

## **Education for Peace in A World of Violence**

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### **ABSTRACT**

*This paper analyzes how the proposal of Education for Peace is insufficient to ensure that the world in which we live reaches the long-awaited era in which wars are not the way to solve global problems. The role played by hegemonic powers in the objective plane of existence is valued, fueling military conflicts in order to be able to dispute the resources of the world. Thus, it must be assumed they propose to the school to educate for peace in a world of violence, which will be a task overwhelmed by historical realities.*

*According to the analyses developed in this work, education for peace must start by eliminating once and for all the poverty that overwhelms millions of human beings in the world. We cannot talk about peace in the name of the hunger and the impoverishment of millions of human beings, nor of the dispossession of resources from poor countries done by the most powerful ones.*

**Keywords:** Education for peace, neoliberal capitalism, dispossession, rebellion.

### **THE PEACE OF THE OPPRESSORS IS SUBMISSION**

It was not until the early 20th century that the first steps were taken towards establishing education for peace. In general, the intention was to minimize the possibility of repeating the events of the First World War by appealing to the good education of human beings since it was believed that they could avoid war if they were educated in values contrary to it. The objective causes of war were not taken into account, but rather a phenomenon like this was intended to be avoided as it was the result of an economic relations system appealing to the subjectivity of people without altering in any way the system of dispossession from which the conflict emerged.

Thus, Echeandía describes this complex situation:

“A principios del siglo pasado el movimiento por la Escuela Nueva, ante la primera guerra mundial, propugna unos valores antibelicistas de carácter internacionalista. Tras la segunda confrontación mundial, la ONU y especialmente la UNESCO, añaden a estos planteamientos otros como la educación para los derechos humanos y el desarme.” (Echeandía, 2020)

«At the beginning of the last century, the movement for the New School, in response to the World War I, advocated anti-war values of an internationalist nature. After World War II, the UN and especially UNESCO added other concepts such as education for human rights and disarmament. »" (Echeandía, 2020)

Although research on education for peace began in the context of the First and Second World Wars, given the impact that this had and its results on people’s consciousness, it was not until 1959 when the first worldwide institute was created whose purpose is systematically engaged in research on this important subject. We are referring to the International Peace Research Institute, in Oslo, Norway, created by Johan Galtung.

Some social movements were inclined to seek social improvements to the precarious conditions in which people lived by appealing to non-violence using international references such as Gandhi and Luther King. These processes grew to the point of being fundamental in India’s Independence and playing a very active, though not fundamental, role in the US defeat in Vietnam.

Another key moment in the development of research on education for peace and globalization of efforts to train people who do not resort to violence to resolve their conflicts was the UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization) declaring the year 1986 as the International Year of Peace. Afterwards, the United Nations (UN) subsequently declared the year 200 as *"International Year of the Culture of Peace"* (Echeandía, 2020)

Education for peace is an important aspiration of mankind whose history has been almost constantly driven by war events, therefore, the following has to be taken into consideration:

“En los últimos 5.000 años de historia, la humanidad solo estuvo 900 años en paz, en los cuales los hombres se preparaban para el conflicto siguiente. Mas de 8.000 tratados de paz se han firmado en el transcurso de los últimos 35 siglos. Desde 1945 hasta finales del siglo XX se disputaron 140 guerras con 13.000.000 de muertos.” (Cagliani, 2020)

«In the last 5,000 years of history, mankind had only been at peace for 900 years, during which men were preparing for the next conflict. Over 8,000 peace treaties have been signed in the course of the past 35 centuries. From 1945 to the end of the 20th century,

140 wars were fought, resulting in 13,000,000 deaths. » (Cagliani, 2020)

Along with these efforts, wars have multiplied in the world rather than disappearing. The participation of major powers in acts of unilateral aggression towards countries who supply raw materials for the world market has been a constant occurrence in recent years.

