

Peace and Conflict Resolution in Pre-service Teacher Training Programs in Rwanda: Human Rights Education Perspective

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Abstract: This study sought to explore the promotion of peace and conflict resolution in pre-service teachers' training programs in Rwanda. The study adopted an explanatory sequential research design with a mixed research method approach. The target population was all final year pre-service teachers and tutors and lecturers in Teacher Training Colleges and Higher Learning Institutions offering educational programs in Rwanda. A sample of 365 pre-service teachers and 50 tutors/lecturers was selected using stratified, simple random and purpose sampling techniques. A likert-scale questionnaire was used to collect quantitative data and a semi-structured interview, a focus group discussion and documents were used to collected qualitative data. Quantitative data was analyzed using means and standard deviations and thematic analysis was used to analyze the qualitative data. The study found that all aspects of peace education and conflict resolution are promoted in pre-service teachers training programs. The study also found that peace education and conflict resolution are integrated in different academic documents as a standalone subject or topic in a subject or as a cross-cutting issues. Finally, the study found that lack of capacity and resources to teach peace education and conflict resolution, bullying and unfair punishments are challenges facing peace education and conflict resolution. The study recommends that relevant authorities should build the capacity of teaching staff in pre-service teacher training institutions to enable them teach peace and conflict resolution in an effective manner and to provide adequate teaching and learning resources in order to enhance the teaching of peace education and conflict resolution.

Keywords: Peace; conflict resolution; teacher training; human rights education; Rwanda

Introduction

Rwandan education system relies heavily on its teachers who are essential in the process of teaching and learning. Based on this fact, teacher training institutions prepare student teachers for professional life and better service in their future career. Teacher training curriculum equips student teachers with competences to observe and respect human rights within the community in which they live (Rolf et al., 2007). To achieve this objective, pre-service teacher training institutions must equip trainees with required skills to promote human rights education (Gurminder & Neetu, 2014; Ntawiha et al., 2022). Human rights education incorporates democratic citizenship, social emotional learning, environmental education, gender equality, diversity, peace and conflict resolution, anti-bullying, anti-racism, social justice and multicultural education.

However, incidences of human right violation, especially child rights by teachers or among learners have been reported in various countries including Somalia, Democratic Republic of Congo, Central African Republic, Chad, Nigeria, Cameroon and Niger (Save the children report, 2006; UNICEF, 2021). For instance, while talking about the violation of human rights at school Aaron (2020) highlighted that in addition to forced and unpaid labor, children are not allowed to play, to speak their minds and they have no voice on what to do or to learn at school. Acknowledging the lack of relevant and accurate data about children, the Government of Rwanda with the support of UNICEF-Rwanda, Centre for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and the International Development Research Center (IDRC) conducted the Violence against Children and Youth Survey in 2015-2016. The study revealed that 24% of girls and 10% of boys were victims of sexual violence while 37% of girls and 60% of boys were affected by physical violence. On the other hand, 12% of girls and 17% of boys were affected by emotional violence (Ministry of Health, 2017). Likewise, it was reported that in Rwanda 5 out of 10 girls and 6 out of 10 boys experienced physical, sexual or emotional violence at school or in their families before they reached the age of 18 (UNICEF, 2018). Due to such incidences, a question may arise whether pre-service teachers are equipped with enough skills to cater for human rights while

assuming their full responsibilities in their teaching career (Basabose & Habyarimana, 2019).

A critical review of the existing literature revealed that studies have been conducted to assess the integration of peace education in schools in general (Basabose and Habyarimana, 2019; ADEA, 2022) but no study has been conducted about the integration of peace and conflict resolution education in pre-service teachers training programs in Rwanda. Nevertheless, the government of Rwanda has shown interest to integrate peace and values education in the competence-Based Curriculum (REB, 2015, REB, 2020). Therefore, this study attempted to explore how peace and conflict resolution are promoted in pre-service teacher training programs.

