

# Adjusting the language of teachers' authority in classrooms: a rapid training in Dialogue & Peace Building

**Hiam Loutfi ElZein**

Chairperson and Associate Professor, Rafik Hariri University, Damour, Lebanon,  
[lotfih@rhu.edu.lb](mailto:lotfih@rhu.edu.lb)

## Abstract

*Much of today's Arab world lives in cultures of violence and inequity. As Betty Reardon has put it, the culture of violence is 'the aggregation of world views, ways of thinking and problem-solving that lead to the continuous use of violence' and where 'human inequality is assumed to be natural, and violence in the pursuit of social and political purposes is legitimized as necessary and inevitable' (2001, p. 21). In other words, we are brought up in violence. As such, teachers of Arab countries after the Arab spring and especially the Lebanese are, unfortunately facing different and diverse students affected by violence and warfare. This qualitative case study targeted the perceptions of Lebanese teachers (n= 40) who had teaching experiences in five public Lebanese schools and through in-depth interviews the researcher explored the challenges they faced in establishing dialogue and building peace in diverse students in their classrooms, specifically about their teaching beliefs, styles, pedagogy, and classroom management strategies. Results showed that teachers' participants encountered numerous challenges including language barriers, different perceptions and expectations of the roles of the teacher and students, teaching pedagogies and styles, and classroom management. The main findings suggest that teachers need to be prepared to face the hurdles of having more responsibilities, enhance their skills about social cohesion, positive authority language, and change in the external and internal dialogue, and communication with parents.*

## Keywords

Dialogue, peace building, classroom management, language barriers, diverse students

## 1. Introduction

The global society in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is facing many challenges that are affecting the lives of people, to name few: social inequity, political instability, fragile economy, health issues, environmental issues such as global warming, and migration (The World Bank, 2013) Added to this, the number of people displaced by war, persecution, or violence that has reached its highest point since World War II. According to the most recent United Nations High Commission for Refugees estimate (UNHCR, 2014), there are 60 million refugees and internally displaced people in the world today. It said the number of people forcibly displaced at the end of 2014 had risen to

a staggering 59.5 million compared to 51.2 million a year earlier and 37.5 million a decade ago. This displacement can often disrupt the education of school age children and confound the education systems in countries that receive them. Teachers are an important resource for children in refugee and emergency settings; understanding how to retain and motivate them is a critical, yet little-studied, issue.

The vast majority of Lebanese teachers who are teaching children (Lebanese, Syrian, Palestinian and/or Iraqi) face a wide range of challenges teaching in a context extremely different from the one existing before displacement. These challenges may include teaching beliefs and styles, classroom management and discipline, standard-based curriculum development and assessment, working with linguistically, culturally, and cognitively diverse students and communication with parents and school administrators. Therefore, finding out how Lebanese teachers are performing to adapt to the new culture in their classrooms is crucial for helping them to be successful in classrooms, and can inform professional development for teachers' skills in the future. The results of the study will provide a great service to the teaching of diverse learners and will enhance Lebanese teachers' skills about social cohesion, positive authority language, and a better understanding of how to adapt more effectively to the teaching environment.

## **2. Literature Review**

Ferris and Winthrop (2010) see education as a priority for refugee children. They believe that it can help restore the normal life of these children, protect them from violence and exploitation, and contribute to peace building (Winthrop and Matsui 2013; Shields and Paulson 2015).

One important point of the 2011 Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report about cycle of education's influence on violent conflict was the inappropriate use of school systems that reinforces prejudice and intolerance. The concern was if countries fail to provide young people with the knowledge and skills to facilitate development, the region would face greater challenges including high levels of unemployment, violence, criminality and extremism. Education can make a vital difference in all these areas by building and sustaining resilient education systems, tipping the balance in favor of peace (UNDP, 2013).

“In the time of crisis and transition towards full recovery, education systems must build and at the same time, strengthen education systems in host countries to further develop and sustain resilience to cope with shocks, mitigate their impact, and ensure continuation of service delivery provision. This in turn can significantly contribute to peace building and social cohesion. As such, evidence based advocacy, policy dialogue and capacity development are the strategic tools necessary to empower the educational systems towards resilience” (UNESCO, 2015)

