

BOOK REVIEWS

Education for a culture of peace in a gender perspective

Betty Reardon, 2001

Paris, UNESCO Publishing, The Teacher's Library

US\$20.50 (pbk), 197 pp.

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In October 2000, the United Nations Security Council passed *Resolution 1325*, which dealt with women, peace and security, attesting that violence against women during wartime is a crime against humanity and recognizing women's right to participate in all peace-building processes. In the words of Carol Cohn (2004, p. 8), 'Resolution 1325 is often called a landmark resolution because it represents the first time the Security Council has ever turned its full attention to the subject of women and armed conflict'. In a similar vein, Betty Reardon's work is a landmark contribution to peace education. It is the first book that introduces a gender perspective to the field. As such, it is an outstanding guide, not only for educators, but also for everyone interested in the politics of education and in gender-mainstreaming.

Education for a culture of peace in a gender perspective is a comprehensive syllabus. It presents a rich repertoire of methods and resources for doing peace education with a gender-sensitive approach. Its content is not limited to gender-related issues, but it intriguingly shows that there is a gender dynamic in every classroom and a gender dimension in every topic related to war and peace.

The book is divided into two parts. Part 1 deals with the social foundations of peace education in a gender perspective, while Part 2 has a more practical focus on pedagogical and methodological issues. The clear and thought-provoking introduction to Part 1 outlines recent developments in the efforts to educate for peace and the struggle towards gender equality. Just as 'the task of achieving a culture of peace is complex and multifaceted' (p. 24), so is the task of mainstreaming gender and peace. Like peace, 'gender too is a dynamic and changeable concept' (p. 33); it is socially and historically constructed. As Simon de Beauvoir reminded us about half a century ago, we are not *born* men and women, we *become* men and women. 'Concepts of masculinity and femininity vary among cultures and societies as do ideas about appropriate roles and behaviors for men and women' (p. 33). What this book does, very successfully, is give educators from different parts of the world a new language and new tools for casting a critical eye on these constructions and their implications for the peace education classroom.

In Part 1, educators are presented with resources and methods to help students imagine a humane society and to discuss the social values, human capacities, and social skills that are needed for the development of such a society. Using participatory approaches, educators are encouraged to initiate gender-sensitive debate and foster imagination in their students. In each section, this pedagogical approach finds a new formulation. The final section of Part 1 presents an outstanding overview of global problems related to gender, violence and peace, and it comes with an important warning (p. 114):

What education for peace must undertake is the facilitation of the learning that will enable people to understand that war and the other forms of physical, economic, political, ecological and gender violence are not of the same order as natural disasters. These are not inevitable eventualities to be prepared for; these are the consequences of human will and intent and can be avoided, even eliminated entirely if human will and intent so determine.

It is precisely here that the promise of peace education and the significant role of the peace educator lie.

The question of *how* to teach for peace is just as central as the question of *what* to teach. That is why the second part of *Education for a culture of peace in a gender perspective* focuses specifically on the pedagogical dimensions of peace education. How can one become a proficient ‘teacher of peace’? How can ‘the teacher as peace-builder and peace-maker’ (p. 139) develop the appropriate capacities and skills? What are the goals and methods that one can use while teaching for a culture of peace and gender-justice? How can we critically evaluate and improve the role of schools as ‘centres of community’ and as ‘agents of change’? Answering these questions and others, Part 2 offers a self-reflective guide to all educators of peace.

Betty Reardon offers this book as a ‘prototype, rather than a definitive text’ (p. 13). In other words, it can be used as a whole, as well as in parts, or it can be used as a source of reference and imagination. With an extremely useful list of online and print resources, the book is an enticing invitation to integrate a gender perspective to our education practices. As Betty Reardon shows, gender does not only concern women; just as importantly, it is about men and masculinity. How can we imagine new masculinities and femininities that will contribute to peace and gender-justice at the same time? The challenge is for everyone, not only for those interested in ‘gender (read: women’s) issues’. To borrow bell hooks’ (2000) famous phrase, ‘feminist peace education is for everybody’.

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Educating beyond violent futures

Frances P. Hutchinson, 1996

London and New York, Routledge

US \$31.95 (pbk), 304 pp.