It cannot be affirmed that wars are always the result of lack of education and poverty. If we consider that “(...) la UE y los EE.UU. representan juntos el 10 % de la población mundial, realizan aproximadamente el 40 % del comercio mundial y suman más del 60 % del PIB mundial.” (COMISIÓN EUROPEA, 2006, p. 5). « (...) the EU and the US together represent 10% of the world’s population, account for approximately 40% of world trade and account for more than 60% of global GDP. » (COMISIÓN EUROPEA, 2006, p. 5). We will have to conclude that these nations had no economic need to attack others. The real reason is, like in recent years, the ambition of capital.

It is interesting to note that in a world where conflicts are produced daily according to the cumulative capital interest, it proposed to implement an education for peace. In reality, the values proposed for education systems are aimed at maintaining a peace with hunger for the vast majority of them inhabitants of the world. We are told about peace as the world’s wealth is concentrated in fewer and fewer hands, for which it is killed in the name of democracy and lied in the name of human rights (OXFAM Internacional, 2020).

If we reflect on what has happened regarding wars in the last thirty years and who has perpetrated it, the answer is very clear. Let’s say that the country in the world which spends most on military expenses is also the one who spends the most on invasion wars against other nations. To cite some examples, in the last decades the USA has developed military interventions in: 1993-1994: Somalia; 1995: Bosnia and Herzegovina; 1998: Sudan; 1998: Afghanistan; 1999: Yugoslavia; 2001-present:

Afghanistan; 2002 Philippines; 2003-2011: Iraq war; 2007: Somalia; 2011: Libia; 2011-2012: Yemen, Pakistan, Somalia, and 2014-present: Iraq and Syria, ISIS bombing in the\_ War against the Islamic State.<sup>1</sup>

The imperialist powers also develop actions of pressure and interventionism which, although they do not include direct invasion, considerably aggravate the lives of millions of human beings in an attempt to ensure that their hegemonic interests are not undermined. The US foreign policy

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<sup>1</sup> The list is based on the report RL30172 from the United States Congressional Research Service on International Relations Congreso de Estados Unidos Relaciones Internacionales.

has always been at the service of safeguarding the economic interests of its big entrepreneurs. They themselves declare that the fundamental objective of the first-level visit to several countries in the region was to orchestrate the aggression against Venezuela:

“Días después declaró que uno de los principales objetivos de la visita que había realizado a Argentina, Colombia, México, Perú y Jamaica era explorar la disposición de los actuales gobiernos de esos países a apoyar el bloqueo a las exportaciones venezolanas de petróleo, al igual que a otras acciones contra el gobierno de ese país que estaba valorando el presidente Donald Trump.” (Merino, 2018, p. 171)

«Days later, he stated that one of the main objectives of his visit to Argentina, Colombia, Mexico, Peru and Jamaica was to explore the willingness of the current Governments of those countries to support the blockade of Venezuelan oil exports, as well as other actions against the government of that country that President Donald Trump was valuing. » (Merino, 2018, p. 171)

It cannot be denied that the essence of capitalism is accumulation at the expense of man himself and the planet. It is not possible to believe that armed conflicts in the world can be eliminated with education for peace because they are not the result of failed educational processes, but they emanate from the essence of a system whose logic objective is implacable. It is rightly asserted that: "Los problemas y contradicciones de la economía estadounidense, y de la economía mundial, son de gran complejidad y emanan de procesos y tendencias fundamentales desarrolladas por décadas." (Merino, 2018, p. 139) «The problems and contradictions of the U.S. economy, and the global economy, are of great complexity and stem from fundamental processes and trends developed over decades.» (Merino, 2018, p. 139)

The world has come to a point where: "Los 2153 milmillonarios que hay en el mundo poseen más riqueza que 4600 millones de personas (un 60% de la población mundial), según revela Oxfam en un informe publicado hoy (...)" (OXFAM Internacional, 2020) «The 2153 billionaires that exist in the world have more wealth than 4.6 billion people (60% of the world's population), according to Oxfam in a report published today (...) » (OXFAM Internacional, 2020). In our hemisphere alone there has been a concentration of wealth, which is ironic if we compare it with the increasement in poverty and exclusion.

