

**Why Should “True Democracy” Fight Back on Equal Terms?
Orienting policymaking towards “lobbying for peace” and social justice
through citizenship education**

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ABSTRACT

Peace, justice, and democracy, very few words strike as impactfully as these three concepts in the international arena; they are put on a pedestal in such a manner that we envision them as standards impossible to achieve, idealized but ill-treated. In the quest for peace, we have been focusing on war, conflict, and violence, instead of exploring peacebuilding by peaceful means, with as much intensity.

Within this context, alarming voter turnout trends show high abstention rates and an apparent democracy backslide. We avowedly condemn autocracies, but we also need to question the state of democracy where it is “taken for granted.” Scholars, observers, and experts forewarn the “lack of democratic representations” and “social equity,” making education, supposedly a common good, a place for injustice instead of fulfilling its role of a social gap closer. Calls for a “renewed social contract” strike in various international organizations’ reports and speeches, supplemented by a pressing need and calls for immediate action emanating from civil society and non-governmental stakeholders.

Covid-19 widened the gap even further, hurdling the 2030 Agenda for sustainable development, battering a polycrisis worldview already struggling with alarming climate change, wars, conflicts, and forced displacements, making education to international solidarity henceforth a necessity. The growing distrust in political systems is a grave threat to peacebuilding and needs to be taken seriously. Thus, education as a peacebuilding practice is a marginal aspect of how we view our institutions; however, if a structural change is to be foreseen, peace implementation ought to be addressed on both micro and macro levels.

Young people, mainly, explains Kotkin Joel, are threatened by social upheavals. A recent study by the Federal Reserve Bank of Saint Louis warns that “millennials are in danger of becoming a “lost generation” in terms of wealth accumulation. To make matters worse, over half of all young people, in a survey of ten countries, think the world is doomed by climate change.” If technology is necessary for scientific advancements, it has also created unsolvable problems. It is crucial to inspect the digital spheres as an extension instead of considering them as “unattended and unruly no-man’s-lands.” Skyrocketing numbers of access to social media platforms during the lockdowns are only proof of the extent of the territory that needs to be seized and how critical thinking should be a significant 21st-century skill. (+62% for *FB*, 44% for *TikTok* and 315% for *LiveMe*). As these issues should be addressed multidimensionally, education plays a major part. In this regard, what policymaking strategies and levers can genuinely make education, beyond literacy, an agent of social change and advancement?

Leaning on interactions with International Organizations’ leaders, this paper will focus on potential solutions for institutionalizing peace and rekindling a genuine sense of democracy. We should be delivering policymaking/planning recommendations in view of building a sustainable peace polity rooted in a fair and just social system, “bandwagoned” by education. This work will also develop the concept of “Peace Proximity” as a stepping stone for better-implemented policies. We shall also examine the theoretical framework within peace and conflict studies.

KEYWORDS: peacebuilding, citizenship, education, democracy, policymaking, lobbying, critical peace, critical democracy, peace proximity

1 INTRODUCTION

Peace, justice, and democracy, few words strike as impactfully as these three concepts in the international arena. They are put on a pedestal in such a manner that we envision them as standards impossible to achieve, idealized but ill-treated. Indeed, in the quest for peace, we have focused on war, conflict, and violence instead of exploring peacebuilding with as much intensity.

“The peace quest” has long been ensconced as an institutional prerogative, as a component of the international arena, caught in a “cross-fire” of diplomatic efforts, ruled by self-interest. If diplomacy and international machinery are essential, they cannot achieve peace without the membership and co-agency of civil society. Furthermore, conversely, civil society needs not only to be proactive in its demands but choose peace-committed leaders, make beneficial use of comprehensive democratic tools, and never take democracy and peace for granted.

Although far from being a uniform block, civil society endeavors were somehow seen as the baseline of a hierarchical “trickle-down- effect” where citizens undergo policies, “sparsely contributing to peace,” whereas citizens can be a vibrant engine of peace. This idea echoes the philosopher Alain, who stated: “Do not think that the bad guys are the ones fighting wars, while the “good guys” stare in horror. Men who make war are the same ones who love peace.”

Although highly relevant, the philosophical debate of peace vs. war is way too broad to summarize in this paper. We shall tackle the interweaving of peace as a practical notion and its dovetailing in our institutions to make it a tangible reality through collective efforts prompted by citizenship education.

Indeed, Antonio Guterres declared before the Security Council last August, amid the Ukraine-Russian war, that “dialogue and diplomacy are needed to save succeeding generations from the scourge of war.” According to the UN Secretary-General, in the midst of divides, conflict, and instability, from military coups to inter-state conflicts, invasions, and “wars that stretch on” for years, “today’s collective security system is being tested like never before.” He drew attention to lingering differences between the world’s great powers, including at the Council, which continues to limit a collective response. The Secretary-General spotlighted humanitarian assistance stretched to the breaking point, human rights under assault, and a lack of trust. He declared that “many of the systems established decades ago are now facing challenges (...) unimaginable to our predecessors - cyberwarfare, terrorism, and lethal autonomous weapons,” adding that “the nuclear risk has climbed to its highest point in decades.”

This impactful speech, addressed as a last warning to the international community, only emphasizes the importance of reviewing peace paradigms as climate change, pandemics, and forced displacements continue inching. As the UN Secretary-General pointed out, the tools which have prevented another catastrophic world war “are more important than ever; however, they need updating for today’s rapidly deteriorating international peace and security environment.” A much-needed international consensus must be rooted in solid national foundations to nurture and distill the culture of peace.

“Lobbying for peace,” this term that might sound provocative and even deemed pejorative, underlines the need to upgrade peace endeavors and rekindle ailing democracies and public institutions, which tend to widen social gaps instead of reducing divides.

