

EDUCATION AND NATIONAL PEACE

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Peace education is the process of acquiring the *values*, the *knowledge* and developing the *attitudes, skills, and behaviors* to live in harmony with oneself, with others, and with the natural environment.

There are numerous United Nations declarations on the importance of peace education.^[1] Ban Ki Moon, U.N. Secretary General, has dedicated the International Day of Peace 2013 to peace education in an effort to refocus minds and financing on the preeminence of peace education as the means to bring about a culture of peace.^{[2][3]} Koichiro Matsuura, the immediate past Director-General of UNESCO, has written of peace education as being of "fundamental importance to the mission of UNESCO and the United Nations".^[4] Peace education as a right is something which is now increasingly emphasized by peace researchers such as Betty Reardon^[5] and Douglas Roche^[6] There has also been a recent meshing of peace education and human rights education^[7]

Definition

Ian Harris and John Synott have described peace education as a series of "teaching encounters" that draw from people:^[8]

- their desire for peace,
- nonviolent alternatives for managing conflict, and
- skills for critical analysis of structural arrangements that produce and legitimize injustice and inequality.

James Page suggests peace education be thought of as "encouraging a commitment to peace as a settled disposition and enhancing the confidence of the individual as an individual agent of peace; as informing the student on the consequences of war and social injustice; as informing the student on the value of peaceful and just social structures and working to uphold or develop such social structures; as encouraging the student to love the world and to imagine a peaceful future; and as caring for the student and encouraging the student to care for others".^[9]

Often the theory or philosophy of peace education has been assumed and not articulated. Johan Galtung suggested in 1975 that no theory for peace education existed and that there was clearly an urgent need for such theory.^[10] More recently there have been attempts to establish such a theory. Joachim James Calleja has suggested that a philosophical basis for peace education might be located in the Kantian notion of duty.^[11] James Page has suggested that a rationale for peace education might be located in virtue ethics, consequentialist ethics, conservative political ethics, aesthetic ethics and the ethics of care.^[12]

Since the early decades of the 20th century, –peace educationl programs around the world have represented a spectrum of focal themes, including anti-nuclearism, international understanding, environmental responsibility, communication skills, nonviolence, conflict resolution techniques, democracy, human rights awareness, tolerance of diversity, coexistence and gender equality, among others.^[13] Some^[who?] have also addressed spiritual dimensions of inner harmony, or synthesized a number of the foregoing issues into programs on world citizenship. While academic discourse on the subject has increasingly recognized the need for a broader, more holistic approach to peace education, a review of field-based projects reveals that three variations of peace education are most common: conflict resolution training, democracy education, and human rights education. New approaches are emerging and calling into question some of theoretical foundations of the models just mentioned. The most significant of these new approaches focuses on peace education as a process of worldview transformation.^[citation needed]

Peace education as-

Conflict resolution training

Peace education programs centered on conflict resolution typically focus on the social-behavioural symptoms of conflict, training individuals to resolve inter-personal disputes through techniques of negotiation and (peer) mediation. Learning to manage anger, –fight fairl and improve communication through skills such as listening, turn-taking, identifying needs, and separating facts from emotions, constitute the main elements of these programs. Participants are also encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and to brainstorm together on compromises^[14]

In general, approaches of this type aim to –alter beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours...from negative to positive attitudes toward conflict as a basis for preventing violence (Van Slyck, Stern and Elbedour, 1999, emphasis added).^[15] There are various styles or approaches in conflict resolution

training (ADR, Verbal Aikido, NVC) that can give the practitioner the means to accept conflictual situation and orient it towards a peaceful resolution. As one peer coordinator put it: –Conflict is very natural and normal, but you can't go through your beating everybody up—you have to learn different ways to resolve conflict!^[16]

Democracy education

Peace education programs centered on democracy education typically focus on the processes associated with conflict, and postulate that with an increase in democratic participation the likelihood of societies resolving conflict through violence and war decreases. At the same time, –a democratic society needs the commitment of citizens who accept the inevitability of conflict as well as the necessity for tolerance^[17] (U.S. Department of State, *The Culture of Democracy*, emphasis added).^[17] Thus programs of this kind attempt to foster a conflict-positive orientation in the community by training students to view conflict as a platform for creativity and growth.^[citation needed]

Approaches of this type train participants in the skills of critical thinking, debate and coalition-building, and promote the values of freedom of speech, individuality, tolerance of diversity, compromise and conscientious objection. Their aim is to produce –responsible citizens^[18] who will hold their governments accountable to the standards of peace, primarily through adversarial processes. Activities are structured to have students –assume the role of the citizen that chooses, makes decisions, takes positions, argues positions and respects the opinions of others!^[18] skills that a multi-party democracy are based upon. Based on the assumption that democracy decreases the likelihood of violence and war, it is assumed that these are the same skills necessary for creating a culture of peace.