Poverty is maintained by violence and education for unconsciousness. Educating the poor oppressed ones for peace or non-violence is like whispering in their ears that they have no right to defend themselves from those who attack them. No matter how awful their misery and desperate life situation is, the right thing to do is to appeal to peaceful methods and, if necessary, to die without hesitation.

How can exploitation be solved with peaceful methods? Are the most powerful nations willing to share capital with the oppressed a part of the juicy surplus value that it squeezes from day by day?

### **THE OPPRESSED MUST HAVE THE RIGHT TO REVEAL THEMSELVES**

If we agree that those who are exploited have the right to fight for a better world, we must consider at least in a first approximation, that there exist a kind of violence that is necessary and useful. Should not the vast majority of those who rose against colonization in all its forms have resorted to violence? Would the Spanish empire have granted freedom to Cubans voluntarily? A great example could be one of the most peaceful of men, José Martí who had to undertake the fate of war, which he called necessary to free the island from Spanish control. How can we understand Bolivar, Sucre, Morelos, Hidalgo, San Martin and so many others?

“En América Latina y el Caribe el 20% de la población concentra el 83% de la riqueza. El número de millonarios en la región ha pasado de 27 a 104 desde el año 2000. En grave contraste, la pobreza extrema está aumentando. En 2019, 66 millones de personas, es decir, un 10,7% de la población vivía en extrema pobreza, de acuerdo a datos de la Comisión Económica para América Latina y el Caribe (CEPAL). (OXFAM Internacional, 2020)”

«In Latin America and the Caribbean, 20% of the population accounts for 83% of the wealth. The number of billionaires in the region has increased from 27 to 104 since 2000. In stark contrast, extreme poverty is on the rise. In 2019, 66 million people, or 10.7% of the population, lived in extreme poverty, according to data from the Economic Commission for Latin America and the Caribbean (ECLAC). » (OXFAM Internacional, 2020)

These data demonstrate the deception: when national education systems establish the value of hard work within the curricula, they are preparing the oppressed to be more efficient in the system that exploits them. Being laborious within an exploitative neoliberal capitalist state is a type of subalternity that is achieved by stripping the value of its concrete historical character. Neither peace nor any other value can be separated from the historical conditions of people because it loses its ability to give a guiding sense to existence.

Reality demonstrates that capitalism continues its unstoppable pace accumulating and concentrating wealth at the expense of the lives of millions of human beings on the planet while proposing an education for peace which, in this reality, becomes a cruel euphemism. To ensure this overwhelming concentration of global GDP, an integration mechanism has been created among the world's most powerful countries. For example:

“Una iniciativa de gran éxito para establecer lazos entre las comunidades de ambos lados del Atlántico ha sido el Diálogo Empresarial Transatlántico (TABD). Inaugurado en Sevilla en noviembre de 1995 por la Comisión Europea y por el Gobierno de los EE.UU., el TABD es actualmente un proceso de impulso empresarial en el que directivos de empresas de ambos lados desarrollan orientaciones conjuntas en materia de organización.” (COMISIÓN EUROPEA, 2006, p. 7)

«One successful initiative to build links between communities on both sides of the Atlantic has been the Transatlantic Business Dialogue (TABD). Inaugurated in Seville in November 1995 by the European Commission and the US Government, the TABD is now a business development process in which managers from both sides develop joint organizational guidelines. » (COMISIÓN EUROPEA, 2006, p. 7)

These dialogues between the exploiters guarantee capital flow and the accumulation of capital gains. In reality, they do not seek the common good but private profit. It is therefore undeniable that wars, as well as, poverty and violence in general, have a common root cause that has been denounced over several centuries: capitalism, which in all its stages of development, is aggressive and deprives the planet and humanity of their dignity.

Therefore, we must ask ourselves in all honesty: Would it be possible for the millions of oppressed people on the planet to fight against exploitation if they do not know its causes and origins? Why are the theories explaining the exploitative and destructive essence of capitalism not studied in schools? What real role does education play when it does not teach the origin of poverty but instead, it educates the exploited.

ones to be punctual and hard-workers? What are the interests of such an education system?