Education is a central public institution regarding the expression of democracy, even though it is side-lined in terms of public peace. Education allows operating on a multidimensional level by purportedly enacting the values leading to a better “living together.”

Thus, education as a peacebuilding practice is a marginal aspect of how we view our institutions. However, if a structural change is foreseen, peace implementation should be addressed on both micro and macro levels.

Peace, as explained by Johan Galtung, the father of peace studies (within the framework of the “positive peace” approach) cannot be reduced to the absence of conflict. It implies the refusal to resort to hostilities for conflict resolution, conflicts that inevitably arise from the divergence of interests. We shall refer to this concept as “peacebuilding by peaceful means,” based on the assumption that compassion, empathy, and solidarity should be thought. Peace education might be known under different labels depending on parts of the world; however, the goals remain the same.

Lobbying for peace and demanding policies in favor of peaceful environments is not only an essential peace endeavor but a step forward to “advance” latent, stagnant, and only moderately efficient peace work.

There are numerous examples of civil society actions making a change and shaping laws and policies. Mahatma Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Mother Theresa, and many other renowned figures made the impossible possible, and they had one pillar they agreed on: the role of education.

Within a context of multiplied social spheres and the multiplicity of threats, under what Zygmunt Baumann refers to as “liquid times,” what policymaking strategies and levers can genuinely make education, beyond literacy, an agent of social change and advancement of peace?

In this paper, first, we shall focus on the notion of building a common good constructed on peace and social justice. Then we shall tackle how citizenship education can bridge peace for more robust democratic systems, exploring critical democracy afterward as a means of enforcing ethics.

2 EDUCATING FOR PEACE AS A COMMON GOOD

The common good as a philosophical concept appeared as early as the 13th century through the writings of Thomas Aquinas. Aquinas examines “Politics,” in which Aristotle affirms that the city underlines “the existence of a common good (...). Just as the whole is more important than the part and takes priority (...), the city takes priority over the individual (...).”

During the World Forum for a Responsible Economy, two broad concepts of the “general interest” were outlined. The Anglo-Saxon approach “postulates that the general interest results from the sum of the interests of each.” The French-style republican vision assumes that “the general interest is understood as an objective which exceeds the sum of individual interests.”

Alain Giffard’s definition of the common good as a shared common interest goes even beyond, highlighting the necessity of active membership to fulfill this notion:

“The common good (...) implies more than the respect of the law in expressing the general interest. It requires a commitment from everyone as an operating condition of the rule. The common good is not a norm; it is not defined by convention; nevertheless, there is the object of discussion among the people involved.”

This vision implies that citizens deliberately develop the common good, as explained by Chrystèle Basin: “Being a citizen is less about one’s duties in exchange for the guarantee of one’s rights than about participating in a society through the contribution of one’s intelligence, time, and skills, and in being able to decide the nature of one’s contribution.”

For Hubert Allier, the question would be: what do we want to build together? Furthermore, how do we decide what a common interest is? According to Allier, “it is less a matter of seeking a definition than identifying objectives.” He defines three axes of work for common good building purposes that should be part of education strategic planning for peace purposes:

- The guarantee of personal fulfillment
- The conditions of collective well-being
- The responsibility toward future generations - a roadmap for genuinely sustainable development

We interviewed Ms. Giannini, Assistant Director-General for Education at UNESCO, about the relevance of peace education. Ms. Giannini explained that discussing peace education is not novel. She clarified that the new dimension is the urgency to transform education in a way that can bring out not only the first mission of education, which is giving learners skills and competencies in specific subjects but bring out the role of education as “the fundamental tool to disseminate better knowledge of the many complex challenges that are around us.” Education would allow better awareness of the complexity, generating new behaviors and attitudes. According to Ms. Giannini, education should be a “big part of the solution;” it should be the tool to build what we refer to as “positive peace.”

When it comes to bolstering peace education as part of the common good, it is also relevant to root policies in solid backgrounds, applying the “the law of proximity” (*Loi de proximité*). There is a strong belief that the more distant an element is, the less likely it is to draw attention. The goal does not imply concealing broad scopes but focusing on tangible effects and deconstructing various levels of action for more substantial citizens’ membership, emphasizing peace proximity as a priority in implementing peace.

Prof. Dr. Anantha Duraiappah, Director of the UNESCO Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable development (MGIEP) explained the importance of achieving peace through the capital factor of implementing peace in all layers of society starting from within. Indeed, he rightly pointed out “how one can find peace with others when fighting demons within themselves.” This idea highlights the importance of integrating the notion of everyday peace within, or what we shall call “proximity peace,” as part of critical peace education. According to Teachers without Borders, Critical peace education is the result of applying critical pedagogy to realms and issues concerning peace development or degradation. Although the academic discourse in the field has not been widespread, several notable scholars have contributed to the theory.

Descaling and reframing the approach to peace education supports putting efforts in perspective and “plays down” the need for action, recentring “responsible citizenship” endeavors as shown by the staircase model, displaying how peace can be implemented in a macro/micro and even mezzo approach:

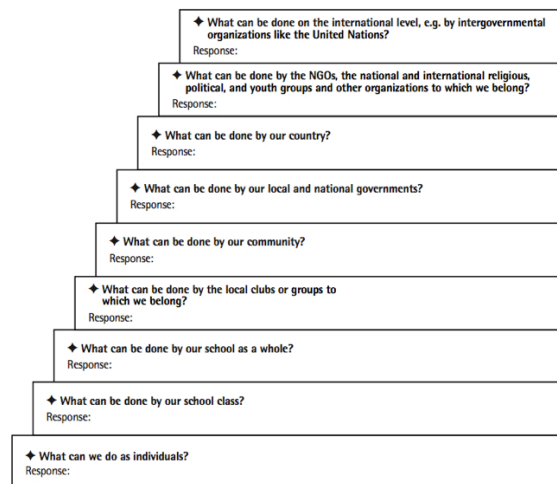


Figure 1 The Staircase Model for Critical Peace Education

In these terms, it would be possible to

- Understand the value of social responsibility
- Gain skills in devising and proposing alternative solutions to problems
- Enrich knowledge of practical possibilities

This model is one of the multiple potentials to distill peace through peaceful means, on the condition of creating spaces within and outside the educational system, in the forms of third spaces for educational purposes, associations, and multistakeholder networks.

