
RESEARCH ARTICLE

Dreamers of Peace: Laboratory School Mentors Notions of Peace and Their Aspirations

REJIE F. PALMOS¹ ✉ Eleanor S. Jamero², Verna Jade Janay³, Obed Joy Gaitan⁴, Myra Angelie Oliveros⁵, Julynn Rico⁶, Augustine Divinagracia⁷ and Christine Coriento⁸

¹²³⁴⁵⁶⁷⁸*Faculty, College of Education, West Visayas State University, Iloilo City, Philippines*

Corresponding Author: Dr. Rejie F. Palmos, **E-mail:** peace-education@wvsu.edu.ph

ABSTRACT

This study illustrates the concepts, reflections, and aspirations for the culture of peace of the Integrated Laboratory School mentors. Through narrative inquiry, the participants' notions and understanding of peace were explored. Themes emerged from the narratives. The study reveals that the mentors' concepts of peace are reflected in these themes: Peace as the Absence of Violence and Conflict, Peace as a State of Mind, and Peace as a State of Tranquility and Security. A peaceable classroom is described as a learning space that embraces diversity and a place of comfort and security. The experiences that compelled the mentors to reflect on their concept of peace are categorized into Diversity of Students and Working with Parents. Moreover, Engaging Activities in the Classroom and Teachers as Peace Bearers are the themes that reflect the teachers' experiences that made them reflect on what a peaceable classroom is. Narratives also reveal the mentors' aspirations for a culture of peace which are as follows: Equal opportunities for Everybody, an Integrated Peace Education Program, a Peace Lounge, and Learning Space, and the Creation of Peace Peer Mediators and Facilitators. Based on the findings, recommendations were advanced.

KEYWORDS

Laboratory school, mentors, notions of peace, aspirations

ARTICLE DOI: [10.32996/ljahs.2022.2.2.1](https://doi.org/10.32996/ljahs.2022.2.2.1)

1. Introduction

Manuel Domes, Project Manager of forum ZFD, stressed that "based on the contextualized implementation of the Executive Order 570, Series of 2008, which is the 'Institutionalization of Peace Education in Basic and Teacher Education,' the project envisions higher education institutions to be at the forefront in providing a learning environment for students to understand the conflict issues around them and to learn to address them nonviolently."

A number of colleges and universities also heeded this mandate, including West Visayas State University. The university has been integrating Peace Education into its curriculum for several years now in the laboratory school, as a Special topic in Pre-service teachers, and as an elective subject in Graduate School.

One of the many reasons for teaching Peace Education is to adhere to the United Nations Sustainable Development Goal (SDG) # 16 -Peace and Strong Institutions and UNESCO's goal of peace education, that is, to instill the theoretical construct and applied aspects of the concept of peace in the minds of students and teachers in order to build a safe and habitable world.

The mission of planning and management of peace education is to develop a mechanism and a process through which peace education can be institutionalized in the programs of school education and teacher education so that it becomes an integral part of the educational processes. In this inspiration, the laboratory school mentors as a fountain of childhood memories and formation of pre-service teachers should be involved to study their inner resources and hopes for a culture of peace in this part of the globe.

From the few peace types of research conducted in our university, we now shift the view from the inside to incorporate the laboratory school. We started with the institutionalization of Peace Education in the university, the creation of a center for peace education, experiences of the peace educators, conflict management styles of administrators and stakeholders, and the special programs in teacher education.

A recent study for pre-service teachers (Deleon et al., 2017) revealed the idea that spreading peace has become everybody's advocacy. The College of Education of West Visayas State University, in response to this challenge, offered Peace Education as a course to the pre-service teachers enrolled in Bachelor in Elementary Education, Bachelor in Secondary Education, and Bachelor in Special Education since 2008. This narrative inquiry looked into the reflections of these pre-service teachers enrolled in Peace Education from 2008 to 2012.

