Peace Education Primer

Kevin Kester
Assistant Professor, School of Global Studies
Hannam University
Adjunct Professor, UN University for Peace Asia-Pacific Centre

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ABSTRACT: This article aims to briefly introduce the field of peace education to adult, higher education and secondary school practitioners. Aiming to confront and resist violence, peace education focuses on the necessary content and pedagogical approaches needed to nurture cultures of peace in a variety of communities. The common themes, pedagogies, training objectives, enabling conditions and evaluation processes of the multidisciplinary field are identified in this paper within the perspective of peace education as education for global citizenship. A brief overview of peace education in action at the United Nations University for Peace is outlined, and popular books and articles on peace education are provided for academics interested in further infusing principles of peace pedagogy into their educational practices.

What is Peace Education?

The Integrated framework on education for peace, human rights and democracy (UNESCO, 1995) provides an overview of the broad objectives of peace education:

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. (Section 2)

It is possible to situate peace education as part of the larger field of peace and conflict studies, which may be subdivided into peace research, peace studies, peace education (hereafter referred to as PE) and peace activism. PE can find its roots in the work of several educators, including John Dewey (1916), Maria Montessori (1949), Paulo Freire (1970), Johan Galtung (1975), Elise Boulding (1988) and Betty Reardon (1988), as well as Toh (2004) and Jenkins (2007). In addition, critical humanist authors and peace activists, such as Gandhi and King, influenced PE thought through their practices of social critique, civil disobedience and active nonviolence. Many heads of states, including Jose Ramos-Horta, Oscar Arias, His Holiness the Dalai Lama, and His Majesty King Hussein of Jordan, also influence practices in the field through their connections with peace
institutes. The writings of Henry David Thoreau, Leo Tolstoy, and William James are used to teach peace lessons, as is the theoretical work of Margaret Mead (1928), Michel Foucault (1969, 1975), Gene Sharp (1973), Albert Bandura (1977), and Howard Zinn (2006). The field has a number of conceptual frameworks that serve to underscore the development of programs and taught content, much emanating from the aforementioned thinkers (Kester, 2008).

As 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), PE serves as a reflexive educational and community approach to social change. In this sense education is viewed as a social investment, not merely a personal means to a vocation. Betty Reardon (1999) stated: “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” (p. 31-32). As such, peace educators teach about contemporary social, political, economic, ecological, and ethical problems, exploring the root causes of conflict and facilitating the exploration of nonviolent social strategies to manage social discord without resort to violence.

Hence, educators for peace seek to nurture intercultural understanding and global citizenship through developing respect for oneself, others, and the larger environment of which we are all a part (Reardon, 1988; Earth Charter, 2000). One dominant objective of the field is to nurture cultures of peace that challenge the assumption that violence is innate to the human condition and that violence emanates from our common animal ancestors (Adams, 2000). PE is receiving increasing attention due to its policy and values-centered alignment with the work of UNESCO, UNICEF and other international organizations (UNESCO, 1974, 1995; Fountain, 1999; Earth Charter, 2000).

**A Brief History of Peace Education**

European philosophical thought greatly influenced PE with the field becoming largely institutionalized in the 1950s and 1960s in Western Europe and the United States. Johan Galtung, a Norwegian sociologist is often credited as the ‘Father of Peace Studies’ (Ikeda, 2002). He founded the International Peace Research Institute (PRIO) in 1959, which in 1964 began the first academic journal devoted to peace studies - the *Journal of Peace Research*. In 1964, Galtung also co-founded the International Peace Research Association (IPRA), which today houses the influential *Journal of Peace Education* and Peace Education Commission. As a peace scholar, Galtung is known for promoting the dialectic between ‘negative peace’, or the absence of war, and ‘positive peace’, the presence of cultural values and institutional practices that sustain peace cultures and nonviolence. His theory of ‘structural violence’ is also widely used by practitioners and academics alike (Galtung, 1988; 1996).

During the same time Galtung was initiating the movement for peace research in Europe, several educators in the United States were mobilizing networks for peace in North America. Notable among these academics are Kenneth Boulding, Elise Boulding and Betty Reardon. Kenneth and Elise Boulding – an economist and sociologist, respectively – were active Quakers and peace activists. The Bouldings, along with Johan Galtung, were instrumental in the development of IPRA, and in gaining its consultative status to the UN Economic and Social Council (ECOSOC). Elise Boulding additionally served on the Congressional panel that led to the
creation of the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) in Washington, D.C., an institute that is currently responsible for numerous conflict resolution programs in public schools across the United States (see Morrison, 2005).