The UNHCR (2014) report detailed how in region after region, the number of refugees and internally displaced people is on the rise. In the past five years, at least 15 conflicts have erupted or reignited of which three in the Middle East (Syria, Iraq, and Yemen). Most alarmingly, however, it showed that over half the world’s refugees are children. According to numbers Al-Monitor (2011) obtained from the Lebanese Ministry of Education, 400,000 of the refugees are of school age, 3-15 years old, but only 150,000 of them, 37.5%, are studying in Lebanese public schools. Exact figures of enrolled refugee children in Lebanese schools are not available (UNHCR, 2013). To provide education to the largest possible number of students, the Ministry of Education developed afternoon sessions specifically for displaced students to ease overcrowding. Some schools now accommodate at least 500-700 refugee children in the afternoon. There are now 259 such schools with some 85,000 children enrolled (Naufal, H., 2012)

Another problem faced by the government was Syrian children not attending school either because their parents did not seek to enroll them or the inability of the children to keep pace with the educational program after extended absences. As a result, the ministry of Education developed extracurricular, four-month Accelerated Learning Program (ALP) to enable students to catch up and stay in the educational system. While the biggest challenge for the Ministry of Education is to provide education to the largest possible number of Syrian children, another challenge it faced is not letting the current situation negatively affect Lebanese students (Al-Monitor, 2011; Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE), 2010, 2014). Despite the fact that the Ministry of Education and Higher Education (MEHE) prepared a national strategy Reach All Children with Education (RACE), to all children in Lebanon, including refugees and vulnerable Lebanese

children, yet this strategy has failed to reach its target for several reasons among which is insufficient funding, weak coordination among government agencies and limited collaboration with non-governmental organizations (NGOs) (El-Gahli, Ghalaini & Ismail, 2016).

In several areas, the number of Syrian students is close to or greater than that of Lebanese students, especially in Mount Lebanon, Bekaa' and South Lebanon. The Ministry of Education had initially managed to limit the number of Syrian students admitted to each class, but the system became overloaded amid the worsening of the refugee crisis. There was concern that delays in educating the displaced might negatively affect the Lebanese students, especially in language learning, because of the difference between Syrian students' narrower exposure to languages compared to the broader focus in the Lebanese curriculum (MEHE, 2014). In addition, the morning shift teachers are exhausting themselves dealing with the educational differences between Lebanese and Syrian students. The Ministry of Education took steps in this regard, and through the British Consulate and French Embassy, organized training courses for teachers to help them cope with the educational needs of all children as well as maintain harmony between different groups of students, minimize potentially destabilizing impacts and handle psycho-social and language issues among students and their parents. Moreover, Lebanese teachers were faced with Syrian refugee students who have different life experiences, different educational experiences and different language skills than Lebanese students enrolled at these schools. Meanwhile, teachers were asked to teach large classrooms, to take on double shifts of students and to cater to students with different backgrounds (MEHE, 2010, 2014). Another problem teacher were faced with is early marriage, gender-based violence and trafficking and how to understand their education's role in protecting girls, taking into account that Syrian girls in formal and non-formal educational programs may be overage and therefore at even greater risk (Watkins and Zyck, 2014). Moreover, teachers were also faced with male youth gendered challenges like child labor. These challenges were a hindrance in teachers' performance and they were in need of understanding how these challenges can be addressed (Yarak, 2015).

“Collective efforts are also underway to overcome some of the obstacles which hinder school attendance, including: high transportation costs; parental reluctance; bullying at school; and lack of help with homework.

Moreover, recognizing that the number of refugee children in need of an education exceeds the number that the public school system can absorb, partners support the creation of other learning opportunities for children out of school, for which the MEHE is designing a regulatory framework. For the 2014- 2015 academic year, some 106,000 Syrian refugees are enrolled in public schools. Formidable challenges remain in ensuring they can complete their year, in expanding opportunities for non-formal learning, and for expanding activities for the many tens of thousands of children outside any learning environment (UNCHR, 2015, p.10)”.

The challenge of the Lebanese government is to balance between its humanitarian responsibilities, and manage the political, security, and economic risks of the Syrian refugee crisis and it is not an easy achievement.

### 3. Methodology and Methods

#### 3.1 Research Question

The research questions addressed in this case-study are the following:

What are the major challenges that Lebanese teachers face in teaching diverse learners in classrooms?

##### *Sub-questions*

1. What are the major differences between teaching only Lebanese students in classrooms and diverse students from different Nationalities?
2. What were the major challenges in teaching diverse learners in classrooms?
3. Which specific experiences helped to successfully work through the challenges encountered while teaching diverse learners?

