

# **Transforming Worldviews: The Case of Education for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina**

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## **Abstract**

Current approaches to peace education tend to focus on specific issues or themes and leave many broader questions about the nature of peace and the means for its lasting establishment in human individual and collective life unanswered. Particularly in the contexts of injustice, violence and war, peace education programs that have the power to transform worldviews from a conflict-orientation to a peace-orientation are needed. Such a transformation requires an integrative view of peace as a psychosocial, political, moral and spiritual condition, and depends not merely upon reducing conflict but on actively creating unity. This paper reviews current trends in peace education and presents the case study of a unique primary and secondary school program called “Education for Peace” in Bosnia and Herzegovina, which has demonstrated transformative results among intrapersonal, interpersonal, inter-community and inter-institutional relations.

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All peoples, nations, cultures, classes and institutions are faced with the problems of conflict and violence. Despite the numerous efforts to prevent, manage and/or resolve such conflicts, their frequency and intensity in human life only seem to be increasing. Evidently, the methods we are using are not sufficient to stem the tide of conflict and create a sustainable culture of peace in the inner, interpersonal, inter-group, and international life of humanity. Perplexed by the pervasiveness of conflict in human affairs, many have resigned themselves to the belief that conflict represents an inherent aspect of our human nature and constitutes an inevitable feature of human life. Those undecided on the matter are left either to concede that all individuals and societies will continue to be marred by conflict, or to entertain the hope that transformation in the present character of human life is possible.

Indeed, it would appear that only a transformation in the root character of human life can resolve the innumerable conflicts that afflict the world today. Though the pursuit of such a goal may seem perplexing, vague and idealistic to many, a unique and systematic effort in the field of peace education is yielding positive results. This paper focuses on the Education for Peace (EFP) program in Bosnia and Herzegovina which has demonstrated transformative effects on intrapersonal, interpersonal, inter-community and inter-institutional relations over the past three years.

Part I of this paper reviews current trends and limitations in the field of peace education. Part II focuses on the need for peace education programs to shift from conflict-based to unity-based worldviews. Part III presents the philosophy, methodology and results of the EFP pilot program in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Part IV discusses the implications of this experiment for the further development of peace education theory and practice.

## **I. Common Trends in Peace Education**

In the field of education, numerous theories on and approaches to reducing conflict and creating a culture of peace are currently being experimented with (see Bar-Tal, 2002; Evans, 1999; Groff and Smoker, 1996; Harris, 1999; Johnson, 1998; Reardon, 2001; Salomon and Nevo, 2002). Peace education assumes that human beings are capable of learning the ways of peace. And yet, an examination of peace education discourse reveals that most theoretical frameworks and applied programs are based on the postulate that conflict constitutes an inherent, inevitable—perhaps even beneficial—dimension of human life. The first proposition that this paper presents for consideration is that this underlying conceptual contradiction may help explain why many peace education programs are having less impact on participants than hoped for (Blitz, n.d.; Maoz, 2000; Salomon, 2003; Tal-Or, Boninger and Gleicher, 2002).

Since the early decades of this century, “peace education” programs around the world have represented a spectrum of focal themes, including anti-nuclearism, international understanding, environmental responsibility, communication skills, non-violence, conflict

resolution techniques, democracy, human rights awareness, tolerance of diversity, co-existence and gender equality, among others (Groff and Smoker, 1996; Harris, 1999; Johnson, 1998, Swee-Hin, 1997). Some have also addressed spiritual dimensions of inner harmony, or synthesized a number of the foregoing issues into programs on world citizenship. While academic discourse on the subject has increasingly recognized the need for a broader, more holistic approach to peace education (Parlevliet, n.d., Swee-Hin, 1997), a review of field-based projects reveals that the following three variations of peace education are most common:

### **1) “Peace Education” as Conflict Resolution Training**

Peace education programs centered on conflict resolution typically focus on the social-behavioural symptoms of conflict, training individuals to resolve inter-personal disputes through techniques of negotiation and (peer) mediation. Learning to manage anger, “fight fair” and improve communicate through skills such as listening, turn-taking, identifying needs, and separating facts from emotions, constitute the main elements of these programs. Participants are also encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and to brainstorm together on compromises (Deutsch, 1993; Hakvoort, 1996; Harris, 1999).

In general, approaches of this type aim to “alter beliefs, attitudes, and behaviours...*from negative to positive attitudes toward conflict* as a basis for preventing violence” (Van Slyck, Stern and Elbedour, 1999, emphasis added). As one peer mediation coordinator put it: “Conflict is very natural and normal, but you can’t go through your entire life beating everybody up—you have to learn different ways to resolve conflict” (Jeffries, n.d.).

### **2) “Peace Education” as Democracy Education**

Peace education programs centered on democracy education typically focus on the political processes associated with conflict, and postulate that with an increase in democratic participation the likelihood of societies resolving conflict through violence and war decreases. At the same time, “a democratic society needs *the commitment of citizens who accept the inevitability of conflict* as well as the necessity for tolerance” (U.S. Department of State, *The Culture of Democracy*, emphasis added). Thus programs of this kind attempt to foster a conflict-positive orientation in the community by training students to view conflict as a platform for creativity and growth.

Approaches of this type train participants in the skills of critical thinking, debate and coalition-building, and promote the values of freedom of speech, individuality, tolerance of diversity, compromise and conscientious objection. Their aim is to produce “responsible citizens” who will hold their governments accountable to the standards of peace, primarily through adversarial processes. Activities are structured to have students “assume the role of the citizen that chooses, makes decisions, takes positions, argues positions and respects the opinions of others”<sup>2</sup>: skills that a multi-party democracy are based upon. Based on the assumption that democracy decreases the likelihood of violence and war, it is assumed that these are the same skills necessary for creating a culture of peace.

