

Transforming High School Students into Peacebuilders:
*A rationale for the Youth Peace Initiative model
of peace education*

Susy Lee Deck



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Abstract

This paper makes a case for the importance of peace education with young people and outlines five characteristics of peace education. It considers the disparate nature of the field of peace education, and then proposes critical pedagogy as best practice for achieving these five characteristics in a high school setting. The application of this practice is shown through a mentoring program Youth Peace Initiative (YPI) undertaken in NSW high schools. Constraints of the education system and strategies for overcoming them are also considered. YPI is a project of the Sydney Peace Foundation and can be contacted via ypi@arts.usyd.edu.au or see www.youthpeaceinitiative.org.au

Transforming high school students into peacebuilders:

A rationale for the YPI model of peace education.

Whilst rhetoric crying out for the education of young people for peace abounds, the implementation of peace education is complicated by the breadth of the field and the lack of research and evaluation of best practice methodology to achieve its lofty aims. Youth Peace Initiative (YPI) is one organisation that is seeking to engage with students in NSW high schools with quality peace education that can transform students into peacebuilders. They do this by using critical pedagogy to mentor student social justice groups meeting at lunchtime to make a difference in their world.

Through the dialogue of critical pedagogy, students engage in a process that leads to self-change and then action. Giroux' understanding of critical pedagogy shows how it informs the aims of peace education:

[it] rests on the pedagogical practices that reject the role of students as passive recipients of familiar knowledge and view them instead as producers of knowledge, who not only critically engage with diverse ideas, but also transform and act on them.¹

Peace education is a process of helping people gain moral and political agency by helping them understand the “relationships between theory and practice, critical analysis and common sense, and learning and social change.”²

In order to provide a rationale for the YPI model, I will consider the importance of working with youth, the characteristics of peace education, and how various

¹ Henry A. Giroux, ‘Democracy, Education, and the Politics of Critical Pedagogy’ in McLaren, Peter & Kincheloe, Joe L., *Critical Pedagogy: Where Are We Now?* (New York: Peter Lang Publishing, 2007), p3.

² *Ibid*, p1.

approaches meet these characteristics. I'll then show how critical pedagogy addresses these characteristics.

This rationale will then be applied in the context of YPI's mentoring project. The constraints of the education system will be considered, and the strategies required for dealing with them. Finally, two case studies will be outlined to illustrate these issues.

1. The importance of peace education with young people

Three arenas of discussion contribute to the conclusion that impacting youth with some form of peace education is crucial – youth studies, peace scholarship and international accords.

a. Youth studies

In contrast to widespread cultural motivations to protect children and childhood, perceptions of youth as potentially violent have led to social policies and structures that aim to contain them during peace, or arm them during war. Media representations of young people in our culture have a strong tendency to be negative, painting youth as either unpredictably violent or 'at risk'.³ Similarly, interest is focused on 'dealing with' anti-social or at risk youth, and concern is growing about increased adolescent mental health issues. This can have negative implications for how we respond to youth, and what we expect from them. Young people are also negatively impacted by commercialism, as "youth identity has become a commodity that is being bought by media conglomerates and sold back to youth themselves."⁴ Youth are particularly influenced by globalisation through the commercialism of fashion, music and technology. There is therefore a need for peace education that empowers youth with a critical understanding of these potentially oppressive forces.

Flowers points out though, that youth workers, whilst strongly optimistic about youth participation, are often vague about the theoretical underpinnings of this faith that

³ Kate Ellis, Minister for Youth, introduces a current web-based government youth forum to this effect <<http://www.youth.gov.au/ayf/Ideas/DiscussionForum.aspx?TopicID=29>> viewed 30/04/2010.

⁴ P. McInerney, 'Toward a critical pedagogy of engagement for alienated youth: insights from Freire and school-based research', *Critical Studies in Education*, 50:1, (2009), pp. 28.

empowerment will 'just happen'. Flowers calls for a notion of empowerment that helps "develop a deeper understanding of social context... a sense of agency... ideology of everyday life... of seizing power".⁵ Work with youth that is effective must include a critical understanding of social systems:

*Youth workers often concentrate on creating opportunities for young people to exercise power without confronting the wider structures that exclude young people from power.*⁶

This sounds very much like peace education, and critical pedagogy in particular, which necessarily entail confronting social factors. While discussion about the issues confronting youth are plentiful, there is a need for education that is not reactive or superficial, but proactively prepares youth to critically analyse the structures and forces that are impacting their identities and their roles in society, in order to find their own roles in transforming them.

