



Teachers' Understanding of Peace Education and Its Integration into Secondary School Curriculum: A Case Study of District Lasbela, Balochistan

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ABSTRACT

Peace education has emerged as a vital component of secondary school curricula worldwide, equipping students with the knowledge, attitudes, and skills needed to resolve conflict nonviolently, respect human rights, and function as responsible global citizens. Despite growing international recognition of its value, empirical evidence on how secondary school teachers in Pakistan understand and enact peace education remains limited. This study explores teachers' perceptions of peace education and examines the extent to which its core components are integrated into the secondary school curriculum in District Lasbela, Balochistan. Using a qualitative interpretivist design, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 18 secondary school teachers, complemented by a qualitative content analysis of English, Urdu, Pakistan Studies, and Islamiyat textbooks for grades 9 and 10. Findings indicate that teachers broadly recognise peace education as central to fostering tolerance, empathy, and conflict-resolution skills, and view it as necessary for reducing school violence and building a more harmonious society. However, its presence in the curriculum remains largely implicit, embedded within moral and civic lessons rather than taught as an explicit, skills-based subject. Teachers identified an overcrowded curriculum, insufficient training, and a lack of dedicated resources as the principal barriers to implementation. The study recommends the development of a structured peace education framework, sustained teacher training, cross-subject integration, and stronger policy support to move peace education from rhetorical commitment to classroom practice.

Introduction

Curriculum shapes not only what students learn but who they become. Beyond academic content, secondary school curricula carry the implicit and explicit values that guide how young people relate to difference, conflict, and one another. Peace education sits squarely within this responsibility. It is commonly understood as the process of imparting the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to prevent violence, resolve conflict peacefully, and build the conditions for peace at the interpersonal, intergroup, national, and international levels (Bajaj & Hantzopoulos, 2020; UNESCO, 2021). Its core strands typically include conflict-resolution skills, human rights education, nonviolent communication, global citizenship education, and social and emotional learning.

In Pakistan, and particularly in Balochistan, the case for peace education is pressing. Rising social fragmentation, ethnic and sectarian tension, and inconsistent exposure to civic values in schooling make the classroom an important, if underused, site for cultivating tolerance and nonviolence. Yet peace education in Pakistan remains largely aspirational rather than operational

(Bashir & Akbar, 2021; Bashir et al., 2020). Teachers, who mediate between curriculum documents and lived classroom practice, are central to whether peace education takes root. Their understanding of the concept, their beliefs about its importance, and the practical constraints they face therefore merit close empirical attention.

This study addresses that gap by examining how secondary school teachers in District Lasbela understand peace education, why they consider it necessary, and how far its components are actually integrated into the existing curriculum.

Specifically, the study was guided by three research questions: (1) How do secondary school teachers in District Lasbela perceive and understand peace education? (2) Why do teachers consider peace education necessary within the secondary school context? (3) To what extent are the core components of peace education – conflict resolution, human rights education, nonviolent communication, global citizenship, and social-emotional learning – integrated into the existing secondary school curriculum? Answering these questions is intended not merely to document a gap between rhetoric and practice, but to identify concrete entry points – curricular, pedagogical, and institutional – through which peace education can be more meaningfully embedded in Balochistan's schools.

Literature Review

Scholarship on peace education consistently identifies a persistent gap between recognised value and classroom practice. Ahmed, Smith, and Patel (2024) found that an overcrowded curriculum, inadequate resources, and limited teacher capacity are recurring obstacles to implementation across contexts. Similarly, research on teacher attitudes suggests that professional development is one of the strongest predictors of whether peace education principles are actually applied in the classroom, since training builds both competence and self-efficacy (Smith & Jones, 2023; Williams & Carter, 2023).

Within South Asia specifically, the literature paints a more uneven picture. Bashir and Akbar (2021) report that prospective teachers in Pakistan show measurable gains in knowledge and attitude following structured peace education training, suggesting that the barrier is less a lack of teacher willingness than a lack of systematic exposure. Bashir et al. (2020) similarly find that where peace-related content exists in Pakistani curricula, it is rarely accompanied by the pedagogical guidance teachers need to translate it into classroom activity. This pattern is not unique to Pakistan: comparative work on curriculum embeddedness suggests that peace-related values are frequently present in textbooks across South Asia and the wider Global South, but almost always as implicit moral content rather than as a distinct, assessed subject with its own learning outcomes (Bajaj & Hantzopoulos, 2020). The consequence, as Johnson and Lee (2023) argue, is that teacher attitudes end up doing much of the work that curriculum design should be doing, leaving implementation dependent on individual teachers' initiative rather than institutional support.