### 3) *“Peace Education” as Human Rights Awareness Training*

Peace education programs centered on human rights awareness-raising typically focus at the level of policies that humanity ought to adopt in order to move closer to a peaceful global community. The aim is to engender a commitment among participants to a vision of structural peace in which all individual members of the human race can exercise their personal freedoms and be legally protected from violence, oppression and indignity.

Approaches of this type familiarize participants with the international covenants and declarations of the United Nations system; train students to recognize violations of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; and promote tolerance, solidarity, autonomy and self-affirmation at the individual and collective levels (Brabeck, 2001).

Human rights education “faces continual elaboration, a significant theory-practice gap and frequent challenge as to its validity” (Swee-Hin, 1997). In one practitioner’s view: “Human rights education does not work in communities fraught with conflict unless it is part of a comprehensive approach... In fact, such education can be counterproductive and lead to greater conflict if people become aware of rights which are not realized. In this respect, human rights education can increase the potential for conflict” (Parlevliet, n.d.). To prevent these outcomes, many such programs are now being combined with aspects of conflict resolution and democracy education schools of thought, along with training in non-violent action.

#### *Discussion*

Based on this brief review, it may be observed that the topical foci, pedagogical aims and resulting methodologies of these mainstream approaches to peace education differ considerably. As Swee-Hin (1997) notes, they “inevitably have their own dynamics and ‘autonomy’ in terms of theory and practice”. “Salomon (2002) has described how the challenges, goals, and methods of peace education differ substantially between areas characterized by intractable conflict, interethnic tension, or relative tranquility” (Nelson, 2000). As the prioritization of peace education gains international momentum, it must therefore be asked, what kind of *peace education* are we referring to? What is actually being delivered? And do the programs delivered succeed in engendering a culture of peace among participants? Advocates of the strains mentioned above might argue that ultimately their foci are inter-related, and indeed, as peace education moves from the margins to the mainstream, a blending of approaches is becoming more and more common. “Over time,” Swee-Hin observes, “there is increasing recognition and consensus-building on the value of sharing ideas and strategies, especially given the interconnectedness... (of) issues of violence, conflicts and peacelessness.” But does the pooling (in this case) of conflict resolution skills training, democracy education and human rights awareness ultimately create an effective conceptual and methodological basis upon which to transform the culture of participating communities from conflict and violence to unity and peace? Or are we merely gathering a “bag of virtues” (Kohlberg, 1984) without critically examining the philosophical coherency of such an exercise? Research has yet to conclude on these questions.

Salomon (2002) raises the problem and its consequences:

“Imagine that medical practitioners would not distinguish between invasive surgery to remove malignant tumors and surgery to correct one's vision. Imagine also that while surgeries are practiced, no research and no evaluation

of their differential effectiveness accompany them. The field would be considered neither very serious nor very trustworthy. Luckily enough, such a state of affairs does not describe the field of medicine, but it comes pretty close to describing the field of peace education. First, too many profoundly different kinds of activities taking place in an exceedingly wide array of contexts are all lumped under the same category label of "peace education" as if they belong together. Second, for whatever reason, the field's scholarship in the form of theorizing, research and program evaluation badly lags behind practice... In the absence of clarity of what peace education really is, or how its different varieties relate to each other, it is unclear how experience with one variant of peace education in one region can usefully inform programs in another region."

Salomon's criticism of the attempt to pool diverse activities under a single label of "peace education" is well-taken. The root of this issue, of course, is that our understanding of peace itself is still undergoing elaboration and refinement. It is now generally accepted that peace is more than the mere absence of war, but consensus on the broader, positive dynamics of peace as expressed in all the various aspects of human life is still lacking. Indeed, there are still many unanswered questions about the nature of peace and the means for its lasting establishment in human individual and collective life. The evident persistence of conflicts in all societies alone indicates that the human need to be convinced of peace at a deeper level remains.

Social-political approaches which have led the peace education movement since its anti-war origins have only gradually begun to integrate psychological dimensions of peace into their theoretical discourse, primarily because of increased international attention to peace-building in trauma-ridden post-war societies such as the former Yugoslavia. Academic credence has yet to be given to the moral and spiritual principles underlying both personal and structural peace, even though the greatest peace-builders of the last century – among them Martin Luther King Jr., Mahatma Gandhi, Maria Montessori and others – each recognized the fundamental importance of this dimension. In the words of King (1964):

"We shall not have the will, the courage, and the insight to deal with such matters [as the achievement of peace] unless in this field we are prepared to undergo a mental and spiritual re-evaluation... We will not build a peaceful world by following a negative path. It is not enough to say "We must not wage war." It is necessary to love peace and sacrifice for it. We must concentrate not merely on the negative expulsion of war, but on the positive affirmation of peace."

Indeed, as others have stated: "The primary challenge in dealing with issues of peace is to raise the context to the level of principle, as distinct from pure pragmatism. For, in essence, peace stems from an inner state supported by a spiritual or moral attitude, and it is chiefly in evoking this attitude that the possibility of enduring solutions can be found" (Universal House of Justice, 1985).

It appears that a general or integrated theory of peace is needed: one that can holistically account for the intrapersonal, inter-personal, inter-group and international dynamics of peace, as well as its main principles and pre-requisites. An essential component of this integrated theory must also be the recognition that a culture of peace can only result from an authentic process of transformation, both individual and

collective. Speaking of this transformation as “critical empowerment”, Swee-Hin states:

“If peace education is not able or willing to try to move not just minds but also hearts and spirits into personal and social action for peacebuilding, it will remain emasculated, a largely “academic” exercise even in the non-formal context... While the non-formal community sector is often seen as the “natural” site for critical empowerment, the formal education institutions should also challenge learners towards transformation.”