#### 3.1 Rational for a Qualitative Design

To explore the major challenges faced by teachers in establishing dialogue and building peace in diverse students in their classrooms, a qualitative case study was chosen. The rational for using qualitative design is the researcher's interest in knowing how people make sense of their

lives, experiences, and their structures of the world. This study described the challenges that teachers experienced in teaching diverse learners and the interpretations of their experiences and techniques that helped them to successfully work through the challenges they encountered while teaching. For the current study, the researcher used interviews as primary tool for data collection and analysis and triangulated the data with profiles, teaching materials and techniques developed by the participants.

Given the complexity of issues, the participants tend to encounter as related to classroom management, language barriers, and communication and teaching styles when dealing with diverse student, it was desirable to obtain a richer and thick description of their own teaching practices by using a qualitative design. This in-depth interviews with the teachers allowed for a more complete expression of ideas in a realistic context of one-on-one dialogue.

### **3.2 Sampling Method**

Since the current study is a case study, selecting cases to maximize learning about a certain issue is very important. According to Stake (1995), the goal of sampling is to “maximize learning” through studying unusual cases. Consequently the guiding principle for this study was varied participants and their willingness to cooperate. Believing that the case study is the most promising and useful for the intention of this study, the researcher utilized purposeful sampling (Creswell, 2009) to look for the special knowledge and expertise about the selected subjects who represent this population.

### **3.3 Selection of Participants**

In choosing a purposeful sampling of teachers to interview, I wanted a maximum variation of characteristics from teachers who I felt could articulate a variety of perspectives. Since the goal of the research is to explore challenges faced in establishing dialogue and building peace in diverse students in their classrooms, forty teacher participants were selected according to the following criteria: (a) they had education and teaching experience not less than five years; (b) they taught in schools that have students from different districts of Lebanon and have students of different nationalities (Palestinians, Iraqi and Syrians) and the teacher’s professional development background were as diverse as possible; (c) they agreed to participate in the study. In addition,

gender, age status and level of educational proficiency were also considered to provide as much diversity as possible.

The forty participants selected from the five public schools located in Beirut are now teaching in grades 8-12. The following table shows the basic characteristics of participating teachers:

**Table 3.1** Demographic Information of Lebanese Teacher Participants

Characteristics	Category	Number
<b>Gender</b>	Male	14
	Female	26
<b>Age</b>	40-45	6
	35- 39	19
	30-34	10
	25- 29	5
<b>Grades Taught</b>	8- 9	10
	10-11	17
	12	13
<b>Years of Teaching</b>	5- 8	10
	8- 10	20
	> 10	10
<b>Education Degree</b>	B. A.	10
	B.A + T.D	21
	M.A.	9

### 3.4 Data Collection

Creswell (2009) suggests that “case study research is a qualitative approach in which the investigator explores a bounded system (a case) or multiple bounded systems (cases) over time, through detailed, in-depth data collection involving multiple sources of information.” In the present study, data were collected from many sources: teacher's profiles, semi-structured and open-ended interviews, and journal reflections. Content analysis of the data was performed; transcripts were coded and broken down to be structured into categories.

### 3.5 Validation Approaches

To test for the validity of data analysis, the researcher used two validation methods. To increase reliability, triangulation was achieved in several ways. For cross-validation purposes and

upon the completion of the data analysis, participants were asked to comment on the findings of the themes and respond to them.

### 3.6 Ethical Considerations

To minimize the risk to participants, the researcher explained the purpose of the study, was cautious about the wording of the interview questions, and respected the participants' decision to respond or abstain from answering the interview questions. In addition, and to protect the participants identities the audio taped data were transcribed with confidentiality by using pseudonyms when reporting qualitative data.

## 4. Findings and Discussion

Lebanese teachers were faced with the presence of large number of Syrian refugee, few Palestinians and Iraqi students who have different life experiences, different educational experiences and different language skills than Lebanese students enrolled at these schools. Meanwhile, teachers were asked to teach large classrooms, to take on double shifts of students and to cater to students with different backgrounds. What were the differences that the teachers experienced while teaching diverse learners? What were the challenges faced and how did the teachers manage these challenges? The findings below reflect the responses of the teachers to the mentioned research questions.

