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Human Rights Education in Peace-Building: A Look at Where the Practice Has Come from, and Where It Needs to Head

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Human Rights Education in Peace-Building: A Look at Where the Practice Has Come from, and Where It Needs to Head

Abstract

The world's peace-building and development organizations increasingly are incorporating human-rights frameworks into the myriad of activities now under their purview. Slower to develop, however, are the capacity-building programs designed to impart knowledge about human rights to citizens and communities. Field-workers throughout the world indicate that the lack of such guidance-giving education hinders them when it comes to monitoring activities, helping to rebuild public institutions, setting up and organizing electoral politics, building an unfettered media, protecting human security, setting up transitional justice mechanisms, and the myriad of other peace-building activities and democratization challenges they face in post-conflict situations. This paper not only explores this emerging field of the study and practice of human-rights education within the cross-national peace-building sphere by sharing the perspectives of educators around the world, but also considers a host of ideas that should help to advance the human-rights agendas of present and future post-conflict planners.

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Human rights, Peace, Development, International organizations, Infrastructure, Human rights education

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**Human Rights Education in Peace-building: A Look at Where the Practice
Has Come from, and Where It Needs to Head**

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Title: Human Rights Education in Peace-building: A look at where the practice has come from, and where it needs to head

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Abstract: The world's peace-building and development organizations increasingly are incorporating human-rights frameworks into the myriad of activities now under their purview. Slower to develop, however, are the capacity-building programs designed to impart knowledge about human rights to citizens and communities. Field-workers throughout the world indicate that the lack of such guidance-giving education hinders them when it comes to monitoring activities, helping to rebuild public institutions, setting up and organizing electoral politics, building an unfettered media, protecting human security, setting up transitional justice mechanisms, and the myriad of other peace-building activities and democratization challenges they face in post-conflict situations. This paper not only explores this emerging field of the study and practice of human-rights education within the cross-national peace-building sphere by sharing the perspectives of educators around the world, but also considers a host of ideas that should help to advance the human-rights agendas of present and future post-conflict planners.

1. Introduction: The problems associated with HRE in post-conflict situations

Most policy-makers, scholars, and HRE practitioners in post-conflict situations deem consciousness-raising about human rights (as per international laws) to be a necessary part of the overall mix as nations seek to rebuild in the period following the cessation of armed conflict. This is especially true in so-called transitional nations --ones that are undergoing processes whereby democratic forms of government are replacing authoritarian ones. However, much less attention is being paid to the task of human-rights promotion and to the needs of those who are engaged in it; namely, human rights educators. Yet it is difficult to imagine how any country

could develop a human-rights-respecting culture and institutions that imbue the principles and articles of human rights in the absence of a well-conceived plan for teaching human rights and cultivating the personnel trained to do it.

Immediately after, and often even before, the cessation of violence, educators, both domestic and international, work to ensure the protection of basic human rights by teaching people what those rights are and educating them in how to document any violations to which they are privy. The saying goes that people must know their rights in order to protect them. As peace accords are signed, human rights educators continue their work of educating people about human rights, the peace accords, and their provisions. Long after the cessation of armed conflict and well into the months and years of reconstruction that follow, educators continue to teach people about human rights. Human rights educators often are the most adept actors in post-conflict settings when it comes to organizing and mobilizing groups of people, and they can do so most effectively using human-rights frameworks. Collectively, people are better able to express their needs and to find the means, through government assistance or self-help initiatives, of fulfilling them. Education can lead them to this end.

Human rights education differs from other post-conflict educational formats because it provides people with an educational space within which they can learn about and assert human rights, a well-organized physical and conceptual safety-zone, intended as beyond the reach of any sort of retribution, where the educator guides them toward new ways of interpreting what they have been through and indeed a re-conceiving of their lives. For a range of students, from those who have long known only the suppression of fundamental liberties like freedom of speech and association, to those who have suffered the most violent abuses, the HRE experience provides a unique opportunity to envision and act out more desirable social relationships. Ideas

about human rights do not, all on their own, make the journey that ends with their being codified into laws; to the contrary, only a community of trained human rights workers is capable of making the necessary connections, both theoretical and practical, between the content of the international human rights conventions and their highly varied local interpretations.

