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The Peace Education Reconstructive-Empowering Approach: From Recognition to Cultures of Peace

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Abstract

This article aims to motivate the reflection, awareness, and empowerment for positive action to all those interested in education and in the conviction that it can be addressed to reduce the existing intolerance, exclusion, and violence and contribute to cultures of peace.

This will be possible by deconstructing the direct, structural, and cultural violence, which is reproduced in the educational system, as a social subsystem, and reconstructing different ways of doing peace education, specifically through the Reconstructive-Empowering (REM) approach. In this task, recognition of the others will be a key element to produce positive social transformation and to foster cultures of peace.

Keywords: Education, empowerment, competence, recognition, cultures of peace.

9.1 Introduction

In this article, I take the opportunity to reflect on the Peace Education (hereafter PE) Reconstructive-Empowering (hereafter REM) approach (Herrero 2019; 2018; 2013; 2012; 2009) that I propose from my research in the UNESCO Chair of Philosophy for Peace (CUFP) and at the Interuniversity

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The PE REM approach takes as starting point the hypothesis that humans have capabilities and competences to make peace. We are not determined to be genetically violent, but it depends more on our environment and culture. Therefore, violence and destruction are avoidable. Since we have the same capabilities to behave peacefully or violently, our response depends in the long run on the education we receive. Therefore, humans are responsible for creating one kind of behavior and not another. Thus, we highlight the importance of PE. With this regard, we state that we can make peace among us as well as with nature (Martinez, 2001, 2005; Adams, 1992). We, human beings, have the “power” to make peace and to transform our conflicts by peaceful means. PE, understood from the REM approach, is the reconstruction of these abilities and competences. This education approach is understood under the dialogic–participative paradigm (Martin, 2010). Every human being is considered a valid interlocutor and capable of making peace. Through recognition and peaceful interpellation, we can be able to create understanding and coexistence and, therefore, cultures of peace.

For the development of this article, I will divide the text into different sections and subsections to give greater coherence and clarity. Therefore, the sections in which I will distribute the content are the following: PE from the REM approach, overcoming intolerance and violence through recognition, and the proposal of recognition as an engine for the creation of cultures of peace.

9.2 Peace Education from the Reconstructive-Empowering Approach

The PE REM approach takes as a conceptual basis the *philosophy of making peace* of Martínez Guzmán (2001, 2005, 2009) from which PE is interpreted as the reconstruction of our human competences, in the sense of capacities or powers, to make peace. On the one hand, I call it *reconstructive* because it focuses on the reconstruction of our skills and abilities to make peace, which we have as a human characteristic. On the other hand, I refer to it as *empowering* because it requires awareness, motivation, and recovery of those powers we have for the peaceful transformation of the daily life conflicts, which are inherent to human relationships (Martínez, 2001; 2005). Thus, the REM approach demands the reconstruction of our human competences to

make peace and our empowerment to bring these peaceful competences to action, from our daily experiences. The aim is to educate in the difference and in the conflict that it entails, and by not facing it with violence but rather by peaceful means, turning them into learning opportunities (Paris, 2009).

In this sense, the elements of the PE REM approach will be distributed in response to the three components that we have to consider when implementing any educational practice and/or action, including PE (Cabezudo and Haavelsrud, 2001: 279). Therefore, this PE proposal includes the following vectors.

1) What should be taught? This will respond to the selection of the contents, which we briefly name as follows:

- A plural, diverse, holistic, and positive concept of peace (Herrero, 2019, 2013).
- The responsibility and social competence to make peace from our personal and everyday experiences (Marina and Bernabeu, 2007).
- The ability to change our perceptions and perspectives in order to put ourselves in the place of the other party, empathize and understand that, on many occasions, different visions, beliefs, judgments, and interpretations are possible depending on the perspective (Strawson, 1995).
- Communication for peace (Nos, 2007) and non-violent communication (Rosenberg, 2017) as a methodological tool to allow us, through performativity and our ability to change discourses, behaviors, attitudes, and perceptions by putting them in dialogue with the others. Therefore, through mutual interpellation, others can demand us accountability if what we express through what we do, what we say, and even what we keep in silence is not accepted, and, thus, we will be able to reach agreements.
- The importance of cooperation for the peaceful transformation of conflicts. Cooperation is required and needed if both sides want to overcome the conflict since it is necessary to cooperate with the other party in order to make peace (Rapoport, 1992).
- The empowerment to bring peace to action. Empowerment is understood as the revaluation of our powers and abilities to make peace as a human characteristic (Bush and Folger, 1996; Lederach, 1984, 1996; López, 2006; Muñoz, 2000).
- Care ethics (Comins, 2009) interpreted as a human value and not only as a gender characteristic, since it is necessary to learn to

take care of others, as well as of nature to contribute to cultures of peace. It also includes sentimental coeducation (Comins, 2009), meaning that we must educate girls and boys equally, including the expression of feelings and emotions in a natural and positive way.

