harmony is not

sufficient. The frequency with which the concepts are taught is much more important. Thus, those teachers who replied that they taught pupils about peace and harmony were asked to provide data on the frequency of teaching the concepts. TABLE II presents the frequency.

TABLE II
Frequency of Teaching about the Importance of Peace and Harmony

No	Frequency	No	Value	Total	Mean	%
	Often	21	3	63		34
	Sometimes	51	2	102		54
	Rarely	22	1	23		12

1	Missing Point	2	----		
	Total	96	----	188	2.00 100

Key:

Often = When topics appear in texts, they are presented in class mostly

Sometimes = When topics appear in texts, they are presented in class occasionally

Rarely = When topics appear in texts, they are presented in class in few situations

Value:	Often	Sometimes	Rarely
	3	2	1
Range	2.50-3.00	1.50-2.49	1.00- 1.49

The mean value for the frequency of teaching is 2.00 regarding the distribution by subject area, outcomes are indicating that it was sometimes that issues related to presented in TABLE III below. peace and harmony were discussed in classrooms. As

TABLE III

Comparison of Frequency of Teaching about the Importance of Peace by Subject

Subject Area	Social Studies			Civics			English		
	No	Value	Total	No	Value	Total	No	Value	Total
Frequency									
Often	7	3	21	9	3	27	5	3	15
Sometimes	21	2	42	18	2	36	12	2	24
Rarely	10	1	10	8	1	8	4	1	4
Missing	-			-			2		
Total	38		73	35		71	21		43
Mean	1.92			2.02			2.04		

The calculated mean for the frequency with which students were taught about the importance of peace is 1.92, 2.02, and 2.04 for social studies, civic and ethical education, and English respectively. The results suggest that the frequency is comparatively higher for the English language and lower for the social studies.

However, results of the one-way ANOVA ($F = 735$, $p > .05$) presented below rejected the calculated difference in mean and indicate that there were no statistically significant differences in the frequency the importance of peace was presented to pupils by teachers teaching different subjects.

<i>Frequency of Teaching about the Importance of Peace by Subject</i>					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	.683	2	.342	.735	.482
Within Groups	42.306	91	.465		
Total	42.989	93			

Teachers were asked about the frequency with which they taught pupils about the effects of conflicts. TABLE IV presents the data collected in that regard.

TABLE IV
Percentage of Teachers who Taught the Effects of Conflicts

Subject Area	Social Studies		Civics		English		Total	
	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Options								
Yes	38	28	42	32	22	17	102	77
No	11	8	7	5	10	7	28	20

Missing	2	2	---	----	1	1	3	3
Total	51	38	49	37	33	25	133	100

About 77 percent claimed they taught students about the impact of conflicts. This is something to be stressed considering the conflicts disrupting peace in universities and the country at large. Teaching about the

effects of conflicts is not sufficient. The frequency with which it is taught is also important. TABLE V presents data on that.

TABLE V
Frequency of Teaching about the Effects of Conflicts

No	Frequency	No	Value	Total	Mean	%
1	Often	18	3	54		34
	Sometimes	60	2	120		54
	Rarely	24	1	24		12
	Missing Point	---	----	----		----
	Total	102	----	198	1.94	100

The mean value for the frequency of teaching the effects of conflicts is 1.94 indicating that it is sometimes that issues related to effects of conflicts

were discussed in classrooms. As regards the distribution by subject area, outcomes are presented in TABLE VI below.

TABLE VI
Comparison of Frequency of Teaching about the Effects of Conflicts by Subject

Subject Area	Social Studies			Civics			English		
Frequency	No	Value	Total	No	Value	Total	No	Value	Total
Often	6	3	18	7	3	21	5	3	15
Sometimes	25	2	50	29	2	38	6	2	12
Rarely	7	1	7	6	1	6	11	1	11
Missing	-			-					
Total	38		75	42		65	22		38
Mean	1.97			1.54			1.72		

The calculated mean for the frequency with which students are taught about the effects of conflicts is 1.97, 1.54, and 1.72 for social studies, civic and ethical education, and English respectively. The results suggest that the frequency is comparatively higher for social studies and lower for civic and ethical education.

However, results of the one-way ANOVA ($F = 1.637$, $p > .05$) presented below rejected the calculated difference in mean and indicate that there are no statistically significant differences in the frequency the effects of conflict was presented to pupils by teachers teaching different subjects.

Frequency of Teaching about the Effects of Conflicts					
	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.334	2	.667	1.637	.200
Within Groups	40.314	99	.407		
Total	41.647	101			

Teachers were asked about the methods they used in teaching about the mechanisms they employed to deal with conflicts. TABLE VII presents the data in relation to that.

