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A Peace Education Primer

Edward J. Brantmeier

Introduction

Increasingly, with the support of global initiatives such as UNESCO’s Culture of Peace Programme, peace education has gained both visibility and credibility in many global arenas. Practical applications of peace education are context dependent and they respond to various forms of conflict and violence that necessitate an understanding of varying socio-historical-political conditions in those unique contexts (Bekerman, Zembylas, McGlynn 2009; Harris, 1999). Some global peace educators, such as Betty Reardon (1988), argue for a more universal, comprehensive peace education approach that upholds the principles of humane relationship, planetary stewardship, and global citizenship. Perhaps a middle road approach to responding to unique forms of conflict and violence while bridging local efforts to more global initiatives and universal principles is the most sensible and harmonizing approach. Regardless, exploring various definitions, approaches, and values for doing peace in formal and informal education contexts seems an important undertaking for clarifying what peace education is and how we can “do peace” in our homes, places of work, and societies.

This article aims to answer some very basic yet important questions that are debated in the field of peace education—how are we to think about peace education? What peace values should be promoted? And finally, how can we do peace education? Organizationally, this article first fosters peace thinking—namely, definitions of peace education, related theoretical constructs, and strategies for doing peace. Secondly, it fosters development of the “soft” infrastructure necessary for education for peace, namely peace values and capacities that some argue need to be cultivated to increase peace on the planet. And thirdly, how might peace thinking and peace feeling translate into peace action? In this section, “doing peace” is explored and more generally applied to teaching peace and peace leadership in schools, in businesses, and in community contexts. Finally, an examination of the role of peace education as it relates to wider social, cultural, political, economic, and environmental change is considered.

What is Peace Education Anyway?

Education for peace is a response to the nested forms of conflict and violence founded in a variety of contexts—homes, schools, communities, societies, and nations. Considering this, it is important to understand conflict and violence in local contexts. To this end, in the past I have first and foremost engaged research participants and various university and teacher audiences in a reflection process concerning their everyday understandings of both peace and its opposite, non-peace (Brantmeier, 2007). I consciously use the word non-peace instead of the word conflict given conflict is a natural and inherent part of life that does not necessarily have to lead to violence. Typically, I begin presentations on peace education with reflections, asking participants to identify both peaceful attitudes and behaviors that they observe in everyday situations in schools, in businesses, or in community contexts. Participants are asked to find patterns in observed attitudes and behaviors and finally they are asked how they can multiply the peace and change the non-peaceful attitudes and behaviors in their everyday situations. After this reflective process that draws on participants’ background knowledge and cultural schema, definitions of peace education rooted in the scholarship of foundational peace researchers and educators are explored and also critiqued.

Peace Education Defined

Most simply, peace education can be understood as education for the elimination of direct and indirect forms of violence. (Harris and Morrison, 2002). On one level, peace education is a response to different forms of violence. Direct violence can be understood as war between nations or groups within societies, fighting between individuals or groups, or domestic violence in the home. Indirect violence, according to Galtung (1969) can be understood as structural and psychological violence. Structural violence is understood here as political, economic, environmental, and social arrangements that privilege some at the exclusion of others. Psychological violence, such as bullying, intimidation, fear of violence, and inter-group tensions, is argued to be part and parcel of structural violence. Galtung
(1969) maintains, "The violence is built into the structure and shows up as unequal power and consequently as unequal life chances... Above all, the power to decide over the distribution of resources is unevenly distributed." (p. 171) Indirect violence, involves inequality and inequity given limited resources are controlled and distributed by privileging some and excluding others access, opportunity, and choices in life. The social, political, economic, and environmental arrangements that, generally speaking, privilege the global north over the global south in terms of energy and resource consumption and life expectancy are examples that can be used to explore the causes and conditions that create and sustain structural violence.

