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## Developing Peace Values Among Future Teachers Through Inclusive and Reflective Educational Practices

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This article aims to explore how peace education can be integrated into university curricula to shape future teachers' professional identities in Moldova. The objective is to provide evidence that peace values, when embedded in language education and reflective teaching practice, promote inclusive, empathetic, and democratic learning environments. The central hypothesis is that peace education, when approached as both method and mindset, enhances not only communicative competence but also socio-emotional skills vital for classroom harmony and intercultural understanding. The research methodology combines qualitative needs assessment conducted with teacher-training students across Moldova and a case study of a university module titled "Peace Education." This module incorporates scenario-based learning, multilingual tasks, and linguistic strategies for emotional regulation, empathy, and conflict mediation. Findings reveal that future educators perceive peace education as highly relevant to classroom management and social cohesion, especially in multilingual and multiethnic settings. The study concludes that peace education must be systemically embedded in teacher training programs, as a transformative pedagogical approach that prepares future teachers to model and sustain peaceful, inclusive interactions through daily language practices and critical reflection.

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**Солкан Анжела, Буреа Светлана. Розвиток цінностей миру серед майбутніх учителів через інклюзивну та рефлексивну освітню практику.** Мета статті – дослідити, як освіту миру можна інтегрувати в університетські програми для формування професійної ідентичності майбутніх учителів у Молдові. Потрібно надати докази того, що цінності миру, вбудовані в мовну освіту та рефлексивну педагогічну практику, сприяють інклюзивному, емпатичному й демократичному навчальному середовищу. Центральна гіпотеза полягає в тому, що освіта миру, якщо розглядати її як метод і як спосіб мислення, покращує не лише комунікативну компетентність, але й соціально-емоційні навички, життєво важливі для гармонії в класі та міжкультурного розуміння. Методологія дослідження поєднує якісну оцінку потреб, проведену зі студентами-педагогами по всій Молдові, і тематичне дослідження університетського модуля під назвою «Освіта миру». Цей модуль уключає сценарне навчання, багатомовні завдання й лінгвістичні стратегії для емоційної регуляції, емпатії та посередництва в конфліктах. Результати дослідження свідчать, що майбутні педагоги сприймають освіту миру як надзвичайно важливу для управління класом і соціальної згуртованості, особливо в багатомовному та багатоетнічному середовищі. У дослідженні зроблено висновок, що освіта миру повинна бути системно вбудована в програми підготовки вчителів як трансформаційний педагогічний підхід, який готує майбутніх педагогів до моделювання та підтримки мирної, інклюзивної взаємодії через щоденну мовну практику й критичну рефлексію.

**Ключові слова:** освіта миру, підготовка вчителів, цінності миру, емпатія, посередництво в конфліктах, інклюзія.

## INTRODUCTION

Peace is a contested and deeply contextual concept at once abstract and practical, personal and structural. It can be understood as a social condition shaped by negotiated meanings, institutional arrangements, and cultural reproduction that allow individuals and communities to live without fear, marginalization, or systemic violence. From a sociological perspective, peace emerges through social interaction, shared norms, and cultural continuity. Ethnological elements, such as Moldovan folk traditions and reconciliation customs, are emphasized as cultural foundations of peace education within society. In today's world, the development of peace values among future teachers has gained increasing importance. This is achieved by focusing on communicative competence, not only as linguistic fluency, but as the capacity to manage conflict, express empathy, and foster inclusion through language. In globalized and diverse classrooms, peace education is promoted through intercultural dialogue, multilingual sensitivity, and inclusive practices, positioning the teacher as a key agent of social unity and transformation.

### 1. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

#### 1.1. What is Peace?

Drawing on the postulates of modern peace, Harris and Morrison (2003) describe peace as a multifaceted process grounded in respect for human rights, cooperation, and civic participation. It is not limited to a political or military condition but seen as a dynamic social relationship that shapes human experience across education, governance, and culture (Haris, 2004; Carter, 2015).

