

**MANAGING PEACE EDUCATION AND CONFLICT RESOLUTION STRATEGIES IN  
THE 21ST CENTURY FOR STUDENTS' MULTIDIMENSIONAL SKILLS  
DEVELOPMENT AND LITERACY ACQUISITION**

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**ABSTRACT**

The objective of this paper is to explore the management of peace education and conflict resolution strategies in the 21st century for students' multidimensional skills development and literacy acquisition in the right direction. The researchers discuss the concept of skill development and literacy acquisition. They also examine the concept of conflict resolution strategies in consonant with school related conflicts which are capable of obscuring the degree of students' skill development vis-à-vis literacy acquisition in the right direction. Furthermore, the paper assessed available mechanism for conflict resolution among parties involved in school as multidimensional skill development and literacy acquisition may not thrive in a violent and chaotic school environment. The paper equally evaluates the goals every school administrator ought to adopt in a bid to resolve conflicts meditatively without hurting the parties involved and disrupt the academic programme of the school. Conclusively, suggestions to managing peace education to promote students' skills development and literacy acquisition in the right direction are proffered. It was however recommended among others that the training and retaining of school administrators and teachers should be intensified to enable acquire the essential skills and knowledge, appropriate techniques and methods to effectively manage peace education and conflict resolution measures in such a way that concepts that are relevant to students' skill development and literacy acquisition will be reflected and identified.

**Keywords:** Peace education, conflict resolution strategies, skills development, Literacy Acquisition

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## **INTRODUCTION**

Globally, the educational institutions at all levels have witnessed tremendous human conflicts, widespread violence and proliferation of dangerous weapons which have sustained the culture of war and violence. Sadly, Best (2020) submitted that this abysmal situation has hampered peace, growth and as well retarded national development in various countries such as Kenya, South Africa, Somalia, North Korea to mention but a few. In Nigerian schools, the trend is the same because the country has witnessed series of school violence, outbreaks of ethnic violence, abductions, terrorism, religious extremism and dehumanization. This problem has robbed many students the ample opportunities for quality education, skills development and literacy acquisition in the right direction (Akpuru-Aja, 2017). However, all activated efforts to intervene and curtail this hydra-headed trend has proven abortive to the extent that it is almost corrupting and eroding public morals as well as leading to further lack of love, compassion, trust, fairness, cooperation and reverence for the human family and all life on this planet (Altman & Griffiths, 2014). To this end, the purpose of this paper is to promote peace education management and conflict resolution strategies as the tools to curb violence but boost students' multidimensional skills development and literacy acquisition with the 21<sup>st</sup> century in view.

### **The concept of skill development and literacy acquisition in the school system**

Over the years, the issue of much emphasis on academic excellence, lack of quality skilled teachers and acute shortage of facilities have hindered students' educational improvement (Dunham, 2015). Similarly, Bisno (2018) submitted that inconsistent follow-up by government and poor funding are problems facing skills development and literacy acquisition among students in Nigerian schools. In a survey study carried out by Evarts (2022), findings showed that poor teacher attitudinal display, poor parental responsibilities to their children, peer group pressure, media programmes, students' needs and family economic status are problems encountered in skill development literacy acquisition among secondary school students. Fisher and Ertel (2015) also discovered that inadequate provision of training materials, inadequate provision of basic workshop tools and equipment and poor maintenance of skill acquisition equipment were affecting students' skill development. They likewise found that lack of qualified teachers, inadequate teacher practical training, non-professional attitude of teachers, non-provision of training and retraining for teachers on practical skill, inappropriate teaching methods, inability to control large class size during practical skill training and poor funding of skill acquisition programmes are problems that affect skill development among secondary school students. The findings imply that the poor skill development and lack of literacy acquisition displayed by most secondary school students in recent times is not far-fetched from the enumerated identified problems above.