b. Peace scholars

Danesh classifies reasons youth are essential to peacebuilding. Firstly, there are situational reasons: schools are collective breeding grounds for both war and peace, assuming peaceful behaviour can be learned. Next there are political and economic reasons: young people's group forming proclivity and social agency poses both threats and opportunities for peacebuilding. Finally, youth are unique contributors to peace: they possess characteristics conducive to peacebuilding like creativity, openness to newness, desire for change, and energy.⁷

Therefore, rather than simply succumb to negativity, there is a call to invite youth onto "the frontlines in the battle for peace."⁸ Young people have the potential to bring

⁵ Rick Flowers, 'How effective are Youth Workers in activating young people's voices?' *Youth Studies Australia*, 17:4, (1998), pp34-40, p36-7

⁶ Flowers, *op cit*, p37.

⁷ Dr. Roshan Danesh, *Youth and Peacebuilding*, Encyclopedia of Peace Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2008, <<http://www.tc.edu/centers/epe/>>, viewed 10/02/2010, p3.

⁸ Yvonne Kemper, quoting Jeremy Goldberg in *Youth in War-to-Peace Transitions: Approaches of International Organisations*, January 2005, Berghof Research Centre for Constructive Conflict

much energy and creativity to positive projects, especially when encouraged and supported, and this is beginning to be recognised:

Whilst youth's relevance for societal transformation is a long-acknowledged fact, their large numbers and potential roles in conflict have recently caused organizations to consider them a target group for peace and development programs.⁹

Young people may lack critical literacy about social change, but their sense of justice is sharp, belonging is important to them, and their willingness to bring effort to bear is often an untapped resource. In fact, Lederach's essentials for peacebuilding – relationship, curiosity, creativity and risk – are vivid features of adolescence.¹⁰ As one teacher reports, his students “really like learning about human rights - they realise how important they are and it appeals to their sense of justice”.¹¹ This means young people are an excitingly rich field for peace education that leads to their participation in social justice.

However, renowned peace education proponent Johan Galtung reminds us that “peace education in schools lags behind peace research and action”¹² and Danesh acknowledges that “theorizing about youth and peace, and programs targeting youth as agents of building peace, remain underdeveloped aspects of the peace education field”.¹³ The goal of the Global Campaign for Peace Education is “to assure that all educational systems throughout the world will educate for a culture of peace.”¹⁴ They see the need is to “develop the capacities, in teachers and learners, to face challenges of unprecedented proportion” using a radically different education. They put

Management Report No.10, Berlin, <<http://www.berghof-center.org/uploads/download/br10e.pdf?LANG=e&id=134>> p57.

⁹ Kemper, *op cit*, p3.

¹⁰ J.P Lederach, *The Moral Imagination: The Art and Soul of Building Peace*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), p.

¹¹ Youth Peace Initiative (YPI) *Volunteer's Manual*, (Sydney: Sydney Peace Foundation, 2010), p7.

¹² Galtung, Johan, *Form and Content of Peace Education*, Encyclopedia of Peace Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2008, <<http://www.tc.edu/centers/epe/>>, viewed 10/02/2010, p1.

¹³ Danesh, *op cit*, p1.

¹⁴ Robert Stewart, Nov 2002, <http://www.peace.ca/globalcampaignforpeaceeducation.htm> viewed 3/3/10

emphasis on youth by defining peace education as “intended to prepare students for democratic participation in school and society.”¹⁵

That peace education programs can be effective has been shown by a review of twenty years of evaluative research, where 51/79 studies found such programs partially or highly effective in teaching peace and conflict skills.¹⁶ An evaluation of the Winning Against Violent Environments Program (WAVE) in high schools in the United States showed “significant improvements in students understanding and capacity to positively deal with conflicts.”¹⁷ Programs that exist are often aimed at youth in or post-conflict, or at risk of harm. However, there is international recognition that peace education is more widely required.

c. International accords

The United Nations Children’s Fund’s (UNICEF) working definition of peace education begins with “the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict” and includes an assertion that “peace education has a place in all societies – not only in countries undergoing armed conflict or emergencies”.¹⁸

The need for peace education was acknowledged in 1974 and reaffirmed in 1995 by UNESCO member states and commitments were made to integrate peace education into all education systems.¹⁹ Similarly, the preamble to the UDHR confers a responsibility on society to educate for Human Rights “principally in schools”.²⁰ The first phase of the United Nations’ Human Rights World Programme in 2005 focused

¹⁵ Stewart, *op cit*.

