

## **PEACE EDUCATION: DEFINITION, APPROACHES, AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS**

**Ian Harris,**

*Department of Educational policy and Community Studies, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, WI 53201, USA*

**Keywords:** Peace education, peacebuilding, strategies for peace, environmental education, human rights education, development education, conflict resolution education, international education

### **Contents**

1. What is Peace Education?
  2. Goals for Peace Education
  3. History of Peace Education
  4. Difference between Peace Education and Peace Studies
  5. Peace Education as a Strategy to achieve peace
  6. Peace Education for the Twenty-First Century
  7. Conclusion
- Glossary  
Bibliography  
Biographical Sketch

### **Summary**

The achievement of peace represents a humanizing process whereby individuals manage their violent tendencies. Peace educators contribute to this process by teaching about peace—what it is, why it doesn't exist, and how to achieve it. They use their educational skills to teach about how to create peaceful conditions. In schools and community settings peace educators impart the values of planetary stewardship, global citizenship, and human relations. Peace educators teach about how conflicts get started, the effects of violent solutions to conflict, and alternatives to violent behavior. Peace education students learn how to resolve disputes nonviolently. Students also learn in peace education classes about peace strategies that may be used at both micro and macro levels to reduce suffering caused by a multitude of different forms of violence – wars, ethnic conflicts, structural domestic and civil violence, as well as environmental destruction. All these different forms of violence threaten human existence.

Peace education has both short and long term goals. Peace educators address the sources of immediate conflicts and give their students knowledge about strategies they can use to stop the violence. In the long term they hope to build in students' minds a commitment to nonviolence and provide knowledge about nonviolent alternatives, so that when faced with conflicts they will choose to behave peacefully. In this way peace education tries to build peace into the minds of its students. Such efforts attempt to counteract violent images in popular culture and the bellicose behavior of politicians.

Peace education has taken place informally throughout history as various cultures pass

on to their progeny understandings about the ways of peace. Every major religion has a peace message. In the twentieth century formal peace education programs have been introduced into schools and colleges.

Peace education has taken different shapes as it has developed around the world. At the beginning of the twentieth century in the United States and Europe people concerned about the advent of mechanized warfare began to educate the population in those countries about ways that war could be outlawed through the League of Nations and other international agreements. Educators in countries in the South, more concerned about the structural violence and poverty, have promoted a variety of peace education known as development education to improve the quality of living in poor countries. Towards the end of the twentieth century people throughout the world concerned about the suffering of minority groups began to see that human rights education could engender respect for principles embodied in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Educators concerned about ecological catastrophe have developed a type of peace education known as environmental education that explains the principles of living sustainably on this planet. By the beginning of the twenty-first century, peace educators concerned about civil and domestic forms of violence have developed a new form of peace education known as conflict resolution education. All these different forms of peace education have in common teaching and learning about the roots of violence and strategies for peace.

### **1. What is Peace Education?**

Peace education hopes to create in the human consciousness a commitment to the ways of peace. Just as a doctor learns in medical school how to minister to the sick, students in peace education classes learn how to solve problems caused by violence. Social violence and warfare can be described as a form of pathology, a disease. Peace education tries to inoculate students against the evil effects of violence by teaching skills to manage conflicts nonviolently and by creating a desire to seek peaceful resolutions of conflicts. Societies spend money and resources training doctors to heal the ill. Why should not they also educate their citizens to conduct affairs nonviolently? Peace educators use teaching skills to stop violence by developing a peace consciousness that can provide the basis for a just and sustainable future.

The word ‘education’ comes from the Latin word ‘educare,’ to draw or lead out. Peace education draws out from people their instincts to live peacefully with others and emphasizes peaceful values upon which society should be based. Educators, from early childhood to adult, can use their professional skills to tell their students about peace. The study of peace attempts to nourish those energies and impulses that make possible a meaningful and life enhancing existence.