Themes from these reflections identified their notions of peace, peaceable classroom and learning, and the circumstances that compelled them to reflect and act on these. The following themes are the major results of this study. For Concepts of Peace, Peaceable Classroom and Learning: Peace comes from within; Peace is an educational thrust that needs to be well-developed; Peace education aims not just to reproduce knowledge but to transform; Peace as a sense of enlightenment in the class, and Responsibility in the midst of diversity.

For Circumstances that Compelled them to Actively Reflect on their Notions of Peace, Peaceable Classroom, and Learning: Change of mindset from 'akin to atin' mentality; Role modeling as a tool for peace; Vigilance in the midst of uncertainty; Catalyst of inspiration for the next generation. For Circumstances that Compelled the Pre-service Teachers to Actively Act on their Notions of Peace, Peaceable Classroom, and Learning: Respect and tolerance for all; The goal to have a peaceful classroom; Benevolence and hope for humanity; Peace as a must in a life-long journey; The need to cultivate peace in the midst of differences.

Recommendations include making Peace Education part of pre-service instruction; extending peace education training to cooperating schools, preparing modules to be disseminated to a wider audience; and peace education advocacy in the DepEd. Jabor (2017), in his peace research, showed that the students consider the school as a Zone of Peace when people have positive attitudes toward one another. There were friendship and understanding, and each member was willing to lend a helping hand. Moreover, the institution was viewed as a place where there was no war; silence and love prevailed.

Their responses also covered the spiritual aspect, as they believed that the school, as a zone of peace, had been taken care of and guided by the Almighty. The teachers, on their part, saw the school being a zone of peace as a place that not only nurtures learners' mental faculty but also equips them with sound moral judgments and appropriate behavior to make them good citizens. They viewed the school as a place where love and togetherness abide. Further, they believed that the declaration sends positive feedback to the people in the community that conveys the school is safe and free from violence and encourages parents to enroll their children in such schools.

The parents were made to feel more welcome at the school and were willing to participate in the school's programs and activities. The students saw themselves as good children who were talented, loving, caring, proud, righteous, and happy in the zone of peace. As models to others, they embody respectfulness, industry, and friendliness that inspire others to willingly work with them as a team.

The teachers saw themselves as good models, mentors, and implementers as members of the school, which is a Zone of Peace. From the students' point of view, through participation and cooperation, the practices towards peace building could be sustained. In addition, the students professed that members of the zones of peace must love one another and develop self-discipline. Implementation and commitment were cited as means with which to sustain those practices that contribute to creating a culture of peace in the school. Other than being implementers, teachers were influential in encouraging others to contribute to peace building. They believed that the implementation of the peace practices should not be confined to the school and that peace should be practiced everywhere. They also expressed their lifetime commitment to peacebuilding.

Several peace practices were revealed in the study, and those practices showcased partnership and volunteerism, restoring faith in teachers, bringing out the best in students, and molding humane individuals through a hidden curriculum. Those practices make a positive impact on the students, teachers, and school. This study resulted in the creation of the Bubble Peace Model of the Donato Pison Sr. Memorial Elementary School.

According to Johnson and Johnson (1995), there are many approaches to peace education, many of which are based on ideology, practical experience, and good intentions. What is lacking are peace education programs based on theories validated by research that can be operationalized into practical procedures. Three interrelated theories underlie effective peace education: social

interdependence theory (dealing with the nature of cooperation and competition), constructive controversy theory (dealing with political discourse and creative problem solving), and integrative negotiations theory (dealing with mutually beneficial agreements).

There is considerable research validating these theories, and each has been operationalized into a practical procedure. It is the combination of moving from competitive to cooperative relationships among disputants, in which political discourse and creative problem solving take place and mutually beneficial agreements are established and maintained, that consensual peace is established and maintained. In this context, we want to discover the concepts of peace and a peaceable classroom among the laboratory schoolteachers or mentors. Through this effort, we will be able to intervene or make programs to enhance their peace education knowledge, skills, attitude, and values.

