UNIVERSAL OBSTACLES TO PEACE EDUCATION

Sara Zamir,
Ben-Gurion University, Eilat, Israel.

Keywords: peace, peace education, mistrust, political education, stereotypes, demonization and de-humanization, war culture, peace-culture, UNESCO.

Contents

Summary

Any educational system considers as a target, on one hand, to impart the heritage of the past and on the other hand, to prepare the individual for the future society.

Therefore, it seems as if there is nothing more natural than educating towards the value of peace, which unifies both past and future: the value of peace is not only rooted within the scriptures but it is also an inseparable part of the aspiration for a better future.

Nevertheless, while educating towards peace, educational systems, apparently, face some universal obstacles. The source of those obstacles stems, so it seems, from the actual need to put the theoretical value into practice, namely, to transform the value of peace from a mere "vision" to an actual "way of life".

The aim of this chapter is to present four main universal obstacles to peace education, to evaluate their severity and also to suggest possible solutions.

Mistrust towards the peace process. While the interests of countries can be defined in political, ideological, economic and strategic terms, the concept of trust lies in the psychological field. The concept of trust combines both an emotional dimension (I feel I can trust this person) as well as a cognitive dimension (I know I can trust this person). The demand to be trustworthy as well as trustful is not a simple one, coming usually after long-lasting conflicts.

Stereotypes and expressions of demonization and de-humanization of the enemy. In continuous, difficult and violent conflict situations, there is an increasing tendency of each side, to view the opposite side as an inhuman entity, which does not deserve to take part in the community of nations. Alongside the tendency to de-legitimize the opposite side, every society claims absolute justice for itself alone. A continuous conflict tends to exhaust the rational powers which act in a society, and to create unfounded generalizations, which do not distinguish between people, trends and movements.

Peace education as political education. Since peace education relates to political agreements as well as political agenda, it is sometimes perceived as a powerful tool used by the authorities to impose their interests upon people.

War as a culture (war might be conceived as an innate as well as an acquired part of society). War is deeply rooted in people's culture; the spirit of war is embedded within literature, poetry, rewritten history, media, language and widescreen movies; All these tend to over-glorify wars and as a result inflame the imagination of youth.

Alongside these universal obstacles, which are directly connected to the deeds of education towards peace, the critics of peace education, which question the very essence of the process, might become its ultimate barrier, long before peace education is being actually implemented.

The Culture of Peace. The UN, UNESCO, and other related global institutions, as well as international Academic Research and Peace NGOs such as "IFLAC Pave Peace" (The International Forum for the Literature and Culture of Peace), should unite together to help combat these universal obstacles in peace education and to promote possible solutions which would spread the culture of peace globally and effectively, as for instance, the setting up of a powerful global TV by satellite, for the diffusion of Peace Education and Peace Culture.

1. The Spectrum of Peace Definitions: Meanings and Implications

One can learn about the difficulties of defining "peace" from analyzing answers of parents of children aged three to thirteen years, given to the questions "what is war?" and "what is peace?" (Myer-Walls, Myers-Bownan & Pelo, 1993). After decoding the answers of parents who were asked those questions, one can notice several contrasts between definitions of "war" and those of "peace".

The responses describing war were active and concrete and included aspects of causality. On the other hand, the responses describing peace were less consistent and tended to describe peace as an antonym of war.

The war answers were more likely than the peace answers to outline what people do, while the peace answers were more likely to outline what people feel.

Compatible with those findings are the results from research concerning children's attitudes towards peace and war (Davies, 1984). Surprisingly enough, even young children, 5 to 9 years old have positive images about war and conflict while their images

of peace are weak and passive. The imagery they associated with war included dominant images such as "daring", "adventurous" and "heroic" while the imagery for peace included recessive images like "white" and "silent".

According to Galtung (1973), there are two different concepts of peace: one is the negative peace definition. That is to say, defining peace in terms of an absence of war, ceasefire and disarmament. The other concept is the positive peace that means cooperation, human rights, justice, anti-racism, and conservation of the environment.

Definitions like the "negative peace", tend to appear passive and vague. Nevertheless, self-standing definitions like "positive peace" convey a new realm of connotations.

