Essentials of Peace Education

Working Paper of InWEnt and IFT

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The following discussion paper lines out the basic elements, d
eficits and necessary steps to improve peace education within
the framework of development work. However, it does not
constitute a final position, but rather represents a work in
progress, which will realize further improvement through
collective discussions. The first discussion has taken place in
February this year at the international expert meeting „Pro-
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*"Education is fundamental to peace-building. Education for
peace, human rights and democracy is inseparable from a style
of teaching that imparts to the young, and the not so young,
attitudes of dialogue and non-violence – in other words, the
values of tolerance, openness to others and sharing."*

With these words the UNESCO Director-General, Mr. Koichoro
Matsuura, stresses the significance of peace education to the
process of establishing a civil and peaceful society.
Peace Education plays a decisive role not only in dealing with
the violent potential present within societies, but also in
containing violence within the international framework of
development cooperation.
The term „Peace Education" is equally diverse as the expecta-
tions attached to it: It consists of theoretical deliberations as
well as didactic models and practical approaches that are
based upon peace as fundamental value. Overlaps occur with
models of global and inter-cultural learning, as well as with
human rights education and democratic education.
International concepts such as „disarmament and non-proli-
feration education", „global education" or „tolerance
learning" resort to basic approaches and methods of peace
education but are viewed as independent learning and educa-
tion programs. In the context of development cooperation it

is particularly important to clarify the relationship between
Peace Education and concepts of basic education. A basic
education that is understood as qualitative education and
which links normative questions about values, „democratic
citizenship" and „life skills", proves necessary yet does not
suffice to (always) cause peace-furthering effects. Many
peace educational approaches are based on basic education.
Additionally, several successful peace educational approaches
werde developed, which, due to their rich methodology, prove
effective in situations where comprehensive literacy or com-
prehensive schooling are hard or impossible to come about.
UNESCO (1994) and the International Conference of the
Ministers and Secretaries of Education (2001) passed a num-
ber of framework action plans crucial to the advancement of
this area. Yet, it will be necessary to deal with the matter on
an academic level as well to better determine commonalities,
connecting points as well as differences.
That raises the question of what exactly constitutes the
distinct character of peace educational deliberations and
actions.
There is no uniform definition of Peace Education. Albeit,
diverse challenges and problems, differing individual and
social settings as well as general politico-structural conditi-
ons, undeniable commonalities and similarities exist. One of
these commonalities is the realisation that peace education is
indispensable to constructively deal with conflicts and that it
furthers the capability to resolve them peacefully. These
concerns are realised in most different contexts and situati-
ons.
The importance and variety of peace educational approaches
to action increases the necessity for a transparent presentati-
on of underlying premises and objectives. That includes the
underlying concept of conflict, violence, war and peace. It is
these key terms of Peace Education and their definition which
determine the respective understanding of peace education.
For instance, it makes a significant difference whether con-
flicts are exclusively perceived as destructive forces or as
opportunities of change.
As significant as dealing with different concepts of conflict
and violence maybe, it seems equally important in develop-

ment cooperation (especially in post-conflict regions) to agree on similarities and commonalities. That way, differences won't be overrated and it will be possible to experience being part (with all rights and duties) of a society. However, this does not translate into hasty appraisals of society but rather into an integration that is based on the idea that we are equal, because we are different."

1. Basics of Peace Education

Peace Education is based on the presumption, that conflicts do not necessarily have to escalate violently, that there is no innate readiness for violence, and that war is not a natural phenomenon. Well documented social science research proves this point.

As a professional concept for action, Peace Education combines the strengthening of conflict resolution capabilities, dealing with the downsides of human nature, lust for the ill, and the fascination of violence. This is the very reason why refraining from the use of force is an essential prerequisite for successful Peace Education and an essential condition for successful human coexistence.

There seems to be widespread agreement that violence mustn't be a means to conflict resolution. Yet, there are diverging standards in the individual, social and international realm as to tolerating, accepting and approving the use of violence. Peace Education rejects the threat and the use of force on all levels and is committed to comprehensive means of civil conflict management. Based on that a second premise follows: If violence is dispensable, it will be possible through learning tools to transcend a constructive management of conflicts, and the capability to refrain from using force. These deliberations constitute the fundamentals of Peace Education.

2. Peace as a process: Peace Education as a contribution to developing a culture of peace

Peace Education is based upon a positive and procedural concept of peace that is characterized by a decrease in violence and an increase of fairness. Hence, Peace Education aims at developing a comprehensive culture of peace and serves as the foundation for a peaceful coexistence. A culture of peace encourages and furthers values, attitudes, traditions, behaviors and lifestyles that rest on principles of human rights, tolerance and non-violence. This has to be transcended not only through explanations but also through personal, social and political actions. According to the General Secretary of the United Nations, Kofi Annan, the reach of such universal values is not determined by their universal adherence and application.

An ethic code always constitutes an ideal vision of the future that serves as an orientation for taking action.