UNESCO (2014) emphasizes the role of education in promoting human rights by stating that education develops in young people new values and attitudes that can prevent them from becoming offenders in the future. It is a key mechanism of promoting tolerance. Furthermore, Ntawiha (2016) adds that one of the roles of education is to address global problems of criminality, to dissuade young people from criminal activities and also through them [young people] to teach their family and communities at large. To this end, education should be a tool used to promote equality, dignity, respect, freedom from discrimination, justice, the right to life, freedom of speech and right to family among other human rights and fundamental freedoms (UNESCO, 2014).

Human rights education empowers people to know, claim and defend their rights. It promotes participation in decision making and peaceful resolution of conflicts and it encourages empathy, inclusion and non-discrimination (Ntawiha, 2016). To this end,

Human rights education means that kind of education, training, dissemination, information, practices and activities which aim, by equipping learners with knowledge, skills and understanding and molding their attitudes and behavior, to empower them to contribute to the building and defense of a universal culture of human rights in society, with a view to promote and protect human rights and

fundamental freedoms (*Council of Europe, 2017*).

In a similar vein, Rwandan Education Sector state that the aim of education is to educate a free citizen who is liberated from all kinds of discrimination, including gender-based discrimination, exclusion and favouritism. Education should promote peace, justice, tolerance, respect for human rights, gender equality, solidarity and democracy (MINEDUC, 2003).

In view of the above, Rwanda has revised its curriculum to incorporate aspects of human rights education. The newly developed Competency-Based Curriculum (CBC) incorporated human rights education aspects through what is known as cross-cutting issues. The cross-cutting issues are an “important curriculum content that does not belong to any one subject or learning area exclusively but which is taught and learned in a number of subjects” (REB, 2015). These issues include peace and values education, inclusive education, gender education, environment and sustainability, genocide studies and financial literacy. According to the CBC framework, peace and values education, as one of the components of human rights education, is about how education can contribute to a better awareness of root causes of conflicts and violence at the personal, interpersonal, community, national, regional and international/global levels and about how education can cultivate values and proper attitude which will encourage individual and social action for building more peaceful families, communities, societies and ultimately a more peaceful world. Peace and values education is therefore defined as an education that promotes social cohesion, positive values including pluralism and personal responsibility, empathy, critical thinking and action in order to build a more peaceful society that is free from violence (REB, 2015).

Human rights advocates and conflict resolvers share similar goals in responding to conflict. In the short run, both seek to end violence and minimize suffering. In the long run, both try to assist societies in taking steps to ensure that violence does not recur and that rights of every human being are respected (Babbitt & Hannum, 2001). Hence, peace education refers to the process of promoting knowledge, skills, attitude and values needed to bring about behavior changes that will enable children, youths and adults to prevent conflicts and

violence, to resolve conflict peacefully and to create conducive conditions for peace at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national and international levels (UNESCO, 1999). For James (2008), Peace education is the process of acquiring values, knowledge, attitude, skills and behaviors to live in harmony with oneself, others and the natural environment.

On the other hand, conflict resolution education is defined by Crawford and Bodine (1996) as a targeted and explicit instruction about how to resolve differences peacefully, manage one’s emotional expressions, and de-escalate potentially explosive situations without violence. They go on to say that conflict resolution education aims at enhancing students’ social and emotional development for them to peacefully interact with other people, to create a safe and constructive learning environment and to decrease violence. Furthermore, conflict resolution education programs focus on developing critical skills and abilities for a person to deal with conflicts constructively (Ntawiha, 2016b).

