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Peace Education in Post-Conflict Settings

ABSTRACT

Peace Education is considered to be an important pillar in preventing armed conflict and promoting positive peace. The aim of this article is to understand if education systems help development of peace processes in post-conflict settings and if the idea of implementing Peace Education into the formal curriculum could advance prospects for peace. In the paper three case studies are investigated more deeply – Japan, Germany and the South Caucasus. The article uses secondary sources to present the issue. The literature review includes academic books, articles, and official declarations of international organizations. The paper concludes that examples of integrating Peace Education principles in formal school education curriculums are not numerous, and the lack of a comprehensive data on Peace Education around the world could have been the reason that prevented governments from seeing the importance of implementing Peace Education within their national education systems.

Keywords: conflict, education, Peace Education, Japan, Germany, South Caucasus

INTRODUCTION

One of the contributing factors for enforcing the mindsets of war, as opposed to enforcing the mindsets of peace, have been the national education systems. Often, they have been used as a tool to implement nationalist policies aimed at building enemy images and dehumanizing the "other", preparing the populations for war, portraying the conflict as historical and unsolvable, and sustaining mobilization for war efforts. Education, however, can be used as a tool for peace building actions for sustainable solutions, which can promote shifting mindsets of war to the mindsets of peace.

The main aim of the article is to see if the education systems help promote peace processes in post-conflict settings. Additionally, the article intends to set basis for future works in order to examine thoroughly how the peace education theories apply to education systems in the wider spectrum, and whether the theories have potential to benefit the education system meaning to provide a viable shift to a more inclusive, peaceful and beneficial state of affairs in the education system. The data for the paper has been collected through collecting secondary sources, analyzing relevant documents and conducting content analysis. The literature reviewed for this article mainly includes academic books, articles, and official declarations of international organizations related to Peace Education.

The article proceeds as follows. The first section provides a brief definition of conflict and peace as well as discussion on both terms. Here the contributions of influential thinkers in the cross-sectorial field of Peace Education are compiled. Next, the current state of affairs is elaborated more deeply. Thereafter, the case studies of Japan, Germany and the South Caucasus are introduced. The reason for selecting these countries is simply due to the fact that there are very few post-conflict countries, which have reformed their education systems with respect to implementing Peace Education principles. Pioneers in this aspect have been post-World War II Japan and Germany. Their successful experience can be useful for the conflict-ridden South Caucasus region, which for many decades has been struggling with developing sustainable peace due to periodical manifestation of ethno-political conflicts. The following section presents discussion. The conclusion aptly summarises research findings.

THEORETICAL OVERVIEW

In order to further elaborate discussion, firstly, we must define what Peace Education constitutes. Peace Education can be defined in a variety of ways, and there is no one, universally accepted definition as such. According to R.D. Laing [as cited in UNESCO 2001], Peace Education is an attempt to respond to problems of conflict and violence on scales ranging from the global and national to the local and personal. Peace Education is about exploring ways of creating more just and sustainable futures [UNESCO 2005: 9]. Fran Schmidt and Alice Friedman consider Peace Education to be holistic: "It embraces the physical, emotional, intellectual, and social growth of children within a framework, deeply rooted in traditional human values." It is based on a philosophy that teaches love, compassion, trust, fairness, co-operation and reverence for the human family. The same authors also consider Peace Education to be essential for skill building; it empowers children to find creative and non-destructive ways to settle conflict and to live in harmony with themselves, and with others. Peace building is the task of every human being as well as the challenge of the human family [UNESCO 2005: 9].

In the views of Johan Galtung, one of the founders of the field of peace studies, Peace Education should not simply focus on the knowledge of the concepts of peace

and war, but it should promote conflict competence; how to cope with self-destructive anger, violence, reconciliation after violence, justice and injustice. Such an approach could prevent the intensification of tensions and stereotypes between groups that contributes to the emergence of negative attitudes, which, in turn, results in violent behavior [Galtung 1969].

Theories referred to below in this article explain the causes and conditions of conflict and negative peace, which is a prerequisite for understanding the place and the role of Peace Education in building sustainable peace. These theories are: Abraham Maslow's and John Burton's human needs theories [Maslow 1943; Burton 1993]; Ted Robert Gurr's relative deprivation theory [Gurr 1970]; John Dollard's frustration-aggression theory [Dollard 1939]; and Johan Galtung's rank disequilibrium theory [Galtung 1964]. All of the above-mentioned theories have a common thread: cognitive dissonance [Festinger 1957], which refers to a breakdown between some preferred state of affairs and an actual state of affairs.