A culture of peace is also a culture of observance and intervention, requiring diverse social skills that Peace Education wants to convey. Not adjustment but the courage to stand up for one's believes must be honoured and encouraged. Discrimination, racism and anti-Semitism mustn't be tolerated. Peace cannot be achieved and maintained in the absence of social justice, the presence of misery, fear and non-freedom in the local and global realm.

Peace Education enables us to become aware of our own situation and offers options to take action in order to deal with it and to find (together with others) possibilities for positive change.

That also includes an education aimed at obtaining a global perspective of the world and a perspective of „one- world" that are necessary to counter national egotisms. Complementing „global learning" approaches, Peace Education offers holistic perspectives, open mindedness and cooperation to counterbalance uncontrolled globalization strategies and their destructive national effects. In practice this can cause conflicting goals between (authoritarian) ideas of an adapted and loyal citizen, on the one hand, and peace educational efforts aiming at the capability of political action critical of society and authority on the other hand. Peace Education can contribute to peacefully resolve conflicts arising under such circumstances.

3. Peace Competence, Peace Capacity, Peace Action: Peace Education as a comprehensive learning concept

Peace Education perceives itself as an holistic and comprehensive learning concept that does not scale down or question the sense of individual procedures. Such a learning concept comprises three basic elements:

Peace competence is essential to grasping interrelations, categorizing developments, to carrying out analyses and to developing strategies in dealing with conflicts, violence and war. Peace competence primarily translates into know-how, which includes knowledge of the escalation mechanisms of conflicts, the causes of war and of violence. It also comprises the knowledge of people's peace capabilities and the social and international requirements. Furthermore, the ability to assess one's own possibilities, capabilities and limits is an important aspect of Peace competence as well.

Peace capacity can be described as social competence that comprises self-strength, empathy, and the ability to change perspectives as well as communication and cooperation skills. Peace action is the motivation and ability to take social and political action related to developing democracy, implemen-

ting human rights and overcoming violence. It aims at influencing political decisions and developments on the community, national and international level and can take diverse forms. Within this context, however, it is vital to take on responsibilities and to resist conformity forces.

Peace Competence, Peace Capacity and Peace Action belong together, build upon each other and are mutually dependent.

4. Interconnected diversity: The Central topics and approaches of Peace Education

Practical approaches of Peace Education are diverse and vary significantly. The following areas are part of core topics and approaches:

4.1. Dealing with violence and approaches to overcoming violence:

Comprises the task of raising people's awareness for all forms of violence (direct, structural and cultural violence) and a systematic search for alternatives to the use of force. Different models of violence prevention open up new perspectives and offer non-violent alternatives of action.

4.2. Dealing with military, armament and war:

This topic critically deals with legitimizing mechanisms of armament and military, their social and political function as well as their effects. The range of approaches includes (national) myths justifying the military and traumata related activities as a way of dealing with violence and the effects of (civil-)war.

4.3. To enable and facilitate constructive conflict management and non-violent action:

One of the most important but also one of the most difficult approaches of Peace Education is transcending conflict capabilities. There is a wide range of training concepts available (reaching from peer-mediation to training in conflict management), directed at different target groups.

4.4. Overcoming prejudices and foe-images, developing tolerance and intercultural competence:

Dealing with foe-images (for a long time related to the cold war) and prejudices belongs to the central topics of Peace Education. However, dealing with foe-images takes on special characteristics in differing historic, social and cultural contexts. The focus rests on dealing with prejudices and foe-images within the context of ethno-political conflicts. That begs the question of how differences can be expressed without any discriminating connotation or without attributing a devaluating meaning to them.

4.5. Facilitating democratic participation and/or mediating Democratic capabilities:

Comprises the training of different forms of political participation and forms of civil disobedience.

4.6. Gender related aspects

Practicing and accepting violence plays an important role in the (social and cultural) construction process of gender roles. Boys and girls, women and men, play different roles within society and within the family. This is particularly the case in situations involving violence as well as in the context of conflict resolution, which is why gender specific approaches of peace education are crucial. An essential field of action is the abolishment and overcoming of any kind of disadvantages of or discrimination against women and girls in the global and the social realm.

4.7. Dealing with the media

Dealing with the media increasingly becomes a central topic, since it affects social and political behavior. Because of the dominating presence and reflection of violence in media, violence is presented as an acceptable option in daily life. This tendency must be counteracted. Yet, dealing with the new media also has to show the opportunities of alternatives for human interaction. New media is an important tool for peace-educational work that should be used more frequently. It can particularly contribute in regions lacking basic educational structures to develop basics in human rights and democracy as well as peace education.

Educational reality often deals with the mentioned topics and approaches in an isolated manner. However, from a peace education point of view it seems desirable to exercise an interconnected approach which takes all aspects into consideration.

5. Places of Peace Education within and outside the schooling system

Aside from pre-school education, extracurricular education and adult education, schools offer a suitable framework for peace educational approaches. The crucial (but often restricted) prerequisite for practicing peace education in a formal area is the opportunity to participate in educational processes and to obtain basic and general education.