Despite this crucial role potentially played by human-rights education in post-conflict settings, one can search through in countless reports on post-conflict reconstruction, and through the newer literature on the impact of human rights on post-conflict and transitional societies, and find not a single mention of the incorporation of human-rights education into peace-building planning activities. Quite simply, a far-reaching and sustainable educational effort in human rights has yet to materialize in any post-conflict situation. The fact is that even though the right to an education in and for human rights has been adopted and legitimized within the national constitutions and legal frameworks of almost every post-conflict country, there are few stories to tell about successful national and international initiatives. It is time that human rights education becomes more fully embraced by all those who are thinking about and acting out peace- and nation-building.

While it is difficult to pin down all the causes of this failure to fully incorporate human rights education into peace-building activities, it is lamentable that members of national human rights communities, including educators, are not included in post-conflict planning meetings. Most of those involved in planning are unable to conceive of, much less to articulate, the connections between human-rights promotion, stabilization rebuilding, and educating for human rights. They are not at all likely to understand that human rights ideas which fail to closely adapt themselves to changes in the political, social, and economic conditions of a country, as it rebuilds in the years following an armed conflict, quickly become obsolete. In the eyes of many people,

human rights refers strictly to infringements upon citizens' civil and political liberties, especially the flagrant ones that come in the form of murder, torture, unlawful detention, and restricted mobility. This failure to acknowledge that all of the human rights, from social to economic to cultural, have to be promoted in the re-building and democratization of a nation emerging from a period of prolonged conflict is all too common among those working in the fields of democracy and human rights.

The fact that human rights education is not being taken as seriously as it should presents a serious problem. It is essential for people to have some understanding of their basic human rights, and that means ensuring that these ideas are widely disseminated through the proper educational channels. The case of Afghanistan shows that this is easier said than done. In the aftermath of the August 2009 election, complaints abounded about the slow development of a sociopolitical climate conducive to peacebuilding and reconstruction. Dr. Sima Simar, the head of Afghanistan's Independent Human Rights Commission, put it this way: the new Afghani legal and democratic structures by which the country was to be governed were firmly in place, and yet there was little chance that genuinely democratic hopes and habits would take root among the Afghani people unless broader socio-cultural changes began to emerge. She went on to say that between the first election in 2005 and this second one, the nation's leaders had done little to redirect outdated socio-cultural trends and to introduce ideas about human rights (2009).

2. Human Rights Education (HRE): An Overview of Institutional and Organizational Frameworks

In 1992, United Nations Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali touted Human Rights Education as a central component of peace building in his now famous paper, “An Agenda for Peace.” Shortly thereafter, the U.N. Security Council officially voiced its support for HRE as one of many mechanisms capable of effecting institutional change in post-conflict situations. Then, in 1993, its stance received an implicit confirmation when the Vienna Human Rights Declaration declared that “human rights education is essential for the promotion and achievement of stable and harmonious relationships among communities, and for fostering mutual understanding, tolerance and peace.”

The pronouncement established, at least on paper, the primacy of human-rights education within the U.N.’s peace-building activities as well as within those of other international and national conflict-management and post-conflict reconstruction programs all around the world. The U.N. peace-building missions of the early 1990s in Cambodia, Haiti, Guatemala, and El Salvador all included a HRE component. At the end of the 1990s, HRE was integral to the peace-building programs in Somalia, Bosnia, and East Timor. Also significant was HRE’s presence later in that decade as part of the initial stages of the ad hoc peacekeeping efforts mounted by the U.N. in Liberia and Sierra Leone.

The Aspen Institute’s 2007 report on peacebuilding activities highlighted that in the late 1990s and early 2000s there was a heightened awareness of human rights by multiple actors within many peace-building operations. This report also noted that basic human-rights knowledge was being fluidly and more widely disseminated on the ground by the various international actors engaged in peace-building activities under the aegis of international, regional, and national human rights instruments. Commenting on the U.N. peace-building operations around the world, The Aspen Institute said that “The actual practice of human rights

field work--recruiting and training a pool of human rights officials with field experience, monitoring, supporting NGOS, developing a capacity to assist new or reforming government institutions, has developed significantly” (2007, p 5).

