

Holism, Dialogue, and Critical Empowerment: A Pedagogy for Peace*

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Peace is one of the most talked-about topics in the world due to the seemingly endless history of violent conflicts and wars and devastating loss of life. The situation is worsening, as small-scale arms and strategies are joined by high-tech war systems and weaponry, and the mass media are used to rationalize “war for peace” in a widespread militarization of consciousness. Wars are increasing in number and scale, as are the social and economic conditions that cause them. The suffering caused by poverty and oppression is as grave as the consequences of war.

It’s easy to talk about peace. Nobody will disagree publicly that we need it. But some forces promote war while preaching peace, and genuine peacemakers have diverse visions and strategies. One of the most important ways to build peace is through educational programs and curriculums. Peace education has been gaining public recognition but is a new area, so we need to cultivate a broad and deep understanding of reality, develop holistic visions of a peaceful world, and devise pedagogical methods to encourage and empower people to build peace together. We aim not just to end war but also to build a “culture of peace.”

The Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding (APCEIU), founded two years ago to promote a culture of peace in the Asia-Pacific region, is fortunate to have an extensive network of individuals and organizations, starting with the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) family. As we study peace education, hold workshops and symposiums, and share information through our publications, we

gradually become acquainted with those already engaged and experienced in this area.

Our training workshop for Pacific-area teachers and administrators, held on 16–20 July 2003, in Suva, Fiji, was unforgettable, thanks to the teamwork of our facilitators, co-organizer, and host. Our co-organizer, the UNESCO Office for the Pacific (director, Dr. Edna Tait), and our host, the Fiji National Commission for UNESCO (secretary, Isireli Senibulu), gathered together a diverse, highly representative group of 40 school teachers and principals, plus five nongovernmental organization leaders, from 10 Pacific island nations: Fiji Islands, Cook Islands, Papua New Guinea, Samoa, Solomon Islands, Tonga, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Tokelau, and New Zealand. Judging from the participants’ response, it was the right time and right place for this workshop. Held on a boat anchored off the Suva Tradewinds Hotel, in the Pacific Ocean, the workshop was literally surrounded and supported by peace.

Our tireless Fiji hosts met and escorted all the participants from the airport, including

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those who had to come days in advance by circuitous routes due to the scarcity of flights. Our hosts led us in joyful cultural evenings, earning praise for their warm, generous hospitality, and were with us right up to the end of our stay.

It was the patient, energetic work of our facilitators throughout the 5 days of the workshop that made this an empowering experience for everyone. The core team was comprised of Dr. Toh Swee-Hin (director of the Centre for International Education and Development and professor in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta, Canada, and recipient of the 2000 UNESCO Prize for Peace Education); Dr. Virginia Cawagas (adjunct professor in the Department of Educational Policy Studies at the University of Alberta, Canada, and editor of the *Journal of the World Council on Curriculum and Instruction*); and Dr. Loreta Castro (director of the Center for Peace Education at Miriam College, Philippines, and member of the advisory board of the Global Campaign for Peace Education of the Hague Appeal for Peace).

Four other experts led sections of the workshop: Dr. Lawrence Surendra (University of Madras, India); Drs. Bob and Jennie Teasdale (Flinders University, Australia); and Dr. Konai Thaman (University of the South Pacific, Fiji). Just before the teacher-training workshop, they were joined by two other experts—Dr. Joy de Leo (South Australia Department of Education, and the Asia-Pacific Network on International Education and Values Education); and Dr. Han Zunsang (Yonsei University, Korea)—for a workshop on curriculum development. This second experts' workshop on education for international understanding (EIU) produced a draft framework for a teachers' resource book, *EIU for a Culture of Peace*.

The opening ceremony set the tone for the workshop. In her welcoming speech Emi Rabukawaqa, the Fiji permanent secretary for education, called upon the participants to “re-learn peace” by knowing ourselves and “the

other,” developing our capabilities for intercultural understanding, and cultivating shared values.