Education for peace or non-violence has to be put be taught simultaneously as education for unconsciousness so that the possibility of emancipation of the exploited is possible. Not knowing the cause of a phenomenon, is not being prepared to work on its transformation. In other words; when you educate for peace within capitalism what you are doing is substituting cause for effect. Education is held responsible for something it did not cause. Neither can the school eliminate poverty nor can it avoid social violence emanating from the misery created in capitalism.

On October 12th 1979, the leader of the Cuban Revolution expressed at the UN:

“No se puede hablar de paz en nombre de decenas de millones de seres humanos que mueren cada año de hambre o enfermedades curables en todo el mundo. No se puede hablar de paz en nombre de 900 millones de analfabetos. La explotación de los países pobres por los países ricos debe cesar.” (Ruz, 2016)



«We cannot speak of peace in the name of tens of millions of human beings who die every year from hunger or curable diseases around the world. Peace cannot be spoken of in the name of 900 million illiterates. The exploitation of poor countries by rich countries must stop. » (Ruz, 2016)

In that speech, Fidel was not arguing the need for world revolution, nor bowing to unnecessary violence. It was and still is a problem of elementary logic: if we do not stop this march towards total destruction, the violence that we will face will be inevitable. Furthermore, Fidel warned:

“No he venido aquí como profeta de la Revolución, no he venido a pedir o desear que el mundo se convulsione violentamente. Hemos venido a hablar de paz y colaboración entre los pueblos. Y hemos venido a advertir que, si no resolvemos pacífica y sabiamente las injusticias y desigualdades actuales, el futuro será apocalíptico.” (Ruz, 2016)

«I have not come here as a Revolution prophet; I have not come here to ask or wish that the world convulses violently. We have come here to talk about peace and collaboration between people. We have come here to warn that, if we do not resolve peacefully and wisely the actual injustices and disparities, the future will be apocalyptic. » (Ruz, 2016)

He used the word peace in the same discourse where he called for a fair distribution of wealth. He asked for peace, but with justice, not peace with hunger and exploitation. Not a peace that is sustained in the US military arsenal.

That is why we consider non-violence to be a cynical proposal if it is made from a capitalism perspective that impoverishes the vast majority of the planet and robs them from the possibility of living a life filled with freedom and dignity. Therefore, the quest for peace is inalienable from the one for economic justice.

If we are not able to ensure that the wealth generated by the world is fairly distributed among all, it will not be possible to achieve the peace that we deeply desire. One thing is clear, capitalism will not make this donation voluntarily because it is against the logic of the system of exploitation. The fundamental ethics of capital is accumulation and the day that it ceases to be like that, it would also cease to be considered as capitalism.

So, we might ask: How is it possible for millions of people to be educated for peace if their basic needs are not even met? Can teaching be above and in total conflict with the historical reality in which children live?

Education for peace is our responsibility as educators if it is supported by a mass of oppressed people whose historic mission is to emancipate themselves.

It is not about worshipping violence, but instead, being objective from the historical point of view and based on facts: will capitalism cease to be violent? Why is the most aggressive state in history the one that invests the most in its weapon development?

Mexico can be a great example to show how the discourse on violence denies historical reality and sets a narrative that holds the victims themselves responsible for the disaster and seeks to solve the problem by appealing to totally decontextualized values. In an article written by Yolanda Lira (2014) she explains the following:

“(…) en el contexto del estado de Durango, donde el IPN tiene influencia desde hace 34 años, se consideró una contradicción fundamental de la problemática detectada -y que impulsa este proyecto- la permanencia de Durango en el bloque de los cinco a diez estados más violentos del país (...). (Yolanda Lira, 2014, p. 124)

«(...) in the context of the state of Durango, where the IPN has had influence for 34 years, a fundamental contradiction of the problem detected was considered -and that drives this project- Durango's continuous presence in the five to ten most violent states of the country (...) » (Yolanda Lira, 2014, p. 124)