ISBN 0-415-13280-0

In the field of nonviolence education, *Educating beyond violent futures* is an educational tool for building peace in current as well as future contexts. Aware of the need for employing futures planning in education (Toffler, 1974; Slaughter, 1986), Hutchinson provides readers with information which is useful beyond the field of peace education. His cross-disciplinary method of presenting research and instruction exemplifies a comprehensive approach to the field.

The book consists of nine chapters that include over 100 tables and figures, which illustrate the theories, trends and educational activities it describes. The first four chapters provide the rationale for, and means of, 'questioning fatalism and impoverished social imagination' (p. 1). In these chapters, Hutchinson points out that developing critical consciousness about violence in media and resisting cultural traditions, such as providing boys with war toys, characterize a paradigm shift from a violence orientation to one of peace. Instead of focusing on and expecting the violent problem solving that they see in media and real life, students can plan nonviolent alternatives for resolving human conflicts, a crucial step in manifesting peace. As Diamond (1999) explains, manifesting peace is the outcome of an intention along with an affirmation of that purpose.

In Chapter 2, 'Enhancing our foresight', we are reminded that 'People are beings of praxis rather than products of strict determinism' (p. 33). Reviewing theories and research in future studies, Hutchinson warns the reader to avoid mechanistic thinking about current trends and predicted scenarios of the future. He recommends 'speaking against certainty and finality' and warns us not to allow the colonization of our minds and actions, which impede critical questioning and creative action (p. 28). He provides examples of critical analysis and planning for peaceful management of current and future conflicts. Critical analysis entails recognizing and replacing mechanistic metaphors of degenerating human agency (Giddens, 1994) with possibilities for peace-building interaction. For example, students can learn to recognize and replace simplistic labels used as descriptors to dichotomize groups of people involved in a common conflict. While looking beyond these labels, such as enemy and terrorist, they can learn to see commonalities and the need for peaceful conflict resolution (Williams, 1996). Hutchinson recommends teaching critical analysis of direct, structural and ecological violence through multiple means of knowledge acquisition, including reconceptualized literacy instruction, which the next section of the book explains.

The second part of the book, 'Expanding our ways of knowing and vocabularies of hope', encourages the reader to see and analyze the past, present and future through more than one cultural lens and tradition of examination. For example, Table 7.6 lists 'Cultural empowerment and active non-violence alternative knowledge traditions'

(p. 165). Part 2 also highlights the importance of learning ideologies and vocabularies from several cultures for identifying and transforming dominant and other relations that obstruct the development of peace. In this section, Hutchinson further points out that the fourth R of education, human relations, has vocabulary that extends discussion beyond the acceptance of domination by techno-capitalist cultures for discourse about alternative ways of interacting in the present and future. Developing awareness of domination is crucial for building bridges between divided members of a society (Eilsler, 2000).

To study human relations in depth and incorporate diverse sources of knowledge, Hutchinson encourages the development of multiple types of literacy. Different ways of reading the world and its relations allows students to learn beyond the sanctioned ideologies which many educational institutions have been offering and maintaining through their current curriculum. The book provides a multicultural vocabulary for peace which broadens the concept. Table 7.12, for example, lists the macro and micro levels of inner, interpersonal, and international peace throughout the world. Hutchinson also illustrates how creative thinking, such as utopianism, in addition to dialectical and empirical approaches to understanding, can augment student learning. He points to the limitations of communication, problem solving, and futures planning that are primarily technology-based.

The third part of the book, 'Encouraging forward-thinking, life-affirming and empowering principles and practices', highlights the role of compassion in examining and understanding problems before developing solutions. Table 8.2 lays out the dimensions of hope, distinguishing between hopelessness, passive hope, and active hope. For each dimension, Hutchinson describes the corresponding motivational states of students that educators can identify when preparing responsive instruction.

This book has much relevance for learning in a world that is characterized by interpersonal, cross-cultural, structural and ecological violence. People everywhere, not just students in formal institutions of learning, should learn critical futures planning to identify and evaluate contexts that need change, and then prepare for those changes. Although the book was published in 1996, its contents are still pertinent for educators who are looking for ways to integrate peace competencies in any discipline of the social sciences. In this reviewers' course on the sociology of education, Hutchinson's work provided the critical futurism, illustrations, and learning applications that texts written for the course lacked. Educators in psychology, history, political science and health courses should also recognize the practical uses of this book for teaching in their discipline. Analyzing human behavior across the disciplines, fostering a critical futurist perspective, and finding alternatives to violence are instructional goals for which many educators can use this book. The book gives many examples of planning in the 1990s. To add currency to this information, one should read recent work done on the means and effects of reconciliation, forgiveness and restorative practices that are being used internationally in preparation for nonviolent futures as well as peace now. Social science instructors of all age groups should integrate the recommendations for futures planning this book provides.