APCEIU director Dr. Samuel Lee introduced the center and its work, and expressed his pleasure to be holding a teacher-training workshop in the Pacific region, in collaboration with the UNESCO Office for the Pacific (Apia) and the Fiji National Commission for UNESCO. Edna Tait of UNESCO thanked Samuel Lee for his initiative, noting that “it is the first time an organization from Asia has offered a full workshop to the Pacific.” She called upon the participants to

- be willing to take peaceful risks to find new ways to help their students become peaceful students;
- have courage in the face of opposition: not everyone is committed to peace; and
- find strength in partnership: as the woven mat is stronger than any of its single strands, so we are stronger in our work with the support of others.

Workshop Topics

The workshop topics were all interconnected under the concept of holistic peace education:

- Imaging peaceful futures
- Conceptual framework for EIU
- Militarization—root causes and consequences
- Education for conflict resolution and transformation; active nonviolence
- Issues of structural violence and global justice
- Globalization and development
- Intercultural sharing
- Education for empowerment
- Issues of human rights (focus on indigenous peoples)
- Human rights education
- Cultural solidarity (focus on intercultural understanding)
- Panel discussion on Asia-Pacific values and EIU

- Environmental care
- Personal peace and wisdom of civilizations
- Field trip (to an alternative school)
- Teaching-learning strategies; whole-school approach
- Curriculum mapping and resources

Facilitators made these topics appealing and enjoyable by employing a lively teaching method based on holism, dialogue, critical empowerment, and value formation. All the participants became totally involved—mind, body, and spirit—in learning to educate for peace through activities that drew out their ideas, experiences, visions and hopes, creativity, and cooperative skills, and moved them to greater understanding, commitment, and confidence as educators for peace.

A few selections may serve to illustrate the style and effectiveness of this type of workshop. It started with a simple exercise, “imaging a peaceful world,” in which the participants wrote on colored strips of paper two catch phrases—one reflecting peace at the local level, and the other at the global level—and exchanged these with each other until various groupings emerged, such as “breaking down barriers,” “joy of living,” “mutual respect and care for each other,” “nurturing the environment,” “equity,” and “understanding.” In the style that was to characterize the whole workshop, the activity was followed immediately by a “synthesis”: further background information, examples and explanations by the facilitators, and active dialogue between them and participants.

This introduction led directly to the workshop’s core concept: “a holistic framework for EIU toward a culture of peace.” Referring to the six petals of the “peace education flower,” the participants engaged in a succession of creative activities and sharing of understanding related to the major issues, recognizing their interconnections.

The facilitators briefly explained each area of the framework, noting that any one of them can be the starting point:

Dismantling the culture of war. The world is being more and more militarized, with increasing wars and direct violence, nuclear testing, and the danger of nuclear war.

Living with compassion and justice. Another kind of violence is structural. From 20,000 to 30,000 children die every year due to lack of basic needs. Compassion and justice mean equity for all. Now billions are marginalized, in urban slums and poor rural areas, going hungry every night.

Promoting human rights. They differ among cultures, but principles and values underpin human rights everywhere. Caring for and loving each other are part of protecting human rights. Human rights include basic economic rights (right to food) and cultural rights (people’s languages and ways of life). Schools also need to build a culture of human rights.

Cultural respect, reconciliation, and solidarity. The world is culturally diverse. We need to find the real roots of intercultural conflicts, which may be economic.

Living in harmony with the earth. We must live in peace not only with human beings but also with the Earth. We can learn from the indigenous peoples’ “caring for the seven generations,” based on a vision of land as sacred.

Cultivating inner peace. Everyone needs deep inner peace. Living peacefully with others is related to being at peace with ourselves. How do we cultivate a sense of inner peace while working for world peace?

The facilitators then introduced the basic pedagogical principles of EIU, which include holism (interrelatedness of the six main issue areas); dialogue (teaching-learning in the horizontal mode); local-global connections; critical empowerment (transformation, commitment, and action by learners); and value formation (educating the heart and spirit as well as the mind).