According to Fisher and William (2021) a skill is the learned ability to perform an action with determined results with good execution often within a given amount of time, energy, or both. Fisher (2020) alluded that a skill is the ability to use one's knowledge effectively and readily in execution or performance. However, a multidimensional skill is the set of learned abilities to perform an action with determined results and good execution often within a given amount of time and energy (Göksoy & Argon, 2016). In

the same vein, multidimensional skill development involves the systematic processes which enable trainees (students) and the working age people (teachers) to gain access to dexterity, knowledge and ability, career ethics and good working attitude by skill training, establishing skill standards, and other relating activities (Griffin & Moorhead, 2017). On the other hand, Iwuagwu (2018) argued that skills development is synonymous to literacy acquisition because the former deals with the ability to do something well with expertise while the latter is the ability to read, write, speak and listen in a way that allows one to communicate effectively and make sense of the world. Similarly, literacy acquisition in its broadest sense describes "particular ways of thinking about and doing reading and writing" with the purpose of understanding or expressing thoughts or ideas in written form in some specific context of use (Jaja, Osai & Ogoloma (2015). To buttress this fact, the Federal Republic of Nigeria (2013) streamlined the multidimensional skills which can be developed by the students through the following subjects: English Language, one Nigerian Language, Mathematics, Basic Science and Technology, Basic Science, Basic Technology, Information Technology, Physical and Health Education, Religion and National Values, Christian Religious Studies, Islamic Studies, Social Studies and Civic Education. Others are Security Education, Pre-Vocational Studies, Home Economics, Agriculture, French Language, Cultural and Creative Arts and Business Studies among others.

Unfortunately, it has been observed that many students in Nigerian schools have not been able to do well in internal and external examinations as evidence of literacy acquisition and skill development. This is due to constant violence and lack of peace in their schools which disrupt academic activities and portends a lot of danger to the affected schools (Jones, 2020). To worsen this problem, many teachers have not been encouraged enough to go for professional skills development training, competence, on-the-job training through understanding of the subject matter for effective involvement of the student in instructional delivery (Kalagbor, 2017). In other words, Kinanee (2018) found that students exposed to internship training approach achieved significantly higher mean scores in Entrepreneurial Education for soap making and traditional cloth waving than the students who were not exposed to internship training. Also, the result revealed no significant difference in the mean practical skill acquisition scores of male and female students exposed to internship in soap making and traditional cloth weaving. This implies that practically exposing students to internship training will most likely enable them to have real contact with the practical aspect of their career and put the skills learnt in the school to use.

Similarly, Mullius (2020) found that students from control group had better skill acquisition competencies compared to the experimental group from middle, low and high socio-economic backgrounds. This means that it is very important to expose students to food practical for skill development and literacy acquisition. Correspondingly, Nwachukwu (2018) found that most students have not learnt one skill or the other and would prefer to be empowered in areas like computer skills, hair dressing, tailoring and soap making, etc. It was also discovered that skills development and literacy acquisition have significant contribution to society through human empowerment and such opinions have no gender bias but differed significantly by educational attainment. This implies that skill development and literacy acquisition can eliminate joblessness, helps in the development of positive attitude towards work and developing entrepreneurial

ability. They can also support in building self-reliant young people, lead to technological advancement, reduce poverty and crime rate in the society among other benefits.

### **Conflict resolution strategies and students' skill development and literacy acquisition**

One of the dimensions of managing students' skill development and literacy acquisition effectively in the school system is through the mechanisms of conflict resolution (Nwalado, 2021). According Obi (2014) conflict resolution strategies are the ways of mediation by the school administrator for two or more parties to find a peaceful solution to a disagreement among them. The disagreement may be educational, social, religious, personal, financial, political, or emotional because conflict is inherent in human nature (Rahim, 2022). A conflict is an inevitable struggle and a clash of interest, opinion, or even principles. It will always be found in school system as the basis of conflict may vary to be personal, racial, class, caste, political and international. Best (2020) found that accommodating, collaborating and compromising were significantly related to students' skill development and literacy acquisition in the right direction.

Oboegbulem and Alfa (2013) found that agreeing on the procedure taken for the resolution of conflicts by encouraging parties to work together, taking staff and students' comments and suggestions, and involvement of school disciplinary committee among others. Sun (2018) found that unresolved conflicts among the students and school management can result in eroded trust, decreased motivation, lowered morale, increased stress and health risks, decreased performance and productivity, increased absenteeism and presenteeism and students' quitting. In such a situation, little act of mediation by the administrator can have a greater impact on the outcome of the state of affairs, to reduce tension, create an environment that encourages openness, transparency, expression of opinions, assurance, respect and acceptance for one another (Uchendu, Anijaobi-Idem & Odigwe, 2014). More importantly, an environment in which everyone listens to one another and takes effort to understand the other person's view point.

