<h1 style="text-align:center">Peace Education</h1>

The Problem of Defining Peace Education

Peace education is notoriously difficult to define. There are arguably three levels of understanding peace education. The primary concern of peace education is to prevent the suffering and wastage associated with warfare. A secondary concern is the linkage with cognate social concerns, such as reflected in development education, education for international understanding, human rights education, futures education, inclusive education, education for social justice, and environmental education. A third level of peace education is what might be called the intrapersonal and interpersonal aspects of peace education, dealing with self-understanding, self-fulfilment, and how we interact with each other and our environment at a personal level.

One of the noteworthy recent developments in peace education has been an increasing interest in the above interpersonal and intrapersonal aspects of peace education. In other words, we need not be merely concerned with the prevention of violence on a governmental and social level, but we need also to be concerned with local and domestic violence, and with the quality of our everyday relationships. Ultimately the personal and social dimensions of peace education are only classifications, and each is uniquely linked. Indeed one of the overall lessons of peace education is that the personal is uniquely important: we teach peace education substantially through who we are.

Maximalist versus Minimalist Peace Education

Another way of understanding peace education is through the notion of maximalist versus minimalist peace education. The maximalist understanding of peace education involves educating individuals towards sensitivity and responsibility in a range of areas, including personal fulfilment, the creation of a just and co-operative society, inclusiveness, and care for the environment. Minimalist understandings of peace education involve educating individuals towards learning to avoid war and aggression, and learning to avoid militarism and arms races. Both understandings pose challenges. Clearly it is insufficient to educate people to avoid war without encouraging an awareness of social injustice and inequality. However, at the same time, one problem is that peace education can be seen as encompassing all educational endeavour so that peace education merely becomes a synonym for education.

The definitional problem of peace education can be seen as an extension of the definitional problem for peace itself. The Norwegian peace researcher Johan Galtung is widely recognized for emphasizing the difference between negative peace, that is, the absence of armed conflict, and positive peace, that is, the presence of co-operative and harmonious relationships. Johan Galtung has also developed a threefold classification of direct, structural and cultural peace: direct peace denoting the absence of armed conflict, structural peace denoting the presence of justice and just structures, and cultural peace denoting the presence of a vital culture of peace.

The above classifications can be useful for peace education. Peace education can be seen as promoting both negative and positive peace. Peace education can be seen as encouraging direct peace, that is, educating individuals to see the dangers of war; encouraging structural

peace, that is, educating individuals to see the importance of social justice; and encouraging cultural peace, that is, educating individuals to see the importance of a culture of peace.

A Brief History of Peace Education

Peace education arguably has a long history. If we view the major world religions as striving to encourage co-operation and harmony, if only internally, then the propagation of these world religions serves as a form of peace education. Similarly one of the interesting historical phenomena of European history has been recurring peace plans, aiming to prevent wars between European monarchs. These too can be seen as a form of peace education. The beginning of a self-conscious idea of education as a means of preventing war can be traced to the philosophy-of-education of John Dewey and Maria Montessori. Both were motivated very much by reflection upon modern warfare, either a world war just ended (for John Dewey) or a new world war on the horizon (for Maria Montessori).

In more recent times, the importance of peace education has become directly recognized in international law, namely, in United Nations documents and declarations. One of the interesting aspects of international declarations on peace educations is that these have become more explicit in recent years. Peace education is now increasingly recognized as a professional field, with the Peace Education Commission recognized as one of the Commissions of the International Peace Research Association. Peace education is also widely recognized in scholarly journals, with articles in peace education now common in educational journals. There is also a specialist scholarly journal in peace education, the international *Journal of Peace Education*.

Peace education and International Law

It is easy to decry peace education as being at best an idealistic non-essential aspect of educational endeavour and at worst political indoctrination in the guise of education. This is why the recognition of the importance of peace education within international law is so important. International law has no enforceable authority of its own. However, there is a powerful moral and symbolic force within international law, and the recognition of the importance and role of peace education is an indicator that peace education is not merely an invention of particular interest groups and is indeed an essential part of education.

The *Charter of the United Nations* remains one of the core documents of international law, and the Charter outlines the special purpose of the United Nations in preventing future war. Peace education is one crucial means by which this aim can be fulfilled. The Preamble to the Charter refers to re-affirming faith in the dignity of the human person and establishing conditions under which justice and respect for international obligations may be maintained. It is difficult to see the above task of re-affirming faith in the dignity of the individual or establishing respect for international obligations as being anything other than an educational task.