¹⁶ Tricia, S. Jones, ‘Education That Makes a Difference’, in P. van Tongeren, M. Brenk, M. Hellema, and J. Verhoeven, eds., *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*, (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), p251-2.

¹⁷ Batton, Jennifer, ‘Managing Conflict at School: Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management in the United States’, in P. van Tongeren, M. Brenk, M. Hellema, and J. Verhoeven, eds., *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*, (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), p277.

¹⁸ R. Rivers, & Giannis Scotto (eds), *Peace Training: Preparing Adults for Nonviolent Intervention in Conflicts*, Associations and Resources for Conflict Management Skills (ARCA), <<http://www.peacetraining.org/>> viewed 04/03/2010, p9.

¹⁹ Canadian Centre for Teaching Peace, <http://www.peace.ca/unesco1974recommendation.htm> and <http://www.peace.ca/unesco1994declaration.htm>, viewed 20/03/2010.

²⁰ United Nations, Declaration of Human Rights, (1948) <http://www.un.org/en/documents/udhr/index.shtml#ap>, viewed 20/03/2010.

on promoting human rights in schools.²¹ Observations that the UN Charter calls for the participation of young people led to the establishment of The Global Youth Action Network in 1999 which is now active in increasing youth participation within the United Nations System.²²

Despite these affirmations that “youth and educational work is described in many international declarations as a key element for the promotion of peace”²³ a review of the literature shows it remains a poorly defined field. Young people are clearly an important focus for peace education, but a concerted effort with a holistic approach may be necessary to support their efforts to rise above negative expectations and depressing outcomes to construct identities and actions consonant with long-term transformation and social change. Fleshing this out is a primary aim of YPI. In order to analyse peace education with young people in the formal school system, it will be necessary to break it into its component parts, or characteristics.

2. Five characteristics of peace education

As the study of peace and conflict has grown as a discipline, the definition of ‘peace’ itself has grown, often organically and through harsh experience, to include concepts like negative and positive peace, peace with justice, human rights, social justice and democratic education. In a school context this can range widely from anti-bullying policies to fundraising for charity, with many special-interest groups in between. Unfortunately this complexity can lead to difficulties in forming clear pathways for peace education. To try to define a way forward for schools outreach in the large field of peace education, I’ll consider five general characteristics distilled from the aims of peace education. This will lead to an analysis of best practice.

a. transformative

²¹ Tibbitts, Felisa, *Human Rights Education*, Encyclopedia of Peace Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2008, <<http://www.tc.edu/centers/epe/>>, viewed 10/02/2010, p2.

²² Global Youth Action Network, <<http://gyan.tigweb.org/about>> viewed 08/05/2010.

²³ Schell-Faucon, Stephanie, *Conflict Transformation through Educational and Youth Programmes*, created July 2000/ updated March 2001, Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation, Berlin, <http://berghofhandbook.net/documents/publications/schell_faucon_hb.pdf>, p1.

*Peace education should bring forth from all learners the vocation of becoming more fully human and create a process of transformation where those involved then feel capable of transforming the world.*²⁴

Peace educators aim for nothing less than the transformation of an individual from violence to peace. They believe that “teaching at its best, is an enterprise that helps human beings to reach the full measure of their humanity.”²⁵ In particular, Kok believes transformation depends “not merely upon reducing conflict but on actively creating unity”²⁶ and his program demonstrated transformative results with 6000 school students in post-conflict Bosnia.

Toh calls for this kind of transformation in the school context:

*If peace education is not able or willing to try to move not just minds but also hearts and spirits into personal and social action for peacebuilding, it will remain emasculated, a largely “academic” exercise even in the non-formal context... While the non-formal community sector is often seen as the “natural” site for critical empowerment, the formal education institutions should also challenge learners towards transformation.*²⁷

Peace education therefore cannot simply be knowledge or curriculum based. There must be positive change in the student and action taken by them as a result.

b. process-centred

Facilitating learning for peace requires an educator to have an intentional and acute awareness of the relationship between the values that are being articulated and the processes through which those values are disseminated... [peace education] puts more emphasis on helping learners to think critically

²⁴ Freire, *op cit*, p28.

