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Chapter 1

The Nature of Peace Education: Not all Programs are Created Equal

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Imagine that medical practitioners would not distinguish between invasive surgery to remove malignant tumors and surgery to correct one's vision. Imagine also that while different kinds of surgery are practiced, no research and no evaluation of their different effectiveness accompany them. The field would be considered neither very serious nor very trustworthy. Luckily enough, such a state of affairs does not describe the field of medicine, but it comes pretty close to describing the field of peace education. First, too many profoundly different kinds of activities taking place in an exceedingly wide array of contexts are all lumped under the same category label of "peace education" as if they belong together. Second, for whatever reason, the field's scholarship in the form of theorizing, research and program evaluation sadly lags behind practice (see the chapter by Nevo, this volume).

In this chapter, I wish to offer some basic, conceptual distinctions between different kinds of peace education as they pertain to programs in politically different regions. My argument is that neither scholarly nor practical progress can take place in the absence of clear conceptions of what peace education is and what goals it is to serve. Second, I will focus on one class of peace education programs, that class which takes place in regions of intractable

conflicts, claiming that other kinds of peace education are subsumed under it, and outlining what in my opinion should be its goals and major mission.

Peace education has many divergent meanings for different individuals in different places. For some, peace education is mainly a matter of changing mindsets; the general purpose is to promote understanding, respect, and tolerance towards yesterday's enemies (Oppenheimer, Bar-Tal, & Raviv, 1999). A prime example would be peace education programs in regions of intractable conflict such as Northern Ireland, Israel, or Bosnia (e.g., see the chapter by Cairns, this volume). For others, peace education is mainly a matter of cultivating a set of skills; the general purpose here is to acquire a non-violent disposition and conflict resolution skills. Prime examples for such would be school-based, violence prevention programs, peer mediation, and conflict resolution programs (Deutsch, 1993). For still others, particularly in Third World countries, peace education is mainly a matter of promoting human rights (Toh & Floresca-Cawagas, 1996; see also the chapter by Svi Shapiro, this volume), while in more affluent countries it is often a matter of environmentalism, disarmament and the promotion of a culture of peace (e.g., Harris, this volume).

Is there a common core to all the different varieties of peace education or is it no more than a loose collection of programs which differ from each other in important ways? Indeed, what is common to schoolyard, violence prevention, multicultural understanding, tolerance towards yesterday's enemy, and the collective striving for dignity and equality? In the absence of clarity of what peace education really is, or how its different varieties relate to each other, it is unclear how experience with one variant of peace education in one region can usefully inform programs in another region. Could experience with peer mediation in a Los Angeles, school district enlighten peace educators in Belfast? Would evidence of attitude change as a result of a Swedish program about Peace on Earth inform educators struggling

with inter-ethnic tensions in New York? In the absence of conceptual clarity, the benefit of experience and wisdom is unlikely, and the accumulation of a body of scholarship uncertain.

Not All Programs Are Created Equal

What is peace education? What is the *core* of peace education, its *prototypical attributes*? What, if anything, distinguishes its most prototypical instantiations from other, similar fields? How does it relate to its relatives – conflict resolution, mediation, democratic education, civil education, multicultural education, and the like, or are all of these to be treated as variants of each other? Given the fact that some programs are designed to cultivate particular skills of interpersonal, conflict resolution, while others are designed to promote reconciliation with a political adversary, it becomes clear that subsuming all of these programs under one superordinate category of *peace education* harmfully blurs important distinctions. For example, programs designed to cultivate a positive outlook on peace *in general* are profoundly different in their assumptions, the challenges they face and the goals they hope to attain from programs designed to promote a peaceful disposition toward a *particular* ethnic or racial group.