Participants were then asked to share their questions or critical comments, first listing them by group and then sharing them in the open forum.

The second day dealt with several themes, but here I will focus on “living with compassion and justice”:

Facilitator: “We ask you to look into the lives of the marginalized and disadvantaged. Even in northern industrialized countries, marginalization is common. Do your analysis in groups, and present the results in the form of a song, after 30 minutes. It will be a song about the particular group you have chosen: urban poor, fisherfolk, farmers. We’re here to share our experiences in teaching and learning education to build a culture of peace. Since yesterday we have been demonstrating both content and method. The first verse will be on the realities, the second on the root causes, and the third will present some solutions or ways of empowerment. (Each participant drew from a hat a piece of paper with a word associated with urban poor, farmers, or fishing people.)

“If you think your word is associated with the life and work of the urban poor, move to that table (etc.). (Groups formed, with some discussions about the meanings of some words in unfamiliar languages.) Compose your masterpieces, after discussing for a few minutes the answers to the questions on your sheets.”

Education for Empowerment—Activity and Synthesis

A follow-up session was held on the same theme, but this time it was a comprehensive discussion using “analysis papers” based on the contents of the songs, i.e., realities, root causes, and solutions (posted in the front of the room).

The facilitators complimented the groups’ grasp of issues and added necessary information as the dialogue continued. Additional points were made: Subsidies for chemical fertilizers pose problems for the environment and lead to greater indebtedness. Monsanto’s invention of the terminator seed¹ symbolizes the growing corporate domination of food production and distribution. Countries that formerly were self-sufficient now import large

quantities of food. Tourism development is taking fertile land away from farmers. The globalized economy promotes monoculture and cash cropping, leading to dependency and malnutrition. It’s time to rethink our practices and replace them with more sustainable ways of life.

As large trawlers invade local fishing grounds and overfish them, and as more marine products are exported, small fisherfolk are being marginalized. Some modern fishing methods and shrimp farming are destroying the mangroves and other key parts of the ecological system. We must be sure that “government support” goes to those who need it. Remember that underemployment, as well as unemployment, is also important: insufficient income contributes to all other problems.

Limits are needed: globalization is undermining small businesses, forcing economies open and setting obstacles in the way of development, submerging it in the interests of foreign investors. We need appropriate government policies, education in skills, and special support (loans and credit) for small businesses. One of the most serious consequences of globalization is the “race to the bottom” in reducing wages. Multinational corporations keep moving to countries where they can pay lower wages and benefit from low environmental standards, bringing destruction in their wake.

The participants watched part of a film, *Politics of Food*, on how liberalization and free market policies harm farmers and food security. Next the participants observed the facilitators’ role-play of the global civil-society forum in Porto Alegre, Brazil, where delegates called for new ways of viewing the earth and human life. Their slogans: “Reclaim the global commons.” “Our world is not for sale.” “The world belongs to no one; we all belong to the world.” “We are all commoners.” “We declare our right of access to the commons for ourselves and future generations.”

The facilitators’ roles briefly described the situations and urgent demands for equity and dignity of scavengers, poor farmers in India,

