The International Institute on Peace Education:
Twenty-six Years Modeling Critical, Participatory Peace Pedagogy

Tony Jenkins

Co-Director, Peace Education Center at Teachers College, Columbia University
Program Coordinator, Global Education Associates
Global Coordinator, International Institute on Peace Education
Jenkins@g-e-a.org

Introduction

In 2005 the International Peace Bureau nominated the International Institute on Peace Education (IIPE) for the UNESCO Peace Education Prize. In the nomination it described the IIPE as "probably the most effective agent for the introduction of peace education to more educators than any other single non-governmental agency."[1] In a world where far too few opportunities exist for teacher training in peace education, for 26 years the IIPE has been providing unique short-term, residential, cooperative learning experiences in peace education. Held annually, the IIPE brings together educators and professionals from around the world to learn with and from each other in short-term learning communities that model principles of critical, participatory peace pedagogy. The IIPE has two primary goals: 1) to provide learning experiences and exposure to formal and non-formal educators to the content, pedagogy and

---

[1] Cora Weiss, *Nomination of the International Institute on Peace Education for the UNESCO Peace Education Prize* (International Peace Bureau, 2005).

teaching and learning methods of peace education as practiced by educators from around the world; and 2) to assist in the promotion and development of peace education in the host region and globally. This article will describe the pedagogy, structure and cooperative organizing model of the IIPE which work holistically together toward achieving these goals.

A Brief History

In 1982 the first IIPE was held at Teachers College, Columbia University. It was organized by Professors Betty A. Reardon, Willard Jacobson and Douglas Sloan in cooperation with the United Ministries in Education. Each of these professors, working in different fields and disciplines, came together to apply their collective knowledge, wisdom and experience toward a problem that threatened the extinction of the human race and all life on the planet - nuclear proliferation. This first IIPE experience examined the practical and theoretical contributions of education to world order and nuclear and general and complete disarmament. In doing so it addressed the political and personal dimensions of the task of disarmament, inquiring into worldviews, beliefs and attitudes that sustain and make possible a highly militarized system of global security.

From 1982 the Institute evolved in parallel to other developments in the peace research and peace studies fields and the work of the IIPE founder, Dr. Reardon.[2] Rather than an exclusive focus on disarmament education, the IIPE began to examine peace and violence more holistically. In the broadest sense, it became concerned with addressing the *system or culture of violence* that has been taught and passed on from generation to generation through schools, communities and governments; this system is seen as reinforced and supported by sets of institutions, rules and laws, and most cogently a widely shared belief system that suggests that war is an acceptable solution to human conflict.

Complementing this systemic and holistic view, the Institute organically developed into an annual, international program that is hosted, cooperatively planned and co-coordinated by a partner academic or non-governmental institution. This internationalization of the IIPE enables it to be inclusive of cultural contexts. Furthermore, it has enabled the Institute to be adaptive and flexible in its form and in the content chosen that frames each year's program.

While the social purposes of the IIPE are directed toward the development of the field of peace education in theory, practice and advocacy, the objectives of each particular institute are rooted in the needs and transformational concerns of the host region. The Institute seeks to build strategic, international, institutional alliances among NGOs, universities and agencies involved in peace education with the goal of increasing the benefits of shared expertise on substance and practice as well as advancing educational reform initiatives. It also encourages regional cooperation toward the maximization of resources, cooperation in pedagogical and substantive developments, and increasing regional perspectives on the global issues that comprise the content of peace education. This is accomplished through significant involvement of regional organizations and participants with an annual goal of 50% of the participants coming from the region.

---

[2] Ian Harris and Mary Lee Morrison, *Peace Education* (North Carolina: McFarland, 2003). Betty Reardon, "Peace Education: A Review and Projection," in *International Companion to Education*, Eds. Moon, B., Brown, S. & Peretz, M.B. (New York: Routledge, 2000).