Yet the following paradox persists: while knowledge about human rights was by then end of the 1990s being more extensively disseminated and included within a number of peace-building mandates, many U.N. mission officials interviewed at the time complained of their lack of training in human- rights education. The U.N. officials who participated in the missions staged in the immediate aftermath of the conflicts in El Salvador, Guatemala, and Haiti, many of whom were part of a 1999-2001 study of human rights education supported by the United States Institute of Peace (USIP) and based at The Center for the Study of Human Rights (CSHR) at Columbia University, that there was plenty of funding available for human rights promotional materials, which usually included radio and television commercials, and yet they lacked the knowledge and training to provide effective human rights education. Further, they failed to see human rights education’s playing a role when it came to monitoring, or helping to prevent, violations, or in staving off recurrences of conflict. Finally, it looked to them as if the coordination between international, national, and local actors often lacked cohesion and oversight, which created many missed opportunities. As all this was seen from the perspective of human rights education, it meant that these trained professionals who know how to teach human rights were never called upon to help.

In the early 2000s and to the present day, human-rights education has been a component of the U.N. peace-building missions in East Timor, Afghanistan, Liberia, and Iraq, among other places. Furthermore, in those and other places, national education ministries have implemented HRE training programs for teachers; other governmental ministries have provided basic human

rights training to civil servants, members of security forces, and justice officials; and non-governmental organizations have put together smaller-scale HRE programs. Past and present funding for such activities has been made available through the World Bank, the European Union, and the development branches of the bureaucracies of Spain, Norway, Great Britain, and the United States.

Human rights education within nations is still characterized by a smattering of unconnected HRE programs run by a wide variety of local and international agencies having little coordination, too little funding, and an absence of strategic planning (Lord and Flowers, 2006; Guinn, 2006).

3. The Evolution of Human Rights Education through stages of post-conflict rebuilding

The following paragraphs present an ideal-type construct that helps to illustrate the types of human rights education programs that exist in countries as they enter and pass through the various stages of post-conflict rebuilding. It highlights the fact that as political and social conditions transform in these countries, so too must the human rights issues that planners and educators are willing and prepared to address in programming activities.¹ The stages of post-conflict rebuilding are loosely based upon those put forth in the World Bank's post-conflict reconstruction framework (World Bank, 1998).

Stage I is best defined as crisis. Even when there is steady progression towards peace settlements, this stage is characterized by its intensity and feelings of urgency, fear, and powerlessness which pervades most activities. Even if a contingent of peacekeepers has already arrived on the ground, HRE promoters should not forego the necessary stages of planning and

training, including if it has to be carried out outside the country. During this stage, the planners play the key role of developing plans and assembling necessary resources. Their activities include: conducting a broad-based assessment of context and need, mobilizing institutional support, assessing the type and extent of resources called for, and identifying the stages along which planning can be organized and compartmentalized. Until HRE becomes an automatic component in all peace building processes, support, resources, and plans for HRE must be collected from the ground up and even on an ad-hoc basis.

Where it existed on the ground at this first stage, HRE educators often described their work as the foundation upon which human rights and justice were built. The initial key goals were to stop and find redress for human rights violations, usually focusing on serious infringements of civil and political liberties, in particular those that endangered life.

Instructional methods tended to be casual and organized around informing people of their rights, and encouraging them to report violations to local monitors and to seek redress from authorities. Radio programs were often used to disseminate information about specific violations as quickly and as widely as possible. As the crisis nature of the stage diminished, the UN and other organizations typically began to train trainers, especially staff from international organizations. Such training is especially beneficial if it includes members of the international police and military components of the international peace keeping force.

The initial HRE programs implemented by international and national organizations in these countries focused on human rights violations of life, liberty, and property. In these programs, HRE was first aid administered to those whose rights had been violated, and as a means to help them find redress. These programs focus on monitoring, recording, and reporting violations for possible legal processes. The rationale for this form of HRE is that the more people

know about their rights, the more likely it is that they will report to international agencies if violations continue to occur.

