

PEACE PEDAGOGY: CASE ANALYSIS

INTRODUCTION

Peace Education (PE) studies violence in all of its forms, and aims to use education to overcome the system of war for the creation of a system of peace.ⁱ PE educates its participants about the nature of war and peace, and provide strategies for the peaceful resolution of social and other problems that cause violence. PE includes various topics including Education in Values, Human Rights Education, and Coexistence Education. These types of PE teach about the roots of violence and inform participants about the processes that precede peace, such as negotiation, reconciliation, and the use of legitimate agreements to reduce violence.ⁱⁱ In intractable conflicts, it is common for a conflictive collective memory to exist, preventing the overcoming of differences and progress towards peace. Challenges confronted by PE in this context include creation of a collective for reconciliation, and teaching of skills for recognition and overcoming of differences in the common interest of peace.ⁱⁱⁱ

Peace Pedagogy (PP) provides the methodology to facilitate learning and teaching of the concepts and skills associated with PE. These include activities in which participants create shared responsibility, such as work in teams comprised of participants from different interest groups, in which they express the emotions associated with collective memory. Once a cooperative relationship has been established, activities are implemented in which participants learn concrete concepts such as “peace process”, “reconciliation”, and “transitional justice”, and visualize strategies that could be used to achieve a system of peace that takes the interests of each group into account. These activities aim to create a collective conscience for reconciliation, and include opportunities for inter-group mediation.

The present text considers three cases of Peace Education and Pedagogy, focusing on methods that aim to teach key concepts such as transitional justice and reconciliation.¹ It then highlights lessons learned from the cases that could serve Colombia as it seeks a negotiated end to its 50-year conflict.

EDUCATION ABOUT JUSTICE: SIERRA LEONE

The Revolutionary United Front (RUF) started a war against the government of Sierra Leone in 1991. The conflict officially ended in 1999 with the Lomé Peace Agreement, although the violence persisted until 2002. Two main transitional justice mechanisms were created: a

¹ To read more about initiatives that use elements of peace pedagogy to promote reconciliation between groups, see the spotlight titled “Reconciliation: International cases and lessons learned.” http://www.oim.org.co/images/Reportes/Spotlights/Spotlight_7_-_Reconciliation_ENG.pdf

Truth and Reconciliation Commission (TRC), and the Special Court for Sierra Leone. In 2002, the government recognized the need to educate the public about: 1) the relationship between the TRC and the Court; 2) the role of the Court in ending impunity; and 3) the limitations on the Court’s mandate. The NGO No Peace Without Justice coordinated an education program with a special government working group to implement training sessions and participatory town hall meetings for civil society groups, local leaders, and other members of the public. The meetings aimed to inform participants about these topics and hear their concerns and ideas. In addition, the NGO conducted education projects with lawyers and ex-combatants so that they could learn about transitional justice structures in the country, and how these related to the regular justice system. In addition to these meetings and training sessions, the strategy used video, radio, printed materials, and visits to the Court to help the public in their educational process.^{iv}

The education program achieved its objective of informing the Sierra Leone public about transitional justice in their country. The strategy of going to the communities and holding town hall meetings engaged vulnerable groups who felt abandoned by the State in the transition to peace. Some independent studies found that public perception of the Court improved as a result of the program, and that the participants reached a high level of knowledge of the Court’s functions, although it was not clear if they understood processes it executed within the functions. Another lesson from this program is that it was very important to start public education at the beginning of the operation of the Court, to prevent speculation. It was found that the public had many questions about the Court’s case prioritization strategy, because people did not understand why some of those who were commonly thought of as highly responsible for grave crimes were not judged, and others were. This strategy related to the Court’s mandate, which said it should focus on those ultimately responsible for grave violations in the framework of the conflict. It was found that the strategy was unclear in its explanation of this part of the mandate, and many groups were left with the perception that the Court did not understand the conflict well, and provided impunity. However, the use of local meetings and the involvement of vulnerable groups have led this strategy to be considered a replicable model for other countries.^v

POLITICAL EDUCATION: NORTHERN IRELAND

After the Good Friday Peace Agreement in Northern Ireland in 1998, many PE programs began in Northern Ireland, England, and Ireland. The majority of these were implemented in schools and with youth groups. However,

the Glenree Centre in Ireland implemented political education programs focused on implementation of the Good Friday Agreement and political participation for youth, politicians, community leaders, and activists in the three countries. The objective of the program was to educate the participants in concepts relating to democracy, so that they could make informed decisions about participation in politics, and (in the case of the politicians themselves), strengthen decision-making processes associated with peacebuilding. The education in political topics was complemented by training in negotiation and leadership, with political dialogue workshops between politicians of the different parties.^{vi}

