Educating for Peace in Higher Education

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Abstract Peace education has become an important issue nowadays and a major concern for researchers and educators all over the world. Peace education has been introduced into many educational institutions either as separate programs or integrated within the various subject materials. Hoping to trigger some positive changes, post-war countries started adopting such programs. Research shows that the sooner children get introduced to the knowledge of peace and practice the skills related to it, the greater the chance they will become positive change agents in the future. While peace programs are being introduced into schools worldwide, it seems that attempts to do so in higher education are still minimal. Consequently, I believe that school teachers have become more qualified to educate their students for peace than university professors although one cannot deny that many universities are now offering courses or even degrees in peace studies such as conflict resolution and transformation. However, where offered, such programs are by exclusively the departments of political science in a few universities. As such, I argue that, as in many schools, peace related student learning outcomes should be introduced into almost every general education course, if not all, offered by every department at higher education institutions. As a result, learners who do not have the chance to get introduced to such programs throughout their school years will have the chance to do so at the university level.

Keywords Peace Education, Higher Education, General Education Courses, Education

1. Introduction

1.1. Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to develop a better understanding of peace education programs and to suggest ways to introduce such programs into the curricula of higher education institutions, ways based on literature review and personal experience.

1.2. Research Questions

Based on the study objective, the following questions will be observed:
1. Should peace education be introduced into our educational systems as separate programs or into all curricula of all subject matters?
2. Are school and university professors qualified to implement such programs?

2. Literature Review

Peace education and studies, conflict resolution and transformation are different terms with different approaches to one utmost goal: Establishing a more peaceful world. In his address announcing 2001-2010 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence, Koi Chiro Matsuura, Director General of UNESCO, says, "The United Nations and UNESCO were founded to achieve a world at peace. This means more than an absence of war. It means justice and equity for all as the basis for living together in harmony and free from violence."[1] So many devastating conflicts are destroying basic human values all over the globe. National and international wars, revolutions, and terrorism acts, besides several other political, economic, social, cultural and environmental issues have become major sources of the devaluation of human life. As such, strategies to overcome or avoid such destructive events have become a must.

The history of Man reveals that dominating the *Other* has been a medium for survival. In the old ages, this medium was termed tribal wars; in the 19th century, Colonialism; in the 20th century, Post-Colonialism; and in the 21st century, globalism. Currently, there is no continent devoid of wars, and Samuel Huntington's [2] prediction, "In this new world the most pervasive, important, and dangerous conflicts" will be between "peoples belonging to different cultural entities" is alarming as it is based on the winning-losing exegesis, which is never constant and ever changing. The winners impose their climates on the losers, and the losers struggle against impositions; but then after, and History confirms it, winners may become losers

and losers may become winners. And in all cases the consequences on humanity are destructive.

From a theological point of view, Rev. Fr. Boulos Wehbe [3], an educator and thinker, confirms that man's dignity and freedom are intrinsically parts of his humanity; and although this dignity may be degraded by oppression or other reasons, "this dignity is never extracted from the very essence of the individual or of the group which are affected by them. This is because, from the perspective of "neutrality" or from the perspective of theological anthropology, albeit in Christianity and Islam [and in fact in most world religions], man's dignity is imprinted in his very essence by His creator, who, according to the Book of Genesis, created him in His own image unto His likeness." And from a cultural point of view, Amartya Sen [4], Nobel Prize winner (1998) and professor at Harvard University, argues in his book, *Identity and Violence*, that humans have a common, shared humanity that joins them and that this is more important than external differences of human being's "plural identities," which are related to factors of culture and religion, class and community, gender and skin-color, language and politics, and a multitude of other markers. Sen believes in the possibility of a peaceful world if humans make "reasoned" choices to overlook egoistic economic and political interests. But will humans ever make reasoned choices? The answer to this question has become a main issue for educators all over the world.

Ian Harris and Mary Lee Morrison [5] list several strategies for achieving peace. Peace through strength involves the use of arms and force; and peace through justice and transformation deals with human needs and rights and with the transformation of behaviors and beliefs, respectively. Through politics, peace is achieved by creating laws and treaties. Peace through sustainability requires both a "holistic and biocentric" education. Peace education, then, is the most important suggested strategy. But then a set of questions must be posed: What is peace education? What are the benefits of peace education? Should such education be introduced into our educational systems as separate programs or into all curricula of all subject matters? More importantly, are school and university professors qualified to implement such programs? And finally, are there sufficient programs in all educational institutions, especially in institutions of higher education, to affect the aspired positive change around the globe?