Peace education thus needs to develop a comprehensive and integrative vision of itself. An integrative perspective on peace education would acknowledge that, above all, peace can only be attained through a process of transformation based on the recognition “that peace is a psychosocial and political, as well as a moral and spiritual condition, requiring a conscious effort, a universal outlook, and an integrated and unifying approach” (Danesh, 2004, p. 6). “An education that is transformative redirects and reenergizes those who pause to reflect on what their lives have been and take on new purposes and perspectives. The transformation begins when a person withdraws from the world of established goals to unlearn, reorient, and choose a fresh path” (McWhinney and Markos, 2003:16).

Fundamental to this task is the need to undertake critical re-examination of the basic postulates upon which peace education programs are based. In other words, we must ask ourselves, what is it that we are really teaching participants? As currently practiced, most programs of peace education adopt conflict as the normative basis for their theoretical frameworks and pedagogical methodologies. The essential message that participants receive is that they ought to accept conflict as inevitable and learn to maximize what benefits they can acquire from it. But if peace education is intended to result in a qualitative transformation in the perceptions, feelings, attitudes and behaviours of both individuals and societies, such that they voluntarily choose peace-based behaviours, goals and policies over conflict-based ones, then the adoption of conflict as the normative platform for such education represents a considerable conceptual contradiction.

New research is finding that so-called “direct” education for non-violence, “by introducing the idea of violence even when negating it, runs the risk of causing violence. This is especially so if violent acts are described or pictured.” “Indirect” education, by contrast, which uses “models for peaceful action without even mentioning violence” are said to “have a better chance at success” (Gellman, 2002). An important implication of these preliminary findings is that by focussing on positive applications of human potential, transformative learning is fostered; whereas by focusing on negative behaviours, the transformative process is hindered. It also affirms that a re-examination of the mainstream approaches to peace education may be warranted.

## **II. The Importance of Worldview**

The assumption that conflict constitutes an inherent feature of the human reality represents a *conflict-oriented worldview*. Worldviews reflect the way an individual or group perceives reality, human nature, the purpose of human life and the laws governing human relationships (Danesh, 2004). For the most part, we are only partially conscious of the worldviews we hold. Nevertheless, worldview determines where we see ourselves going, what we understand to be the processes taking place around us, and what we believe our role in these processes can and should be.

Worldviews develop in the contexts of family, religion, culture, and school; and are additionally shaped by the political environment, the media and our life experiences. Discussed in their various aspects as “social representations” (Moscovici, 1993), “dispositions” (Brabeck, 2001) “cultural fabric” (Hägglund, 1999) and “collective narratives and beliefs” (Salomon, 2003), worldviews “are constructed, transmitted, confirmed, and reconstructed in social interactions, and they mediate social action”. In other words, worldviews influence everything we think, feel and do.

Most of the peoples of the world live with conflict-oriented worldviews (Van Slyck, Stern and Elbedour, 1999). Indeed, conflict-oriented worldviews are so firmly positioned as the norm in our societies that they pass undetected even when interwoven into *peace education* lessons, let alone other issues, discussions and activities that occupy us on a daily basis. The result is a perpetuation of cultures of conflict in which people feel themselves to be conflicted, engage in conflicts at home and at work, prepare themselves and their children for future conflicts, and recount their past conflicts in cultural and historical narratives.

Peace educators are, by choice, reformers and sometimes even revolutionaries. Yet due to the widespread acceptance of conflict-based worldviews, most peace education efforts to date have not been radical enough in rejecting the notion that conflict is inevitable, and expanding their vision of peace to include all of its inter-related dimensions. If peace education is to be effective, it must address the issue of worldviews and, more importantly, aim to transform worldviews from a conflict-orientation to a peace-orientation. Worldview transformation, called “double-loop learning” by Bateson (1972, in McWhinney and Markos, 2003) involves a process of reflection within which one “question[s] the data and assumptions used to conduct one’s life, whether consciously or unconsciously, [in order] to adopt new constructions of reality, life goals, and moral obligations. Such questioning may produce broad changes in a person’s life, leading to quite different worldviews. However, frequently people and organizations make changes and adopt new learning without recognition of the process by which they have chosen new worldviews” (p. 18). The Education for Peace program that will be discussed in the following case study attempts to make that process of worldview examination and change a more conscious and deliberate activity; the aim being to replace conflict-based constructions of reality with unity-based perceptions and principles. A peace-oriented worldview is one that recognizes the truth that we, as human beings, are simultaneously psychological, social, political, ethical, and spiritual beings; that human nature is essentially developmental; and that the primary challenge of life is to increase our capacity to create unity-in-diversity within ourselves, our relationships and the world-at-large. This perspective is based on what Danesh and Danesh (2002a) call a “unity-centred paradigm”<sup>1</sup>.

A developmental perspective demonstrates that worldviews “evolve in direct response to the development of human consciousness” (Danesh, 2004). “Development” in this context refers to the fact that all human beings pass through the dynamic phases of infancy, childhood, adolescence and adulthood. Likewise, humanity on a collective level evolves through similar stages in its historic, experimental journey towards collective maturity.

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<sup>1</sup> Dr. H.B. Danesh is a medical doctor and psychiatrist with more than 30 years of academic and clinical work on the issues of violence, aggression, and family therapy, Danesh is the originator of the EFP program described in this case study and has formulated its main conceptual framework. He is a researcher and international lecturer in conflict resolution and peace education; has lived in the Middle East, Europe and North America; and is the founder and director of the International Education for Peace Institute.

Whereas conflict, insecurity and power-struggles mark earlier stages in the development of human beings and societies, maturity represents the acquired capacity to create unity in the context of diversity, to establish relationships based on truthfulness and respect, and to administer the affairs of human life in a spirit of service and in a manner that is just.

