

Why education is more than a way of being — it is an art of becoming

What is the priority of pedagogy for peace in the 21st century? Do we teach cultures and philosophies of peace at schools and universities around the world only to start new wars and conflicts? Is education for peace still a top priority in universities and colleges? And finally, does education help us to live a peaceful life and to bring peace around the world? These questions need to be in our awareness on a daily basis. Only then can we treat people, nature and most life itself in a more empathic manner.

In this light, education by definition is an ethical enterprise. In other words, education is more than a way of being; it is an art of becoming. It is not only a process of nurturing the human soul, as the ancient Greeks understood it through the notion of *paideia*, meaning the acquisition and transmission of excellence, but also what philosopher Bertrand Russell defines as “a certain outlook on life and the world.” The ancient Greeks understood *paideia* as the essence of culture and communication in a good society. The aim of *paideia*, Aristotle argues in *Politics*, is to enable members of a community to decide the political organisation of society. Therefore, we need to assess the *paideic* dimension of peacebuilding. This describes the ethical and spiritual foundations of the process of rebuilding peace in or among societies.

Not just about security

As such, peacebuilding is not only about the security-sector reform of a society emerging from conflict; it is the medium- to long-term process of educating humanity with a special focus on the importance of promoting peace. In other words, in a world truly concerned about the happiness of future generations, peace and the process of taming violence in and among societies are continual, concrete, and the daily results of education as a learning process. In this process, the importance of autonomy and the nobility of spirit, which are primarily intellectual virtues, cannot be underestimated. Therefore, the main concern of education is to engender a certain character in human beings and to teach them the nobility of spirit and the moral common ground of actions. If that is the case, the aim of education is not solely an academic pursuit; it is a pursuit of moral wisdom.

Immanuel Kant, in his *Lecture Notes on Pedagogy*, says the aim of education “must be the moralisation of man”. The educational theory advocated by him is closely related to his belief in the moral progress of humanity which is a self-articulated and self-realised process of attaining intellectual maturity. However, Kant considers this self-educating process of humanity as a slow and gradual cosmopolitan process. “Our only hope,” affirms Kant, “is that each generation, provided with the knowledge of the foregoing one, is able, more and more, to bring about an education which shall develop man’s

natural gifts in their due proportion and relation to their end, and thus advance the whole human race toward its destiny.”

There was a time when education was the highest task of human culture. However, in today's world we have become dulled to what it means to be fully cultured or well-educated. Our modern world is without a vision of human society encompassing these two experiences. Likewise, peace, as a dominant idea for moral education in the past, has gradually experienced its isolation in the two fields of politics and international relations. As a consequence, the peacekeepers of today are diplomats and soldiers. Moreover, the peace education promoted today by institutions such as UNESCO and the UN General Assembly is far from being sufficient to prepare the future generations against war and violence.

As a matter of fact, teachers and educators teach values such as fairness, compassion, truth and freedom to Others, but they also confront these values while transmitting them in classrooms. Furthermore, every form of value education is the foundation for mutual evaluation of moral and social principles. To transmit moral, political and social values from one generation to another is not an ideological process. Schools and universities are not supposed to be ideological institutions where individuals learn to become loyal and obedient. Here resides the difference between Tagore's Santiniketan and Hitler's National Socialist German Workers' Party. While Tagore invites us to consider the nature of education through a conscious relationship with nature and creativity, and as a path to bridge the gap between the educated and those who have not been educated, Nazi officers like Adolf Eichmann carried out mass murders while never permitting their consciousness to rise above the level of following rules and obeying orders.

Looking for moral leadership

Building peace and transcending regional and global conflicts cannot be left entirely to the action and volition of political leaders. What is necessary herewith is not political governance, but moral leadership. Moreover, moral leadership cannot prevail by instrumental reason, namely, to work with the elements as means to an end. What we need here is a massive pedagogical enterprise as a mode of “cultivation” of humanity. The effort to peacebuilding is, therefore, accompanied with a freedom from prejudice, exclusion and domination. An essential part of a definition and practice of a culture of peace is through education of non-violence that develops the quest for mutual understanding. This raises questions concerning the value of civic upbringing, as an individual process and as a process that a community goes through. Here education is not about learning facts, but to cultivate one's judgment in order to be able to distinguish between the mediocre and the spiritually noble. If this is how things are in the context of the political, then education is not about repeating and imitating the

already inherited values that are collectively accepted, but also about being able to create new values and norms in an autonomous way. It is certainly not ideological, but philosophical since it is exploration of constantly new questionings and a reactivation of the process of thinking. Such a process is an effective strategy for peacebuilding in today's world where pedagogy for peace is not something that is currently articulated and practised by the mainstream politicians, practitioners and researchers of international relations.