PEACE EDUCATION

From Peace Movement Ideals
to Ministry of Education Realities,

or

How to succeed in peace education
without really trying

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1. INTRODUCTION: how not to try

According to clearly formulated resolutions from
UNESCO, and the First special session on disarmament
of the United Nations General Assembly (1978), member
states are now to take peace education/disarmament education
seriously.[1] That the United States takes it seriously is beyond
doubt: precisely this is one of the reasons why that
particular country has left UNESCO, not only alleged mal-
administration, the feudal manners of the men on the top,
and "statism", the supremacy of government over the private
sector, and in the United Nations system of the inter-
governmental over the non-governmental.[2]   O f course,
there is a paradox here: most of the schools in most countries
belong to the public sector, i.e. under governmental control,
And governments very often pursue policies that are far from
peaceful, and even if they should be peaceful, pursue peace
with means that are far from peaceful, armament. So, how
could one ever expect the public school system in any
country to go in for peace education, possibly contradicting the master?

A public school system in a nation state is predominantly
a mechanism for the transmission of the national myth:
shared religion, language and history. In this myth, the
wars of the past will have to play a role. By the very
fact that a nation state exists and is capable of running a
public school system, it follows that some of those wars,
of liberation or not, were successful. From this it might
follow that peace education in defense of a generally
supportive attitude to wars of liberation could be incorporated
in a public school curriculum. But, as we all very well
know: one thing is our war of liberation, quite another is
the wars of liberation of other peoples. Whereas, ours was
entirely legitimate, theirs are illegitimate, subversive,
engineered from the outside, etc. We hear this every day.

Hence, rather than the policies that gave rise to the
birth of the nation state, the policies maintaining it in the
system, would be deemed proper for transmission to the next

generation.   After the Peace of Westphalia in 1648 the
official formula in this connection has been "balance of
power".   The balance of power thesis is neither quite true
(a country may attack even if it is inferior, or it may
abstain from attack even if it is superior,for the simple
reason that there may be no motivation), nor false (of
course, power also deters, be it because it can be used for
defense, or for retaliation). But we are not dealing here
with peace research, rather with national myths.and self-assertiveness.
Hence, when governments are admonished to launch peace
education in their schools, the most likely outcome will
be some effort to justify balance of power policies engaged
in by that very same government. In practice, this means
justification of armament and the whole military apparatus,
as well as policies based on certain images of conflict
formations in the global environment held by the top
establishment of the very same nation state.   Peace, yes,
but with s<u>ecurity</u>, based on strength = force = self-assertiveness.

One wonders how it could be otherwise?   How can
a   Ministry of Education come up with a curriculum to be
taken seriously in primary and secondary schools that could
contradict the major assumptions of such rather heavy
institutions as the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense,
not to mention the Military itself? A private school might
do this, possibly at the risk of losing public subventions
on which it might heavily depend, meaning in practice that
the school is not that private after all.   And this would
be <u>a fortiori</u> the case if the nation state is a   member of
an alliance with a super power on the top, built in the
usual manner of alliances, on the basis of an explicit
or implicit agreement between governments of the "I shall
protect you, but you shall be loyal to me" variety. A
military system depends for its efficacy on a minimum of
allegiance from the citizens, a military alliance system
extends this allegiance transnationally (not only inter-
governmentally).   There will always be conflicts, dissent
from within the system. But to bring countervailing theories
and concepts into the <u>public</u> school system is a challenge

too obvious even for democratic nation states to contemplate.
Conclusion: peace education is a beautiful vision, one of
those lights shining in the 1970's and early 1980's, fading
away and then disappearing when confronted with the harsh
reality as indicated above. Governments do not want their myths exploded;
governments run schools – hence, there will be no such thing.