With the development of consciousness comes the development of more integrative and peace-oriented worldviews. This process “alters not only our selves but also the nature of all of our relationships” (Danesh and Danesh, 2002). A peace-oriented worldview challenges us to establish peace within ourselves, to engage peacefully with others, to prepare ourselves and our children for the creation and maintenance of peace in their professions and personal lives, and to recount the great strides towards peace and unity that our cultures and societies have been making.

Worldview transformation, from a focus on conflict to a focus on unity, is the essential foundation upon which a peaceful global civilization depends. Upon this foundation, a new vision and methodology for peace education was designed and piloted in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The following sections provide a case study of that experience.

### **III. Case Study**

#### ***Context: Post-War Bosnia and Herzegovina***

When we began the Education for Peace (EFP) program in six pilot schools in September 2000, Bosnia and Herzegovina (BiH) was still marked by much of the immediate destruction which the 1992-95 war had caused. Physical, economic and political reconstruction had pulled BiH out of the crisis condition of basic survival, but stability in each of these areas was still lacking and substantial investment of international resources continued. The general population, marred by the violence that had resulted from ethnic, religious and political conflicts, struggled through the challenges of post-war recovery and remained highly politicized over issues of refugees, returnees, and the search for war criminals. School-aged children and youth, in addition to the adult population, had fresh and full memories of the war, and little systematic attention was being given to healing the traumas they had sustained. On the surface, the rituals of daily life were renewed and the country was great strides away from the warfare that had consumed it less than a decade before. On the other hand, much of the country still lay in rubble; fear still seized people at the thought of travelling to “enemy” areas of the country; anger, based on ethnic generalizations, still polarized whole communities; and hopelessness still characterized most people’s feelings towards the future of BiH. Indeed, the war had caused a fundamental breakdown of trust in human nature, leaving entrenched conflict-based worldviews among the generality of the population.

It was in this context that the first seed of the Education for Peace program was planted. In September 1999, as part of the Royaumont Process<sup>3</sup>, a 3-day seminar on “Conflict-Free Conflict Resolution” (CFCR)<sup>4</sup> was sponsored by the Government of Luxembourg for journalists from across the Balkans. Though four years since the signing of the Dayton Peace Agreements, considerable fear and anxiety characterized the multi-ethnic group that had come to participate. Indeed, on the first night of the seminar, the organizers were awakened by a number of distressed individuals who demanded that they be transferred immediately to another hotel so that they would not be forced to sleep under the same roof as their “enemies”. The seminar proceeded over the next several days, engaging this group in a learning process about the dynamics of conflict, power and violence, and the practical

measures leading to transformation, consultative problem-solving and unity-building. By the end of the 3-day seminar, the participants were themselves transformed, displaying signs of friendship, ease and mutual trust. The results were so dramatic that they caught the attention of the Minister of Education for the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (FBiH), who invited the trainer and the Ambassador of Luxembourg to meet with him. The Minister, a man who had himself been imprisoned in a war-camp during the 1992-1995 war, expressed considerable surprise at the effect which the CFCR approach had produced, and indicated that a program of this nature was desperately needed for the children and youth of BiH who had suffered the effects of the war and into whose hands would be given the precarious task of rebuilding the future of their country. The invitation was accepted, and a unique program of Education for Peace<sup>5</sup> was designed.

### ***Strategy: A Unique Model of Education for Peace***

This new model of Education for Peace aims to effect lasting transformation in the worldviews and character of individuals, groups and societies such that they come to understand and consistently embody the universal principles and practices of peace. The EFP curriculum is formulated within the framework of a peace-oriented worldview: a positive, transformative vision (O'Sullivan, 1999) distinguished by the recognition of the oneness of humanity and the earth, the fundamental importance of unity-in-diversity, the application of standards of justice and equality, and the practice of unified non-adversarial decision-making and conflict resolution. This program rests on the view that peace represents an inherent longing and capacity within all human beings, and that it is the need and ultimate destiny of humanity to express this capacity for peace in all dimensions of life: within oneself, in one's relationships, in relations between groups, and in the organization and administration of society.

EFP can be applied to many contexts: families, schools, businesses, NGOs, media and government. When applied to the context of schools, Education for Peace attempts to set in motion the exploration and application of peace in all aspects of the life of the school and its surrounding community. The process involves integration of principles of peace, by teachers, into the daily lessons of every subject area and for students of all grades. Peace and its prerequisites thus become the transversal themes (Brabeck, 2001) or pan-curricular framework through which all subjects are studied, as well as the "hidden curriculum" (Bartal, 2002) or management philosophy by which the school aims to administer itself. Through this in-depth, systematic, and sustained education of children, youth and adults in the principles of peace, the necessary foundation and structure for a lasting peace within and between various groups and communities is laid. Each generation of new leaders and citizens thereby gains the necessary insights and skills to decrease the occurrence and intensity of conflict, and to dedicate their talents and energies to the creation of a vibrant culture of peace.

### ***Process: Introduction of EFP to Primary and Secondary Schools***

With the support of the FBiH Minister of Education, the Republika Srpska Minister of Education, two relevant cantonal Ministers, the U.N. Office of the High Representative which at that time coordinated the re-structuring of BiH's educational system, and a grant from the Government of Luxembourg, the Education for Peace program in Bosnia and Herzegovina began. The program was piloted over two years (July 2000 – June 2002) in three primary and three secondary schools: two schools in each of the cities of Sarajevo, Banja Luka, and Travnik / Nova Bila. These cities represent the three main ethnic groups of Bosnia and Herzegovina—Bosniak (Muslim), Croat (Catholic), and Serb (Orthodox). Coordinating all

aspects of pilot implementation was a staff of twenty-four individuals, including eighteen Bosnian teachers from the participating schools and six EFP specialists<sup>6</sup> from Landegg International University, Switzerland. During the pilot phase, the EFP project reached almost 400 teachers, school administrators and staff, 6000 students, 10,000 of their parents and family members, as well as the general public through media coverage of project events. From the elite and materially advantaged, to refugees and displaced persons, this whole-community approach highlighted a basic EFP concept that a culture of peace can exclude no one.

