

## **Peace Education for Development**

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### **Abstract**

*Peace education is an essential component of quality basic education. This paper defines peace education as the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level. The definition represents a convergence of ideas that have been developed through the practical experiences of UNICEF peace education programmes in developing countries. It is also reflective of the thinking of a number of theorists in this field and of much peace education work that has been carried out in industrialised countries. It is UNICEF’s position that peace education has a place in all societies- not only in countries undergoing armed conflict or emergencies. Because lasting behaviour change in children and adults only occurs over time, effective peace education is necessarily a long-term intervention. While often based in schools and other learning environments, peace education should ideally involve the entire community.*

**Keywords** - Peace Education, Jomtien Declaration on Education, UNICEF, WDE (World Declaration on Education), Behavioural Change, Structural violence, Psychosocial Rehabilitation.

Reference to this paper should be made as follows:

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*Peace Education for Development,*

RJPSSs 2017, Vol. 43,  
No.2, pp.248-257,  
Article No. 33 (RJ1949)

Online available at :  
[http://anubooks.com/  
?page\\_id=2012](http://anubooks.com/?page_id=2012)

### **Introduction:**

Peace education are considered from the perspective of the convention on the Rights of the Child and the *Jomtien Declaration on Education for All*. Peace education programmes have been developed in a number of UNICEF country offices and National Committees for UNICEF over the past decade. Ideas are continuously evolving about how to use the full range of children's educational experiences to promote commitment to principles of peace and social justice.

Peace education is integral part of the UNICEF vision of quality basic education. The 1990 World Declaration on Education for All (The Jomtien Declaration) clearly states that basic learning needs comprise not only essential tools such as literacy and numeracy, but also the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values required to live and work in dignity and to participate in development. It further states that the satisfaction of those needs implies a responsibility to promote social justice, acceptance of differences, and peace (Inter-Agency Commission, WCEFA, 1990). Since 1990, a number of UNICEF documents have confirmed this vision of basic education as a process that encompasses the knowledge, skills attitudes and values needed to live peacefully in an interdependent world. 'The Future Global Agenda for Children – Imperatives for the Twenty-First Century' (UNICEF 1999, E/ICEF/1999/10) makes a commitment to "... ensure that education and learning processes help to form both human capital for economic growth and social capital for tolerance, respect for others and the right of each individual to participate with equality within family, community and economic life; ... and to challenge the culture of violence that threatens to destroy family and community life in so many countries."

"UNICEF is committed to ensuring access to basic education of good quality—where children can acquire the essential learning tools needed to gain the knowledge, skills, values and attitudes critical to their own lives, the well-being of their families and their constructive participation in society." (UNICEF 1999, E/ICEF/1999/14). Peace education, then, is best thought of not as a distinct 'subject' in the curriculum, nor as an initiative separate from basic education, but as process to be mainstreamed into all quality educational experiences (although the actual approach used to introduce peace education will be determined by local circumstances). The term 'education' in this context refers to any process – whether in schools, or in informal or non-formal educational contexts – that develops in children or adults the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values leading to behavior change. The term 'peace' does not merely imply the absence of overt violence (sometimes referred to as 'negative peace'). It also encompasses the presence of social, economic and political

justice which are essential to the notion of 'positive peace' (Hicks, 1985). 'Structural violence' is a term that is used to refer to injustices such as poverty, discrimination and unequal access to opportunities, which are at the root of much conflict. Structural violence is perhaps the most basic obstacle to peace, which by definition cannot exist in a society in which fundamental human rights are violated. The Convention on the Rights of the Child, like other major human rights treaties, calls for the elimination of all forms of both overt and structural violence, and the creation of a society based on the principles of justice and peace. Peace education must address the prevention and resolution of all forms of conflict and violence, whether overt or structural, from the interpersonal level to the societal and global level. It is significant that the framers of the CRC viewed the promotion of understanding, peace and tolerance through education as a fundamental right of all children, not an optional extra-curricular activity.

**Value assumption:**

The definition of peace education, and the development of peace education programmes in UNICEF, makes a basic assumption: that the peaceful resolution of conflict and prevention of violence, whether interpersonal or societal, overt or structural, is a positive value to be promoted on a global level through education. It is recognised that this value may not be universally shared by all individuals and groups, and in all circumstances. Forms of violence that may be considered unjustified by some may be seen as appropriate, or even righteous, by others. An inherent risk in the promotion of a values-oriented activity such as peace education lies in the possibility that it will be seen as culturally biased, or as an imposition of one culture's values upon those of another. And in some contexts, the word 'peace' itself may carry political connotations. While acknowledging that different value systems exist, UNICEF continues to support the development of peace education programmes, and the values of non-violent conflict resolution and peace-building. The rationale for such programmes is that peace is essential for children's survival, development, protection, and participation in society. Violence and armed conflict are major barriers to the realisation of children's rights on all levels. The promotion of peace, and of peace education, is therefore an essential component of UNICEF's mandate to work for the rights and well-being of children. Developing a peace education initiative with community involvement from the outset may help keep the focus on the creation of a harmonious and rights-respectful society, allay concerns about any politically motivated aims, and help to clarify the values of all stakeholders.