Many contemporary scholars cite Betty Reardon of Teachers College, Columbia University as the ‘Mother of Peace Education’, particularly as a leading pioneer in the design of education for peace programs within higher education institutes (Stomfay-Stitz, 1993; Harris, 2004; Kester, 2010). Reardon sought to construct formal education programs that were taught expressly for peace, whereas Galtung and Kenneth and Elise Boulding conducted peace research and established civil society organizations for peace activism within communities. In this respect, Reardon oversaw the establishment of the PE concentration in Masters and PhD programs at Teachers College Columbia University in 1981. She also founded the International Institute for Peace Education (IIPE) in 1982. IIPE brings together researchers, educators, and activists across the globe annually to study peace and conflict issues in local learning communities. In its 30-year history, IIPE’s annual conference has been held in various locations across North and South America, Europe, and Asia. Reardon was also instrumental in forming the Global Campaign for Peace Education at the Hague Appeal for Peace, a civil society conference held in the Hague in 1999. In 2002, she served as a lead consultant in the formation of the MA program in Peace Education at the United Nations University for Peace in Costa Rica. Reardon remains an active author and practitioner in the field.¹

Towards Transformative Learning and Cultures of Peace

Since the late 1980s, several educators have amalgamated various dimensions of PE under the umbrella term ‘culture of peace’ (Adams, 1989, 2000; Boulding, 2000; Goodman, 2002). In this view, the overarching goal of education for peace is both the reduction of violence and the transformation of mindsets that emphasize cultures of war. Through a culture of peace lens, peace educators explore cultures of violence more deeply and aim to transition cultures of violence to cultures of peace. To realize this aspiration, programs purposefully educate for critical awareness, cultural solidarity, empowerment, and transformation toward a culture of peace. To achieve this, programs aim to enable students to become responsible citizens, who are open to other cultures, respectful of differences, and have the ability to resolve conflicts nonviolently (Kester, 2008). In respect to the transformation of a culture of war to a culture of peace, UNESCO describes a culture of peace as:

a set of values, attitudes, traditions and modes of behavior and ways of life based on, among others, respect for life, ending of violence and promotion and practice of non-violence through education, dialogue and cooperation; full respect for and promotion of all human rights and fundamental freedoms; commitment to peaceful settlement of conflicts; and adherence to the principles of freedom, justice, democracy, tolerance, solidarity, cooperation, pluralism, cultural diversity, dialogue and understanding at all levels of society and among nations. (UNESCO, n.d., n.p.)

Furthering this agenda, an important document that grounds the movement for cultures of peace is *The Seville Statement on Violence* (Adams, 1989). *The Seville Statement* is a declaration by psychologists and medical practitioners that violence is not an innate characteristic of the human condition. These practitioners challenge the biological fatalism that underscores many peoples’ justifications for violent conflict, defense spending and fear of others. *The Seville Statement* is organized around five scientific propositions. It argues that it is scientifically incorrect to say that:

1. We have inherited a tendency to make war from our animal ancestors,
2. War or any other violent behavior is genetically programmed into our human nature,
3. In the course of human evolution there has been a selection for aggressive behavior more than for other kinds of behavior,
4. Humans have a 'violent brain',
5. War is caused by 'instinct' or any single motivation (p.1)

In this vein Mikhail Gorbachev, as quoted in Adams (1989), proclaimed:

> When disarmament is discussed a common thesis is that man is violent by nature and that war is a manifestation of human instinct. Is war the perpetual concomitant of human existence then? If we accept this view, we shall have to reconcile ourselves with continuous development and accumulation of ever more sophisticated weapons of mass destruction. Such thinking is unacceptable. It is reminiscent of times when more sophisticated weapons were invented and used to conquer other peoples and enslave and pillage them. That past is no model for the future. (p.1)

Adams (1989) goes on to declare:

> *The Seville Statement* confronts an active resistance in the mass media and related social institutions more than it confronts an inherent ignorance or 'psychological inertia' in ordinary people. The myth that war is part of human nature does not appear to be so much an inherent component of 'common sense' so much as it is the end result of a campaign of psychological propaganda that has been promulgated in the mass media in order to justify political policies of militarism. (p. 8)

Gorbachev insisted that a new model for the future was needed. In this respect, peace educators sought to propose alternative possibilities through futures-envisioning exercises (Boulding, 1988; Hicks, 1988, 2004). Through philosophical inquiry - Where are we now? Where did we come from? How did we get here? Where do we want to go? And how do we get there? - educators are promoting a type of transformative learning (Berry, 1988, 1999; O’Sullivan, 1999). Transformative learning is a deep cultural and philosophical adjustment through which people come to see life and living through new lenses. Values and attitudes are transformed, for example, from competition, consumerism and ahistoricism to cooperation and shared resources, and through this transformation new possibilities begin to emerge for a society based on common principles, needs, interests and shared visions.
O’Sullivan (1999) writes: “Truly, we live in a momentous time of survival and we are in desperate need of a broad historical system of interpretation to grasp our present situation. Although we cannot predict the future, we must nevertheless make educated guesses about where our present state of affairs is leading” (p. 16).