The main activities of the program included training of teachers and school staff; introduction of the EFP concepts to students in every classroom; use of the arts for student exploration of the dynamics of peace, and promotion of interaction between the participating school communities through holding inter-community “peace events”.

#### ***a) Training and Support of Teachers and Staff***

In preparation for the start of the school year, the 24-member implementation team attended an eight-day intensive training seminar in July 2000 at Landegg International University in the fundamentals of Education for Peace. Themes addressed in the trainings included:

- Biological, psychological, social, moral and spiritual aspects of human development, and the role of teachers and parents/guardians in rearing peace-oriented young people;
- The nature and dynamics of unity in the context of diversity;
- The dynamics of violence in the family, school environment, and society, and how to deal with these dynamics;
- The impact of the home environment, media, and society on the peaceful development of children;
- The transformation of worldview and behaviour from a conflict-orientation to a peace-orientation;
- Universal principles of human rights and responsibilities, including gender equality as a prerequisite for peace, and application of these principles in daily life;
- Principles, practices and ethics of democracy and leadership for peace, including the practice of “Conflict-Free Conflict Resolution” (CFCR) and non-adversarial decision-making;
- The psychological needs of traumatized children and adults, and the dynamics of the process of healing.

These themes are addressed more fully in Danesh (2004) and are currently being prepared as a 10-unit curriculum manual for teachers and students (see Danesh and Clarke-Habibi, forthcoming). Similar intensive trainings were held twice a year for all teachers, administrators and support staff of the participating schools. Throughout the training process, participants asked many questions which, in turn, formed the basis of seminar themes and group discussions, such as:

- *What could have been done to prevent the war once the processes of conflict had started in BiH?*
- *Why did groups of people who had lived together and had intermarried, allow themselves to commit the violence that they did?*
- *Why was there such brutality and barbarism in BiH among people who are so educated and sophisticated?*
- *What are the best ways to solve conflicts, at the intrapersonal, interpersonal, and group levels?*
- *How can we avoid the mistakes of the past in the future? How can we be sure that the cycle of conflict and war won't happen again?*
- *How can intentional violence be explained?*
- *What do children and women who have been victims of violence experience psychologically and how can victims undertake a process of healing?*
- *By what processes can persons who have committed terrible acts regain their integrity? Can people truly change?*

The purpose of these training sessions was to equip all school staff with knowledge of the principles of peace, to provide them with an opportunity to process their own experiences of conflict, and to build a new vision of human nature and the dynamics of a culture of peace that would permeate every aspect of school life.

### ***b) Integration of Peace Principles into Every Subject, Every Day***

Teachers were then given the task to integrate the principles of peace into the themes and activities of their subject areas throughout the school year. This process required that they first re-examine for themselves standard curriculum topics and activities in the light of the EFP principles. While initially difficult for many due to the newness of the approach and methodological constraints of the national curriculum, a body of specially tailored peace education materials, designed by teachers themselves and uniquely suited for application within BiH schools gradually began to take shape. For example, standard pieces of literature were used to discuss the dynamics of human nature, unity, the concept of worldview, and the use of power. The principle of unity was frequently explored in physics, chemistry, biology, and ecology classes:

*Through the subject of biology, the pupils have realized that unity is the product of diverse things coming together and that one thing can't function without another one. In fact, nature can't function without all the elements that create the natural life. — Teacher of Biology, 3<sup>rd</sup> Primary School, Ilidža*

To aid teachers with the implementation process, EFP training sessions also focused on pedagogical tools which could facilitate the integration of peace principles into every lesson topic. These tools included:

- i) a new “understanding-oriented” approach to lesson design<sup>7</sup> which builds backwards from the outcome intended for learners, and provides an effective way to meet both EFP and standard curriculum learning goals;
- ii) creative learning methodologies for use within and outside the classroom in order to maximize students’ understanding of the peace principles; and
- iii) the design of authentic assessment activities by which to measure students’ mastery of EFP concepts along with standard curriculum components.

Each week, and sometimes daily, the EFP team members met with teachers to consult on the lesson planning process and to monitor implementation of the EFP program in the classroom. Drawing on their own creativity and expertise, teachers assisted their students to connect each lesson topic to the theme of building a peaceful society in Bosnia and Herzegovina and in the world-at-large.

Incorporation of these components in the training process meant that the EFP program was able to respond directly to the needs in the BiH school system for systematic and diversified teacher training, with emphasis on active learning and competencies; special programs for school directors, administrative and support staff; and training on ways to integrate modern communication and information technologies into the learning process.

### ***c) Cultivation of Student Creativity***

As the students mastered the concepts through active participation, discussion, and classroom consultation, they were then encouraged to express their understanding in varied ways, for example, through the arts, in scientific experiments, oral presentations, and essays. The arts in particular became a powerful medium through which students consolidated their academic learning and communicated their messages of peace to the wider community. These presentations incorporated a wide range of artistic media such as drama, music, puppet shows, mime, and dance. In addition, classes in each subject area prepared non-performance presentations through visual arts, posters, panel displays, poetry, literature compositions, recorded music, videos, and other media. Students and teachers reported that what they valued most about these presentations was the increased sense of collaboration that resulted between students and teachers generally, as well as the opportunity for students to undergo independent investigation of critical issues affecting their lives and their futures. Students especially appreciated the opportunity to use their talents and capacities more fully.

