P

Peace Education as a Field

Maria Hantzopoulos[1] and
Hakim Mohandas Amani Williams[2]
[1]Education Department, Vassar College,
Poughkeepsie, NY, USA
[2]Gettysburg College, Gettysburg, PA, USA

The words "peace" and "education" by themselves engender much contention; they are not apolitical terms. They have diverse definitions and their meanings, both separately and apart, are historically, geographically, and contextually bound. While the two terms convey multiple meanings on their own and together, there is general consensus around some common ideas that define peace education. Generally defined as the procurement and mobilization of knowledges, skills, attitudes, dispositions, and behaviors to work towards more just and sustainable alternatives for the present and future, with a nod to examining the past, peace education is concerned ultimately with eradicating all forms of violence through the realization of negative and positive peace. Negative peace is defined as the cessation of direct and physical violence, whereas positive peace is concerned with the elimination of structural violence, and in particular the systemic and institutional forces and structures that reflect ideologies of domination, control, and marginalization.

This dual focus constitutes comprehensive peace education and serves as the basis of some of the key principles that give contours to the field. Essentially, peace education as a whole, in its myriad manifestations worldwide, considers how practice, theory, and pedagogy combine to envision a more equitable future grounded in negative and positive peace. While the belief that education can help eliminate all forms of violence is a site of considerable debate, there are also other debates regarding peace education's origins, philosophies, trajectories, impact, and even its disciplinary parameters. This entry takes up these debates to map the field. As a philosophy, process, and pedagogy, peace education is a broad conceptual and practical tent that encompasses education that promulgates and interrogates disarmament, conflict resolution, human rights, environmental protection, and development.

Development of Peace Education as a Field

There are certain signposts that signal the coalescence of peace education as a field: recognition by policymakers, NGOs/INGOs/IGOs, educators, and researchers; coherent philosophies; ongoing

debates about its trajectory; increasing number of publications, conferences, assessments, and evaluations (Synott 2005).

Although peace education's foundations as a codified field can be traced to the early nineteenth century – with the field gaining momentum in the Post World War II era – its antecedents go much further back and its myriad histories and roots are often unacknowledged. Many indigenous communities have practiced and have passed down nonviolent traditions in resolving their conflicts, and other peoples have always employed peace education in similar manners. Most of the world's major religions have offered writings and teachings on how to create and maintain peace, though they do also feature war, and some of the adherents of these religions have also interpreted and deployed these religious texts for incredibly violent purposes. However, peace studies – the parent field of peace education – admittedly owes some of its postulates about living peaceably and justly from key religious texts (Harris and Morrison 2003).

Prominent peace education scholar Ian Harris describes how the growth of peace education parallels the growth of peace movements, particularly in Europe. In the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, for instance, peace movements proliferated in response to both wars and rapid industrialization, the former of which emphasized disarmament and latter of which linked peace with dismantling class conflict. While much of Europe either began or continued its brutal colonization of parts of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean, and Latin America at this time, peace movements ironically also gained momentum and legitimacy in Europe.

The development of peace education in the twentieth century takes multiple forms and trajectories depending on specific geographical and historical contexts. Within the Global North, World War I ushered in a new era of peace activity, before, during, and after the war, including the establishment of the Nobel Prize and the League of Nations. Its formalization as a field congealed alongside various peace movements, as people the world over challenged the dominating political realist influence of "peace through strength."

These peace movements saw educators and students forming peace societies to denounce war and militarism, discussing its perils and threats. Early movements focused on disarmament in the face of World War I and thereafter. Peace education started to take shape both informally and formally in schools as a way to promote peace among nations through education, as school peace leagues were being formed and social studies teachers were interweaving international relations into their curricula (Harris and Morrison 2003).

It was also during the early twentieth century that educational and social activists, such as Maria Montessori, John Dewey, and Jane Addams began to develop progressive educational theories that saw schools as potential sites to promote a shared humanity rather than a narrow nationalism that often rationalized violence toward and marginalization of an "Other." While the atrocities of World War II certainly challenged these approaches, the aftermath of this war prompted a resurgence and renewed commitment to global citizenry and world peace, bolstered by the formation of the United Nations.