Anne Goodman, Professor of Community-Based Peacebuilding at the University of Toronto, writes that cultures of peace encompass diverse and integrally connected projects and actions as well as the principles that underscore the work of peacemakers (Goodman, 2002). She contends that there are numerous paths toward peacebuilding that educators and students may participate in. These include working to abolish nuclear weapons, generating alternative sustainable energy, challenging the global market economy, working toward disarmament, conducting conflict resolution training in conflict zones, working for more democratic political institutions, advocating for more women in decision-making roles at all levels of political and economic institutions, and trying to get PE into schools (ibid). All of these endeavors converge with the process of education as educators and students reflect on the lessons learned through participation.

Goodman (2002) also delineates between the “official” and “unofficial” aspects of cultures of peace. She explains that the official culture of peace mission is outlined and promulgated by UNESCO and the UN, while unofficial components are driven by grassroots efforts in local communities such as peace gardens, peace circles, peace zones, advocacy networks, and local educators for peace. Examples of these regional networks include the Canadian Voice of Women and the anti-nuclear movements of the past 60 years in North America, Europe and Asia, as well as the more recent Occupy movements in the US and student demonstrations in Quebec. The current civil society initiative in Canada for a Canadian Department for Peace² and the Global Campaign for Peace Education³ are additional initiatives for broad-based peace education. As the field continues to expand, there is an increasing demand for investigation into what kind of impact PE is having on learners and whether or not the programs are contributing to more peaceful societies (Nevo & Brem, 2002; Harris, 2003, 2008; Danesh, 2008).

Enabling Factors of Successful Programs

In respect to the impact of PE, there are a number of enabling factors that support successful PE programs. Program designers and educators may draw on these enabling conditions to ensure effective educational interventions. Gordon Allport (1954) formulated a contact hypothesis that pinpointed under what conditions prejudice was reduced and mutual understanding fostered. His hypothesis though over 60 years old, still informs many practices of PE (Salomon & Nevo, 2001; Tal-or, Boniger and Gleicher, 2002). He argues that conditions necessary for inter-group contact to be effective include (a) supportive environment, (b) equal status among participants, (c) close and sustained contact, and (d) cooperation. In other words, trainers and participating members of peace programs need to be committed to the entire agenda. They must take full moral and financial responsibility for the training and the physical and ecological environment in which the learning takes place. For training to have a sustained effect, members of the larger community, other departments in the school,

² See http://www.departmentofpeace.ca/. As expressed previously, movements for departments of peace are growing in numerous countries. Departments of peace have already been established in Nepal, the Solomon Islands, and Costa Rica.
and outside community organizations also need to reflect the goals and values of training. This is a complex and complicated endeavor, particularly in regions of prolonged intractable conflict (Feuerverger, 2001).

Gordon Allport’s hypothesis presents an ideal situation. In most situations it is likely that not all of these factors will be present or possible, such as financial stability. In this case it is necessary that many of these conditions be met (not necessarily all). When financial constraints are present, practitioners may wish to emphasize the broader support of the entire community. It is additionally paramount that members of the learning community be regarded as equals. This includes educators and participants. Freire’s pedagogy (1970) offers tremendous guidance on how to establish and maintain a culture of respect and equality in the classroom. After a supporting environment of equal status has been established, it is then possible to move forward with close prolonged contact that may foster continued international understanding and cooperation. This community could be enveloped with a common goal and sense of purpose, which will assist in fostering cooperation in the learning community. Kester and Booth (2010) also assert that at least one important element is missing from Allport’s model: (e) the revelation and dialogue on power dynamics present in communities, which mirror greater societal norms and political institutions.\(^4\)

Another important condition of building PE communities is the recognition of multiple forms of identity. Tal-Or, Boninger, and Gleicher (2002) note how discussing identity may help form peaceful environments where learners begin to reconstitute notions of in-group and out-group. This consequently leads to dialogue on concepts of Othering, a process that may or may not lead to the production of super-ordinate identities. They describe super-ordinate identities where Black and White share identities as US citizens, or Muslim and Hindu share a South Asian identity. These super-ordinate identities when facilitated well may lead to discussions of shared values and common futures, where historically competitive relationships may convert to cooperative partnerships. Arie Nadler (2002) also highlights enabling factors of successful programs that include (a) deliberately designed equality, (b) interpersonal trust, (c) awareness and respect for the various cultural beliefs and practices present in the training, and (d) addressing real, pressing, and common problems. Nadler, therefore, includes the need to incorporate “real and common problems” in the training. This ensures contextually relevant training and serves to expand on the conditions developed by Allport (1954) and Tol-Or, Boniger & Gleicher (2002).