*The EFP Project has brought changes to our school, our community and our families. The walls of our school are full of students’ artworks, pictures, poetry, posters, essays and drawings. The collaboration between parents and the school has become better, and the teachers and their parents from Travnik have visited our school.* —Parent and Support Staff, Nova Bila Primary School

### ***d) Involvement of the Community-at-Large***

“Regional Peace Events,” each lasting several days to a week, were held at intervals throughout the year, giving students the opportunity to demonstrate for the public their reflections on the principles and processes of peace. These events were followed by moving “National Peace Events” (in Banja Luka in February and in Travnik in May), during which delegations of students, their parents or guardians, teachers, and school administrators from

each region came together to share their best presentations on peace. These events allowed participants from all six schools to express their enthusiasm for the process of peace building and to establish bonds of trust and cooperation. They also created a basis for program staff to evaluate the progress being made both by students and teachers toward the ultimate objectives of the EFP Project.

These occasions made a profound impression on all present. As one teacher remarked following a Regional Peace Event:

*Few words are needed to describe this experience, because we all saw it. People were together, mixed with each other—guests, parents, students from Travnik and Nova Bila—there were no differences made between people, it was very good. —Grade 1 Teacher, Nova Bila Primary School*

The National Peace Events were especially moving for all participants. One parent who attended the event in Banja Luka remarked:

*The fact that the children from all parts of Bosnia and Herzegovina, who belong to different ethnic groups and represent different cultures willingly gave effort and spent their free time together with the teachers to prepare presentations in the interest of unity says a lot. The children's expressions and applauses say to us all, that life together is not only possible but necessary. —Parent, 3<sup>rd</sup> Primary School, Ilidža*

The final event of the year was a “Youth for Peace” conference, held in June 2001 at the United Nations Headquarters in Sarajevo. The conference provided student representatives from the six schools with an opportunity to systematically consult together on a common vision for the future of their country, and to present this vision to representatives of the leadership of their society.

### ***Outcome: Transformation on all Fronts***

Our experience with Education for Peace in BiH was that once teachers and students were equipped with an understanding of the principles and pre-requisites of peace, along with certain pedagogical tools, then not only did their approach to teaching and learning systematically change, but more importantly, their perceptions of self, others, and the world around them transformed dramatically. Indeed, a unique process of authentic reconciliation and community-level healing began.

This wholesale transformative effect was gradually felt at the intra-personal, inter-personal, and inter-institutional levels. A full treatment of this case study will be presented in future, but a few examples will be shared here in brief for illustration.

#### ***a) Enhancement of Teaching and Learning Practices***

When the EFP pilot program first began, personal teaching styles were very rigid; pedagogical techniques were typically didactic and directive; and many teachers attended EFP trainings only due to the nominal financial incentive they received for participation. Over the course of the year, however, genuine enthusiasm for the program increased. Teaching styles began to change, becoming less authoritarian, and showing evidence of greater creativity among both teachers and students. Teachers who were initially sceptical

about the relationship between their subject area and peace principles discovered points of connection that enhanced even their own understanding.

*The EFP Project has helped us look at our syllabus in a different way, from a different perspective, giving us a chance to enrich it with issues not dealt with so thoroughly before. Although it hasn't always been easy, especially at the beginning, I think that we have become more confident in applying the principles of peace.* —English Teacher, Mixed Secondary School Travnik

*I've been teaching this lesson (in physics) for the past 25 years, and never thought about it in terms of the principle of unity-in-diversity. It makes sense, and my students also find it much easier to understand now.* —Physics Teacher, Mixed Secondary School Travnik

*The pupils in our school are coming from different parts of BiH, especially the eastern part, Srebrenica. I found that this project has made a big step in our pupils because they are giving the best of themselves...* —Pedagogue, 3<sup>rd</sup> Primary School, Ilidža.

*We never used to be allowed to do creative projects in our classes. Now all our teachers want us to be creative!* —Grade 10 Student, Second Gymnasium, Sarajevo

Some teachers also spoke about changing their manner of interacting with students, placing greater emphasis on encouragement and consultation. As the project progressed, both teachers and students demonstrated increased skills in a number of areas including: methods of decision-making, listening to and considering the ideas of others; moderating the tendency to dominate; encouraging the less talkative; helping to care for the unity of the group; and appreciating differences.

### ***b) Transformation of Inter-Community Relationships***

One of the most dramatic evidences of transformation was in the character of inter-community relationships. When EFP was first introduced, the communities of Banja Luka, Sarajevo and Travnik / Nova Bila had been characterized by isolation, mutual suspicion, ethnic stereotyping and even hatred. Teachers and students of each community held rigid identities defined by ethnicity, language, religion and geographic locality during the war, and many maintained sceptical and even hostile attitudes towards members of the other communities. Each doubted the sincerity of the others, and team members were regularly asked to provide assurances that their opposite communities were in fact participating at all.

As the project progressed, these rigid “friend/enemy” dichotomies dissolved dramatically and participants began to see themselves and relate to others through the perspective of unity rather than division. Teachers voluntarily arranged curricular and extra-curricular exchanges between regions that had had little or no contact since the war; students started to build friendships among their peers in the other ethnic communities, voluntarily exchanging phone numbers and email addresses with other students that they met during Peace Events and asking the EFP staff to arrange for longer inter-community visits. Some students even made their own plans to visit new friends in formerly hostile communities, and a significant few even started inter-ethnic and inter-community dating.

*EFP has had a strengthening effect on communication and friendships among people in BiH. It is my belief that if EFP is enabled to continue, BiH children will be able to travel to any part of this country and meet the people there as “friends.”* —Director, Ivo Andrić Primary School, Banja Luka

*We have noticed that there is more friendship between students here after the Peace Week. While preparing presentations we learned to love each other, and that we can love people from all different ethnic groups, and that both men and women should respect and love each other.* —Grade 8 Student, Nova Bila Primary School

Also, for the first time since the war began, the mayors of each of these cities visited one another several times – on the occasions of the EFP Peace Events – and jointly declared the month of February 2001 as the “Peace Month”.