The Rwandan CBC curriculum recommends integrating peace and conflict resolution as a cross-cutting issue in all subjects but also as a separate topic or course in some training programs such as social studies in Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs), and general studies in humanities (REB, 2015 & 2020). This is in line with the idea of UNESCO (2013) which emphasized that peace education should be taught both formally and informally in the hidden curriculum. This is referred to peace as process curriculum whereby peace content is directly infused in curriculum, peaceable classroom and peaceable schools whereby peace education is implicitly integrated in classroom and school. To this end, REB (2015) through the Rwandan CBC curriculum framework recommends the teaching of peace education as follows:

The first way of teaching peace education is to integrate peace content and teaching-and-learning methodological approaches (including tools and resources) into different subjects. The second way is to integrate peace content in all other subjects through infusion of its specific teaching-and-learning methodological approaches (including tools and resources). The third way is to integrate PVE in all subjects by

making peace and values an everyday life practice and by requiring all teachers to (1) behave as peaceful facilitators of learning or to be guides on the side instead of being sages on the stage and (2) behave as peace builder models for learners. In view of the above background, there is need to explore how peace and conflict resolution education is promoted in pre-service teachers' training program in Rwanda. This is very important because pre-service teachers are supposed to disseminate and promote a peace and conflict resolution culture in schools after they join the teaching profession. The study was guided by the following research questions:

1. How peace and conflict resolution are promoted in pre-service teachers training institutions in Rwanda?
2. How peace and conflict resolution are integrated in different subjects taught in pre-service teachers in Rwanda?
3. What are challenges faced in promoting peace and conflict resolution in pre-service teachers training institutions in Rwanda?

Methodology

Design

This study was guided by explanatory sequential research design that used the mixed research approach. Both quantitative and qualitative data was collected and analyzed whereby quantitative data were first collected followed by qualitative data. The use of mixed approach was motivated by the researchers' intention to better establish findings (Ivankova & Stick, 2007; Creswell & Clark, 2011; Creswell, 2012).

Population and Sample

The target population was all final year students and their tutors/lecturers in Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) and High Learning Institutions offering educational in Rwanda. Within this backdrop, a total of 415 subjects made of 365 students and 50 tutors/lecturers were sampled from nine Teacher Training Colleges and three Higher Learning Institutions randomly selected. The sample size was determined using the table of sample size determination, stratified sampling, simple random sampling and purposive sampling techniques were used to select the sample. Table 1 summarizes the sample of this study.

Table 1: Population and Sampling

Gender	Pre-service teacher		Tutors/lecturers		Grand total
	HLLs	TTCs	HLLs	TTCs	
Female	114	80	10	8	212
Male	96	75	20	12	203
Total	210	155	30	20	415

Instruments

A questionnaire made of open and close ended items was used to collect quantitative data from pre-service teachers and educators. Focus Group Discussion was used to collect qualitative data from student teachers and interview guide was used to collect data from tutors and lecturers. The researchers further reviewed different documents such as curricula, syllabi, textbooks, program specifications and module descriptions to extract more light on how the integration is included.

Validity and Reliability

To ensure the validity of the research instruments, face and Content validity were checked whereby the

research instruments were given to two experts to judge the appropriateness of question items. Test-retested method was used to check the reliability whereby the obtained correlations coefficient was 0.82.

Data Analysis

To analyze quantitative data, the researchers used descriptive statistics including means and standard deviation. To analyze qualitative data the researcher used the thematic analysis by putting the findings from group discussions and interviews into identified themes. The choice of this analytical techniques depended on the nature of the problem under investigation which required collection and

merger of both quantitative and qualitative data so as to use the results to get more understanding of the research problem. Hence, the mixture of the methods to investigate the issue of peace and conflict resolution education in pre-service teacher training programs in Rwanda offered the opportunity to overcome challenges that would be caused by the use of one single paradigm so as to make conclusion and recommendations based on stronger findings (Creswell, 2012)

Ethical Considerations

To ensure this study conforms to ethical standards, the researchers first obtaining a research permit from the Directorate of Research and Innovation of the University of Rwanda-College of Education through an open and honest approach. Secondly, the researchers sought the informed consent from all participants after explaining to them the purpose of the study. Thirdly, researchers respected the principles of confidentiality and anonymity of the respondents by keeping the data in a safe place and by avoiding to reveal the identity of respondents.