Even if the role of citizenship education is highly-debated and not formally acknowledged, there is a shift in discourse as reflected in the UN Secretary-General’s “Our Common Agenda” report, mentioning 51 times the word “education” and its derivative in an 86-page report.

Leveling peace to a common good standard through active citizenship will allow learners to be active peacemakers, peace advocates, and peace lobbyists through project-based learning and learning by doing. If advocacy is an umbrella term used for any activity that involves influencing individuals or groups to achieve an objective, “lobbying” is a specific type of advocacy that is carried out alongside policymakers (i.e., government officials) and lawmakers (i.e., parliamentarians). This component can be included within the framework of peace education, part of active citizenship. Mainstreaming peace in theory and practice in education relies on fully integrating this notion through policy design and reformed curricula.

In this regard, Prof. Dr. Duraiappah points out that mainstreaming is why mathematics and science have done well when focusing on numeracy and literacy. Right now, there is a need to focus on social and emotional competencies, which are particularly important for individual well-being and collective peace.

If there is a belief that education “cannot do it all,” citizens’ empowerment needs to be triggered in a virtuous circle and nurtured by policies in favor of social justice. Citizenship education can be a tool for balancing citizens’ rights and duties designed for consolidating a most needed critical democracy.

2.1 Lobbying for Social Justice through Education

Lobbying as a means to influence and inform governments has been part of democracy for at least two centuries and remains a legitimate tool for influencing public policies. However, it conveys risks of undue influence. Lobbying in the 21st century has also become increasingly complex, including new tools for prompting governments, such as social media, and a wide range of actors, such as NGOs, think tanks, and foreign governments. Lobbying can also represent valid interests that inform decisions in the public interest. If used wisely and integrated as a democratic tool, lobbying can be readdressed, making young or lifelong learners aware of “hidden hierarchies” within what Michel Beaud refers to as “*Système National/Mondial Hiérarchisé*” (Hierarchical National/Global System). Ethical lobbying allows a reevaluation of capitalism and analysis of influence hierarchies. Indeed, being aware of hidden hierarchies and the necessity of addressing factors challenging authentic democracy contributes to owning tools that guarantee a broader adherence, reclaiming territories of public influence by cultivating critical thinking.

Education is a significant contributor to peace and appears in two of the 24 indicators in the Positive Peace Index (PPI) produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace. Education can lead to peace and be a part of ‘building back better’ by “supporting the transformation of the security situation, political institutions, economic regeneration, and social development.” However, education policies can also play a role in “the escalation of conflict if they are poorly designed or implemented” and should be carefully implemented, assessed, and monitored. Although education is not part of the GPI (Global Peace Index), it is incorporated into the PPI. It does feature in the report produced by the Institute for Economics and Peace (IEP) as “a composite measurement of attitudes, institutions, and structures which create and sustain peaceful societies, support the optimum environment for human potential to flourish, and enhance resilience.”

Considering thus citizens as actors of peace and international relations is relatively new territory, sending back to the quintessence of the act of citizenship, that needs to direct attention to citizens as individuals and as part of neighborhoods, communities, and states before even considering the global scale.

Research has proved that the development of unequal conditions of citizenship creates mechanisms of reproducing social inequalities duplicated in schools. Being the right place to start, education is a conducive and a “*bandwagoning*” means to “increase individual mobilization and responsibility to participate in claiming social and political rights and roles.” According to UNESCO, Education towards citizenship from a civic perspective is the leading way to “invest” in all the main types of learning outcomes, namely: cognitive (knowledge, understanding, and critical thinking); socioemotional (sense of belonging and sharing responsibilities) and behavioral (acting effectively and responsibly, motivation to act).

Policymakers in this regard ought to be aware of the common but differentiated responsibilities (CBDR), a principle of international environmental law, initially establishing that all states are responsible for addressing global environmental destruction yet not equally responsible. Manifolding this concept to a local, national, and regional scale may help assign inclusive and active roles to citizens and communities, whether in peacebuilding, peacemaking, or peacekeeping.

Enhancing evidence-based policy and research backed by narratives transmission and local actors means focusing on grassroots lobbying and bringing special issues to daylight. An open policy design needs to rely on freedom of speech, among other democratic tools, greasing the wheels of heavy but most needed machinery by keeping access to information open and up to date.

Access to plural and reliable information is critical in the Information Age. Chambers calls “deliberative democracy,” referring to “deliberative systems” taking place at the level of the public space; in other words, Chambers refers to “the set of social and institutional elements which, within a given regime, are supposed to promote informed, fair and adversarial deliberation.”

Deliberative democracy requires that “citizens have access to political information, that the press and media be able to contribute to public debate in a free and independent manner,” and that “civil society be able to act as a conduit between the public space and the political space itself.” Deliberative democracy calls for “members of the political community to have adequate education and training to participate fully in deliberation.”