2.   Is peace education nevertheless possible?

So, we are in a dilemma.   On the one hand, there are
the demands of the Establishments in our countries, built
into their systems, usually because   leading spokesmen
such as presidents and prime ministers may have engaged in
some festive occasions.   On the other hand, there is the
despair of peoples all over the world, reaching far into
governmental circles, including the heavy institutions
mentioned above, that the policies on which peace is supposed
to be based, simply do not work.   People see it before
researchers do, and researchers before the politicians:
offensive weaponry in a   country with even the most "peaceful"
intention of securing peace through a guaranteed capability
of retaliation tends to stimulate equally offensive weaponry
in the other country, again possibly with exactly the same
motivation ;   the result is an arms race; then fear sets in
and there is an effort to control the arms race, even to
undertake some steps in the direction of disarmament;   all
of these efforts fail in the sense that the total destruction
potential is not at all reduced, only some weapon systems
are given up, with others more than substituting for them;
then tensions, even confrontations, come into the picture
along the edges of systems in conflict and finally the
result is there: a major war.[3]

So much evidence points in
exactly this direction, so much theory   The realists are
the people who see this . The idealists of this world are the
people who deny it and continue pursuing age-old policies
from a period before ideologies pitted systems against each
other in a much sharper way than ever before (with the exception,
a notable one, of the religious wars in Europe that led
precisely to the Peace of Westphalia).[4]   People want to be
informed, and have a right to be informed.   Governments

want to indoctrinate,and so do the more aggressive peace
movements.[5] The latter may be as convinced in their one-
factor theory (total disarmament, one-world government,
cooperation across all borders), as the governments in theirs
(balance of power,"balance" sometimes meaning "parity" like
in mechanics, quite often meaning "superiority", like in shop-
keeping - "being in the black").   Both parties may be
equally convinced that peace depends to a large extent on
how successful they are   indoctrinating the young.[6]

   At this point, a distinction implicitly made use of
above should be brought out more explicitly: isn't there
a difference,when discussing all of this, between a dictatorship
and a democracy?   I think there is, and I think it should be
seen as crucial in the whole debate, although the difference
is more important in the rhetoric of democracy than in our sad
reality.

   In a dictatorship, we would assume "peace education"
to be governed by the following five principles:

- a government would evaluate the curriculum , and decide
- only "official" peace movements would be invited
  to participate in this process - not "dissidents"
- the answers to the basic question: "how to achieve
  peace" would be given in advance and be in line with
  governmental policies
- the basic assumptions would not be considered
  debatable; learning, not discussion is encouraged
- the whole exercise would be surrounded by an
  atmosphere of nervousness, anxiety.

The   main consideration of the Establishment would be how
to guarantee,through "peace education", that the young generation
will not only come to the same conclusions as those presumably
held by the establishment, but even on the basis of the same
premises, such as "our experiences in the Second world war".
If both premises and conclusions are the same, the indoctrination
is much more complete than if only the conclusions coincide:
there will always be the risk that new premises might disturb

the thought system, and by some be seen as warranting
different conclusions.

What, then, would we expect of peace education in
a democracy?   Before we discuss the answer, which obviously
is the negation of the five points just given, some reflections
on the nature of democracy might be in order. Of course,
democracy is much more than a system of elections and a
way of selecting the leaders of the country, making them
responsible to the people indirectly, through the
mechanisms of parliaments. This is only parliamentocracy.
Democracy, in my view, has very much in common with the
scientific research process. Good research presupposes that
conclusions are not given in advance, and that any assumption
can be questioned; so does good democracy.   But the
difference is also basic: research is and remains elitist
since very special skills are needed whereas democracy is
based on the assumption that everybody can participate in
this community of people engaged in search and re-search,
always anxious to improve the condition of the majority of
the members, potentially of all.   It is this particular
capacity of democracy which makes it possible to adjust the
course, to change not only the speed but also the direction
by which a society travels through the social landscape, in
history.   A change may be for the better or for the worse,
There is no built in guarantee that the course chosen by the
majority, after an extensive debate, necessarily is better
for the people as a whole than the course charted by
governing elites.   But to this another argument can be
added: people grow in the process of participating in community/
society./ world affairs.   The challenges work on them.

Voltaire once proposed a very important argument in
favour of monarchy : in order to arrive at wise decisions,
all that was needed was to educate one person, the monarch,
whereas in a democracy one had to educate quite a lot of people,
the whole demos.   Peace education is that education for the
participation of a society in the world system, and it is an
indispensable part of a system that wants to refer to itself as

a democracy. Of course, Voltaire is right: education of
the monarch costs much less and education of the functionaries
in the Ministries of Foreign Affairs and Defense only a little
bit more, being only a question of a couple of hundred, at most
a thousand people. Peace education involves educating not
only thousands but millions of people. But it is difficult to
see how democracy can function without. Unless, that is, that
one accepts what so many people seem to accept: democracy may
be acceptable for domestic, but never for foreign policy, not
to mention world politics - the latter is for the selected few,
for the elites, for the specialists, the initiated. And this
not only because it is so "difficult", but because there are
basic"interests" at stake, some of them even secret, presumably
because they don't easily survive exposure to daylight.