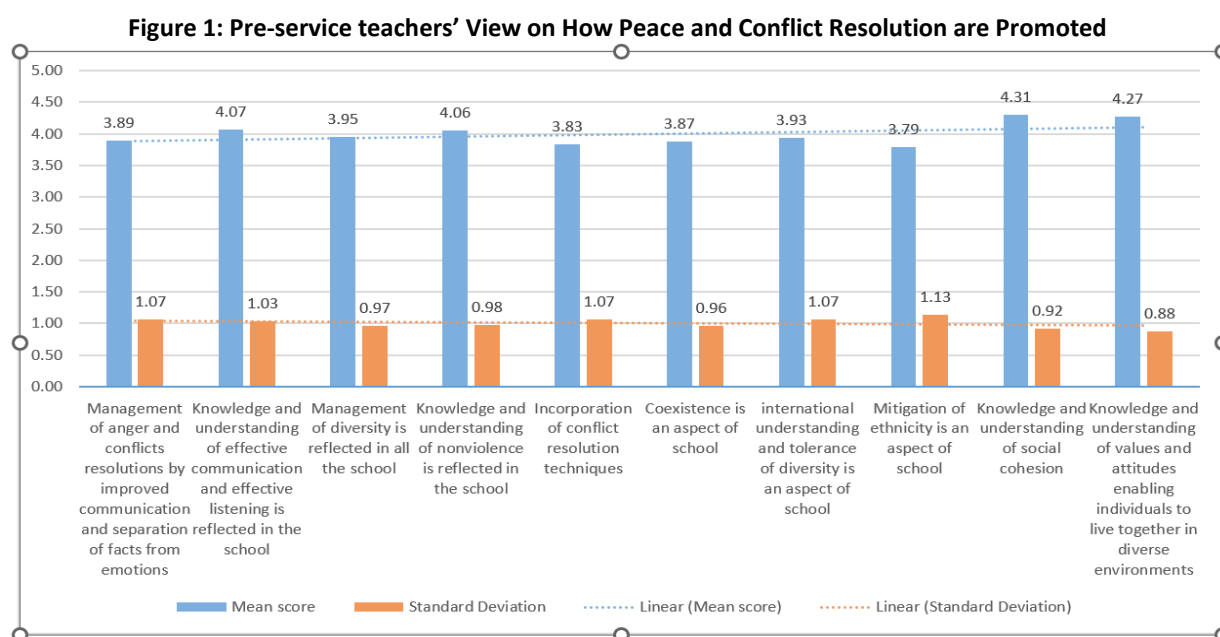
Findings and Discussion

Research Question 1: How are peace and conflict resolution promoted in pre-service teachers training institutions in Rwanda?

This research question sought to establish how peace and conflict resolution are promoted in pre-service teachers training institutions in Rwanda. Pre-service teachers were asked to rate how different aspects of peace and conflict resolution education are promoted in their colleges. The ratings were as

follows: **1= strongly disagree, 2= disagree, 3= neutral, 4= agree, 5= strongly agree** as presented in figure 1.

Figure 1 indicates that anger and conflicts are managed through improved communication and by separating facts from emotions ($M=3.89$, $SD=1.07$). The mean of 4.07 and SD of 1.03 demonstrate that pre-service teacher training institutions equip learners with knowledge and understanding of effective communication and the use of effective listening to promote peace and conflict resolution. The figure also show that the school environment acknowledges people's differences and recognize these differences as valuable to manage diversity as an aspect of peace and conflict resolution in the school ($M=3.95$, $SD= 0.97$). This implies that whatever members of the school community bring to the table is considered as unique, is valued and is discussed. Furthermore, the pre-service teachers' training institutions used peaceful means to resolve conflicts so as to avoid causing any harm to any of conflicting parties ($M=4.06$, $SD=0.98$). It is to be noted that peace education mainly put a focus on the enhancement of a person's uniqueness and the increase in respect of their rights and freedom through enhancement of mutual comprehension, endurance and comradeship. It also enables the children to identify and prevent both categorical and random conflict through imparting them with a set of characteristics, expertise and values that would enable them to resolve and eradicate conflict no matter if they are on primary, secondary or tertiary level (Gurminder & Neetu, 2014; Ntawiha, 2016b & Ntawiha et al., 2022).



