

# Achieving Education in Conflict and Crises-Affected Areas through Peace Building and Reconciliation

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**Abstract:** *Any reference to man as a social and rational being tends to suggest that man is a socially determinable personality and one who co-exists harmoniously with those of his kind. However the realities of our time abound with different cases of conflicts. The complexity and pluralism which our social institutions assume, portend conflicting languages, world views, ideologies and so on, in multi-dimensional relational and modes of claims of rights and interest as well as rights of duties, obligations and burden. Sociological studies buttress stratification and conflicts as inequalities as naturally given, marked by continuous bargaining disagreements, exploitations, frustrations, compromise, dislikes and incompatibilities. Thus, confirming Karl Marx assertion that the history of society is characterized by class struggles. Conflict therefore takes place within the individual, between people, organizations and organizational subunits. At each stage therefore, there is a progression till crisis point is reached. However, the purpose of this study is to examine the relevance of education interventions in achieving peace building and reconciliation in conflict and crisis- affected contexts. The methodology is based on the review of academic and programming literature to examine the existing evidence base on how to achieve the stated objectives. The study therefore highlights various approaches to peace building and reconciliation, and literacy education as means of achieving peace. The study concludes that peace building is a process that does not end with a ceasefire, or peace accord rather about transformation processes within societies that have experienced violent conflict. The challenge of peace building and education in reconciliation is to understand how education can support such political, security, economic and social transformation processes.*

**Keywords:** *Conflict, education, peace building, reconciliation.*

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## Introduction

In time past, people were naturally good, and there was no war of all against all, but the establishment of private property as a result of our natural inventiveness which brought with it fraud, disputes, and conflicts (Fagothey cited in Ogoko, 2005). Conflict however is a state of disagreement, tension, stress, misunderstanding or arguments between people, groups, communities, states and nations. It is a situation in which there are feelings about something, usually the issue. Conflict at the individual level is expressed in the forms of anxiety, fear, frustration, emotional outburst, anger, lack of self-control, tension and aggression because there is a threatened value or desired persons, institutions or sub-systems. Montville's writing in the United Nation cited in Echezona

(2007:153) defined conflict as two distinct, mutually supportive components of conflict resolution as:

“training in dispute resolution skills, and political conflict resolution-processes; the widely used negotiation mediation-conciliation approach, concentrated on problem-solving through consensus-building so that the basic interest of all parties could be satisfied; on the other hand, the litigation or power negotiation approach promoted discord, since the “power” side wins while the weak side loses and is determined to seek revenge in the future. Negotiating skills were critically important and could help resolve deep-rooted ethnic and sectarian conflicts. Infact, conflict resolution could support the evolution of democratic pluralism in civil society”.

However, there is still no consensus on the best strategies for conflict resolution, though practitioners agree on the goal of conflict resolution, to move from power-base relations and “win-lose approaches to conflict towards the facilitation of communication, confidence-building, problem solving, voluntary agreement and “win-win” situations. From the above, one can see that mediation, conciliation approaches including withholding of finance, training in dispute resolution, building positive relationships and so on are ways of resolving conflict (Echezona, 2007).

In 2000 (March) the UN Secretary-General Kofi Annan set up an independent panel to make a clear set of recommendations on how to do better in future in the whole range of United Nations activities in the area of peace and security. Brahimi Bakhdar, the former Algerian Foreign minister in his report released on the 23 August 2000 observed that:

“Without renewed commitment on the part of member states, significant institutions change and increased financial support, the UN would not be capable of executing the critical peace keeping and peace-building tasks that are at core of its missions: to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war” (UN, 2003).

The UN and its member nations face a pressing need to establish more effective strategies for conflict prevention. However, the organization would continue to face challenges of having to assist countries and nations in making the transition from war to peace.

Conflicts in African nations pose major challenges to the United Nations efforts towards global peace, prosperity and human rights for all. The main aim of these conflicts is the destruction, not just the armies, but of civilians and the entire ethnic groups. Preventing each war is no longer a matter of defending states or protecting allies rather a matter of defending humanity itself. However, the organization will continue to assist communities and nations in making the transition from war to peace (UN, 1998). For instance, since 1966 till date, more than 30 wars have been fought. In Africa, the vast majority of them are intra-state which includes the Nigerian-Biafran war and so on.

In 1996 alone, 14 of the 53 African countries gained their independence; there has been an ongoing recognition among Africans themselves that the continent must look beyond its colonial past for the causes of

current conflicts. The major causes identified are political, external economic motive, and ethnic and religious factors (Echezona, 2007).

