MEI OCCASIONAL PAPER

Major challenges for peace education in regions of intractable conflict

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Peace education in regions of intractable conflict – very much like human rights programmes, anti-racism and tolerance education programmes – is carried out in socio-political contexts that essentially negate the messages of such programmes in various ways, such as partnership and peace with an adversary; tolerance for minority communities in societies, where intolerance is widely practiced; anti-racism, where racism is rampant; and human rights, where they are frequently violated (for example, Dunn, Fritzche and Morgan, 2003; Iram, 2003; Short, 1996; Tibbitts, 2002).

One of the major objectives of the above-mentioned programmes, which face severe challenges, is to overcome resistance from societies. In the same manner, peace education also faces various challenges, such as contradictory collective narratives, charged negative emotions, and severe inequalities (Salomon, 2004; Salomon, 2006). Some of these challenges are dealt with head on, as is the case of historical memories that fuel the conflict (for example, McCully, 2005; Roe and Cairns, 2003) or opposing identity constructions that, likewise, underlie the conflict (Halabi and Sonnestein, 2004).

However, there are other challenges that are scarcely dealt with, let alone studied. Four, rarely-addressed challenges are discussed in this paper, as they appear to concern the very core of peace

education as well as other afore-mentioned programmes. Although the discussion of the four major challenges is mainly based on research and experience of peace education in Israel/Palestinian territories, it seems to be of a more general relevance. They are as follows: (a) the creation of a 'ripple effect', whereby the impact of peace-education programmes spreads to wider social circles of non-participants; (b) increasing the endurance of desired programme effects in the face of their easy erosion; (c) the need for differential programmes, given the differences in culture and in the role that each adversary plays in the conflict; and (d) the need to find ways to bridge general dispositions, principles and values and their application in specific situations, where competing motivations are dominant.

These four challenges transcend specific questions on the programme, such as its goals, methods, contents, age of participants and even relations with the surrounding socio-political context. In fact, they are bound to arise irrespective of the circumstances surrounding the peace education; it can be carried out amid an ongoing conflict or in a post-conflict situation; between geographically separate, neighbouring ethnic groups or within seemingly integrated societies; in conflicted societies or in relatively stable ones.

The creation of a 'ripple effect'

The UN called for the promotion of a culture of peace by educating people to see themselves as peaceful people with norms that emphasize co-operation and the resolution of conflicts by dialogue, negotiation and non-violence. This can be achieved

> …when citizens of the world understand global problems, have the skills to resolve conflicts and struggle for justice non-violently, live by international standards of human rights and equity, appreciate cultural diversity, and respect the Earth and each other. Such learning can only be achieved with systematic education for peace. (Hague Appeal for Peace Global Campaign for Peace Education, 1999).

Clearly, the idea was not only to provide peace education to individuals, but also to the society as a whole. Thus, a major challenge for educational programmes, such as peace and tolerance education, is the near-absence (or possibly rarely documented) of a 'ripple effect' that is effective across the society. Yet, the views, perceptions, attitudes and dispositions of an individual that are slated to be changed are not independent of the society and are deeply rooted in so-called 'social ethos', and more specifically in a collective narrative and 'ethos of the conflict' (Bar-Tal and Salomon, 2006). If anti-racism, tolerance or peace-education programmes are to have any lasting effect, they must go beyond influencing the minds of a few participants and affect the 'social ethos.' If a society does not express its desire to live in peace with an adversary, does not condemn intolerance of a minority community, or fails to promote human rights, influencing the hearts and minds of a few individuals to become more peace oriented or more tolerant may not really matter much for the social context.

The issue here pertains to the levels of influence – the level of the individual's psychology and the level of society. Dan Sperber (1985) likened these two levels to the meeting of psychology and anthropology. While the former deals with the individual's cognitions, the latter deals with the spread of ideas and ideologies. However, as Sperber clarifies that the spread of ideas, underlying cultural traditions or fashions cannot be understood without taking into account individual cognitions. He likens the two processes to the spread of disease – to the relationships between the pathology of the cell and the spread of the pathology. 'What pathology is to epidemiology of disease, psychology of thought should be to epistemology of representations' (p. 75). However, lest we exercise reductionism, the two need to be examined together. Although neither of them adequately explains the spread of pathology or ideas, a change in attitudes, beliefs and perceptions between two individuals as well as within an individual (ripple effect) require two separate, though related, sets of explanatory concepts.