The findings in figure 1 further show that conflict resolution techniques such as reconciliation and mediation are used to solve conflicts and to promote peace in the school setting ($M=3.83$, $SD=1.07$). Respondents also revealed that school policies and regulations encourage them to live in peace with each other to promote the culture of peace ($M=3.87$, $SD=0.96$). The figure also indicates that respondents confirmed that pre-service teachers' training institutions encourage pre-service teachers to accept diversity and tolerate other people's behavior and beliefs that are different from theirs even when they agree or do not agree with them ($M=3.93$, $SD=1.07$). The findings also show that pre-service teachers' training institutions alleviate any problems related to ethnic or social group belonging ($M=3.79$, $SD=1.13$). The study also revealed the sense of solidarity and strong relationship among members of the community is an aspect of all school activities ($M=4.31$, $SD=0.92$). Finally, majority of respondents confirmed that school climate enables them to have understanding and values and attitudes enabling individuals to live together in diverse environments ($M=4.27$, $SD=0.88$).

Research Question 2: How are peace and conflict resolution integrated in different subjects taught in pre-service teachers training programs?

The second research question sought to explore how peace and conflict resolution are integrated in different subjects taught in pre-service programs. The researchers reviewed different documents such as curricula, syllabi, textbooks, program specifications and module descriptions. Furthermore, the researchers conducted a FGD with students and the interview with tutors and lecturers.

A critical review of curricula, syllabi, textbooks module descriptions and program specifications revealed that peace and conflict resolution aspects were not integrated in some subjects. For instance, in Teacher Training Colleges (TTCs) that train nursery and primary school teachers, the subjects in which peace and conflict resolution were integrated included social studies which was taught in all options and special needs and inclusive education which was taught in combination of such social studies education, early childhood and lower primary education. This concurs with the revelation

of students during the focus group discussion. One of students said:

...we study human rights in social studies and we were taught about the right to privacy that an individual student has his/her private life and that students' issues should not be exposed to anyone, anyhow. We were also taught how to resolve conflicts in case there is a conflict between students, with a leader or any other person.

Another one added:

In social studies, we studied the types of conflicts, sources of conflicts and conflict resolution methods. We saw that in case of conflict between individuals, one can use mediation to solve the conflicts. Thanks to this, I have acquired skills to resolve conflicts even outside the school context.

In addition to peace and conflict resolution being taught in the two subjects, during the FGDs students revealed that peace clubs and cadreship training [this is a training whereby youth are trained about Rwandan culture, values, history and governance] are other school activities where peace education is emphasized. Another student said:

We have a peace club where we discuss about how we can live together in peace. We play sketches about 'Ubumwe n'ubwiyunge' [Unity and reconciliation]. We sing songs about peace and we play role-plays to illustrate how conflicts can be solved to reach a win-win situation. In cadreship training, we are also taught how to love the country and to live with other people in peace.

At university level, peace and conflict resolution were taught in some modules. After reviewing documents, it was revealed that different aspects of peace and conflict resolution were taught in modules such as Fundamental Academic and Life skills for Teachers and Citizenship and Transformative Education. These modules are compulsory for all pre-service teachers. This was confirmed by a student in the FGD who said:

In life skills we study human rights. In slides we were shown the photos of the

children in the refugee camps being mistreated, fighting and their rights being violated. We discussed these photos in class to give our opinions on respect of human rights but in other modules we learnt the subject content only [which means that human rights are not infused in the content of other modules].

Another student added:

I remember in citizenship (referring to the module of citizenship and transformative education), we studied peace and security as well as types of conflicts and their causes. We were taught that when there is a conflict, it is good to use mediation instead of going to court because one may lose.