2. Methodology

2.1 Research Design

Central to the framework of this narrative is a notion of reality and how they are part of interpreting and constructing it and, in doing so, "...develop an understanding of social life and discover how people construct meaning in natural settings" (Neuman, 2006, p. 88). Thus, in this inquiry, the researchers will be guided by the interpretivist perspective from the conceptualization of their goals up to the methods they need to employ in the ensuing process (Crotty, 2003; Esterberg, 2002). The researchers will position themselves in this inquiry not as detached observers but rather as involved, active, participative, and reflective co-inquirers and interpreters with the teachers. They will gradually depart from the positivist notion of knowledge being "value free and objective" (Neuman, 2006, p. 87).

Thus, they could not have agreed more with Starrat (1993) when he quoted Jennings (1987), saying that "...human beings are essentially makers of meaning; they are purposive agents who inhabit symbolically constituted cultural orders, who engage in rule-governed social practices, and who self-identities are formed in those orders and through those practices" (p.82). This study will adopt a symbolic interactionist stance that views reality as being made possible through the interactions of individuals (Macionis, 2005; Renzetti & Curran, 2000; Henslin, 2006). This implies that in the process of interaction, realities may be changed (Luhman, 2001).

2.2 Ethical Considerations

All efforts will be exerted to ensure that the research complies with the ethical standards of the university. Part of the ethics of this project is informing the informants that their reflections will be used in the research. The whole project proposal will then be submitted to the COE ethical committee for checking and approval.

2.3 The Informants

The informants of this research include the (11) main stay laboratory schools and teachers. They are the advisers in the integrated laboratory school.

2.4 Data Gathering Procedure and Instruments

The researchers will identify the mainstay faculty of the Integrated Laboratory School. There will be an orientation about the research and how their reflections about peace will be used as data for the research. Schedule and conduct of interview will be given before writing the reflections.

The researchers will choose the teacher's reflections with the most authentic insights and experiences. These reflections will be chosen based on the following set of characteristics: (1) It must clearly, and at length describe and elucidate his or her concepts of peace; (2) It must be able to provide narrative vignettes that motivated him or her to actively reflect on his or her concepts of the peaceable classroom, (3) It must be able to describe his or her dream or aspiration of a culture of peace; and (4) It must substantially make sense of his or her experience during the school year.

It is done through reading the reflections critically and selecting the most common and salient reflections which represent the voice of the majority of the teachers. In these papers, their reflection essays from the classrooms will be used to illustrate their concepts of peace and a peaceable classroom.

Recognizing that this is a "political" process, the researchers worked out a system where each member of the team was given equitable enough, democratic, and independent access, space, and time to present his or her views.

Since all reflections will be used, all researchers will be given the opportunity to read through and examine the reflections. A series of deliberations were organized to sift through the data. To further ensure the reliability of the sample, names and other forms of identification will be removed from the general data so that there will be objectivity.

