

Towards Global Understanding: The Transformative Role of Peace Education

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Introduction

What some practitioners call education for democracy, civic education, tolerance education, or human rights education, are all ultimately education for the creation of a culture of peace. In fact, all of these are necessary ingredients for peace. Peace education has always been concerned with understanding the root causes of all forms of violence and their subsequent eradication. Democracy, human rights and peace remain central to our practice and fundamental to our goals for education. Certainly, in the wake of the World Trade Center tragedy--and its global repercussions--some may ask the question of whether there is any potential for peace. What is certain however is that a "quick-fix" solution, or a pre-packaged "tool," imposed either locally or globally, which fails to account for specific contexts will not work. Rather, what is necessary is a paradigm shift that shapes content and pedagogy by incorporating issues of human security, equity, justice and intercultural understanding through the promotion of global citizenship, planetary stewardship and humane relationship. These are the core values of peace education (as put forth by Betty Reardon, 1988, and related to the United Nations Charter, Universal Declaration of Human Rights and UNESCO) and they can be derived from and applied to many contexts.

These shared values--which are defined and supported by the United Nations and other international bodies--are the key to our survival, and should therefore be incorporated into education. Although education for peace, human rights, democracy, and the like have been criticized as another form of western imperialist indoctrination, these types of education seek to create a critical citizenry, informed not by western hegemonic values, but by universal values culled from a global context that incorporates both western and non-western perspectives. These values must then be adapted to suit specific learners to prepare them to be global citizens in a changing world.

Historical Perspective on Education for Peace

Originally a study of the causes of war and its prevention, peace education has evolved into the study of violence in all its manifestations and educating to counteract the war system for the creation of a peace system; a peace system on both the structural and individual level¹. The content and the methodology of peace education are progressive; promoting egalitarian learning environments, open inquiry and significant learner participation. Peace educators, such as David Hicks, Ian Harris and Betty Reardon, all endorse the power of education as a means of transforming society. By creating an awareness of the links between structural violence and direct violence, these educators strive to create a means for a peaceful future². Understanding of, and support for peace education has never been more necessary. Although there is currently some global recognition that the world is in crisis, it should be noted that this current crisis stems from a long history of structural violence within a global culture of war. Peace educators have long recognized that public support for peace education arises from recognition of

economic, social and environmental crises. Although some theorists have framed this perceived crisis in terms of the triumph of capitalism and individual liberty over socialism and equality (Smith and Carson, 1998), it seems more likely that the general perception of crisis arises from more direct threats to national and economic security. In any event, the relevance of peace education derives not just from its perspective on outbreaks of violence in the form of war, terrorism, abuse, etc., but on its attempts to address long-standing and chronic threats to human security.

Peace education is holistic and transformative, incorporating a number of ideas in its definition and practice. A multi-disciplinary, international field, peace education calls for long-term responses to conflict on the national international and interpersonal levels in order to create more just and sustainable futures (Hicks, 1988).

Education for peace is "education for the long haul, for ongoing struggle" (Reardon, 1988, p. 47). By promoting the development of critical thinking skills that lead toward media, scientific and political literacy, as well as incorporating learning how to cooperate and resolve conflict non-violently, peace education functions to foster the "development of a planetary consciousness that will enable us to function as global citizens and to transform the present human condition by changing societal structures" (Reardon, 1988, p.x). Reardon's concept of peace education incorporates a variety of knowledge, skills and attitudes for interpreting ideas as well as the development of reflective and participatory capacities for applying knowledge to overcome problems and achieve possibilities (Reardon, 1999).

Reardon's notion of nurturing reflective and participatory capacities parallels Paulo Freire's (1970) concept of "Conscientization", an idea that informs peace education through its emphasis on raising the critical consciousness of learners as a means for social change. Freire, in developing his humanistic, liberatory, and revolutionary pedagogy, coined the term "Conscientização" to define "learning to perceive the social, political and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (1970, p.17). Developed out of his analysis of the nature and effects of oppression, Freire's pedagogy stresses the need for the oppressed themselves to observe the situation of their oppression, thus enabling the consciousness-raising process to begin. This shift in awareness is necessary because "as long as the oppressed remain unaware of the causes of their condition, they fatalistically 'accept' their exploitation" (Freire, 1970, p.51). Of course, since very few opportunities are in place both domestically and internationally that allow the oppressed to see the true nature of their existence, many feel powerless to change their situation, accepting the day-to-day hardship and violence that surrounds them. However, Freire stresses that the reality of oppression must not be perceived as permanent but rather as a limiting but ultimately transformable system.