Pedagogical Principles

As is illuminated above, the IIPE philosophy of peace education is both holistic in nature and comprehensive in scope in which the social purposes of peace education are oriented toward social change and transformation, in which transformation implies deep change affecting ways of thinking, worldviews, values, behaviors, relationships, and social structures.[3] Peace education, in this sense, seeks to nurture the types of changes in thinking, attitudes and behaviors that will help learners to *understand, confront, resist, transform and ultimately eliminate violence in all of its multiple forms*.   Such changes are intended to inspire learners to actively pursue the transformation of the present culture of violence through considerations of alternatives.   The IIPE offers participants a learning experience in peace education in which participants begin illuminating and assessing possibilities for overcoming various forms of violence.   The IIPE recognizes that the central change that must take place as part of a process of transformation toward a culture of peace is acknowledging the futility of violence and recognizing the practicality of alternatives. Betty Reardon describes the transformation that must occur as "a change in the human consciousness and in human society of a dimension far greater than any other that has taken place since the emergence of human settlements."[4] As most any educator will tell you, such transformations are not easily facilitated, nor can they be forced, mandated, or dictated.

How to facilitate learning for personal and social change and transformation is the fundamental challenge at the core of peace education pedagogy. Facilitating learning for peace requires an educator to have an intentional and acute awareness of the relationship between the values that are being articulated and the processes through which those values are disseminated.   The ethos of much of the world's formal education is very hierarchal and top down, in which teachers tell students what to think at the expense of developing critical thinking, information processing and problem-solving skills.[5] The peace pedagogy of the IIPE is essentially critical pedagogy with roots in the tradition of Dewey, Freire, and Montessori. It puts more emphasis on helping learners to think critically and does not dictate what to think. Emphasis is given to capacitating learners with relevant skills and knowledge for active engagement in civil and political society. With what issues and to what degree a student is engaged is ultimately of his or her own choice. Parker Palmer astutely observes that "the way we interact with the world in knowing it becomes the way we interact with the world as we live in it."[6] In other words: "how we come to know, what it is that we know, largely influences how we will use or act upon that knowledge in the world."[7]

Magnus Haavelsrud further describes the integral interrelationship between form, content and context in peace education.[8] He argues that for peace education to be relevant and valuable to a given population the content and form of that education must take into consideration the social, cultural, political and

---

[3] Betty Reardon, Comprehensive Peace Education: Educating for Global Responsibility (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988).

[4] ibid., p. x

[5] Tony Jenkins, "Rediscovering Education for a Better World: Illuminating the Social Purposes of Education through Peace Education Pedagogy and Content," in *Transforming Education for Peace,* eds. Lin, J., Brantmeier, E., & Bruhn, C. (Charlotte, N.C.: Information Age Publishing, 2008).

[6] Parker Palmer, *To Know as we are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey* (NY, NY: Harper Collins, 1993, p. 21).

[7] Tony Jenkins, *Community-based Institutes on Peace Education Organizer's Manual: A Peace Education Planning Guide* (NY, NY: International Institute on Peace Education, 2007. available online at www.c-i-p-e.org, p. 29).

[8] Alicia Cabezudo & Magnus Haavelsrud, "Rethinking Peace Education," in *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies,* eds. Webel, C. & Galtung, J. (New York: Routledge, 2007).

educational context of the learner. Haavelsrud's theory complements the educational philosophies of Freire, Dewey and Montessori who each call for autonomous and learner centered approaches to teaching and learning.[9] The importance of relevance in educational content and process that each of these theorists describe illuminates the necessity for multiple approaches for peace education.[10] Essentially they are describing that there is no one-size-fits-all approach to peace education. As an international learning experience the IIPE has to take this into consideration in facilitating exposure to various content and multiple pedagogical forms and educational approaches. In doing so, the IIPE utilizes a unique and inclusive pedagogical form that is largely informed by the mutually reinforcing principles of *community and cooperation*. These principles manifest themselves in both the form and structure of the IIPE which will be further elucidated below.

The IIPE might best be described as a *learning community*. A learning community is an intentionally designed space in which individuals become engaged in learning toward a *common purpose*. At the IIPE this common purpose is framed by two inquiries. The first is an inquiry into the substantive theme of the Institute. This theme is typically process or issue/problem based. In 2005 in Rhodes, Greece the theme was process oriented, focusing on the approaches and methods of "Educating for Peace through the Arts." In Istanbul, Turkey in 2004 the theme was issue oriented, inquiring into the concept of human security as an alternative to the highly militarized nation-state model. In conducting this inquiry participants shared and examined the concepts, obstacles to, possibilities for, and practical applications of human security in their various contexts. The second inquiry, building upon the dialogue generated in the first, examines the form, possibility for, and role of peace education in contributing to social change based upon the conceptual theme. In the case of human security, participants began by reflecting upon and observing the deeply held worldviews about security that were manifest in their home contexts. They then had to consider the relevant content and form of education that might transform those worldviews and the conditions that sustained them.