In order to open a theoretical discussion on the causes and conditions of conflict, Johan Galtung's concepts of structural and cultural violence are used. Galtung's structural and cultural violence theory [Galtung 1969] argues that some social structures and social institutions harm people by preventing them from meeting their basic human needs and rights. One of the human needs and rights is the right to peace and the right to education. Structural violence concept is also closely related to the paradigm of Elitism in political theory, and politics tends to be dominated by elite groups, those at the top of the decision-making structures, which are also referred to as "ingroups" [Marsh, Stoker 2010].

The structural violence concept is particularly relevant to those education systems, which do not see that their policies and content creates a problematic environment for establishing a society with peace values, which, in turn, would enable conflict transformation processes to take place. First step towards a paradigm shift, however, is perception. However, when structural violence is perceived, then cultural violence [Galtung 1969] emerges. Cultural violence refers to the conscious approval, affirmation, and celebration of structural violence by members of the dominant "ingroup", who use platforms such as media, entertainment, school books, and other forms in the human symbolic environment that binds people together in common traditions, practices, religion, language, history, etc. This theory can be used to explain how cultural violence can be both used to sustain the current state of affairs and also be drenched into an education system, justifying the processes led or driven by dominant "ingroups" in terms of preventing change in the education system in order to maintain power over shaping societies' mindsets.

According to peace and conflict studies literature, the shift from structural to cultural violence often occurs because of relative deprivation and/or rank disequilibrium [Galtung 1964]. According to Ted Robert Gurr, when members of the minority group start to experience a situation where their "value expectancies", such as resources, rights, and services to which they feel entitled are greater in value than their "value

capabilities", which refers to resources, rights, and services which they feel they are realistically likely to acquire and be able to hold on to, relative deprivation occurs. As an example, those members of societies, who have the ability to assess the value capabilities compared to value expectancies question the justice of the current state of affairs in the education system. This can lead to the state of rank disequilibrium [Galtung 1964; Sandole 1986].

Rank disequilibrium begins to exist when there are multiple criteria for assessing a group's merit or contributions, and some groups are higher on one or a small number of socio-economic indicators (e.g. access to education) and lower on other indicators (e.g. quality of education, opportunities this education system provides, etc.). The preferred state of affairs would be to be indexed "high" on most of the indicators instead of low, which is the actual state, and this leads to the appearance of rank disequilibrium.

The emergence of either relative deprivation or rank disequilibrium, or sometimes both, triggers frustration. Frustration can create a dynamic which allows a conflict between frustrated "victim" and frustrating "victimizer" to escalate to aggression. According to the frustration-aggression literature [Dollard 1939], whether or not frustration stimulates an aggressive (violent) response towards the perceived source of the frustration depends upon the interplay of four factors: the importance of the frustrated goal; the severity (e.g. pain) of the experience of being frustrated; the frequency of the frustration experience; and the anticipation of punishment if one were to respond "assertively" to the perceived source of the frustration. Clearly, in the exceptionally dynamic frustration-aggression nexus, the preferred state of affairs is not to be frustrated, to be able to achieve one's goals, vs. the actual state of affairs, which is being frustrated, prevented from achieving one's goals.

At a fundamental level, when frustration occurs, we can speak about basic human needs that ontologically apply to all humans, regardless of their backgrounds. For John Burton [1993], when such needs are denied over time, there is bound to be a violent response to the perceived source.

Acquaintance with the stated theories is an important factor in understanding the causes and conditions of conflict, which could also include violence. The development of this understanding leads to demands for better solutions, in order to finally achieve sustainable peace, and, therefore, it lays foundations for the idea of introducing peace education to national education systems in order to prevent, avoid and resolve conflicts.

CURRENT STATE OF AFFAIRS

According to a leading voice in critical pedagogy, Paolo Freire, education is designed to serve political agendas [Freire 1985]. In other words, as long as the state controls and mandates education, it cannot be seen as a neutral disseminator of knowledge but, rather as a tool which helps promote particular political agendas,

in order to affect the minds of new generations. Predominantly, in those countries, which are more prone to conflicts, especially those that are multicultural and have sensitive relations with certain groups, as is the case in the South Caucasus countries, it is important for the education systems to promote inclusion and multi-culturalism, with high consciousness of the role that the education and educators can play in either promoting peace and stability or divisions and war.

In the process, it is also important to distinguish between Education for Peace which is the development of skills (personal conflict management, avoidance of conflict escalation, mediation, active listening, gender and difference awareness, etc.), and Peace Education which covers a much broader scope including human rights, democracy, weapons control, etc.

International organizations are playing an important role in setting guidelines and recommendations for national governments both with regard to Education for Peace, as well as for Peace Education. It is of significance to note that the main aim and the founding principles of international organizations such as the United Nations is ensuring peace and co-operation, and many of the UN instruments have particularly addressed the importance of Peace Education within their declarations, which strengthens the idea of promoting Peace Education as an integral part of the education systems across nations.