### 4.1 Differences and Challenges

When teachers were asked about the major differences observed in teaching only Lebanese students versus teaching diverse students from different Nationalities, the findings reflected the following:

These are few responses:

*“Children who lately joined our school are not able to keep pace with the educational program due to their extended absences and movement from one camp to another.”*

*“The education system in our school is a plurilingual (we teach in three languages; Arabic, English and French) which means Syrians joining our school with little foreign language experience, lack of English or French language skills is a barrier for them to perform well in class and a driver to drop-out.”*



*“The first term was difficult; children were unable to communicate verbally because not all of them speak English language. I used a lot of visual resources, props for storytelling and so on, and tried to keep language very simple.”*

*“One problem I am facing is that Syrian children have been taught mainly in Arabic. This situation is posing a challenge not only for me as a teacher in delivering information, but also for refugee children who joined our school.”*

*“When the students came to our school I was not happy to do this and even I made my students not to cooperate with them, but after a while and when I started to understand their situation, I changed and made my students change.”*

*“We have students enrolled in grade nine which means they have to sit for the final exam, and so they have to present proper certification from their school in Syria. When they were asked to do so, they refused fearing ramifications from the Syrian regime.”*

*“In addition to violent acts performed by students, I tried to employ a variety of teaching styles to respond to the needs of the different students, but teaching in a language that the students did not acquire was the only problem I faced.”*

*“I had to forget about my prior experience with other students of different background (not knowing English, or coming from different social background) and tried to adapt the teaching method to the level of different students.”*

*“We worked cooperatively in our school to develop strategies for the newly enrolled students that have to do with subject-specific literacy and how to implement these strategies across the curriculum.”*

*“Teaching students from different cultures is not different from teaching in a school with a single culture, but the only exception is to pay attention to the needs and educational experience of these students.”*

*“Some children picked up the language very quickly and I hope by the end of the academic year most will have acquired enough English to communicate with me and their peers.”*

*“Although I hear some innocent comments like refusing to sit by a Syrian student or commenting on the dirtiness of another, but the lovely thing about teaching this age is children are still very naive to differences in nationality and identity and so are very accepting to all.”*

Teaching practices go along a continuum from teacher-centered to learner-centered. They transfer information through a lecture format or through learners’ interactions and experiences. Although the evidence that learner-centered pedagogy improves student learning (Hattie, 2009; Darling-Hammond and Bransford, 2005), research has identified a number of common challenges

countries face in its implementation. The challenges may stem from material, human resources, social as well as cultural conditions, and may be, it can be heightened in refugee contexts (Mtika and Gates, 2010; Schweisfurth, 2011, 2013).

Refugee students have to undergo the Lebanese curriculum and get certification of learning in the form of the Lebanese program, and acquire the English or French language as the key asset for their achievement. More salient to the teacher's instructional practices, were the challenges of implementing the Lebanese program on the Syrian children whose programs in their country are taught in Arabic. Teachers faced challenges in adapting their curriculum to the refugee students. Teachers indicated that the students struggled with the subjects of math and science that were not taught in their mother tongue. This lack of knowledge was a major impediment to success, especially for older students. A few of the teachers described feeling at a loss when they had to teach history or geography classes. They did not know how to present features of this information that the refugee students had never seen or whether the material could have had importance for the lives of these children. Teachers felt inadequate in their ability to address the students' linguistic needs through classroom-based instruction. Moreover, language barrier and late enrollment aggravated the problem by having over-age students in lower grades, where some students were placed one or more grades below their age level because they were not up to the demanded level.

These identified challenges by teachers inhibited them to use more active instructional techniques. Adding to the limited resources, lack of access to training, double shift policies and overcrowded classes impeded the contextualization of education for refugee students. Therefore, instructional support and students' engagement and motivation, provides relevant and accessible curriculum, and promotes conceptual learning among refugee students remains vague.

In going far beyond the surface of interpreting the differences between Lebanese and Non-Lebanese students, the researcher delved by asking more questions about the major challenges faced in teaching diverse learners in classrooms and the strains experienced by teachers in the studied schools. Teachers felt unable to provide adequate teaching, especially in crowded classes and responding to the additional learning and welfare needs of the refugees. Teachers noted that they have to drop their false expectations about the refugee students and build more positive relationship with them. A large number of teachers expressed concerns for their limited knowledge of classroom management skills in the presence of diverse students. They preferred to focus their

attention on teaching students than spending time managing disruptive behavior. Compared to their classes before the enrollment of Syrian students, the teachers expressed frustration of the large amount of disruptive behaviors from Lebanese students who used not to be like that before. Similarly, by encountering these challenges, teachers mentioned that they have to reconsider their role to align more with authoritarian practices, but after being exposed to ad hoc training around pedagogical methods, classroom management and psychosocial support they began to perceive their role as facilitators helping students to perform tasks cooperatively with their classmates. Still teachers faced other challenges, they reported that attendance falls short of enrolment due to the movement of refugees families, cost of transportation or stationary and difficulty of students adapting to the new system. Teachers felt that they lacked the competence and resources to meet the psychosocial needs of the recently traumatized students. They were uncertain how to cope with incidents of violence in the classroom linked to the newly arrived students, and noted that the admission of these students could revive feelings of trauma among fellow students.