It is obvious that peace education is not a single entity. A variety of distinctions can be offered. For one, *peace* has more than one meaning, and so does its absence - *violence*. Galtung (1973) distinguished between *positive* and *negative* peace, with the former denoting collaboration, integration, and cooperation, and the latter denoting the absence of physical and direct violence between groups. He also coined the construct of “*structural violence*,” denoting societal built-in inequalities and injustices. A second, possible distinction pertains to the socio-political context in which peace education takes place: Regions of intractable conflict (Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998), regions of racial or ethnic tension with no overt actions

of hostility (e.g., Lehman, this volume), or regions of tranquility and cooperation. A third distinction can be between desired changes: Changes on the *local, micro* level, e.g., learning to settle conflicts and to cooperate on an *interpersonal* level, vs. desired changes on a more *global, macro* level, e.g., changing perceptions, stereotypes and prejudices pertaining to whole *collectives*. Although in both cases individuals are the targets for change, the change itself pertains to two different levels: More positive ways of handling other *individuals* vs. handling other *collectives*. Still another possible distinction is between the political, economic and social status of peace education participants: Racial or ethnic majority vs. minority, conqueror vs. conquered, perpetrator vs. victim. Clearly, peace education for the weak and dominated is not the same as for the strong and dominating (for important distinctions, see the chapter by Bar-Tal, this volume).

Three Categories of Peace Education

Whereas these and other distinctions are of great importance, I think that the socio-political context in which peace education takes place supersedes the rest. It is the context that determines to an important extent (a) the challenges faced by peace education, (b) its goals, and (c) its ways of treating the different sub-groups of participants. Thus, for example, a rough examination of peace education programs around the world suggests that whereas regions of relative tranquility emphasize education for cooperation and harmony (positive peace), promoting the idea of a general *culture of peace*, regions of conflict and tension emphasize education for violence prevention (negative peace), greater equality and practical co-existence with real adversaries, enemies, and minorities. And whereas the former are likely to promote individual skills in handling local, interpersonal conflicts, the latter are more likely to address perceptions of and tolerance toward collectives.

With this in mind, I wish to suggest that peace education be classified into three distinctive categories, peace education in regions of intractable conflicts, peace education in regions of inter-ethnic tension, and peace education in regions of experienced tranquility. This distinction is offered mainly for clarification purposes; in the real world programs are not that well distinguished from each other. Also, no value judgment, importance or status is implied.

Peace Education in Intractable Regions:

This class of peace education programs takes place in the context of ongoing, violent conflicts between actual adversaries. These are basically conflicts about tangible resources, accompanied and sustained by collectively held, national, ethnic, tribal or religious *narratives* describing (the good) *us* vs. (the bad) *them*. These narratives contain a host of collectively held memories of past atrocities and present day victimhood, one's own moral superiority vs. that of the other (e.g., Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998). Peace education in this category attempts mainly to change mindsets that pertain to the collective *other*, including the *other's* narrative and one's own group responsibility for the *other's* suffering. Cases in point are Northern Ireland, Israel/Palestine, Cyprus, Rwanda.

Peace Education in Regions of Inter-Ethnic Tension:

This category of peace education programs takes place in contexts most frequently characterized by inter-ethnic, racial or tribal tension between a majority and a minority without necessarily entailing either overt acts of aggression or collective memories of a long history of hostilities, humiliation, conquest or dispossession. Cases in point are Belgium, Blacks, Latinos and Native Americans in the USA, guest workers in Germany.

Peace Education in Regions of Experienced Tranquility:

This category of peace education programs takes place in contexts in which there is no specifically identified adversary with whom peace, reconciliation or co-existence is desired. In such contexts, programs are perhaps best characterized by consisting of education *about* peace rather than education *for* peace since there is no concrete adversary or outgroup with whom peace is sought. In this respect, education about peace can play a crucial role in cultivating a *bystander concern* for peace such that past indifference to violent acts carried out in other regions of the world (e.g., Rwanda, in 1994) will not repeat itself (Staub, this volume).