When there is more peace than crisis and a concerted attempt is made to institute a rule of law and reorganize life accordingly, the country is entering a new stage that human rights educators and planners must take into consideration. This stage involves detailed, on the ground negotiation for peace when the intensity of the violence and abuses have abated, but the social and economic deprivations have become more apparent. Daily living at this stage is often characterized by the demand for survival basics—water, food, secure living quarters, health treatment for emerging epidemics. Humanitarian interventions increase and greater numbers of international humanitarian and development agencies, including human rights educators, enter the country. For many civilians, the heavy presence of peacekeepers, soldiers, and their military equipment may invoke conflicting emotions. For some, the international peacekeeping force may signal security and peace. For others, their patrols, weapons, and vehicles can raise anxieties, along with additional fears and unanswered questions regarding when the peacekeepers will leave. The characteristics of these situations contribute to the needs assessment process for HRE.

The great demand for humanitarian aid may keep HRE at the margins. The context is still not conducive to regular courses and formal teaching and it will most likely be limited to occasional daylong programs. There are, however, other important ways to promote HRE learning. Human rights educators, for example, can begin to combine their efforts with those of development and aid groups, identifying the ways that human rights are beneficial to address their daily concerns, helping them to deal with difficult political circumstances, and resolving day-to-day problems. The greatest impact, however, may come from routine interactions among international agencies, local officials, and civilians. For instance, when an expatriate military or

police officer carries out law enforcement according to a rule of law without the use of force, an example is set for local police and the expectations of civilians are raised.

As reconstruction activities unfold, there is a palpable need for changes in both the HRE focus and the strategies used to reach people. If they did not do so in practice, most NGOs recognize the need to change their approach from violation-centered advocacy to more forward-looking methods. One human rights educator who had been teaching human rights in Peru since the 1980s, reflected back on his experiences:

Essentially our human rights strategy takes a proactive stance and involves education and training. Our previous one was reactive and condemned violators. At some point I realized that no one would talk to me - government, citizens, etc - and that most of the other activists were getting chased out of the country. I had to think of a way to be more effective and still achieve my goals (de la Jara, 2010).

Similarly, an educator from the Fray Bartolome de las Casas Human Rights Center in Chiapas, Mexico, interviewed for this study in April of 2010 mentioned the same shift in strategies. In 2004, after years of denouncing human rights through radio broadcasts, he said that this organization finally began educating (HRE) people on how to use legal institutions to bring alleged violations before the courts. Programs emphasizing instruction in legal rights were based on the premise that the main leverage in human rights is to be found in codified laws and legal institutions as opposed to the moral and political realms. In the law-based HRE framework, the basic notions of human rights are introduced to participants along with, and sometimes through, the domestic and international law and institutions.

Stage III, the early reconstruction phase, delineates the start to stable peace and to rebuilding society. One typical characteristic of this stage is the disappearance of soldiers from daily view. For example, in fieldwork conducted in 2000 many Salvadoran peasants identified soldiers' leaving their village as the beginning of a new period in their lives, the real beginning

of the transition to peace (as reported in Martin, et al., 2002). Energies then focused on rebuilding schools, government agencies, markets, local magistrates, police, military, prisons, and more. A framework based on popular advocacy strategies incorporates an emphasis on self-organization, which can be useful in promoting rights even amidst authority vacuums and a devastated infrastructure. It is not enough to have rights; you have to know them and organize to get them.

As tensions ease and there are fewer human rights violations, human rights educators are one of the few actors who can help to create educational spaces in which people are taught how to assess the causes of conflict and to determine how to change them. This movement towards such a reflective analytical process fosters a growing collective-consciousness in the nations undergoing transition. People learn to respect human rights because they could see it as a way of preserving peace or because after having been party to war and its atrocities, they felt impelled to invoke some moral standards. By helping develop such a reflective climate, HRE educators are able to reach wider audiences and, even more significantly, address such root causes of conflict as the attitudes and behaviors that result in intolerance, discrimination, and social inequity.

In later stages of post-conflict reconstruction some of the hardest HRE work in that the optimism of the earlier stages may have waned and been overshadowed by setbacks, with the realization that the task has only begun. Hardships continue. Families remain broken apart and devastated. Economic opportunities are limited and a damaged infrastructure turns any effort to satisfy needs of daily life into a struggle. Some of these feelings may have been apparent at Stage III, but as realization sets in of how much further there is to go, frustration and exhaustion can play prominent roles. FEducators need to mitigate frustration by connecting HRE to the perceived and real needs and by ensuring that there are attainable goals.