Sociolinguistically, peace is embedded in language, influencing how we name, imagine, and enact coexistence. Merriam-Webster's (n.d.) Third New International Dictionary notes peace as both "freedom from civil clamor" and "a state of mind free from troubling thoughts," reflecting outer and inner dimensions. Dietrich (2012) identifies these as political, relational, and emotional layers, while Harris and Morrison (2012) expand this into personal, relational, structural, and ecological peace.

From a cultural sociology lens, Moldovan folk tales and rural customs illustrate peace as restoration and moral balance. Stories and practices like offering bread and salt for reconciliation encode deeply rooted nonviolent traditions (Trilling, & Fadel, 2009; Richmond, 2013; Felea, 2017). These customs nurture empathy, emotional intelligence, and mutual respect – values essential for peace education.

Such cultural heritage informs teacher identity and pedagogical practice, emphasizing peace as intrinsic, not imported. Galtung (2010) advocates for transdisciplinary peace studies, especially vital in post-socialist contexts like Moldova, where unresolved identity tensions persist. In this light, teachers become key agents of peace, fostering resilience, multiculturalism, and democratic values within and beyond the classroom (Aspeslagh, 2006; Harris, & Morrison, 2003).

In the context of developing competences that will equip future teachers, motivation, corresponding cognitive strategies, and intercultural approach (Byram, 2020; Jiang et al., 2022) play a crucial role in language and peace education, particularly when learners face real communication challenges (Dörnyei, & Ushioda, 2001; Solcan, 2003; Burdujan, 2013; Burea-Titica, 2020).

#### 1.2. Sociolinguistic Aspect of Peace Value Formation

Intercultural and communicative competences are essential for fostering inclusion and understanding in diverse classrooms. Through dialogical methods and problem-based learning, teachers develop soft skills and cognitive strategies – such as critical thinking and emotional regulation – that empower them to become facilitators of peace and intercultural dialogue in educational settings.

From a cultural sociology perspective, folk narratives and national myths play a key role in conveying peace values across generations, notes Trilling and Fadel (2009). From the perspective of culture and folkways, stories and old tales play a key role in passing on peace values. In Moldova, peace is often portrayed not explicitly but symbolically, represented by the reestablishment of justice at the end of folk tales, the harmony between humans and nature, and moral virtues such as patience, kindness, and respect. These narrative patterns encode a cultural ideal of peace as restoration, reconciliation, and shared well-being. Another compelling testament to the deep roots of peace values in Moldovan society lies in long-standing rural customs that embody nonviolent conflict resolution. Passed down across generations, these customs reveal that the ethos of peace was cultivated not only through stories but also through daily

interpersonal practice, considers Richmond (2013). One such tradition, still remembered and occasionally respected in rural areas, speaks volumes: when two villagers conflicted, one would invite the other to share a meal, offering bread and salt, symbols of hospitality, reconciliation, and goodwill. This simple, meaningful gesture served as a social ritual to restore trust and signal the desire to repair the relationship without shame or escalation as Felea (2017) states.

Such customs show that Moldova developed, centuries ago, its own frameworks for bridging divides, restoring dialogue, and modeling peace. Rather than relying solely on formal institutions, these community-based practices cultivated emotional intelligence, empathy, and mutual respect-values that now inform modern peace education. They exemplify how cultural heritage can become an educational resource, helping future teachers recognize that peace is not a foreign concept imported through curricula but an intrinsic part of their identity, ready to be revived and transmitted anew in schools and communities. In this context, teachers become agents of peace, cultivating resilience, pluralism, and multiculturalism in and beyond the classroom (Aspeslagh, 2006).