Another fundamental document of international law is the *Universal Declaration of Human Rights*. Article 26 indicates that education shall be directed to strengthening respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms, promoting understanding, tolerance and friendship, and education shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace. The idea of maintaining peace suggests the more limited notion of negative peace, although the other elements of Article 26 clearly refer to a wider notion of encouraging what we might

describe as education for positive peace. Within both of the above documents, there is an implicit endorsement of the importance of education for peace.

Peace Education and UNESCO

The agency within the United Nations with primary responsibility for educational policy is the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO). The Preamble of the UNESCO Constitution indicates that the organization was formed for the promotion of a culture of peace; that is, as war commences in the minds of individuals, so too defences against war must be similarly constructed in the minds of individuals. UNESCO has regularly issued documents affirming the importance of peace education, most recently as the lead agency in the United Nations commitment to programmes encouraging a culture of peace, namely, the International Year for the Culture of Peace and the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World.

Within United Nations programmes on education for tolerance, there are numerous commitments to peace education. The 1995 UNESCO *Declaration of Principles on Tolerance* and the 1996 United Nations General Assembly *Follow-up to the United Nations Year for Tolerance* make it clear that tolerance is an essential component of peace. Article 1 of the UNESCO document describes tolerance as the virtue which makes peace possible and which contributes to the replacement of a culture of violence by a culture of peace. Article 4 of the UNESCO document involves a commitment to improve teacher training, curricula, textbooks, lessons and educational materials in order to create caring and responsible citizens who are open to other cultures, able to appreciate the value of freedom, respectful of human dignity and differences, and able to prevent conflicts or resolve such conflicts through non-violent means.

Peace Education and Disarmament Education

Disarmament education can be considered a sub-field within peace education. The 1978 United Nations Special Session on Disarmament I, the 1980 World Congress on Disarmament Education, and the 1982 United Nations Special Session on Disarmament II all urged governments and international organizations to develop programmes in disarmament and peace education. The Special Session II initiated the World Disarmament Campaign, which in turn became a catalyst for many peace movement initiatives of the following decade. The World Disarmament Campaign was an example of how intergovernmental action can impact upon popular culture and of how it is possible to lead in promoting peace.

Since that time, the World Disarmament Campaign has been succeeded by a permanent agency, the United Nations Office of Disarmament Affairs (UNODA), the focus of which has been in diplomacy rather than education. In 2002, however, the United National General Assembly commissioned an expert report, *The United Nations Study on Disarmament and Non-Proliferation Education.* The report renews the United Nations commitment to peace education, specifically in Articles 6-10. Article 20 usefully describes peace and disarmament education as a base of theoretical and practical knowledge, allowing individuals to choose values which reject violence, resolve conflicts peacefully and sustain a culture of peace.

Peace Education as a Right

If it is tempting to see peace education as merely an ideal, one counter to this is to view peace education as a right. The 1959 *Declaration of the Rights of the Child* emphasizes the rights children have to protection and education, and Principle 7 expressly states that a child has a right to an education that will develop a sense of moral and social responsibility. One could argue that a corollary of this is that a child has a right to peace education. The same thrust can be discerned in the 1989 *Convention on the Rights of the Child,* with Article 29.1(d) indicates that education should be directed towards the preparation of the child for responsible life in a spirit of understanding, peace, equality and friendship among all peoples.

If we see peace education as a right, then it is not too difficult to see the connection between a right to peace and a right to peace education, and the connection between peace education and human rights education. The 1984 United Nations General Assembly *Declaration on the Right of Peoples to Peace* recognized peace as a right. Rights are meaningless if individuals do not know of these rights, and in particular if peace is a right, then it follows that individuals have a right to know about this particular right. If peace is a right, it follows that peace education ought also to be regarded as a right. It is thus not surprising that the 1993 World Convention on Human Rights in Vienna recognized peace education as being part of human rights education. One flows from the other.