Peace educators address the violent nature of society, and ask, “Must it be this way?” Aren't there nonviolent ways that human beings can solve their conflicts? How do we get to these other ways? Just as war has its adherents and its schools, peace can be taught and promoted so that it becomes active in the mind of citizens and world leaders. Traditional education glorifies established power to legitimize its authority. History books praise military heroes and ignore the contributions of peace makers. Violence,

carried out by governments waging war and repressing civil rights, also appears in homes where physical and psychological assaults confront conflict, disobedience, anger, and frustration. Children too often learn in school to respect the military and to support those structures that contribute to violence, like violent forms of popular entertainment. They also learn not to question violent political and social behavior. Peace educators question the structures of violence that dominate everyday life and try to create a peaceful disposition in their students to counteract the omnipotent values of militarism.

A European peace educator has defined peace education as: "The initiation of learning processes aiming at the actualization and rational resolution of conflicts regarding man as subject of action." (vor Staehr, 1974: 296) According to this definition, peace educators teach peacemaking skills. A Japanese peace educator states that peace education is concerned with peaceless situations (Mushakoji, 1974: 3). These include struggles for power and resources, ethnic conflicts in local communities, child abuse, and wars. Students in peace education classes study institutions that create violence as well as the values that give credibility to those structures. An American peace educator, Betty Reardon, defines peace education as "learning intended to prepare the learners to contribute toward the achievement of peace" (Reardon, 1982: 38). She goes on to state that peace education "might be education for authentic security," (Reardon, 1982: 40) where a need for security motivates humans to form communities and nations.

Because individuals disagree about how to achieve security, there are many different paths to peace. An Israeli educator (Salomon, 2002) has stated that peace education programs take different forms because of the wide variety of conflicts that plague human existence. Each different form of violence requires a unique peace education strategy to resolve its conflicts. Peace education in intense conflicts attempts to demystify enemy images and urges combatants to withdraw from warlike behavior. Peace education in regions of interethnic tension relies upon an awareness about the sufferings of the various groups involved in the conflict to reduce hostilities and promote empathy for the pain of others. Peace educators in areas free from collective physical violence teach about oppression within that society, explain the causes of domestic and civil violence, and develop a respect for global issues, environmental sustainability, and the power of nonviolence.

In addition to providing knowledge about how to achieve peace, peace educators promote a pedagogy based upon modeling peaceful democratic classroom practices. They share a hope that through education people can develop certain thoughts and dispositions that will lead to peaceful behavior. Key aspects of this disposition include kindness, critical thinking, and cooperation (Harris and Morrison, 2003). Developing such virtues is an important part of peace education. However, it is not the complete picture. The struggle to achieve peace takes place at both individual and social levels. Peace educators work with individuals to point how the root problems of violence lie in broader social forces and institutions that must be addressed in order to achieve peace.

Peace activists use community education to alert people about the horrors of violence. Working through non-governmental organizations they use public relations techniques – guest speakers, press releases, media interviews, and newsletters – to provide awareness about nonviolent solutions to conflict. Educators from many different academic

disciplines also practice peace education. Sociologists in college classrooms talk about violence in civil society. Political scientists describe world order models meant to manage global conflicts. Psychologists explain the structures in the human psyche that lead to violent behavior. Anthropologists debate about violent and peaceful tendencies of collective human behavior. Historians write about the history of peace movements. Literature professors review works of art devoted to peace. Professional teachers in primary and secondary schools teach about peace in many settings, from early childhood to high school. Most infuse peace themes into their curriculum while some organize peace studies programs that provide a more comprehensive overview of peace strategies.

-  
-  
-

TO ACCESS ALL THE 20 PAGES OF THIS CHAPTER,  
Visit: <http://www.eolss.net/Eolss-sampleAllChapter.aspx>

### Bibliography

Banta, B. (1993). *Peaceful Peoples: An Annotated Bibliography*. (Metuchen, N.J: Scarecrow Press). [This book summarizes research studies on peaceful societies.]

