

Global Campaign for Education

Briefing paper on key priority areas informed by the Strategic Plan 2023-2027 Peace Education

1. Background

Peace education has historically been linked to the search for structural solutions to conflicts, whether social, political, military or even interpersonal. The creation of the United Nations Organization, on the foundations of the old League of Nations, and the consequent adoption of the International Bill of Human Rights, marked a turning point in the fight for human rights and humanitarian law, which gradually involved schools and all education practices and settings.

The painful lessons learned from the Black African Holocaust (Maafa) and the Hebrew Shoa, from the indigenous genocides in America, and those that occurred in Gaza, Congo, Rwanda, Armenia, Chechnya and the Dominican Republic, among many others, contributed to building the values of equality, justice, dignity, and freedom through education.

Other historical struggles that have contributed enormously to the construction of social consciousness for peace must be recognized, such as the ongoing struggles for women and LGBTIQ+ people emancipation.

However, the conflicts occurred after the creation of the UN and the emergence of de facto regimes in all continents, which led to ferocious dictatorships and states of emergency, motivated various initiatives at UNESCO and the UN, aimed at promotion of cultures of peace. These initiatives found transcendental support with the creation of the UN Commission on Human Rights, in 1946, (currently the Human Rights Council, created in 2006), the UN University for Peace, in 1980, and the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights, in 1993.

The creation of these institutions was sustained thanks to growing academic concern and the direct participation of teachers and the education community as a whole. In fact, the experience of two world wars and the Spanish Civil War led the educational community to reconsider the purpose of history on the teaching curriculum, leading to a convergence with the principles of peace education¹.

This background has given rise to far-reaching initiatives, such as the [World Programme for Human Rights Education \(2005-ongoing\)](#) and the [Global Campaign for Peace Education](#).

¹ https://www.icip.cat/wp-content/uploads/2021/01/policy_paper_09_eng.pdf

2. The GCE Strategic Plan (2023-2027)

The current GCE Strategic Plan has raised concerns about the rise of authoritarianism and threats to democracy, which include not only the closure of spaces for participation, but also the repression of peaceful and legitimate social protest and the criminalization of students and teachers.

As a rights-based movement, GCE is committed to continue advancing our foundational asks for a free, inclusive quality education that contributes to just, sustainable, and peaceful societies and:

- GCE will develop a set of policy positions and information/learning resources on these elements to support joint advocacy and campaigning, as part of our global campaigns we aimed at Relevant education: skills for life, work & citizenship and contribution to sustainable and peaceful societies, in connection to SDG4.7

GCE asks that governments and decision-makers at all levels:

- Prioritise funding for education in emergencies applying a development-humanitarian-peace nexus approach.
- Invest in teachers to be better equipped and prepared to teach learners about disaster risks and climate change, health, human rights, causes and consequences of conflict and how to live and interact peacefully; and to support learners and colleagues' safety and well-being when and after disaster strikes.

3. Critical challenges

The escalation of social, political and military conflicts in all regions of the world is significant and it seems that the search for peace is not the main topic of the conflict resolution agenda. Subsequently, children and women's lives, but not only, continue to be lost dramatically and with impunity, without achieving significant progress, or worse, regression, in the search for lasting peace.

Geopolitical disagreements persist behind many of these conflicts, but in most cases, war is also inflamed by racism, intolerance, and many other violent and subtle forms of discrimination. The Global Campaign for Education is convinced that no lasting peace would be reached without justice. Justice systems must work for peace. Equally important, education systems must promote global citizenship that recognizes and protects the dignity and intrinsic equality of human beings and people's inalienable right to self-determination.

Education should be a significant contributor to peace, as a way to build values, knowledge, attitudes, skills and behaviours to live in harmony with oneself, with others and the environment. However, education, by itself, is not necessarily conceived as an instrument for change. On the

contrary, it could rather be a precursor to inequality and violence, if its aims do not promote the values and knowledge necessary to live in peace.

That said, for education to become a peace driver, it is necessary that its content, its practice, and governance, including the pedagogical and teaching dimensions, remain in tune with the purposes established within the International Human Rights Law.

The peace-human rights relationship is therefore crucial to achieve the desired objectives, so that civil society advocacy strategies always follow the principle that we do not have the right to just any education, but to one that promotes human dignity and peaceful development, within the framework of the full realisation of human rights as a way of life.

Way forward

Learning to live together is a critical pathway for education and lifelong learning at all levels and modalities. Therefore, the role of education in peace-building and peace-maintenance, and more specifically the role of teachers in peace education, is key for understanding the conflict and finding ways for sound resolution.

In order to engage in transformative pedagogy for peace-building, the role of teachers must be redefined. Teachers need the disposition, knowledge, skills and commitment necessary to engage learners in critical and creative thinking and practices. Teachers must also become ethnic, religious, gender and social-class border-crossers who understand the impact of their ethnic identities and those of the learners in their classroom practices and interactions.

Building capacities is then crucial to all education actors and this requires, on the one hand, adequate and sustainable financing and, secondly, the state sensitivity and political decision to adopt and implement transformative public policies, which encompass the entire educational system and beyond.

Peace education is not a call to docility and submission, but to the construction of environments of equality, respect, and harmony. Paradoxically, this requires the formation of cultures and pedagogies of resistance to violence, exploitation, and hatred. Pedagogies of resistance are a necessary practice to create conditions of horizontal decision-making and therefore require the construction of an ethic of equality that includes a strong vision of gender and a sensitivity for interaction with all age, ethnic and religious groups.

Resistance calls to counteract and even denounce the mechanisms of social domination that induce or produce violence. This implies that cultures of peace should not be understood as spaces of passivity, but rather the opposite, of active development of constructive proposals for peaceful conviviality and positive change. Education systems must become a space for dialogue at all levels, including intergenerational dialogue.

Civil society organisations, in general, and the Global Campaign for Education, in particular, are called to demand the necessary changes so that education systems fulfil their role in building cultures of peace. Furthermore, the GCE should mobilise its members to bring about the urgent social changes that are needed to maintain agile and effective conciliation mechanisms in the face of conflicts.