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Peace education

Ian M. Harris and Mary Lee Morrison (2nd edn), 2003
 Jefferson, NC, McFarland & Company
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 ISBN 0-7864-1487-1

Defenses of peace

Ian M. Harris and Mary Lee Morrison begin the second edition of their book *Peace education* with an excerpt from the Preamble of the Constitution of UNESCO: ‘Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed’. Reconstructing peace in the minds of men and women is no simple task. When the media is owned by a handful of corporate elites that collude with political and military elites, the media will increasingly propagandize the bidding of military political leaders. When families are violent, when communities require youths to develop an aggressive code of the street, or when commercials for war toys and action figures extol muscular power and aggressiveness, young people are conditioned to accept that overpowering another is desirable, appropriate, even fun (Fry, 1993; Derksen & Strasburger, 1996; Anderson, 1999). In relation to education, as Ian M. Harris and Mary Lee Morrison explain, schools ‘pass on militaristic values emphasizing competition and rituals of patriotism’ and ‘perpetuate nationalistic ideologies, including the extolling of the valor of war and the promotion of technology that leads to environmental destruction’ (p. 191). There are also Junior Reserve Officer Training Corps programs in schools, training young people for the military while they attend high school, as well as new federal education mandates, such as the No Child Left Behind Act signed into law by George W. Bush in January 2002, which require high schools to provide names, addresses and phone numbers of students to

military recruiters, or risk losing federal funding under the Elementary and Secondary Education Act.

In *Peace education*, Harris and Morrison provide a framework for counteracting social learning and conditioning—whether from militarism, communities, peers, the media, families or schools—that contribute to violence. An excellent blend of background information about peace education and practical suggestions and examples for developing a peace education program in a school or community, the book is part guidebook and part treatise on the nature of violence and peace in US society. Taking up issues of philosophy, the arts, literature, political science and religion, in addition to more typical social science topics involving poverty, oppression and inequity, the book provides an expansive explanation of its topic, as any classic book in a field should. Carefully footnoted, it includes a bibliography and resource guide, as well as a peace education syllabus, and interweaves with these practical elements important contextual matters regarding pedagogy, culture, language and emotions.

Of course, the problem with peace education is the problem with the Dewian concept of education as a transformative power. Social reformers have long used education as a means of social betterment. And for the most part—whether we are dealing with health, poverty, hunger, desegregation, racism, teen pregnancy, alcohol and drug abuse—the success of schools has been limited. The use of peace education could fall into this school reform pit. I have seen this happen with violence prevention programs that become school commodities, resume-booster programs for high-achieving students who volunteer to be mediators, or token services for public relations purposes (Casella, 2000). At the same time, at the beginning of the twenty-first century, there may be nothing more crucial than peace education, and nothing more vital than the ability to use education for the betterment of both individuals and society. The authors, who have plenty of scholarly and practical street-level experience with peace education, are not lost to the fact that peace education has some potential pitfalls. Rather than only heralding and prescribing peace education, they explore the topic, provide biographical sketches of significant figures in peace movements, discuss theoretical perspectives of nonviolence, and explore peace education in the realm of schools and in the world of realpolitik, as well as the challenges that lie ahead for anyone involved in these pursuits.

Peace education is a book of careful critique, one that intends to teach and to inform. It is also a book about hope that explores possibilities for the future of people on earth. We know what awaits us if we go the route of any number of individuals, organizations and institutions that promote the use of force to achieve personal, economic and political goals. Unfortunately, images of the future that entail peacefulness and fairness are not so clear. The authors describe research and personal experiences which demonstrate that children in the USA have a difficult time conceptualizing peace. Ask them to be warlike, and they know how to behave and how to direct that behavior with powerful jabs, kicks and thrusts. But ask them to be peace-like and they do not know how to act; ask them to draw pictures of peace and their pictures of butterflies and rainbows parody simplistic stereotypes of nature, not of people. It is hard for us to image a world of people peacefulness, of

even begrudging coexistence—or, more difficult yet, the way of getting there from here. The authors help to clarify this and provide a framework, and in doing so contribute to crucial understandings about the true essence and dire importance of peace education and of meaningful social activism.