²⁵ Mary Lee Morrison, ‘Poetry and Peace: Explorations of Language and “Unlanguage” as Transformative Pedagogy’, *In Factix Pax*, 3, no.1, (2009), p95.

²⁶ Kok, Havva, ‘Unity-Based Peace Education: A New Approach to Peace Education by Transforming Worldviews’, *In Factix Pax*, 2, no.2, (2008), p195.

²⁷ Kok, *op cit*, p208.

*and does not dictate what to think... With what issues and to what degree a student is engaged is ultimately of his or her own choice.*²⁸

Of great importance here is the notion that in peace education, the means is just as important as the ends, and must be consistent with it. Haavelsrud asserts that it is a principle of peace education that “the educational interaction should be in harmony with the idea of peace.”²⁹

This means that students and teachers become partners; students should actively participate in decision-making; and a problem isn't just academic but also emotional and practical. “Psychological research has shown that people's values and ability to make moral judgements are the product of their interactions...In institutional settings, it is especially important to ensure that learning takes place in a non-violent, voluntary context.”³⁰ A classroom with an authoritarian teacher with outcomes to test is therefore a difficult place to establish peace education.

c. participatory

*Beyond the promotion of critical literacy around peace with justice and nonviolence among youth, the goal is also to bring the experiences and insights of young people to bear on shaping the nature of that literacy.*³¹

Schell-Faucon states that the aim of peace education is to empower young people both to develop critical judgement and to participate confidently in society.³² Again, this involves more than just teaching information.

The NSW Commission for Children and Young People (CCYP) undertook a comprehensive literature review of references between 1998 and 2002 compiling the benefits of, and barriers to, youth participation. They found that participation was important for allowing young people to own decisions, increasing self-confidence,

²⁸ Tony Jenkins, ‘The International Institute on Peace Education: Twenty-six Years Modelling Critical, Participatory Peace Pedagogy’, *In Factis Pax*, 2, no.2, (2008), pp168.

²⁹ Haavelsrud, *op cit*, p4.

³⁰ Schell-Faucon, *op cit*, p7.

³¹ Trent Newman, Youth Peace Initiative, created 2008, <<http://youthpeaceinitiative.org.au/what-is-youth-peace-initiative/>>, viewed 17/02/2010.

³² Schell-Faucon, *op cit*, p6.

respect and protection from abuse, and improving the quality of organisation's decisions about helping young people.³³ Constraining participation were adult attitudes, organisational culture and adults simply not listening.³⁴ They concluded that there was a clear case for participation and that the compulsory elements for effective participation were knowledge, opportunity and support.³⁵

The Australian *What Works* study of youth participation however, produced a more complex picture. While they acknowledged that participation is usually cited as good practice in the youth sector, they found that in successful partnerships with youth, participation for its own sake was a by-product rather than a focus. They warned of the “dangers of tokenistic involvement of a few young people that ignores underlying diversity and tensions.”³⁶

That students should participate in peacebuilding is widely agreed upon, but often whether the outcomes are to suit parents, educators, youth workers, business, police or the young people themselves is less clear. The forms chosen may reflect the direction of the motivation. Are compulsory curricula based on an implicit deficit analysis of youth who need to be informed to be useful members of society? Are youth councils and awards ceremonies an easy way to make adults feel they are encouraging youth? Is being informed by youth motivations a risky and even chaotic business? Are the funds necessary to support youth-led projects much more difficult to find as there may be fewer advantages for the donor?

YPI aims to react to these questions by employing critical pedagogy to analyse them as they “learn from the voices of Australian youth that speak out on issues relating to peace and social justice”.³⁷

³³ NSW Commission for Children and Young People, TAKING PARTicipation seriously kit, 2003, <<http://kids.nsw.gov.au/kids/resources/participationkit.cfm>> viewed 20/03/2010, p3.

³⁴ *Ibid* p4.

³⁵ *Ibid*, p14.

³⁶ Fiona Taylor, *Partnerships in the Youth Sector*, Australian Youth Research Centre for the Foundation for Young Australians, 2008, <<http://www.fya.org.au/what-we-do/research/what-works/partnerships-in-the-youth-sector/>> viewed 25/03/2010, p119.