In this paper, I argue that peace related student-learning outcomes should be introduced into all general education courses offered by various departments at institutions of higher education. I believe that learners who do not have the chance to get introduced to such programs throughout their school years should have the chance to do so at the university level, at least via the general education courses.

With the variety of definitions of peace education, I find it necessary to establish one that will be referred to throughout this paper. Harris and Morrison [5] define peace education as "a philosophy and a process involving skills, including listening, reflection, problem-solving, cooperation and conflict resolution. The process involves empowering people with the skills, attitudes and knowledge to create a safe world and build a sustainable environment. The philosophy teaches nonviolence, love, compassion and reverence for all life." In *Learning to Abolish War: Teaching Toward a Culture of Peace* [6], it is stated that peace education develops peace related values, skills and knowledge, which all aim at preparing learners to affect positive change in the world on the cultural, social and political levels. Betty Reardon [7] states that the promotion of "an authentic planetary consciousness that will enable us to function as global citizens and to transform the present human condition by changing the social structures and the patterns of thought that have created it" should be at the center of peace education. Therefore, peace education contributes to the establishment of a proactive global citizen capable of inflicting positive changes on all levels, cultural, social and political. Thus, educators are responsible for putting learned peace theories into practice; especially that peace education has become a hot issue.

In his 2006 address to the UNU in Japan, Seyed Mohammed Khatami [8] says that "it has been over 60 years that the world, weary of world wars, has constantly been called to be committed to a single thought: the necessity of creating peace, learning to appreciate the beauty of peace, building a culture of peace and discovering the processes to achieve peace." Such a commitment has become even stronger now. Joseph Camilleri [9] warns that "the global condition is one of heightened vulnerability as much for states as for groups and individuals. One need only think of the effects of financial crises, oil spills, ozone depletion, global warming, ethnic cleansing, genocidal policies or terrorist attacks. We are living through a period of profound economic, ecological, political and cultural transformation. If there is one characteristic that distinguishes this period, it is, as we shall see, the "globalization of insecurity."" Thus, a need for a new global peaceful mentality is on the rise. But as long as violence is one of the options to resolve conflicts, peace will never have a chance in this world. As such, this new mentality has to contribute to providing the young and older generations with a set of knowledge including, but not limited to, multiculturalism, human rights, peace strategies, democratic processes, environmental stewardship, and proactive communication, a set of learnt skills, which educators must draw in new undergraduate and even graduate courses. Such courses should include analysis of communication, empathy, cooperation, analysis of sources of violence, envisioning of peace, and adaptation, and some dispositions such as acceptance, respect, service, optimism and involvement [10] necessary to give tolerance and peace an opportunity to prevail.

Although the positive results of peace programs will most probably be slow and far-reaching, the benefits of such courses and programs are believed to promote human

life and values and to lead to a safer world. Adrian Nastase [11] says that "the main short-term objective of peace education, then, should be the promotion of a conception based on the peaceful resolution of conflicts already existent or still to appear, and in the long-term, it should aim to prevent any serious international conflicts arising." Therefore, peace education should help in resolving or transforming current conflicts and in avoiding future conflicts. Betty Reardon [7] identifies reform, reconstruction and transformation as the three phases of peace education, each of which has a different goal. Preventing war and changing behavior, "establishing global institutions to resolve conflicts and keep the peace," and rejecting all forms of violence are the goals of the previously mentioned phases of peace education respectively. Johnson and Johnson [12] state that "the ultimate goal of peace education is for individuals to be able to maintain peace among aspects of themselves (intrapersonal peace), individuals (interpersonal peace), groups (intergroup peace), and countries, societies, and cultures (international peace)." Such goals are implemented in general education programs in post-war countries as they have proven to be effective strategies in training learners to peacefully resolve and transform their conflicts. In other words, peace programs have proven to provide the youth with strategies to learn from their violent past, to cope with their present critical situation, and to avoid any potential future conflicts. For instance, Filipov [13] concludes his report by stating that in countries "such as the ones of Bosnia and Herzegovina, El Salvador, and Sierra Leone, the post-conflict peace-building processes have yielded significant results and have made progress toward the long-term recovery of the state and the establishment of durable peace." Such efforts show that sustaining peace is almost guaranteed if appropriate peace programs are implemented, especially in general education requirements.