From this example, we can see that the learning community model of the IIPE is utilized both for the benefits of learning from and with each other and for the political and action possibilities. Betty Reardon describes the idea of a learning community quite nicely:

> "A learning community is built upon the base of common concern and is developed through mutual respect, attentive listening and vigorous participation. …Participants are engaged with each other in a common engagement with the issues intended to devise proposals to engage the larger community in addressing the social problems of concern."[11]

One of the intended political outcomes of learning in community is to foster community values and practices, such as cooperation, sharing, participation and fellowship. This is in direct contrast to typical

---

[9] Paulo Freire, P*edagogy of Freedom* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998). John Dewey, *How We Think* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1997). C. Duckworth, "Maria Montessori and Peace Education," in *Encyclopedia of Peace Education*, ed. Monisha Bajaj (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2008).

[10] Daniel Bar-Tal, "The elusive nature of peace education," in *Peace education: The concept, principles and practice in the world,* eds. G. Salomon & B. Nevo (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2002). Gavriel Salomon & Baruch Nevo, *Peace education: The concept, principles, and practices around the world* (Mahwah, NJ: LEA, 2002).

[11] Betty Reardon, *Freedom of Religion and Belief: An Essential Human Right – a Learning Manual* (New York: Peoples Movement for Human Rights Education, 2006, p.18).

political and learning processes that fragment and divide, rather than bring people together.[12] Parker Palmer notes that "good teachers also bring students into community with themselves and with each other – not simply for the sake of warm feelings, but to do the difficult things that teaching and learning require." He goes on to explain that "intellectual rigor depends on things like honest dissent and the willingness to change our minds, things that will not happen if the 'soft' values of community are lacking."[13] The IIPE is intentionally designed this way. It is a learning experience rooted in community values and processes in which it is emphasized from the very beginning that every participants' experience, knowledge, and the questions they bring are equally relevant. As a community experience, the IIPE asks participants to recognize that they all have something to contribute and that they all have something to learn from one another. The IIPE is a space in which there are no *experts* who drop in, give us the answers, and then disappear.

In building community, the IIPE experience is largely influenced by this notion of *learning with and from one another*. This idea of learning with and from each other seems simple enough, however it is a process considerably foreign to most people's experiences. Consider for a moment how the problems of the world are typically solved. The practice of politics, as it has come to be defined, has little interest in change. It is conducted in a mode of competition, of winners and losers. The political institution has become one of, if not the largest contributor to the system of violence; it often exemplifies and magnifies all that is bad in our social relations and classifies citizenry into power relations, robbing individual citizens of their uniqueness as human beings and depriving their dignity. Around the world, most formal educational experiences have prepared students to engage in the world in a similar fashion. The challenge educators are confronted with is how to prepare people to conduct the politics of change in a different mode; in a learning mode.[14]

Nurturing a space for authentic communal learning is how the IIPE approaches this problem. This is based in the observation that social change is a process best arrived at and sustained communally.[15] The IIPE emphasizes learning processes, which help nurture individuals capacities of reflection, openness, listening, social & political engagement, empathy, and action. When people utilize these skills and engage in this process of communal learning the possibility emerges that they will challenge and inquire into their worldviews; the community may finds new ways to communicate and new ways to relate to one another; and new, collective forms of wisdom and knowledge may emerge. The IIPE also seeks to capacitate educators as active agents in this transformative process by nurturing capacities of *critical thinking and cooperation*. Nurturing these capacities is essential for fostering the autonomously arrived at knowledge and skills necessary for the possible engagement of learners with society. These essential capacities of critical thinking and cooperation enable students to reflect upon reality and possibilities for action at the individual level; to critically engage and analyze existing knowledge; and most significantly nurturing these capacities significantly increases the possibilities for student engagement with their communities and society at large.[16]

---

[12] Jenkins, "Rediscovering Education for a Better World."

[13] Palmer, *To Know as we are Known*, p. xvii.

