

History of Peace Education

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INTRODUCTION

Throughout history humans have taught each other conflict resolution techniques to avoid violence. Peace education is the process of teaching people about the threats of violence and strategies for peace. Peace educators try to build consensus about what peace strategies can bring maximum benefit to a group.

Peace education activities that attempt to end violence and hostilities can be carried out informally within communities or formally within institutional places of learning, like schools or colleges. Peace education has been practiced informally by generations of humans who want to resolve conflicts in ways that do not use deadly force. Indigenous peoples have conflict resolution traditions that have been passed down through millennia that help promote peace within their communities. Rather than killing each other over their disputes, they employ nonviolent dispute mechanisms that they hand down from generation to generation through informal peace education activities. Anthropologists have located on this planet at least 47 relatively peaceful societies (Banta, 1993). Although there are no written records, human beings throughout history have employed community-based peace education strategies to preserve their knowledge of conflict resolution tactics that promote their security. More formal peace education relies upon the written word or instruction through schooling institutions.

RELIGIOUS TEACHINGS THAT PROMOTE PEACE

Perhaps the earliest written records of guidelines that teach others about how to achieve peace comes through the world's great religions. These religions – following the teaching of such prophets as Buddha, Baha'u'llah, Jesus Christ, Mohammed, Moses, and Lao Tse – have specific scriptures that advance peace. Organized religions promote their own visions of peace but ironically religions also have become a rallying cry for martyrs intent on destroying “others” who are seen as heathen because they belong to different religions. That the great religions contribute both to war and peace might be seen as indicative of certain ironic and contradictory aspects of human nature that contribute to the great peace dilemma: Why can't human beings who know about peace figure out how to live in peace?

COMMUNITY-BASED PEACE EDUCATION

One of the first Europeans who used the written word to espouse peace education was Comenius (1642/1969), the Czech educator who in the seventeenth century saw that universally shared knowledge could provide a road to peace. This approach to peace assumes that an understanding of others and shared values will overcome differences that lead to conflict. The ultimate goal of education was a world in which men and women would live in harmony with acceptance of diverse cultures.

The growth of peace education parallels the growth of peace movements. The modern peace movement against war began in the nineteenth century after the Napoleonic wars when progressive intellectuals and politicians formed serious societies to study the threats of war and propagate arguments against the build up of armaments. Indigenous peace organizations sprung up in Great Britain, Belgium and France. The second wave of nineteenth century peace movements was closely associated with workingmen's associations and socialist political

groupings. The last segment of the nineteenth century peace movement preceded the First World War. Peace organizations were formed in nearly all European nations during these decades spreading into the United States and the newly formed states of Italy and Germany. As the nineteenth century drew to a close, groups of teachers, students, and university professors formed peace societies to educate the general public about the dangers of war.

At the beginning of the twentieth century Europeans and Americans formed peace movements to lobby their governments against the saber rattling that eventually led to World War I. Bertha von Suttner, an Austrian who helped convince Alfred Nobel to establish a peace prize, wrote novels against war and organized international peace congresses (Hamann, 1996). These congresses represented the notion that international conflicts should be resolved by mediation and not weapons. The purpose of such congresses was to sway public opinion against military build ups that presaged the First World War. Public demonstrations were also aimed at ruling elites to get them to adopt more pacifist policies.

In 1912 a School Peace League had chapters in nearly every state in the United States that were "promoting through the schools ...the interests of international justice and fraternity" (Scanlon, 1959: 214). They had ambitious plans to acquaint over 500,000 teachers with the conditions for peace (Stomfay-Stitz, 1993). In the interbellum period between the First and Second World Wars, social studies teachers started teaching international relations so that their students wouldn't want to wage war against foreigners. Convinced that schools had encouraged and enabled war by indoctrinating youth into nationalism, peace educators contributed to a progressive education reform where schools were seen as a means to promote social progress by providing students with an awareness of common humanity that helped break down national barriers that lead to war.

Many of the leading peace educators early in the twentieth century were women. Jane Addams, an American woman who won the Nobel Peace Prize in 1931, was urging schools to include immigrant groups (1907). The slogan "peace and bread" was central to her work and articulated a vision that poverty was a cause of war. She felt that educators needed to connect to the struggles of urban America to create a true democratic community. She rejected the traditional curriculum that limited women's educational choices and opportunities. She wanted women to work for reforms that ended child labor and was active in international campaigns for the League of Nations established after the First World War to establish a global forum whereby the nations of the world could outlaw war.

At about this same time an Italian woman, Maria Montessori, was traveling through Europe urging teachers to abandon authoritarian pedagogies, replacing them with a rigid but dynamic curriculum from which pupils could choose what to study. She reasoned that children who did not automatically follow authoritarian teachers would not necessarily obey rulers urging them to war. She saw that the construction of peace depends upon an education that would free the child's spirit, promote love of others, and remove blind obedience to authority. Dr. Montessori emphasized that a teacher's method or pedagogy could contribute towards building a peaceful world. The whole school should reflect the nurturing characteristics of a healthy family (Montessori, 1946/1974).