The heightened visibility of global movements for decolonization also greatly influenced the development of peace movements and nonviolent approaches across the globe. In India, Gandhi honed his theories and practices of nonviolence that ultimately led to Indian independence from British rule, inspiring others globally to fight for liberation through nonviolent tactics. From the Civil Rights Movement in the United States to anti-apartheid organizing in South Africa, many movements began to adopt nonviolent approaches as a central tool for decolonization and liberation. While not all movements against colonial, neo-colonial, settler-colonial, and imperial empires at the time were nonviolent, many of these uprisings resulted in more socially just practices under new regimes that emphasized positive peace through literacy campaigns, social and national welfare programs, public health, and equitable housing policies. Finally, the emergence of the Cold War, the nuclear arms race, and the threat of nuclear war between the USSR and the USA promoted peace movements globally that centered on

nuclear disarmament, which culminated in the 1970s and 1980s; academics and scholars began to establish peace research projects in direct response to the threat of global obliteration.

Initially, peace research focused on direct violence, both personal and large-scale, defining peace as the absence of violence and war, also known as negative peace. However, research shifted to understanding root and structural causes of violence, highlighting how people suffer at the hands of social, political, cultural, and economic systems. This led to more nuanced conceptualizations of violence, including physical, behavioral, or direct violence that uses force against an individual, group, or nation; structural violence, in which social and economic systems produce poverty and wealth/resources gaps and inequity; political violence in which opposition forces are silenced, marginalized, and abused; and cultural violence, in which groups of people are denied dignity, rights, and opportunities based on their identities bolstered through racism, patriarchy, militarism, classism, and other forms of systemic oppression etc.

By centering systemic understandings of violence, researchers expanded their notion of peace from the lack of direct violence to also the attainment of justice, equity and human rights, and well-being. This became known as positive peace. Johan Galtung's trailblazing work in peace research identified five problems that interfere with the development of negative and positive peace: violence or war, inequality, injustice, environmental degradation, and alienation (Galtung 1969). He builds on this framework to posit values for a truly peaceful society: nonviolence, economic welfare, social justice, ecological balance, and participation. Peace research helped catalyze further systemic critique from a feminist perspective and peace activists like Birgit Brock Utne (1985) and Betty Reardon (1988) specifically began to use the term "peace education" in their seminal works like Education for Peace and Sexism and the War System. Viewing and linking masculinist tropes to war, violence, and militarism, much of peace education theory rested upon dismantling patriarchy for the attainment of peace.

By the 1980s, peace education became more recognized and legitimized as a field with scholarship linked to it, and the connections among peace research, peace movement, and peace education became stronger. The field was propelled forward as it grappled with issues like growing worldwide wealth inequality, environmental degradation, the persistence of violent conflicts, the increase in terrorism, and abundant racism, sexism, and xenophobia. Scholars like Sharp (1984) laid out approaches to peace education through various realms such as government strength, conflict mediation and resolution, personal peace, world order, and as power relationships, while Reardon's work (1986) laid out the conceptual foundation of the field to include notions such as planetary stewardship, global citizenship, and humane relationships. David Hicks (1988) began to identify the ways in which skills, knowledges, and attitudes, influenced by concepts identified in peace research, coalesced to form an interrelated foundation for peace education.

With gaining prominence, peace education became associated and connected to other forms of educational justice movements such as human rights education, conflict resolution, environmental education, multicultural, cross-cultural, and tolerance education. Scholars began to point out the inherent linkages between peace education and the other forms of education, articulating that peace education is in some ways the umbrella under which many of these other initiatives rest. For instance, peace education, which conceptually deals with causes and practices of violence and non-violence, necessarily intersects with human rights education, which conceptually grapples with human dignity and entitled rights. Another thread of peace education is represented in the popularization of conflict resolution programs in the 1980s, which focused on interpersonal relations, as well as larger global relations. Moreover, the connection between peace education and environmental education became more pronounced. Global concerns about pollution, climate change, resources, and even natural disasters exacerbated by human consumption, conflict, and way of life centered ecological security as part of a just and sustainable peace. Yet, despite this robust

development of peace education in the twentieth century, it still remains marginalized and is not always incorporated into the basics of school curricula.