Recent research concerns the way the fruits can spread through contact within a group. This line of research focuses on the 'extended contact hypothesis' (for example, Pettigrew, Christ, Wagner and Stellmacher, 2007), whereby interaction within contact groups affects friends of participants. Thus, whereas the effects of intergroup contact belong to the realm of changes in individuals, the extended contact touches upon the spread of these effects. However, this line of research examined only rarely the spreading effects of indirect contact in the context of social tension or actual conflict (one exception is the N. Irish study of Paolini, Hewstone, Cairns and Voci, 2004). The context of a real tension or conflict between groups is qualitatively different from less threatening contexts as it entails strong feelings of anxiety, hatred, distrust and anger (Coleman, 2003; Salomon, 2002). It is an open question whether findings of studies carried out in the US concerning relations between ethnic groups (Wright, et.al., 1997), or in Finland about relations with foreigners (Liebkind and McAlister, 1999) also apply to regions, where there is tension between majority and profoundly discriminated ethnic minority, such as Kashmir (India) and Lebanon?

According to the extended contact theory, when an in-group person (A) learns that another in-group friend (B) has close contacts with an out-group person (C), then this leads, under certain conditions, to A's more positive attitudes, reduced anxiety and weaker prejudices towards C's out-group (for example, Paolini, Hewstone and Cairns, 2007). This argument has been supported in a variety of countries and contexts with a variety of means, ranging from reading friendship stories in the UK (Cameron, Rutland, Brown and Douch, 2006) to knowledge of real face-to-face contact (Turner, et. al., 2007). A number of underlying mechanisms have been suggested and supported – reduced inter-group anxiety, changed in-group norms with respect to the out-group (Wright, etc. Al., 1997), vicarious experience (Turner, Rhiannon, Hewstone, Voci and Vonofackou, 2008), and self-disclosure (Turner, et. al., 2007).

However, one factor that has not been sufficiently studied so far concerns different degrees of proximity to the actual contact. Not all candidates to be part of the extended contact are equally

close to the contact itself or emotionally involved with the person who is in contact with an out-group member. It can be hypothesized that the effects of the extended contact and the need to establish balance (Heider, 1958) are stronger for those who are emotionally and/or physically closer to the individuals involved in real contact with adversaries than those who are farther away and/or less emotionally involved. It can also be hypothesized that the extent of non-participants to be affected is negatively related to the strength of their adherence to their collective narrative (Halperin, et. al., 2008) or to their authoritarian tendencies (Pettigrew and Tropp, 2006). Last, Shnabel and Nadler (2008) found that while a minority (ethnic Arabs in Israel) are driven by a need for empowerment, the majority (Jews in Israel) is driven by a need for moral justification. Thus, it is possible that the qualitative nature of the underlying mechanisms of the 'ripple effect' is different for majorities and minorities, particularly in conflict zones.

The challenge of the 'ripple effect' of peace-education programmes in contexts of intractable conflict is twofold. First come the psychological questions: whether 'ripple effects' resulting from peace or similar educational programmes do actually take place; how potent are they; what mechanisms underlie them; what conditions facilitate and hinder their creation; and if the mechanisms and conditions are more or less similar to the ones observed in less conflicted contexts. Secondly, there is the more applied question of how to create, facilitate and subsequently sustain 'ripple effects.'

Increasing the endurance of desired programme effects

There is ample research to show that peace education and similar programmes have a positive, albeit differential, impact on the attitudes, prejudices, desire for contact and legitimization of the 'other side' on programme participants (for example, Jones and Kmitta, 2000; Smith, 1999). However, these positive results are more often than not obtained when measured right after the completion of programmes. When such changes are measured a while later, the obtained effects appear to have been eroded and returned to their original state (Kupermintz and Salomon, 2005). (A rare exceptional study is the one carried out in Sri Lanka by Malhotra and Liyanage, 2005, where positive effects of a four-day programme were detected after a year).