2.2 Peace Education and Education for Peace

According to OECD and UNESCO data, less than 15% of the world's population is illiterate today. Adam Szirmai, the author of 'The Dynamics of Socio-Economic Development,' explains that "global literacy rates began to improve during the second half of the 20th century when the right to education became a global priority". This notion, known as "basic education," responded and still responds to a need that has undoubtedly evolved, where education needs to act as the "gap closer" and the empowerment driver it should be. Such an ambition needs to be accompanied by the appropriate training resources to empower educational systems, which need to be enforced by resilient policies, ensuring regular improvement.

This critical lens is the prism that not only refers to the critical theory framework as an approach to international relations but also keeps stock, believing that there is no perfect system, and no fair system can stand to sustain on its own. Critical peace education—as a field of scholarship and practice, in this regard interrogates taken-for-granted notions and assumptions about peace and peace education.

In this sense, a qualitative case study from Cyprus attempted to reclaim a form of "critical peace education" that acknowledges the complex and diverse manifestations of peace education in different contexts but also explored "local understandings of how participants can cultivate a sense of transformative agency." This study assumed that "recent interdisciplinary developments critically reassess the ongoing postulation that modern world diplomacy is only reserved for the work of diplomats representing sovereign states" and drew attention instead to the everyday conduct of diplomacy by "non-elite actors." Critical peace education enhances "the forms of diplomatic activity important to everyday life" and how they "inform people's modes of acting and behaving." The study argues that "teachers' strategies to address the concerns of those around them towards peace education may constitute a form of everyday diplomacy," meaning "a set of people-to-people activities" attempting to "move a society towards "peace formation."

According to the author of this study, the "local turn" (or the "everyday turn") has emerged very recently in social theory, especially in the last decade or so, highlighting "local ownership and participation in peacebuilding efforts and a peace process that is an everyday type." It is "a process entailing ideas and practices that appear mundane, yet they can be significant and political in promoting or creating obstacles towards peace." Nurturing these efforts is, in many ways, lobbying for peace.

In this analysis of "everyday peace," quoted in the study, Roger Mac Ginty suggests that the conceptualization of such methods rests on three premises, that are also relevant to peace education as "an everyday form of practice," and that are worthwhile bearing in mind as policymaking pillars:

First, the fluidity in the social world makes peace education possible at some periods and impossible or unimaginable at others. This highlights the fluidity of individuals, collectives, ideas, and practices. Also, to keep in mind, **the heterogeneity of groups, often seen as homogeneous,** meaning that flagging and gathering all those "who may react negatively to a peace education intervention into a single category of "rejectionists" is not productive. Mac Ginty explains that it is more prudent to "conceive groups as containing a wide range of intensity of affiliation, opinions and affects," acknowledging the complex character of a multifaceted approach to peace.

The importance of the locality in which individuals and groups will engage with a peace education intervention is also capital; for instance, says Mac Ginty, if the conflict between rival communities is still open and there are unsolved political issues, those involved in peace education interventions “must negotiate a way through a complex range of social norms, practices, and aspirations that shape their inter- and intra-communal experience. This facet reflects the “variety in the intensity of affiliation, opinions and affects likely to pertain within a group.” We can only observe why it is crucial to explore “how everyday diplomatic skills may be used in different situations.”

3 CRITICAL PEACE EDUCATION

The term peace education is comprehensive of a broad range of definitions. We shall in this paper tackle “peace education” as follows, according to the international charity Peace Direct: Peace education refers to activities that “promote the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that will help people to prevent the occurrence of conflict, resolve conflicts peacefully, or create social conditions conducive to peace.”

As we mentioned earlier, education and training, to quote Kenya’s Ministry of Education Science and Technology, “may not offer immediate remedies to the local and global challenges that face human kind” but “it has a crucial socialization function through the shaping of personal and collective identities, the formation of responsible citizenship and the promotion of critical social participation,” leaning on “principles of respect for life, human dignity, and cultural diversity.” This framework underlines how much conflict-sensitive education needs strong policies to sustain the core values of nonviolence and social justice, which are central to peace education.

It is a constant, collective, and transformative action to keep education for peace purposes from “sitting on its laurels,” maintaining all linkages and channels of dialogue. Such an approach to implementing reforms and policies relies as much on “down-top” as “top-down” agency (and much likely variable geometrics) to ensure practical in-field work, as well as qualitative and quantitative feedback. Such an approach also avoids the perverse effect of piling up policies, taking the necessary resources to “unplug” outdated and inefficient policies regarding the well-being of educators, managers, and administrators, making peace not only a goal but also a means.

Researchers from the University of Umeå explained that “the meaning of peace beyond the absence of war is not well understood or conceptualized. they pointed to the “fluid” character of peace as a concept intertwined with “all sorts of laudable goals and embedded in visions of a good society.” Indeed, many scholars believe peace and conflict studies focus more on conflict than peace. Johan Galtung has introduced the distinction between negative and positive; however, these two categories of peace employed in the field, according to the researchers from the University of Umeå, “need for a more nuanced conceptualization of peace, that can capture the many real-world situations that exist between the ideal-typical negative and positive peace categories.” This debate is based on the reflection that peacebuilding in France, for example, does not bear the same paradigms as in China or Peru. Understanding how to operate peace, setting goals, and subscribing strategies within regional, national, and local settings - powered by international organizations’ expertise pooling and research-based recommendations - will allow proper lobbying for implementing the right policies.

Critical peace education needs a particular setting to thrive, meaning one that favors most forms of “deliberative democracies.” Deliberative democracy, as mentioned above, is a “school of thought in political theory” claiming that “political decisions should be the product of fair and reasonable discussion and debate among citizens.”