The goals in Stage IV are to achieve regular, structured, and sustainable programming that reaches the broadest spectrum possible, spanning civil society, grassroots organizations, schools, religious institutions, social organizations, and local government, ideally as a permanent component of official formal curricula. Most importantly there is a stronger emphasis on building the capacity of local HRE institutions. Sustainability calls for a conscious shift in the partnering balance between international actors and local actors. Local actors assume increasing responsibility and full attention is given to the transition to local leadership and the competency and needs of local organizations.

Stage V is characterized by internal sustainability and self-sufficiency and marks the end of the transition. External actors are now leaving and the organization of HRE will be in local hands. Activities fitting into the legal, advocacy, and social relationship-centered frameworks continue and ideally expand in numbers of participants. The focus turns to pre-existing issues such as discrimination and economic deprivation. Today's human rights movement in Peru is a good example of a human rights community that has turned its efforts to educating the Peruvian public about the social exclusion of the indigenous populations (De la Jara, 2010).

4. A closer look at learning and teaching in the human-rights classroom

Here is what a U.N. Humanitarian Affairs officer interviewed in 1999 had to say, about her work with the UNHCR in Bosnia in 1995:

In Bosnia our job was to disseminate information about human rights and the Dayton Peace Accords through a series of workshops. Since our personnel lacked information regarding teaching methodologies, they presented human rights in a very formal way. This information was not interesting to people who had lost five family members, it just didn't mean anything to people at all. They were preaching principles saying "You have the right to life," without any mention of how to go about ensuring that right or how to apply it to the current situation. It was a disaster. They got bored. As a result many participants did not show up at the following workshop. We realized that to the person

who had lost five family members in the war, this information was meaningless. We knew we had to change the approach if we were to make any significant change in peoples' thinking.

Speaking directly to this failure, Dalton wrote: "These principles are put forth in many documents, including that which is the most easily and universally accessible, the UDHR. The U.N. missions knew the documents, and many could even relate them to national laws and historical content (the problem we looked at in the first of these four subsections); however, many of them did not do a good job handling the human part." This is what Dalton wrote about the transformation:

We knew we had to change our approach. In Mostar we tested a new thing. We just said, "let's just forget about peace agreements for a minute and let's talk about feelings, emotions, and what these people have gone through. We used the UDHR as a background to inspire. We then went on to use debate, and we found that people got very engaged. The result was that these working groups became very popular and everybody wanted to join in.

In the following three sub-sections, ideas as to what constitutes effective practice of human rights education are presented. These analytic descriptions also contain a basic assessment of where the biggest improvements have been made in human rights pedagogy, and where there remains need for improvement. The goal here is to advance human rights education by improving the effectiveness of human rights educators.

(a). Lack of awareness of local issues, histories, and cultural specificities

"...there is nothing human in our teaching of human rights" (Velasquez, UN Mission official, Haiti, 1999)

If the content of a HRE workshop causes learners to feel dissociated, owing to the pursuit of merely abstract ideals, from their post-war realities, then the central mandate of HRE—showing people how a knowledge of, and a belief in, human rights can serve them as a tool promoting social change—is dead in the water. Particularly dangerous is pitching human rights as a strictly legalistic phenomenon, as this comment attests, as it was shared with this author in 1999 by an observer from the Guatemalan human rights NGO, The Myrna Mack Foundation:

I think the root of this [problem] is that the international community didn't necessarily do a great job of context-assessment. I see law and human rights as emancipatory but the Mayans have experienced law only as one of the tools used against them by a genocidal, repressive state. One of the problems is the discourse used to promote human rights does not address this difference of perception. Quite frankly, the failure to connect with the problems as perceived by the population has marginalized those working to promote human rights, if not discredited them in the view of the population who have been fed a healthy dose of army propaganda that human rights was merely the discourse of the guerillas during the conflict, and now functions to exonerate criminals by giving them legal protections (Mack, 1999).