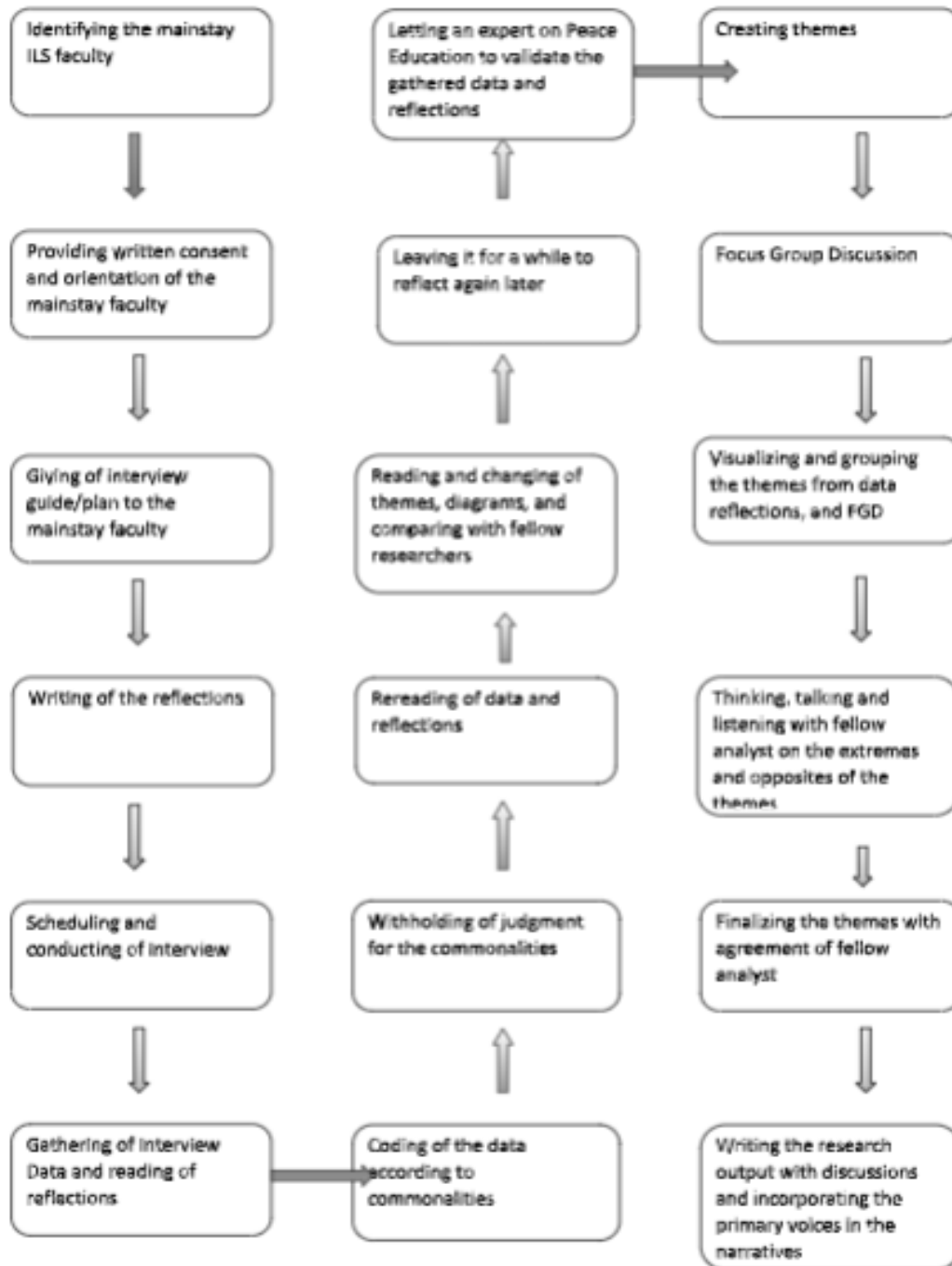
During the data analysis phase, the researchers made use of coding techniques which is a "modifiable system for categorizing the information in the data" (Suter, 2006, p.328).

Data will go through the initial coding and focus coding stages (Loftland & Loftland, 1995). While pouring through the data and constructing themes, and identifying vignettes, the researchers constantly ask and clarify questions such as the figure on the right.

To ensure the validity of the reflections, an expert on Peace Education will validate the work/data. To facilitate the enormous data, the researchers employ some diagramming strategies such as typologizing, matrix making, concept charting, and flow charting. They will take a more flexible stance on the data, especially during the part when they deliberate and finalize their choices, themes, and vignettes. They do this by (a) rephrasing, (b) changing diagrams, (c) constantly comparing, (d) thinking in extremes and opposites, (e) talking with fellow analysts, (f) listening to fellow analysts, (g) drawing back, and (h) withholding judgment.

<i>Developing Analysis</i> (Loftland & Loftland, 1995 p.194)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">▪ Is this idea clear?▪ Does it have a logical order?▪ Which of these examples best illustrates this point?▪ Is there some small scheme that would fit these piles of materials better?▪ Should I recode these materials?▪ Should I look at how well this projected section organization is going to fit with the next section? Will it dovetail?▪ What is going to be the transition here?▪ How does it fit with the previous section? Should I work more on the section preceding this one, which will make this section clearer?▪ On second thought, is it possible this topic is not relevant at all and ought to be thrown out?▪ Should I not work on this anymore today and work on _____ instead?

