

PEACE EDUCATION: A NEW NATIONAL POLICY

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ABSTRACT

The government has recently announced that it is keen to encourage Peace Education initiatives in Australia, and that it is seeking to establish a Peace Research Institute within a tertiary educational institution in Australia.

Relevant local and overseas examples will be used to highlight some of the policy considerations which arise in the development of peace education and research, and the relationship of research on peace education to teaching in this area.

The paper will conclude by indicating areas in which fruitful research could be undertaken to support this new policy initiative.

"I ask you to keep a fundamental question in your mind: will there be a world left for you or your children in 20 year's time, or will the earth be a charred, stricken globe spinning forlornly in space?"

Rt. Hon. W. Hayden, July 7 1983.

The Minister for Foreign Affairs, Mr Hayden, took the opportunity of the H.V. Evatt Memorial Lecture 1983 to put forward his views about what the Australian government could do to help promote world peace. This was the first major statement by the Labor Government of its policies in the area of peace and disarmament. It was in this speech that Mr Hayden announced the appointment of Australia's first Ambassador for Disarmament and indicated that the Australian government would be taking an active part in the United Nations and other international forums to achieve a more stable world situation. Mr Hayden also stated that,

The Government will give strong support to the U.N. in its activities directed at the dissemination of information on peace, disarmament and arms-control issues and in its attempts to promote greater public awareness and understanding of these issues.

This was a clear indication that the Government supported a broad public education campaign about these important matters. But Mr Hayden went further and said,

I will also be discussing with the Minister for Education and Youth Affairs ways it might be practicable to introduce peace studies into schools and tertiary institutions....

This is undoubtedly an area with which the current Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Susan Ryan, has some sympathy and interest. Speaking at the 1982 Australian Womens Education Coalition Conference she pointed out that feminist educators were,

...trying to create a different sort of society, one which challenges the basic aggressive impulses of the capitalist system in which we live, one which challenges the violent and militaristic values of the patriarchy. (p15)

She also announced at this year's symposium on nuclear war at the Australian National University that the Labor Government had begun consultations with that university about the development of a peace and disarmament studies institute.

This paper discusses some of the issues that policy makers, researchers and teachers will have to consider if peace education is to be successfully encouraged in all sectors of education in Australia. The paper will suggest that unless a fundamental shift occurs in the organisation and curriculum of schools and tertiary institutions peace education, in the sense

of encouraging the development of a society which is based on non-violence and non-militaristic values, will be unsuccessful.

The starting point is to define peace education and research. Peace education is related to, but is not the same as, disarmament education, development education, human rights education and education for international understanding.

Robin Burns (undated) outlines three approaches to peace education. The first tends to be based on the concept of 'negative peace' - or peace meaning the absence of war. Teaching based on this approach may emphasise the horrors of war, examine its immediate causes, and generally try to move people to take action to prevent war or to work towards nuclear disarmament. The second approach to peace education is to develop conflict resolution skills and attitudes towards peaceful resolution of conflict starting at the local level. While this may be of value, Burns points out that it oversimplifies the causes of war. The third approach has three strands. The first strand is that peace education, peace research and peace action are inseparable and should all be included in peace education programmes. The second strand takes a positive definition of peace as the absence of structural as well as direct violence. Inevitably peace education viewed in this light is concerned with social justice and the relationship of peace to development. The third strand is to develop forms of practice based on the action-research cycle, which includes exploring how attitudes and values, especially in relation to militarism and sexism, help to perpetuate structural as well as direct violence.

These approaches to peace education have their parallels in peace research. Summy (1982) and Mack (1983) have both identified 'schools' of peace researchers. Summy takes as the first school that approach which perceives peace as the absence of overt violence, and accepts any means both violent and non-violent as consonant with the goals of peace. Such researchers may focus on maintenance of the 'power balance' or how to achieve parity of armaments. The concept of social justice is not seen as part of this approach. Summy states that it is difficult to include this school 'within the bounds of peace research'. The second approach he calls revisionist. This school, while holding the same view of peace as absence of war, concentrates on the attitudes and behaviours needed for conflict resolution. The third school takes a positive definition of peace, and, as Summy states,

argues for a refocus of the traditional orientation of peace studies away from an emphasis on conflict avoidance, conflict resolution and conflict management....to a probing of the latent violence grafted into the bedrock of an unjust social order. An essential to the proponents of this school is a commitment to change at the levels of societal values and structures in the direction of greater social justice, equality and freedom for all.