Most current HRE programs begin with a needs-assessment. For example, in the Africa Human Rights Education Project (AHREP) supported by Amnesty International, U.K. and funded by DFID, all projects begin with participatory consultations carried out by the project leaders to ascertain the particular needs of the community members participating in the project (AHREP Evaluation Report, 2010). In other words, whereas too often in the past so-called needs were in fact being dictated by outside forces, now it is the various players own needs, preferences, abilities and desires that projects are built around. Thus today's human rights educators are trained to focus on assessing needs and on ensuring that the question "Are you getting what you need, or just what someone thinks you need?" stays at the forefront of these need-assessments.

Most of today's human rights discussions tend to be highly localized and thus play into another trend whereby regional bodies are developing a growing body of materials that are imbued with local cultural values. Increasingly, these are being made available to educators for use in their classrooms (Abbas, 2007). But back in 1999, HRE educators, especially those coming from other countries such as the human-rights officials sent by the United Nations, were using overly generic documents and printed materials. The use of such international educational content, often focusing on cases outside the country not only failed to arouse the interest of participants but even generated some resentment, given the way the foreign focus seemed to make light of (subordinate) national, local, and personal values and cultures. We now know that international documents are most useful when they are incorporated with or used in support of local applications and standards.

(b). Lack of material and institutional resources to support rights talk

To teach people about human rights within conflict situations where such rights are conspicuous only by their absence, too often has the effect of inflaming their sense of injustice (Martin, et al 2002).

We are now aware that it is by no means sufficient just to talk about rights; rather, all talk of human rights must be accompanied by work toward social change. Peace scholar John Burton (1990) sounded the alarm in this regard over a decade ago when he insisted not only that unmet human development needs are the root causes of conflict but that even when all political and ideological issues seemingly have been worked out through negotiation, and the conflict has thereby nominally been brought to an end, the conflict still will find a way to reappear if any fundamental human needs remain unmet.

A human rights officer on mission in Haiti in 1999 spoke to this author of how empty he had felt telling women they had the right not to be beaten by their husbands, when he knew there was no official personage to whom they could report such beatings (Velasquez, 1999). A Guatemalan farmer interviewed in 1999 here expresses a similar sentiment:

They came [from a human rights organization] in the 1940s to teach us about human rights, then again in the 1960s; and now you want to tell me the same thing in the 1990s... My wife is sick and I am worried about getting my goods to market to sell, in order to buy her the medicine she needs. I know what human rights are. I know where they come from. What good is that to me, when my wife is dying and I don't have enough money to help her?

Both by word of mouth and by direct observation, cases like these demonstrate the disembodiment of human rights teaching. Many people have been exposed to human rights education on a variety of occasions and yet have learned to shun it because it had, or appeared to them to have, no direct link to their problems, particularly the economic ones. Often human rights educators international and local, complain of their inability to back up their teaching with that material and institutional support that would heighten the security of communities and individuals and thereby lead the latter to reconsider their belief that human rights education is too abstract to merit the investment of any more of their precious time.

Given all the cautionary tales that have come the way of so many human rights educators, it comes as no surprise that we have at last learned one simple lesson: that people must be taught, as part of any effective HRE program, advocacy and organizational skills. Models of these programs, and the impacts they are having, are just now being evaluated and documented. In the near future, policy-makers and planners will be able to access them in order to learn more about this outcomes-oriented approach in HRE.

(c) Conflict Management

In earlier days, another common and ineffective educational practice characteristic of HRE initiatives supported by the UN and by national governments, was presenting human rights in a relatively non-controversial manner. In 2000, human rights educators of the Mexican Human Rights Commission complained that their training workshops were failing to come alive because both educators and learners were afraid to speak out against the rights-violators often found within government security and paramilitary forces.

Today there is a growing acceptance of the fact that precisely because human rights education leads to social transformations, it stirs up a sense of moral outrage along the way. Thus, effective HRE discussions should be, and generally are, contentious affairs. Moral outrage is stirred, for example, when young participants studying in a human rights classroom in Iraq (as they were in early 2010 in a HRE program at the University of Baghdad and reported to this author) are asked what they think of when they hear “human rights” and respond “Abu Ghraib!” Whereas earlier educators might well have tried to hush up comments such as that one, today’s effective human rights educators see them as invaluable hooks; drawing their learners into the study of human rights. Once they have thus been hooked, skilled educators can bring them up to higher levels of understanding of all such controversial topics.