[14] Jenkins, *Community-based Institutes on Peace Education Organizer's Manual.*

[15] Palmer, *To Know as we are Known*; Jenkins, *Community-based Institutes on Peace Education Organizer's Manual.*

[16] Tony Jenkins, "Disarming the System, Disarming the Mind," *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice* Vol. 18, No. 3 (July-September 2006).

IIPE Form and Structure: Program Components

The structure of the IIPE helps to manifest the principles of community and cooperative learning by providing interactive opportunities through all phases of the program. Each component of the program serves a particular function in the learning experience of the Institute: the orientation, the plenaries, the workshops and seminars, community-based excursions and the reflection groups. The orientation introduces participants to the purposes and process of IIPE, beginning the process of acquaintance from which the learning community is built. The plenaries provide a common substance for all in the community and a basis for the specific consideration of some of the workshops and seminars. The excursions permit participants to have some direct experiences with the host country, its landscapes and the issues of justice and peace that its citizens are addressing. The reflection groups are the heart of the learning and community building experience, the base at which daily learnings are shared. Reflection groups provide a space for assessing learning, challenging assumptions, and integrating new knowledge and experiences into participants' professional and personal lives. The plenary, workshop and reflection group sessions are further described below.

Plenary Sessions. Each day the IIPE begins with a plenary panel that briefly introduces perspectives and practices on theme issues. Plenaries are moderated by skilled facilitators who work to make the sessions as participatory as possible through a variety of different strategies. The IIPE organizers have adapted a technique for large groups in various professional settings and have found the technique described below helps to facilitate more meaningful learning experiences than the typical question and answer format.[17] Each plenary speaker (typically no more than 3 in total) is asked in advance to speak for no more than 15-20 minutes regarding their experience or research on a thematic issue. Panelists are also encouraged to organize their presentations in an engaging way so that they are communicating with the audience rather than lecturing or reading from a paper. The speakers are not considered experts, but rather facilitators of the learning community. They share their own experience and knowledge as a way of contributing to the inquiry of the sub-theme being explored on a particular day. They provided a starting point for a larger community discussion. Conducting the inquiry into the theme is considered a community process and it is emphasized that each participant has unique ideas and experiences to contribute.

The specific process for the discussion session following the plenary presentations is designed to be as interactive and participatory as possible. Participants are asked to form small groups of three or four by turning to their seated neighbors. Groups are given approximately 15 to 20 minutes to discuss their reflections on the plenary panel with the goal of producing a single question that might contribute to the entire IIPE community inquiry on the theme of the plenary. This is a critical part of the community building process. The groups are asked to produce questions that will be given back to the entire community to explore. This process also averts a reliance on experts (i.e. the panelists) for determining solutions to our questions and gives that responsibility to the community at large.

---

[17] Jenkins, *Community-based Institutes on Peace Education Organizer′s Manual.*

After the allotted time for discussion, questions are taken from several groups at once. Taking more than one question at a time helps to reveal the overlapping and interconnected concerns of the entire community. This also aids the plenary panelists in forming their responses more conversationally. As the questions posed are intended as inquiry for the entire community, these questions are often written down on chart paper and posted in a common area for further reflection.

Workshops/Seminars. Nearly every participant contributes to the program by conducting a practical workshop or seminar. Unlike a typical conference, proposals for workshops are not submitted in advance. As part of the program planning process, organizer's work closely with each participant to develop a workshop that will reflect their unique experiences and knowledge so as to complement the overarching theme of the IIPE and the contributions of others. This process is slow and deliberate, taking many months to complete, however it helps in forming a more holistic and comprehensive program. Workshop facilitators are asked to make their 90 minute sessions as participatory as possible so other participants may gain first hand experience in the teaching methods used in the facilitator's home context.

Reflection Groups. During the IIPE small "reflection groups" of eight to ten people meet daily to allow participants to share what they learned and help each other think of how to apply what they learned to their respective situations. Participants meet with the same reflection group throughout the entire length of the IIPE and present group reports in the last plenary session. Reflection groups are facilitated discussions that engage participants in both an integrative and cumulative learning process. The objectives of this process are to deepen and reflect upon the knowledge, skills and practices developed throughout the IIPE and to collectively develop new communal knowledge while nurturing learning community cohorts. The process focuses on reflection and integration, drawing upon the daily themes of the IIPE as different frameworks or lenses for exploring the learning and providing unique perspectives. As such, each session models a cooperative group learning process, providing all participants opportunities to share their personal learnings, perspectives, concerns, and questions while contributing to and developing a larger group dialogue. This process is intended to maximize the participation of all involved.