³⁷ Youth Peace Initiative (YPI), created 2008 <<http://youthpeaceinitiative.org.au/what-is-youth-peace-initiative/>> viewed 12/02/2010.

d. relational

*Peace training emphasises relational skills as the base necessary for individuals to have a positive impact on conflict.*³⁸

The *What Works* study found that “the valued contributions made by youth workers within schools centre around their skills in developing consensual, non-judgmental and egalitarian relationships with young people.”³⁹ While the youth workers acknowledged the constraints of the school system, they also found the opportunities for relationship building were greatly enhanced when they were in the schools regularly. Rodd presents research that shows youth worker’s relationships with young people have both an educative and therapeutic component and that these relationships are crucial to their success.⁴⁰ Such relationships are difficult for teachers to build, and this has implications for the success of formal peace education.

Successful peace education requires complex human behavioural change like “building relationships of trust; accepting responsibility for constructive change; high quality facilitation; action-learning; review and servant-leadership”⁴¹ all of which are difficult to evaluate, but crucial elements of any sustainable approach.

e. sustainable

Spies’ analysis of peace education concludes that “to initiate change is the easy part. To sustain it is much harder.”⁴² Measuring the long-term effects of peace education is complex, but Jenkins found that nurturing capacities for critical thinking, cooperation and analysis of existing knowledge “significantly increases the possibilities for

³⁸ Rivers, R. & Scotto, Giannis (eds), *Peace Training: Preparing Adults for Nonviolent Intervention in Conflicts*, Associations and Resources for Conflict Management Skills (ARCA), <<http://www.peacetraining.org/>> viewed 04/03/2010, p18.

³⁹ Taylor, *op cit*, p117.

⁴⁰ Helen Rodd & Heather Stewart, ‘The glue that holds out work together: The role and nature of relationship sin youth work’, *Youth Studies Australia*, 28:4, (2009) pp4-10.

⁴¹ Chris F. Spies, *Revolutionary Change: The Art of Awakening Dormant Faculties in Others*, created Aug 2006, Berghof Handbook for Conflict Transformation, Berlin, <http://berghof-handbook.net/documents/publications/dialogue5_spies_comm.pdf>, p4.

⁴² *Ibid*

student engagement with their communities and society at large”⁴³ which is a clear aim of peace education.

What Works described a joint initiative between schools and local government to put youth workers in schools, primarily to support marginalised students. The success of their partnerships relied on the youth worker’s ability to understand that “we’re not on our turf: it’s their culture”; on their relationships of friendship, credibility and trust; and on their understanding that “youth work within schools is not for sprinters; it’s for stayers.”⁴⁴ Nevertheless, “mechanisms for engaging youth... are still in the early stages of experimentation.”⁴⁵ I turn then to an analysis of current approaches.

3. The disparate nature of the peace education field

Peace education can be analysed through its three major components. The first is content – *what* will be taught; second is form – the method or pedagogy, or the *way* it is taught; and third is organisational structure – *where* it will be taught. According to Haavelsrud, the inter-relationship between all three is crucial and an emphasis on one without consideration of the others would be problematic.⁴⁶ The relative emphases however, allow for multiple approaches in various contexts.

In a school situation, content is usually in the curriculum, but may be supplemented for specific situations. For present purposes, the organisational structure is the school, and a consideration of the constraints that this raises follows. The main focus here is with form, and I’ll now consider six major approaches to peace education with youth and their ability to deliver the characteristics above.

a. Education for those affected by violence

One major sector of peace education is concerned with ensuring that those affected by conflict will not repeat the cycle of violence, but overcome their past. Related to this

⁴³ Jenkins, *op cit*, p170.

⁴⁴ Taylor, *op cit*, p79.

⁴⁵ Danesh, *op cit*, p4.

⁴⁶ Magnus Haavelsrud, *Conceptual Perspectives in Peace Education*, Encyclopedia of Peace Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2008, <<http://www.tc.edu/centers/epe/>>, viewed 10/02/2010.

are programs aimed at ‘youth at risk’ of violence. Peace education programs in the form of conflict resolution skills training have been effective in helping youth affected by conflict or violence.