It is seen as a contradiction that violence occurs in a state which, according to the IPN, has been influential for 34 years, allowing the idea that education is responsible for eliminating this phenomenon to slip away. This creates the false idea that the cause of such phenomenon is merely educational. The article quoted also states that: “En consecuencia, y como enmienda al problema de la violencia, se estableció la educación para la paz como una vía de solución.” (Yolanda Lira, 2014, p. 124)

«Consequently, and as an amendment to the problem of violence, education for peace was established as a solution. » (Yolanda Lira, 2014, p. 124)

Despite all these proposals, we consider that the problem of violence must be tackled first by educating people in understanding the concrete historical reality so that they are able to understand that the causes emerge from a structural state of social injustice. Therefore, we believe that the right to a better world is inalienable to all human beings. In this sense we can ask: Can we emancipate ourselves from our exploited status by giving up the fight for our dignity and the defense of our victories?

Should Venezuelans, for example, renounce their Bolivarian Revolution, even with the problems they have created or failed to solve themselves, in order to submit to the will of the USA?



## **EDUCATION FOR CONSCIOUSNESS BEFORE EDUCATION FOR PEACE**

Thus, we stand by the idea that it is not possible in any way to educate for non- violence in a world where violence is the way to impose a universal order based on exclusion and dispossession.

We argue that education for non-violence should be replaced by *education for consciousness*.

Education for consciousness involves the knowledge of the ultimate causes that sustain and justify violence within the capitalist system. We believe that studying capitalism must include the knowledge of young people about Marxist theory as one of the most essential explanations for the alienating nature of this system.

In short, we must recognize that conflict is inevitable within the capitalist whole because accumulation generates poverty, unhealthiness and death.

What is education for peace?

The most important question should be: Is it possible to achieve peace within capitalism? The answer is and must be blunt: it is not possible because one cannot speak of peace from a system as unjust, inhuman and destructive as this.

When will mankind reach peace?

Only with the destruction of the neoliberal capitalist system and the installation of fair and truly democratic governments we can move forward towards building a world of peace.

Education for consciousness will not be proposed euphemistically to solve the world's problems sitting at the table and negotiating criteria on which we will more or less exploit depending on the depth of the systemic crisis of capital. Education for peace must start from the recognition that it is impossible to live within capitalism by avoiding the insurmountable conflict between exploited and exploiters. Education for peace should not be instrumental and supportive of capital. The foundation of education for peace must be the right of men to dignity and full freedom, and this means organizing and fighting to overcome this human phenomenon.

What should education do?

1. We must educate children to fight for a world of peace, in other words, to fight against neoliberal capitalism.

We believe that one of the transversal ideas that must consolidate our curriculum is that all men have the right to be free, worthy and happy and this will not be achievable as long as a few profit

from the work and sacrifice of the vast majority. Education in the value of peace must be exercised on the right to know where exploitation comes from and how wealth is accumulated on one side and poverty on the other. For this we need to prepare them, from the schools, to become critical citizens with knowledge of historical subjects and with class consciousness.

2. Thus, we propose this work should be carried out pedagogically in various directions

First, students must succeed in clearing the paths of the historical dispossession to which we are being subjected. All forms of dispossession must be studied and analysed in schools: the dispossession of life (genocide), the dispossession of land (ecocide), the dispossession of knowledge. (epistemicide), the dispossession of ethics (ethicide) and lastly, the dispossession of will.

The 'Indian' was dictated the prayer "Let your will be done and not mine" with the express purpose of making him believe that his situation of misery was produced and desired from the deities in which he placed his hopes on. He was, thereby, deprived of the right to rise up against the ones who robbed him at made him believe that his happiness should not await in the kingdom of this world.

