



6 Educating for Peace

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“That since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed.”

UNESCO

Peace education is the process of acquiring the values and knowledge and developing the attitudes, skills and behaviour to live in harmony with oneself, with others, and with the natural environment. It aims to reduce violence, support the transformation of conflicts, and advance the peace capabilities of individuals, groups, societies and institutions.

Peace education builds on people’s capacities to learn and helps to establish a global and sustainable culture of peace. It is context-specific, but is essential and feasible in every world region

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and during all stages of conflict. Peace education takes place in many settings, whether formal or informal: in every-day learning and education, in the preparation, implementation and evaluation of professional projects with selected target groups, and in the support provided for conflict-sensitive education systems.

There is no uniform concept of what peace education should include and the international discourse on this topic is still in its infancy. Various social, political, economic, historical and cultural contexts must be taken into account, along with the different traditions and levels of intensity in the systematic debate and practice of peace education nationally.

Recent UN documents, such as the UNESCO concept of “Education for All” and the Sustainable Development Goals (Goal 4), underline the importance of peace education. The key prerequisite for success is the renunciation of all forms of corporal punishment, violence and psychological pressure as a means of delivering education.

Objectives of peace education

Peace education has four core and interdependent objectives:

≡ recognition of conflicts as an opportunity for positive change, which means developing the skills for the constructive management of conflicts and a respectful relationship with those who are “other”;

- ≡ recognition of different individual, social and political forms of (everyday) violence and the “fascination of violence”, which means promoting analysis of individual and collective experiences of violence, both past and present (→ Preventing Violence; → Dealing with the Past and Transitional Justice);
- ≡ analysis of the causes, impacts and after-effects of war, which means looking at possible mechanisms against and alternatives to war at the individual, social and international level;
- ≡ the development of visions of peace and community life and ways of translating these visions into practical action.

To implement these goals, it is necessary to create spaces in which learning processes can develop. These learning spaces for peace are based on the concept and implementation of “learning arrangements”: context-specific, bespoke settings that take account of factors such as learning objectives, target groups, methods, timeframes and available facilities. Learning arrangements do not prescribe any form of instruction or use manipulation. They encourage an ethical, political and practical focus and open-ended dialogue (→ Facilitating Dialogue and Negotiation).

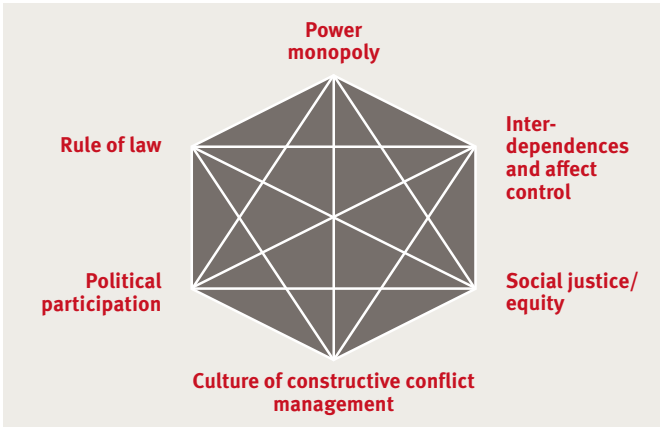
Essentials of peace education

Peace education *deals systematically with major challenges to peace*, such as conflict, hostility and enemy images, violence and war. By considering the many facets of violence in detail, we can develop a better understanding of violence and identify risk factors and prevention measures.

Peace is not perceived as a static condition but as a process of decreasing violence and increasing justice (→ Building and Sustaining Peace). Peace is also not seen as an exception to the rule, but as the preferred rule. It thus serves as both a normative aim and a pragmatic orientation for action.

Models such as the “civilisatory hexagon” can provide a basis for reflection, offering guidance and facilitating the visualisation of linkages between normative aims. In this sense, peace education

Civilisatory hexagon



Graph by: Christoph Lang

Figure 2, source: Dieter Senghaas 2007

has significant overlaps with other approaches such as civics or human rights education.

Peace education *initiates and supports social and political learning processes*, in which positive social behaviour, empathy and capacities for non-violent communication can evolve (peace capacity); knowledge about peace and war, conflict and violence can be acquired (peace competence); and the willingness to show civil courage and engage for peace is fostered (peace action). Peace education offers practical advice for education in family and preschool settings, in school and in the non-formal education sector. Conflicts within society must not be concealed but should be made visible within the framework of peace education.