The contrast between war and peace definitions may be due, in part, to the fact that war is seen as a dominant event for which one can identify exact dates of beginning and ending. War is named, sometimes by several names; those names convey its nature, dates, ideology and causes. Moreover, most people were socialized to glorify war and to justify its causes.

On the other hand, times of peace are very unlikely to be named. Peace is perceived as merely a period between wars or as an absence of wars. It is also difficult to identify or observe unique "peace behaviors" during peaceful times; Thereof, peace is often treated as an abstract term, like the "End of Days" vision which is disconnected from daily life. Peace, as a strategy, can be defined in three different ways (Dahan & Yonah, 1997). Each definition constitutes different perspective about peace, bearing upon different views and ideals. As a result, each definition preaches a different educational conception. Even though this typology was originally meant to suit the Arab-Israeli conflict, it has meaningful implication on conflicts elsewhere.

According to the first definition, peace means *ending the state of war.* This definition is based upon the assumption that the costs of war, both in body and soul, are too high for any society either to pay the price or to stay indifferent. The hope, corresponding with this definition, is that bloodshed will cease so that the nation will stay secured within its borders. The ideal stemming from this definition is the ideal of a buffer zone. The physical expression of this ideal is building a security fence which will avoid enemy's intrusion. The mental expression of the buffer-zone ideal is maintaining identity separation between people. Underlying this definition is the expectation that the buffer zone will protect the nation's society from assimilating in the region, for better or for worse.

The concept of peace education, which derives from this definition, is limited and involves mainly, academic studies of peace agreements and their practical implications. The meaning of peace is conveyed as ending the state of war, nevertheless, the former enemy remains a threat.

According to the second definition, peace means *world prosperity.* The ideal compatible with this definition is the ideal of economic development. The concept corresponding with this definition is that technologically modern and sophisticated countries will assist their inferior neighbors and other undeveloped countries, in order to achieve peace.

Namely, rich countries will accelerate processes of modernization like industrialization, urbanization and democratization within poor countries, in order to maintain relative tranquility.

The implication of the second definition for the educational system is that the educational system of the modern world can continue using degrading images of the undeveloped countries and also maintaining cultural imperialism. The danger of this strategy might result in expressions of paternalism within the curriculum materials. In fact, these processes may achieve the exact opposite of peace culture since it could arouse emotions of resentment and inferiority.

According to the third definition, peace means *collaboration among people.* The ideal compatible with this definition, is the ideal of equality.

Contrary to the first and second definitions, the third definition neither includes fear of assimilation within different cultures, nor assumes moral or economic hierarchy.

Collaboration means planning, building and using common projects on an equal basis. Collaboration also means acknowledgment of cultural pluralism, namely, recognition of the fact that different cultures can interact with each other without losing their identity.

The implications of the third definition for the educational system are radical: these implications actually demand general revolution in the terminology, values, stereotypes and beliefs which are rooted in any society accustomed to wars.

This view is actually expressed in a comprehensive definition for peace, embedded in the resolution of the 18th Session of the General Conference of UNESCO (1974). There, it was stated that, "Peace cannot consist solely in the absence of armed conflicts but implies principally a process of progress, justice and mutual respect among the peoples designed to secure the building of an international society in which everyone can find his true place and enjoy his share of the world's intellectual and material resources".

-
-
-

TO ACCESS ALL THE **18 PAGES** OF THIS CHAPTER,
Visit: http://www.eolss.net/Eolss-sampleAllChapter.aspx

Bibliography

Aharoni, A. (2002) "Peace Culture - Literature and Media Required for Sustainable Global Development", IPRA conference, Kyung Hee University in South Korea, July 1-5, 2002. (This presentation defines the concept of "Peace Culture" and discusses the ways for its attainment).

Aharoni, A. (2203) Women Creating A World Beyond War and Violence, Haifa, Israel, New Horizon Publishing, 156 pages. Amazon.com. See also: www.iflac.com/ada (This anthology is comprized of

assays, letters, projects and poems about women and peace).

Bar-On, D. (2002). "Conciliation through Storytelling: Beyond Victimhood". In Salomon, G. & Nevo, B. (Eds.), Peace Education around the World: The Concept, Underline principles, The Practice, N.J and London: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates Publishers, PP: 109-116. (This article defines the psychological term "Victimhood" and introduces the TRT (To Reflect and Trust) approach as its retort).