Mack's categorisation is more detailed but little attention is paid to the third approach. It seems that Summy's categorisation of peace research parallels fairly closely Burns' classification of approaches to peace education.

In practical terms the assumptions about what constitutes peace education and research result in different types of activity in schools and tertiary institutions. For example, positive peace as an aim of education is quite different from teaching about the dangers of nuclear war in either a separate unit or as part of existing courses. One issue to be considered then is what type of development is desirable.

In the Atlantic College's manual on peace studies five methods of introducing peace studies into a school are identified. Wood (1982) refers to them, and some of the pros and cons:

- * Separate courses which may be optional or compulsory, examined or non-examined. This 'high profile' approach had the advantage of offering the widest possibilities for pursuing the subject in depth. But a crowded timetable and lack of resources could make it difficult.
- * Peace studies as modules in existing subjects. This overcame the timetable problem but will peace studies rest easily in traditional subjects?
- * Peace studies as part of an interdisciplinary curriculum. Offers the most 'global' approach but might be too nebulous.

- * Peace studies transmitted through the hidden curriculum and practical projects such as voluntary work. Good for low ability pupils but unlikely to work in a school with traditional attitudes such as corporal punishment.
- * A peace week. Stimulates interest but needs to be followed through.'

(Wood 1982)

One might add to this extra-curricula student groups, such as the Schools Against the Bomb movement in Britain and recently-formed student peace groups in some Canberra secondary schools.

Whilst such categorisation is useful in offering some practical alternatives, in looking at what sort of developments are most desirable it seems necessary to consider further how they relate to the types of peace education Burns identifies. In the absence of detailed information about programmes I shall examine the reasons put forward for development of peace education to discover what types of emphasis are being suggested.

A number of recent journal articles have drawn attention to the need for young people to understand the current world situation and the threat of nuclear war. For example Simmons (1982:48) argues that colleges should teach students about war and peace and suggests arms control, international relations, technology and society, and history as possible areas in which study would be profitable. She also states,

I believe every college should have at least one inter-disciplinary course on war and peace.

and she suggests that students could 'pursue the subject through work in the disciplines'. To achieve this, she says, colleges would have to develop an independent major. Her ideas for units suitable for inclusion in that major include Soviet-American relations and the American political process (eg the relationship between domestic issues and foreign policy).

Several articles in recent issues of Phi Delta Kappan (Herndon, Elam, Everhart, Fleming 1983) take the view that the nuclear threat is the major motivation behind the need for peace education and imply that what must be taught is information about that threat. Elam refers to a survey he undertook of students in three U.S. states to assess their knowledge of the nuclear threat and some of the developments leading up to it. Elam concludes that students' poor knowledge in these areas indicates that 'the threat of nuclear war is a problem to be dealt with head-on in the curriculum' (537). Similar emphasis is found in some of the articles in the Teachers College Record special issue on Education for Peace and Disarmament (see for example Melman, Musil and most of Barnett's article, 1982).

Whilst it is clearly important that young people are informed of these matters, courses developed from such motivations are likely to be based on the view of peace as the absence of war (or, more specifically, nuclear war, which seems to be the major concern of the writers referred to so far). Such study of the 'facts' about nuclear war would give the same level of understanding of social interactions as looking at the 'facts' of the nuclear family. Such courses are examples of the first and most narrow type of peace education to which Burns referred.

Such approaches could be achieved through four of the five methods of introducing peace education quoted earlier. Peace Week activities in Canberra recently had such a focus, alerting students to the consequences of a nuclear war and attempting to stimulate them to learn more about the problem and become active in opposing the nuclear arms race. The only method suggested which might seem inappropriate to this focus would be through the hidden curriculum, as it would be considered neither direct enough nor sufficiently informative.