### **1.3. Why Peace Education Matters for Future Teachers**

For those preparing to become teachers, peace is not just a word- it is a way of teaching, learning, and being. Teaching is more than passing on knowledge; it is about shaping how young people see themselves and others in the world. In this sense, peace education is not an extra topic, but a core part of what it means to be a good teacher in today's world. Peace education teaches skills that help build fair and caring schools – skills like listening, sharing, understanding others, working through conflict without violence, and showing respect for all. These are not soft skills or side lessons – they are the tools teachers use every day to shape learning spaces where every student feels safe, seen, and heard (Carter, 2015). As Harris and Morrison (2003) consider, teachers can help shape peace by shaping the minds and hearts of young people. They do this not only by what they teach, but how they teach – by the questions they ask, the voices they uplift, and the example they set. A teacher, who listens deeply, handles disagreement with care, and builds a classroom of trust is already teaching peace (Dörnyei, & Ushioda, 2001). Yet, as Koshmanova and Holm (2007) noted, many teacher-training programs still treat peace, tolerance, or diversity as ideas to know, not as habits to grow. This means, future teachers may know the theory but not how to bring it into their daily practice. To shift this, peace education must be built into the heart of how we prepare teachers, not just as content, but as method, mindset, and mission. In this context, preparing future foreign language teachers brings an added layer of significance to peace education. Activities that aim to develop peace values have a multi-aspectual role in language education. Communication itself becomes the core space where peace is practiced. For teachers who are preparing to teach languages, the way they learn to communicate in situations of tension or misunderstanding becomes especially important. Conflict resolution, cultural sensitivity, and negotiation rely heavily on how meaning is expressed and received (Johnson, & Johnson, 2007).

According to Dörnyei and Ushioda (2001), awareness of communicative inadequacy what he calls “the gap between one's actual and desired communicative competence” – can act as a powerful motivational stimulator for language learners. When learners are placed in real or simulated communication challenges, they are more likely to take ownership of their learning and seek strategies to bridge those gaps. In this context, as assumed by Solcan (2003) and Burea-Titica (2020), this fact becomes a stimulus that challenges students' learning motivation, contributing to cognitive processes. A. Solcan assumes that problem-solving tasks can serve as a valuable tool to stimulate students' involvement and provoke a cognitive spark, generating multiple factors that enhance the learning process and, as a result, lead to valuable skills formation.

Furthermore, this process encourages learners to refine their metacognitive skills, prompting them to monitor their language use more intentionally, seek feedback, and revise their communicative strategies. This aligns with Oxford's (2011) emphasis on strategic ability to recognize communication problems and use flexible solutions as a cornerstone of language learning success.

As a result, peace education in language teaching does not function in isolation from linguistic goals. Rather, it creates conditions in which the growth of values and intercultural empathy is intertwined with language development. Activities that involve conflict negotiation, collaborative dialogue, and cross-cultural exploration foster soft skills such as critical thinking, creativity, and emotional intelligence, which are increasingly recognized as essential for 21st-century educators and learners (OECD, 2018).

Burdujan (2012) also mentions the role of intercultural communicative competence in language education, arguing that effective language teaching must help learners not only use language accurately, but navigate cultural differences respectfully and ethically.

Peace-focused tasks-like resolving misunderstandings, debating global issues, or co-creating inclusive narratives-become real-world laboratories where students build both linguistic fluency and the social-emotional tools necessary for fostering understanding across borders.

In this way, foreign language classrooms are transformed into labs for peace-building, where communication is not merely about mastering grammar or vocabulary, but about practicing the very acts of dialogue, reflection, and reconciliation that define peaceful human relations. As Cates (2004) assumes, “language education can and should help students develop into global citizens who care, communicate, and contribute to a more just and peaceful world.”

In our project, we identified how students preparing to become teachers perceive the need for peace education.

- They see peace education as highly useful to their work as future educators.
- They want more hands-on ways to bring peace into classroom life – through activities, stories, language practices, and ways of guiding group work.
- They feel that in a divided world, schools can be places where students learn not only facts, but also how to live together. Peace education helps teachers do more than manage behavior or teach peace values.

## **2. METHODOLOGY**

### **2.1. Forming Future Teachers: Insights from the Moldova Needs Assessment**

To understand how peace education can truly shape the professional identity of future teachers, it is essential to ground theory in real classroom and social contexts. In Moldova, a country marked by both rich cultural traditions and ongoing socio-political tensions, the formation of teachers cannot be separated from the broader task of social unity, democratic participation, and intercultural dialogue. As part of our project, we carried out a needs assessment with students in teacher education programs – young people preparing to step into one of the most socially influential roles in society. Their feedback was not only thoughtful but revealed a deep awareness of the challenges and responsibilities that come with teaching in today’s world.