The recognition of all human beings as valid interlocutors (Honneth, 1997, 2008, 2011). We interpret the concept of recognition as a step beyond tolerance since recognition takes as a starting point the consideration of other human beings as equally valid to oneself, at the expense of their physical, geographical, and cultural differences. To address this concept more broadly, I will dedicate a section on its own, as I consider it as a key concept and the engine of the creation of cultures of peace, which is the ultimate objective of this article.

- 2) How can this be taught? This would correspond to the form or methodology used in the teaching–learning process. Thus, the methodology that implements the REM approach would be that of deconstruction–reconstruction, that is, “we will unlearn what we have learned badly or stopped learning due to the rigidity, authoritarianism and violence of our educational-social systems” (Herrero, 2012: 53). In this sense, we will deconstruct the direct, structural, and cultural violence classified by Galtung (1985, 1993) that reproduces the educational system as a social subsystem and we will rebuild an education based on peace values and the training of our potential (powers) or competences to make peace from our personal experiences and everyday life.
- 3) Where can this be taught? That would relate to the contextual conditions that are required to implement the PE REM approach. On this third issue, a dialogic, inclusive, communicative, free, dynamic, and interactive context is required, highlighting the 2.0 contexts taking us into the jargon of cyberspace (Martin, 2010). Of course, contextual conditions must have the characteristics of a culture of peace (Adams, 1992). Likewise, the context of the PE REM approach should not be limited to the formal context of the educational system, but it should also cover informal contexts such as family or media; and non-formal ones, for instance, other entities with which we interact and educate ourselves, such as sports, leisure, and cultural associations, among others.

9.3 Facing Intolerance and Violence Through Recognition

Education, as a social subsystem, reproduces the three types of violence proposed by Galtung (1985, 1993): direct, structural, and cultural. In general, education is understood under the narrative–passive paradigm (Martin, 2010), as a banking education in words of Freire (1970), with a greater focus on individuality and competition rather than on cooperation and understanding of each other to promote peaceful coexistence. Considering this, we can name the following examples of different types of violence.

- 1) *Direct violence* (this violence is the consequence of the use of force or violence in any external manifestation). Education reproduces different kinds of direct violence such as labels, contempt, insults, punishments, shouts, blows, bullying, and fights, among others.
- 2) *Structural violence* (this violence is the consequence of an unequal process of social construction and socialization, which are inherited in our social structures and systems (e.g., political, legal, economic, cultural, etc.), and provokes human stratification). Education, as a social subsystem, also reproduces different kinds of structural violence. For instance, we can see social division of labor (manual and intellectual), educational hierarchy, abuses of power and coercion, vertical relationships, unidirectional and vertical communication, competition, a lack of equal opportunities for all, and exclusion, among others.
- 3) *Cultural violence* (this is a symbolic violence which is expressed by infinite means — religion, ideology, language, art, science, media, education, etc. — and fulfills the function of legitimizing direct and structural violence, as well as inhibiting or repressing the response of those who suffer it). Examples of cultural violence in education can include xenophobia toward others — prejudices, stereotypes, gender roles, cultural and anthropological ethnocentrism, extremism, and racism, among others.

Considering the three types of violence proposed by Galtung (1985, 1996), I would like to put him in dialogue with Honneth (1997, 2008, 2011), who defines the three most common forms that we tend to use to despise others. Therefore, Honneth (2011) classified three ways of contempt, which can be addressed as well as the three types of violence of Galtung.

- 1) The contempt of the body or the physicist (direct violence). The non-recognition of the body and of the physical conditions causes, in the

injured people, the alteration of their identity and the loss of trust in themselves.

