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PEACE EDUCATION: NURTURING HOPE FOR A PEACEFUL FUTURE DESPITE THE CONFLICTING NATURE OF SOCIETY

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Abstract

Educating for peace is crucial due to the normalization of violence and its influence on our general well-being. It is therefore important for the students to learn about how a healthy life, for everyone, can be sustained without violence as a response to conflict. In peace education through the lessons about the sources of and responses to conflict, students analyze current problems and how they can be avoided, as well as responsibly managed. They need a vision of a peaceful future as a foundation for peacemaking and skills for constructing it. Peace Educators throughout the world, through various Peace Education Programs are working towards achieving such goals and thus developing a sustainable culture of peace.

Keywords: Conflict, Peace, Peace Education, Peace Education Program, Peace Educators, Culture of Peace.

Introduction:

To be hopeful in bad times is not just foolishly romantic. It is based on the fact that human history is a history not only of cruelty, but also of compassion, sacrifice, courage, kindness. What we choose to emphasize in this complex history will determine our lives.... The future is an infinite

succession of presents, and to live now as we think human beings should live, in defiance of all that is bad around us, is itself a marvellous victory.

— Howard Zinn, 1922-2010 (2007, p. 170)

'Conflict' in all its forms like- disputes, distrust, incompatible interests, not necessarily leading to violence, is inevitable in life. But despite what we see or read in news and history books, it is often addressed peacefully: "Actually, peace is not news because most people live in peace with their neighbours most of the time, and most countries live in peace with neighbouring countries most of the time" (Alger, 1995, p. 128). How people handle and experience conflict depends on their location in the changing social, political and cultural contexts that shape their learning and their options for responding.

Education alone may not resolve (and may legitimize) systemic issues that exacerbate destructive conflict—viz: resource scarcity, concentration of power, social exclusion, or narratives of enmity and aggressive nationalism. 'Socio-structurally', it may reinforce destructive conflict—for instance by being unequally distributed, or through language or (de)segregation practices that disadvantage or limit the autonomy of certain groups (Davies, 2005). 'Culturally', it may legitimize beliefs and narratives of national, ethnic or gender-based chauvinism and social inequity, or normalize (some or all kinds of) violence and militarism.

However, it is also true that 'Education' may build capacity and social relationships for democratic, inclusive and just conflict management, by influencing both the individual and the collective understandings, competencies, opportunities, values, norms, agency, and status equity. Education for constructive, democratic non-violent conflict and peace building is not just a matter of adding new learning activities; it means transforming school structures, policies, curriculum, and pedagogical practices.

'Education for peace' therefore may have remarkably different goals, especially comparing higher- and lower-conflict contexts (Salomon, 2002; 2011). The *absence* of direct physical violence at a certain place and time, without resolution or transformation of the factors causing the problem, is called

"negative peace" (Galtung, 1969). In contrast, "positive peace" refers to the on-going *presence* of just, democratic mechanisms and social support for sustainable, on-going redress of structural and cultural violence as well as individual disputes. There are three basic approaches to achieving (different kinds of) peace (Galtung, 1976):

a) Peace-keeping: refers to the security measures that are designed to impede direct physical violence (to achieve 'negative peace') through control.

b) Peace-making: refers to negotiation, mediation, and other dialogue to understand conflicts and identify mutually-acceptable resolutions. It takes place after conflict emerges, but also addresses its causes and solutions, not just its aggressive symptoms.

c) Peace-building: refers to the complex long-term transformation of cultural and social systems, to develop sustainable 'positive peace' by redressing the beliefs and practices that cause exploitation, marginalization, and dehumanization.

'Peace Education' refers to the 'Peace- Building' approach to achieve peace; as there still remains around the world a remarkable faith in education's capacity to help communities to reconstruct, re-humanize, and develop, even after devastating violence (Gill & Niens, 2014b). Often among the first emergency assistance for refugees and war-affected children is to establish schooling, even where there is no functioning nation-state (Tomlinson & Benefield, 2005; Waters & LeBlanc, 2005). Education provision is a key, often gender-responsive, initiative intended to facilitate psycho-social wellness, to mitigate the impact as well as the likelihood of further violence (Kirk, 2011; Skovdal & Campbell, 2015).