The findings show that future teachers in Moldova strongly recognize the importance of peace education, not only as a subject of study but as a guiding principle in shaping school culture. Many students expressed a desire to learn how to promote empathy, cooperation, fairness, and inclusion, especially when working in multilingual and multiethnic classrooms. The needs assessment identified four key areas where peace education could make a meaningful impact:

1. Conflict Resolution and Dialogue Skills. Many respondents acknowledged the everyday reality of conflict between students, within communities, or even within schools themselves. They saw peace education as a pathway to learning how to address conflict constructively, through active listening, nonviolent communication, and shared problem-solving.

2. Social Cohesion and National Unity. Given Moldova’s regional and cultural complexity-including areas like Transnistria and Gagauzia-future teachers emphasized the need for education that bridges rather than deepens them.

3. Youth Engagement and Civic Participation. Students saw themselves not only as future instructors but as potential change makers. They expressed interest in learning how to create more participatory classroom environments, where students are invited to think critically, speak openly, and act ethically. Peace education, in this sense, was seen as a means to train young people in democratic habits, preparing them to become active, thoughtful citizens.

4. Respect for Cultural and Linguistic Diversity. Respondents highlighted the importance of linguistic inclusion, intercultural respect, and the recognition of all students’ backgrounds as strengths rather than obstacles.

### **2.2. A Shift Toward Reflective and Inclusive Teacher Formation**

What arises from this needs assessment is a clear message: future teachers do not want only to be transmitters of knowledge – they want to be facilitators of peace, inclusion, and growth. But to do so, they need teacher education programs that go beyond the traditional model of subject instruction and offer reflective and inclusive practices.



**Fig. 1.** *Forming Future Teachers through Peace Education in Moldova*

*Note: Core Needs Identified by Future Teachers in Moldova. Insights gathered from teacher training students across Moldova suggest a vision of education rooted in peace, participation, and respect for culture.*

**Source:** made by S. Burea.

Reflective training, where they explore their own biases, values, and teaching style; practical strategies, such as how to manage classroom tension, work with diverse learners, or respond to student trauma; and a deeper sense of professional purpose, rooted in ethical responsibility and care.

This vision of teacher formation also aligns with the UNESCO Office in New Delhi (2005) framework for peace education, which emphasizes that inner peace, social harmony, human rights, and critical thinking must all be nurtured from within the education system – starting with the teacher. In short, the needs assessment underscores the growing demand for a teacher formation model that is both values-driven and practice-oriented model where peace education is not taught in isolation, but integrated across the curriculum, linked to classroom management, assessment, curriculum design, and interpersonal communication.

### **2.3. Integrating Peace Education into University Curricula: A Case from Moldova**

In response to the needs identified through the Moldova assessment, it became clear that preparing future teachers for their peacebuilding role requires systematic changes in university-level teacher education. Peace education must not be sidelined in pedagogical training. Instead, it must be woven into the structure of existing programs, line up with broader educational goals, and be rooted in local social realities. One meaningful example of such integration is found in the course European Educational Policies, offered at the Faculty of Foreign Languages and Literatures. As part of this course, a thematic module titled Peace Education has been developed and implemented. This module specifically targets students in modern language programs—those preparing to teach English, German, French, or Italian, equipping them not only with language pedagogy but also with ethical, civic, and intercultural competences.

The Peace Education module is designed around several key principles:

#### **1. Alignment with European and Global Policy**

The module draws from the PeaceEdu project and is informed by international frameworks, which affirm that education at all levels is one of the main pathways to building peace. It also reflects the European Union's emphasis on multilingualism, cultural diversity, inclusion, and human rights as core pillars of education.