Teachers' responses reflected the challenging situation they were experiencing and overwhelmed with classroom management, teacher's role, pedagogy and communication

Most of them believed that: *"The war has affected the children's brains and way of thinking; I do not know how to handle it."*

*"Regardless of the number of students in class, I believe education is a way to create a sense of routine for children whose lives have been disrupted."*

*"In my school the policies or actions done by the government are not taken immediately to alleviate discrimination."*

In this quote, the teacher summarized what most teachers experienced in their classrooms: *"In my class I had students shouting out, not paying attention, avoid doing their homework, disrespect each other, refuse to interact, and engage in struggles. All of these behaviors diverted my focus away from teaching."*

Other responses came as follows:

*"The highest percentage of students is Syrian, few are Iraqi and Lebanese students make inappropriate comments about them especially while reading or being engaged in activities."*

Another teacher mentioned:

*"There are a number of refugee students in my school, mostly from Syria, who are disliked and hated. Some of the Syrian students do not like to mingle with the Lebanese students which led to bad relationships."*

A third one commented:

*“Our school developed a policy in how to deal with refugees, but it has not done enough to break the vicious circle of mismatch.”*

Another comment:

*“Many students have negative feelings about refugee students in this school. Comments about this group have been made even in my classroom, and sometimes I do not know how to handle it.”*

*“We put in our school different standards of behavior, and still most Lebanese students don't want to make friends with the Syrian, they call them "dirty" even few teachers are unwilling to help the Syrian students.”*

One teacher was able to overcome her hatred to the refugees by saying: *“I had to know my biases, and I had to discover what makes my mind stop in finding ways to help these children survive. The moment I started to know myself I started to devise strategies to manage my class.”*

*“Although we want to provide support, but we are overscheduled and have a large number of students, even sometimes we are rushed to finish the program, distracted and distressed and as such we end up not being supportive.”*

Other responses were given by other teachers:

*“I understand that there are outbreaks of tension and sometimes physical violence between Syrian and Lebanese students, last time a violent incident happened and a Syrian student was a victim. This led the school director to dismiss the Lebanese student for one week, but the parents protested against this act, and the director has to reenroll the student again.”*

*“I hear students repeating and mentioning some words they heard from their parents, which sometimes aggravates the communication between the students and makes the class somehow out of order. I sometimes I do not know what to do”*

*“We experienced a fluctuating situation of attendance. Syrian students used to attend for a short period of time and after that they disappear, and when we investigated the only response was they moved to another place.”*

All these responses can be summarized by the notion that teachers need training that enables them to focus on teaching and learning and provide some psychosocial support. Similarly, to overcome language barriers refugee students need to be taught literacy and numeracy and critical thinking by their mother tongue by competent teachers – preferably Syrian teachers- or presence of teachers as aids in the classroom to facilitate learning, which means trying to adapt the Lebanese education system to the needs of these students. For these students, the tools to survive and then

thrive include opportunities for learning and socialization. Moreover in refugee contexts, where violence and insecurity scarce resources (Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies, INEE, 2011; Novelli, 2011; Smith, 2010), teaching materials, classroom space, and furniture, are all in short supply, and curriculum quality is inconsistent, the World Bank (2010) notes “teachers are sometimes the only resource available to students” (p. 3). Adding to this overcrowded classrooms and high number of over-age pupils add to teachers’ stress levels and these factors, according to Gomez (2013), “will continue to push teachers out of the profession and drive down conditions for quality teaching and learning if not addressed” (p. 29). In this context of scarce professional development resources, and the challenges faced, the teachers created a culture of peer training and teacher-to-teacher support where they met and exchanged resources and feedback to each other.

As seen also from the comments, schools are not separate from the real world. They are the result of what an individual experienced at home, neighborhood or school. Children are reflecting the perceptions of their community. To alleviate the problem a comprehensive approach is needed in each situation. The disparity in the students’ level of education, backgrounds and psycho-social state of being, creates an overall challenging situation. Flexibility and adaptability in finding solutions to meet the needs of these children was the key.