"Education on its own will not create world peace. Nor will a school be able to heal and control children living in violent or drug-related communities...[but] I do think schools can interrupt the processes towards more violence." —Lynn Davies (2004, p. 223)

The burgeoning movement for Peace and restorative justice practices aim to transform lived citizenship education in schools, and usually includes some explicit teaching of interpersonal conflict communication. Restorative peacemaking initiatives replace punitive, inequitable anti-violence systems with a range of activities designed to nurture caring and inclusive relationships, learning from conflicts, and joint problem-solving (Morrison & Vaandering, 2012; Schimmel, 2012).

Peace Education: A Perspective

Peace Education is part of the larger field of 'Peace and Conflict Studies', which may be subdivided into 'peace research,' 'peace activism,' and 'peace education.' Peace Education as a philosophy and practice is found in the work of several educators, including John Dewey and Paulo Freire. In addition, critical humanist authors, such as Tolstoy and Thoreau, and peace activists, such as Gandhi and King also influenced peace education through their practices of social critique, civil disobedience and active non-violence. Peace education philosophy is also found in the work of heads of States (e.g. Oscar Arias, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan), authors (e.g. Tolstoy, Thoreau, Emerson), social thinkers (e.g. Mead, Fanon, Foucault), and social learning theorists (e.g. Bandura and Walters).

Peace education as a practice in schools is attributed to Maria Montessori, John Dewey and Paulo Freire, among other scholars, though earlier thought on education for peace can be traced back to Comenius, Erasmus and Socrates. All three educators, Montessori, Dewey and Freire sought to create education that was learner-centred, autonomous and participatory. Translating Montessori, Dewey and Freire's theoretical and conceptual models of critical education into practice, peace education is a problem-posing education that attempts to build in every person the values and behaviours on which a culture of peace is predicated, including the development of non-violent conflict resolution skills and a commitment to working together to realize a shared and preferred future.

Peace education includes the cultivation of peace building skills, such as dialogue, negotiation, mediation, alternative dispute resolution, artistic conflict

resolution, and active listening. Peace educators also teach the values of respect, understanding, and non-violence, present skills for analyzing international conflict, educate for alternative security systems, and use a pedagogy that is democratic and participatory.

Thus, peace education as a practice and philosophy refers to matching complementary elements between education and society, where the social purposes, 'why we teach', match the content, 'what we teach', and pedagogy, 'how we teach', of the educative process. Each of these components must be mutually conducive toward fostering peace cultures. Accordingly, peace education is an emancipator dialogical experience conducted through participatory learning, where learners cooperatively grapple with contemporary issues relevant to their local and global contexts.

Peace Education throughout the world, seeks to further the auspices of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights *Article 26b*, which reads: "Education shall be directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups, and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace."

In India, where peace education has existed for the longest of times in the teachings of our great philosophers, it has developed in various forms and can be said to be growing exponentially, with Departments of Peace already established at the university level. The Indian Government introduced peace as a core subject into the National Curriculum Framework (NCERT, 2005), thereby requiring teachers to be trained in peace education, and is successfully working towards developing and running conflict resolution programs in schools and colleges around the subcontinent.

The peace-training of teacher-trainers has a multiplying effect on educators, their students, and the communities in which those students reside. Training teacher-educators for the purpose of peace building, could potentially influence myriad individuals and organizations across nations, as those teacher-educators

train teacher-trainers, and teacher-trainers then train teachers. The impact is multi-dimensional and multi-levelled and eventually reaches students who then might develop knowledge, values, attitudes, and behaviours consistent with the development of cultures of peace. In fact, Nevo and Brem (2002), Harris (2003, 2008), and Danesh (2008) all argue that greater program evaluation is needed to ensure that peace education programs are effectively achieving their goals.