Apparently, socio-political forces and events suppress the previously attained changes; this suggests that things that can be changed by a 'shot in the arm' kind of educational intervention can as easily be changed back to their original state by external forces (Salomon, 2006). A similar fate faces attempts to change teachers' understanding of 'good learning' (Strauss and Shiloni, 1994) and mothers' way of handling substance-dependent infants (Dakof, et. al., 2003).

While the research and theoretical literature pertaining to attitude change is rich, there is far less research that pertains to the issue of maintaining changes. Two fields are much concerned with this issue: The medical (for example, Mccrady, Epstein and Hirsch, 2002) and the therapeutic fields (for example, McGuire, 2003). Different models of diffusion and social adoption of medical and technological innovations have been suggested (for example, Kempe, Kleinberg and Tardos, 2003), including word-of-mouth and the two-step-flow of communication. However, it may well be the case that the models developed for the fields of medicine and technology diffusion of innovation may not fit issues concerning the impact of peace education, with its potential negation of prevailing views and the dominance of the collective narrative.

Still, Cockell, Zaitsoff and Geller (2004), studying changes following eating disorder treatment, identified three main factors that support the maintenance of the change: the continued connection with social support; the self-application of cognitive and affective learned skills; and one's focusing on issues beyond the eating disorders. On the other hand, the loss of the strict structure provided by the intervention, self-defeating beliefs and environmental challenges hindered the longevity of the change.

Social support and the adverse effect of the social environmental challenges appear to be the most relevant factors for peace education. In this field, one's attitudes, feelings and perceptions *vis-à-vis* the other side in the conflict are deeply rooted in the collective narrative and its dictates and are vulnerable to the effects of adverse socio-political events. When the collective narrative, expressed by the media, significant others, politicians and the general social atmosphere, negates the kinds of attitudes and perceptions acquired in the process of peace education, the latter stand little chance of surviving by most individuals.

Three attempts to restore the eroded attainments of peace-education programmes were successfully carried out two months after their completion. The field-experimental interventions showed that when even brief interventions, such as forced compliance (a form of role playing; Leippeand Eisenstadt, 1994), peer teaching of lessons learned during a peace-education programme to younger peers, and writing reflections on the programmes, are carried out, the initial changes are revived and last for at least another three months.

Such experimental interventions suggest that the changes may not have been totally eroded, allowing for a semi-spontaneous recovery. However, they are limited to settings that enable such interventions, thus not an answer to the question of how to maintain changes on a large social scale of other than school youngsters. Moreover, would the revived changes overcome truly dramatic or painful socio-political events that are so common in situations of intractable contexts?

The answer may lie in the attained depth of the attitudinal and perceptual change. It can be assumed that the deeper the change the more durable it might be. Apparently, this may depend

on a number of factors. One such factor is likely to be the extent to which peace-education programmes satisfy the collective needs of participants. This can be implied from the study by Shnabel and Nadler (2008), mentioned above, about the differential needs of minority and majority participants. Another set of factors is suggested by Kelman (1958): Compliance, identification, and internalization. Ajzen and Sexton (1999) speak of the depth of processing, belief congruence and attitude-behaviour correspondence as relevant factors for change maintenance. Indeed, research on depth of processing (Ajzen and Sexton, 2000) would predict that the deeper the processing, the more elaboration and more controlled rather than automatic connections to existing cognitive schemata would increase the chances of accessing the acquired attitudes and perceptions. However, deeper processing is less likely to take place when the desired attitudinal and perceptual change and one's belief system are incongruent; this suggests that deeper processing is more likely among those who are already partly converted.