Bickmore, K. (2002). Good training is not enough: Research on peer mediation program implementation. In I. Harris & J. Synott (Eds.), *Social Alternatives: Peace Education for a New Century* (special edition), 21(1), 33-38. [This article describes a research study in the Cleveland Public Schools that had a positive effect in reducing violence in schools that had adopted conflict resolution education programs.]

Bodine, R., & Crawford, D. (1999). *The Handbook of Conflict Resolution: A Guide to Building Quality Programs in Schools*. San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. [This book is meant for teachers, providing descriptions of how and why they should implement conflict resolution programs in schools.]

Bok, S. (1998). *Mayhem: Violence as Public Entertainment*. Reading, MA: Perseus Books. [This book presents complex perspectives on the impact of media violence.]

Boulding, E. (2000) *Cultures of Peace: The Hidden Side of History*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press. [This book describes utopian efforts to create peaceful communities and families.]

Bowers, C. A. (1993). *Education, Cultural Myths, and the Ecological Crisis*. Albany, NY: SUNY Press. [This book contains a radical critique of western education that takes promotes destruction of the environment.]

Brocke-Utne, B. (1985). *Educating for Peace: A Feminist Perspective*. New York: Pergamon Press. [This book describes the oppression of women, a topic that is often overlooked in peace studies.]

Comenius, J. (1642/1969). *A Reformation of Schools* (S. Harlif, Trans.). Menston (Yorks): Scholar Press. [This book presents an approach to education that promotes universal knowledge in vernacular schools.]

Diaz, J. C. (1979). "Reflections on Education for Justice and Peace." *Bulletin of Peace Proposals*, Vol. 10, no. 4: 374- 381. [This article argues that peace education should address unjust situations and not just be concerned with the elimination of war.]

Eliot, T. S. (1936). "The Hollow Men," *Collected Poems of T.S. Eliot*. New York: Harcourt Brace and Company: 107. [This is one of the most famous poems of a well known and respected twentieth century

American born English poet.]

Friere, Paulo (1970). *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*. (New York: Seabury). [This book describes a radical approach to adult literacy.]

Gregor, T. (1996). "Introduction" In Thomas Gregor, ed. *A Natural History of Peace* (pp. ix-xxiii). Nashville: Vanderbilt University Press. [This article summarizes the content of a book that overviews anthropologists' understandings about the human struggle to achieve and maintain peaceful societies.]

Harris, I. (1988). *Peace Education* Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co. [This book presents an overview of the field of peace education.]

Harris, I. & M. Morrison (2003). *Peace Education* (2nd. Edition) Jefferson, North Carolina: McFarland & Co. [This book is an update on the field of peace education, including perspectives on conflict resolution education.]

Heater, D. (1984). *Peace through Education*. London: Falmer Press. [This book describes the contribution of the Council for Education in World Citizenship in Great Britain.]

Hutchinson, F. (1996). *Educating Beyond Violent Futures*. London: Routledge. [This collection of essays discusses the challenges of educating for a peaceful future.]

Johnson, D. and Johnson, R. (1991). *Teaching Students to be Peacemakers*. Edina, MN: Interaction Press. [This book has lessons on teaching peace appropriate for adolescents.]

Jones, T., & Kmita, D. (2000). *Does it Work: The Case for Conflict Resolution Education in our Nation's Schools*. Washington, DC: CREnet. [This collection of essays describes the state of the art of evaluation of conflict resolution education programs at the end of the twentieth century.]

Kant, I. (1795/1970). Perpetual peace: A philosophic sketch. In H. Reiss (Ed.), *Kant's Political Writings* (2nd ed., pp. 93-143). Cambridge, MA: Cambridge University Press. [This short book describes how humans can use their rational capacities to create institutions that will resolve conflicts and hence promote peace.]

Lantieri, L. and Patti, J. (1996) *Waging Peace in our Schools*. Boston, MA: Beacon Press. [This book provides arguments for using conflict resolution in urban schools.]

Mische, P. (1989). Ecological security and the need to reconceptualize sovereignty. *Alternatives*, XIV(4), 389-428. [This article criticizes overemphasis upon using military forces to achieve security and argues for an alternative approach to security based upon environmental sustainability.]