#### **2. Thematic Focus**

The module introduces future teachers to a range of interconnected peace-oriented themes:

- Multilingualism and language inclusion
- Cultural dialogue and intercultural competence
- Equity, diversity, and educational justice
- Critical reflection on social cohesion, identity, and belonging

Each topic is treated not only as content to learn but as a lens through which to reflect on one's role as an educator in increasingly diverse, sometimes polarized classrooms.

### 3. Pedagogical Strategies for Peace

Recognizing that peace education must be both reflective and practical, the module employs student-centered teaching methods such as:

- Scenario-based learning, where students simulate real-life classroom situations involving cultural misunderstandings or conflict;
- Collaborative projects, encouraging dialogue and shared problem-solving techniques;
- Storytelling and narrative work, allowing students to explore peace-related values through personal and cultural stories;
- Multilingual tasks, helping future language teachers build bridges across languages in the classroom.

One effective pedagogical strategy for cultivating peace values in the language classroom is the integration of *problem-solving techniques* based on case studies. In these activities, students are presented with realistic, often emotionally or culturally charged scenarios that may involve misunderstandings, stereotypes, or potential verbal conflict (Solcan, 2003; Gursel-Bilgin, 2020). Their task is to collaboratively identify the source of the tension and propose peaceful, linguistically sensitive solutions. Through these exercises, students not only develop their critical thinking and empathy but also actively practice linguistic forms that require dialogue and nonviolent communication. For instance, students may be encouraged to use calming phrases, reflective listening structures, and language of de-escalation when responding to provocative remarks. Examples include responses like: "I understand that you're upset – can we talk about what happened?"; "I see things differently, but I respect your point of view"; "Let's try to find a solution we can both agree on"; "Can we take a step back and look at this calmly?" These verbal strategies teach students, future teachers, how to repair broken communication and defuse tension rather than escalate it. According to Marshall Rosenberg's model of Nonviolent Communication (Rosenberg, 2003), such expressions build connection by separating observation from judgment, naming feelings and needs, and making respectful requests rather than demands. When students repeatedly practice such dialogues, they not only build linguistic competence but also internalize the attitudes and behaviors associated with conflict negotiation that bring all involved to a peaceful interaction.

Other linguistic tools that are used in developing future teachers' peace values may be considered as those that include psycho-pedagogical and linguistic skills that help the student to wave successfully in these practices.

One of the first and most important is the above-mentioned *language of de-escalation and emotional regulation*. In moments of heightened tension, the ability to use calming and respectful language is critical. Phrases such as "Let's take a moment to calm down," or "It seems there's a misunderstanding- let's clarify things," help lower emotional intensity and invite a collaborative spirit. These expressions are marked by polite modal verbs like could, may, and would, and by hedging structures such as "It seems that..." or "Maybe we could..." that soften the speaker's tone. The passive voice, as in "Mistakes were made," is also frequently used to avoid direct blame and reduce defensiveness.

Equally vital is the *language of active listening and empathy*, which affirms students' experiences and fosters mutual understanding. Expressions such as "What I hear you saying is..." or "That must have been difficult" help establish a tone of respect and attentiveness. These linguistic choices often involve paraphrasing structures, inclusive pronouns like we or our, and empathy markers such as "I can imagine that...". Such language use demonstrates care, reduces the sense of hierarchy in teacher-student interactions, and encourages all voices to be heard.

In the domain of conflict mediation and repair, teachers can guide students through moments of disagreement by *modeling balanced and inclusive forms of communication*. Phrases like "It's okay to disagree, but let's do so respectfully," or "Can we find a solution that works for both of you?" exemplify this. They often rely on conditional forms (e.g., "If we tried this, would it help?"), reported speech to

neutralize confrontation (e.g., “He said he didn’t mean to offend you”), and concessive clauses that acknowledge difference while promoting unity (e.g., “Even though we see things differently, we can still work together.”).

A peaceful classroom also thrives on language that expresses appreciation and positive reinforcement. Simple affirmations like “Thank you for sharing” or “That’s a thoughtful idea” contribute to a culture of encouragement and engagement. Such expressions frequently employ adjectives of encouragement (e.g., thoughtful, insightful, helpful) and help students feel their contributions are valued.