*Since the war, cities have gradually re-established contact with one another for administrative and commercial purposes, but your program is the only thing making the relationships between people normal again. It is our only hope.* — Deputy Mayor, Sarajevo

Such was the enthusiasm by the local communities for the EFP program that after the first year of implementation when our program funding ended, five of the six pilot schools voluntarily continued their participation; the exception being due to a change of the chief administrator and not to any change in the favourable disposition of the staff and students towards the EFP program, many of whom expressed regret at not being able to continue.

### ***c) Initiation of a Culture of Healing***

What gradually became apparent was that a “culture of healing” (Danesh, 2004), in addition to a culture of peace, had begun to emerge. Many teachers, parents and students expressed a regained sense of inner peace, hope, and even improved family relations. As one Serb secondary school teacher and assistant principal put it, “Because of EFP, I am not only a new teacher, but also a new mother and a new woman.”

*We learned many new things: new approaches to conflicts, how to create our lives, how to realize our relationships with other people, and how to learn to make our own decisions. But the most important thing that we learned is to be at peace with ourselves and teach other people to be peaceful. Our society doesn't have many projects like this, and it was a great opportunity to take part in it.* — Grade 11 Student, Banja Luka Gymnasium

Adults in the school community began to share stories, even in public settings, about positive qualities of other ethnic groups. In one case, a Bosniak teacher spontaneously thanked the Croat community during an EFP training seminar, for the risks that they had taken to save his dying sister's life when she had been caught behind the “enemy” line. The director of the Croat school responded by saying their two communities had each done many good things for each other during the war and that these stories should be collected and published in a book. This and similar occurrences demonstrated the beginnings of a collective healing process, and the early signs of individual recovery from the traumas of the war.

#### ***d) Escalation of Political Will for Program Expansion***

When the possibility of a community-wide program of Education for Peace was first proposed to different levels of BiH society and the international community that was present there, it was a common sentiment that BiH was somehow a “hopeless case”, and that a program such as EFP, however much needed, would not be accepted by the generality of BiH society because too many obstacles remained in the attitudes of the people. The common perception was that only a few individuals, already “peacemakers”, would willingly participate, but that it would be very difficult to animate a significant portion of the population.

Within the first six months of implementation, however, schools and authorities formed a favourable opinion of the EFP program which, as they described themselves, was noticeably “different.” Teachers, students, and school administrators, as well as the mayors, Ministers of Education, international education authorities and ultimately the BiH Ministry of Foreign Affairs, began to request that the EFP program be introduced into all the schools in the country. Political and community will for Education for Peace ripened.

*The EFP program has had a distinctly transformative effect on the students, their parents and the teachers themselves. Indeed, the level of satisfaction with this program seems to be considerable. Aware as we are of the painful legacy with which our country still struggles, the results of this program are most welcome... We therefore fully support the initiative to consider introducing Education for Peace to all primary and secondary schools across this country. –Deputy Minister of Foreign Affairs, Bosnia and Herzegovina*

During the second year of pilot implementation, the EFP program received signed endorsement by all 13 BiH Ministries of Education (at the entity and cantonal levels) for expansion of the program to all 300 secondary schools and 1200 primary schools in a two-phase implementation plan. At the same time, it gained the support and assistance of all eight Pedagogical Institutes that provide the in-service training and support for BiH’s 50,000 professional teachers. If accomplished in its totality, the program would thereby reach approximately 600,000 students, their teachers and family members.

As of September 2003, EFP has begun the first phase of this new strategy in 100 secondary schools, employing the expertise of teachers involved in the first project to train and mentor the second generation of EFP teachers. This has been made possible through a generous four-year grant by the Swiss Agency for Cooperation and Development, and a supplementary grant by the Canadian International Development Agency.

#### ***e) Creation of Local-International Bonds***

Finally, though not the primary focus of the EFP program, the relationships that were formed between the local communities and the international EFP team members played a significant role in the positive spirit and momentum of the program as it unfolded. Prior to the initiation of EFP, schools in BiH had been the object of many international projects aimed at physical and social reconstruction. While grateful, on the one hand, for the post-war assistance offered by various governments and NGOs, a certain degree of distrust and resentment was expressed by citizens of BiH who felt stigmatized by the war, and belittled by the processes of political reconstruction that were shepherded by the international community after the Dayton Agreements. Furthermore, nationalistic sentiments were still prominent

among certain segments of the population, and this distribution of political orientation was reflected as well in the school communities themselves. It was not surprising, therefore, that when the EFP pilot program began, the international members of the implementation team received suspicious and sometimes hostile reactions from segments of the pilot schools.

The team members responded by immersing themselves totally in the local culture of the BiH people. They met for hours with teachers and students in the schools each day; drank coffee with their BiH team mates and student contacts in local cafés; learned and used to the best of their ability the local languages; invited one another to visit each other's homes and families; ate, shopped and discussed "life's ups and downs" together; and participated in non-EFP aspects of the school community life. This spirit of interaction was also reflected in the efforts of the team members to genuinely seek the advice and input of school directors and staff at each turn in the implementation process. While simple efforts on the one hand, they were received by our local counterparts as important indicators of our sincere love for BiH, its peoples and cultures, and a deep and long-term commitment of service to the betterment of the country's future. It helped establish mutual bonds of friendship and trust; led to the acceptance of the EFP team members by the BiH community as "part of our people", and gave the spirit of a "locally-owned" program to the EFP project. Indeed, it crystallized that first point of unity, around which ever-wider expressions of unity could take shape.

#### **IV. Implications**

Medium-term impacts of the Education for Peace program in Bosnia and Herzegovina include initiation of educational dialogue and curriculum dissemination among all teachers in the country; the development of a new and relevant model of integrative peace education that can be applied to all subjects and disciplines; and eventually, the design of a new curriculum for primary, secondary and teacher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina.