Although the researcher found most teachers were very motivated and engaged, and there is large potential for improvement, I did find that the teachers were in need for a systematic program to give some structure and solidity to their teaching practice. They need access to some new ideas to further develop their peace education program; they need to know their biases and what causes their mind to stop. The moment they develop self-knowledge they will be able to come with strategies for managing their class when a challenge arises. Nonetheless it was a pleasure to witness how the teachers in deplorable circumstances were trying to manage the difficulties faced and overcome their authoritarian teaching methods.

## **4.2 Successful strategies**

Which specific experiences helped to successfully work through the challenges encountered while teaching diverse learners?

One of the interviewed teachers mentioned:

*We suggested few activities to offset the discrimination and spread peace in classroom and we got support from the community around us.*

Another mentioned:

*“In collaboration with a number of teachers we developed a booklet about how to handle conflict and violence in our classrooms, but not all teachers applied it.”*

A third commented:

*“A small number of teachers attended the training held by the government that addressed issues of peace, violence, security and conflict resolution, but they are not implementing everything. The excuse they are giving is that they do not have time, they have to finish the program.”*

*“As part of the learning program, we tried to offer opportunities for students to communicate with each other about their culture, origins and background. It was an effective way to create awareness in students about respect for cultural diversity as well as identity.”*

Few teachers commented on the training they were exposed to by saying that:

*“It is narrow in scope, not applicable in such situation, irrelevant, infeasible to actualize with time and space constraints.”*

*“My school at the beginning was hesitant to implement the program, later on after seeing the good results in other classes they started to implement it but with caution.”*

*“I feel inhibited working with a program I see it as political, and disturbing to the implementation of other programs, but I have to implement part of it from time to time.”*

*“Our school adapted the program we were trained on. We are trying to even share the parents to insure the importance of this. I think that the implementation of this program will ensure that it is beneficial for those involved.”*

*“We tried to implement what we were trained on, but the problem is lack of instructional materials and unavailability of time.”*

*“I hope that what we are implementing in our school from peace education activities to come to a time to cultivate a sense of urgency in other teachers toward eliminating prejudice, violence and authoritarianism in the classroom. “*

*“I brought back the classroom management techniques that I studied at the university and started to implement them. The most successful one was consistency. I made the students understand what I want from them and this made my life easier.”*

*“Throughout the academic year we tried to explore the most prominent issues that create violence between Lebanese and Syrian students and based on our observation we found that the*

*best way is to educate students critical awareness, solidarity, respect of differences and responsibility.”*

When talking about collaboration teachers mentioned the following:

*“We sought help from Syrian teachers who underwent intensive training in curriculum and teaching diversification to be an aid in dealing with the students in our classrooms.”*

*“We did a collaborative work with Syrian teachers. We prepared together mock classroom presentations focusing on inclusive education and differentiated learning experience.”*

Other teachers faced resistance from students while implementing peace education program:

*When trying to implement peace education program we were faced by resistance from students, may be the children were influenced by their parents’ beliefs, or religious upbringing or their previous experience with peers.”*

*“I believe that the students and due to their experience inside and outside the classroom, made them respond negatively to peace instructions.”*

*“We aimed at educating Lebanese as well as Syrian students to the notion of citizenry with the knowledge, values and skills of peace communication”*

*“We were successful in implementing our peace program when we established support from the neighboring community. We convinced them that their goal is the same as ours, create peace in our classrooms to be able to teach students and manage our classes.”*

*“We trained students on respect, love and empathy, and tried to change their behaviors from violence, bullying and miscommunication to cooperation, nonviolence, dialogue, reflection and active listening.”*

*“Students, in my class, whom I spoke to, mentioned how it was comforting when I spoke to them about what had happened, and asked about how they were coping. They said that they regained trust and confidence in their abilities.”*

Teachers have the feeling of commitment toward constructive, cooperative relationships, and intention to implement issues related to peace studies, peace education and nonviolent social activism, but they are faced with either the attitude of teachers who are not ready to change or lack of material and resources or uncooperative community. Teachers believe that violence is the core problem of a culture of peace and the only way to eradicate it is through education. An education that relies on changing attitudes and beliefs, conceptualizing of what constitutes peace, violence

and conflict among the students, as well as commitment from the side of teachers as well as parents and community to work toward nonviolence. There are many possibilities for how to address a crisis in class, from activities that take only a moment to restructuring the entire course, and plenty in between and to consider that students appreciate any action, no matter how small.