In deliberation, citizens “exchange arguments and consider different claims designed to secure the public good,” Henceforth, citizens can agree on actions or policies best likely to produce public good. Deliberation is a necessary precondition for the legitimacy of democratic political decisions and can therefore favor ethical forms of lobbying for “peace as a common good.” Deliberative democracy claims that “citizens should arrive at political decisions through reason and the collection of competing arguments and viewpoints.” Citizens’ preferences should be shaped by deliberation, in advance of decision-making rather than self-interest, in line with the notion of lobbying for peace as a common good, as developed in this paper.

Critical peace education, as much as peace, needs ethical lobbying to remain active, resilient, and forward-looking. Within this framework, there is undoubtedly a need to value “education to the historical truth” and reflect on past achievements and failures, but also build a fertile ground for farsighted, sustainable policies as global progress deteriorates. According to the UN, development has indeed declined in 9 out of 10 countries worldwide, urging the UN to move the Summit of the Future to 2024.

3.1 The 2030 Agenda for Sustainable Development

Peacebuilding and conflict management need to lean on social, economic, and political pillars of security, even more so to promote peacebuilding and reconciliation. Such a project requires learning institutions to ensure sustained peace, reinforced by the “inculcation of a culture of peace as a means of preventing and resolving conflicts.” Peace is one of the five pillars of the 2030 Agenda, along with People, Planet, Prosperity, and Partnership.

The 2030 Agenda for the Sustainable Development Goals (commonly referred to as SDGs) is a comprehensive stakeholder universal policy plan comprised in the form of 17 goals aiming to “end poverty, protect the planet and improve the lives and prospects of everyone, everywhere.” The “Decade of Action” to deliver the Sustainable Development Goals is in motion, making the clock tick critically, especially since the “precipitous spread of the novel coronavirus turned a public health emergency into one of the worst international crises of our lifetimes, changing the world as we know it,” making the urgency to shift from talk to action even more critical.

The SDGs offer the possibility to tackle local and global issues in a cross-disciplinary approach, taking ownership of SDG 16, aiming at achieving “**peace, justice, and stronger institutions.**” and SDG 4, devoted to “**quality education,**” and even other SDGs as the 17 targets are heavily connected. Even if the challenges are global, decision-makers must embed policies just as well locally; some might use the word “*glocal*,” a neologism attempting to bridge the two opposites but not necessarily opposed scales. Policies need to be transparent, tangible, and measurable. It is furthermore necessary to demand a level of ethics and accountability to keep the wheels of democracy running unhindered. It is a relentless collective and individual focus that needs to be instilled, from a noticeably early age, through citizenship education.

This vision of national social growth needs to be enacted in various forms of advocacy, activism, and lobbying, but it does not imply solely spectacular or viral action. Community work, group discussions, school councils, and all actions addressing racism, gender discrimination, human rights, politics, environment, and animal rights can play a part. It might be even more relevant to inculcate and value forms of “ordinary citizenship,” as Catherine Neveu states, opening possibilities of active citizenship for an even broader range of citizens, not only to “confirmed activists.”

A study conducted in the city of Rio De Janeiro on citizenship education in 2020 identified three levels of action that give a probing scaling:

- Citizenship in and beyond the nation-state in a context of interdependence
- The contexts of citizenship: institutions, intergovernmental organizations, governance, accountability, and citizen participation.
- The city as a laboratory and pacer of citizenship.

These levels and fields of action, where all 17 SDGs can apply, show how citizens and the institutions are co-dependant and can mutually benefit from co-agency, supporting resilient, long-rung collective efforts. There are still two dimensions to consider, less static, the first being the crucial role of “informal” education and knowledge, families, friends, and cultural heritage. The second is political terms and agendas that can create as much uncertainty as disruption. Thereby, lobbying for “peace as a common good” needs to be effortlessly activated to be integrated into national constitutions, under “the principle of inalienability,” protecting a fundamental human right, making the well-being and fair access to quality public services a clear goal. The assimilation of this idea can only take shape in the mind of young people, citizens, advocates, and leaders in the making.

Educating for a peaceful future requires enrolling in principles associated with real-life contexts and situations. Stephen Stetter declares that “policy-makers tend to discuss peace education mainly in relation to political conflicts,” whereas “the ambition and intellectual grounding of peace education are much wider in scope: it appeals to the general ambition to strive for peaceful (...) and non-violent conflict resolution in everyday life also outside the conflict zones of international politics.” Bearing this in mind, peace education tools and decision-making need to be a core feature of educational policies, just as much in societies outside conflict zones.

Mr. LIM Hyun Mook, Director of the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding, one of the leading UNESCO centers in favor of citizenship education, explains that political and economic arrangements alone cannot secure lasting peace. We need more intellectual and moral solidarity to enhance mutual understanding between people. According to Mr. Lim, this concept of mutual understanding is crucial to UNESCO. This interest took shape through Education for International Understanding. (EIU) starting the 1990s. This conception has evolved into Global Citizenship Education (GCED), a term gaining prominence over the last two decades, with several relative terms (depending on the geographical setting) and debates over the global dimension inter alia. The UNESCO’s concept of GCED, which the OECD developed under the global competencies’ framework, carries the merits of providing a repertoire of turnkey recommendations that need to be implemented locally, considering cultural and social standards in addition to constructions around “peace as a common good.”

3.2 Peace as a Standard Social Reference

Social upheavals particularly threaten young people. A recent study by the Federal Reserve Bank of Saint Louis warns that “millennials are in danger of becoming a “lost generation” in terms of wealth accumulation. To make matters worse, over half of all young people, in a survey of ten countries, think the world is doomed by climate change.” Not to mention the loud resonance of the platformization of the web toppling societal ecosystems into a “liquid identity effect.” If technology is necessary for advancements in science, it has also created unsolvable problems amplified by the “megaphone effect” on phenomena such as bullying, to name one. Digital spaces moving from arenas of equitable access to free speech and democracy to jungles of hate speech are governed by imperfect algorithms, confirming, even more, the necessity to educate and implement genuine advocacy for peace and social justice through policies in favor of peace lobbying. It is essential to inspect the digital spheres as an extension instead of considering them as “unattended and unruled no-man’s-lands.” Skyrocketing numbers of access to social media platforms during the lockdowns are only proof of the extent of the territory that needs to be seized and how critical thinking should be a significant 21st-century skill (+62% for FB, 44% for TikTok, and 315% for LiveMe). As these issues should be addressed multidimensionally, education plays a major part through digital pedagogies and digital humanities.