The components of peace education have each attracted their own body of evidence. Conflict-resolution instruction, built around mediation, negotiation, and dialogue, is associated with reduced bullying and improved classroom management (Patel & Ahmed, 2024). Human rights education fosters empathy and civic awareness, particularly when abstract principles are grounded in case studies and historical examples (Thompson, 2023; Woldeyes & Offord, 2018). Nonviolent communication training has been linked to lower rates of verbal aggression among students (Garcia & Lee, 2024), while global citizenship education broadens students' awareness of transnational issues such as climate change and inequality (Chang & Wu, 2023; Bennett et al., 2024). Social and emotional learning, meanwhile, is repeatedly associated with better academic outcomes and stronger emotional self-regulation (Durlak, Weissberg, & Pachan, 2022).

What is less well documented, especially in the Pakistani context, is how these components appear, or fail to appear, in actual textbooks, and how teachers themselves narrate their understanding of peace education. This study contributes context-specific evidence on both counts.

Methodology

The study adopted a qualitative, interpretivist research design suited to exploring the subjective meanings teachers attach to peace education (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Data were collected from 18 secondary school teachers (12 male, 6 female) in District Lasbela, selected through non-probability purposive sampling to capture a range of subject specialisms and teaching experience. Semi-structured interviews formed the primary data source, while a qualitative content analysis of grade 9 and 10 English, Urdu,

Pakistan Studies, and Islamiyat textbooks provided secondary, document-based evidence of curriculum integration. Interview data were analysed thematically, and textbook content was coded against the established components of peace education: conflict resolution, human rights education, nonviolent communication, global citizenship, and social and emotional learning. Ethical protocols included informed consent, participant anonymisation through a coding system, and secure storage of all data.

Interview data were transcribed, anonymised, and analysed using an inductive thematic analysis approach, following the phases outlined by Creswell and Poth (2018): familiarisation with the transcripts, generation of initial codes, collation of codes into candidate themes, review of themes against the coded extracts and the full data set, and refinement and naming of themes prior to write-up. Two members of the research team coded a subset of transcripts independently before comparing and reconciling codes, which helped guard against idiosyncratic interpretation. Textbook analysis followed a parallel deductive procedure, with passages coded against the five predefined components of peace education and coding decisions cross-checked for consistency. Trustworthiness was addressed through triangulation of interview and textbook data, an audit trail of coding decisions, and reflection on emerging themes among the research team.

Results and Discussion

Teachers' Perception and Understanding of Peace Education

Teachers across subject areas and experience levels described peace education as more than a discrete topic; they framed it as a practical orientation toward tolerance, empathy, and respectful coexistence. As one participant explained:

"Peace education is not only a course to study; it's the art of being and relationship through which a learner is trained to lead a peaceful and responsible life with self as well as with others."

This sentiment recurred across interviews: teachers repeatedly linked peace education to the cultivation of interpersonal skills, communication, and cultural respect, rather than to a fixed body of content. Several teachers noted that empathy in particular functions as a gateway skill, one that reduces conflict by helping students recognise the perspectives of others. Teachers with more experience tended to connect peace education explicitly to conflict-resolution training, while newer teachers more often framed it in terms of emotional intelligence and inclusive classroom culture, suggesting that understanding of the concept is shaped as much by professional experience as by formal training.

Despite this shared appreciation, teachers' accounts also revealed unevenness in how peace education is conceptualised. Some described it primarily as a way to prevent bullying and school violence; others positioned it as a broader vehicle for global citizenship and social responsibility. This variation echoes Smith and Jones' (2023) finding that, despite growing recognition of its importance, many educators still lack a precise, shared understanding of how peace education is meant to be delivered in practice.

Other teachers extended this framing further, describing peace education as inseparable from a school's broader ethos rather than a bounded activity.

In simple terms, it is designed to produce people capable of gaining wonderful academic results as well as being good responsible members of the society.

