

Access to Peace Education

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INTRODUCTION

Perhaps peace education thinkers think peace can be taught like war is taught, but the reality is that neither war nor peace can be taught since they are learning concepts. Violence and war are products of the mis-education of a privileged minority and the non-education of a poor majority in many parts of the world.

Currently, peace education is rarely practiced in the educational institutions of undemocratic nation-states, and even where there are democracies, its implementation is limited (Galtung, 1974; Bjerstedt, 1992). It is a positive sign that peace education thinkers may correct, amend or set right the true nature of peace education as a concept and adopt the right methodology of learning for peace education rather than focusing excessively on pedagogy. The key issue this article addresses is the issue of access to peace education and the increasing ability to reflect the goals and values of peace education.

PEACE EDUCATION COURSES ARE OFTEN OUT OF REACH

At the university level, peace education courses worldwide are being run with very high fees. Hence, the majority lack access to these courses. For example, the University for Peace in San Jose, Costa Rica (2004) charges US \$18,000 for tuition fees towards a Masters Degree Programme in Peace Education, and Columbia Teachers College, New York, USA charged \$975 per credit for the 2006-07 academic session. Other peace education institutions also charge high fees for the peace education courses. Peace education, despite lacking a concrete field for employment after graduation like management, engineering, biotechnology and information technology, has become a commercial endeavor for educational institutions. Thus, though it benefits a few privileged well-to-do individuals, peace education has also become a source of economic exploitation.

There is one exception to this trend of charging high fees for peace education courses at the university level. The name of this institution is The Graduate Institute of Peace Studies, Kyung Hee University, Republic of Korea. This institution was founded by Professor Young Seek Choue, Ph.D., Chancellor of the University, and access to the program is free.

ALIGNING ACCESS WITH THE GOALS OF PEACE EDUCATION

Scholars in peace education accept the concepts, meanings and ideas of great educationists of the past like Comenius, Rousseau, Pestalozzi, Froebel, Dewey, Montessori and other thinkers whom they consider initiators of peace education. Aspeslagh (1999) has provided a long list of these initiators of peace education, designating them as classical educators and the educators of new educational movements. If peace education, founded on the principles of those scholars mentioned above, is available to everyone, the discipline will be a very powerful and effective means for sustainable peace for all people everywhere.

Peace education must be considered a public good. And being a public good, it should not be highly priced. It should be free of cost to all because it is essential. Free access to peace education will make all people benefit without any discrimination and as such, will benefit the society at all levels. Hence, 'expenditure' on peace education is not actually expenditure, but it is an 'investment' in human resource development. And in the long run, not only the particular society, but all the societies of the world will receive heavy returns for centuries. The cost of ignorance about peace education can be very high for every society. Hence peace education is essential for non-exploitative, non-violent and peaceful societies, and it should be free to all. Also, peace education will reduce the cost of managing other problematic and costly affairs like defense, the judicial system, intelligence

departments, jails, other retributive measures, mental hospitals, orphanages and other such institutions.

The world has enough resources to meet the needs of 15 billion people while the world's population is about 6 billion. These resources must be distributed and used properly in the planning and execution of true peace education courses to all peoples of all nations. The World Bank, wealthy nations, wealthy individuals, private educational charitable trusts and distance peace education courses may share the burden of governments' inability in financing peace education in order to make it free to all.

CONCLUSION

True peace education makes humans whole and is a life-long endeavor. It is the core aspect of all types of education. Peace education includes all the elements that constitute human life. Thus peace cannot be taught, but is learnt by both teachers and students through dialogue, discussion and practice.

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