General education courses are offered to every student enrolled at a university disregarding his/her field of specialization. The purpose of such courses is to provide students with general knowledge in several areas other than their major. Moreover, students acquire skills that will enable them to become more productive citizens throughout their daily lives. Current general education courses in most universities in the Middle East and in most countries around the world usually deal with topics of significance to students' general knowledge; these include Languages, Religion, History, Philosophy, and Humanities courses devoid of the basic strategies for building up a peaceful personality. Religion courses center on one religion or another and barely expose their communalities. History courses are based on the winning-losing exegeses whereby the winners are cheered and the losers are feared. Besides, History books are almost always written by winner historians who usually have the upper hand. Philosophy courses expose differences in philosophical theories rather than emphasizing their similarities. Besides,

Humanities courses are almost always subject to the educator's ideologies. Here lies the biggest problem because educators of such courses lack the skills necessary to detach themselves from their own ideological confines in the classrooms.

Another stoppage of peace education courses is unfortunately related to the problem that most higher education institutions are becoming more and more profit oriented and sometimes politically geared. As such, change will come at a cost that most institutions, educational or not, are not willing to pay. Such costs include teacher training, revision of curricula and a drastic change in mentality, which is usually accompanied with a fierce resistance to change. This brings me to the focal point of this paper. Is it worth prompting this change despite the financial costs that will incur? Will integrating peace related learning outcomes into general education courses pay back by eliminating cultural, religious and political conflicts? I, among several other educators, believe that such an endeavor is not only worth the efforts but also necessary to achieve peace goals; indeed, every single student should be taught peace related knowledge, skills and dispositions.

A great bulk of change should begin in all general education courses offered. Interpretations, analyses and discussions in courses such as Languages, Literature, Education, Philosophy, History, Religion etc... are limitless. For instance, in a history course, instead of glorifying war, educators may focus on the fact that war has always been more destructive than constructive to all those involved. As such, an emphasis could be made on how war could have been avoided had appropriate conflict resolution and negotiation skills been applied. A different interpretation of the facts rather than a change of the facts themselves is needed, an interpretation emphasizing that the loss of one life from whatever conflicting party is a loss in human life in general. Educators must emphasize that we must learn from History not to repeat the mistakes of rulers who rose and fell such as Alexander the Great—and I do not know why historians still give him the title, "Great"—or Napoleon, Hitler, and the like. Moreover, Languages, Literature and Philosophy courses could be used to highlight cultural similarities instead of differences, which would bring the various cultures of the world closer to each other rather than encouraging discrimination and supremacy of one "ism" over another. Such courses could also be used as panels for discussing local and global problems with the aim of coming up with possible solutions. The same applies to general education courses offered by other faculties.

Chemistry, Biology, and Physics, with all their branches, could be taught as destructive or constructive mediums. If those courses are preceded by proper general education courses, then teaching sciences to improve human health and safety, as well as Man's obligation to protecting the environment, becomes a medium for banning the use of science for destructive purposes. Imagine the amount of change such an endeavor would cause in the mentality of

both the internal and external communities of higher education institutions. Modern inventions could be used for constructive and destructive purposes; the deterrent must be in the human who is prepared via peace education to ban their destructive use. Money-makers will continue to use science for destructive purposes only if the grounds for conflicts are available. But if conflicts are peacefully resolved, then those will redirect the use of science for constructive purposes.

The main question to ask here is whether university educators of all disciplines are qualified to educate for peace. Of course, without generalizing, I believe that the majority is not, and for several reasons. Harrris [14] believes that teachers are too busy with preparing their students to score high on standardized tests to the point that "rather than being trained in sophisticated peace theories and practices that would enable them to build what Martin Luther King, Jr. called the "beloved community," youth in Western schools are prepared to compete in a capitalist marketplace and to consume goods created in that marketplace." Moreover, according to Harris and Morrison [5], "professors, steeped in the academic traditions of their respective fields, have their research and teaching agendas set by the established limits of their disciplines." Unfortunately, this has become the case not only in Western schools but in educational institutions all over the world. If anything, this shows how most schoolteachers and university professors limit themselves and are sometimes limited by their institutions and to their disciplines and forget about the essence of education, preparing the younger generations to become the leaders of tomorrow. In other words, many university professors have become so busy with research and publishing to the point that they have forgotten about their initial duty, educating the future generation. As such, university administrations are trying to support their teachers in achieving this purpose by creating as many opportunities as possible for professional research growth in the various scientific fields so they may sell their research either to promote their reputation or to make more profit. So teachers and administrations of institutions of higher education are becoming more materialistic and less concerned about the true purpose of education, such as the one practiced by the ancient Greeks targeting a healthy mind and body.