Peace Education and the Culture of Peace

The expansion of the concept of peace education has been reflected more recently in the culture of peace programmes of the United Nations. The rationale behind the culture of peace movement is that peace involves more than governmental action, but a civil and cultural process, encompassing all sectors of society. Peace is not merely institutional but personal. Thus peace education must ultimately involve teaching to encourage a culture of peace, however complex and difficult this might be.

This integrated understanding of peace and peace education is reflected in the 1999 United Nations General Assembly *Declaration and Programme of Action on a Culture of Peace.* Article 4 of the Declaration indicates that education is one of the principal means of building a culture of peace. Article 9 of the Programme of Action contains specific actions for fostering a culture of peace through education, including involving children in activities for installing the values and goals of a culture of peace, revision of curricula and textbooks with regards to peace, encouraging and strengthening efforts in developing skills and values supporting a culture of peace, and expanding culture of peace initiatives in institutions of higher education.

Delimiting Peace Education

Any discussion of peace education ought to include the relationship of peace education to peace advocacy, and the relationship of peace education to peace research. Peace advocacy is practiced by peace groups seeking to emphasize the importance of peace and the destructiveness of war. Peace education similarly seeks to emphasize the importance of peace and the destructiveness of war. However, the difference is methodology. An important aspect of the educational task is that the educator must always respect the autonomy of the learner; thus, there is a fundamental difference between preaching and teaching peace. What makes this distinction more complex is that the task of emphasizing peace is no doubt better accomplished through recognizing the importance of the autonomy of the learning.

The relationship of peace education to peace research is similarly a complex one. If we define peace research as normative applied research with the aim of emphasizing the importance of a commitment to peace, then it becomes clear that this is not far removed from the aims of peace education itself. It is for this reason that peace research and education are often linked together. Peace research is ultimately an educative endeavour. Similarly peace education aims to clarify the causes of war and social injustice, and how we might work to prevent such in the future. Thus peace education may also be seen as a research process

The Philosophy of Peace Education

At a fundamental level., one of the problems for peace education is the dearth of a developed educational rationale or philosophy of peace education. One of the reasons for this is that those are involved in peace education are likely to see the need for peace education as obvious, and thus the temptation is to see the need to articulate a philosophy of peace education as unnecessary. However, one of the marks of any valid educational endeavour is the existence of a developed educational rationale. Without such a rationale, peace education can be dismissed as indoctrination or political correctness.

There have been recent attempts to develop a coherent philosophy of peace education. Maltese educationist Joachim James Calleja sees a possible basis for peace education in the notion of duty and specifically in the Kantian categorical imperative. The fact that Immanuel Kant was a peace proponent adds weight to this specific line of argument. Australian educationist James Page identifies five possible ethical foundations for peace education – virtue ethics, consequentialist ethics, conservative political ethics, aesthetics ethics and the ethics of care. It is argued that none of these is conclusive in themselves, but each is part of a whole and credible rational for peace education.

The Methodology of Peace Education

Just as there are levels or layers to peace education, so too one can suggest there are layers to the methodology of peace education, involving curriculum, structures and process, and personal leadership. The curriculum level is perhaps most appropriate to secondary and tertiary education. For instance, it is important to have a curriculum that does not necessarily follow a narrow nationalistic agenda and that allows for a genuinely international perspective. It is important to have a curriculum which acknowledges dispossession and marginalization of peoples. The teaching of history and civics is where this comes into focus most clearly, although it is also important in a range of other subjects and fields.

Structures and processes are important in that without just structures and processes within educational institutions, then all the discourse about peace within any curriculum can remain mere rhetoric. Indeed, without just structures and processes, discourse about peace within a curriculum can be destructive, in that can engender cynicism and disengagement. Peace and justice go together. If one has an educational programme with much discourse about peace, and the educational context of that programme is an educational institution with a dearth of justice in structure and processes, then clearly students will tend to be cynical about the peace education programme.

The final level of peace education – personal leadership – is the most challenging. We learn through example and role modelling. We learn peace through seeing peaceful people in

action. If someone aspiring to teach peace has a domineering teaching style, then this clearly is counterproductive. Peace education is concerned with the empowerment of the other. The role of a peaceful and encouraging teacher is not a simple one, especially in demanding and often conflict-ridden educational settings. Yet there are steps which can be taken to empower and support the teacher. Overall the methodology of peace education, and indeed peace education generally, remains an emerging field. More research, both theoretical and practical, is needed in this field in the future.

Author Information

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