Human rights education

Peace education programs centered on raising awareness of human rights typically focus at the level of policies that humanity ought to adopt in order to move closer to a peaceful global community. The aim is to engender a commitment among participants to a vision of structural peace in which all individual members of the human race can exercise their personal freedoms and be legally protected from violence, oppression and indignity.^[citation needed]

Approaches of this type familiarize participants with the international covenants and declarations of the United Nations system; train students to recognize violations of the Universal Declaration

of Human Rights; and promote tolerance, solidarity, autonomy and self-affirmation at the individual and collective levels.^[19]

Human rights education –faces continual elaboration, a significant theory-practice gap and frequent challenge as to its validity.^[20] In one practitioner's view:

"Human rights education does not work in communities fraught with conflict unless it is part of a comprehensive approach... In fact, such education can be counterproductive and lead to greater conflict if people become aware of rights which are not realized. In this respect, human rights education can increase the potential for conflict"^[21]

To prevent these outcomes, many such programs are now being combined with aspects of conflict resolution and democracy education schools of thought, along with training in nonviolent action.^[22]

Worldview transformation

New approaches to peace education are starting from insights gleaned from psychology which recognize the developmental nature of human psychosocial dispositions. Essentially, while conflict-promoting attitudes and behaviours are characteristic of earlier phases of human development, unity-promoting attitudes and behaviours emerge in later phases of healthy development. H.B. Danesh (2002a, 2002b, 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008a, 2008b)^[23] proposes an "Integrative Theory of Peace" in which peace is understood as a psychosocial, political, moral and spiritual reality. Peace education, he says, must focus on the healthy development and maturation of human consciousness through assisting people to examine and transform their worldviews. Worldviews are defined as the subconscious lens (acquired through cultural, family, historical, religious and societal influences) through which people perceive four key issues: 1) the nature of reality, 2) human nature, 3) the purpose of existence, 4) the principles governing appropriate human relationships. Surveying a mass of material, Danesh argues that the majority of people and societies in the world hold conflict-based worldviews, which express themselves in conflicted intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, and international relationships. He subdivides conflict-based worldviews into two main categories which he correlates to phases of human development: the Survival-Based Worldview and the Identity-Based Worldview. It is through the acquisition of a more integrative, Unity-Based Worldview that human capacity to mitigate conflict, create unity in the context of diversity, and establish sustainable cultures of peace, is increased - be it in the home, at school, at work, or in the international community.

Criticism

Toh Swee-Hin (1997) observes that each of the various streams of peace education –inevitably have their own dynamics and ‘autonomy’ in terms of theory and practice. –Salomon (2002) has described how the challenges, goals, and methods of peace education differ substantially between areas characterized by intractable conflict, interethnic tension, or relative tranquility.^[24]

Salomon (2002) raises the problem and its consequences:

–Imagine that medical practitioners would not distinguish between invasive surgery to remove malignant tumors and surgery to correct one's vision. Imagine also that while surgeries are practiced, no research and no evaluation of their differential effectiveness accompany them. The field would be considered neither very serious nor very trustworthy. Luckily enough, such a state of affairs does not describe the field of medicine, but it comes pretty close to describing the field of peace education. First, too many profoundly different kinds of activities taking place in an exceedingly wide array of contexts are all lumped under the same category label of "peace education" as if they belong together. Second, for whatever reason, the field's scholarship in the form of theorizing, research and program evaluation badly lags behind practice... In the absence of clarity of what peace education really is, or how its different varieties relate to each other, it is unclear how experience with one variant of peace education in one region can usefully inform programs in another region.

According to Clarke-Habibi (2005), "A general or integrated theory of peace is needed: one that can holistically account for the intrapersonal, inter-personal, inter-group and international dynamics of peace, as well as its main principles and pre-requisites. An essential component of this integrated theory must also be the recognition that a culture of peace can only result from an authentic process of transformation, both individual and collective."^[25]

One major aspect under debate is the issue of conflict itself in peace education theory. Most peace education programs postulate that conflict is an inseparable, indeed beneficial, aspect of human nature and human social relations. Increasingly, this assumption is being questioned.^[citation needed]

References

1. **Jump up** Page, James S. (2008) *Peace Education: Exploring Ethical and Philosophical Foundations*. Chapter 1. Charlotte: Information Age Publishing. ISBN 978-1-59311-889-1. Chapter details; and Page, James S. (2008) 'Chapter 9: The United Nations and Peace