Education is a nurturing process whose essence recognizes that man is endowed with an immense power of knowledge which is limited, not so much in its essence as in the nature of acquisition of the data of information. This limitation together with others in man's nature, tend to impede the individual's progress intellectually (emotionally) and morally unless he is helped (guided) by the collective experience previously accumulated and preserved by constant and planned transmission of the knowledge thus acquired.

Education helps to equip man with all round habit of good behaviour. That is why Aristotle and Plato observed that if one did have knowledge, he would never act wrongly. Knowledge they say is virtue and as such a change and causal. Aristotle thus, wrote that wisdom is knowledge about certain principles and cause; the first principle and the causes are knowledge for by reason of these, and from these all other things are subordinate to them. In recognition to existing gaps in knowledge and practice, this paper examines the techniques involved in peace building interactive as it involves reconciliation.

### **Methodology**

The paper employed a mixture of qualitative and quantitative survey research methods based on secondary data as tools. The paper also used online data base, journals and materials which served as secondary means of reports on conflict-crisis-affected contexts that aimed to promote the constructive debate and guided analysis on peace-building and reconciliation.

### **Conceptualization of Terms**

#### **Conflict**

Conflict can be seen as a situation in which two or more human beings desire goals, which they perceive as being obtainable by one or the other, but not both. This compact definition can be opened up and clarified by saying that there must be at least two parties, one party in mobilizing energy to obtain a goal, a desire objecting a situation, and the other party perceives the other as a barrier or threat to that goal (Michael cited in Echezona, 2007). The above definition indicates that conflict is a post conflict negotiation that ends in peaceful agreements.

According to the report by USAID, Literacy in conflict and conflict affected contexts refers to a continuum ranging from a relatively stable environment to increasingly escalating tensions that may lead to change such as institutionalized forms of violence. Conflict is experienced differently across identity groups, geographic areas, and time. Crisis can be the result of conflict, violence, and natural disasters. Very often, conflicts violence, crisis overlap compounding the effects. These factors according to Akwukwoa (2014) combine to create highly insecure environments, challenging the abilities of schools and communities to provide a safe and effective learning environment for learners.

The effects of conflicts on children is great especially areas where it is rooted. During the Nigerian civil war in 1966-1970 for example, Children, youth's women and old people from the Biafran zone were greatly affected. Also in Bornu state and its environs affected by Boko Haram insurgency, children, women and old people suffer

the same effects. It is highly understandable that the absence of peace is greatly felt in the areas of conflict that leave many people vulnerable.

### **Literacy/Education:**

Literacy can have a tremendous impact on conflict resolution and human rights. Various peace projects all over the world have been initiated with the help of literacy based programmes to help in resolving and reconciling numerous affected and warring parties. According to Pro-literacy International Organization that promotes peace with the use of literacy, more than 759 million adults-16 percent of the world's population, possess only basic or below literacy levels in their native language which simply means that they did not attain the basic formal education while they were children (Akwukwoa, 2014).

Since the publication of a United Nations (UN) special report on children and armed conflict by Michael cited in Kapur (2018) that attention has been given to assessing the impacts of conflict on literacy. These include the disruption of schools, attacks on teachers, and pupils or students, for recruitment of child soldiers and needs of refugees and internally, displaced people (IDPS)(UNESCO 2010). The aim was to expose the extent and nature of the abuse perpetrated against children and education systems in conflict-affected situations, as well as to expose strategies and address the effects of conflict on education. The establishment of the UN in San Francisco in 1945 after World War II was the result of a desire to save succeeding generations of mankind from any major war of global dimension. The architects of this global body desired to work together to prevent the out-break of new global conflict as well as build a world of freedom, progress, prosperity and justice for All (UN, 2001).

In line with the above, the UN educational scientific and cultural organization (UNESCO) defined literacy as the ability to identify, understand, interpret, create and communicate and compute using printed and written materials associated with varying contexts. Literacy thus involves a continuum of living in enabling individuals to achieve their goals, to develop their knowledge and potential and to participate fully in their community and wider society.

### **Peace-building**

The concept of peace-building has received renewed attention following the UN secretary general's call for the establishment of the peace-building commission (PBC), the peace-building support office (PBSO) and peace-building fund (PBF) in 2006. These structures have emerged because of concerns to prevent relapse, in the aftermath of conflict. They provide support to countries in the immediate post-conflict period mainly through funding for political period governance, security and macro-economic reforms (Abu-Nimer, 2000). However, the UN peace-building architecture according to Abu-Saba (1999) provides the opportunity to initiate social programming in areas that support peace-building.