Additionally, peace education was promoted in other modules as a cross-cutting issue as well as in extra-curricular activities. For instance, during a FGD, a student said:

Human rights are reflected in many ways like in Chemistry and Biology as a cross cutting issue. For example, when attending Lab, there is a structured process to follow. Students organize themselves on how to use the lab and when there is conflict, class members try to solve the conflicts without taking them to educators.

Another student complemented:

In the module of special needs education, we learnt to respect people with disabilities. In our daily life, we support students with disabilities within the campus. Their rights are respected because there are conducive infrastructures which cater for the needs of people with disabilities.

In view of these findings, Bar-Tal (2002) argued that in order to become a peaceable school, an education institution can set the goal of peace education, improve curriculum, promote manuscript writing and other educational materials and organize trainings for teachers among other activities. Similarly, Bhuttah et al. (2020) adds that it is important for instructors, educational authorities and curriculum experts to pay their full concentration toward creating an environment that that influences learning and also provide the basic

framework for inculcating the culture of peace within the school. Hence, they emphasized that for encouraging peace in any society, a sound and principled curriculum is a fundamental requirement.

Research Question 3: What challenges are faced in peace and conflict resolution education in pre-service teachers training institutions?

As the third research question sought to explore challenges faced in peace and conflict resolution education in the pre-service teachers training institutions, the following challenges were revealed to be faced in the peace and conflict resolution education.

Lack of Capacity to Teach Peace Education

During the interview with educators, it was revealed that despite the training received on peace and values education, educators were still struggling to integrate peace education in some subjects. One of interviewed teachers responded:

AEGIS TRUST has trained us in teaching peace and values education as a cross-cutting issue in CBC but that was not enough as it is not easy to integrate peace education in all subjects. I think more trainings are needed. How can I integrate peace in integrated science subject for example? In social studies it is easy because there is a unit on peace education but in other subjects we concentrate on the major content to make sure we finish it on time.

This was corroborated by one of the interviewed lecturers who said that

Sometimes you find yourself in a situation where you can't talk about this aspect in the subject you teach. In science subjects, it is hard. For social sciences that can be possible because what they teach is what happens in everyday life of the ordinary citizens but in science subjects, it is not easy.

Therefore, some educators did not have sufficient skills and expertise to teach peace education as a cross cutting issue, specifically in science subjects.

The above finding corroborates the findings of a study conducted by Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) to assess the integration of peace education into teaching and learning in African countries. The study revealed

that majority of teachers in Kenya, Cameroon, Mali, Somalia and Botswana lacked the capacity to integrating peace education in their curricula (ADEA, 2022). Similarly, in their study to assess the challenges of offering peace education among educational leaders in Malaysian public primary schools, Khairuddin, Razak, Idrus, and Hisham (2019) mentioned lack of expertise among teachers as a challenge to introduce peace education in Offering Peace Education among Educational Leaders.

Lack of Resources

During the interview both students and educators revealed that there are no appropriate resources to teach peace and conflict resolution in the pre-service teachers training programs. For example one of the tutors interviewed said:

Peace education is well taught when there are good illustrations of cases where peace was violated and restored. For example, such a movie or scenario may raise the feelings and emotions of students so that they can understand how peace issues are sensitive. Unfortunately, we do not have such movies or scenarios in our programs, only some photos which can be interpreted differently. I think movies can help to promote peace education.

Similarly, a university lecturer complemented this idea by saying

To promote the culture of peaceful conflict resolution where a win-win scenario is reached, the use of real case studies need to be exposed to students. For example there are archives that have good stories from Gacaca courts but these stories are not integrated in our programs.

This demonstrates that there is lack of appropriate and effective resources in teaching peace and values education in the pre-service teachers' training. This is in contradiction with the desire that peace content should be integrated in all subjects through infusion (REB, 2015). The findings corroborate the idea of Basabose and Habyarimana (2019) who assert that one of the challenges to peace education is lack of appropriate teaching and learning materials as some of the materials used contain contradictory messages.