With enabling conditions in mind, there are myriad ways to ensure they are met to facilitate successful learning. First, the values associated with PE could be infused throughout the curriculum and across disciplinary boundaries (Apple, 1969; Pike & Selby, 1988; Reardon & Cabezudo, 2002). For example, educators could use dialogue circles to foster equality and trust and to deconstruct assumptions of the Other in a variety of classroom situations (Bohm, 1996). Practitioners could also use social justice theatre to develop trust among participants (Boal, 1992), or the jigsaw teaching technique, which manufactures a sense of equal status and responsibility among learners. Futures-envisioning activities might also assist learners to define shared values and common visions for the group (Boulding, 1988; Hicks, 1988). These activities, along with enabling factors could help in the creation of sound education for peace programs.

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\(^4\) The work of peace educator Mohammed Abu-Nimer (1999, 2007) is useful in dealing with contact across power differentials.
Peace Education in Action: The UN University for Peace

This section describes a model of PE developed largely from the work of many actors behind the scenes at the UN and Betty Reardon at Teachers College, Columbia University. The program is the United Nations University for Peace MA Program in Peace Education in Costa Rica.

In 1980, the United Nations General Assembly adopted resolution 35/55 for the founding of a higher education institution dedicated solely to the study and pursuit of sustainable global peace. That resolution led to the establishment of the United Nations University for Peace (UPEACE) Graduate School of Peace and Conflict Studies, with its headquarters in San Jose, Costa Rica. The University has liaison offices in New York and Geneva, and regional programs in Africa, the Middle East, Central Asia, Asia-Pacific, Latin America, and the Caribbean. UPEACE with its worldwide reach and impact could be argued to be the leading international institution in the global movement toward education for peace and international understanding. There are other leading institutions that have departments and centers focused on peace research, such as the University of Bradford, George Mason University, and Notre Dame. However, UPEACE is the only institution dedicated solely to the study of peace.

The mission of the University, as agreed by the UN General Assembly and stated in its Charter, is “to provide humanity with an international institution of higher education for peace, with the aim of promoting among all human beings the spirit of understanding, tolerance and peaceful coexistence, to stimulate cooperation among peoples and to help lessen obstacles and threats to world peace and progress, in keeping with the noble aspirations proclaimed in the Charter of the United Nations” (UPEACE Charter, 1980, Article 1). UPEACE was not the first institution of the UN to be established and dedicated to the pursuit of peace through education. Others include UNESCO, the United Nations Institute for Training and Research (UNITAR) and the United Nations University (UNU) in Tokyo, Japan. UPEACE was, however, until 2009 the only educational institute of the United Nations to offer degree programs. The UN Secretary-General serves as Honorary President of UPEACE, a position currently held by Ban Ki-Moon of South Korea.

The University is mainstreaming the objectives of education for peace and sustainable development in alignment with the UN International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for Children of the World (2001-2010) and the Decade for Education for Sustainable Development (2005-2014), as well as gender mainstreaming in alliance with UN Security Resolution 1325 (2000). As part of these declarations and resolutions, UN organizations and Member States are encouraged to emphasize education for nonviolence, sustainable ecological development, and gender equity into their policy priorities. At its San Jose campus, the University is also home to the Earth Charter Center for Education for Sustainable Development.