It is also certain that as human rights practitioners seek to bring universal human rights within the framework of local norms and values, they often encounter opposition from those who perceive human rights as being strictly western ideals, entirely inapplicable to their own non-western societies and, in fact, a form of cultural imperialism. Nonetheless, today there is a growing recognition on the part of human rights educators that the conversational flare-ups which occur whenever local values or religious beliefs are found to be at variance with

international human rights norms, are valuable, in the sense that contentious classroom discussions, born of cultural discords, can lead learners to view human rights education as something not merely handed down from by western strangers but rather very close to their own life circumstances.

Implementing HRE programs in post-conflict contexts is a challenging task. Continuing violence, discrimination, animosity, group and individual vendettas, and general disregard for human life and dignity present obstacles all around. Rampant biases of all kinds work in tandem with institutional breakdowns to keep comprehensive, objective information from reaching the population at large, and even more so those living in remote or devastated zones. Urgent and ongoing crises can obscure the course of events. Within such climates, where rumors and often vicious innuendos are rife, it is difficult to talk, much less teach people, about human rights. This only builds that much stronger a case, however, for sending into post-conflict situations today human rights educators who can lead people to speak frankly about their grievances, while feeling both safe and certain that their lives will improve as a result of their increased knowledge about their human rights.

4. Future Tasks: Advancing the practice of hre in peacebuilding

This essay has laid out several of the tasks that must be considered by HRE post-conflict planners and the donors supporting such work. First and foremost, planners must put in place programming that is fundamentally concerned with the relevance of human rights to learners. Human rights must be seen as relating to specific historical and cultural values, contexts, and needs. For this perception to take hold, there has to be careful planning of HRE programs from

the outset, but also monitoring, impact-evaluation, and the creation of new educational models that respond to evolving needs and interests over time (Marks, 2000).

A. Planning for the long-term

The international community underestimated the polarization of urban-rural and Maya-Ladino populations and the capacity of the government, especially locally, to implement human rights standards. There was a lack of forward-looking thinking and programming to prepare for the fact that the human rights situation in Guatemala has changed drastically since the conflict. We're well into the post-conflict stages and have missed a lot of the opportunities for initial post-conflict programming. We've gone from a situation of Army, guerrillas and civilian militias committing abuses, hundreds of which have led to lynching, to a situation in which the issues related to human rights have become police abuses, political corruption, and domestic abuse (Mack, 1999).

As this quotation and other parts of the essay have suggested, all too often, in the immediate aftermath of a conflict, human rights education serves as a mere band-aid, a first aid function, doing so chiefly, and often solely, by informing people about their rights so that they themselves then can in theory, if all too rarely in practice—monitor rights violations. Not surprisingly, it has not been seen as upholding any sustainable function as conflicts transform themselves. We thus underscore the fact that human rights education will be of little use until it has learned how to respond to needs that evolve over time. As Crocker (2006) has insisted about all post-conflict activities, planning must entail planning for the long-term sustainability of all valuable inputs.

Earlier sections of this paper have demonstrated that for long-term sustainability, human rights education must be conceived of as ever-evolving, and because it responds to social conditions, as these conditions change dramatically and relatively rapidly over the post-conflict years, human rights education if it is to be responsive to societal conditions it too must evolve. For example, approaches such as those used in the violation or law-based frameworks often only

address the symptoms of conflict and not its root causes. These frameworks are necessary and effective at the early stages, but they are inadequate for long-term change.

What should be the long-term role that HRE might play in a society emerging from armed conflict and what are the ways HRE can or should fit into the overall peace-building and reconstruction processes? While few people have offered detailed arguments, there is widespread agreement that HRE is needed but that it had to be adjusted to changing social needs and contexts. A consensus has also emerged that the HRE goal should be to nurture a culture of human rights within the whole social and institutional fabric and foster human rights principles that promoted and guided political and economic development. As noted earlier, most people also agree that such a transformation would take time.