Conclusion: Learning to Learn Together

Learning with and from one another may seem a simple idea, but in so many ways it is foreign to our experience in highly individualized and competitive educational systems. *Learning to learn together* requires much more than sitting in the same space, conference or classroom together. It requires a broad set of skills and capacities that are useful in the classroom setting and extremely practical as capacities for societal engagement. To be able to learn together, IIPE participants are charged with the responsibilities of deeply listening to one another; temporarily putting aside their own ideas to consider another persons perspective; slowing down, quieting their minds and reminding each other and themselves that they don't know everything; and, to as frequently as possible, remind themselves that they are part of a bigger living system and as such are dependent upon each-other for their collective survival. Looking at these responsibilities holistically, participants are reminded that l*earning how to learn together is essential for social change and transformation and that* social transformation is a process that has little possibility for success unless it is pursued and sustained cooperatively and communally. *Coming to understand how a community can work, learn and grow together to affect change on an issue of common concern is perhaps the primary learning objective of each IIPE.*

As an international initiative, the IIPE is challenged to present relevant learning experiences for a diverse population of educators coming from different cultures, with distinct socio-political situations, and diverse experiences of conflict and violence that require unique educational interventions for their transformation. No learning experience can address every given possibility. The principles of community and cooperation that are the backbone of the IIPE experience take this into consideration. By nurturing skills of community and cooperative learning, the IIPE is able to capacitate educators for the necessary ongoing learning they will need to do, together, as they mutually construct contextually relevant educational strategies for social change and transformation.

For more information about the history, pedagogy, principles or practices of the International Institute on Peace Education please visit www.i-i-p-e.org.

Bibliography

Daniel Bar-Tal, "The elusive nature of peace education," in *Peace education: The concept, principles and practice in the world,* eds. G. Salomon & B. Nevo (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum, 2002).

Alicia Cabezudo & Magnus Haavelsrud, "Rethinking Peace Education," in *Handbook of Peace and Conflict Studies,* eds. Webel, C. & Galtung, J. (New York: Routledge, 2007).

John Dewey, *How We Think* (Mineola, NY: Dover Publications, Inc., 1997).

C. Duckworth, "Maria Montessori and Peace Education," in *Encyclopedia of Peace Education*, ed. Monisha Bajaj (Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing, 2008).

Paulo Freire, P*edagogy of Freedom* (New York: Rowman & Littlefield, 1998).

Ian Harris and Mary Lee Morrison, *Peace Education* (North Carolina: McFarland, 2003).

Tony Jenkins, "Rediscovering Education for a Better World: Illuminating the Social Purposes of Education through Peace Education Pedagogy and Content," in *Transforming Education for Peace,* eds. Lin, J., Brantmeier, E., & Bruhn, C. (Charlotte, N.C.: Information Age Publishing, 2008).

Tony Jenkins, *Community-based Institutes on Peace Education Organizer's Manual: A Peace Education Planning Guide* (NY, NY: International Institute on Peace Education, 2007. available online at www.c-i-p-e.org).

Tony Jenkins, "Disarming the System, Disarming the Mind," *Peace Review: A Journal of Social Justice* Vol. 18, No. 3 (July-September 2006).

Parker Palmer, *To Know as we are Known: Education as a Spiritual Journey* (NY, NY: Harper Collins, 1993).

Betty Reardon, *Freedom of Religion and Belief: An Essential Human Right – a Learning Manual* (New York: Peoples Movement for Human Rights Education, 2006).

Betty Reardon, "Peace Education: A Review and Projection," in *International Companion to Education*, Eds. Moon, B., Brown, S. & Peretz, M.B. (New York: Routledge, 2000).

Betty Reardon, *Comprehensive Peace Education: Educating for Global Responsibility* (New York: Teachers College Press, 1988).

Gavriel Salomon & Baruch Nevo, *Peace education: The concept, principles, and practices around the world* (Mahwah, NJ: LEA, 2002).

Cora Weiss, *Nomination of the International Institute on Peace Education for the UNESCO Peace Education Prize* (International Peace Bureau, 2005).