These priorities impact the campus culture. Students at UPEACE interact with concepts of social justice and peacebuilding through exploration of the values, beliefs and worldviews present among

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5 Website: www.upeace.org.
6 In 2009, UNU in Tokyo and its affiliate institutes also began matriculating students in MA, and subsequently PhD programs, focused on sustainability science.
7 Online at http://www.earthcharterinaction.org/content/.
cultures of the diverse student body. The more than 200 students that study at UPEACE’s main campus represent nearly 60 nations. This manifest itself in a multicultural approach to PE, which embodies a symbiotic relationship between education for peace and international education where both multicultural education and PE aim to raise global awareness and intercultural respect. At UPEACE graduate students deconstruct their previously held prejudices and beliefs about other cultures and formulate models for greater cooperation in the future. These issues are explored through a broad curriculum, including the following courses within the PE concentration:

- Foundation in Peace and Conflict Studies
- Peace Education: Theory and Practice
- Cultures and Learning: From Violence Towards Peace
- Practices of Conflict Management and Peacebuilding
- Language, Media and Peace
- Human Rights Education
- Education for Sustainable Development
- Gender and Education

This model of PE is being implemented in multiple centers of UPEACE within Asia, Africa and Europe. Culturally sensitive, PE offers a model of education that promotes peace, justice and democracy through radical inquiry and compassionate listening. How are such programs evaluated?

**Evaluation of Programs**

Nevo and Brem (2002) summarized a body of research on PE programs, broadly defined, that were conducted from 1981-2000. The publications were identified through a search of PsyLit and ERIC databases and PE websites. The authors began by categorizing programs into ‘facets’ pertaining to the purposes of programs, age of participants, didactic approaches, duration of programs, research design and methods of measurement. One of the most important findings of Nevo and Brem is that not enough attention in PE programs is given to behavioral development. Most programs, on the contrary, appeal to rationality, not emotions, which could be perceived as problematic when emotions and psychology are so central to conflict resolution. Few programs work with participants beyond one year, and most evaluations of programs conclude that they are effective with few critical perspectives. Nevo and Brem (ibid) also found that programs that attempted to reduce violence were less effective than PE programs that emphasized intercultural understanding. Additionally, shorter programs (with a total duration counted in weeks and months) were more effective than longer programs that extended beyond a year. These findings have serious implications for PE developers.

UNICEF Egypt (1995) outlined behavioral indicators for PE programs. It categorizes behavioral indicators as knowledge objectives, skill objectives, and attitude objectives. The knowledge objectives include knowledge of prevailing gender norms and stereotypes with indicators such as participants labeling the concept of stereotype when presented with biases and providing examples of prejudices. The skill objectives include development of communication skills, including attentive and active listening, restating the events of a story, refraining from creative liberty (i.e. changing the actual events of the story), and paraphrasing concepts back to the speaker. The attitude objectives include willingness to take action with indicators such as knowing one’s agency and control over things in one’s own environment (e.g. personal and natural), identifying range of choices in the face of conflict,
choosing constructive and collaborative action, and expressing satisfaction with having taken action and achieving the desired outcomes. If these attitudinal and behavioral indicators are witnessed among students during and after the program (measured preferably against pre-tests and post-tests), then it is possible to quantify changes among learning participants in evaluating the impact of programs.

Other scholars contend that in evaluating programs, the emphasis should be on monitoring pedagogy, not students (Hicks, 1988; Toh, Cawagas, & Durante, 1993; O’Sullivan, 1999). Churchill and Omari (1981), for example, provide a list of criteria for program evaluation that seeks to assess programs in relation to PE program goals, indicators, students’ learning, teaching skills and associational networks. They propose general criteria for evaluation that monitors the education program’s “relevancy and worth of the projects in light of evolving needs,” as well as the program’s consistency with PE objectives (ibid, p. 11). They also question the “worth of the activities in relation to expenditures (financial and human), taking into account eventual opportunity costs to participants” (ibid). Finally, Churchill and Omari (1981) assess criteria indicating the worth of the program to participants. They ask how the program has increased positive effects on participating schools, education in the country, and international relations. Their model operationalizes program value through assessing students and educators’ post-program attitudes toward international understanding, education innovation, and educational partnerships.

**Conclusion**

In conclusion, PE aims to confront and resist violence. PE focuses on education about peace, education for peace, and education through peace, while addressing the knowledge and skills needed to nurture cultures of peace. The content of programs includes diverse worldviews, nonviolent methods of social transformation, political economy of peacebuilding, case studies of peacemakers, human rights and responsibilities, sustainability education, disarmament education, and global justice. The pedagogy of PE is student-centered and directed towards solving “real and pressing issues” in contemporary politics and international affairs. Conditions that foster successful programs include a supportive environment, equal status among participants, close and sustained contact, interpersonal trust, cultural awareness, and dialogue on contemporary social issues. Furthermore, shorter intercultural understanding programs seem to be more effective than long programs seeking to reduce violence in schools and communities. Indicators of success include attentive and active listening, paraphrasing, and identifying a range of choices in the face of conflict. Finally, the overall goal of PE is to transform conflict through dialogue and nonviolence towards the creation of sustainable and peaceful communities.
References


**Recommended Resources**