Galtung (1990) also introduced the idea of cultural violence to the field of peace education, "Cultural violence makes direct and structural violence look, even feel, right - or at least not wrong." (p. 291). Cultural violence is exhibited when cultural formations are used to legitimate forms of violence, either direct or indirect. For example, in-group norms that legitimize, reinforce, or perpetuate violence against individuals, groups, and people within a broader society could be considered cultural violence. Cultural assimilationist practices in schools, such as a colonized curriculum that espouses the history and voice of colonizers over the colonized, could be considered a form of cultural violence. The denial of minority representation in the curriculum, in the student body, teaching staff, and leadership in diverse schooling contexts could also be considered forms of cultural violence. A multicultural peace education approach attempts to examine the cultural violence of the past and the present; it urges the creation of more just and humane relationships and social structures in schools (Brantmeier, Aragon, & Yoder 2009). However, cultural violence is a tricky bit indeed. It assumes there are universal human rights, values, and that cultural groups in power may violate these standards through oppressive policy and practice.

Some suggest focusing on eliminating or preventing violence is not enough given alternatives to replace the violence need to be envisioned; peace is vibrant and lively. On other levels, peace education can be understood as a harmonizing, integrative force used to establish both common ground and diversity affirmation. It can be and should be used to promote positive change, beyond that absence of direct and indirect violence, "Education for peace can generate new knowledge paradigms, connective relationships, institutional processes, and social structures." (Brantmeier and Lin, 2008, pxiv). In addition to being generative, the method and focus of peace education emerges as an important consideration. Harris defined peace education as:

Teaching encounters that draw out from people their desires for peace and provide them with nonviolent alternatives for managing conflicts, as well as the skills for critical analysis of the structural arrangements that legitimate and produce injustice and inequality. (Harris, 2002)

Peace education needs to take place through peaceful means. Drawing "...out from people their desires for peace" promotes the desires for peace which are necessary to cultivate the "soft" infrastructure of peacebuilding—thoughtful and emotional engagement to create sensible, peaceful futures. Examining nonviolent alternatives for managing conflicts, such as nonviolent communication, active listening, and community reconciliation processes are essential; shifting interactions from "control-based" paradigms to "needs-based" paradigms is essential to promoted peacebuilding and reconciliation in communities riddled with violence (Davies, 2009). Peace education requires practical communication skills as well as critical thinking skills to understand structures that reproduce various forms of violence. Yes, the learners and teachers of peace education need serious commitment and education to become effective in their work.

Types of Peace Education

Harris (1999) describes various types of peace education that intend to eliminate various forms of violence. These types of peace education include the following: global peace education; conflict resolution programs; violence prevention programs; development education; and nonviolence education (pp. 308-309). Exploration of the goals, strategies, and violence addressed by these types of peace education truly expresses the transdisciplinary approach necessary to eliminate violence and achieve a vibrant, sustainable peace. For example, global peace education aims to understand national systems, cultural knowledge, promote multicultural awareness, and study nationalism; it addresses war, interstate rivalry, violation of human rights, ethnic conflicts, terrorism, and tribal warfare (Harris, 1999, p. 308-309).

Conflict resolution programs address interpersonal violence and aim to provide mediation, conflict management, and communication skills, promote empathy, and to understand conflict styles. Violence prevention programs aim to counter bias, promote education about stereotypes and
environmental destruction. The goals of development studies include the costs of violence (Harris, 1999, pp 308-309). Harris continues to elaborate on types of peace education by describing development studies. Development studies addresses inequalities in health and wealth, structural violence, environmental destruction, lack of freedoms, positive peace, and environmental destruction. The goals of development studies include ecological security, equitable development models, promotion of democracy, critical thinking, as well as strategic planning (Harris, 1999, pp 308-309). Finally, Harris describes nonviolence education as having the goals of a comprehension of the power of peace, of learning about the power of nonviolence, of helping students to discover their own truth and to appreciate the truths of others. Nonviolence education counteracts despair about the possibilities of peace, popular images of violence in the media, and focuses on all forms of violence (Harris, 1999, pp. 310).