The negation of the five points mentioned above would
lead to a process for elaboration of a curriculum where all
kinds of organisations within a country would participate together,
including the ministries mentioned and the more aggressive
peace movements. The debate would go "public", become accessible.
The result would be a curriculum with no conclusions given in
advance, and with an invitation to the students to question
all assumptions. In other words, democracy as a research
process. And rather than being surrounded by nervousness,
the whole process should be one of delight, of exploring together
the processes of world politics in general, with peace as the
goal of those processes in particular.

Of course, this is easily said, but not so easily done as
so much of what might enter the curriculum is "controversial".
I have encountered that word very often, and after some study
have come to the conclusion that it stands for something in
which the Establishment does not agree. A "controversy"
differs from the more plebeian "disagreement"— which ordinary
people might run into—by having the Establishment as one party
to the disagreement. Disagreements can be handled by the
Establishment telling who's right. A controversy is much more
problematic since there is even an element of subversiveness

about it, and there is no super-Establishment that can pass
the final judgement. Hence the obvious way out: the
Establishment imposes its view, puts its stamp on "peace
education" as "national security education" and the result,
even in the best of democracies, is remarkably similar to that
of dictatorship. The only difference might be that the level
of nervousness is even higher. After all, there are some
soft strings in democracy establishments, some democratic
inclinations, even some elements of bad consciousness.

However, there is another way out that should be
entirely acceptable, precisely in a democracy. After surveying
the whole area to be covered under the heading of peace
education, the parties engaged in the process may even agree
as to what is controversial and what is not controversial. In the
latter we might include such ideas as the history and
geography of warfare since the Second world war, the history
and geography of the arms race, the results or non-results
of disarmament conferences, information about international
organisations, guides to important theories of peace, of
development, of human rights - just to mention some examples.
It might not even be difficult to commission books in these
areas, assuming that they should be as informative as possible,
with no unsolicited comments from the authors, just giving
facts. The theories of any contemporary peace research may
be surrounded by controversy, but what of the theories of, say,
Immanuel Kant or Bertrand Russell, or Buddha, or Jesus Christ
for that matter (although the latter may be more problematic,
because it may turn out that he had no peace theory)?

Equally important, however, is a list of controversial
topics, but even on that list the parties might agree. Do
balance of power policies lead to peace or war, and under what
conditions? Do disarmament conferences lead to disarmament
or armament, and under what conditions? What about the
policies of our own government, are they peace policies or mainly
war policies? Where are the roots of peace and war to be
located? Are they inside persons, in their genetic or personality
constitution; between persons in their relations in such
important institutions as family, school and work; inside

societies, in their class structure or policy-making
structure; between societies in the way international relations
are run; within regions, particularly regions having the
same civilisation and built into the codes of those civilisations;
between regions as for instance in the East-West or North-South
relations; or within the world system itself in the way
international organisations tending towards world government
are constructed? The reader will of course sense that these
categories do not necessarily exclude each other, and probably
himself have some ideas where the source of war and where the
source of peace might be located, or rather have their point
of gravity (hint to the reader a peace researcher: it
may not necessarily be at the same place!)

The way out is then very simple: teach the non-
controversial in the more classical school manner; leave the
controversial topics to debate! What could be more democratic,
what could be more in line with its edicts of rational discourse
and search for solutions than simply having teachers enter
the classroom with some material, much of it cut from newspapers,
even from the same day, presenting different views for the
students and then have the students debate with the teacher
participating, playing the difficult role of presenting honestly
his or her own views and at the same time animating the debate
(the latter is probably best done precisely when the is honest
and comes out with his/her own position). The students might
then make a report, possibly come to a conclusion, possibly
conclude that there is more than one conclusion, and so on.

Of course, in this process many things will be said
that are not necessarily pleasant to establishment ears.
The capacity to tolerate this, to let it happen even in public
schools, seems to be a rather important benchmark of democracy.
And it is precisely at this point that I am sceptical: I have
great doubts that it will happen. Not that the government
itself will necessarily intervene. But groups of parents may,
simply because they disagree with something that someone has
said, knowing that the disagreement is at the same time a
controversy, and that for this reason they will be protected

or at least not attacked by the government if they come
out in the open attacking the teachers, the schools, where
the "incident" has occurred (such as questioning the nuclear
policy of NATO in a NATO country` or the role of the Red Army in a WTO
country).