Today’s digital divide is not only a matter of access to technological resources, which is another imperative debate. The social digital divide question must consider all aspects of a social environment, meaning the acknowledgment of uncharted territory in regulation and policymaking.

In this regard, we must reconsider the “culture of performance” as our sole purpose and look forward to “building social and emotional learning for education,” making schools, the first social spheres in the life of children, safer places, and aiming for a safer internet, creating, and growing virtuous circles.

François Taddei studied the creation and continuation of these virtuous circles. The answer, as simple as it sounds, makes sense: “We start by allowing those who are already doing things differently to continue to do so, and we invite those who are willing to dare to do likewise,” explains Taddei, “then we evaluate their work and spread it. From here, virtuous cycles can emerge”. This implies “believing in the innovative capacity of teams and high-quality initial teacher training and continuing professional development for teachers.”

Lobbying for peace requires mastering peace as a social subject, and thus, a thorough knowledge of peace mechanisms and stakes. This means starting by laying grounds for creative, ethical, accountable, and transparent systems, restoring historical truth, and creating spaces for free speech and critical thinking. This also means applying these mechanisms in both virtual and physical spaces, using role modeling (leading by example), budding from immediate environments, with families, educators, and school staff to politicians on national and international levels.

Peace-sensitive policies also need the strong commitment of the youth. Countless discussions about their future do not systematically include them. Full youth membership demonstrates that commitment and involvement are not only a “like button” on social media (*slacktivism*) but taking a stand and speaking up against injustice; signing a petition might already be a step forward.

Acting against and even condemning injustices and issues such as forms of bullying can be an act of lobbying for peace. Bringing these questions to school principals, national deputies, or even heads of state, casting the spotlight, is a first step to demanding policies in favor of peace. Acting on a multilevel approach means that anyone and everyone can be a peace lobbyist, contributing to implementing relevant measures to institutionalize peace.

4 ETHICS, ADVOCACY, AND DEMOCRACY

Caring needs to be taught and learned. If such a statement seems opposed to the educational landscape today, oriented toward academic performance, the rising interest in neurosciences proved the benefits of learning through a social-emotional approach, what can be referred to as the emotional quotient (EQ). This idea is gaining significant prominence in work environments but much less in educational milieus. UNESCO's Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEP) advocates for "building kinder brains" employing education through "a whole-brain learner-centric approach" aimed at "strengthening the interconnectedness of cognition and the social-emotional domains, which is essential for human flourishing."

This method carries numerous returns that require educators' training and a more fluid school-family relationship. Building peace-sensitive environments mutually benefit trends and tendencies of ethics, advocacy, and democratic expression. An approach that can help understand and dissect subjects that need to be tackled within a given educational ecosystem, not only patching issues for trend effects. This approach based on communication and dialogue where students are not only "brains to fill," gives more accurate indicators on what motivates young people, for example, to commit to causes and which causes they are most likely to embrace.

According to MGIEP, the "whole-brain" approach also requires "supporting and strengthening school-community partnerships to promote more localized, place-based curricula to link learning to real-world problems learners face daily." Moreover, "learner agency should be promoted by shifting from passive to active learning, where each learner actively engages in, and experiments with information and the environment" as "the relationship between teacher and student is bi-directional," fostering the generalization of healthier mutual social relations.

Nevertheless, why would ethics, advocacy, and democracy be meaningful for society? It is about aiming for the highest standards and civic requirements to achieve a peaceful living, resorting to democratic tools for a better living. This could be achieved by designing policies in favor of citizenship education. The definition of citizenship education is a set of methods and approaches to "develop knowledge, skills, and understanding that pupils need to play a full part in society as active and responsible citizens. Pupils learn about democracy, politics, parliament, voting, human rights, justice, media literacy, the law, and the economy." The close ties and gateways between the foundations of a peaceful society and citizenship education are theoretically aligned, even if situational specificities need to be addressed. Indeed, democracy does not mean "an ideal state of peace," as democracy does not prevent conflict, but democratic systems of governance guarantee counter-powers to hold the equilibrium.

On the international level, explains Anna Jarstad, “Even if democracy is no guarantee of peace,” it “offers institutions and regulations a peaceful way of handling antagonisms. This approach makes democracy desirable and an important part of peace-making.” The correlation between peace and democracy is intricate, as stated by Jarstad, “if democracies do not tend to go to war with each other, the road to democracy is often violent.”

Peace is affected by a range of factors, among which Anna Jarstad names international initiatives such as mediation and aid. She points out that the UN has generally “failed in achieving democracy through international interventions after wars, as “only three out of the 27 countries where the most extensive peace missions have taken place are democracies today. This statement underlines how much peace endeavors need to “spring from the inside,” from civil society and national institutions, making a multidimensional approach reality on both micro and macro levels, hence the necessity of lobbying for peace and making every action and every actor count.

4.1 Engaging Democracy in Social Spheres

“Democracy in the twenty-first century requires that the rule of law cease being the rule of power (...). The rule of law must incorporate human dignity into the equation and enable people power, self-determination, and referenda. The rule of law must evolve into the rule of social justice.” These words by Alfred De Zayas emphasize the urgent need for “giving power to the people,” not only by making citizens an accessory of a “window democracy,” but by acknowledging the role of “the citizen” as an actor of social change and international relations transformation.