**School-related conflicts that can hinder students' skill development and literacy acquisition** There are many potential causes of conflict in the school. Urias (2018) enumerated the causes of such conflicts as follows:

1. Increase in compulsory education and poor instructional resources
2. The increase in students per class and poor interpersonal relationship
3. The progressive decline in the teacher's authority about students and students are less likely to comply with rules and limits which results in conflict.
4. Insufficient school facilities to aid teaching and learning in the classroom. This negatively affects the psychological environment in overcrowded classrooms.
5. Lack of space for practical and collaborative activities in the classroom.
6. Indiscipline among students in the classroom and task inter-dependence
7. Provocation and contempt of the students towards the teacher, or the teacher towards the students to exercise their authority and power.
8. Lack of students' study habits and carrying out work, leading to a negative attitude during class, role conflict and inequitable treatment.

9. Poor communication between teacher-students or students-students. Communication relies on clear and complete messages being sent as well as being received.
10. Diversity in background, religion, race, ethnicity among others.

### **Measures for resolving conflicts and promote students' skill development and literacy**

According to Ury (2013) when a dispute arises between school management and students, students and teachers, school management and parents, among others, often the best course of action is negotiation to resolve the disagreement. This is because effective teaching and learning cannot take place in a chaotic school environment. There are fundamental approaches which a competent school administrator may adopt for conflict resolution in order to enhance students' skill development and literacy acquisition. Ury (2013) submitted that among these are seven steps to successfully negotiating the resolution of a conflict in the school:

1. Understanding the conflict as soon as possible without giving room for it to fester
2. Communicate with the oppositions and do so without taking sides
3. Brainstorm possible resolutions and effectively apply them
4. Choose the best resolutions which may suit both parties involved
5. Use a third-party mediator as the case maybe to avoid injustice, inequity and partisanship
6. Explore alternatives within the shortest period of time and utilize them
7. Cope with stressful situations and pressure tactics to avoid sounding like a lunatic.

### **Goals of school administrators in conflict resolution for students' skill development**

Sun (2018) delineate that the goals of negotiation by the school administrator are:

1. To produce a solution that all parties can agree to within the shortest period of time
2. To work as quickly as possible to find this solution
3. To improve, not hurt, the relationship between the groups in conflict
4. To understand more about those whose ideas, beliefs, and backgrounds may be different from others.
5. To ensure that interpersonal relationships with everyone continue and grow successful negotiations pave the way for smooth relationships in the future.
6. To find peaceful solutions to difficult situations because full-blown battles use up resources- time, energy, good reputations, motivation. By negotiating, the administrator avoids wasting these resources, and you may actually make new allies and find new resources for skill development and literacy acquisition in the school

In managing conflict resolution, the best way out is the solution that is best for both sides. The fact is that

this may not always be possible to find, but the school administrator is expected to use all the available resources his disposal to solve the conflict as smoothly as one can (Akpuru-Aja, 2017). With effective school management skills, conflict resolution through negotiation can be good for all parties involved (Altman & Griffiths, 2014). Often, each side will get more by willingly participating in negotiations without grudges than they would by walking away and it can be a way for the school management to sustain educational resources that might otherwise be out of reach (Best, 2020). Besides, the main goal of negotiation with the oppositions is to come to an agreement that benefits all in order to encourage students' continuous skill development and literacy acquisition (Bisno, 2018). More so, Dunham (2015) affirmed that when conflicts resolutions are effectively managed with these enumerated steps above, there is bound to be a peaceful co-existence among the school management, teachers, students, parents and other critical stakeholders involved in administering the education enterprise.

Evarts (2022) found that another successful approach for encouraging students' skill development and literacy acquisition is the promotion of peace education in the school system. Ordinarily, peace means the absence of conflict or violence at a particular time and place (Fisher & Ertel, 2015). It is capable of evoking the climate of freedom from fear, intimidation and harassment, oppression and brutalisation by external forces or agents (Fisher & William, 2021).

Peace education aims to help students acquire skills for nonviolent conflict resolution and to reinforce these skills for active and responsible action in the school environment. Peace education is the process of acquiring values, knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors to live in harmony with oneself, others, and the natural environment (Fisher, 2020). Peace education promotes the knowledge, skills and attitudes to help people prevent conflict occurring, resolve conflicts peacefully or create conditions for peace. There are numerous United Nations (2020) declarations and resolutions on the importance of peace in the school system. One of such declaration is that managing peace education is a panacea for students' skill development and literacy acquisition. Peace is a term commonly used to describe a state of quietude and tranquility that is free from pollution, heated argument, conflict, violence and disturbances (United Nations, 2020). A culture of peace in a school system is an integral approach to preventing violence and violent conflicts. It is an alternative to the culture of riots and violence based on education for peace and promotion of sustainable economic and social development, equality between genders across ages, democratic participation and respect for human rights (United Nations, 2020).