In 2005, UNESCO made a pledge to improve textbooks, teacher trainings and other necessary activities "with a view to educating caring and responsible citizens, open to other cultures, able to appreciate the value of freedom, respectful of human dignity and differences, and able to prevent conflicts or resolve them by non-violent means" [UNESCO 1995]. According to Art. 1 of the UNESCO document, tolerance is an essential requirement for peace and is the virtue which makes peace possible and which contributes to the replacement of a culture of violence by a culture of peace. Education for tolerance should encourage development of independent judgment, critical thinking and ethical reasoning skills [Page 2008].

The constitutional mandate of UNESCO notes that since war begins in the minds of individuals, it is in the minds of individuals that the defenses of peace should be constructed [Page 2008], implying that education systems should not be used as a weapon to form negative images of the "other", instead Peace Education principles should be implemented in national educational curriculums.

Article 26 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights [1948] declares that "Education shall be directed […] to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms. It shall promote understanding, tolerance and friendship […] and shall further the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace" [Page 2008]. According to the UN Resolution 39/11, Right of Peoples to Peace [1984], peace is seen as a human right, therefore, "if peace is considered as a right, then people should have the right to be educated and informed about that right, as any particular right is rendered meaningless if individuals and societies are not informed that they have it" [Page 2008].

The Vienna Declaration and Programme of Action [1993] sees peace education as being part of human rights education and human rights education as crucial for world peace. "Education should promote understanding, tolerance, peace and friendly relations between the nations and all racial or religious groups" [Page 2008].

Sharon Anne Cook [2008] defines peace education as education that promotes concepts of non-violence, human rights, social justice, world-mindedness, ecological balance, meaningful participation. Peace is also defined as all those times when a nation is not actively at war, and peace education as everything supporting that condition.

THE (SUCCESSFUL) CASES OF JAPAN AND GERMANY AND THE CASE OF THE SOUTH CAUCASUS

Pioneers in experimenting with Peace Education in the past 50 years have been Japan and Germany. There are only a few cases across the world, which have demonstrated successful implementation of Peace Education in formal schooling. After the defeat in WWII in 1945, Japan reformed its education system on the basis of a new constitution and specifically the Fundamental Law of Education, which proclaims pacifism and democracy to be its basis and renounces war forever as its sovereign right and the use of force as means of settling international disputes. The preamble of the Fundamental Law of Education aspires "to bring up people who love truth and peace" [Hara 2012].

As the consequences and damage caused by the two atomic bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki began to be revealed to the public, the Japan Teachers Union (JTU) adopted the slogan "Never send our students to the battlefield again" in 1951, and it became the central focus of JTU activities. In 1968, the Hiroshima Municipal Board of Education distributed its first official guidelines for teaching the subject of Peace Education to elementary, junior high and senior high schools. Their Peace Education, which is based on the hope of a peaceful world, which will be free of nuclear weapons, provided the foundation of Peace Education all over Japan. Since then, Peace Education has been taught not only as an independent subject, i.e. moral education, but also across different subjects such as social studies and Japanese literature, as well as special activities such as school excursions to Hiroshima and Nagasaki, since the 1980s [Hara 2012].

Following World War II, "re-education"/"re-orientation" was an important factor in rebuilding both parts of Germany. The process entailed dismissing teachers with Nazi party backgrounds and destroying ideologically biased textbooks. The new constitution of the Federal Republic of Germany, also promoted peace and democracy and granted educational autonomy to the state governments, which caused decentralization of the education system, setting basis for grassroots peace education in the Federal Republic. In Germany, writing and publishing textbooks was not conducted

by the central government-selected scholars, therefore, books differ between states. Based on the belief that school education should not undermine independent and critical thinking of children, textbook drafts were judged based on whether it was in line with the Basic Law, and not on the basis that its ideology might have been problematic.

Although the educational guidelines of the federal states vary to some extent, they have a lot in common in terms of their attitudes towards History Education – History Education at school is regarded as a part of Peace Education in Germany. In History Education in Germany the main focus lays upon analyzing the value and behavior of those Germans involved in the inhuman and cruel political system and activities of the Third Reich in the past [Hara 2012].

The successful cases of post-conflict Japan and Germany with regard to implementing Peace Education principles into their national educational systems, gives hope for countries such as Georgia to also be successful in this field. However, a deeper analysis of the problems facing the current education system in Georgia is required in order to apply relevant Peace Education components to the education system.