Fisherfolk		
<i>Realities</i>	<i>Root causes</i>	<i>Solutions</i>
Environmental pollution Overfishing Small income Small catches Problem of marketing Commercial fishing Expenses for family, taxes	Cash economy Commercialization Isolation Rapid population growth High living cost Cultures/traditions	Financial support (government) Move "ice plants" to rural areas More education Introduce new methods Fisherfolk collaborate Government support: modern equipment Ban commercial fishing in village waters Conservation of fish and mangroves
Farmers		
<i>Realities</i>	<i>Root causes</i>	<i>Solutions</i>
Lack of land Unsuitable land Indebtedness Crop failure Labor-intensive production Poor returns High cost of production –transport –fertilizer –labor	Inequitable distribution of land High cost of machinery, labor Natural disasters Harsh climate Oversupply, low prices Trade barriers Insecure market Geographic isolation Perishability of produce Seasonability Lack of modern resources Unwise planning	Better land distribution Better farming methods Market-oriented farming Use of science and technology Cooperation among farmers Relaxed trade policies Subsidized prices Transportation Infrastructure (government) Subsidies for machinery, transport, fertilizer Farmers' cooperatives Long-term government and international loans for land purchase More coordinated management and marketing
Urban Poor		
<i>Realities</i>	<i>Root causes</i>	<i>Solutions</i>
Hunger and starvation Cold weather Sadness, depression Hopelessness, idleness Poor health School dropouts Street kids Prostitutes	Unemployment Illiteracy Ignorance Lack of skills Social inequalities Insecurity Broken families Exploitation	Increased budgets Poverty alleviation Free education for all Quality public education Free medical services Safety nets "Put the last first" Encourage self-reliance Welfare Empowerment: skills, knowledge

street children, and Southeast Asian women working in sweat shops owned by countries in the north; and the calls by civil-society organizations to protect the basic right to life of these and other oppressed groups.

The facilitators suggested that teachers and principals do this activity by devising a variety of roles for their students to learn “empowerment, signs of hope, and the ability to challenge global and local structures of power—not to lose hope and become paralyzed. Educators are required to bring the sense of hope to others, think about our own role as consumers, be in solidarity with street children. Our students will eventually take government and other leading positions. We hope they will be in solidarity with the suffering people of the world.”

Lawrence Surendra led an energetic activity and discussion of “globalization and development” on day 2, and on day 3 Bob and Jennie Teasdale led an exploration of indigenous Pacific-region language concepts related to human rights. Another activity, led by Loreta Castro, had the five groups draw posters on human rights problems and solutions for children, women, workers, elderly people, and persons with disabilities.

The packed schedule on day 3 proceeded with the topic of cultural solidarity, which had participants prepare and present a radio broadcast. They were given 20 minutes to plan and 5 minutes to do the broadcast. Titled “Broadcast on Issues from Around the World,” it included topics such as the Amazon (problems caused by loggers), the Innu of Canada (noise pollution caused by a military base), the Cordillera people in the Philippines (dam construction causing flooding and homelessness), the South Pacific (interethnic conflict), and New Zealand (multiculturalism).

Each group was given a paper briefly describing the problems, root causes, and people’s demands for improvements. (This broadcast may be done over several days, and students may be given additional reading material.)

At the panel discussion on Asia-Pacific values and EIU on the evening of day 4, four panelists shared their concepts and experiences related to a culture of peace from different parts of the region: Southeast Asia (Loreta Castro, Philippines); South Asia (Lawrence Surendra, India); the Pacific (Konai Thaman, Tonga and Fiji); and Northeast Asia (Samuel Lee, Korea).

On 19 July the focus was on environmental care through writing poetry. Each person received a paper with the name of a living or non-living thing (rock, cloud, rice, frog, coral, ocean, butterfly) and was instructed: “Close your eyes. You are going on a journey, to the far past. How do you feel? Breathe deeply and feel what and how you are. Slowly travel to the present; do you feel how you have changed? How do you feel? Then slowly travel to the future. If you could make a contribution to humanity, what would it be? Travel slowly back to Fiji and our meeting room. On the count of 3, open your eyes and be ready to write your poetry, speaking of your past, your present, and your own appeal to the future.”

The participants wrote poems; some read theirs aloud and all were posted around the room. A few examples:

Sea

In the beginning...
 Deep blue, clear green, sparkling,
 My waves ebb and flow
 Covering the globe,
 Lapping on the shores of foreign lands.
 I am fresh, free, beautiful, majestic.