To say what the teachers did in their classrooms was successful we have to see whether their work agrees with the necessary conditions that Allport (1954) suggested for an effective inter-group contact; a) supportive environment, (b) equal status among participants, (c) close and sustained contact, and (d) cooperation, and Nadler's factors (2002) of a successful peace education program: (a) deliberately designed equality, (b) interpersonal trust, (c) awareness and respect for the various cultural beliefs and practices present in the training, and (d) addressing real, pressing, and common problems. In other words commitment, full responsibility, and implementation of goals and values and incorporation of real problems will lead to a successful peace education.

In building community of peace, experience is largely influenced by this notion of *learning with and from one another*. Teachers reached to a conclusion that introducing peace education into the curriculum encouraged students' capacities for openness, listening, social engagement, and action. When students started to utilize these skills they found new ways to communicate and to relate to one another. Even teachers felt empowered when they discovered how the techniques they used transformed the class into nurturing and cooperative one and enabled the students to reflect upon possibilities for action at the individual level and engagement with their communities. This concurs with what Cabezudo and Haavelsrud (2007) argued that for peace education to be relevant and valuable to a given population the content and form of that education must take into consideration the social, cultural, political and educational context of the learner.

Teachers added to the knowledge skills, social skills and sensitivity to others, and to values honesty and open-mindedness. When students were given the opportunity to work in pairs and small groups and engage in collaborative projects, they acquired the skills of working together with different people. They also learned to listen to others and communicate their own ideas clearly. When teachers accepted and expressed appreciation for diverse viewpoints, ideas and opinions; tolerance and appreciation for diversity (physical and intellectual) was reflected in the attitude of students. As Jenkins (2008) believes that the fundamental challenge of peace education is how to facilitate learning for personal and social change and transformation. Facilitating learning



for peace requires an educator to have an intentional and acute awareness of the relationship between the values that are being articulated and the processes through which those values are disseminated.

What was mentioned by interviewed teachers can be summarized by Reardon and Cabezudo (2002):

“A culture of peace will be achieved when citizens of the world understand global problems; have the skills to resolve conflict constructively; know and live by international standards of human rights, gender and racial equality; appreciate cultural diversity; and respect the integrity of the Earth. Such learning cannot be achieved without intentional, sustained and systematic education for peace”. (p. 33).

To sum up, teachers have to examine their attitudes and assumptions toward diverse individuals, develop their competence and their teaching practices and methods as well. They have to face the challenges of diversity and not remain in their own den, because if they stay overwhelmed by these challenges they will not be able to create a rich environment of experiences for students. Teachers who build their own competence in diversity they can increase their ability to form authentic relationships across different groups and this will support their growth as educators. Teachers are then able to create an inclusive inquiry-based learning atmosphere in their class where all students have the opportunity to share and learn from each other’s perspectives, experiences and life stories.

## **5. Conclusion**

In the Lebanese context, this research was a pioneer in exploring teachers’ authority in classrooms as related to displaced children enrolled in Lebanese schools, an aspect that is causing a high concern for the government as well as schools. It provides a reference for educational leaders to reflect on the current findings and revise their educational practices. It also sets the stepping stones for further research to expand the knowledge on this topic and develop other research questions that were not tackled in this study. For instance, further research can compare private versus public schools in dealing with the problem of adjusting the language of teachers in classrooms and the successful techniques implemented. Another research can assess the most effective curriculum used with these students that lead to better achievement and adaptation. An

interesting research would be assessing the perceptions of Lebanese students who shared same classroom with displaced children.

## REFERENCES

- Allport, G. (1954). *The nature of prejudice*. Cambridge, MA: Addison-Wesley.
- Al Monitor, (2011). Lebanon's schools do double-duty to educate both Syrian, Lebanese students. Retrieved from <http://www.al-monitor.com/pulse/originals/2015/10/lebanon-education-ministry-syrian-refugees-children-school.html#ixzz4DqeW0Fmp>
- Cabezudo, A. & Haavelsrud, M. (2007). Rethinking Peace Education, in *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies*, eds. Webel, C. & Galtung, J. New York: Routledge, 2007.
- Creswell, J. W. (2009). *Research Design: Qualitative, Quantitative, and Mixed Methods Approaches* (3<sup>rd</sup>ed.), Sage Publications, US.
- Darling-Hammond, L. and Bransford, J. (2005). *Preparing Teachers for a Changing World: What Teachers Should Learn and Be Able to Do*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- El Ghali, H., Ghalayini, N., & Ismail, G. (2016). *Responding to Crisis: Syrian Refugee Education in Lebanon*. Policy Brief # 7, 2016 AUB Policy Institute.
- Ferris, E. G., and Winthrop, R. (2010). Education and displacement: Assessing conditions for refugees and internally displaced persons affected by conflict. In background paper prepared for the Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2011. Paris: UNESCO.
- Gomez, S. (2013). *Teacher development & management strategy 2013–2015*. Unpublished summary.
- Hattie, J. (2009). *Visible learning: A synthesis of over 800 meta-analyses relating to achievement*. London: Routledge
- Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies (INEE). (2011). *Third international policy dialogue forum of the Task Force on Teachers for EFA: Understanding the role of teacher policy and programing in fragility*.
- Jenkins, T. (2008). Rediscovering education for a better world: Illuminating the social purposes of education through peace education pedagogy and content, in *Transforming Education*