Bar-Tal, D. (1994) "Transforming social beliefs in Israel – From Conflict to Peace", Kol Adam, Jerusalem: Adam, PP: 6-19 (In Hebrew). (This article analyses the nature of six functional social beliefs characteristic to a society in conflict).

Benyamini, K. (1981). "Israel youth and the image of the Arab", Jerusalem Quarterly, 20, PP: 87-95. (This article presents the findings of a longitude study about stereotypes held by youth in Israel).

Buber, M. (1958) I and Thou 2e, Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark. Translation: R. Gregory Smith. (A poetic book, first published in German in 1923, that places ethics and belief in the context of dialogical encounter).

Cohen, A. (1985). Ugly faces in the Miror. Tel-Aviv: Reshafim. (In Hebrew). (This book presents the findings of studies concerning the portrayal of the Arab image in children's books).

Dahan y. & Yonah, Y. (1997). Peace Education, unpublished paper, Beer-Sheva: Ben- Gurion University of the Negev. (This paper discusses three definitions of peace and their implication on peace education).

Davies, R. (1984). Children and the Threat of Nuclear War, Lancaster: Center for Peace Studies. (This book contributes to the study of children's imagery and perception concerning wars).

Firer, R. (2002). "The Gordian Knot between Peace Education and War Education". In Salomon, G. & Nevo, B. Peace Education around the World: The Concept, Underline principles, The Practice, N.J and London: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates Publishers, PP: 55-62. (This article introduces the concept of war education both as a product of war culture and as a mean for its perpetuation; the article also discusses the effects of war education on peace education).

Firer R. & Adwan, S. (2002). Comparing Palestinian and Israeli Textbooks, Research summary 28-3/02 distributed by the Common Grounds News Service. (This research summary analyses Palestinian and Israeli history and civics textbooks and discusses the way those books are used in each society to reflect the conflict in which they are both engaged, and are also part of a wider societal mechanism to ensure that the conflict becomes part of the development of children's identities).

Gabizon, R. "The Disjunctive subject is the Unifying One". The Echo of Education, 59. PP: 5, (In Hebrew). (The article suggests that the process of peace education should embody three important elements: Information, Analysis and Assessment).

Galtung, J. (1973). Peace: Research, education, action. Christian Ejlers, Copenhagen.(Professor Galtung is widely known as a pioneer in academic peace research, founded and directed the International Peace Research Institute, Oslo (PRIO) 1959- 69 and the Journal of Peace Research, director of Transcend Peace and Development Network).

Gordon, H. (1983)." Existentialist writing and the enhancing of trust: A method developed in Buberian learning groups". Israel Social Science Research, 1, Ben-Gurion University of the Negev, PP: 65-78. (This book describes a peace education project which aim has been to initiate a dialogue between Arabs and Jews by implementing the principles of the existential philosophy of Buber).

Haass, R. Arthur, P. Pollak, A & Smyth, M. (2002). The Northern Ireland Peace Process, United States Institute of Peace, Washington, D.C. (This presentation discusses the successes and failures of the Good Friday Agreement of 1998).

Hareven, S. (1996)"The Vocabulary of Peace" In Hareven, S. (author and ed.) The Vocabulary of Peace, Tel-Aviv: Zmora Bitan, PP:179-186. (The article discusses the correlation between political changes, cultural diversities and terminology).

Hicks, D. (1988). "Understanding the Field". In Hicks, D. (Ed.), Education for Peace, London & N.Y: Routledge, PP: 3-19. (the article discusses the growing interest in peace education, its origins as well as its nature).

IPCRI, (2004). Report Analysis and Evaluation of theNew Palestinian Curriculum: Reviewing Palestinian

Textbooks and Tolerance Education Program Grades 4 & 9. Submitted to: The Public Affairs Office US Consulate General. Jerusalem June 2004. (IPCRI is the Israeli/Palestinian Center for Research and Information).

Johnson, M L. (1998) "Trends in Peace Education". ERIC Digest. ERIC Clearinghouse for Social Studies and Social Science Education Bloomington IN. (This Digest was created by ERIC, THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER; It contains a brief scrutiny of peace education in the 1980s and in the1990s. http://www.ericfacility.net/ericdigests/ed417123.html).