Another teacher, discussing a peer-mediation initiative introduced in her school, described the effect in cultural rather than curricular terms:

It is not merely tutoring; it is the establishment of the culture of the school and culture of people.

Such statements suggest that, for many teachers, peace education is less a topic to be delivered than an institutional atmosphere to be cultivated, one that depends as much on everyday interactions and modelling as on any specific lesson.

Teachers' Perception of the Necessity of Peace Education

Teachers were emphatic that peace education is necessary, citing its role in reducing violence, improving communication, and strengthening community relationships. Several described concrete behavioural changes after introducing conflict-resolution strategies in their classrooms. One teacher observed:

"Since the nonviolent approach is taught to the students, they are able to embrace it from within their conscience. They cease perceiving aggression as the outcome and seek the possibility to cooperate and negotiate."

Teachers also connected peace education to life-skill development, arguing that the ability to manage emotions, resolve disagreements, and collaborate has value well beyond the classroom, extending into students' homes and future workplaces. This aligns with Johnson and Johnson's (2019) argument that schools implementing structured conflict-resolution programmes see measurable reductions in bullying and improved peer relationships. Notably, several teachers framed peace education not merely as a tool for managing present-day classroom problems but as an investment in the kind of citizens students will become, a long-term, character-building function rather than a short-term disciplinary fix.

Communication difficulties emerged as a recurring trigger for classroom conflict, and teachers repeatedly linked peace education to stronger expressive and listening skills. One teacher explained that many conflicts arise simply because students do not know how to express themselves, and that peace education teaches them the language and tools they need to communicate their emotions constructively. Several participants offered concrete examples of behavioural change following such instruction, describing students who had previously reacted to frustration with shouting or withdrawal gradually adopting more measured, verbal responses to disagreement. Teachers also noted that these communication gains were not confined to the classroom: some reported that students began applying the same skills at home, mediating disputes between siblings or de-escalating tension between parents. This spillover effect reinforces the view that peace education functions as a durable life skill rather than a classroom-specific behavioural fix, a finding consistent with Durlak, Weissberg, and Pachan's (2022) meta-analytic evidence that social-emotional learning produces benefits that persist beyond the immediate instructional setting.

Integration of Peace Education into the Secondary School Curriculum

The textbook analysis complicated the otherwise positive picture painted by teacher interviews. Peace-related themes are present across the Islamiat, Pakistan Studies, Urdu, and English textbooks, but almost entirely in implicit form, embedded within moral, religious, or civic content rather than framed as explicit peace education with defined learning outcomes.

The Islamiat textbook offers the richest normative foundation, drawing on Qur'anic and Hadith material concerning compassion, justice, and tolerance. However, the dominant pedagogy remains rote memorisation, with limited space for students to connect these principles to contemporary social conflict. Pakistan Studies addresses citizenship and constitutional rights but tends toward a nationalistic framing that emphasises unity through homogenisation rather than critical engagement with the country's ethnic and provincial diversity, including limited representation of Baloch, Pashtun, and Hazara communities. The Urdu textbook contains considerable literary material, poetry and prose treating compassion and moral courage, that could support peace education, but classroom activities focus on grammar and comprehension rather than ethical reflection. English textbooks similarly touch on justice and cooperation through thematic readings such as "Responsibilities of a Good Citizen," yet these remain incidental moral lessons rather than a structured peace curriculum, and the exam-oriented teaching style leaves little room for the reflective writing and debate that peace education requires.

Across all four subjects, five cross-cutting patterns emerged: peace content is implicit rather than explicit; pedagogy remains largely rote and teacher-centred rather than participatory; assessment measures factual recall rather than behaviour or attitude; local relevance to Balochistan's specific social context is minimal; and representation of marginalised communities is limited. Teachers themselves confirmed this gap, repeatedly citing an overloaded curriculum, absence of dedicated teaching material, and lack of formal training in peace pedagogy as the principal barriers preventing them from translating textbook content into active, skills-based instruction.