- for Peace*, eds. Lin, J., Brantmeier, E., & Bruhn, C. Charlotte, N.C.: Information Age Publishing, 2008.
- MEHE. (2010). Quality education for growth. National Education Strategy Framework.
- MEHE. (2014). Reaching all children with education in Lebanon.
- Mtika, P. and Gates.P. (2010). Developing learner-centered education among secondary trainee teachers in Malawi: The dilemma of appropriation and application. *International Journal of Educational Development*, 30, 396-404.
- Nadler, A. (2002). Post-resolution processes: Instrumental and socio-emotional routes to reconciliation. In G. Salomon & B. Nevo (Eds.), (pp. 127-141). Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum.
- Naufal, H. (2012). Syrian refugees in Lebanon: The humanitarian approach under political divisions. European University Institute, Migration Policy Centre Research Report, 2012/13. Retrieved from [http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/24835/MPC\\_RR2012-13.pdf?sequence=1](http://cadmus.eui.eu/bitstream/handle/1814/24835/MPC_RR2012-13.pdf?sequence=1)
- Novelli, M., & Smith, A. (2011). The role of education in peace-building: A synthesis report of findings from Lebanon, Nepal and Sierra Leone. New York, NY: UNICEF. Retrieved from [http://www.unicef.org/spanish/evaldatabase/index\\_61271.htm](http://www.unicef.org/spanish/evaldatabase/index_61271.htm)
- Reardon B.A., and Cabezudo, A. (2002). Learning to abolish war: Teaching toward a culture of peace: Book 1, Rationale for and approaches to peace education. New York: Hague Appeal for Peace.
- Schweisfurth, M. (2011). Learner-centered education in developing country contexts: From solution to problem? *International Journal of Educational Development*, 31, 425-432.
- Schweisfurth, M. (2013). Learner-centered education in international perspective: Whose pedagogy for whose development? New York: Routledge.
- Shields, R. and Paulson, J. (2015). Development in reverse? A longitudinal analysis of armed conflict, fragility and school enrolment. *Comparative Education*, 51, 212-230. doi: 10.1080/03050068.2014.953314.
- Smith, A. (2010). Schools as zones of peace: Nepal case study in access to education during armed conflict and civil unrest (pp. 261–278). In UNESCO, *Protecting education from attack: A State-of-the-art review*. Paris, France: UNESCO.

- Stake, R. E. (1995). *The Art of case study research*. Thousand Oaks, CA: SAGE Publications.
- The World Bank Group. (2010). *Teacher policy and management in fragile and conflict-affected situations: A review of issues, policies and experiences*. Prepared for the Ninth High-Level Meeting on EFA, Addis Ababa, Ethiopia.
- The World Bank. (2013). *The Annual Report 2013*. Washington, DC.
- UNCHR. (2014). *UNCHR global trends: forced displacement in 2014*.
- UNDP. (2013). *Arab knowledge report*.
- UNESCO. (2015). *Bridging learning gaps for youth. UNESCO education response to the Syrian crisis, 2015-2016*.
- UNHCR. (2015). *Country operations profile–Lebanon*. Retrieved from:  
<http://www.unhcr.org/pages/49e486676.html>.
- UNHCR. (2016). *Lebanon daily registration statistics*. Retrieved from  
<http://data.unhcr.org/syrianrefugees/syria.php>.
- Watkins K. (2013). *Education without borders: A summary. A report from Lebanon on Syria's out-of-school children*.
- Watkins, Kevin., Zyck, Steven A. (2014). *Living on hope, hoping for education: The failed response to the Syrian refugee crisis*, Overseas Development Institute (ODI)
- Winthrop, R. and Matsui, E. (2013). *A New agenda for education in fragile states*. Washington, DC: Brookings Institution.
- Yarak, F. (2015, September). *Public response of the education sector to the Syrian refugees' crisis in Lebanon*.