The results of the political education program are positive, with improvements in participants' level of understanding of political processes. The workshops with politicians from different parties also resulted in the consolidation of joint policies and plans to strengthen peacebuilding.^{vii}

RECONCILIATION EDUCATION: AFGHANISTAN

Despite the intractable nature of the conflict, significant PE projects have been implemented during the more than thirty years of violence in Afghanistan. One of these is "Culture of Peace" led by a team from MacMaster University, with local NGOs. This project started in 2000 and ended in 2001 just after the events of 9/11, which caused an intensification of the Afghan conflict. The objective was to educate intellectuals, politicians, and Afghan leaders in the skills and knowledge necessary to resolve conflicts and facilitate reconciliation through improved inter-group relationships. The participants attended monthly workshops of three or four days each in the Afghan University. The topics began with non-Afghan conflicts, followed by the causes of the Afghan conflicts (regional, inter-group, etc.), the identification of factors that facilitated the continuation of violence, then finally reconciliation, prejudice, and the reduction of hate.^{viii}

The workshops saw participation by a range of sectors and groups, including at one point the Taliban. The participants reported that the workshops helped them to understand the political situation and the conflict, and to think of ways policies and social programs could affect and benefit social groups other than their own. The fact that the project was created by local people was important for the sense of ownership and relevance of content. It was also found that the role of the Afghan University was crucial in uniting different actors as it was a respected entity that could serve as a neutral space to overcome inter-group tensions. The presence of a respected international peace expert from MacMaster University, and a local expert, also gave legitimacy to the project and a sense of optimism about its results.^{ix} The fact that this project was successful in fulfilling local objectives but did not contribute to a decrease in violence demonstrates the importance of contextual conditions that support broad impact for PE, which were not present in Afghanistan.

CONCLUSION

These cases of PE provide many lessons for Colombia. The country is already using a case prioritization strategy under the Justice and Peace process, and it is possible that a similar strategy (although not necessarily under the same law) would be used for ex-FARC members considered ultimately responsible for grave crimes. A public education strategy such as Sierra Leone's could therefore be effective for informing the public about the case prioritization strategy in Colombia, where it could contribute by alleviating concerns about impunity and the dissemination of responses to citizen questions. The town hall meeting model that includes vulnerable groups is also relevant to Colombia, where peace must be implemented (and understood) at the local and regional levels.

Political education is also important in Colombia, especially because policies that result from the peace process should transcend governments to be state-implemented. Colombia could adapt a strategy like that of the Glenree Centre to implement education programs about policies that result from the talks, complemented by relevant training. The parties' use of these workshops to consolidate joint policies is especially significant in terms of facilitating the implementation of peace policy.

The "Culture of Peace" project in Afghanistan also provides lessons for Colombia. The latter has experience in uniting different sectors to talk about peace, and the Afghan example shows that these meetings can have some impact on peacebuilding while the conflict is still in effect. The inclusion of one international and one national expert in a neutral space facilitates the open environment. This is already being done in Colombia but the Afghan example provides a PE model that could be incorporated to existing initiatives. It is also important that Colombia note that despite this particular project's success in the midst of conflict in Afghanistan, the lack of supporting conditions to allow it a broader impact meant that it did not contribute to an end to the intractable conflict there, which still persists. Existing Peace Education in Colombia could form the base for the inclusion of these lessons learned and others, and the strengthening of peacebuilding at the local, regional, and national levels.

ⁱ Ardizzone, L. (2003) *Generating Peace: A Study of non-formal youth organizations*, *Peace & Change*, 28(1), 420-445.

ⁱⁱ Harris, I. (2004). *Peace Education Theory*. *Journal of Peace Education*, 1(1), pp. 5-19.

ⁱⁱⁱ Bar-Tal & Rosen, (2009). *Peace Education in Societies Involved in Intractable Conflicts: Direct and Indirect Models*, *Review of Educational Research*.

^{iv} Karwande, M. (2014) "Implementing an Engagement Model: Outreach at the Special Court for Sierra Leone." In *Transitional Justice, Culture, and Society: Beyond Outreach*. Ramirez-Barat, C. International Center for Transitional Justice: New York.

^v Ibid.

^{vi} Glenree Centre "Political Workshops". Webpage. Last Access 16/ 5 / 2014 http://www.glenree.ie/site/political_workshops.htm

^{vii} Ibid. and Glenree Center News Page . Last Access 16/ 5 / 2014 www.glenree.ie/site/news_january_december_2012.htm

^{viii} MacMaster University Afghanistan Peace Education Program. (2001) *Culture of Peace: Final Report*. Last Access 16/ 5 / 2014

http://www.humanities.mcmaster.ca/~mpeia/media_culture/reports.html#final

^{ix} Ibid.