A second rationale for peace studies is to reduce direct violence in society. In Germany fear of right-wing extremism in young neo-Nazi men led the Interior Secretary to call for the development of new teaching materials (Kirkman 1981). He has accused schools of failing to give young people adequate explanations of the Nazi era which might counter some of the stories they are told by their families. A further concern is the vehement nationalism of these young men, whose racist attitudes are increasingly directed at the four and a half million guest workers as unemployment worsens. In Great Britain too Eva Pinthus has worked in schools where racial tension is high or violence is a considerable problem. Such motivations for peace education

obviously require more fundamental changes to the teaching of existing disciplines than simply adding a new topic concerned with the arms race. The German example highlights the implicit messages conveyed in history teaching in particular. The need to avoid monocultural curricula in a multi-racial environment is also clear. In addition many exercises in group-building, communication and non-violent conflict resolution have been successfully used by Eva Pinthus in her work in Britain. Examples of the type of exercise can be found in handbooks such as The Friendly Classroom for a Small Planet and Learning Peaceful Relationships, both of which tend to be directed mainly, though not exclusively, toward teachers of primary school children. These approaches are also used by peace educators in conjunction with studies of the nuclear war threat already referred to. They all include an emphasis on the peaceful resolution of conflict, Burns' second type of peace education.

Though courses or units on peace education can and do include the development of non-violent attitudes and skills, the benefits of these are likely to be far greater if the 'hidden curriculum' of the school reinforces them. Schools which resort to force and especially corporal punishment may find students cynical about any attempts to teach non-violent conflict resolution.

While the focus of concern in the examples just referred to is overt, direct violence, largely of a physical kind, the third approach to peace education draws attention not only to violence on a global scale (through the use of war to 'resolve' conflict) but also to violence as a fundamental feature of the structures of our society. This approach sees the massive inequalities of wealth, income, power and information on global, societal and interpersonal levels as violent features of our world which have to be changed if a genuine peace is to be achieved. People with such a view would find all the methods of introducing peace studies which were listed earlier at best insufficient.

A total reorientation of school curricula, organisational practices and relationships would be needed in line with Burns' third notion of peace education. Such an approach would have to come to grips with the 'hidden curriculum' and the structure of schooling as well as the view of knowledge assumed in the overt curriculum. Students would need to develop more than just an awareness of the problems of violence at all levels of society. They would need to develop a desire and a sense of power to change the situation, as well as the skills necessary to do so. They would need to experience the dynamic nature of society. Thus, such an approach would have to engage students in the action-research cycle itself. They would, as Hardy (1982) says, have to 'have real experiences of organising for and creating change during their school days.' (p31)

It is my view that while the motivations and activities associated with the first two approaches to peace education can be valuable, neither will achieve the social transformation necessary to achieve a peaceful society in the fullest sense. Only the third approach will get to the structural roots of violence and create the type of society of which Senator Ryan spoke at AWEC.

What does this mean for schools and tertiary institutions?

I want to draw here on the work of Maxine Greene (1982) and Broughton and Zahaykevich (1982). Maxine Greene implies that it is important to look at everything we do in education. In particular she places great emphasis on the students' being 'empowered to interpret' their experience, and goes on:

I would want to put more stress on the process of interpretation than is ordinarily done, so that young people become to some degree self-reflective about the ways there are of making sense. (p129)

As an example she quotes the concept of 'discovery' in American history (the same can be applied to Australia of course) as a highly questionable idea. As she says it is important to not only make clear that Columbus' aim was not simply to 'discover' but to seek territory and 'exploit what he thought was the Far East', but also to 'enable children to reflect on the terms in use for describing and explaining what happened in the past, and obviously in the present too' (p129). Thus terms like 'the Great War', 'heroism', 'victory' all need to be

subject to critical scrutiny. Apart from this emphasis on the process of interpretation, Greene takes an existentialist position in urging 'an awareness of personal responsibility for the pursuit of meanings and truths'. She wants people to be made aware that all knowing is gained by a person or persons with particular interests, and no knowledge can be certain or final. She rejects positivism - the subject:object split and the fact:value division.

The danger lies in people's becoming accommodated to the idea of an objectively existent reality, defined by others, usually official others, and taking that reality for granted (p130).