Man did not respect me.
 Now I am ill, constipated
 By ships and pollution,
 Oil and debris that float on my surface;
 Nuclear waste is dumped at my feet.
 Angrily I crash on the land,
 Leaving behind dirty beaches of muck and
 stink.

Mankind,
 You have infected me,
 Made me a prisoner.
 Leave me alone;
 Set me free once more.

—Natalie Faitala
 Cook Islands

Sugar Cane

Created to serve
 Swaying in the beautiful sun
 Waiting to be discovered
 I was at peace with myself.

So sweet I was soon discovered
 Young and old enjoyed my service
 But after a while I became exploited
 Was altered and mass produced
 My service has become destructive.

Please use me wisely
 Stop overexploiting me
 I was created to serve
 Never meant to be destructive.

—Margaret Toukoune
 Vanuatu

The next activity was a mock South Pacific and New Zealand summit to prepare for the World Summit on Sustainable Development, with each country presenting its major environmental problems, then together brainstorming on solutions. The facilitators introduced a critical sustainability paradigm:

<i>Inner dependencies</i>	<i>Alternative energies and technologies</i>
Intergenerational	From gross national product (GNP) (GNP) responsibility to global progress index (GPI)
Nonviolence to the planet	From "NIMBY" ² to green justice
Lighter ecological footprints	Eco-feminism
Live in voluntary simplicity	Deep ecology
Wisdom of the elders	Green theology

The final petal of the flower of holistic education for peace was personal peace and wisdom of civilizations. Participants wrote their thoughts on large colored paper leaves, read the words aloud, and attached the leaves to the outline of a tall tree. The participants identified common themes and reconfirmed the connection between personal and social peace.

On day 5 everyone got down to the serious work of planning how they would implement programs of education for a culture of peace in their own schools. The participants did a mapping exercise that included curriculum content (subject areas and levels, topics, and issues), extracurriculum (activities and levels, topics and issues), and school-wide and institutional policies. The participants first brainstormed individually, then in groups: primary- and secondary-school social studies teachers, science teachers, and teaching principals, and pure administrators. Their mapping results, in the form of charts, were posted for full-group discussion, and led to proposals for future cooperative work among the participant countries.

At the closing ceremony on the afternoon of 20 July, expressions of thanks and appreciation overflowed. Govind Singh of Fiji spoke for all the participants: "We came with vague ideas; you set the course for us, and we were able to follow. I was moved by the quality of this workshop. It gave us so much in such a nice way, in such a short time. Some things we keep close to our chests and fear to share; you helped us put them on the table, to get to know each other and the world at large. You showed us there is a way to do that. You have given us a new challenge—put a load on our shoulders. We will go back and institute into our systems the goals and activities we have learned here. The last exercise has given us a clear picture of what we must do from now. I see the heads nodding in consonance. From here on, we will collaborate among ourselves on what we learned in this compressed workshop."

In their written evaluations, the principals and teachers complimented the pedagogy used by

the facilitators, especially the open-forum method of discussion, which gave everyone the opportunity to share their thoughts and experiences on the topics; the creation of interest before, during, and after every session; and the great amount of knowledge made available by the facilitators. The participants said the workshop was a positive demonstration of international understanding in action, and that it was a lot of fun. They called it comprehensive, informative, motivating, and challenging, and said they had gained assurance and confidence in taking new directions.

As organizer of the 2002 Fiji workshops and recorder of the whole proceedings, I recognized the workshop as a model of democracy in action. The workshop proved that whenever

people gather in an atmosphere of mutual respect to share their visions, critically analyze their local and global realities, and seek solutions in cooperation, they move one another to deeper understanding, commitment, and action. I hope this model will be picked up by many others concerned with educating for peace.

Notes

1. The terminator seed is engineered literally to terminate, so its descendants cannot be saved for future planting.
2. "NIMBY (not in my backyard)" is the slogan of people resisting the construction of nuclear waste dumps, dioxin-producing incinerators or other such polluting facilities in their neighborhoods.