Surely not all forms of peace education are represented in this typology. However, what emerges from this exploration of various types of peace education is an understanding that there is a need for matching the goals of a particular peace education approach with the forms of violence they address, as well as with the strategies used to achieve various forms of peace. A particular type of peace education needs to be used in order to eliminate a particular form of violence found in a given context. To this end, peace education approaches need to be context responsive, fluid, and dynamic given the multiple layers of complexity and opportunity in conflicts.

Strategies for Doing Peace

Widely used in the peace studies community, the concepts of peacekeeping, peacemaking, and peacebuilding need to be understood at both the macro and micro levels. Most simply, peacekeeping can be understood as peace through strength; peacemaking can be understood as peace through dialogue; and peacebuilding can be understood as peace through creating conditions necessary for peace such as: attitudes; dispositions; nonviolent interpersonal communication (Harris, 1999; Berelowitz, 1994). Strategies for promoting peace on both the macro and micro levels can be structured in accordance with the previous three peace action-orientations. For example, peacemaking at the macro level can be understood as efforts to bring nation-states or groups within a country into dialogue toward reconciliation (Whaley and Piazza-Georgi, 1997). Peacemaking at the micro level can be understood as mediation of conflict between individuals or groups within local institutions and communities. Peer mediation or community conflict resolution programs are some examples of this strategy for doing peace.

Peacebuilding efforts at the macro level develop human and institutional capacities to create positive peace (Whaley and Piazza-Georgi, 1997)—a process and condition where social, political, and economic structures create the conditions necessary to eliminate both direct and indirect forms of violence. Peacebuilding at the micro level constructs attitudes, dispositions, behaviors, and social structures that promote cohesion and an authentic harmony within communities and social institutions. This can be achieved by study nonviolent historical mentors or by considering how science and math have contributed to a more peaceful world. Educators and/or employers can model teaching approaches and use democratic, participatory classroom management techniques that empower students and inspire in them a desire for mutually negotiated peace.

Lastly, peacekeeping involves promoting security and safety, both at the macro and micro levels. Peacekeeping at the macro level may involves United Nations efforts or international coalitions providing safety, security, and humanitarian needs within a given conflict zone; it is a form of deterrence violence. At the micro level, keeping communities and institutions secure and safe often takes the form of police patrols and community watch groups who attempt to creative violence free neighborhoods and other public spaces. Combined, the concepts of peacemaking, peacebuilding, and peacekeeping create a conceptual framework that guides peace and reconciliation efforts in global and local contexts.

Building the Soft Infrastructure for Peace

Many of you already do peace education in your places of work. If you negotiate interpersonal conflict, if you build trust among your colleagues, and if you engage in community building activities aimed at group cohesion or harmony, you already are a peace educator, though your concepts and strategies are implicit in the everyday actions that you do. Understanding what peace education is and strategies for doing peace are both important for engaging in explicit education for peace. However, peace knowledge as well as the "soft infrastructure," defined as values, beliefs, attitudes that undoubtedly relate to action orientations, are both important. Betty Reardon,
Related to peace values, Reardon (1999) elaborates on the following capacities that need to be cultivated: ecological awareness; cultural competency, conflict proficiency, and gender sensitivity (Reardon, p. 15). For example, teaching both interpersonal conflict resolution and communal conflict transformation skills to students are imperative for peacebuilding. John Davies, Co-Director of Partners in Conflict and Partners in Peacebuilding from the University of Maryland, recently cultivated the conflict proficiency capacities of students at the Malaviya Centre for Peace Research at Banaras Hindu University. John facilitated a four day workshop on “Preventing and Transforming Societal Conflict” that included specific teaching of nonviolent communication techniques, active listening techniques, and techniques for facilitating community reconciliation processes; he did this by engaging students in active role playing. Undoubtedly, student conflict proficiency increased through participation in this workshop (Davies, 2009). The workshop also positively impacted their self-conceptions as peacebuilders.