It is capital to consider these new paradigms of social change and social situational parameters of the “citizen’s environment, viewing the public space as an arena for social interaction. The fragmentation of the public space needs to be tackled within the framework of a multipart analysis, beyond the national/international dichotomy. This process of fragmentation of the public space is accompanied by the “fragmentation of the discussion communities.” The public space supposed to “represent a common place for discussion” often resembles a “superposition of acoustic chambers, each with its codes and shared opinions that are taken for granted by those who are part of it.” Take Facebook as an example, or in our social and political engagements in general, we tend to “communicate only with those who are like us.”

In this sense, democratic conditions and social vulnerability should be addressed since the objective is to foster citizenship awareness, as revealed by the study we mentioned above, conducted in the urban setting of Rio de Janeiro. A citizenship education process thus “needs to develop democratic conditions and contributes to the prevention of social vulnerability and the segregation effects revealed, (...) promoting the development of participatory citizenship dynamics”. In these conditions, students can challenge the “spatial division between the private and public spheres, where a conceptual barrier is usually placed, hampering people to enable a horizontal (link from individual to individual and from individual to collectivity) and a vertical (individual-participatory instances/political system-state) citizenship.” Therefore, this observation proves that citizenship education must be bolstered for stronger social cohesion as a powerful means to reduce inequalities and increase social mobility.

Reclaiming public space as individuals or as collectives means gaining ownership of the digital space as a social space, evolving with minimal regulation. The most meaningful symptoms dwell in the product of algorithms in the shape of echo chambers and filter bubbles, “potent metaphors that encapsulate widespread public fear that the use of social media may limit the information that users encounter or consume online, thus failing to promote a shared experience of free-flowing information.” These social media algorithms combined with tendencies to “interact with like-minded other (...) create an environment that predominantly exposes users to congenial, opinion-reinforcing content to the exclusion of more diverse, opinion-challenging content.”

A wide gap in policymaking needs to be addressed, allowing citizenship education to stem from a more robust framework, guaranteeing a plurality of opinions and favoring peace through dialogue and international solidarity.

Data flows also needs to break the silo in which education is constrained. It is essential to reframe fields of action to allow adaptable and reliable actors’ networks. As Stephen Stetter points out, education as a peace driver needs to be much more included in the political components and further steps of peace and conflict transformation as a part of peace agreements and peace processes. Education must be considered an element contributing to equality and justice for all conflict parties involved. There are concrete examples, adds Stetter, including peace education elements in peace agreements and peace processes, namely Northern Ireland, Bosnia and Herzegovina as well as Northern Macedonia; the procedures have been “a crucial component in improving the pervasiveness and societal reach of these agreements.”

Precisely, to respond effectively to conflict, conflict resolution theorists and practitioners underscore the importance of “cooperative, non-adversarial processes for problem-solving and relationship building, which are often conducted with an external third party or mediator.” Breathing appeasement and favoring peacebuilding through dialogue, taking various forms, art, culture, and sport, allowing to advance peace, directly or indirectly, opens numerous opportunities for democratic expression in different social spheres.

These processes nuance the space between conflict and peace and “direct attention to underlying interests and human needs (e.g., security, identity, bonding, control, development) beneath superficial positions and demands, and highlight the significance of culture in human interactions.” They do indeed “affirm the importance of empathy, creativity, and shared positive power (power with rather than power over)” in all conflict resolution processes, whether between individuals, groups, or states.” It is also essential to underscore the “potentially positive role of non-official processes of dialogue and engagement in today’s major international conflicts, acknowledging the character of multichannel peace endeavors and communication, maintaining peace actors’ perceptive and forewarning.

4.2 Critical Democracy and Everyday Peace

Considering peace as a “big-picture,” a screenshot of a precise moment will conceal fundamental dimensions of peace. Working in-depth and considering time, space, and endogenous and exogenous factors is key. These dimensions are capital to avoid the cure becoming worse than the disease. Planning a conflict-sensitive education can avoid the indirect accentuation or mitigation of conflict by “creating or entrenching socio-economic divisions, through processes of political inclusion and exclusion, as well as through accommodation of cultural diversity. It is important to recognize that “policy decisions have consequences for peacebuilding” as “educational content, how it is delivered and how the overall education system is organized can lead to peace or return societies to conflict.” UNESCO advises that “when planning education policies, governments should consider long-standing rivalries and partially resolved disputes between groups and regions.” Stetter specifies that conflict-sensitive education interventions must ‘do no harm and “ensure that they do not reinforce inequalities or further fuel divisions. Programs must remain flexible to best respond to fluctuating contexts” with “improved feedback loops” that “can help monitor outcomes and effectiveness.” Also, “collaboration between education specialists, peacebuilding specialists, and the broader development field in a system thinking approach to achieving sustainable, long-term change.” This implicates “an everyday peace effort” and a critical approach to peace and democracy, as a safeguard against the misuse of education, as an ideological propaganda tool for example.

It is also interesting to consider the genesis of the concept of peace education for a better understanding of the ramifications that have been formally institutionalized in various policy decisions. The 1998 UN Resolution on the Culture of Peace defines “peace education” as an “encompassing policy that starts in school education - to turn the individual classroom into a small peace culture but should reach out to society as a whole.” According to the UN, peace education is based on an “integral approach to preventing violence and violent conflicts, and an alternative to the culture of war and violence” based on “the promotion of sustainable economic and social development, respect for human rights, equality between woman and men, democratic participation, tolerance, the free flow of information and disarmament.”