Focus on Peace Education in Regions of Intractable Conflicts

Despite the diverse ways in which peace education is operationalized, peace education as designed and practiced in contexts of intractable conflict appears to constitute a superordinate case of peace education as it includes the other kinds of practices and principles. Peace education in regions of intractable conflict often entails elements of anti-racism, conflict resolution, multiculturalism, cross-cultural training and the cultivation of a generally peaceful outlook, but it can neither be equated with these nor reduced to them; it has its residual, unique character which transcends these elements. Relative to these elements, it faces the most difficult obstacles, such as collectively held animosities, shared painful memories, and common, national or ethnic views of self and of *other*, all issues on a macro, collective level. Such programs are also the least studied and the least conceptually developed ones, relative to those programs that pertain to the micro level. I thus turn to a more detailed treatment of that category of peace education programs.

Peace education in regions of intractable conflicts *uniquely confronts* what Azar (1990) has described as “*ethnic [racial, national or religious] hostilities crossed with developmental inequities that have a long history and a bleak future.*” It follows from this

conception that this class of peace education faces three important challenges: (a) it faces a conflict that is between collectives, not between individuals; (b) it faces a conflict which is deeply rooted in collective narratives that entail a long and painful shared memory of the past; and (c) it faces a conflict that entails grave inequalities.

The first challenge faced is *a conflict between collectives, fueled by shared narratives, not a conflict between individuals*: In fact, there need not be a personal dimension to the conflict at all: Either there is no contact between individuals on either side of the conflict (Cyprus as a case in point) or, alternatively, daily contact may be accompanied by civilized relationships between individuals (as is the case in the Basque region). Yet, the conflict is alive and kicking. The collective dimension of conflicts is nicely illustrated in a recent newspaper account of the Basque conflict with Spain: “The enemy isn’t the Spanish lad next door ... it’s the national state in the form of a central government that responded to the historic cease-fire by arresting the very people with whom it must negotiate” (San Francisco Chronicle, May 24, 1999). In this light, conflict resolution and skills for schoolyard mediation are not of primary relevance for peace education in regions of conflict or tension; the former programs deal with the micro, individual level, whereas the latter needs to focus on the collective.

The second challenge facing peace education in contexts of intractable conflict is *a collectively held ethos, or narrative, that explains the conflict and each side’s role in it, justifies one’s own position, and denigrates the other’s* (Bar-Tal, 2000). Such narratives “generate intense animosity that becomes integrated into the socialization processes in each society and through which conflict-related emotions and cognitions are transmitted to new generations” (Rouhana & Bar-Tal, 1998, p. 762). Of great importance are the collectively cultivated and shared memories providing a historical dimension to the conflict. Collectively-held, historical memories are maintained, revived and promoted by politicians, national

historians, text books, school curricula and the media (e.g., Liebes, 1992). Collective, historical memories and narratives affect the views that the individual member of that collective is likely to hold; they affect the way the individual interprets the actions of the *other*, and the way that the individual relates to the *other*. Examples are the memories of the Battle of Little Bighorn held by the Sioux and Cheyenne, as contrasted with its past description in American textbooks, or the memory of the battle of William of Orange in 1690 as it is differently branded into the collective memories of Catholics and Protestants in Northern Ireland. Such memories, as the recent events in Kosovo suggest, have a tremendously strong impact on actual actions, not to mention attitudes and attributions. *This is what peace education has to face and to counter.*

The third challenge facing peace education is *the grave inequalities usually implicated in the conflict* - inequalities between conqueror and conquered, between social, economic statuses, between majority and minority or between the indigenous population and relative newcomers. Two implications follow from here. One implication is that the two sides would best be served by different kinds of peace education intervention, as they are likely to have different agendas. As a study by Maoz (2000) shows, Palestinians are more concerned with issues of inequalities and past injustices while the Israelis are more concerned with the elimination of terror. Similarly, coming to show understanding for the suffering of dispossessed refugees may be an important peace education ingredient for the strong majority, but coming to understand the conqueror's motives or perspective may not be what the conquered would best resonate to. The second implication is that because feeling of equality among members of contact groups is a major condition for success (Aronson, 1988; Pettigrew, 1998), the absence of equality promises to fail intergroup contact.