Freire's acknowledgement that society is dynamic rather than static not only makes his pedagogy truly liberatory and transformational, but also provides further support for the practice of peace education in the era of globalization. Peace education theorists, such as Magnus Haavelsrud (1980), have reiterated this and other Freirean notions concerning the need for education to develop an awareness and understanding of causal relationships, thereby expanding ones horizon. By understanding the micro/macro

relationships (or popularly termed local/global), learners can perceive contradictions in social, political and economic spheres. Through this initial perception, and subsequent understanding, learners undergo a profound transformation characterized by an expanded world-view and greater understanding of the interrelationship of all beings on the planet.

Global Support for Peace Education

Several global education campaigns take into account larger structural issues while addressing the needs of children and all learners striving to create a culture of peace. One example, the UNESCO Declaration and Integrated Framework for Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy produced by the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, came out of the 44th session on the International Conference on Education (1995). The declaration, created out of the need to remove obstacles to peace such as "violence, racism, xenophobia, aggressive nationalism", as well as human rights violations, religious intolerance, and the wide gap between wealthy and poor, stresses the importance of education in the development of individuals who will promote peace, human rights and democracy (UNESCO, 1995, p. 4). The document emphasizes that, by improving curricula and pedagogy, the result of education can be caring individuals who are responsible citizens and respectful of human dignity. Furthermore, the UNESCO framework provides comprehensive strategies for achieving a culture of peace, stating that education must be holistic, involve educational partners, and utilize administrative modes that allow for greater autonomy. The UNESCO framework also insists that education must be continuous and consistent, implemented locally, nationally and internationally and include proper resources. Additionally, the content of education should include education for citizenship at an international level and address the conditions necessary for the construction of peace, including conflict resolution, human rights, democracy, an end to racism, and the elimination of sexism. The framework states that "the ultimate goal of education for peace, human rights and democracy is the development in every individual of a sense of universal values and types of behavior on which a culture of peace is predicated" because it is "possible to identify even in different socio-cultural contexts values that are likely to be universally recognized" (p. 9). Perhaps most importantly, the UNESCO framework insists that content should be developed democratically, including all voices in the design of peace education programs since "no individual or group holds the only answer to problems"(p.9). It is therefore necessary to "understand and respect each other and negotiate on equal footing, with a view to seeking common ground" (p.9).

Two additional examples of international support for peace education are the Global Campaign for Peace Education and the Manifesto 2000. The Global Campaign for Peace Education, supported by the Hague Appeal for Peace (HAP), utilizes the UNESCO framework as well as the values put forth in the Hague Appeal for Peace agenda, encouraging the support of education programs that will work toward the creation of a culture of peace. According to the Hague Agenda for Peace & Justice for the 21st Century, "A culture of peace will be achieved when citizens of the world understand global problems, have the skills to resolve conflicts and struggle for justice non-violently, live by international standards of human rights and equity, appreciate cultural

diversity, and respect the Earth and each other. Such learning can only be achieved with systematic education for peace." (Hague Appeal for Peace, 1998, p. 1).

Manifesto 2000, written by Nobel Peace Laureates who are committed to creating a culture of peace as put forth by the United Nations International Year for the Culture of Peace 2000-2001, supports both the HAP initiative and the UNESCO framework. The Manifesto emphasizes the necessity to respect all life by rejecting violence, sharing with others, listening to understand, preserving the planet, and rediscovering solidarity. The Manifesto, along with the UNESCO framework and the Hague Appeal for Peace provides very clear guidelines for how education can decrease both the direct and structural violence prevalent in our society. These international documents not only demonstrate support for peace education, but also represent a collection of core values that transcend national boundaries. However, the fact that the United States pulled out of UNESCO and that the majority of UNESCO member states are from the third world, further supports the notion that these ideas do not necessarily come from, or are even supported by the West (Mundy, 1998).

International Applications of Education for Peace

Because of its radical nature, peace education inevitably meets with resistance. Those in power want to preserve the status quo, utilizing education as a means to this end. However, inroads are being made and examples of peace education can be seen in many diverse settings. A survey of different peace education applications show a variety of formats, objectives, settings and localized or context/condition dependent ideologies (Petroska-Beska, 2000; Bar-Tal, 2000). Examples of various peace education initiatives include Latin American efforts linked to popular education (Diaz, 1993; Cabezudo, 1993), Balkan efforts focused on conflict resolution and democracy education (Corkalo, 2000; Murdzeva-Skarik, 2000), programs in Cyprus and Northern Ireland that address intercultural understanding (Duffy, 2000; Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis, 2000), and Asian projects that deal with disarmament and anti-nuclear education (Yamane, 1996; Floresca-Cawagas & Toh, 1993). In each setting, peace education does not function as indoctrination, but rather emerges from the needs and desires of the local population.