Capacities of gender sensitivity can be fostered by modeling teaching that promotes gender equity and equality. For example, I often encouraged reflection on gender dynamics in Indian society during my own teaching about peace education at the Malaviya Centre for Peace Research. Following this modeling, a few male students brought up critical questions of women’s equal participation in various realms of Indian society. The role of the girl child, bride burning as a traditional cultural practice, and property inheritance practices were discussed. Seeds of gender sensitivity were planted in a handful of male students during these conversations. Peace values and the capacities needed for peacemaking and peacebuilding are vital to understand for building cultures of peace.

Doing Peace in Schools and the Workplace

Over the last few years of talking to various university audiences about peace education, it became apparent to me that simple talking about definitions of peace education and about peace values and capacities was not concrete enough to engage people in meaningful dialogue about the everyday realities of their lives. In the spirit of problem-posing education (Freire, 1972), I developed a few scenarios to engage participants in meaningful dialogue during presentations:

1. You are a teacher, public official, or a corporate employee and you overhear that someone is carrying a knife. What do you do?

2. You are part of a team tasked with developing a program to address inter-personal and intergroup violence in your work place. What do you do?

3. You are on a school textbook committee, advertising team for a business, or public relations official for the government. You need to adopt materials that represent your country. What do you do?

These action-based scenarios serve as a bridge between real life situations and theory and concepts that are integral to a deeper understanding of the field of peace education. Other scenarios can and should be developed to best match diverse contexts and needs.

CIA for Peace

Doing peace education requires practical thinking about various aspects of formal and informal educational contexts. The following CIA (Curriculum+Instruction+Assessment = Doing Peace) framework is useful for doing peace in schools, communities, and/or businesses.

Curriculum: Peace as text

Curriculum, or peace as text, is the written text that contains socially constructed and legitimized knowledge that is meant to engage students in
knowledge acquisition and in some ideal cases, critical thinking and problem-solving about real world issues. The curriculum used and taught is of paramount importance given it helps construct and shape versions of reality and truth in the minds of the mass populace. An examination of the politics of curriculum suggest that curriculum is used an ideological tool for controlling and propagating "official knowledge," thus promoting the vested interests of certain ideological camps within a society (Apple, 2004). Apple suggests that "our education institutions do function to distribute ideological values and knowledge" and that "As a system of institutions, they also ultimately help produce the type of knowledge (as a kind of commodity) that is needed to maintain the dominant economic, political, and cultural arrangements that now exist" (xxi).

For example, the teaching of war narratives and various other forms of violence are integral to the perpetuation of political, economic, and cultural systems of oppression and domination. In Cultures of Peace: The Hidden Side of History, Elise Boulding (2000) writes of a the war-steeped history of western civilization:

History is generally thought of as a story of the rise and fall of empires, a chronicle of reigns, wars and battles, and military and political revolutions; in short, the history of power—who tames whom, who controls whom. (2000)

Boulding (2000) offers an alternative peaceful history that never quite makes mainstream history books—a history of peaceful societies existing not without strife and not in perfect harmony, but nonetheless with substantially less violence as a part of their daily lives. Telling history from the point of view of less represented groups of people who live relatively peaceful lives in comparison with the political and military hegemony revered in many history books is essential for disrupting the perpetuation of war cultures. The inclusion of more peaceful voices of the past is one very tangible way to acknowledge and to legitimize peaceful ways of living in the present and for the future.

Peace curriculum is essential for building vibrant, sustainable, and peaceful futures. When I talk about peace education to teachers and future educational leaders in the United States, I normally ask audiences the following question meant to engage them in thinking about peace curriculum, Based on information provided here, can you think of potential topics, lessons, or units that you could teach in schools, businesses, and or community contexts?

The hidden curriculum, or peace as subtext, is equally as important to consider in schooling, business, and community contexts. The hidden curriculum can be understood as the messages sent via informal rules and regulations and messages sent via the physical environment of the school, work place, community, etc… For example, if windowless, cinder block walls are the classroom or institutional norm, what message is being sent about learning and the learning environments? If violent and/or sexual images are commonplace, what messages are people imbibing from these environments? Is the hidden curriculum inviting students to seriously contemplate social problems of the past or present, or is it suggesting they should rote memorize content and assimilate knowledge without actively critiquing and transforming knowledge into meaningful action?