When discussing the challenges to conflict resolution in the South Caucasus region, Galtung, referred to the traits of the three "cultural mentalities" held by the people of this region, which pose considerable obstacles to any peace process [Galtung 1997]. The "Warrior Mentality", is one of the three mentalities he discussed as a preventive mechanism for establishing peace, where he underlines that violence is seen as a professional pursuit in the Caucasus; and often formal education systems through officially accredited textbooks, that positively portray warrior heroes, along with, visual monuments, such as statues of man on horseback, enforce this mentality to consider violence as normal and natural, and also entails the idea that conflicts as well as negotiations are about winning, not solving. The "Chief-Sheikh Mentality" refers to the poor civil society traditions the region has, where the Chief-Sheikh type of leaders makes all the decisions, including decisions on war, peace and foreign policy, while people submit. The final of the three cultural traits, the "Victim Mentality", has formed because of the suffering that the groups have experienced from others (e.g. invaders throughout centuries), as a result, each group demands undivided attention and focus only on their own trauma. Therefore, a dialogue easily turns into parallel monologues: nobody listens to each other, but each participant articulates their grievances. This mentality is the prerequisite to preserving the *status quo* of conflicts, as new ideas are not welcome, if it does not put the opponents' own concerns in the center of the discussion [Galtung 1997]. As logical as it can be, the combination of these cultural traits is not contributing to shifting the mindsets of war to the mindsets of peace. Even though school students in the South Caucasus region might have not directly experienced, nor have had the memory of conflict manifestations (until the most recent Armenian-Azerbaijani conflict), the formal education system, through history textbooks helps to maintain an image of the other country being the

enemy, which prevents a sustainable resolution to their problems [Sultanova 2012]. In all South Caucasus countries, the state approved education systems through its textbooks of Literature, History, and more recently Civic Education, forces the new generation to maintain the historical memory of conflict, which empowers the idea of being in the actual phase of conflict currently, as well as intensifies the stereotypes, assumptions, and negative attitudes towards the "other", that have been culturally constructed within the societies throughout time. Therefore, promoting culture of tolerance, anti-discrimination, and peaceful conflict transformation is challenging in the face of the content of the textbooks of the above-mentioned subjects.

Integrating Peace Education principles into national education curriculums can promote positive conflict transformation and contribute to the process of peace building. Official state-approved curriculums determine what is important to learn within a society and legitimize what should be included as relevant knowledge and practices. From the analysis of the literature, it can be assumed that teachings that include Peace Education principles are not often titled as Peace Education, and may fall under the topic of civics, citizenship, human rights education or else, therefore, in order to obtain a deeper understanding of what constitutes Peace Education and if specific countries' national education systems are in line with Peace Education principles, a close examination of each country's educational policy is required.

CONCLUSION

Examples of integrating Peace Education principles in formal school education curriculums as are in the cases of post-war Germany and Japan are only a few. Therefore, we can assume that the lack of a comprehensive data on Peace Education around the world has prevented government officials of conflict-affected countries, such as those in the Caucasus region, and aid workers from implementing Peace Education in a systematic and comprehensive manner [Hara 2012].

Peace Education proposes a wide range of approaches, as well as aims which differ on a state-to-state basis, according to the audience and socio-political and ideological context. However, Peace Education overlaps and shares theoretical and practical grounds with other types of "progressive educations" [Goldstein, Selby 2000]. These encompass the following: Civics Education, Development Education, Environmental Education, Human Rights Education, and Multi-Cultural Education. Peace Education shares a concern of contemporary problems with global education as the basis of its content and a belief in participatory and active learning strategies [Hicks 1988; Perkins 2002]. David W. Hicks and Johan Galtung also distinguish between negative and positive peace, as well as direct and indirect (structural) violence [Hicks 1988; Galtung 1964, 1969].

Peace Education has been identified as sharing common ground with Citizenship and Human Rights Education through beliefs in the interdependency of the world's

citizens [Harris, Morrison 2002; Goldstein, Selby 2000], and through its faith in tolerance and respect for difference, and an appreciation of the rights of others as being important to establish and maintain sustainable peace.

Concluding from the analysis of the case of the South Caucasus region, it is evident that education systems in their current form are not beneficial for the development of peace processes in this region, while the case of successful implementation of Peace Education principles into the education systems of post-war Japan and Germany gives hope that the idea of implementing Peace Education into formal educational curriculums in post-conflict countries could advance prospects for peace, development and prosperity.

From the analysis of the existing literature, it can be assumed that teachings that include Peace Education principles are not often titled as Peace Education, and may fall under the topic of civics, citizenship education or else, therefore, in order to obtain a deeper understanding of the issue, an examination of national education systems on a country-to-country basis is required in order to assess whether specific educational policies states are implementing are in line with Peace Education principles.

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