

Towards Comprehensive Peace Education

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Peace Education is the process of acquiring the values, the knowledge and developing the attitudes, skills, and behaviour to live in harmony with others, and with the natural environment. Since the early decades of the 20th century, "Peace Education" programs around the world have represented a spectrum of focal themes, including anti-nuclearism, international understanding, environmental responsibility, communication skills, non-violence, conflict resolution techniques, democracy, human rights awareness, tolerance of diversity, coexistence and gender equality among others. Some 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 most common three variations of peace education are : conflict resolution training, democracy education, and human rights education.

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 fair" 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. In general, approaches of this type aim to "alter beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours-from negative to positive attitudes towards conflict as a basis for preventing violence."

Democracy Education : Peace education programs centered on democracy education typically focus on the political 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". 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" 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". 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 Right 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 violence, oppression and indignity. Approaches of this type familiarize participants with the international 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.

Besides these three approaches, 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.

Worldview Transformation: New approaches to peace education are starting form insights gleaned from psychology which recognize the developmental nature of human psychosocial

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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 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 social influences) through which people perceive four key issue-(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 relationship. 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.

Thus peace education connotes a generalized comprehensive approach to education for global responsibility in a planetary nuclear age; it operates at all levels and in all spheres of learning, include all fields of relevant knowledge, and is a life long, continuous process. Although its general purpose can be described as education for peace as a transformed global social order, the learning entailed in acquiring the skills and art of peacemaking is for more than education about peace.

With the establishment of degree programs in peace studies in many colleges and universities, the introduction of nuclear age education and peace education into literally hundreds of schools, and the appearance of numerous books and articles on peace education, the climate is opportune for peace education to emerge as an important influence towards significant change in all educational practice. The legitimation of the field, with the establishment of the U.S. Institute for peace and the University for peace, indicates that the struggle for the recognitions of this field of knowledge has been productive. It has provided the institutional and academic bases for a new stage of the struggle to gain recognition for peace education as necessary and practical. We sincerely hope that these institutions will flourish and that they will move beyond the substantive task to the transformational, becoming academic models for transcending the instrumentalism that they so impeded the larger struggle for peace.

Researcher, scholars, and educators have begun to address seriously the issue of the content and methodology of peace studies and peace education. We urge them, now to undertake an exploration and discourse on the full nature of the transformation they seek and the qualities of an effective education for peace and global transformation.

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