We believe that this transversal line that we propose should lead to the location of the real historical enemy of our people. For instance, whomever Martí called The Giant of the seven leagues when he summoned the people in the essay *Nuestra América*:

“Los pueblos que no se conocen, han de darse prisa para conocerse, como quienes van a pelear juntos (...). Es la hora del recuento y de la marcha unida, y hemos de andar en cuadro apretado, como la plata en las raíces de los Andes” (Pérez, Unidos, como la plata a las raíces de los Andes, 2015)

«The people who do not know each other, must hurry to know each other, as those who will fight together (...). It is the time of counting and of the united march, and we have to walk in tight frame, as silver in the roots of the Andes» (Pérez, Unidos, como la plata a las raíces de los Andes, 2015)

We can consider some aspects of this quote: firstly, we must work together because without unity, it will not be possible to achieve the victory; and secondly because there is only one person who is the common enemy that all of us will face in this hemisphere. This is explained again in the letter to his Mexican friend Manuel Mercado when he explains:

“(...) ya estoy todos los días en peligro de dar mi vida por mi país y por mi deber -puesto que lo entiendo y tengo ánimos con que realizarlo- de impedir a tiempo con la

independencia de Cuba que se extiendan por las Antillas los Estados Unidos y caigan, con esa fuerza más, sobre nuestras tierras de América.” (Pérez, Carta de José Martí a Manuel Mercado, 2011)

«(...) I am already in danger every day of giving my life for my country and for my duty - since I understand it and have the courage to do so- to prevent in time, with the independence of Cuba, the United States from spreading through the Antilles and falling, with that additional strength, upon our lands of America. » (Pérez, Carta de José Martí a Manuel Mercado, 2011)

The knowledge of the historical enemy includes studying their historical strategies such as "divide and conquer" to understand the need to go through some inevitable differences and move towards a common front. It also implies recognizing the various hegemonic forms from which it manages to subject us and naturalize dominations such as: patriarchy, machismo and racism.

The search for the necessary unity must be sought on the understanding that unity for victory does not require total agreement, nor does it exclude diversity, even if is theoretical. It is rather a unity in the principles to move towards a unity in diversity (different situations, suffering in different ways, believing to have different urgencies) and identity (all oppressed).

On the other hand, the school must be involved in the CONSTRUCTION OF A UTOPIA that starts from the human totality as a world of meanings. Utopia annihilates the selfishness of capital because it is based on a horizon where everyone has a place. All the great utopias in history: that of Jesus, that of Marx, that of José Martí, for example; included a common destiny of equality and full dignity for humanity. If the school sets aside the construction of utopia to embark on partial scientific knowledge, it is like abandoning the education of a total human for whom "homeland is humanity".

According to the Brazilian intellectual and religious Frei Betto:

“Patria es la capacidad de una nación de integrarse con otras, en la cual la humanidad constituye una sola familia, sin discriminación y prejuicios étnicos, sociales o religiosos. Patria es una humanidad solidaria, justa, libre y pacífica”. (Centro de Estudios Martianos (CEM), 2020)

«Homeland is the capacity of a nation to integrate with others, in which humanity constitutes one family, without discrimination and ethnic, social or religious prejudice. The Homeland is a humanity that is united, fair, free and peaceful. » (Centro de Estudios Martianos (CEM), 2020)

To build this utopia, we must recover the philosophy that has been taken away by the instrumentality of neoliberal education. Return the school to the debates on fundamental problems that overwhelm man discussing the fate of humanity as another cross-cutting axis of all education.

Ultimately, the utopia would serve to redefine a new ethic, to draw the common horizon, to motivate from historical consciousness and for science to have an emancipatory sense.

Besides the aspects mentioned, I believe that schools must take up a transformative praxis in which students experience, first and foremost, the power of their strength when they unite for common objectives. The school experience helps them understand that the world can change if we unite and work together.

To do this, one must educate in doing, transforming and emancipating. We must educate to always meet the other and to be aware of the power we have by acting with unity, consciousness and motivation.

## **CONCLUSIONS**

The education for peace proposed by capitalism is a fallacy and a fetish because it annihilates the awareness of the true historical roots of man's violence against man and places responsibility on the school for something that goes beyond its possibilities.

All the values that the neoliberal capitalist system proposes to include in educational systems are disconnected from historical reality so that we do not educate people in the rights and duties he has to achieve the definitive emancipation from all forms of exploitation.

Education for peace would imply or mean educating for historical science, understanding exploitation, and the need to unite and act in order to transform the world.

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