The Roadmap in the Research Process



3. Results and Discussion

"If we are to reach real peace in the world, we have to begin with the children. & quot;
- Gandhi

Striving for peace must now be seen as a societal goal, and thus peace education must be recognized as an advantageous tool for teachers to utilize in order to work towards a peaceful world (Bartlett, 2009). To strive for peace, there must first be committed mentors to teach peace.

This study illustrates the concepts, reflections, and aspirations for the culture of peace of the Integrated Laboratory School mentors.

3.1 Mentors' Concepts of Peace

To understand how to make peace education effective and sustainable, it is first necessary to define the nature of peace (Patra, J. & Mete, J., 2015). The narratives of teachers reveal their concepts of peace. These concepts were categorized into three themes: Peace as the Absence of Violence and Conflict, Peace as a State of Mind, and Peace as a State of Tranquility and Security.

3.2 Peace as the Absence of Violence and Conflict

Most of the teachers shared that peace for them is the absence of violence and conflict. They believe that peace is the absence of violence in all forms. It can also be seen in situations where there is harmony. Sir Paul shares, "Peace comes when there's no fighting or war, everything coexisting in perfect harmony and freedom." Ma'am Gemma's narratives also reveal that her concept of peace is living in harmony with each other.

Moreover, Ma'am Myra's notion of peace is reflected in her narratives. For her, peace is not only the absence of war but the absence of oppression and discrimination. In addition to this, Sir Obed believes that "peace is also the absence of social injustice or of being unfair to others."

3.3 Peace as a State of Mind

Peace is a state of mind. This is expressed in the Preamble to the UNESCO Constitution: "Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defense of peace must be constructed" (UNESCO, 2005). Some teachers point out that peace is a state of mind. Ma'am Myra shares that peace has a connection with what one is thinking about. She further narrates that "it is what we think that influences our actions. If we think we are at peace, then we create peace. If we think of chaos, then it may affect our present situation." Just as violence or war is in the minds of men, peace can be installed only through the cleansing of the minds of men (UNESCO, 2005).

According to Ma'am Fatima, it is a state of mind where one is devoid of fear of being unique or different. For her, peace is also respecting the uniqueness and differences of others. Thus, it is necessary to learn to live together within diversity. Respect and love for diversity are the preconditions for social peace (UNESCO, 2005).

3.4 Mentor's Experiences on their Peace Concepts

Human beings are considered the biggest agent of change in creating a peaceful culture. This is because peaceful relations and structures can be enhanced through the efforts of an individual. The worth and success of education are closely linked to preventing bullying and creating a safe and peaceful culture at school (Polat, 2015), and it is necessary to create a culture based on freedom, justice, democracy, tolerance, and unity to build a peace culture globally (UNESCO, 2005).

A peaceable classroom is characterized by affirmation, cooperation, communication, appreciation for diversity, appropriate expressions of feelings, and peaceful conflict resolution. This is also one way to help students respect and appreciate each other regardless of differences (Castro & Galace, 2010).

A peaceful classroom is invaluable to both educators and students. It makes it possible for teachers to teach and students to learn. Children who are "peacemakers" are better able to solve problems, get along with others, and create a positive atmosphere. The narratives revealed themes that illustrate the experiences of ILS mentors regarding their Peace concepts and having a peaceable classroom. These are; Diverse students and having empathy for students and difficult parents.

3.5 Diversity of Students

Teachers shared that handling many children with different characteristics compels them to reflect on their concepts of peace and how they were able to reflect on their classroom as being a peaceable one. Ma'am Maejoy points out that "It's really hard to mold and interact with more than 50 individuals with different characters, beliefs, and behaviors every day. With this, I am really compelled to meditate and learn how to achieve a peaceable classroom." Ma'am Hazel also narrates, "Every time we have an activity in the classroom, I see to it that nobody is excluded by preparing diverse activities that are interactive and suits their development. This makes me motivated and brings joy to my profession." Ma'am Kay also added, "Our pupils have different backgrounds; thus, having a diverse classroom is a challenging one, especially if you are handling 50 plus students ages 5-7 years old. This makes me go back to their family background and try to understand the culture that they have in the family."