Peace-building according to Galtung (1976) involves addressing and removing the root cause of violence-the structural and the cultural violence-that feeds into and enables direct violence. The goal of peace-building is positive sustainable peace. Galtung (1976) stated that "...structures must be found that remove causes of wars and offer alternatives to war in situations where wars might occur". He emphasized on the importance of local knowledge ownership and participation in peace-building.

According to Lederach (1997), peace-building is defined as a process that is dynamic and social and involves transforming relationships. In 2007, the Secretary General’s policy of United Nation Committee provided a conceptual basis for peace-building as follows:

*“Peace-building involves a range of measure targeted to reduce the risk of lapsing or relapsing into conflict by strengthening national capacities at all levels for conflict management and lay the foundations for sustainable peace and development. The peace-building strategies must be coherent and targeted to specific needs of the country concerned based on national ownership, and should compromise a carefully prioritized sequence, and therefore relatively narrow set of activities aimed at achieving the above objective”.*

The OECD/DAC recently offered a definition of peace-building within the 2008 Guidance Note on Evaluation Conflict Prevention and peace-building. The Guidance states:

*“Peace-building covers a broad range of measures implemented in the context of emerging, current or post conflict situation and which are explicitly guided and motivated by a commitment to the prevention of violent and the promotion of a lasting and sustainable peace”.*

The legacies of the work of Galtung and Lederach are visible within these definitions. Both endeavour to work towards the idea of a lasting and sustainable peace. National capacity and ownership are emphasized on the UN definition. Lederach’s emphasis on peace-building as a broad and dynamic process is maintained in both definitions that embrace a broad range of measures. According to Kapur (2018),, neither definitions explicitly adopts Galtung’s emphases on the root causes of conflict or the elimination of structural violence although these can perhaps be implied in the commitment towards sustainable peace

### Theoretical Framework

The theoretical base of this study stems from the theory of peace-building by Galtung (1975) with his publication of three approaches to peace resolution as follows: peace keeping, peacemaking and peace-building. Galtung developed many of the core concepts that continue to be applied in peace-building work and definitions today including in the United Nation (2007) as much as Lederah (1997) and (Kupur, 2018). Core concepts from Galtung’s work include: negative peace, positive peace, structural violence, root causes of conflict and sustainable peace. These core concepts that inform Galtung’s notion of peace-building are summarized as follows:-

S/N	Concept	Definition
1	Peace	The cessation and absence of violence.
2	Positive peace	The absence of structural violence. The presence of social justice. The conditions that eliminate the causes of Violence.
3	Structural violence	Indirect violence. “violence that is built into structures and shows up as unequal life Chances”.
4	Root cause of conflict	Manifestation of structural and cultural violence, leading to direct violence.
5	Sustainable peace	Peace and processes towards it that address the root causes of violence conflict.

Core peace building concepts as developed by John Galtung, adopted from Radhuka Kapur 2018 publication.

The work of John Paul Lederach in (1997) has also been important for evolving definitions of peace-building. Lederach wrote that peace building is defined as:

*“... a comprehensive concept that encompasses, generates and sustains the full array of processes, approaches, and stages needed to transform conflict toward more sustainable, peace relationship. The term thus involves a wide range of activities that both proceed and follow formal peace accords. Metaphorically, peace is seen not merely as a stage in tune or a condition. It is a dynamic social construct”.*

Transformation is an important concept within Lederach’s work and the idea regarding the transformation of conflict and the relationships between conflicting parties continues to be important for peace-building definitions and practice.

### **The Role of Education in Peace-building and Reconciliation**

Education is perhaps the most important tool for human development and the eradication of poverty. It is the means by which successive generations develop the values, knowledge and skills for their personal health and safety and for future political, economic, social and cultural development. This may be one reason why the MDGS place so much emphasis on achieving universal free and compulsory primary education through Education for All (EFA).

However there are many impediments to the achievement of EFA. These include lack of priority to education on the part of national governments (such as insufficient spending as a percentage of GNP or inequitable distribution of fund and resources), or lack of effective action by the international community in the use of development assistance. Within countries poverty, child labour, distance from school, unequal access due to gender or cultural factors and the existence of conflict are all barriers to the enrolment of children in school.

However, there are three broad summary in which one may conclude on how education could be achieved in conflict and crises- affected contexts through peace-building and reconciliation. The first represents a concern for the promotion of children and a response to the negative impacts of conflicts on their education. This is a purely humanitarian motivation approach. The second represents a concern that education is provided in a way that “does no harm”. This approach can be defined as conflict sensitive education. That means that it is sensitive to sources of conflict in the society in which it is situated and is provided in a way that does not make antagonisms or animosities worse. The third represents a concern that education can do some good, for example, by contributing to transformations within conflict-affected societies that might make peace possible and more likely to ensure- that is, education that contributes to peace-building.