In multicultural and multilingual classrooms, the language of inclusion and respect for diversity plays a huge role. Future teachers must learn to say things like “Everyone’s background brings value to our discussion,” or “Let’s respect all languages spoken in this room.” These expressions signal that diversity is not only tolerated but welcomed. The use of inclusive vocabulary (e.g., diverse, shared, welcoming) and structures that invite participation (e.g., “Would anyone like to share another viewpoint?”) foster a safe environment where all learners feel represented and respected.

Integrating these language practices into teacher education requires more than lectures. Future teachers need opportunities to apply them through role-play scenarios, dialogue analysis, and language transformation exercises, where they practice turning aggressive or judgmental statements into constructive, respectful dialogue. For example, a classroom exercise might ask students to rewrite a phrase like “You’re wrong and that’s stupid” into “I see it differently – can you explain your view more?”

The corresponding rhythm and intonation could be called the tone of peace. The result of conflict solving or strategic communication lies not only in the linguistic choices, it’s also in how it’s expressed. In teacher training, especially for future language educators, mastering vocal tone is crucial to building trust, easing tension, and supporting emotional safety in the classroom.

Students are learned the role of rhythm. It must be purposeful yet calm, conveying openness rather than swiftness. A deliberate, even pace reflects self-control and invites listeners to engage thoughtfully. Research shows that controlled speech patterns foster more receptive learning environments and reduce stress in tense situations.

Falling intonation, the gentle downtick at the end of a sentence, naturally de-escalates conflict. In contrast to aggressive, sharp endings, a steady, downward tone helps signal trust and understanding. When asking questions, rising intonation can reflect genuine curiosity instead of defensiveness. It signals openness and encourages reflection, showing students that their perspective matters.

Strategic pauses also play a vital role. By giving students space to process, pauses prevent rushed responses and support deeper listening. Medium notes word-for-word that pauses create reflective space and improve listener engagement.

Training in these linguistic features equips future teachers not only to handle conflict or manage behavior, but to create a culture of peace through daily language choices. These skills become particularly powerful in foreign language teaching, where students are simultaneously building fluency and developing the social-emotional capacities to navigate difference, negotiate meaning, and foster understanding.

These activities are not simple techniques but acts of transformation designed to shift mindsets, encourage empathy, and model what peaceful, inclusive teaching can look like.

#### 4. Critical and Reflective Practice

The module also guides students in analyzing their own beliefs, examining how power, culture, and history influence teaching. Drawing on Freirean critical pedagogy and peace education theory (Harris, & Morrison, 2003), students are encouraged to see themselves not only as teachers but as active participants in shaping the kind of world their classrooms reflect.

### 3. RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

By embedding peace education within an existing course, the research demonstrates how theoretical ideals can be transformed into practical pedagogical strategies. The Peace Education module shifts peace from being a conceptual value to a set of applied competencies, concrete teaching practices, curriculum objectives, and reflective teacher identities.

The findings reveal that future teachers are not only acquiring a conceptual understanding of peace but are also learning to enact it in language and classroom interaction. These practices support the development

of communicative and intercultural competences, equipping teachers to manage conflict, foster inclusion, and nurture socio-emotional growth among students. In foreign language education, such skills are especially impactful, as learners simultaneously build linguistic fluency and emotional resilience. Lastly, these activities are not merely instructional tools but acts of transformation designed to shift perceptions, cultivate empathy, and model peaceful, inclusive education in practice.

## CONCLUSION

Peace education is more than a topic; it's a way of shaping teachers who foster fairness, empathy, and understanding in their classrooms. In Moldova, where diversity and history shape everyday life, preparing teachers to build peaceful, inclusive spaces is both timely and essential.

Future teachers want tools to create classrooms where every student feels safe and respected. When peace becomes part of how teaching is practiced, not just taught, schools become spaces of growth and connection. Peace begins with simple, daily choices. And the classroom is one of the most powerful places for it to take root.

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