The Peace Education Pedagogy:

Peace education is a values-oriented field that aims to cultivate in learners the knowledge, attitudes, skills, and behaviors upon which a culture of peace is predicated (UNESCO, 1995). Reardon (1999) states: "The development of learning that will enable humankind to renounce the institution of war and replace it...with the norms of a peaceful society [as articulated in] the Universal Declaration of Human Rights remains a core of the peace education task" (pp. 31-32).

Reardon and Cabezudo (2002) argue that democratic practices in the classroom may lead to greater exercise of democratic decision-making in society. They declare: Education for global citizenship in a culture of peace requires pedagogy of democratic engagement. Active and participatory engagement of students in the learning process initiated by peace curricula is the most relevant and effective pedagogy to prepare students for active participation in the global change process now being carried forth by global civil society (p. 70).

An effective pedagogical approach to peace education is required that integrates knowledge and understanding with the development of values and attitudes underpinning a culture of peace; and promotes critical empowerment for personal and institutional transformation in all areas of life. The mandate should be to:

- *Strengthen* national and regional capacities in planning and implementing a broad range of practices in peace education toward a culture of peace.

- *Encourage and facilitate* collaborative links between various peace building initiatives and other regional, international and global efforts in education.
- *Implement* research and development with regard to the philosophy, teaching methods and curricula for peace education.
- *Organize* training workshops and seminars.
- *Produce* and disseminate teaching materials and other publications.
- *Create* opportunities for indigenous voices and vulnerable groups all over the region to participate in peace education, including the sharing of success stories.
- *Promote* peace education as one constructive strategy towards democratic and sustainable transformation.

Peace Education Programs:

Peace education is an emerging academic discipline and professional practice for the development of formal and non-formal learning programs towards the creation of peace around the world. There is a multitude of peace education programs, with different approaches, principles, and goals. Some of the programs seek the immediate cessation of physical violence in schools and communities (Johnson and Johnson, 1996). Others emphasize values and behaviors, such as non-violence, cooperation, social justice, and sustainability (Harris, 1988; Reardon, 1988). Some desire social reformation, others social transformation (O'Sullivan, 1999; Hicks, 1994). And still others aim toward international understanding (Boulding, 1988).

Some programs work with elementary schools, others with high schools (Reardon and Cabezudo, 2002; Danesh, 2008). Some are integrated into undergraduate curricula, others in teacher-training institutes (Jenkins, 2004; Toh, 2004). Some train professionals and others work with community associations (Jenkins, 2007). Some work with governments, others with non-governmental organizations and civil society initiatives (Hague Appeal for Peace, 1999). The approaches vary.

These educational programs provide the competencies necessary to reduce the development of aggression caused by exposure to violence and to create peaceful relationships among children. In this way, children who could have grown up to participate in violence might contribute to the construction of a more peaceful society (Chaux, 2009, p. 90).

Objectives of a Peace Education Program:

Education is a political act, directed towards certain specific social purposes. There are several objectives to this end:

1. To facilitate learning from various texts and contexts, diverse perspectives on global issues, social movements, democracy and peace.
2. To foster learning communities through dialogical processes that are committed to the study of social justice and peace-building, a process that acknowledges and embraces indigenous and marginalized worldviews and communities.
3. To learn through reflection on personal experiences and social conditions, a critical praxis of popular knowledge, systematic research, and futures envisioning.
4. To facilitate learning toward social and political action possibilities, a social justice agenda for transformative economics, politics, social relations, and sustainability.
5. To engage with democracy through doing and to employ nonviolent social action as a method of public pedagogy.

Role of Peace Educators in Peace Building:

It is not our differences that divide us.

It is our inability to recognize, accept and celebrate those differences.