**A focus on behavioural change :**

The focus on behavioural change in the UNICEF definition of peace education

reflects the fact that behaviour does not occur in a vacuum; it is nested within the context of the family, peer group, the community and the larger society. Behaviour development is intrinsically linked to and interdependent with the values and norms of those groups. Existing values and norms can either contribute to or hinder behaviour that promotes peace. Peace education in UNICEF promotes the development of values as the basis for behavioural change, and views behaviour as an indicator of an individual's or group's values. The effectiveness of peace education is increased when strategies are used that address the values of the entire community. The process of changing behaviour proceeds through a sequence of stages (adapted from Fishbein, 1992; and HealthCom, 1995) in which an individual:

1. Becomes aware of the issue (peace and conflict);
2. Becomes concerned about the issue;
3. Acquires knowledge and skills pertaining to the issue;
4. Becomes motivated, based on new attitudes and values;
5. Intends to act;
6. Tries out a new behaviour (for example, peaceful conflict resolution);
7. Evaluates the trial; and
8. Practices the recommended behaviour.

These stages may vary in order, or take place simultaneously, depending on the social and cultural context in which the behavioural change is taking place. A comprehensive approach to peace education should address all of these stages. The eight-step process of behaviour change with respect to peace and conflict issues might look like this: a young person may 1) become aware that most conflicts between people of her/his age are dealt with through fighting; 2) become concerned about the damage that is being caused by physical and emotional violence; 3) learn about alternative ways of handling conflict and realize that there are non-violent alternatives in conflict situations; 4) become motivated to try out these skills in a real situation; 5) make a decision to try skills of non-violence the next time she/he is involved in a conflict; 6) try out new behaviour such as negotiating in a cooperative manner in a conflict with a peer; 7) reflect on the experience and realize that the outcome was less physically or emotionally harmful than the behaviours used in previous conflict situations; and 8) make a commitment to continuing to use and learn about non-violent methods of handling conflict.

**Peace education in practice :**

Schooling and other educational experiences that reflect UNICEF's approach to peace education should:

- Function as ‘zones of peace’, where children are safe from conflict in the community;
- Uphold children’s basic rights as enumerated in the CRC;
- Develop a climate, within the school or other learning environment, that models peaceful and rights-respectful behaviour in the relationships between all members of the school community: teachers, administrators, other staff, parents, and children;
- Demonstrate the principles of equality and non-discrimination in administrative policies and practices;
- Draw on the knowledge of peace-building that already exists in the community, including means of dealing with conflict that are effective, non-violent, and rooted in the local culture.
- Handle conflicts—whether between children, or between children and adults—in a non-violent manner that respects the rights and dignity of all involved;
- Integrate an understanding of peace, human rights, social justice and global issues throughout the curriculum whenever possible;
- Provide a forum for the explicit discussion of values of peace and social justice;
- Use teaching and learning methods that promote participation, cooperation, problem-solving and respect for differences;
- Allow opportunities for children to put peace-making into practice, both in the educational setting and in the wider community;
- Provide opportunities for continuous reflection and professional development of all educators in relation to issues of peace, justice and rights.

This vision of peace education is consistent with the UNICEF concept of rightsbased, child-friendly learning environments (UNICEF 1999, E/ICEF/1999/14). This concept includes (among others) elements such as the realisation of the rights of every child, gender sensitivity, responsiveness to diversity, the promotion of quality learning outcomes such as life skills and successful problem solving, and the enhancement of teacher capacity.

**Initiatives related to peace education:**

A number of educational initiatives have areas of overlap with peace education, and with each other. These include children’s rights/human rights education, education for development, gender training, global education, life skills education, landmine awareness, and psychosocial rehabilitation. Each can be thought of as providing another lens or perspective through which to examine how peace can be

‘mainstreamed’ in basic education.

**Children’s rights/human rights education:**

Children’s rights/human rights education and peace education are closely linked activities that complement and support each other. Peace is a fundamental pre-condition without which rights cannot be realised, while at the same time, the ensuring of basic rights is essential to bringing about peace. Rights education usually includes the component of learning about the provisions of international documents such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights or the Convention on the Rights of the Child. Children are encouraged to understand the impact of rights violations, both at home and abroad, and to develop empathy and solidarity with those whose rights have been denied. Rights education encourages the development of skills that will enable children to act in ways that uphold and promote rights, both their own and others’. It also addresses the responsibilities that come with rights.

**Education for Development:**

Education for Development is the term used in UNICEF to describe an approach to teaching and learning which builds a commitment to global solidarity, peace, acceptance of differences, social justice and environmental awareness in young people (Fountain, 1995). Its aim is to empower children and youth to participate in bringing about constructive change, both locally and globally. Five basic concepts of Education for Development are interdependence, images and perceptions, social justice, conflict and conflict resolution, and change and the future. These concepts are approached as interdisciplinary perspectives that can be incorporated into the teaching of a wide range of subject matter, rather than as specific subjects in themselves. Interactive, participatory, cooperatively-structured teaching methods are as important as the content of Education for Development. These methods allow learners to better grasp complex concepts, build problemsolving abilities and develop social skills. These approaches have been used in both formal and non-formal educational activities, and provide a human development-oriented framework for educating about peace and social justice issues.