Major Pedagogical Influences in Peace Education

Many prominent educational theorists have greatly influenced the pedagogy of peace education. While peace education is not aligned with any singular philosopher or educator, the writing of John Dewey, Maria Montessori and Paulo Freire have provided primary educational inspiration for peace pedagogy.

John Dewey (1916), considered one of the most notable educational theorists and philosophers from the United States, played a major role in reconceptualizing, advancing and advocating for progressive and experiential education. Philosophically speaking, he was an instrumentalist who believed that ideas could be implemented to solve real world problems. As World War I approached, Dewey believed that the use of force was necessary in ushering in a democratic global polity. However, after seeing the ravages of war and receiving a biting critique from one of his former students, Dewey more ardently pursued the connection between education and peace. He averred that a teaching and purposeful promotion of internationalism could be a central check against the kind of insidious nationalism that fed war. World War II would harden his resolve even further.

Dewey also denounced the regurgitative practices in education as a burden and hindrance to the imagination, and viewed subjects such as geography not just as a listing of mountains, towns, and cities and history as just an enumeration of dates and key persons but as disciplines that needed to be taught with context and social meaning in mind. This notion of epistemic historicity is important for peace education. Teaching these subjects in such a manner would also permit learners to apprehend wider connections beyond themselves; in other words, acknowledging their interdependencies and world citizenship. He thus

advocated for experiential learning, where students would meld theory and practice, and cooperative learning where students would build skills for democratic building and living.

Dewey's centering of education on the child's interests is not dissimilar from Maria Montessori's (1949). Montessori's methodology and theory emerged out of her own scientific observations and experiments regarding the education of the whole child. She believed that students are natural learners and that teachers should be a guide in the classroom, allowing the child's passions and imagination to direct the learning. She travelled the world advocating that values such as global citizenship and respect for diversity were just as central as math and science. She posited that a child-centered and child-directed pedagogy and environment had the power to foster independent, reflective thinking, self-discipline, creativity, and relational skills. These dispositions were, in her estimation, pivotal in building democracy and peace.

These characteristics were formulated within a very structured classroom environment; what seemed like chaos to the untrained eye or ear was the self-directed industry of children simultaneously at work *and* play. In the resource-rich Montessori classroom, there was peer learning, self-assessment, experiential learning, adaptability, and communication. These concepts drove a balance between independence and interdependence, which are both requisite for individual empowerment, critical thinking and cooperative living. With the teacher being de-centered, learners became acclimatized to self-monitoring and intrinsic motivation. This modeling was key because Montessori also argued that peace knowledges and content had to be commensurate with peace pedagogies and structures so that learners would grasp more resolutely the tangibility of nonviolence.

Montessori's radical re-envisioning of the teacher-student relationship was also central to Paulo Freire's theories on learning. Freire visualized teachers-as-students and students-as-teachers in the enterprise of interdependent knowledge co-construction and conscientization (a term meaning consciousness-raising). This

horizontalization of the teacher-student relationship was about modeling an authentic democratic living as both teacher and student worked toward each other's liberation.

Just as Dewey had denounced recounting, cataloging and regurgitation in the classroom, Freire framed this as banking education: where the teacher deposited knowledge into the student to be retrieved at a later time. He distinguished this from problem posing education which was about inverting hierarchies and inculcating an ethic of constantly asking questions of taken-for-granted assumptions. He conceptualized education as an iterative loop – a veritable praxis – of critical reflection and theorization as well as critical action toward the unmasking, analyzing and deconstructing of the social, political and economic contradictions of the world that render so many people oppressed, and the co-crafting of just and sustainable alternatives.

This praxis emerged out of Freire's literacy work with peasants in Brazil. He was determined not only to teach them how to read but how together learn how to read the world. That is, this reading of the word and the world would catalyze people to transcend their immediate cultural and economic milieu and in turn, analyze the larger structural violence that shaped their current condition and oppression. His work led to his exile from Brazil and reaffirmed to him that education was indeed (and never truly is) neutral; that it is an inherently political act, because it can either be used for oppression or liberation. It is in this way that peace education may be used to dismantle the ways in which educational sites, including but not limited to schools, might be reframed from sites of hegemony to ones of transformation, particularly for those that are most marginalized by the dominant culture.