In conflict contexts, Kemper’s useful study identified three typical approaches to youth made by international organisations. A rights-based approach has a short-term focus on prevention, using the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. An economic approach viewing youth as decision-makers in the marketplace provides programs like vocational training; and a socio-political approach has a long-term view to transforming youth into participating peacebuilders.⁴⁷ This last approach encompasses the transformative and sustainable characteristics of peace education, but this sector has limited relevance in NSW schools that are fully focused on delivering curricular outcomes.

b. Human Rights Education (HRE)

A large international study of textbooks in 1993 to see how HRE had been taken up in schools worldwide, reported that no common specific content was found.⁴⁸

Ethnocentric perspectives were merely reproduced, political rhetoric was dominant, but a critical treatment of the realization of rights was neglected. The study also found that progressive teaching methods and new material were rare, and that education was concerned only with curricular outcomes.⁴⁹

In NSW, the Government’s Board of Studies produces the syllabus for students in NSW and has made good progress since the 1993 study.⁵⁰ No ‘peace education’ officially exists, but HRE is incorporated into Geography and History for Stages 4 and 5, and represents 20% of the Legal Studies course for Stage 6. While some scope exists to allow students to investigate issues of their choice, this is primarily a knowledge-based approach and students are required to undergo examinations to assess the major outcomes of this course. According to the five characteristics of peace education, that this barely qualifies as peace education as transformation is not

⁴⁷ Kemper, *op cit*, p3-4.

⁴⁸ Hornberg, Sabine, ‘Human Rights Education as an Integral Part of General Education’, *International Review of Education*, 48:3, (July 2002), pp. 192.

⁴⁹ Hornberg, *op cit*, p193.

⁵⁰ Board of Studies, NSW, Legal Studies Stage 6 Syllabus (2009), <http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/syllabus_hsc/legal-studies.html>, viewed 08/05/2010, p20-21.

an outcome, teaching methods are limited in their ability to be process-centred, participatory or relational, nor to assess the long-term effects of the learning.

c. Participatory or democratic education

Carter and Shipler report that youth participation as a technical field is on the rise. UNICEF defines participation as “involving young people as active participants in the design, implementation, monitoring, and evaluation of sustainable, community-based initiatives.”⁵¹ Reports from conflict zones have

*created a consciousness that youth not only understand their own situations but that they should be consulted when determining appropriate interventions on their behalf.*⁵²

The CCYP has produced public research and practical kits to promote participation in community organisations independent of conflict.⁵³ Participation can therefore be a characteristic of peace education, or a sector in its own right.

In another Australian study, participation literature was reviewed citing its many social benefits, including those valued by schools.⁵⁴ They point out that while ‘civics and citizenship education’ has been a federal aim since 1997, support for active student participation has not evolved very far:

*Young people’s civic participation has positive outcomes for their educational achievement, but is insufficiently supported by formal curricula and pedagogy in Australian schools.*⁵⁵

⁵¹ R.L Carter, & M. Shipler, ‘Youth: Protagonists for Peace’, in P. van Tongeren, M. Brenk, M. Hellema, and J. Verhoeven, eds., *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*, (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), p151.

⁵² *Ibid* p151.

⁵³ NSW Commission for Children and Young People, TAKING PARTicipation seriously kit, 2003, <<http://kids.nsw.gov.au/kids/resources/participationkit.cfm>> viewed 20/03/2010.

⁵⁴ Black, R., Stokes, H, Turnbull, M.J. & Levy, J., ‘Civic Participation through the curriculum’, *Youth Studies Australia*, 28:3, (2009), p13.

⁵⁵ *Ibid*, p13.

Thus, while this approach obviously meets the participatory characteristic, current implementations are limited as peace education.

d. Education for social justice

In a useful study, Black quotes recent studies showing that socio-economic disadvantage is a significant barrier to youth participation.⁵⁶ At a life-stage crucial for identity formation, globalised social representations of youth can potentially exclude those lacking the means or ability to participate, and become a cause of division and alienation. Black's literature review cites reasons for the lack of evolution in peace education: a culture of deficient views of youth as 'adults in waiting' or 'passive recipients', the tokenism of Student Representative Councils (SRCs), and lack of opportunity for disengaged students.⁵⁷

Alongside a lack of engagement of student issues, schools often address social justice education through ad hoc special events. Charities are supported with simple fundraisers (like mufti days with a gold coin donation for wearing non-uniform) organised by small SRCs. Schools may also choose to make a special event of peace-related calendar days like 'Multicultural Day' or 'Harmony Day'. These days are subject to political change and also to superficial treatments. A special presentation by dancers or a drumming workshop may be enjoyable for the school community, but they are unlikely to address deeply the aims of peace education unless they are followed up with opportunities to explore their meaning and implications.

Black *et al* warn that "civic education programs and participatory experiences where young people have little or no control over the process or outcomes can be counter-productive"⁵⁸ so an approach that aims to give students an active role and tangible change is crucial.