**Instruction: Peace as context**

When “doing peace,” peace as text needs to be understood in relationship to instructional practices, referred to hear as peace as context. The instructor, boss, teacher, community leader, in large measure, influence both the classroom/working environment and climate. Does the leader promote competition or cooperation? Does the leader establish a climate of critical thinking or subservient following within stratified power arrangements? Are democratic practices of participatory engagement modeled in the processes that take place in the workplace? On important decisions, are multiple voices included and honored in the decision making processes. How are conflicts handled and negotiated?

In forging a peace pedagogy, the relationship of teacher and student needs to be considered. Are students perceived as receptacles of knowledge and teachers the dispensers of knowledge in a banking model of education made famous by Paulo (1972) in Pedagogy of the Oppressed? In the student teacher dynamic oppressive or focused on consciousness raising, mobilization, and action toward social transformation? When doing peace, the relationship of teacher and students needs to be critically examined in efforts toward empowering all cultural actors as co-creators of knowledge and action. How does one peacefully teach? Are teaching and learning dialogue oriented? Are teaching and learning modes of colonization or decolonization?
Assessment: How to peaceably measure?

How should we peaceably measure learning and performance? In some cases, information is provided to students or employees, and of course, teachers and administrators expect a certain level of assimilation of that knowledge. The important consideration in peaceful measurement is to question if the method of assessment in line with both the content (curriculum) and information delivery system (instruction). Synchronous instruction plus curriculum plus assessment equals fair learning. Fair learning arises when what is taught is what is tested—and the method of testing mirrors the process used in the teaching and learning process.

In outcome-based educational policy climates that rely heavily on standardized tests as benchmarks of achievement like those in the United States with No Child Left Behind legislation, the teaching and learning process and the content used often mirrors the tests themselves. Thus, the purpose and focus of the schooling process remains quite narrow and directed. Knowledge acquisition for the purpose of test performance drives schooling. Often, this uni-directional process squelches creativity, innovation, the cultivation of socio-emotional intelligence and capacities for engaged citizenship. On the other hand, Jack Miller (2010) conveys that educational approaches rooted in wisdom-based learning seek to cultivate insight, humility, and love. The purpose and focus of such schooling is quite different than test performance. We need to carefully think through how we measure learning and performance given this vital part of the educational process steers what the very purpose of schooling is. Does knowledge acquisition alone promote peaceful futures or do the very purposes of schooling, and the assessment therein, require of us to examine the very purposes of education? Peaceful measuring requires care, thought, and a connectedness to the curriculum, to the instructional process, and to the people that comprise a classroom.

Peace as Policy?

Undoubtedly, public policy shapes and influences the everyday lives of cultural actors in meaningful and consequential ways. What local, state, national, or international policies might support peace? On the other hand, what policies promote conflict, war, and violence? More particular to the focus of this article, how does a national or local educational policy context enable or constraint administrators and teachers to create the conditions necessary for a vibrant peace in the workplace? The distribution of social goods through policy means emerges an arena of economic, political, environmental, and cultural contestation. What educational and cultural hegemony steers the distribution of social goods? How can we influence policy at the national and local level in order to promote peace in our schools, in our places of work, and in our communities?

Peace Education and Change

Indeed, in an Indian context Mahatma Gandhi was a “deep” peace educator given his efforts focused on transforming the structural violence of the status quo—efforts that included changing internal caste-systems as well as transforming colonial rule (swaraj as well as swadeshi economics for example) and the related colonized consciousness of the masses. Allen (2008) argues that Gandhi never discussed peace education given his beliefs that education should be synonymous with cultivating or socializing children for peace. He argues that Gandhi’s philosophy reveals that life is interrelated, interdependent, and indivisible and therefore the engaged life mirroring Gandhi’s philosophy should be peaceful (Allen, 2008). I have argued that both the philosophies of Gandhi and the deep ecologist Arne Naess provide a moral and ethical framework that promote diversity affirmation as well as establish the interdependence of all humans with ecological systems of the planet (Brantmeier, 2010 forthcoming). If peace education efforts are serious about promoting change, much can be learned from the ethical orientations found in Gandhian philosophy, from satyagraha, and other nonviolent methods for social change enacted throughout history around the world. Knowledge paradigms of nonviolence, values, and action orientations that embrace nonviolence and that promote peace need to be cultivated in children, adolescents, and adults through both formal and informal education means. The promotion of peace leadership that embraces the peace values of environmental responsibility, cultural diversity, human solidarity, social responsibility, and gender equality is a very good starting place (Reardon, 1999).