Mainstreaming peace education means that we need a whole new mindset over our approach to peace, from decision-making to the in-field level. Incorporating and rooting peace education in school curricula does not mean adding or overlapping tasks risking “choking” the educational system and overloading educators, already swamped with very demanding tasks, but the underwriting and converging of various societal mechanisms, even outside strategic education planning, enforced by partnership and associative networks.

Dr. Maria Montessori is considered the founder of peace education as a discipline. She called for “ethical, empathetic, and social educational practices that did not exist in the typical public school” in view of “creating the suitable environment for each child to enjoy harmonious interactions that nourish and love” and that would “ultimately contribute to peace: in the family, at the workplace, within the nation – and between adversaries in violent inter-group conflicts.” The pivotal point of setting peace and social justice as a norm, fully inserted in everyday decorum, is applying the values we hold as “moral goals,” making the goal the means. Starting from within by guaranteeing fair access to resources and creating a just atmosphere of trust. Citizenship education and solidarity can help trigger incentives for peace, chasing away violence, but also understanding the causes behind the conflict, in a sensitive approach, based on historical truth and duty of remembrance.

Nathan C. Funk explains that peacemaking “is not only an effort to end war, remove structural violence, or establish the presence of external value conditions. It is also a profoundly internal process, in which the transformation of the individual becomes a metaphor for and instrument of broader changes.” This backs the idea that “peaceful behavior is learned behavior. Everyone is a potential and needed contributor to a culture of peace.” This idea should be the guideline of policymaking, and each one of us must lobby for the achievement of this vision through actions to sustain transformation and positive change in our societies, making peace an everyday effort and an everyday reality.

Democracy might be a perfectible system that should evolve just as much as peace paradigms continue to evolve, but it is still a political means for citizen expression. Peace needs to be supported by citizenship education as a flexible tool to fit and answer the challenges of the 21st century. Lobbying for peace and pressing for a change that has been too long expected is a goal we can all aspire to.

CONCLUSION

Peace and democracy share the fact that they cannot sustain without everyday work efforts, rail guards, and collective intelligence. Citizenship education is one of the defenses of peace and democracy that needs to be guarded and strengthened, but also critically reviewed, to answer the requirements of the cohesion of social fabrics.

Education can create peaceful societies by enforcing the teaching and understanding of shared knowledge, values, and attitudes, enabling individuals to live together in diverse environments.

There are many benefits to citizenship education in terms of peace implementation. One of the first symptoms of the fulfillment of social equity is guaranteeing fair access to quality education for all, an additional signal of how society’s transformation lies in its most elementary institutions.

One should remember that the best tool in favor of authentic democracy is participation; dropping voter turnouts, for example, are symptomatic of democratic backslide, risking the erosion of pillar institutions such as education. There is a direct connection between education and democratic values, in democratic societies, educational content and practices support behaviors of democratic governance.

Citizenship education, and education in general, is vital in a democracy to maintain the dynamics of evolving forms of government that “demand independent thinking by the citizenry. The opportunity for positive social and political change rests in citizens' hands.”

Education systems should be valued and constitute a subject of resource devotion, supporting and defending individuals as citizens, part of the social fabric. Aware citizens are in a better position to improve their democracy and not only undergo social contracts. Policymakers must consider procedures to encourage students to develop reasonable arguments, based on careful research and a clear understanding of history, and not be threatened by youth commitment and advocacy.

Citizenship education policy is about how decision-makers must set their priorities on the kind of society they aim to build. Citizens' responsibility and membership are capital; it is about what truly matters, what values we need to defend as humans and citizens, and what legacy we shall leave for future generations. We have the political leaders we choose, so let us choose wisely.

Being a peace lobbyist is taking part in any aspect to advance the state of peace, from civic engagement to the duty of remembrance, keeping and renewing the sense of democracy, participation, and membership. This implicates the necessity to recognize the political and affective complexities at play in forming visions about peace and peace education, learning lessons from the past.

The plurality of actors in all social spheres guarantees citizens access to the necessary sources of information to capture an accurate picture of political information. Pitseys John declares that “political information (...) produced by the various holders of public power is not enough to guarantee impartiality.” He argues that “both the transmission and reception of the message are influenced by the context in which they take place, as well as by the opinions, perceptions, and prejudices of the receiver.” Democratic deliberation cannot sustain without public information, which needs to be processed and discussed, contradictory and collectively. Such a process requires, inter alia, “places of discussion and public responsibility, a lively mediation of civil society, a quality press, and mass media with the means to exercise their function of counter-power.” In other words, “an education system that provides future citizens with the necessary tools to engage in public debate.”

Ensuring effective policymaking for peacebuilding purposes through education needs to empower citizens and closely monitor policies in the field. To this day, no data is available in this area, information facts that would be relevant for assessing actions, their dissemination, and pooling of efficient resources, bridging even more actors network of peace advocates and peace lobbyists. After all, citizenship education choices are highly relevant in understanding political agendas and priorities set for populations, orientation either national or international, that should be closely monitored by aware citizens.

Peace needs patience and perseverance, whereas conflict does not bear poise. The best yet is to avoid sparking conflicts and build peace by peaceful means. Mobilizing all peace stakeholders will allow a 360° approach that might contribute to healing the polycrisis world we are experiencing.

We shall end this paper with a quote by Alfred De Zayas worth reflecting upon, “Civilization does not simply require society to have a set of laws and powerful police to inform them. Civilization means ensuring the real welfare of people, creating the conditions necessary for their pursuit of happiness.” De Zayas continues by stating that “the true indicators of civilization are not an expanding Gross Domestic Product, ever-growing consumption, and aggressive exploitation of natural resources – but rather respect for human and animal life, sustainable management of the environment, local, regional, and international solidarity, social justice, and a culture of peace.”

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