- 2) The contempt of the rights of a certain person (structural violence). The non-recognition of the human rights and of the people legal aspect causes, in the injured people, the loss of self-respect because the person is considered excluded from the juridical and moral community.
- 3) The contempt for the culture or way of life of the others (direct violence). The non-recognition of the different cultures and lifestyles causes, in the injured people, the feeling of exclusion, marginalization, and underestimation and, consequently, the loss of self-esteem.

By combining the three types of contempt I have just mentioned, we could reflect, for example, on situations in which we exclude or marginalize other people for being disabled, fat, dwarf, black, gypsy, immigrant, poor, refugee, prostitute, lesbian, transsexual, punk, transient, indigenous, etc. As we can see, contempt causes in the aggrieved people a lack of trust, lack of respect, and lack of self-esteem by generating the different types of violence, and, therefore, we can conclude that the non-recognition of others can lead to cultures of violence.

With this regard, in order to face intolerance, contempt, discrimination, and violence, Honneth (1997) proposed the struggle for recognition.

9.4 Recognition: Key Concept for the Creation of Cultures of Peace

The PE REM approach foments the recognition (Honneth, 1997, 2008, 2011) of all human beings as valid interlocutors, considering every single being as equally valid with special attention to her/his culture, social class or religion (Martínez, 2001, 2005). We can interpret recognition as one step further from tolerance because recognition focuses on overcoming ethnocentrism, stereotypes, and prejudices by considering all people as valid interlocutors, on a level of equality and despite the fact that you share or not the others' ideas, cultural forms, religious manifestations, or ways of understanding and living life.

According to the Spanish Dictionary *Diccionario del Uso de Español* by María Moliner (2009) "recognition" is the action of recognizing, defined with the following acceptations:

- 1) To be aware that one person or thing is precisely one determined, known, and identified.

- 2) To admit that a certain person is what he/she expresses and to recognize him/her with his/her legality and authenticity.
- 3) To recognize that a certain thing or person exists and has their own value even if it/they dislike me.

The three acceptations of the definition made by Moliner (2009) are very important for the fact of recognizing others and accepting diversity as an enriching element of our society. Following Honneth (1997, 2008, 2011) and, as I have mentioned in the previous chapter, we refer to recognition by taking into account the three main types of disrespects we do to others: disrespects related to our bodies or appearances, disrespects related to our legal and human rights, and the disrespects related to our cultures, religions, or lifestyles. Therefore, recognition is required to overcome intolerance and violence and to contribute to the creation of cultures of peace. Recognition is overall seen in the following three aspects:

1. The recognition of the body, which promotes esteem, care, love, and self-trust.
2. The recognition of the legal and human rights, which promotes identity, integration, solidarity, empathy, and self-respect.
3. The recognition of the different lifestyles, which promotes self-esteem.

Therefore, the PE REM approach focuses on the reconstruction of self-trust, self-respect, and self-esteem through the three forms of recognition proposed by Honneth (1997, 2008, 2011). In sum, the recognition of these three dimensions — that is physical, legal, and cultural — will overcome the culture of violence and will contribute to the creation of cultures of peace.

9.5 Conclusion

The PE REM approach invites us to reflect on what logic and rationality we have established as human beings and on which education is based. Apparently, from politics, mass media, dominant culture, and education, the logic of violence, individuality, competitiveness, contempt for difference, intolerance, and exclusion are mostly shown. Thus, the educational system, as a social subsystem, also inherits this logic by reproducing not only direct violence but also structural and cultural violence, which are more subtle and difficult to make visible. Therefore, it is necessary to modify these logics and deconstruct existing violence if we want to educate for peace and create a more respectful, tolerant, and inclusive society.

Through the reading of this article, we see that we have powers and competences, as well as different alternatives to making peace. We know, then, that “violence is not a biological fatality included in our genes, but that it is learned through processes of socialization and acculturation, in the same way that we can learn nonviolence and peace” (López, 2006: 71). However, it is in our hands to unlearn the culture of violence and war (Bastida, 2004), which is the consequence of not recognizing the otherness and to learn the cultures of peace through recognition and peaceful interpellation. We, as human beings, are responsible for contributing to a more peaceful coexistence from our personal and daily experiences.

In this endeavor, the PE REM approach, which is based on the recognition of others — not only on the physical integrity of people but also on their human and legal rights and of their different cultures and ways of life — aims to be an alternative to contribute to the creation of cultures of tolerance and peace.

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