It is this phenomenon which she says enables people to accept the 'block politics' view of the world and the limited frames of reference used by the powerful. Further, she emphasises the importance of people understanding the 'interconnectedness' of things. This is critical to bringing people together to confront violence in all its forms.

Greene states that classrooms should have an explicit value base. 'Moral situations never come labelled; they have to be posited as situations that hold alternatives, that can be transcended and surpassed. It may be that the sense of injustice ought to be nurtured....that human mutuality and friendship ought to be fostered' (p134). But above all else young people must not only come to know, and to feel deeply about things, but also to act. They must, as Greene says, 'break through what appear to be limiting situations'. They must be encouraged to think about alternatives to violence, destruction and war.

Broughton and Zahaykevich fiercely criticise positivism, 'the assumption that objective understanding and coherent social life can be grounded only by the scientific method of inquiry' (p154). They draw on Marcuse's concept of 'one-dimensional' existence which they agree eliminates the possibility of 'personal autonomy, critical insight and social transformation' (p156). Marcuse himself favours the arts (the aesthetic dimension) as a way of countering the otherwise disempowering features of our technologised society and ways of viewing the world.

The educational implications of this are radical changes in practice. Education for disarmament which adopts the 'strategic thinking' approach or which focuses on the horrors of the nuclear holocaust is itself oppressive, according to these writers. In the latter instance what is likely to happen is that people try to protect themselves against the battering they receive from prophets of nuclear doom. They 'resist' in order to defend themselves from a psychological pain too great to bear. This is then viewed by those with 'superior' knowledge, as apathy. A hierarchy is immediately reinforced. What Broughton and Zahaykevich have to say to educators is important. Although they refer largely to informal education methods used by peace or anti-nuclear activists, the principles about which they write apply equally to education in more formal settings.

Persons seeking to encourage the third approach will find the current institutional structures are antithetical to the way they want to work. Indeed the outcry from the peace movement when the Government considered giving a large sum of money for peace research to the Centre for Strategic and Defence Studies at the ANU reflects their awareness of some of the problems mentioned above. Such a centre would be based on frameworks of thinking such as those referred to by Summy as being hard to categorise as peace research (see Hastings, 1983). A centre of real value would need to be based on an institutional model more akin to centres for adult learning with participative, network approaches than a traditional hierarchical university model.

Peace education of the third type would need to be modelled on Kemmis' emancipatory approach to action - research in teaching and learning. It would involve undertaking critical analysis of textbooks and resources in current use throughout the school curriculum to identify and critique the views presented about knowledge in general and certain concepts in particular. It would also involve an emphasis on the use of the arts to deal with feelings, images, and generally to go beyond positivism. To develop the interconnectedness of which Maxine Greene speaks, the existing fragments of information currently known as curriculum 'subjects' would need to be brought together to offer perspectives on understanding, rather than to be taught as independent blocks of 'knowledge'. Learning would be coupled with action, so that in doing things, teachers and students are learning.

This is a major challenge to schools and other educational institutions. At present it could well be argued (though I have not done so here) that they reinforce and encourage the values and injustices on which structural violence is based. Their hierarchy, the competition between students, the fragmentation of knowledge are just a few features which contribute to the problems of the militaristic society. The promotion of peace education of a genuine sort will mean a transformation of schools as part of a wide process of transforming society. The implications of the work by Greene and Broughton and Zahaykevich are that the whole approach to teaching and the curriculum has to be changed if people are to reflect personally and critically on their world and be empowered to work together to change the violence of the structures and social relationships. Whilst teaching about the nuclear threat may arouse many people, it may at the same time numb others unless positive alternatives are both considered and worked towards.

All this suggests that there are many areas in which further thought and action are needed. We need to find ways to promote peace education of the third type in the face of inappropriate structures and (some) antagonistic people. We need to consider why peace education is seen as political and controversial, but the teaching of history is not. We have to consider which groups (eg oppressed groups?) are most willing to promote peace education and action, and how they can be supported. We need to investigate the types of pedagogy most appropriate to peace education and to question how far peace education can be successful within existing institutions. Finally, the connections between feminist, multicultural and environmental education need to be explored much further.

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