What promotes professional development of peace educators is making peace-oriented trainings besides courses mandatory to all. This is where higher education institutions play an important role. Cortese[15] believes that "higher education institutions bear a profound, moral responsibility to increase the awareness, knowledge, skills, and values needed to create a just and sustainable future… It prepares most of the professionals who develop, lead, manage, teach, work in, and influence society's institutions, including the most basic foundation of K–12 education. Besides training future teachers, higher education strongly influences the learning framework of K–12 education, which is largely geared toward subsequent higher education." Consequently, university professors, especially of education or any other teaching subject such as mathematics or science, at different levels should be trained to teach all courses with an orientation towards peace. And administrations of universities should become more concerned in building a peaceful human than in building a human who could make more money whatever the consequences. They must start providing their graduating students with the skills enabling them to employ their trilateral wisdom, which entails their intellect, their imagination, and their soul and which rests on a perfect blend of materialism, spiritualism, and intellectualism. If this is to become possible leaders of educational institutions will have to motivate their administrators and teachers to commit themselves to educating their students for peace. [11,16]

Opinions on how the above should be accomplished vary. On one hand, one may believe that separate peace programs are more effective as they have peace as the main focus. As such, all learning outcomes and activities would be strictly peace-related resulting in intensive training in whatever skills are needed to achieve the objectives of the program. For instance, an intensive peace program implemented over a period of time, whether at a school, at a university, and even during a summer camp, will achieve short-term as well as long-term peace-related outcomes. Thus, immediate results might appear in the form of more tolerance and understanding towards the other by the end of the program. On the other hand, one may believe that peace education has to be introduced into the curricula of all subject matters at any educational institution. This approach would continuously expose students to peace-related learning outcomes. For instance, after interviewing eighteen professors of education, Powers [17] concluded that environmental education would be most effective if incorporated in preservice elementary education into all methodology courses. Catalano [18], a professor of mechanical and bioengineering, suggested modifications to the Accreditation Board of Engineering and Technology (ABET), which accredits engineering programs. The suggested modifications emphasized the importance of integrating peace components, such as recycling, waste management and "earth-friendly habits," into the various engineering courses in order to meet Criterion 3 of the ABET, which is concerned with the skills, knowledge and behaviors engineering students are supposed to acquire by the time they graduate.[18] Such attempts prove that the integration of peace education into general education requirement courses is an effective means to prepare students of various fields to base their future career-related decisions on a peaceful mindset they acquired throughout their education. Students will then have the opportunity to learn about and apply such skills in the various situations presented by the different disciplines offered. Although such a strategy will achieve short-term and long-term objectives of peace, results might not be as immediate as those of the previous strategy. For example, a

student taking a Language course during which some peace components are highlighted, such as negotiation skills, might not be able to apply such skills immediately. However, as the purpose of a university education is to prepare students to be able to fully function in real life; the negotiation skills the student learned in the Language course will definitely emerge when they are needed in real-life situations.

3. Recommendations

I would like to end with a few recommendations, which would hopefully be taken into consideration:

(1) I recommend that peace education continues to be integrated into all institutions of higher education as separate programs; however, integrating peace-related learning outcomes into all general education courses should be considered seriously.

(2) Such programs as described above will not be effective unless educators are offered various opportunities to participate in peace education workshops and training sessions.

(3) To ensure effective integration of peace-related learning outcomes into general education courses, university administrations should make available the necessary financial and material resources to assist the implementation of the suggested recommendations.

4. Conclusions

In conclusion, the benefits of introducing peace education both as separate programs and as parts of the syllabi of every university course have become a must. It is now evident that there are only traces of peace-related learning outcomes in higher education, and a good place to start from is introducing such outcomes into such institutions' curricula or syllabi. However, creating peace programs requires financial and human resources and we must be willing to make sure that both resources are available over a long period of time for the sustainability of such programs. [19] Several universities worldwide have started adopting peace programs; this is a good start, but it is not effective until more institutions make efforts to change their programs and purposes. And although departments of political science may be responsible for advancing peace-related programs, I strongly believe that all departments and educators of higher education share the same responsibilities for a better human being and world.

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