According to Evarts (2022) in the school system, peace culture covers healthy inter-personal relationship through effective management of educational services at all levels. This shows that sustainable peace culture is the application of fairness in an administrative process by channeling educational resource inputs, direction of investment, orientation of technological development and institutional changes to the instructional procedures both for the present system and as well the future (Dunham, 2015). Sustainable peace culture will enable secondary schools to survive in this period of global competitiveness through effective management of student support services (United Nations, 2020).



### **Some suggestions to managing peace education meant for students' multidimensional Skills development and Literacy Acquisition**

Promoting peace education considers the above definitions as a baseline and a peace loving administrators and teachers naturally would want to integrate it into all aspects of school curriculum as enunciated by the United Nations (2020) in seven major media of integration as follows:

- 1. Subject context:** Here the administrator and the teacher take Language, Social Studies, Religion, Physical Education, Arts and Science as the core curricular subjects, which can be used to infuse peace.
- 2. Subject perspectives:** These are for teachers making a subject meaningful. A subject is not learned merely for the subject's sake. It has to be interpreted in such a manner so as to contribute to learner's social, emotional, intellectual and moral self-development. Peace education attempts to humanize subjects through bringing in human perspectives and dominion into learning.
- 3. Teaching methods:** In education both what is taught and how it is taught are equally important. A good teacher adopts the child-centred education approach, especially in the primary and secondary levels. Instead of routine lecturing, she uses interesting learning activities. She is not only concerned with imparting knowledge but also concerned with developing socializing skills, moral attitudes and learning skills of children in parallel.
- 4. Co-curricular activities:** These are activities done outside the classroom to achieve the goals of the formal subject learning. Here the teacher includes co-curricular activities as well. Co-curricular activities are complementary in the sense that they do not directly relate to subjects or formal curriculum but are helpful in achieving the goals of literacy acquisition.
- 5. Staff development:** To successfully implement any innovation, first of all the teachers need to develop by raising awareness and training. This can be done through in-service seminars and school-based sessions to enable them support students' skill development and literacy acquisition.
- 6. Classroom management:** Classroom management includes maintenance of discipline, organizing learning, character building, conflict resolution, counseling, etc.
- 7. School management:** This is the administrative, structural, policy-making and policy implementation at the school level by the principal as the head. Teachers who implement peace education at the classroom level need the support of the whole school. Peace education provides important insights into management development of the school. Therefore, the inclusion of peace education in the school curriculum will help to reduce crime, violence and other social vices. On this premise, it be said that there is no significant differences between peace education and conflict resolution strategies in promoting students' skill development as well as literacy acquisition.

### **Summary/Conclusion**

Peace education refers to the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavioural changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level. Similarly, conflict resolution strategies is conceptualized as the methods and processes involved in facilitating the peaceful ending of conflict and retribution. This implies that a school administrator who encourages the

institutionalization of peace education and meditatively resolves conflict among individuals in the school promotes students' skill development and literacy acquisition. Lastly, it can be concluded that without peace education and conflict resolution, effective teaching and learning cannot take place. To this end, the integrating, implementation and practice of peace education and conflict resolution mechanisms needs to be properly and continuously evaluated to ensure effectiveness in students' skill developments and literacy acquisition in the right direction for a better career choice.

### **Recommendations**

Based on the literature reviewed in this study, the following recommendations were suggested to improve peace education management, conflict resolution strategies skills and students' skill development as well as literacy acquisition:

1. The training and retaining of teachers should be intensified to enable school administrators and teachers acquire the skills and knowledge to use appropriate techniques and methods to effectively manage peace education in such a way that concepts that are relevant to students' skill development and literacy acquisition will be reflected and identified.
2. School administrators and teachers should not use avoiding strategy to resolve conflicts but instead apply collaboration and accommodating as a method of settling conflicts in their schools so as to improve students' skill development and literacy acquisition in a conducive learning environment.

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