The three challenges just described – facing collective narratives entailing a painful, historical dimension and grave inequalities – clearly suggest that peace education in regions

of intractable conflict differs to an important extent from the other kinds of peace education, particularly peace education in tranquil regions. This does not mean, for example, that the conflict in some high schools between the Jocks and the Goths, or between Puerto Ricans and Blacks could not entail some of the same characteristics of collectivity and inequality. To the extent that they do, peace education in intractable conflicts would pertain to them, despite the fact that the underlying conflicts are neither as grave nor as deeply anchored in long range, collective memories as those mentioned above.

The Goals of Peace Education in Contexts of Intractable Conflicts

It is now possible to offer a conception of peace education in regions of conflict (See Figure 1). *We can see peace education, at its best, as an attempt to change the individual's perception of the other's collective narrative, as seen from the latter's point of view, and consequently of one's own social self, as well as come to relate practically less hatefully and more trustingly towards that collective other.* More specifically, peace education would be expected to yield four kinds of highly interrelated, dispositional outcomes: Accepting as legitimate the *other's* narrative and its specific implications; being willing to critically examine one's own group's actions toward the other group; being ready to experience and show empathy and trust toward the *other*; and being disposed to engage in non-violent activities.

Figure 1 about here

The disposition to accept the other's narrative means in reality the tendency to give that narrative legitimacy and validity. Accepting the other's narrative does not necessarily mean *liking* it, but it does mean that events, past and present – the ones that constitute the

backbone of the collective memory and interpretation – can now be seen from two points of view, rather than defensively rejected, and that both are perceived as *right* on their own premises. However, such open-minded acceptance cannot remain on the abstract level; it must make contact with real events which are examined afresh. Thus, for example, can the Israeli youngster participating in a peace education program see the flight and plight of the Palestinians in 1948, the *Nakhbah*, from the point of view of a Palestinian? Can *Ethnic cleansing* of the Moslems in Bosnia be perceived by a Serb as seen through Moslem eyes? Legitimization of the *other's* narrative does not necessarily require the adoption of a totally relativistic perspective. One would still be expected to adhere to his or her group's collective narrative.

Tightly intertwined with the legitimization of the other's narrative is the *critical examination of one's group's actions toward the other group*. Critical examination implies that the pain-inflicting sides in the conflict come to acknowledge their guilt, although, of course, the youngsters participating in the program may have had nothing to do, as individuals, with the atrocities, acts of terror, humiliation or conquest carried out by their respective groups. Without that acknowledgement, it would be exceedingly difficult to construct a shared reality and establish common grounds (see the chapter by Staub, this volume). The Jews would have never shown any conciliatory signs towards the Germans if the latter had not critically and publicly examined their role in the *Final solution*. Philippines and Koreans still expect Japan to apologize for its deeds during WWII, something Japan persists in evading. As pointed out by Zhou Xiaizheng, a sociology professor at People's University. "Germany has been good at making apologies for what it did during World War II. But the Japanese are not good at this, nor are the Chinese. They are always looking for excuses and forgetting misdeeds." (New York Times, January 3, 2001).

This is where the third disposition comes in: *Empathy and trust*. Basically, empathy entails the ability to appreciate the pain suffered by the other side, a willingness to see experiences of the other side from its point of view, to engage in what Cohler and Galatzer-Levy (1992) have called “vicarious introspection.” This vicarious introspection, somewhat unlike the more cognitive acceptance of the other’s narrative, entails a large emotional component: One comes to feel the agony or the dreams of the other side.

Finally, there remains the goal of *adopting a disposition to act in non-violent ways*. I do not mean here actions in the schoolyard, although attaining this would be a desirable side effect. What I mean here would possibly yield two kinds of dispositions: A disposition to forgo the use of force and violence to solve national or ethnic conflicts, and a disposition to actively seek agreement and reconciliation with the *other* when an appropriate opportunity arises.