People all over the world need *spaces to learn and experience peace* – at the micro level of the family and in daily life as well

as at the macro level of society and international politics. People *learn from experience and benefit from inspiring learning environments* with appropriate multimedia-based and interactive methods. All the senses and emotions play an important role and need to be integrated in designing learning arrangements. Humour is an element not to be underestimated. The real-life encounter with “the other”, be it members of conflicting parties in post-war societies, minorities and majorities or locals and migrants, is indispensable.

Delivering peace education

The way in which peace education is delivered has an important role to play in convincing people of its benefits, as do the substance and credibility of the peace message. Education methods must be adapted to a changing social and technological environment. Nowadays, the widespread use of social media offers new opportunities for education models. While the use and dissemination of elements like hate speech or fake news may pose threats to peaceful coexistence, social media also facilitate participation, knowledge-sharing and freedom of speech and information.

Peace education should capitalise on this opportunity by using different kinds of media intensively for its purposes, making online materials and media accessible and creating networks. For example, a youth council advises one Berghof Foundation project (Culture of Conflict 3.0: Learning Spaces and Media for Young People to Deal with Internet Violence and Hate), which is essential for understanding young people’s positive and negative experiences with social media. The youth council is involved, among other things, in developing target-group-oriented comic films – a joint effort which brings both great fun and great success.

A proven peace education approach discusses examples of successful peacebuilding and its protagonists. Authentic role

models who promote the principles of non-violence are helpful. Outstanding educators and advocates of non-violence (Maria Montessori, Paolo Freire, Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King) have long been sources of inspiration for the theory and practice of peace education. They have shaped the concept and image of peace education in their respective world regions in a distinctive way.

Methods of peace education

Peace education methods are based on the following practices:

Exemplary learning: reality is very complex, as are conflicts or peace processes. Case studies exemplify and make the backgrounds and the variety of (visible and less visible) relationships more concrete.

Contrasting and emphasising: focus attention on specific or determining viewpoints and problematical aspects.

Change of perspective: empathy is promoted by expanding the learners' own standpoint, which can be inflexible and deeply rooted, to allow a plurality of views.

Clarity and ability to perceive linkages: using techniques such as visualisation, problematical issues are relocated from the realm of the abstract and related to learners' own experiences.

Action-orientated: themes and issues are made accessible through activity and experience-based learning.

Peer-orientated: shared learning is encouraged through group work and mutual support.

Empowerment: building skills promotes self-confidence and autonomy.

Types of peace education

Due to the complexity of protracted violent conflicts and the resulting need for transformation efforts at various levels, a comprehensive approach is required. This must bring together two fundamental types of peace education.

(1) *Direct peace education*: Key elements of this approach are about encounter, inspiration and training. It could also be described as peace education for empowerment, with a focus on personal capacity development or identity-building.

(2) *Structural peace education*: This approach brings together elements that, with the aid of pilot projects, aim to develop learning modules, media and curricula, focusing on the sustainable delivery of peace education in the formal and non-formal education systems. The objective is to bring about a positive change in the structural conditions for peace.

The two types are closely linked. We regard the interaction between them as an essential prerequisite for sustainable peace education and its contribution to conflict transformation. In the Berghof Foundation's project Civic and Nonviolent Education in Jordan we combine training courses and dialogue workshops for multipliers on the one hand with implementing a curriculum at universities on the other. Both processes take place in cooperation with the Ministries of Education and Higher Education.

Evaluating peace education

Does peace education make the difference? Measuring the effects of peace education is a challenging task given the complexity and long-term nature of learning processes. Often, there is a lack of resources to conduct long-term studies, and there is a lack of systematic experience in how evaluation projects can be developed and applied in a conflict-sensitive and context-related manner (→ Learning Together). Nevertheless, there is an impressive variety of evaluation approaches, which mirror the diversity of peace education practices. In recent years, studies and evaluations have also demonstrated empirical evidence of peace education benefits.

References and Further Reading

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- Sustainable Development Knowledge Platform**, <https://sustainabledevelopment.un.org/?menu=1300>