Diaz (1993) writes about implementing peace education in the Latin American context. Specifically, he addresses adapting peace pedagogy to an area mired in structural violence. In this setting, peace education is linked to popular education and non-formal education because these venues remain outside of government control and are therefore less heavily censored. Diaz contends that, in the Latin American context, it is necessary to use a flexible pedagogy that incorporates the promotion of critical consciousness or "social literacy" (Diaz, 1993, p. 73). In Colombia, for example, peace education starts with real life experiences that are then interpreted and analyzed. This reflection on the quotidian allows for greater critical understanding and the opportunity for taking social action, as exemplified by the formation and activities of CODECAL (Corporación Integral para el Desarrollo Cultural y Social) throughout Latin America.

Additional contexts characterized by intense structural and direct violence in which peace education operates can be found on the African continent. In view of the crises that plague Africa, including lack of food, shelter, medicine, and the presence of violence and corruption, Ihejirika (1996) states that "peace education should be seen as a basic

necessity" (p. 226). The author contends that specific goals such as resolving conflict and raising consciousness should be targeted at children, families, schooling and the community, and be relevant to the local situation. Two youth based programs in Sierra Leone and Nigeria exemplify many of these characteristics. Concerned Youth for Peace in Sierra Leone was formed in 1996 by "young men and women who believe in the promotion of international co-operation and peaceful solution of conflicts". The youth group strives to unite organizations and individuals committed to the peace process through educational programming, materials, and a sharing of ideas and resources. A similar non-formal youth program in Nigeria utilizes the arts to promote peaceful interaction and personal understanding (Ekwueme, 2001). Another example, based in South Africa, is the "Center for Conflict Resolution", a program that through its Youth Project works for a "just and sustainable peace in South Africa" (Dovey, 2000, p. 95). The project started with young people and has moved throughout the community to incorporate educators and community members. This expansion led to the "Peace Education Partnership Program", a service "that was more programmatic, long-term and implementation-focused" (p. 98). This brought peace education into schools ultimately becoming formalized as the Schools Program, the focus of which is on creative and constructive approaches to conflict and mediation. These programs continue to grow and center on adapting materials to better address all South Africans.

Additional examples of peace education adapted to fit local needs in high-conflict areas can be seen in Northern Ireland, Cyprus and Israel-Palestine. In Northern Ireland, ad hoc peace education initiatives have been created for many years mainly through individual schools and churches. More recently, large-scale efforts have emerged through schools, youth and community agencies, higher education and adult education (Duffy, 2000, p. 4), which focus on integration between Catholics and Protestants. Duffy states that these programs have demonstrated a mixture of success and failure, but important groundwork for intercultural understanding has been laid.

Intercultural understanding has been a key element in Cyprus. Hadjipavlou-Trigeorgis's (2000) critique of the Cypriot education system, which socializes both Turkish and Greek students to remain in a state of conflict, has led to a dialogue between Turkish and Greek educators and community members to change the education system. The peace education paradigm they have put forth is characterized by inclusion, flexibility, openness, mutual humanization and mutual awareness (p. 9). Educators involved in this discussion have become trainers in peace building of both fellow educators and students.

Although settings where direct violence and conflict are omnipresent seem ideally suited for applying education for negative peace, implementation and finding common ground is often difficult. Nowhere is this more evident than in the Middle East. In fact, the common ground in the region, particularly in the conflict between Israel and Palestine, is often violence itself. Given this situation, peace education in the Middle East must foster the process of reconciliation, requiring formation of peaceful relations between former adversaries based on mutual trust, acceptance, cooperation and consideration of mutual needs (Bar-Tal, 2000). "Coexistence Education" (CE) is a model reconciliation program. This program for Jews and Arabs in Israel and the Palestinian Authority helps students construct a worldview that reflects the reality of the peace

process, helps to advance it, and prepares them to live in the peace era. (Hertz-Lazarowitz, 2000). It is also a model peace education program because it is both created locally and adapted to the specific context. Osseiran (1996) contends that adaptation is the only thing that can make peace education possible in the Middle East, stating that "it is crucial to relate economic and strategic interests to local realities, and to question why these particular countries...are going through these wars...knowing the 'other' and relating the dangers that threaten his or her existence to one's own, will permit humankind to coexist in peace"(p. 247-8).

Although some of the aforementioned peace education programs have made their way into formal school settings, most are situated in the non-formal sector. More often than not, out-of-school efforts obtain more support and freedom to promote peace education values because they are not as hindered by governmental restrictions.

