

# The Role of Educational Curricula in Peace Building in Lebanon

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Today, we face a chasm between two unequal worlds: one struggling for growth and catching up with rapid developments, and the other rushing to use its advanced knowledge to control the less fortunate. This is a grim description of a world in crisis, which will inevitably result in more violence, conflict, war, displacement and migration. Since its independence, Lebanon has been living in a state of instability that has fluctuated between dormant violence, open conflict and declared war, and the consequences of migration, displacement and the threat of collapse. A critical reality and a race into the unknown prompt reflection on peace building through education, in particular official education, that is, the current curricula (1997) and the curricula that the Center for Educational Research and Development (CERD) is developing.

First, let us examine the many problems: Does peace education mean not going into conflicts? Is it an education to yield and surrender? Or does it mean bringing up generations living in a hypothetical peaceful state, which later collide with the reality of conflicts in the world? Is peace education sufficient to build peace?

## Peace building in Lebanon

Peace can be understood as the absence of war and conflict; human and social well-being, and reconciliation with oneself; and respect for human rights, and the right to defend oneself and one's land against despots and usurpers. The concept includes the values of freedom, equality, justice, solidarity and cooperation in a society of equal relations that solves its conflicts through dialogue to preserve human dignity and the establishment of mutual understanding, shunning violence and conflict, and all forms of discrimination, exploitation, bullying and exclusion. This is passive peace. Active peace manifests through a set of constructive actions that make the world a better place for humanity. This means the need to cultivate people who are tolerant, cooperative, critical thinkers, good listeners and communicators, accepting multiple perspectives, are socially responsible and take into account all differences (gender and other). The concept of education for peace is an educational initiative to mitigate the consequences of war on society and humans, and UNESCO has made it one of the education goals for sustainable development. Are public education curricula in Lebanon cultivating peace-building citizens?

## Current curricula and the curricula under development

Education for peace has been the most important goal of the Plan for Educational Advancement by «promoting national belonging and fusion, and

spiritual and cultural openness», and «Lebanese values such as freedom, democracy, tolerance and non-violence». It was founded on Lebanon's role in the development of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and its democratic system based on «respect for public freedoms», «freedom of opinion and belief», «social justice and equality among all citizens without discrimination or bias» in pursuit of «forming citizens working to strengthen peace in themselves, between individuals, and in national social relations». The required advancement is a path from division to unity in order to build sustainable civil peace. Peace building is based on justice, equality, the rule of law, freedom of conscience, freedom of speech, dialogue, among other things. CERD has completed the preparatory documents in the framework of advanced curricula design, identifying the traits of learners/citizens who are tolerant, critical, cooperative, interactive,

researchers and creators, adapting to the skills of the 21st century, adopting the approach of competencies and strategies for the integration of the disabled, making sure to benefit from the developments in technology and informatics.

## The curricula of civic education and national education as a model

The values of education for peace were explicitly included in the general objectives of the curriculum of national and civic education: peace-loving, cultural and human openness, nonviolence, equality, social justice, freedom, acceptance of the other despite gender, color, religion, language and culture difference, acquiring the skills of critical thinking, dialogue and problem-solving through dialogue (one of the basic skills to live together in peace). The specific goals of the curriculum include basic skills that contribute to peace education, such as: the rules of listening and dialogue, literary audacity, helping the weak, and establishing a culture of respect of the law, and resorting to it when conflicts and disputes cannot be solved through dialogue. The objectives of the curriculum and the subject of civic education are reflected in the textbook, and in the teaching/learning methods that stimulate critical thinking, teamwork, solidarity and participation.

Finally, education for peace and its values requires teachers who adopt the values they are teaching and reflect them in their daily conduct, attitudes and teaching methods, acting as role models. Thus, teaching/learning with them is transformed from mere knowledge instruction to an education by identification and a balanced life philosophy that shuns contradictions.

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