Critical Peace Education

In the book the Encyclopedia of Peace Education, Bajaj (2008) argues for the reclamation of critical peace education by encouraging scholars to interrogate asymmetrical power dynamics, by engaging in structural analysis, and by contextualizing understanding of conflict and violence,
and by promoting emancipatory change. Similarly, I have argued that social justice efforts in peace education need to focus on transforming relationships and structures that perpetuate differentials in power, access, and meaningful participation in decision making, not simply basic skills for nonviolent conflict resolution—though these peacemaking skills are vital (Brantmeier, 2007, 2008). Critical peace education in schooling contexts, informed by the work of Freire (1972) and Reardon (1988), includes various stages:

1. raising consciousness about various forms of violence (direct, indirect, structural, cultural);
2. imagining nonviolent alternatives (from social, economic, and political structures to psychological and social harmony, inner peace);
3. providing specific modes of empowerment (conflict resolution skills, nonviolent communication, active listening, critical thinking, community reconciliation facilitation, community education & development, political participation and mobilization, global perspectives and opportunities, meditative techniques for actualizing inner peace);
4. transformative action: engaged action to further social justice, competent multicultural education, explicit education for peace, reflective practice in schools, classroom environment and school culture change, engagement with political arena that shapes educational policy & practice. (Brantmeier, 2007, 2008)

Critical peace education practice and research promotes social change through vision, empowerment, and action.

As a cultural outsider when teaching peace education in an Indian context, I continually told my students at the Malaviya Centre for Peace Research that I was not in India to judge India. It is my belief that forms of violence are context dependent and individuals and groups at the grassroots and policy levels in societies and nation-states need to understand, raise consciousness about, and change the violence they find locally. We need to work on deterring, preventing, and transforming the violence in our hearts and in our local communities and societies. This local focus indeed will contribute to the lofty goal of world peace. This peace education primer provides tools for thought, tools for an attunement of the heart, and tools for changing behaviors; it is intended to promote change for the creation of a better world.

References


1. Introduction

As a Muslim majority country of the third world, Bangladesh has long received apprehensive attention from the international community. Inside the country, however, prevailed a general belief that extremist religious views would never be able to gain hold among the mass. Therefore, the first signs of extremism here were met with reluctance or outright denial. In some quarters there still is an atmosphere of blind disbelief and even attempts to justify the signals of eroding secular veneer of government bodies and social institutions as harmless changes. However, foreign governments, officials and watchdog institutions have been talking about the downward development for quite some time now.

In April 2002, an article by Bertil Lintner claimed the arrival of hundreds of Taliban and al-Qaeda fighters by ship from Karachi to the Bangladesh port city of Chittagong following the fall of Kandahar in Afghanistan in late 2001, which resulted in the banning of Far Eastern Economic Review in Bangladesh. A few months later, Time magazine’s Alex Perry wrote an article in the same vain. To claim that Bangladesh has become a ‘heaven for hundreds of jihadi’ is at best premature at that time and the then United State’s ambassador in Bangladesh rejected it by stating that embassy “follows terrorism issues closely and has no evidence to support” these reports.2

These accusations were received by Bangladeshis as nothing but attempts to defame the country’s moderate image. The utter disbelief started to give way to concern within a couple of years. When visiting Dhaka in September 2004, former US State Department Coordinator for Counterrorism Cofe Black reportedly stated that he was concerned over

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Emergence of Religious Extremism in Bangladesh: Causes and Priorities

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