



International Institute on Peace Education - 2007

Outcomes and General Conclusions

Overview

The 2007 International Institute on Peace Education (IIPE) was hosted by Baketik, the Peace Centre in Arantzazu in the Basque Country (Spanish Estate) from July 14-22, 2007. The event was co-organized by Baketik and the Peace Education Center at Teachers College, Columbia University. IIPE was founded in 1982 by Betty Reardon and faculty colleagues at Teachers College and has been held annually in different parts of the world. It is an intensive multicultural and cooperative learning opportunity in which participants learn from and with each other about substantive peace issues and interactive teaching approaches. The IIPE is also an opportunity for networking and community building among those who educate and work for a culture of peace in the host region and around the world.

IIPE 2007 explored the theme of "*Identity, Interdependence & Nonviolent Transformations - Practical Priorities of Education in Transitions to Peace*," an appropriate theme for a region that has suffered forty years of continuous violent conflict. The Institute focused on the challenges and possibilities for this and other nonviolent transformations to take place, especially as they relate to identity and interdependence. Understanding these concepts and illuminating their interrelatedness was central to the IIPE inquiry. Each participant shared experiences and offered practical models that others might adapt in discovering new strategies and perspectives to bring back to their working communities.

The special sub-theme of the IIPE, "Practical Priorities of Education in Transitions to Peace," was a relevant and practical inquiry into how we can actualize, adapt and design peace education for particular moments of transition towards peace that are being experienced in the world, with special consideration given to the Basque Country and participants' local communities. As a comprehensive, holistic and integrative field, peace education has broad transformational goals that can be challenging to translate to present and local contexts where peace education initiatives are taking place. In exploring this sub-theme the IIPE community considered how to translate these goals into the moment and context in which peace education is being practiced.

Immersion in the Basque Context

In addition to the general program of the IIPE participants were introduced to the history, culture and politics of the Basque Region. This was highlighted by an excursion to the town of Gernika which included visits to the Gernika Peace Museum; the Gernika Gogoratuz Peace Research Center; the Assembly House of Gernika; and the symbolic "Gernika tree," an ancient oak tree around which community leaders have gathered to discuss policies and concerns since medieval times. As a symbolic gesture at the conclusion of the IIPE a group of participants planted a sapling oak at the steps of the Peace Centre at Arantzazu.

The Basque Plan of Action for Human Rights and Peace Education

The 2007 IIPE was supported and attended by representatives of the Basque Government's Ministry of Education and the Department of Justice's Human Rights Office. The Basque Government was actively seeking input and feedback from the international community on the recently devised "Basque Plan of Action for Human

Rights and Peace Education (2008-09).” The Basque Plan of Action was developed by the Basque Government as an outcome of the creation in 2006 of an Interdepartmental Commission on Peace and Human Rights. The plan is supported by the belief that human rights and peace education are essential tools for strengthening social and ethical consciousness in the defense of the dignity of each person, of life in the first place, and of all Human Rights. The plan seeks to create and support an active education fabric for the promotion of a Human Rights and Peace Culture with actions designed to reach these goals without leaving anyone aside. The plan aims at making society in general aware of the need to see this kind of education as a complex, global and permanent process. At the same time it attempts to create the structures that respond to this educative demand.

The IIFE has officially endorsed the Basque Plan of Action and has agreed in principle with the Basque Ministry of Education and Department of Justice to further support its development through trainings and other initiatives.

**Strategic Planning Seminar:
Conclusions Gathered from the IIFE Community**

The final day of the 2007 Institute featured a “Strategic Planning Seminar.” This seminar was an opportunity for the IIFE community to cumulatively reflect upon the ideas, concerns, educational strategies and possibilities for action explored throughout the week.

Participants were asked to consider three spheres of concern for action relevant to the planning of peace education:

- 1) Society; the changes we seek in society at large -- or more specifically the changes which the education we design and deliver will contribute to.
- 2) The systems, institutions and agencies in which education takes place (both formal and non-formal).
- 3) The actual learning settings – where and how learning takes place.

The discussions were further organized around the following guiding questions:

- 1) What is/are the changes that need to be made in order to achieve the values we've been articulating throughout the IIFE?
- 2) What do we/our societies need to learn as part of this process?
- 3) What are the agencies or institutions capable of facilitating that learning?
- 4) How will you cultivate these learnings with your constituency / learning community?
- 5) What are the ways of which being a part of the international network that is the IIFE will enrich or facilitate what you do?

As part of this process participants were also asked to identify personal goals and specific actions they will take in the coming year in contributing to these changes.

Following is a list of general conclusions and recommendations culled from this strategic planning session. They are representative of the entire IIFE 2007 learning community.

Peace Education must be an integral process that involves:

- Intentional changes that allow citizenship in general and the education community in particular to understand, confront, resist, transform and eradicate all forms and manifestations of violence.
- Activation of actions, structures and values that contribute to the fulfillment of the needs of all persons and create the context for a full personal and social development committed with the human community and nature.
- Reflection on our ways of thinking, of looking at the world, our values, behaviors, relationships and social structures.
- Providing training on peace culture to those persons working in institutions and in particular those who are in decision making capacities.
- Nurturing a new paradigm for a more inclusive, humanistic global citizenship.
- An education which nurtures an awareness of the ecological paradigm and the interconnectedness of all life.
- Reflection inside institutions about their role, their ways of communicating with society, on how they can contribute to peace. In this sense the creation of interdepartmental commissions is recommended.
- Training programmes for teachers and families as main agents in education and modeling of values.
- Training involving contents, methods and practices that develop a critical and humanist pedagogy that affects the curriculum and the relationships among all the persons in the education community.
- Reflection on the formation of identities. Work on the awareness on the different identities of every person and create the context for discussion and free expression on identity issues.
- Contribution to a reconciled society creating opportunities for the free sharing of experiences in conflict situations. This sharing creates links and lets us recognize other narratives as legitimate.
- Use of personal narratives as pedagogical tools for their great potential in generating empathy and links among persons and groups.
- Creation of contexts where the suffering of victims in conflict can be recognized and restored contributing to reconciliation.
- Reflection on the transmission of memory and the teaching of history. How can memory contribute to reconciliation?
- Enriching traditional teaching-learning methods with new tools using arts (theatre, films, plastic arts, music, etc), new group dynamics, participative action-research, etc.
- Education on non-violent resistance methods for social transformation and sharing of existing experiences.

- Being aware of the importance of modeling in education. Education has to model the values it wants to transmit.
- Design of programmes in a participative way so that the persons and groups involved have a voice.
- Recognition of children, youth and elderly people as agents of change.
- Involve people from marginal sectors of society in a reflection on a shared future.
- Creation of heterogeneous learning contexts where people of different ages, academic background, different cultures, learn together and from each other.
- Being aware that the planning of education can contribute to an inclusive or a segregated school system. Every person should have the choice for good quality education that opens the possibilities for a satisfactory life in solidarity with others.
- Knowledge about successful approaches and experiences in the world.
- Different approaches have to be adapted to the specific cultural contexts detecting the priorities in each period of time.
- Link between local and global so that we can learn about the challenges and resources existing both in the close community and in the global community.
- Providing all the resources to peace initiatives in all levels of society.
- Using the media as important resource for the transmission of information and values that contribute to peace culture.
- Creations of contexts where different peace agents can share approaches, tools, reflections and strategies: social groups, NGOs, Universities, educators, institutions, politicians, media, police, etc.