"When situations arise, I usually go back to the family's culture and understand its roots of why some of these children behave that way", Marissa added. Dealings with difficult Parents Encounter with parents also induces them to reflect on their peace concepts and their attainment of having a peaceable classroom.

Ma'am Kay mentions that parents sometimes question the role of the teacher; she further recounts, "Instances when you have to face the social media for their immature shoutout on classroom issues." Parents also question a lot on how does a teacher deal with pupil's behavior and thus confuses the students who to follow and respect and therefore creating chaos with your system in the classroom". In addition, Jeanar also mentions that "Dealing with difficult parents are always there and there are also ways to handle these difficult parents.

However, instead of escalating these difficulties, we must show to them that we have understood their feelings as parents and focused together to help solve the issue." Ma'am Hazel also states that "petty fights that my students are doing and sometimes unruly and misbehaving inside the classroom, motivates me to be more understanding and have a positive mind in everything I do."

According to Ma'am Laden, she states that "meditation allows me to learn and by understand these difficult pupils, difficult parents and even colleagues. Working in an unhealthy space eventually makes one unproductive. The importance of not just having a peaceable classroom but having a peaceable second home which is the ILS must thrive."

3.6 Mentor's Experiences in Reflecting on a Peaceable Classroom

A peaceful classroom is vital to both educators and students. It makes it possible for teachers to teach well and students to learn well. The classroom may be transformed into a non-threatening learning environment (Finch, 2001) wherein students can learn to become responsible members of society. With the teacher as a guide, students can learn social skills (e.g., collaboration) through trial and error, reflecting on their mistakes and turning them into learning experiences.

3.7 Engaging Activities in the Classroom.

Ma'am Hazel recounts, "There are days that they're very unruly and misbehaving inside the classroom, so I make sure that interesting experiences are given to my pupils so that they won't become unruly, and of course doing group works would also help in managing pupil's behavior."

Furthermore, Ma'am Maejoy added that "in order to achieve a peaceable classroom, I do personal readings online to learn strategies on how to handle these pupils and to have impacts in their lives. And eventually, teach them the importance of peace which results in a peaceable classroom. One thing that I did every week was held a class meeting, wherein students were able to join in the discussion, such as having a plan for an activity in the classroom like Christmas Party, M-SPACE, Nutrition Month, and many others.

In addition, Ma'am Kay also mentions that "Having a routine such as lining them up before they enter the classroom and allowing each and everyone to greet before they enter the room was one of the many things that I have done in order to have a peaceable classroom. This activity allows them to be courteous and be more aware that he or she is a part of a class."

Ma'am Laden also added that she has morning exercises such as meditation, reflections, listening to worship songs, and relaxation exercises that helped her manage the class very well. "These activities are done during the first hour in the morning while waiting for the others to come."

3.8 Teacher as a Peace Bearer.

Children look to the adults in their lives to keep them safe and to be respectful of their feelings. Teachers are people that keep them safe from harm in schools. According to Ma'am Laden, "Being a teacher of these young people allows me to reflect on my attitude and behavior towards them; we are the person in authority in the classroom, they are looking at us to be their models. " Ma'am Jeanar also added that teachers must always integrate peace education in the classroom every day; thus, the promotion of peace acts in the classroom must be integrated. She recounted, "Children would fight over simple things, and they don't even talk with one another after the fight, so what I did is to talk to them one at a time, then after all sides were heard, I asked the two groups or student to patch things up without having a heavy heart before we end the class. This is what I usually do when a quarrel happens, and this allows me to reflect on a peaceable classroom."

4. Conclusion

Based on the findings, the study reveals that the mentors' concepts of peace are reflected in these themes: Peace as the Absence of Violence and Conflict, Peace as a State of Mind, and Peace as a State of Tranquility and Security.