⁵⁶ *Ibid*, p14.

⁵⁷ *Ibid*, p14.

⁵⁸ Black *et al*, *op cit*, p14.

e. Critical pedagogy

Critical pedagogy is the educational application of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, which arose from the belief that illiterate and oppressed peasants not only could, but had a responsibility to struggle against the dehumanization of themselves and their oppressors.⁵⁹ He proposed that a crucial part of education involved action, and Freire's work has been landmark ever since. His idea of 'banking education' was that it saw a student as "an empty mind passively open to the reception of deposits... from the world outside", whereas a critical pedagogy required a teacher to develop a relationship of trust with their students, and to encourage dialogue as the main process of critical thinking.⁶⁰

Ira Shor developed Freire's ideas into a system of empowering education that aims at changing the world. In order to do this, students must be encouraged in

*Habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which go beneath surface meaning, first impressions, dominant myths, official pronouncements, traditional clichés, received wisdom, and mere opinions, to understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, ideology, and personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media, or discourse.*⁶¹

Galtung uses core components of critical pedagogy when he summarises questions that should always be asked of peace education: "is there a dialogue that engages learners, rather than simply a message conveyed in an educational setting? Does it bring people together in a joint endeavour? Is it capable of self-generated change?"⁶² Jones describes the deeper process through a schools program with UNICEF:

⁵⁹ Paulo Freire, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, (New York: Continuum, 1970), p48.

⁶⁰ *Ibid*, p75.

⁶¹ Ira Shor, *Empowering Education: Critical Teaching for Social Change*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1992), p129.

⁶² Galtung, *op cit*, p2.

*After a great deal of work, this school was able to develop a positive and nurturing community. However, first the students needed to understand their own dynamics of disrespect and agree to disallow that behaviour.*⁶³

Critical pedagogy is a strong call to move beyond curriculum based education only, involving time and deep engagement. Thus HRE for example, initially teaching-focused, would become part of a “human rights based approach to schooling which calls attention to overall school culture, policies, and practices related to human rights values.”⁶⁴

Only this approach engages with all five characteristics. Its aim is to transform through a process of participatory, relational dialogue which will be sustainable because students are focused on taking action to change their world.

4. Best practices for achieving the characteristics of peace education

Daniel Bar-Tal makes the argument that “the objectives of peace education are markedly different from traditional educational objectives and require a different pedagogy.”⁶⁵ For each of the five characteristics, I’ll now explore how to give practical form to these aims of peace education by being action oriented, in partnership with students, being led by student ideas, facilitating well and making time available, with particular emphasis on critical pedagogy.

a. Transformative: enhancing self-view and providing opportunity for action using informal pedagogies

AN HRE methodology text asserts that “Ideally, HRE is based on experiential learning and an underlying participative and interactive methodology.”⁶⁶ Action

⁶³ Jones, *op cit*, p248.

⁶⁴ Felisa Tibbitts, *Human Rights Education*, Encyclopedia of Peace Education, Teachers College, Columbia University, 2008, <<http://www.tc.edu/centers/epe/>>, viewed 10/02/2010, p6.

⁶⁵ Kok, *op cit*, p197.

⁶⁶ Elbers, Regan, Meade & Hemicci, *Resources for Human Rights Education in the Euro-Mediterranean region: A practical introduction to methodologies in non-formal education*, 2008, Euro-Mediterranean Human Rights Network, <<http://www.euromedrights.net>> , p7.

learning also has a far superior retention rate to ‘banking’ learning.⁶⁷ Students begin to see themselves as activists when they are given opportunities to put their passions into practice.

Critical pedagogy’s dialogue method was chosen as the basis of YPI’s mentoring program to help them make sense of their experiences:

*These students have experienced a radical shift in their worldviews as they’ve come across injustices that make a strong emotional impact on them. This can be a real make-or-break moment for young people eager to make a difference but suddenly aware of the many constraints and limitations on the differences they can make.*⁶⁸

There’s a tension though between encouraging students to go beyond token events with little lasting impact and being wary of the danger that they will be overwhelmed. The aim of the mentoring program is to help students develop a transformed self-view as change agents and facilitators of change in others.