Bullying and Harassment

According to Kolstrein and Jofré (2013) bullying and harassment constitute a violation of fundamental human rights because those who bully others intend to harm or hurt them. A person who is targeted by bullying or harassment loses his/her right to be safe, strong and free. It is in this perspective that bullying and harassment were also mentioned as obstacles to peace and conflict resolution education in the pre-service teachers' training programs. Interviewed students revealed that despite efforts to promote peace in schools, cases of bullying and sexual harassment are still observed. For example, an interviewed student revealed that:

We can't say that cases of harassment based on sex do not exist here. Sometimes when you refuse to be in relationship with a boy, he starts giving you bad names and sometimes they write us on the walls of their bathrooms or toilets.

Another one added: "The boys have bad behaviors of touching girls even in public when we do not have any relation with them. They take it as normal thing but it is embarrassing."

Likewise, another student from a public university added

...I do not know what boys think, sometimes you find a boy sending you through WhatsApp an image or photo about sex and you ask yourself why? They abuse us through WhatsApp and this is not a good. They should not send whatever they want to the person they are not familiar with.

Another one highlighted

...it [sexual harassment] is available here. For example teachers teach us about sexual abuse but sometimes they also abuse it by requesting sex for marks which is not good. I know even the student who faced sexual abuse and dropped out [of the school]. Though it is punishable by the law, bullying is available here at the campus.

The findings are supported by UNICEF (2018) which asserted that 50% percent of Rwandan children experience physical, sexual or emotional harassment before they reach the age of 18. In view of the above findings, the presence of bullying and

harassment are a major challenge affecting the peace and conflict resolution education in pre-service teachers training in Rwanda. This is because repeated bullying hurts the victim and constitutes a serious violation of the fundamental human rights.

Unfair Punishment

The concept of peace extends beyond the state of lack of violent conflicts to the presence of justice and equity as well as respect for human rights (Ntawiha, 2016a; Öjendal et al, 2021). Hence, a punishment that is not fair constitutes a threat to peace (International Conference on the Great Lakes Region, 2021). It is in this perspective that unfair punishment was revealed as an obstacle to the promotion of the culture of peace and conflict resolution in the pre-service teachers training institutions. Unfair punishments create resentment against the punisher and the victim who only think about his anger toward the punisher rather than correcting his/her behaviors. Hence, the victim gets in conflict with the punisher and this may retaliate rather resolving the conflict peacefully. To this end, International Conference on the Great Lakes Region (2021) emphasizes that Peace education is not only about promoting knowledge, skills and attitudes to help people solve conflict but also creating conditions for peace.

Interviewed students revealed that sometimes punishments that are given are not proportionate to the weight of offences committed. For example, one of the student in a Teacher Training College (TTC) said: "Sometimes we receive heavy punishments when we have not complied with school regulations. These regulations should be revised to be fair with students."

Another TTC student said *"...physical punishments are not accepted by the government but here sometimes we are beaten when we commit a small mistake, like coming late top class. This is not fair because you might have a genuine reason for late coming."* This is in agreement with findings of Kara (2014) who asserted that despite being outlawed, heavy and corporal punishments remain a prevalent practice among teachers in Bolivia.

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the findings of the study it is concluded that there are good initiatives to promote peace education and conflict resolution in pre-service teachers training programs in Rwanda. Furthermore, peace education and conflict resolution were not

only integrated in pre-service teacher training programs as a standalone subject or module, a topic in a module or subject and as cross-cutting issue to be covered in all subjects but also in extra-curricular activities such as peace clubs and cadreship trainings. The teaching of peace education and conflict resolution in pre-service teacher training programs is affected by limited capacity to teach peace education, lack of adequate resources, unfair punishments and bullying and harassment.

The study therefore, recommends that relevant authorities should build the capacity of teaching staff in pre-service teacher training institutions to enable them teach peace and conflict resolution in an effective manner, to provide adequate teaching and learning resources in order to enhance the teaching of peace education and conflict resolution, to sustain the current initiatives to promote peace and conflict resolution in pre-service teachers training programs and to create a conducive learning environment that is free from unfair punishment, bullying and harassment.

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