These aforementioned ideas and practices constitute peace education's inheritance. Together they signal core competencies that peace educators and learners seek: critical thinking and analysis, empathy and solidarity, participatory and democratic engagement, communication strategies, conflict transformation skills, and reflexivity.

New Directions and Reclamations

While the word "peace" remains a term loaded with varied meanings and interpretations, peace education as a field continues to evolve amid much contestation. It has gained momentum and increased legitimacy, discursively and in practice. The creation of the Journal of Peace Education, a UNESCO (2001–2010) decade for the international promotion of peace and nonviolence, and peace education-themed special interest groups within prominent academic societies such as AERA and CIES all signal this increasing legitimacy. However, peace education still faces some challenges: there are calls for more evaluation to ascertain its impact, and more theorization so that as an educational paradigm it may become more intellectually robust. As explained earlier, it also intersects with related subfields, such as human rights education, global citizenship education, education for sustainable development, and conflict resolution.

There is currently a resurgent interest in reclaiming "critical peace education," something that was briefly promoted in the 1970s, but gave way in the 1990s to a focus on a "culture of peace."

These recent calls for critical peace education specifically respond to the post-structural and post-colonial critiques that find the field, and the concept of peace, both too normative and decontextualized in its foundation (Gur Zeev 2001; Zembylas and Bekerman 2013). Rather than conceptualizing peace education in generalized ways, critical peace education focuses on localized experiences and transformative agency specific to these contexts. Thus, at the core of critical peace education is an intensified analysis of power; it re-centers the interrogative gaze on structural inequality, deepened in the most recent epochs of globalization (Bajaj 2008; Bajaj and Hantzopoulos 2016).

In the face of increasing widespread neoliberal economic policies and widening income inequalities between the rich and the poor, a critical peace education can make significant contributions at a

time when flows and shifts of global capital oft take precedence over a focus on human rights violations and environmental degradation. Moreover, despite these challenges in what seems to be an emergent global polity, far-flung communities seek commonalities in their struggles, facilitated by technological advancements, to stand in solidarity with each other in their quest for a more just and peaceful world.

Critical peace education compels conceptual, theoretical, methodological and practitioner re-inventions in continuing its challenge to massive expenditures on militarization, persistent xenophobia, the unsustainable logics and practices of the modernization project, conservative and populist backlashes, and the perpetual "war on terror." The field must re-commit to ongoing decolonization efforts – both intellectual and ontological – and balancing the tensions inherent to fueling a planetary consciousness without localized realities being subsumed into a blur.

Ironically, peace education needs the aforementioned challenges and its own discontents, because together, they constitute a dialectical relationship, in which boundaries are constantly being re-contoured and re-envisioned. Sustainable peace is a process, mode and destiny, and peace education can play central roles in disrupting staid circuitries, and re-imagining and enacting more just and equitable trajectories and ways of being

with(in) ourselves, with each other, and with the world.

References

Bajaj, M. (2008). *Encyclopedia of peace education*. Charlotte, NC: Information age publishing Inc..

Bajaj, M., & Hantzopoulos, M. (2016). *Peace education: International perspectives*. London: Bloomsbury.

Brock-Utne, B. (1985). Educating for Peace: A feminist perspective. Pergamom Press: New York.

Dewey, J. (1916). *Democracy and education: An introduction to the philosophy of education*. New York: The Free Press.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York: Continuum.

Galtung, J. (1969). Violence, peace and peace research. *Journal of Peace Research, 6*(3), 167–191.

Gur-Zeev, I. (2001). Philosophy of peace education in a post-modern era. *Educational Theory, 51*, 315–336.

Harris, I., & Morrison, M. L. (2003). *Peace education* (2nd ed.). Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Company.

Hicks, D. (1988). *Education for peace: Issues, principles, and practice in the classroom*. New York: Routledge.

Montessori, M. (1949). *Education and peace*. Chicago: Henry Regerny.

Reardon, B. (1988). Comprehensive peace education: Educating for global responsibility. New York: Teachers College Press.

Synott, J. (2005). Peace education as an educational paradigm: Review of a changing field using an old measure. *Journal of Peace Education, 2*(1), 3–16.

Zembylas, M., & Bekerman, Z. (2013). Peace education in the present: Dismantling and reconstructing some fundamental theoretical premises. *Journal of Peace Education, 10*, 197–214.