The horrors of World War II created a new interest in 'Education for World Citizenship.' Right after that war Herbert Read (1949) argued for the marriage of art and peace education to produce images that would motivate people to promote peace. Somewhat like his contemporary, Maria Montessori, he argued that humans could use their creative capacities to escape the pitfalls of destructive violence.

FORMAL SCHOOL-BASED PEACE EDUCATION PROGRAMS

The first academic peace studies program at the college level was established in 1948 at Manchester College, in North Manchester, Indiana, in the United States. Soon thereafter the field of peace research developed as a "science of peace" in the 1950s to counteract the science of war that had produced so much mass killing. A Manifesto issued in 1955 by Bertrand Russell and Albert Einstein and signed by other distinguished academics called upon scientists of all political persuasions to assemble to discuss the threat posed to civilization by the advent of thermonuclear weapons.

In the 1980s the threat of nuclear war stimulated educators all around the world to warn of impending devastation. Three books were produced that represent the highlights of an era acutely concerned with the threat of nuclear annihilation: *Education for Peace* Birgit Brocke-Utne (1985) of Norway, *Comprehensive Peace Education* by Betty Reardon (1988) of the United States, and *Peace Education* by Ian Harris (1988), also of the United States. Brocke-Utne (1985) pointed out the devastation that masculine aggression, manifested in militarism, war, and domestic violence, wreaks upon males, females and children. She argued that feminism is the starting point for effective disarmament. Additionally, she pointed out that societies not at war were not necessarily peaceful because they still harbored considerable domestic violence. Reardon (1988) argued that the core values of schooling should be care, concern, and commitment, and the key concepts of peace education should be planetary stewardship, global citizenship, and humane relationships. Harris (1988) stressed a holistic approach to peace education that could apply to community education, elementary and secondary schools, as well as college classrooms. He also emphasized that a peaceful pedagogy must be integral to any attempt to teach about peace. The key ingredients of such pedagogy are cooperative learning, democratic community, moral sensitivity, and critical thinking.

This expansion of peace education towards the end of the twentieth century points to an important symbiotic relationship between peace movements, peace research, and peace education. The activists lead, developing strategies to warn people about the dangers of violence, whether it be wars between nations, environmental destruction, the threat of nuclear holocaust, colonial aggression, cultural, domestic, or structural violence. Academics studying these developments further the field of peace research. The activists, hoping to broaden their message, teach others through informal community-based peace education activities, such as holding forums, publishing newsletters, and sponsoring peace demonstrations. Teachers observing these activities promote peace studies courses and programs in schools and colleges to provide awareness of the challenges of ecological sustainability, war, and peace.

PEACE EDUCATION IN DIFFERENT CONTEXTS

A rich diversity of peace education is promoted by the myriad of contexts in which it is practiced. Because individuals disagree about how to achieve security, there are many different paths to peace that are explained in peace education classes. An Israeli educator has stated that peace education programs take different forms because of the wide variety of conflicts that plague human existence:

Even though their objectives may be similar, each society will set up a different form of peace education that is dependent upon the issues at large, conditions, and culture, as well as views and creativity of the educators (Bar-Tal, 2002, p. 35).

Each different form of violence requires a unique form of peace education to address strategies that could resolve its conflicts. Peace education in intense conflicts attempts to demystify enemy images and urges combatants to withdraw from warlike behavior. Peace education in regions of interethnic tension relies upon multiculturalism and awareness about the sufferings of various groups involved in the conflict to promote empathy for the suffering of others and to reduce hostilities. Peace educators in areas free from collective physical violence teach about the causes

of domestic and civil violence and try to develop an interest in global issues, the problems of poverty, environmental sustainability, and the power of nonviolence. Peace educators concerned about the problems of underdevelopment, starvation, poverty, illiteracy, and the lack of human rights seek an understanding of the crises that exist in poorer countries and solutions for the problems of underdevelopment. Peace educators use development studies to provide insights into the various aspects of structural violence, focusing on social institutions with their hierarchies and propensities for dominance and oppression. Such study highlights the problems of structural violence and emphasizes peacebuilding strategies to improve human communities.

Peace educators in many countries continue to focus on human rights. Interest in human rights comes from attempts during the twentieth century to establish international organizations like the International Criminal Court that address civil, domestic, cultural, and ethnic forms of violence, to bring to justice tyrants who have aggressed against innocent people. Peace educators falling within this tradition are guided by the December 1948 Universal Declaration of Human Rights that provides a statement of values to be pursued in order to achieve economic, social, and political justice.

Various statements of human rights derive from concepts of natural law, a higher set of laws that are universally applicable and supersede governmental laws. The study of human rights is the study of treaties, global institutions, and domestic and international courts. This approach to peace, known as 'peace through justice,' rests on the notion that humans have certain inalienable rights that governments should protect. People being persecuted by their governments for political beliefs can appeal to provisions of international law to gain support for their cause. Abuse of rights and the struggle to eliminate that abuse lie at the heart of many violent conflicts. Human rights institutions champion rights against discrimination based upon gender, disability, and sexual orientation.