Kozol, J. (1975). The Night is Dark and I am Far from Home. Boston: Houghton Miffin Com. (This book discusses the socialization effects of textbooks on pupils).

Lam, Z. (1994). "School during the Political Battle over Peace". In Pasternak, R & Zidkiyahu, S. (Eds.), A New Era or a Loss of Direction – Israelis Talk about Peace. Tel-Aviv: Eitav, PP: 279-282 (In Hebrew). (This article discusses the problematic issue of peace education and political stands).

Leman, J.(2002). "Belgium: The Triangle of Peace Education, Legislation, Mediation". In Salomon, G & B. Nevo, B (2002.), Peace Education around the World: The Concept, Underline principles, The Practice, Lawrence Earlbaum Associates Publishers N.J and London, PP: 165-176. (This article describes the programs of "multicultural education" and "antiracism training" in Belgium and discusses their role in the process of peace education").

Michel, S. (1994). "War Culture". In Pasternak, R & Zidkiyahu, S. (Eds.), A New Era or a Loss of Direction – Israelis Talk about Peace. Tel-Aviv: Eitav, PP: 164-167, (In Hebrew). (This article criticizes the potential danger of some literary works which might contribute to the promotion of a war culture).

Myers-Walls, J. A., Myers-Bouman, K. S. & Pelo, A. E. (1993). " Parents as educators about war and peace", Family Relations, 42, PP: 66-73. (This article presents a study concerning parents' perception of the concept "peace" and "war").

Rosandic, R. (2000). Grappling with Peace Education in Serbia – Peaceworks, No. 33, U.S.A Institute of Peace. (This booklet discusses the factors confronting peace education as well as reviews and evaluates some peace education programs in Serbia).

Salomon, G. (2002). "The Nature of Peace Education: Not All Programs Are Created Equal". In Salomon, G. & Nevo, B. (Eds.), Peace Education around the World: The Concept, Underline principles, The Practice, N.J and London: Lawrence Earlbaum Associates Publishers, PP: 3-14. (This article presents three main programs of peace education, according to a socio-political typology).

Shamir, S. "Studying the Arabs and Studying Ourselves". In Pasternak, R & Zidkiyahu, S. (Eds.), A New Era or a Loss of Direction – Israelis Talk about Peace. Tel-Aviv: Eitav, PP: 153-160. (In Hebrew). (This article suggests some possible ways of improving Jews' understanding of the Arab world).

UNESCO. (1974). Recommendations Concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace, UNESCO, Paris. . (The recommendations concerning Education for International Understanding, Co-operation and Peace and Education relating to Human Rights and Fundamental Freedoms, have been adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization during its eighteenth session, which was held in Paris and declared closed the twenty-third day of November 1974).

White, P. (1988). "Countering the Critics". In Hicks, D. (Ed.), Education for Peace, London & N.Y: Routledge, PP: 36-50. (This article reviews the critics of Cox and Scruton concerning peace education and provides counter discussion).

Yadlin, A. (1994). "New educational Tasks in the Face of New Political Process", In Pasternak, R & Zidkiyahu, S. (Eds.), A New Era or a Loss of Direction – Israelis Talk about Peace. Tel-Aviv: Eitav, PP: 269-274 (In Hebrew). (This article analyses some educational problems which characterize a nation in a state of siege and suggests new educational deeds in order to face those problems).

Zamir, S. (2003). The Issue of Peace Education in Israel, Ph.D thesis, Beer-Sheva: Ben-Gurion University of the Negev. (This thesis discusses the concept of peace education in the Israeli context and suggests an interdisciplinary syllabus for peace education).

Biographical Sketch

Dr. Sara Zamir was born in Israel in 1959. She is a Lecturer at Ben-Gurion University and Achva College, Departments of Education. She obtained a PH.D in the field of "Peace Education" from Ben-Gurion University, the Negev, Israel. She has participated in international academic Peace Conferences, and published articles in the field of peace education. She was elected as a delegate for the 33rd Zionist Congress in 1997. She developed a "leadership project" for young women: "Women in Politics" for WIZO organization.