TABLE VII
Methods used to teach about Mechanisms of Dealing with Conflicts

Subject Area	Social Studies		Civics		English		Total	
Options	No	%	No	%	No	%	No	%
Talk and Explanation	16	15	21	20	12	11	49	46
Group Discussion	12	12	13	12	2	2	27	26
Film, picture, role play, etc	7	7	6	6	7	6	20	19
Guest Speakers	5	5	2	2	1	2	8	9
Missing	-	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
Total	40	39	42	40	22	21	104	100

As TABLE VII indicates, the most important mechanisms employed to deal with conflicts at school level were “talk and explanation” and “group discussion” (about 72 percent). This suggests that students were being cultivated in ways that favor understanding and cooperation.

XI. DISCUSSION

Results of the study indicated that it was sometimes that discussions were made in classrooms on the importance of peace and harmony and the effects of conflicts. Although pupils need to be reminded more frequently about the value of peace and harmony and the necessity of avoiding violence and conflicts, it is not bad if they were, at least, some of the times taught about the issues. However, considering recurrent conflicts among students in such universities as “Gambela” and “Gondar” and ethnic strife haunting the society, the frequency should have been more than is reported. The more frequent discussions on these issues are, the better for students to learn and appreciate the values of peace and avoid conflicts. As claimed by Bickmore (2004b), student should get sufficient opportunities to practice peace building through giving adequate attention to conflict and violence. This is also supported by Merelman (1990) who advocated that in societies with contested political regimes, children should learn a great deal about managing conflict and violence. They should develop knowledge, inclinations, and skills in how to resolve conflicts.

The study could not find statistically significant differences in the frequency of teaching about the importance of peace and harmony among teachers teaching different subjects. However, the subjects whose chief concern is dealing with rights and responsibilities as well as social duties and responsibilities namely civic and ethical education and social studies should have given more importance to teaching about peace and harmony more frequently than the English language. The results of the study also indicated that the most important mechanisms employed to deal with conflicts at school level were talk and explanation and group discussion. This suggests that students were being cultivated in ways that favor understanding and cooperation. This is supported by Hepburn (1983) and (Leatt 1987).

However, equally important mechanisms such as simulation (Morton, 1986, Borad & Fagerstrom, 1985) and model learning, which could pave the way for learning from different roles and guest speakers, tended not be employed along with the other mechanisms.

It is teachers who are supposed to play a crucial role in the preparation of today’s students for the kind of life they are to live in the future. Thus, as advocated by Mohamedbhai (2003), teacher education needs to prepare teachers in the contents and mechanisms of harmony and conflict resolution. The seemingly never-ending conflicts among people in the country suggest that not adequate attention is given to preparing teachers to the roles they should play in promoting peace and reducing conflicts through availing and teaching contents of peace and conflict in the curriculum of teacher education. Thus, the implication of the prevalence of conflicts on teacher education curriculum is that it has not been based upon an analysis of what it takes to make teachers respond to the needs of society and help cultivate the culture of peaceful resolution of conflicts and working for the common good through teaching students along these lines. Thus, in order to better serve the needs of the society and be more relevant to students, the teacher education curriculum should include these same contents and train teachers in ways they could better teach them and promote cooperation and collaboration among students as the first essential step of maintaining peace and stability in the society and the world at large.

XII. CONCLUSIONS

The study was conducted to examine the teaching of concepts of peace and conflict in primary schools. The study is important since educating today’s children on the importance of peace and peaceful resolution of conflicts helps to build the basis for a future life which is harmonious and peaceful. Outcomes suggested that

contents on these areas are taught some of the times using discussion, and conflicts are mostly resolved through mediation by teachers and other students. Yet, despite the claims of teachers as having somewhat sufficiently taught the concepts in schools, the persistence of conflicts and relative lack of harmony among students in Universities and ethnic conflicts observed here and there suggest that the contents are not adequately taught and internalized by students. As a result in part of this, the absence of tolerance of differences, feeling of bitterness, perpetuation of age old animosities are observed particularly in higher education institutions and in many regions of the country. Thus, it may safely be concluded that the instructional process in primary schools is not effective in preparing students for a peaceful life and peaceful ways of resolving conflicts and . Such inadequate preparation of students suggests that the contribution of teachers to the prevalence of peace and reduction of conflicts in the society is not as high as it should have been.

The implication of the inadequacy in the teaching of peace and conflict is that the teacher education curriculum may not have adequately prepared teachers for their role in schools necessitating the exertion of more efforts to prepare teachers for their long overdue roles in primary schools.

At last, in view of the issues being crucial, it is important to study the case not only in primary schools but also secondary schools and in higher education institutions particularly in those preparing teachers for the general education system of the country.

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