At the beginning of the 1980s the globalists lost some of their hold on the domain of peace education and the humanists took over. Peace educators became more concerned about civil, domestic, cultural, and ethnic forms of violence, trying to heal some of the wounds of pupils who have been raised in violent cultures. They began to teach conflict resolution in schools.

At the beginning of the new millennium conflict resolution education is one of the fastest growing school reforms in the West. Conflict resolution educators provide basic communications skills necessary for survival in a postmodern world. Here the focus is upon interpersonal relations and systems that help disputing parties resolve their differences with communication skills. Approximately ten percent of schools in the United States have some sort of peer mediation program (Sandy, 2001). Conflict resolution educators teach human relations skills such as anger management, impulse control, emotional awareness, empathy development, assertiveness, and problem solving. Conflict resolution education provides students with peacemaking skills that they can use to manage their interpersonal conflicts but does not necessarily address the various kinds of civil, cultural, environmental, and global violence that take place outside schools.

At the end of the twentieth century a variation of this approach to peace education that is practiced in the United States and New Zealand is violence prevention education that attempts to develop resilience skills in young people so that they avoid drugs, sex, and violence in interpersonal relations.

One of the goals often formulated for peace education in intractable conflicts like that between Israel and Palestine in the Middle East is to study the conflict from the perceptions of the "enemy" and thereby develop some empathy for them (Salomon, 2002). Because different groups see conflicts from different perspectives, this approach to peace education attempts to legitimize the point of view of the 'other.' This does not require agreeing with the other side but

rather seeing its perspective as valid, which might lead to a decrease in tension between two conflicting parties. This approach to peace education attempts to build peace by opening people's hearts.

Another peace education thread that developed at the end of the twentieth century is environmental education. Environmentalists see that the greatest threat to modern life is the destruction of our natural habitat, so that in the immortal words T.S. Eliot, "This is the way the world ends, not with a bang but a whimper" (Eliot, 1936: 107). Up to that point, many peace educators throughout the world had focused on the threat of a cataclysmic nuclear exchange between the United States and the former Soviet Union (which collapsed in 1989). Nowadays, environmental educators help young people become aware of the ecological crisis, give them the tools to create environmental sustainability, and teach them to use resources in a renewable way. They argue that the deepest foundations for peaceful existence are rooted in environmental health.

Historically, peace educators concerned about the dangers of war have ignored the environmental crisis. With the rise of global warming, rapid species extinction, water shortages, and the adverse effects of pollution, they are starting to realize that it is not sufficient just to talk about military security, as in protecting the citizens of a country from a foreign threat, but it is also necessary to promote a concept of peace based upon ecological security, where humans are protected and nourished by natural processes (Mische, 1989).

Common to these peace educational endeavors is the desire to help people understand the roots of violence and to teach alternatives to violence. Although these types of peace education have different goals and problems of violence they address, they share a concern about the devastation caused by violence and awareness about strategies to address that violence. Peace educators within these different contexts are teaching skills that can lead to successful management of conflict and attempting to build consensus about ways to stop the violence.

CONCLUSION

In spite of its tremendous growth in the twentieth century, peace education has not really taken hold in school systems around the world. A few countries have used United Nations mandates to stimulate formal school-based peace education activities. Most countries have ignored them. Some countries like the Philippines and Uganda have mandated peace education in the public schools but lack resources for training teachers in the various complexities of this new subject. In most countries, peace education is carried out informally in community settings and through national peace organizations, such as the large rallies held by Peace Now in Israel that attempt to garner citizen support for a less violent solution to the Palestinian-Israeli crisis than that being employed by the Israeli government. Local groups throughout the world, horrified by violence in their communities, attempt to convince their fellow citizens to oppose the violent policies of militaristic governments. This is by far the most widespread use of peace education at the beginning of the new millennium.

Formal school systems have largely ignored the educational insights provided by peace activist educators, mostly because of cultural and economic pressures to ramp up their curricula to include more math and science so that school graduates can compete in a high tech global economy. Peace education in most countries is seen as "soft" and not embraced by frightened citizens who fear imaginary or real enemies.

The threat of terrorism that grew from the end of the twenty century has made it hard for peace educators to convince school authorities to support efforts that contradict government peace through strength policies promoted to provide security for the citizens of that country. Furthermore, it is only recently that peace educators are starting to unify around a common

curriculum for peace education that would include its historic roots in international education as well as modern conventions for human rights, the feminist orientation on violence in interpersonal relations, a concern for the problems of structural violence, an emphasis upon building a culture of peace, and an urgency to address environmental issues—insights that were provided during the previous “bloodiest century” (Harris and Morrison, 2003). Peace educators no longer solely concern themselves with interstate rivalry but also study ways to resolve intra-state violence and the chaos that comes from identity and religious based conflicts. They have added to their tool boxes conflict resolution, forgiveness, and violence prevention skills—practical teachings that counterbalance the geopolitical approaches taken by political scientists concerned with wars between nations. The foundation for a new discipline has been built, leaving future peace educators to figure out how to erect a mighty peace palace.

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