Montessori, M. (1946/1974). *Education for a New World*. Thiruvanniyur, India: Kalakshetra Press. [The book describes an educational method based upon creating nurturing schools and allowing students to choose how they want to learn.]

Mushakoji, K. (1974). "Peace Research and Education in a Global Perspective." In Christolph Wulf, ed. *Handbook on Peace Education* (pp. 300-314). Germany: Frankfurt/Main: International Peace Research Association. [This article argues for understanding the global system as a way to achieve peace.]

Nastase, A. (1982). "Education for Disarmament: A Topical Necessity" *Teachers College Record*, Vol. 84, no. 1: 184-192. [This article argues for peace education as a way to convince people about the dangers of the arms race during the Cold War between the United States and the Soviet Union.]

Prothrow-Stith, D. (1991). *Deadly Consequences*. New York: Harper Collins. [This book by a health educator argues for teaching anger management skills to young people as a way of preventing adolescent violence.]

Prutzman, Priscilla, Lee Stern, M. Leonard Burger, Gretchen Bodenhamer, (1988). *The Friendly Classroom for a Small Planet*. Gabriola Island, Canada: New Society Publishers. [This handbook provides curriculum designed to build cooperation and community.]

Read, H. (1949). *Education for Peace*. New York: C. Scribner's Sons. [This book describes how the human imagination through art can inspire people to achieve peace.]

Reardon, B. (1982). *Militarism, Security and Peace Education: A guide for concerned citizens* Valley Forge, PA: United Ministries in Education. [This book urges opposition to patriarchal policies that lead to war and destruction.]

Reardon, B. (1988). *Comprehensive Peace Education: Educating for Global Responsibility*. New York: Teachers College Press. [This book introduces global peace studies as a way to reduce the threats of war.]

Renna, T. (1980). "Peace Education: An Historical Review," *Peace and Change*, vol. VI, nos. 1 and 2, Winter: 61-65. [This article provides an overview of the early efforts at peace education in the twentieth century.]

Rogers, C. (1946). *Counseling and Psychotherapy: Newer Concepts in Practice*. New York: Houghton Mifflin. [This book provided groundwork for an approach to peace based upon positive human relations and psychotherapy.]

Salomon, G. (2002). The nature of peace education: Not all programs are created equal. In G. Salomon & B. Nevo (Eds.), *Peace Education: The Concepts, Principles, and Practices around the World*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates. [This article argues for an approach to peace education based upon breaking down enemy images.]

Sandy, S. (2001). Conflict resolution in schools: "Getting there." *Conflict Resolution Quarterly*, 19(2), 237-250. [This article provides an overview of the development of conflict resolution education programs in the United States.]

Scanlon, D. (1959). "The Pioneers of International Education: 1817-1914," *Teacher's College Record* (4): 210- 219. [This article presents a history of early efforts to teach for world citizenship.]

vor Staehr, G. (1974). Education for Peace and Social Justice. In Christoph Wulf, ed. *Handbook on Peace Education* (pp. 295-311). Germany: Frankfurt/Main: International Peace Research Association. [This article defines early peace education programs in Scandinavian countries.]

Wells, H.G. (1927). *Outline of History*. New York: MacMillan Press. [These two volumes describe how violent humans have been.]

World Health Organization (2002). *World Report on Violence and Health*. [www.who.int/violence\\_injury\\_prevention](http://www.who.int/violence_injury_prevention). [This book describes some dominant health challenges throughout the world at the beginning of the twenty-first century.]

#### **Biographical Sketch**

**Ian Harris** is Chairman of the Department of Educational Policy and Community Studies at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and President of the International Peace Research Association Foundation. He is author of *Peace Education* (McFarland Inc, 1988); *Messages Men Hear* (Taylor and Francis, 1998); *Peacebuilding for Adolescents* (with Linda Forcey) (Peter Lang, 1999); and *Peace Education 2<sup>nd</sup> edition* (with Mary Lee Morrison) (McFarland Inc, 2003).