And that, of course, might make one turn to private
schools, presumably less vulnerable to governmental, explicit
or implicit, pressure. One such school, perhaps one of the
best secondary schools in Europe, the Ecole Internationale
de Génève, started a programme in world peace studies,[7]
well endowed with a grant from a transnational corporation .
The programme seems to be of only one-year duration, possibly
even being eliminated, possibly due to some kind of pressure,
some kind of fear that this is too controversial. Of course,
the school is a special one catering to international civil
servants (most of them in the U.N. system), and the functionaries
of transnational corporations (with headquarters in the Geneva
area, but also elsewhere). Where the former might be in favour
of a relatively open debate, the latter might not. But how is
it possible, today, to discuss anything of relevance to peace and
war without being able to look into the role played by inter-
national capital?

Another possibility might be Rudolf Steiner schools
found all over in the First World countries. The characteristic
feature is the encouragement of debate, of self-awareness,
of consciousness of what goes on. The graduates from such
schools tend to be perhaps somewhat short on very concrete
knowledge, but extremely long on three rather important aspects
of learning: a sense and grasp of aesthetic dimensions, ability
to formulate and verbalise, and a burning desire to learn more!
A shortcoming, however, is that the schools being tied to Rudolf
Steiner and his ideas not only of pedagogy but also of cosmology
and society, might be handicapped by one of the weaknesses of
that particular genius: he had fascinating views on nature,
human beings, societies, on culture, and not only religion but
certainly also language and art - but very little at least that
I can discover of insight, or interest, or interesting thoughts
about the world system.[8] In addition, the schools, brilliantly
organised and also financed, may cater to the interests of the

middle-class bourgeoisie with esoteric, half-religious
inclinations more than to the politically conscious and
interested.

3.   Conclusion :   let us try!

        And yet, in spite of all these difficulties, peace
education is destined to come.   The school system cannot
in the longer run close itself to matters of major importance
for the populations at large as witnessed by the extent and
the depth of the peace movement of the 1980's, not only in the
First World, but also in the Second, the Socialist countries, World.
People simply want to know more about   peace matters. If
the school doesn't offer any opportunity for more knowledge,
questions and answers, debate, then the party to suffer most
will be the school itself, and those running the schools, the
public authorities.   In a democracy, people will find their
knowledge elsewhere, in a process that has come particularly
far in the Federal Republic of Germany with its almost incredible
production of books and magazines in this field, easily available,
produced everywhere and consumed everywhere, contributing to
very high levels of insight in the population at large . A level
often much above the level found in Establishment circles, even
among governmental functionaries who should know better!
This may even be the best way of learning: it is education
rather than schooling, with no public authority, no officialdom
having been permitted to spray its layer of dust, its greyness
over books that have passed the filters of the ministries of
education and been proclaimed suitable for innocent youth.
        But the trouble is that the school will look anachronistic
if this challenge is not taken seriously.   And democracy will
suffer from not legitimising the concern with peace and the open
debate that is the condition for this concern to be processed
in the direction of practical, but also innovative, peace policies.
It is not so much that in a school setting people will develop
new or better ideas.   Rather, the point is that when the school

withholds its stamp of approval from this subject of concern
the public might draw the conclusion that the field is still
off-limits and one had better not engage in it.   The same
of course, applies to the universities: the moment they have
a chair of peace studies, that field becomes "recognised" and
people react to it in a different manner, even if what comes
out of the holder of that chair may be pure nonsense.

Then, at the same time, may one not also hope that the
teaching of peace education could contribute to something more
than legitimacy, not only to education, but possibly even to
a modicum   of that scarce commodity, peace?   I think yes, and
both at the level of the primary school and the secondary
school, not only at the university level.