Perhaps of greatest relevance is the social support of the change. This, indeed, is one of the conditions for the success of intergroup contact (for example, Pettigrew, 1998). It appears to be also a necessary condition for sustaining the effects of peace-education programmes. Here, unlike the support needed for the creation of a 'ripple effect', the support needed is apparently of closer proximity: Family, neighbours, institutions, and the likes. The experiments, which required intervening with forced compliance, peer teaching and reflection, could not have been successfully carried out if the authorities of the experimental schools had not extended their support. This challenge raises a number of questions, such as whether longer-term programmes succeed in preventing the expected erosion of their positive effects. As discussed above, would deeper processing of the information leading to change, and social support of the changes lead to longer endurance of programmes' effects? These are questions that research needs to address.

The need for differential programmes

So far, many of the contents and methods of peace-education programmes are the same for all sides of a conflict. This is particularly pronounced where the contact hypothesis is applied (Mania, et.al. 2009). It appears as if one size ought to fit all, regardless of whether they are the majority or minority, conqueror or conquered natives or immigrants. In a few cases, programmes are administered in uni-national or uni-ethnic groups. Even then, the contents and the methods remain uniform. The underlying assumption appears to be that the processes of reconciliation, mutual understanding, humanization, and empathy are similar for all those involved. However, research shows that this assumption is incorrect (Yablon, 2007).

In one study (Biton and Salomon, 2005), involving about 800 Israeli-Jewish and Palestinian youths, we found that while the former entered the programme with a conception of peace as absence of violence ('negative peace'), the latter assumed that peace means independence and freedom ('structural peace'). The effects of that year-long school-based programme, which did not entail face-to-face meetings, were far stronger on the Jews than on the Palestinians, since it

dealt mainly with the psychological aspects of reconciliation and did not focus on finding a political solution. And as other research shows, the Jews, being the majority, shun the political and prefer the interpersonal (Suleiman, 2004). Rosen (2008), applying the forced compliance intervention with peace-education graduates, found positive effects that restored the already-attained changes on the Israeli-Jewish participants, but found no effect on the Israeli-Palestinians.

The same was replicated in another study with post-programme attempts to restore attained changes. This suggests that while the Jews engaged in trying to convey the ideas acquired during the peace-education workshop, the Palestinians engaged in asserting their position and becoming empowered. This view was supported by yet another study (Hussesi, 2007), where it was found that following participation in the same year-long school-based programme, the Jews learned to give somewhat more legitimacy to the Palestinian collective narrative, while the Palestinians used the same programme to reinforce their own narrative; no legitimization of the Jewish collective narrative took place. Maoz (2000) found that while the Jewish participants rely on formal power which emanates from institutionally provided power, the Palestinians rely on informal ones – their knowledge of the local history of the conflict and their sense of deprivation and injustice.

A later study (Maoz, 2004) identified different models of peace-education interventions applied in the context of relations between Jews and Arabs in Israel. These models range from the coexistence model that focuses on interpersonal relations and can be seen as generally preserving the status quo to the confrontational model that centres on discussing the conflict and aims at social change. Each of these models has advantages and disadvantages and fits different types of target populations in different phases of 'readiness' to grapple with the conflict (Maoz, Under review); one size certainly does not fit all. The differences in the expectations, needs, culture, and ways of processing the conflict-related information of each side to the conflict would require a differential approach to peace education. However, the challenge is to find some formulae in light of which different programmes, based on different psychological principles, can be designed. Halabi, Sonnenshein and Friedman (2004) have indeed developed differential programmes, the emphasis of which is to strengthen the identity of the so-called oppressed minority and to liberate the so-called oppressor from its illusion of superiority.

Helping general dispositions and values to become applied in specific situations

Bar-Tal, Rosen and Nets-Zehngut (2009) question the value of or direct peace education, as commonly practiced, as long as a conflict is in full force, as is the current situation in Israel/Palestinian Territories. The authors suggest instead engaging in indirect peace education: cultivating general abilities, dispositions and values such as tolerance, critical thinking and

ethno-empathy. While this appears as a sound idea, there is room for some questions: do general abilities, dispositions and values become applied in highly specific situations, where strong counter motivations are at play? Do believers offer their cheeks even to those whom they hate and despise? Are victims, even those with high morals, willing to show tolerance to their aggressors?