B. Evaluating HRE's Impact

Officials and policymakers from many institutions willing to lend support to HRE proposals (e.g., DFID and USAID), have complained that they have received little if any feedback from the educators themselves with respect to what is and what is not working. To be sure, at present the HRE peace-building field is marked by a dearth of written information on the positive or negative impacts of human rights education on peace-building. Thus an important task is to develop tools and methods to better assess the linkages, if any, between actual HRE programs and actual aspects of social amelioration within previously war-torn communities. For instance, documented evidence would be useful when it comes to:

- Increased popular interest/participation in the political process

- Positive changes in the local law-enforcement procedures of the police, prisons, and courts
- Improved responsiveness on the part of other government services to the economic needs and political and civil rights of citizens
- Improved media coverage of human rights, and incorporation of human rights issues into daily news coverage
- Reports from local groups of other changes, such as decreased domestic violence or increased secondary school-enrollment.

Demonstrating the impact of human rights education can help move HRE onto the dockets of all post-conflict planners and the members of national ministries many of which pay a great deal of less lip service to human rights education. If human rights communities do not do a good job of reframing their projects both for donors and for potential audiences for human rights education, attention to human rights education will wane. Evidence can help to cajole donors into taking more action, notably including funding. There is an indispensable need for studies bringing needed substance and tactical savvy to HRE pedagogy and showing how it can be used to bring long-term sustainability to the existing array of peace-keeping activities.

C. Responding to Cultural Conflict

The HRE community has not responded to the critique coming from the academic community as to the culturally imperialistic nature of the human rights enterprise. One such critique has come from Joel Spring (2004), who has included human rights education as one of the globalized

pedagogies he finds threatening. After noting the growing consensus among human –rights educators that the implementation of human rights doctrines and education can indeed only to serve to change local cultures, he goes on to insist that the new human rights culture is sure to supplant local cultures. “It is simply and only a cultural corrective that eliminates customs, behaviors and values in local cultures that violate human rights Of course, no matter how you describe it, this is a form of cultural imperialism.” While human rights does inevitably introduce an element of cosmopolitan thinking, this increases the need for educators to employ participatory approaches to program development, and to fully contextualize pedagogy within the parameters of the particular culture within which they work.

The claims that have been put forth, suggesting that human rights pedagogies comprise a globalizing educational form that seeks to homogenize and eliminate local perspectives can be linked to critiques of the neo-colonial educational models and religious teachings put to work by conquerors and colonizers throughout history as part of their attempt to civilize indigenous populations. Ali Abdi (2007) has proposed new educational arrangements, whose aim is the mental and material decolonization of subject populations. So too, Kenneth Cmiel (2004) warns us that “If human rights investigations are mistaken for effective international protection, adequate protection methods, including indigenous peace processes, may be delayed or derailed.” Methodologically speaking, the most complex risk to evaluate is the possibility that human rights language is suffocating rival idioms of social and political protest, drawing resources (but they should not be hushed) away from other as and possibly more effective, social movements.

Human rights educators must respond to these challenges, doing so not only by creating a pedagogy that is liberating, creative, problem-centered, and above all indigenous to particular

times and places. Indeed, most educators would say that human rights pedagogy which fails to respond in relevant ways to learners' needs and cultures is rarely successful. Further, human rights educators who are working closely with people, should be open to such possibilities that such other idioms exist and not to ignore them. The good ones approach every HRE session entirely well versed in the latest international agreements and trends, but at the same time willing to say nothing about them, if locally contextualized discussions are raising consciousness of grievances and thereby of rights, and allowing people to exercise their democracy their way.

Conclusion

This essay has sought to advance the practice of HRE in peace-building contexts by looking at some of the past and present ideas, practices, and problems from the point of view of those who have actually carried out human-rights education. It has discussed some of its positive developments, which many believe are most robust in the area of human-rights pedagogy, (where the learning curve has been steepest). When I say "robust" I am thinking, most specifically, of the notable growth around the world in the numbers of educators who have a good grasp of how to teach human rights effectively, and the actual components of successful pedagogy revealed throughout this paper. Much less robust is the current state of human rights education with respect to its sustainability and integration within specific cultures. Attention to human rights education in countries that have experienced conflict tends to fade over time, and internationally one rarely sees any strategic alliances being forged among donor countries to support ongoing HRE programs and commit to funding them. HRE programs must be fueled by funding that does not dry up right after the initial splurge of post-conflict spending.

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ⁱ That this evolution as described here is not based on any one country's post-conflict transition experience but rather it embodies the those characteristics and elements that are found through a comparative analysis of human rights education in multiple cases of post-conflict transitions.