In primary school, one would probably be less concerned
with the details of post-second world war history (or longer
historical perspectives, for that matter), more concerned with
what is close to the pupils in space and time.   Maybe the
focus should be more on conflicts and their resolution.   And
they are numerous: in family, at school - if not yet at work,
because of the way our societies try to keep children innocent
by keeping them away from the workplace as long as possible.
The teachers should be equipped with insights in conflict
theory at the intra-personal, inter-personal and to some extent
intra-societal levels - leaving the inter-societal, intra-regional,
inter-regional and intra-global to secondary education.
(The reader will recognise the boxes made use of above for the
possible location of the sources of peace and the sources of
war).   Special emphasis could be on the roots of conflict,
on their expressions in attitudes and behaviour (prejudice and
hatred, discrimination and violence); and various processes
of conflict resolution. Very quickly, the teacher will recognise
his/her own needs for conflict theory in order to engage in
better conflict practice, and also discover the extent to which
conflicts tend to be swept under the carpet, not only in the
family and the school, but certainly in the workplace - the latter
coinciding with the school for the teachers.   The purpose
is to show the lower level members of the systems a smooth

surface, rarely admitting major problems or conflicts
before the solution is already at hand.

But this is the classical way of non-learning, of
not learning to be,[9] of not tapping the capacity to learn.[10]
Much better would be for teachers and students to come up
with examples of conflicts, from some of their own personal
situations, even conflicts that still hurt, put them on
the table literally speaking, and discuss solutions.
And maybe this should be done a number of times before
the teacher carefully tries to draw conclusions, to systematise
and organise. Conflict consciousness should lead to a much
broader repertory of conflict resolution processes,[11] and hence
to much more mature human beings, precisely the material out
of which better democracies can be made.

In secondary schools, one might go further, higher
up in the hierarchies of social complexity, further away from
the here and now, into social and world spaces. There will
be sufficient material available from history and "civics",
there should be more than enough to discuss. One particularly
useful exercise might be counterfactual history: what might
have been done to save the Roman Empire, if you consider the
effort worthwhile? What might have happened if Franz Ferdinand
had not travelled to Sarajevo ? What should the countries around
Nazi Germany have done in the 1930's? A less dogmatic, less
empirical view of history might lead to higher levels of social
imagination, and social imagination is also the material out of
which constructive peace policies can be made.

At the highest level of the gymnasium/lycée, close to the
baccalauréat, one might even discuss quite complicated problems:
how would you conduct a disarmament conference where two
powers each have three weapon systems with different profiles
as opposed to a conference where three powers have two different
weapon systems with different profiles? One wants superiority, one
parity? I can assure the reader that disarmament negotiators
have not been trained that way, but approach the matter in an
amateurish manner, with the security interests of their own
nation on top of their minds. Some mental preparation might help.
Then, very importantly: how do these problems look

from the point of view of different civilisations? Why
are there more ars in Christianity and Islam than in Buddhism?
Why are Eskimos so peaceful? What would a world of Buddhist
Eskimos look like?   Twelve years at school should have given
the students more than enough material to reflect on such
issues, peace education can then demand of them that they
should even reflect in a mature goal-directed manner.

    Provided peace education is not used for indoctrination,
by the Establishment or by the peace movements through over-
eager teachers, we might in some years get a reservoir of people
with increased awareness and increased curiosity. They will
certainly not have the answers to all these problems, as little
as we have in peace research. What we have in peace research
is more the knowledge that conventional wisdom is more conventional
than wise, and usually blatantly wrong and self-serving, than pos-
itive ideas about what to do. Of course, this alone makes
many people feel that peace researchers are ideological,
precisely because they reject what is conventionally held to
be true. When conventions are backed by very solid interests
as in countries tied up in alliances to super-powers (not to
mention the super powers themselves), or heavily militarised
countries, then there will be difficulties, not only for people's
education but also for peace research. For that reason, of
the four countries I know personally, in terms of the efforts
to bring peace education into the schools, I would have doubts
about the NATO members Italy and Norway, and also about
Switzerland. I would be much more optimistic about non-aligned
Sweden, also because the military play a much less dominant
role in the social formation than is the case in Switzerland.
I think it would be very difficult in the first three countries
mentioned to come up with an analysis in public schools of the
conflict formations in which their country is somehow embedded
that would not end up with Establishment conclusions . It might
be quite possible in Sweden to do exactly that.

    However, regardless of how intricate all these problems
are: let us   go ahead! We do not have the answer to
all the problems indicated in this paper, not to mention too many

problems not touched upon. The only way of getting insight
into the problem is through practice. And the ball is in the
court of the ministries of education. It has been placed there
not only by popular movements in general and peace movements
in particular, but also by inter-governmental organisations of
major significance. It is now for these ministries to
take up the challenge. And sooner rather than later, because
many are now watching rather eagerly what does or does not happen...