The Urdu textbook illustrates this tension particularly clearly. Its selections include work by canonical writers such as Iqbal, Ghalib, and Ashfaq Ahmad, whose poetry and prose repeatedly engage themes of compassion, forgiveness, and moral courage,

material well suited, in principle, to peace education. In practice, however, classroom activity around these texts is dominated by grammar, vocabulary, and summary exercises, with the examination system rewarding linguistic accuracy over ethical reflection. Compounding this, the literary selections draw overwhelmingly on a narrow cultural and regional range, with little representation of Baloch or other minority voices, so that students in Lasbela encounter few texts reflecting their own social environment. The English textbook shows a related but distinct pattern: its short stories and essays gesture toward justice, cooperation, and cross-cultural understanding, yet the material is predominantly drawn from Western contexts, making the substance of the lessons harder for students to map onto local experiences of conflict and coexistence. In both cases, the raw material for peace education is present in the curriculum, but its pedagogical framing – exam-oriented, decontextualised, and rarely reflective – prevents that material from functioning as anything more than incidental moral colour.

Teachers' Perceived Barriers and Training Needs

Beyond describing what peace education should look like, teachers were candid about the practical constraints that keep it from being realised. An overcrowded curriculum was the most frequently cited obstacle, with several teachers noting that syllabus coverage requirements leave little room for the kind of open-ended discussion, role play, or reflective writing that peace education depends on. Lack of dedicated teaching material compounded this pressure: without ready-made lesson plans, case studies, or activity guides, teachers were often left to improvise peace-related content within lessons designed for other purposes. One teacher summarised the resulting frustration bluntly:

In peace education there is so much that can be done with little capacity or resource building, and so there is so much to be desired with regards to actual implementation.

Training emerged as the second major theme. Teachers who had attended workshops on peace pedagogy described them as transformative, both for their confidence and for their students' engagement. As one participant put it,

I have learned new ways to teach peace education and this resonates with the students through the workshops and training provided.

However, such training opportunities were reported to be occasional and unevenly distributed rather than systematic, leaving many teachers, particularly those newer to the profession, to rely on personal intuition rather than structured pedagogical knowledge. This finding echoes Williams and Carter's (2023) argument that professional development is one of the strongest levers available for shifting peace education from aspiration to classroom practice, and it suggests that any curricular reform in Lasbela's schools will depend as much on investment in teachers as on revision of textbooks.

Conclusion and Recommendations

This study demonstrates that secondary school teachers in District Lasbela hold a broadly positive and reasonably sophisticated understanding of peace education, associating it with tolerance, empathy, conflict resolution, and responsible citizenship. Teachers are also convinced of its necessity, linking it to reduced school violence, improved communication, and stronger community relationships. However, the curriculum they work within offers only implicit and fragmented support for these goals: peace-related themes exist within Islamiat, Pakistan Studies, Urdu, and English textbooks, but without explicit learning outcomes, participatory pedagogy, or contextual grounding in Balochistan's social realities. The result is a curriculum with a strong ethical orientation but a weak pedagogical architecture for peace education.

Closing this gap will require coordinated action. A dedicated peace education framework should articulate clear learning outcomes and integrate conflict-resolution, human rights, nonviolent communication, global citizenship, and social-emotional content across subjects rather than confining it to isolated lessons. Sustained teacher training is essential, since teachers' own confidence and pedagogical repertoire strongly shape whether peace content translates into practice. Curriculum developers should produce purpose-built resources, including role-play scenarios, case studies, and locally relevant material representing Balochistan's ethnic and linguistic diversity. Finally, policy support and institutional commitment, from mandatory curriculum standards to school-level anti-bullying and peer-mediation programmes, are needed to move peace education from a set of admirable values embedded in textbooks to a lived, practised competency among students.

This study has some limitations worth noting. The sample of 18 teachers, while adequate for the depth of qualitative inquiry pursued here, was drawn from a single district and cannot be assumed to represent teacher perspectives across Balochistan or Pakistan more broadly. Similarly, the textbook analysis focused on four core subjects at the grade 9 and 10 level; peace-related content in other subjects, extracurricular activities, or informal school culture was outside the scope of this study but may meaningfully shape students' actual exposure to peace-related values. Future research could usefully extend this work through classroom observation to examine how teachers translate their stated understanding of peace education into actual instructional practice, through comparative analysis across districts or provinces to test whether the patterns identified here generalise, and through longitudinal designs that track whether structured peace education training produces durable changes in student behaviour rather than short-term compliance. Quantitative studies measuring the relationship between peace education exposure and outcomes such as disciplinary incidents or peer-relationship quality would also complement the interpretive account offered here.

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