A Caveat

The conception of peace education and the goals that emanate from it are both based on an assumption of relative symmetry between the two sides of a conflict. As argued above, both sides are supposed to reach, through one or another kind of peace education program, an empathic perception of the other side’s narrative. Would this apply equally to both perpetrator and victim, ruling majority and discriminated minority? Would it be reasonable to expect Black slaves, exiled Palestinians, or persecuted Armenians to accept as legitimate the narratives of slave owners, Israel, or past Turkish governments, respectively? Grave inequalities can become insurmountable barriers to reaching any kind of more positive perception of the oppressor or perpetrator. The greater the social, economic, political or military inequality between the two sides, the less can peace education, as conceived of here,

be a matter of symmetry. When it comes to extreme inequalities, the agenda of the oppressed, conquered, disadvantaged or discriminated focuses more on the experienced inequality and on the desire to correct it. Inequality easily becomes an energetic force driving feelings of reactance, anger and frustration which stand in the way of trying to positively relate to an adversary's narrative. Under such conditions, peace education and political action become fused.

Mutuality between Peace Education Programs

Does all this then mean that the practice and study of peace education in regions of intractable conflict and tension can neither benefit from its close relatives – conflict resolution, multicultural programs and such – nor inform them? The differences between the different kinds of peace education, as I have tried to show, are profound. For example, multicultural education, like peace education in regions of conflict, deals with different collective narratives, but there are at least two important differences. First, unlike peace education as explicated here, multicultural education need not entail the kind of traumatic and painful, historical components of the *other's* collective narrative, the one that is laced with hatred, fear, mistrust, humiliation and bitterness. Second, and most importantly, the narratives that peace education is trying to struggle with are at the very core of a group's sense of identity and collectivity – as is the memory of the holocaust, the defeat of the Serbs by the Turks in the 14th Century, and the memories of the Apartheid's humiliation for the Blacks in South Africa. Multicultural education does not face such challenges.

Nevertheless, there are both practical and more deep-seated commonalties between the different categories of peace education programs. Practical commonalties are manifested in educational methods and strategies. Peer mediation and research about it may not appear to

have much relevance to where perceptions of another group are the target of educational change. However, as a *practice*, peer mediation may well be a useful *ingredient* in a program designed to bring each side to accept the legitimacy of the other side's collective narrative through face-to-face encounters. School-based peace curricula may not be the most effective peace education interventions but they can be quite effective as initial mind-openers, precursors to genuine peace education; they can also effectively deal with individual behaviors for local violence prevention such as impulse control, emotional expression, perspective taking and anger management (Harris & Callender, 1995; Johnson & Johnson, 1996).

Deeper commonalities can be found at the level of basic approaches, or psychological principles, underlying the various practices: The face-to-face contact approach, the mutual exposure approach, the interactive conflict resolution approach (Fisher, 1997), the learning-about-the-other approach, and the like. Thus, to the extent that peace education in regions of conflict or tension is based on underlying principles which have been formulated and studied to serve, for example, conflict resolution or mediation programs, it can benefit from them. Koehler (1990) has studied face-to-face encounters of opposing sides, as part of a conflict resolution program. His findings suggested that when each side presents its arguments, entrenchment rather than understanding often results. Encounters of this kind are popular in peace education programs and findings of this sort are relevant for many program designers. Similarly, findings from research on cross-cultural training for professionals designated for overseas service shows that the expected, positive relationship between participant satisfaction and actual behavioral change are not often obtained. Satisfaction need not be accompanied by actual change while dissatisfaction often does (Brislin & Yoshida, 1996). Despite the dissimilarity between such peace education programs, these findings are of

interest as they suggest that self-reports of changes do not necessarily reflect actual changes, a matter of importance to where modified dispositions are desired.

In sum, not all peace education programs are alike as they are designed within different contexts and thus serve different functions. Conceptual clarity as to the basic nature of peace education and its varieties is needed as only in the light of this is it possible to ascertain how experience and research of one category of programs can usefully inform the design and execution of programs in other categories.

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Figure Captions

Figure 1: Goals for peace education

Peace Education
In the Context of
Intractable Conflicts

Changing Perceptions of the *Others*'
Collective Narrative

Legitimization
of
Their
Collective
Narrative

Critical
Examination of
Our
Contribution
To the Conflict

Empathy for
Their
Suffering

Engagement
in Non-
Violent
Activities