**Gender training:**

Gender conflict is found in societies around the globe, and gender discrimination and conflict is a leading cause of violence (UNICEF ROSA, 1998). A number of gender training initiatives have begun to address the prevention of violence against women, and alternative ways in which gender conflict may be handled. These initiatives promote attitudes and values that emphasise the rights of girls and women to safety, respect, non-discrimination, and empowerment. Some programmes focus specifically on boys, helping them better understand their relationship to girls, their

roles and responsibilities in family life, stereotypes about masculinity, and communication skills for dealing with conflict. Gender training initiatives have an essential perspective to add to peace education activities, which have sometimes tended to overlook the gender component in violence and conflict resolution.

**Global education:**

Global education, a term coined in the 1970s, has been adopted in the UNICEF MENA region. It incorporates themes such as the environment and ecology, peace, tolerance, conflict avoidance, personal health, cooperative skills, multiculturalism, comparative views on human values, and human and child rights. It is based on a four-dimensional conceptual model. The model is comprised of the temporal dimension (linking the past, present and future), the spatial dimension (creating awareness of the interdependent nature of the world), the issues dimension (demonstrating how contemporary issues are interlocking), and the inner dimension (enhancing understanding that resolving world issues is inseparable from developing self awareness and spiritual awareness). Global education gives priority to active, learner-based teaching methods, peer-learning, problem solving, community participation, and conflict resolution skills. It is values-based and future-oriented (Selby, 1997). Global education provides another broad curricular framework for peace education activities.

**Life skills education:**

Life skills education enables children and young people to translate knowledge, attitudes and values into action. It promotes the development of a wide range of skills that help children and young people cope effectively with the challenges of everyday life, enabling them to become socially and psychologically competent. Life skills can include cooperation, negotiation, communication, decision-making, problem-solving, coping with emotions, self-awareness, empathy, critical and creative thinking, dealing with peer pressure, awareness of risk, assertiveness, and preparation for the world of work (Baldo and Furniss, 1998). Not all life skills—such as knowing how to carry out a job interview or being able to assess the risk of contracting HIV/AIDS—are a part of peace education. But conflict resolution skills, which are a component of many peace education programmes, are an important category of life skills. Many life skills are ‘generic’, in that they can be applied to a number of specific contexts. For example, negotiation skills may be used in resolving a conflict between peers; they may also be used in discussing wages or working conditions during a job interview. Decision-making skills can be used in arriving at a mutually agreeable solution to a dispute between two people, or in making health-related choices such as deciding whether to smoke or engage in a sexual relationship. The emphasis of life skills

education on developing attitudes and values, and translating those changes into observable behaviours, is an important perspective to incorporate into peace education programmes.

**Landmine awareness :**

In a number of countries that have undergone, or are undergoing armed conflict, UNICEF supports landmine awareness campaigns and educational programmes. These are often considered part of a country's peace education initiatives. It would perhaps be more accurate to describe landmine awareness as an aspect of life skills education relating to issues of personal health and safety, rather than issues relating to the resolution and prevention of conflict. Landmine awareness develops skills and promotes behavioural changes that are essential in helping children cope safely with situations of armed conflict, and are a critical educational intervention to help children deal with the impact of armed conflict.

**Psychosocial rehabilitation:**

UNICEF supports programmes for the psychosocial rehabilitation of children affected by war and violence in a number of countries that have undergone – or are undergoing – armed conflict. Most of these programmes are therapeutic in focus, aiming to promote self-expression, coping skills and psychological healing. Peace education is not a form of individual or group therapy. However, psychosocial rehabilitation programmes complement and support peace education when, in promoting recovery from post-traumatic stress, they help children learn new skills for dealing with conflict.

**Conclusion**

This paper has put forward a definition of peace education in UNICEF, based on what has been learned from experiences in the field. Peace education is an essential component of quality basic education that aims to build the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values that will enable young people to prevent violence, resolve conflict peacefully, and promote social conditions conducive to peace and justice. Peace education is firmly grounded in the vision of education set forth in the 1990 Jomtien Declaration. It also is based on the articles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, which aim to eliminate all forms of violence against children, both overt and structural, and to promote an environment of rights in which peace can flourish. Peace education is a right of all children, not only those living in situations of armed conflict. It is a long-term process that can take place in any learning environment. It is hoped that this paper will provide greater clarity as to the meaning of peace education in UNICEF. It should be used to focus efforts in programme development, as well as to give a sense of the wide range of activities that can promote peace through many



different learning contexts. Greater agreement as to the nature of peace education should lead to a continued productive discussion between country offices on how best to evaluate this field of endeavour.

The importance of peace education in the school and teacher education programmes cannot be over emphasized, particularly at a time when the world is facing its worst crisis. Yet, promoting such innovation related to education in human values has met with reluctance at the official level, and lukewarm receptivity at the hands of teachers, students, and parents. Hence, peace education has to be carefully planned and executed.

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