Past research, history and literature do not provide positive answers. Milgram's (1974) subjects were surly individuals who would not think of killing somebody that they do not even know. However, when told that their continued participation in the study is important for science, they hesitated and finally 'killed' an experimental partner. Zimbardo's (2006) psychology students who role-played a prison were also normal individuals with no evil principles of hurting their peers. Yet, when playing guards they badly hurt their classmates, who were unlucky enough to play inmates. Darley and Latane's bystanders (1968) were also law-abiding individuals with no hateful dispositions, yet refrained from even calling the police when a young woman was murdered in their backyard while screaming for help. In all these cases and in similar ones, the persons involved most likely had the right principles and values, but when an authority figure urged, when the situation afforded the opportunity to feel superior, or when responsibility could be thinly spread, behaviour became truly ugly.

This is not limited to psychological studies and experiments. Perkins (1992) analyzed the problems that schools face, arguing that many of their failures are not the result of the absence of relevant knowledge. 'The problem comes down to this: We are not putting to work what we know… We do not have a knowledge gap – we have a monumental *use-of-knowledge* gap.' (p. 3) In one of my studies (Salomon, 1984), I found that intelligent children assume TV to be easy and forgo using their intelligence even when faced with a rather intellectually demanding programme. They process the information not any better or deeper than significantly less intelligent children. When asked, they responded by saying that since TV is easy they see not need to really expand any mental effort in processing its materials. They behave very differently when the same material is presented in print.

Barbara Tuchman in her well-known book *The march of folly* (1984) documents case after case where leaders' actions negate their own beliefs and interests. And Haffner (2000) tells how his colleagues in a German law school, believing in noble values gradually succumb to Nazi propaganda. It appears that general values, dispositions and abilities are not easily applied in specific situations when alternative strong motivations – to comply with the scientist and to avoid being different, appear a fool or putting additional effort – are at play. Would the acquired disposition to be tolerant apply when it concerns a threatening adversary? Would the ability to think critically become utilized when anger arouses by news about a terror activity?

All this does not mean that general abilities, dispositions, principles and values are not to be cultivated. On the contrary, they need to be cultivated and developed. However, the challenge is

to make these more accessible and applicable when motivations that negate them come into play. While this is a general challenge, it is of particular importance in the case of peace education. This is so not only because indirect peace education – the cultivation on general abilities and dispositions – is proposed to replace direct peace education, for example, dialogue – under certain conditions (Bar-Tal, Rosen, and Nets-Zehgut, 2009). It is important for peace education because even direct peace education needs to be accompanied by a wider context of more general abilities, beliefs and dispositions, which provide justification and support to the more specific attitudes and perceptions that dialogue and conflict management skills cultivate. General dispositions, as I have tried to show above, may be insufficient for application in particular situations where contradicting motivations are at play. However, changed attitudes, as pointed out earlier, may also not suffice as they can easily be eroded by stronger socio-political forces.

Discussion

The four challenges that I chose to discuss are not the only ones that face peace education. Other challenges like severe inequalities, built into the social fabric of societies in conflict, are as challenging as the ones discussed above. However, most other challenges do not pertain to the very core of peace education as are the challenges of the 'ripple effect', the endurance of these effects, the need to provide differential approaches and the relations between general dispositions and their specific application. In the absence of any one of the four, peace education may likely be a local, well-intended activity, but with little enduring and socially impacting value.

Another question is whether the points made here apply, partly or wholly, to education for human rights, anti-racism, tolerance, and the likes. The commonality between peace education and such programmes lies in the fact that very often they operate in social environments that are not very supportive of their messages: human rights and civic education in certain developing countries (for example, Fok, 2001), tolerance for minorities in particular minority-rich countries (for example, Weldon, 2006), and anti-racism in multi-national countries (for example, Penketh, 2000). Such programmes – explicitly or implicitly – aim at impacting not only the individuals but also the society; hope to attain enduring effects; and focus on the need to take differences between ethnic and social groups into serious account and combine general dispositions and specific applications. In these respects, the challenges discussed in this paper apply to broader programmes as well.

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