Peace educational approaches and programs, however, mustn't be restricted to the „formal area" of state-run educational institutions. In many countries in the southern hemisphere, less than half of the children visit formal educational institutions. However, peace education has to focus on these children as well, which illustrates the necessity for different approaches and procedures. Here, peace education also follows the concept of life-long-learning and offers respective models for all age groups.

In both areas, facilitating but not preaching self-organized and self-determined learning processes rest at the center of

peace education. Because of its methodological richness, its orientation and interdisciplinary approaches modern peace education is a model for new ways of learning and educating in the future. Learn situations have to be developed as social spaces, where children, youth and adults have opportunities to co-determine and to actively shape that space and where personal development and episodes of achievement are possible.

6. Cultural and regional distinction: contextual reference of Peace Education

To implement the mentioned topics and approaches cultural and regional distinctions have to be made: peace education can also be perceived as a situational learning process. Much depends on the respective conditions on site. In states and regions with strong tensions, conflicts, crises or wars, peace education must be conceptualized differently than in states and regions where human rights and democratic principles are widely realised and guaranteed. These are considerable challenges for any attempt to initiate peace-educational learning processes within the field of development cooperation. Development cooperation often takes place in regions that are torn by crises and conflict. In this particular context, it has to struggle with the individual and social effects of the collective use of force. In these cases peace-educational approaches are indispensable which focus on management, reconciliation and educational prerequisites to developing democracy. In this context, peace education has to primarily deal with collective processes, attitudes and changes. Here, peace education believes in the rule of law and aims at furthering the rule of law through participatory strategies.

7. Peace Education between theory and practice

Peace education has a rather strong connection with praxis, which often lacks an equally comprehensive theoretical base. Yet, peace education is more than the linear implementation of the findings of reference sciences into the educational practice. Peace education requires an independent theoretical foundation and reflection. At the same time findings in peace and conflict studies and other social sciences have to be recognized and/or adopted into the application of peace education. Recent research in the social sciences shows that inhuman attitudes are most likely to be reduced through empathy, that is the capacity to emotionally identify with others. A higher educational qualification as a possible precondition to social prestige can, under specific circumstances, lead to reducing inhuman attitudes. Hence, developing social competence and cognitive capabilities are important tasks of peace education. These scientific findings are applicable on modern industrialized societies but not necessarily on agriculturally structured states or developing countries. Obviously, peace education has to develop differentiated analyses, models and approaches in this context. Peace education depends not only on good will but also on knowledge and professionalism, which can be guaranteed through providing vocational training and possibilities for continuing education. Often peace education has to operate with insufficient structures and funding. States have to recognize peace education as an independent field and it will be necessary to assign adequate means to it, according to its relevance for living together peacefully.

8. Peace education and development cooperation - problems and challenges

Peace education becomes increasingly important as a specific approach of development cooperation. To date, long term and, increasingly also contemporary practical experience with peace educational approaches has become available. At the international expert meeting „Promote Peace Education around the world" first steps were taken towards a systematic analysis and evaluation of these experiences. Still, there is a lack of verifiable criteria to determine which project areas and which partners are suitable to initiate and develop peace educational processes or to determine the limits of cooperation and advancement. Do we have to enlarge cooperation with NGOs and grass roots initiatives, because they are less restrained than government-sponsored or government affiliated initiatives? Or, can projects with governmental cooperation partners offer better continuity and reliability, because they can be integrated into formal education?

The review, application and advancement of existing standards of conditions for successful peace work and for peace educational learning processes can and has to contribute to the development of applicable instruments.

Peace education in the field of development cooperation is on its way to becoming more qualified and professional. Therefore it will be necessary to develop differentiated concepts, corresponding educational standards and evaluation procedures. Yet, it has to be considered that the implementation of peace educational programs in development cooperation, represents an external interference. With regard to the authorization of „humanitarian intervention", we have to remember that conflicts in partner countries belong to the affected persons and can only be solved by them. What is asked for are possibilities of manageable and external ways of accompanying the process. The process of developing and promoting solutions takes time and can be supported through a well directed exchange of regional resources. Although this point

is important to internal conflicts, the increasing international interdependence and mutual impact must be considered as well and calls for global action.

9. Limits and Opportunities: Reflecting on Theory and Praxis of Peace Education

Field reports and comprehensive evaluation measures are necessary in order to realistically estimate and asses the possibilities and results of peace education and to further develop both theory and praxis. Yet, up to now, their availability is insufficient.

Peace education also has to realise, how little its possibilities of influence are and that counter interests and goals are diverse and widespread. People are affected by educated behavior, but more importantly by their daily experiences, the way in which social coexistence is organized and how problems are being handled. Peace education cannot solve such basic social problems as insufficient resources or their unjust distribution. To the contrary: Peace education requires favorable political conditions, which support its institutionalization and guarantee its operation. Only then, peace education will have a real opportunity to develop its comprehensive effectiveness. Otherwise, peace education cannot do much more than to continuously point out threatening situations or developments, to maintain their profile, to name those responsible, make alternative suggestions and to work contribute tiny bits to great changes.