More importantly, the value of this experiment in Education for Peace is that it demonstrates that the possibility for community-level transformation is no longer a matter of conjecture. This transformation was achieved because EFP reached beyond teaching about human rights policy, adversarial democratic systems, non-violence strategies and conflict resolution techniques, and entered into discussion of more fundamental, underlying questions of human nature, the nature and purpose of individual and collective development, and the universal scientific, ethical, moral, and spiritual principles that form the bedrock of all life, order, and growth. It brought participants to examine reflectively and personally on the nature of their own worldviews, and assisted them to align their inner and outer lives more closely to the realities of peace. Education for Peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina helped participants re-discover the potential for peace in themselves and their fellows.

Transformation in our expectation of human potential is so elemental to our overall relationship with the world around us, that it can infuse a change into our perceptions, attitudes and behaviours in general. A peace education approach which focuses on the transformation of worldviews treats conflict at the level of underlying causes rather than at the level of manifest symptoms. It is a lengthy process, primarily because worldview change requires a heightened motivation to alter one's mode of operation in life. However when made, its impact is more deeply rooted, longer lasting and all-encompassing.

In sum, the Education for Peace pilot project in Bosnia and Herzegovina revealed that a radical shift in the conceptualization of peace and peace education is valuable, and that a

systematic approach to large-scale social transformation and healing can be adopted and effectively implemented. Key to this process are a number of factors, including:

**New knowledge:** Familiarization with a conceptual framework that is capable of re-ordering knowledge and experience within a unity-centered paradigm;

**Self-reflection:** Critical examination of one's attitudes about one's self, others and the world, and including a willingness to keep, modify or discard accepted attitudes according to their value in relation to the standards of unity and peace;

**New experience:** Verification of the reality of the principles of peace by putting them into practice and witnessing their effect.

As observed by the Senior Education Advisor for the Office of the High Representative in Bosnia and Herzegovina:

*This invaluable project was conceived in such a way that the soul-searching process of reflection which the participants undergo as the project unfolds – be they pupils, teachers, parents, administrators, ordinary school workers – results, as we have ascertained ourselves, in a heightened holistic awareness of the war period and its tragic consequences, and indeed triggers the desire amongst them to become authentic peace-makers, and precisely provides them with the necessary tools to achieve this goal.*

The results of the Education for Peace program in Bosnia and Herzegovina foreshadow what can be done in education around the world.

## V. Conclusion

In our view, EFP had the impact it did because it aimed not at a set of activities or exercises, but at personal and collective worldview transformation - that is, at a transformation in the way the individuals and school communities conceived of self, human potential, and the purpose and dynamics of human collective life. The pedagogical tools we introduced to teachers were effective in creating a culture of peace and a culture of healing to the degree that they assisted the process of transforming the worldviews of participants from a conflict-orientation to a peace-orientation. A final, personal anecdote will serve to illustrate this point:

During a Regional Peace Week in Sarajevo, I had the opportunity to interact with some of the secondary school teachers following a Saturday morning full of peace presentations by students. Mingling in the teachers' lounge, I was approached by the democracy education teacher, a man in his 30s and someone who spoke English fluently. I was surprised by his serious demeanor since this teacher was the renowned "joker" among the staff. In fact, from the beginning of the Education for Peace program, he had done little but make fun of it and had regularly disrupted training sessions with back-talk, hyperactivity, and jibes such as "Peace, man!" He had attended many internationally-sponsored workshops in democracy and human rights education, and thought that our Education for Peace program was "flaky" and "utopian". Nonetheless, he was a respected teacher, a favourite among the students, and carried a certain degree of influence. On this particular morning, he had attended the Peace Event only because his class was making a presentation. I asked him about his impressions of the day and he said the following:

*“Today has been a very strange day for me. This morning, before coming here, I had another appointment. I was at the cemetery with men from the company of soldiers I had served with during the war. Every year, on this day, we meet at the cemetery to remember those who had died with us. I hate this day: Suddenly I remember everything that happened, and it’s like I am wounded again. ...So, I was in this mood when I came to be with my class. When I watched all the presentations the students made I was really impressed. It “wounded” me too, in my heart. They were so positive, hopeful. These students were in the same war as me, and yet they can see the people of BiH together. Today, for the first time, I know what Education for Peace is.”*

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## Footnotes

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<sup>1</sup> Sara Clarke-Habibi functioned as the National Coordinator of the Education for Peace pilot program in Bosnia and Herzegovina from July 2000 to January 2002.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted from CIVITAS BiH, a program of democracy and human rights education in primary, secondary and tertiary schools of Bosnia and Herzegovina.  
[http://www.civitas.ba/nastavni\\_planovi/index.php](http://www.civitas.ba/nastavni_planovi/index.php)

<sup>3</sup> The Royaumont Process was an initiative of the Stability Pact of Europe for the promotion of “stability and good neighbourliness in South East Europe (through application of) the principles of peace, stability, cooperation and democracy”.

<sup>4</sup> Conflict-Free Conflict Resolution is a unique method of conflict resolution which is built upon the principles of a unity-oriented worldview. See Danesh and Danesh (2002)(a) and Danesh and Danesh (2002)(b).

<sup>5</sup> The conceptual framework of EFP-International’s Education for Peace program was originated by Dr. H.B. Danesh, former president of Landegg International University, psychiatrist and conflict resolution specialist. See Danesh, H.B. *The pedagogy of civilization*. (2004, forthcoming). The EFP program is administered by the International Education for Peace Institute (EFP-International) and its sister agency, the Education for Peace Institute of the Balkans (EFP-Balkans).

<sup>6</sup> This original team included Sara Clarke, Naghmeh Sobhani, Fulya Vekiloglu, Jenni Menon, Louis Venters and Melissa Smith-Venters.

<sup>7</sup> The “understanding-oriented” approach has been adapted by EFP staff from the “Backwards Design” approach created by Wiggins and McTighe (1998).