— Audre Lorde

The main role of a Peace Educator is to develop and enhance such abilities in the learners. At present there are peace educators working in every region of

the globe. A cursory reading though seminal works in the field, such as Ian Harris's *Peace Education* (1988), Betty Reardon's *Comprehensive Peace Education* (1988), or Burns and Aspelagh's *Peace Education Around the World* (1996), and through newsletters and periodicals published by the Global Campaign for Peace Education, and various other eminent journals, illustrate the tremendous reach of educators working for peace.

The peace educators attempt to link local and global perspectives for social transformation through learning, teaching, teacher training, and policy-making. Peace educators teach about contemporary social, political, economic, ecological, and ethical problems, exploring the root causes of each *problem* and creating nonviolent social strategies to manage the multiple manifestations of violence.

These educators contend that schooling typically emphasizes the mind, intellect and knowledge over compassion and empathy, thereby exacerbating an existing dichotomy between mind-body, subject-object, rationality emotionality and science-art. This environment of learning fosters, among other things, a gendered space in which the supposed masculine, i.e., intellect, is given privilege over the perceived feminine, i.e., affection.

Furthermore, peace educators and learners explore together the possible alternatives to conflict that could transform current realities of trauma, hunger, homelessness and other forms of violence into better futures where resources are shared and conflict is managed non-violently through multicultural and multilateral partnerships (Boulding, 1988; Hicks, 1988). By fostering the skills necessary to translate an ethics of care (Noddings, 1992) into caring, cooperative, and peaceful behaviors, peace educators seek to nurture cultures of peace and non-violence that supersede animalistic rationalizing of human violence (Adams, 2000).

Developing a 'Culture of Peace':

A culture of peace has been defined by the United Nations as: "a set of values, attitudes, traditions and modes of behaviour and ways of life based on respect for life, ending of violence and promotion and practice of non-violence

through education, dialogue and cooperation...promotion of all human rights and fundamental freedoms...commitment to peaceful settlements of conflicts...efforts to meet the developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations...respect for and promotion of equal rights and opportunities for women and men. (UN, 1999)

The six main categories comprising a culture of peace include:

1) Dismantling the culture of war.
2) Environmental peace.
3) Education for justice and compassion.
4) Human rights education.
5) Cultivating intercultural solidarity.
6) Harnessing inner peace.

Reardon (2001) describes 'Education for a Culture of Peace': "Learners must be guided towards a clear comprehension of the major obstacles to a culture of peace: the normative and behavioral obstacles that lie at the heart of our discussion of capacities and skills; and the institutional and existential obstacles, the global problems that are the worldwide manifestations of the culture of war. Together these problems comprise the problematic of creating a culture of peace.... One way of looking at the main tasks of creating a culture of peace is to think of the primary goals as reducing and eliminating violence, and enhancing and universalizing human dignity and equality by increasing gender justice. (pp. 111-112)

According to the *Integrated framework on education for peace, human rights and democracy* (UNESCO 1995, section 2): "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. It is possible to identify even in different socio-cultural contexts values that are likely to be universally recognized...Education must develop the ability of non-violent conflict-resolution. It should therefore promote also the development of inner peace in the minds of students so that

they can establish more firmly the qualities of tolerance, compassion, sharing and caring".

Conclusion

To develop a sustainable culture of peace without confronting the problems underlying systemic and direct conflict and violence is not possible. To educate for sustainable peace building is to facilitate broad development of processes, relationships, skills, and understandings for handling differences and problems, rather than prescribing narrowly predefined knowledge or procedures.

'Educators for peace' have a very important role towards strengthening the hope of a peaceful society as they seek to nurture international understanding through a process of dehumanization of the 'other', across national and gendered borders, and through promoting social and ecological justice that prepares learners for planetary stewardship, global citizenship, and human understanding (Reardon, 1988). Comprehensive instruction about peace enables students to identify the roots of violence (Burns & Aspeslagh, 1996; Harris & Morrison, 2003). Such analysis is a precursor to identification of unmet needs for sustenance of life; the core of peace.

A more humane and peaceful world is possible...only if we realize and work towards the fact that: "*There is no way to peace...Peace is the way...*"

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