A peaceable classroom is described as a learning space that embraces diversity and is a place of comfort and security. The experiences that compelled the mentors to reflect on their concept of peace are categorized into Diversity of Students and Working with Parents. Moreover, Engaging Activities in the Classroom and Teachers as Peace Bearers are the themes that reflect the teachers' experiences that made them reflect on what a peaceable classroom is. Narratives also reveal the mentors' aspirations for a culture of peace which are as follows: Equal Opportunities for Everybody, Integrated Peace Education Program, Peace Lounge, and Learning Space, and Creation of Peace Peer Mediators and Facilitators.

Funding: This research received no external funding.

Conflicts of Interest: The authors declare no conflict of interest.

Publisher's Note: All claims expressed in this article are solely those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their affiliated organizations, or those of the publisher, the editors and the reviewers.

References

- [1] Arcinas, M.M. (2016). *Applied research: An introduction to qualitative research methods and report writing*. Quezon City: Phoenix Publishing House, Inc.
- [2] Cabrera, M. (2012). Schools as "zones of peace". Retrieved from UNICEF Philippines website: http://www.unicef.org/philippines/reallives_19131.thmtt.v36G05N9668
- [3] Castro, L. & Galace, J. (2008). *Peace education: A pathway to a culture of peace*. Quezon City: Center for Peace Education, Miriam College.
- [4] Castro, L. & Galace, J. (2010). *Peace education: A pathway to a culture of peace, 2nd Ed.* Quezon City: Center for Peace Education, Miriam College.
- [5] Danesh, H.B. (Eds.). (2011). *Education for peace integrative curriculum series (vol. 4)*. The United States of America and the United Kingdom: International Education for Peace Institute.
- [6] Department of Education Order No. 44, (2005). Retrieved from http://www.deped.gov.ph/sites/default/files/order/2005/DO_s2005_044.pdf
- [7] Finch, A. E. (2001). The non-threatening learning environment. *KOTESOL Journal*, 4(1). 133-158.
- [8] Friere, P. (1984). *The pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.
- [9] Giroux (2004a). Public pedagogy and the politics of neo-liberalism: making the political more pedagogical. *Policy Futures in Education*. 2(3 & 4): 494-503
- [10] Giroux, H.A. & McLaren, P. (1986). Teacher education and the politics of engagement: The case for democratic schooling. *Harvard Education Review*. 56(3): 213-238
- [11] Ibana, R. (2010). *Critical thinking, ethics, education, and public policy. Fact-finding on social and human sciences education in the Philippines*. Pasay City: UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines
- [12] Ibana, R., Gallamaso, J., & Chan, S. (2010). *The teaching of social studies in basic education: Initial findings. Fact-finding on social and human sciences education in the Philippines*. Pasay City: UNESCO National Commission of the Philippines
- [13] Johnson, D. W., & Johnson, R. T. (1995). *Peace Education in the Classroom: Creating Effective Peace Education Programs*.
- [14] Lofland, J. & Loftland, L. (1995). *Analyzing social settings: A guide to qualitative observation and analysis, 3rd Ed.* Belmont, CA: Wadsworth Publishing
- [15] McLaren, P. (1998). *Life in schools, 3rd ed.* New York: Longman
- [16] Merceica, C. (2001). Culture of peace. *Insights on world peace through education and culture*. De Ubaldo, Josef (ed.). Manila: Philippine International Trade Exhibits and Experts.
- [17] Polat, S. (2015). *Peace and Empathy in the Context of Other's View (Ötekine Bakış Bağlamında Barış ve Empati)*. In *Developed with and Developing Empathy: Child and Empathy (Empatiyle Gelişmek Empatiyi Geliştirmek: Çocuk ve Empati)*, edited by Yücel Kabapınar, 135-153. Ankara: Pegem Yayınları.
- [18] Suter, W.N. (2006). *Introduction to educational research: A critical thinking approach*. Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage Publication