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Education for intercultural understanding: the ‘European youth academy’ handbook

Federal Ministry of Education, Science and Culture (Ed), 2002

Alpen-Adria-Alternativ Association for Peace, Human Rights and International Cooperation, Innsbruck, Studien Verlag

25.00 (pbk), 278 pp.

ISBN 3-7065-1704-3

Educating for intercultural understanding is a comprehensive documentation of a multi-lateral school project organised by the Austrian Alpen-Adria-Alternativ Association. The experience is gleaned from four biannual seminars with participant classes from 19 European countries since 1993. The text is divided into three sections based on the nature of the programme, the methods used, and the organisation of the Youth Academy itself. It is presented in a series of 18 articles written by a variety of authors.

This is a useful book which should be read and used by both theoreticians and practitioners educating people of all ages for international understanding. All too often either a theoretical frame or a practical application is presented, but this book provides both. The European Youth Academy is offered as a viable structure for applying peace education by aiming not only to develop positive attitudes towards peace and non-violence in young people, but also ‘personal and intellectual capacities which will allow them to work towards this goal systematically’ (p. 17).

In Section 2, Wintersteiner describes the five stages of a teaching project from three perspectives: teachers, the group as a whole and international cooperation. ‘What

Can go Wrong?', a list of a facilitator's strategic mistakes, which are claimed to ensure the failure of any peace education project, is also included in the section. For example, avoiding conflicts completely by preventing students from engaging in the discussion of diverse views is one such tactic that peace educators are counselled to avoid, as is the mistake of focusing on results rather than on the process of consultation. It is through the hard process of working together, Wintersteiner maintains, that true international understanding is achieved. It is the clash of opinions, not people, which can bring a spark of truth.

Section 3, which describes the structural framework of the European Youth Academy, is valuable in at least two ways. First, it provides the basics of project management, an area perhaps unknown to teachers contemplating participation in a European Youth Academy session. Secondly, it describes how the organisation has thus far developed, including the actual documents and schedules used, as well as a description of the strengths and weaknesses of various organisational patterns. Such transparency is valuable in providing assistance to others contemplating the organisation of activities and adaptations on the same theme, perhaps on a more global level. The need for 'communication' is emphasised throughout the section. Not all information is communication, we are told, and to run the seminars, communication is the key.

Teacher training is of particular relevance in the work of the European Youth Academy (Section 3.3), and in the final analysis, the academy is a tool for educational development and the continuing education of teachers. As groups of students take part in the European Youth Academy seminars, teachers develop from their experiences and the immediate feedback from their students. The process encourages 'whole school ownership' including both the student body and the teachers.

Section 3.4 focuses on the use of electronic media in cross-national networking. For the sake of non-German speakers an English translation of the figures included would have been helpful. Section 3.5 addresses the issue of evaluation for quality development through a self-reflective process. The evaluation process involves all the stakeholders in a process of reflection and consultation to work constructively towards the achievement of their defined goals. This teleological approach is reflected in the section on the history of the European Youth Academy written by Gruber. In this sense, each of the seminars is a learning experience for the staff, and an opportunity for an iteration of qualitative evaluation that can be used to improve the next session.

More books of this type should be written, purchased and read. All too often valuable, sustainable, firmly based programs of high quality are developed, but all the resources are poured only into the activity itself, leaving none for communicating what was learned to others. *Education for intercultural understanding: the 'European Youth Academy' handbook* includes reflection, documentation and a look at how to improve future European Academy seminars. For this we should cheer the European Youth Academy staff and follow suit. The need for communicating our victories and failures, what we have become skilled at and what we have not, is important not only for our own work but for the sake of the development of the field in

general. This form of collaboration helps us to focus our minuscule resources where they count the most.

The book also evokes a question, quite beyond its scope. How well are innovative teachers being supported in their schools by other teaching staff? All too often motivated teachers meet pressure or ostracism from their colleagues who fear comparisons. We can only hope that programs like the European Youth Academy can, at least in the short run, create a network for teachers like these and, in the long run, produce a critical mass of educators who are willing to make a difference.

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