Additional examples of peace education based in non-formal settings, from Japan and the Philippines, provide further evidence for the greater support for and flexibility of grassroots efforts. In Japan, one example of peace education happens in "peace museums", a setting that often attracts schools but also includes the larger community. Peace museums offer a response to war museums. While both museums depict war, the peace museums add images of resistance and positive images of peace. Japan's peace museums are also noteworthy for their use of progressive, learner-centered pedagogy (Yamane, 1996 & 2000). Although peace museums are relatively few in number throughout the world, other venues for peace education are more widespread. For example, in addition to the previously mentioned non-formal youth organizations in Sierra Leone and Nigeria, student organizations in the Philippines, which are part of the TAGASAN network and based on the collective action of people, are vehicles for entry into participation for the creation of more just social structures (Dionisio, 1996). The Filipino youth groups are involved with advocacy work, education, and support for worker movements. The transformation of education is also a central goal of the TAGASAN group. Specifically, transforming education to be more responsive to the needs of Filipino people. A second transformation goal revolves around changing individual attitudes, especially with regards to a commitment to social justice.

Conclusions

The examples I have described of localized peace education programs refute the idea that peace education is another Western implemented "quick fix". The notion that peace education is another form of Western hegemony presupposes a certain degree of acceptance within the dominant ideology of the West. However, peace education is hardly mainstream or universally accepted. Although examples of peace education exist in Europe and the United States, there is a great deal of resistance to peace pedagogy that questions dominant structures and institutionalized oppression. Therefore, peace education in the United States, as in other countries, receives more support (or rather, less resistance) when offered through the non-formal education sector. Evidence for dominant resistance to peace education lies in the fact that very few formal school settings support education for peace--and those that do focus mainly on conflict resolution--often ignoring the critical transformative pedagogy necessary for peace. On the other hand, non-formal education programs (examples of which flourish in inner-cities) provide young people with education that promotes social responsibility and

critical-consciousness (Ardizzone, 2001). Like the Philippine and Nigerian examples, youth-run organizations in marginalized urban sectors of the United States serve as legitimate locations for youth to foster an ethic of social responsibility and take action for social change (Ardizzone, 2001).

The outcomes of recent elections, as well as the nationalistic responses to the World Trade Center incident, clearly demonstrate that American formal education does not promote critical thinking and intercultural understanding. The inadequacy of American education derives, in part, from its failure to address the specific contexts of learners. The many examples of locally implemented peace education programs throughout the world illustrate that peace education, and education in general, can thrive in localized settings. The programs in Ireland, the Middle East and Cyprus that promote intercultural understanding, peace museums in Japan, socially-minded youth organizations in Sierra Leone, Nigeria, South Africa, the Philippines, and the United States, and popular education programs in Columbia and Latin America, provide evidence for the appropriateness of education that adheres to the guiding principles of peace education as outlined by the UNESCO framework. While these programs differ in their specificity, they are all holistic, utilize administrative modes that allow for greater autonomy, involve educational partners, and include proper resources. Ideologically, these programs are consistent in that they attempt to create an awareness of the relationships between the different levels of human existence and presence, namely the personal, the structural, the cultural, the regional, the national, and subglobal, adding a global dimension to all these levels through education (Burns, 1996, p.120). The presence of these various programs points to a national, and more importantly international imperative to promote education for peace in localized settings. In doing so, local education can serve to foster a global awareness, allowing learners to critically understand their local context within the larger global context. Peace education implemented in this fashion not only promotes positive international relations and understanding, but also elevates the goal of education to its highest level by creating a critical, informed citizenry that is prepared to work for the common good.

Notes

1. The two conceptions of peace used by peace educators, negative peace and positive peace, illuminate the broad aims of the field. Negative peace refers to the elimination of war and all other forms of direct violence (such as abuse, gun violence, fighting, etc...). The main goal of education for negative peace is the development of a citizenry that is informed to take action for the achievement of peace and disarmament. On the other hand, positive peace focuses on the elimination of all structural and cultural obstacles to peace, and thus the creation of true peace. Positive peace takes concern beyond the end of war and physical violence, addressing the need for justice, equity, democracy and an end to structural violence (oppression, exploitation, racism, poverty, etc...). Specifically, education for positive peace addresses problems of economic deprivation and development, environment and resources, and universal human rights and social justice (Reardon, 1988). Of these issues, the study of injustice is most central to peace education because, in many ways, the other issues derive from it.

2. Peace education utilizes a broad definition of violence. Violence incorporates war, physical abuse, emotional abuse, torture, homicide, oppression and exploitation. To further distinguish between types of violence, peace researcher Johann Galtung developed the concepts of direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence. Examples of direct violence are acts of war, torture, fighting, gun-violence, physical and emotional abuse. The fundamental ingredient in direct violence is an actor or actors - making direct violence a personal act. On the other hand, there is no actor or single act in structural violence. Structural violence, also known as indirect violence, exists as a continuous state of violence due to societal mechanisms such as exploitation, penetration, segmentation, fragmentation, and marginalization (Galtung, 1988). These two forms of violence, direct and indirect, are interconnected, with one often causing the other and vice versa.

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