Though education systems face exceptional challenges during times of violence conflict, during conflict, international humanitarian law has a particular importance to protections relating to education at times of war, including that:

- Parties to a conflict ensure that parents or families are provided with appropriate education.
- Occupying powers should facilitate the maintenance of education.

- Education should be provided for internal children and young people; and
- Education should be provided throughout non-international conflicts (Kapur, 2008).

The concerns about the impact of violent conflict and war on children received considerable attention during the 1990s and were comprehensively documented through a study commissioned by the UN Secretary-General (Michael, 1996). The report identified a number of important implications for education sector, including arrangement for the education of refugees and displaced persons (Crisp, Talbot and Cipollone (2001), and strategies to prevent the use of child soldiers, protection for girls against sex crimes, landmine education and trauma counseling.

Arguments were also made that education should be an integral part of humanitarian responses (Retamal and Aedo-Richmond, 1998). Attention was drawn to the fact that education is a fundamental right as articulated in Universal Declaration on Human Rights (1948) and the Convention on the Rights of the Child (1981). Children should not lose this fundamental right to education simply because they live in the midst of a conflict. It has also been argued that education is an important element in the physical, psychological and cognitive protection of children during conflict. By providing a sense of normalcy and stability, education may ease the physiological impact of conflict.

A safe learning environment may shield children from the everyday physical violence of a conflict, while also conveying life-saving information on how to protect oneself from danger (for example, sexual attack, child recruitment, landmines). Education can also provide cognitive protection by supporting intellectual development through the teaching of literacy and numeracy and, in some cases, conflict resolution and peace-building skills.

There are significant debates to include education of frontline humanitarian aid response. However, there has been significant development since the World Education Forum 2000 and its resulting Dakar Framework for action includes an explicit call for donor support to the field which is now known as Education in Emergencies (Johnson and Van Kalmthout, 2006). While the field is not defined exclusively in terms of conflict, the description of education due to conflict is certainly one set of circumstances that come within the definition of an emergency (Sinclair, 2000).

The concept of reconciliation has received attention across a range of international contexts; but each conflict is quantitatively different in terms of the level of violence and number of casualties; and qualitatively different in terms of the social context and the nature of atrocities that may have taken place (Kapur, 2018). These factors mean that those affected by conflict have different perspective on what is reasonable or realistic in terms of attempts at reconciliation. Kapur (2018) observed that these factors make it extremely difficult to consider reconciliation a generic concept with the implications for different conflicts. These issues make the concept of reconciliation a problematic case in terms of the difficult and controversial issues it raises. According to Hamber and Menove (1998), the term embodies positive connotations about leading past conflicts. However, Paulson (2006), and UNICE (2010), research on the role of education in relation to truth and reconciliation processes in areas like Sierra Leone gave a deeper understanding that the role of education in contributing to reconciliation processes is yet to be developed.

Reconciliation may be necessary at many levels (between individuals between

groups in conflict, between peoples or nations at war). There are implications for education in terms of facilitating reconciliation by addressing the legacies of conflict. These include the impact on the bereaved and commendation; debates about forgiveness, expressions of regret, apology and symbolic events; understanding the role of amenities, prisoner releases, alongside concepts of restorative and transitional justice. There are challenging long-term tasks that link reconstruction programmes into the mainstream education sector and the longer-time goal of conflict prevention.

Education for reconciliation may thus be seen as a contribution to peace-building, concerned with conflict transformation within societies (Kapur, 2018). According to Solomon (2004), linkages between education and peace-building, the role of educating is often stereotyped as “peace education, perceived to involve working with children and youth on peace education programmes for personal development’ inter-group content and conflict resolution techniques.

### **Conclusion**

One of the most significant contributions of peace theorists has been to highlight how peace-building is a process that does not end with a ceasefire or peace accord; it is about transformation processes within societies that have experienced violence conflict. The challenge of peace-building and education in reconciliation is to understand how education can support such political, security, economic and social transformation processes. Most education programmes tends to adopt single-issue approach.

The literature reveals a subtle distinction in perspective between education programmes in post conflict areas that attempt to do no harm by taking conflict analysis into account and approaches that are more explicit and implicit about contributing to peace-building through post-conflict transformation. For instance, a conflict-sensitive approach to the reconstruction of schools might simply rebuild schools in their former locations even if this means that dimensions between schools remain, no further harm is done if communities remain separate and cooperation between than can be encouraged. A peace-building approach may more actively seek local consensus on rebuilding shared schools in line with the sort of structural change and transformation of social relationships necessary for positive peace as advocated by theorists such as Galtung (1975) and Lederach (1997).

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