YPI Teacher Contact: Enough theory exists already in schools: students need to be given opportunities to act on it... its good educational practice. (YPI,2010)

b. Process-centred: exchanging roles freely between teachers and students

The *What Works* study raised the important issue of power in interactions with young people:

*The concepts around ‘youth participation’ can be useful to help youth agencies understand how they structure and organize young people’s activism, and the ways in which adults control power in their relationships with young people.*⁶⁹

⁶⁷ Rivers, *op cit*, p18.

⁶⁸ Sydney Peace Foundation Bulletin, Issue 28, March 2010, www.sydneypeacefoundation.org.au p1.

⁶⁹ Taylor, 2008a, p10.

In a school setting, teachers exercise power over students that can be used benevolently or harshly. Critical pedagogy seeks to redress this power imbalance by seeing teachers and learners in a process together, with a united aim. Freire says “good teaching seeks to *draw out* the “inner learner” of both student and teacher... toward a process of *humanization*.”⁷⁰ This ensures that the means of peace education are consistent with the ends.

Furthermore, evaluative research has shown that teachers also need to learn peace education in order to increase the likelihood of successful (peaceful) outcomes:

*peace education programs are most successful when adults model constructive conflict management and caring community... it is as important for the adult members of schools... to learn and enact these constructive behaviors for themselves.*⁷¹

Similarly, Batton reports that “for schools to see significant positive changes it is vital to train all adults who interact with students.”⁷² Critical pedagogy is therefore best practice for achieving these aims, as teacher and students are learning together.

YPI Teacher Contact: teachers just need to provide helpful facilitation of their ideas like making space in assemblies and newsletters, arranging a YPI mentor, giving encouragement. (YPI, 2010)

c. Participatory: supporting student-led initiatives

The *What Works* research studying youth participation in communities asked pertinent questions about what governments want young people to participate in, and what young people themselves choose to participate in. They noted that government commitment to youth participation has meant school ‘Civics and Citizenship

⁷⁰ Morrison, *op cit*, p95, quoting Freire.

⁷¹ Jones, *op cit*, p248.

⁷² Jennifer Batton, ‘Managing Conflict at School: Ohio Commission on Dispute Resolution and Conflict Management in the United States’, in P. van Tongeren, M. Brenk, M. Hellema, and J. Verhoeven, eds., *People Building Peace II: Successful Stories of Civil Society*, (Colorado: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2005), p276.

Education' (to motivate them into contributing?) and Youth Advisory Councils or awards for high achieving individuals (funding and congratulations for a tiny minority), but ask whether this is to the detriment of encouraging student activism?⁷³ Instead, their research sought out projects that were chosen (and passionately driven) by young people, in an effort to understand what participation youth want, rather than what organisations want of them.

Flowers⁷⁴ and Kemper⁷⁵ both note that the weakness of this approach is an idealised view of youth – an inherent belief that if given the opportunity, they will promote peace. *What Works* summarises this as

*there are common misconceptions that linked up services must inevitably result in better outcomes for young people... the more complex issues of power and control, and of perception of services (including education) by young people must be considered.*⁷⁶

The key here is attitude. Foundational to critical pedagogy is a belief in the ability of the learner to become active. This is profoundly different to the curriculum driven banking method of education. A critical pedagogy approach can ensure that students contribute and initiate action. The Black *et al* study shows this can be successful in its evaluation of *ruMAD?*: “a curriculum framework that promotes and facilitates inquiry-based, student-led initiatives designed to effect social change.”⁷⁷ The program has a participatory pedagogy and reports a subsequent independent and positive evaluation of this approach.

YPI policy is to only encourage student (rather than teacher or mentor) initiatives. This can only happen with elicitive rather than prescriptive facilitation.

⁷³ Taylor, 2008a, p8.

⁷⁴ Flowers, *op cit*, p36.

⁷⁵ Kemper, *op cit*, p38.

⁷⁶ Taylor, *op cit*, p7.

⁷⁷ Black, *op cit*, p15.

Overall, materials should be designed in an open-ended way, so there is scope for students to devise creative solutions. (Schell-Faucon, 2000)

d. Relational: elicitive facilitation and mentoring

McInerney studied programs in Victoria that were engaging alienated students using a critical pedagogy approach. Teachers helped students analyse popular culture, technology and the local environment and rather than imposing curricula, encouraged student agency by helping them construct their own knowledge and language.⁷⁸ An effort was made to give learning “real purpose and meaning” and student projects were created that incorporated actual community work so that students could “view themselves as makers and writers of history.”⁷⁹

Schell-Faucon says this partnership is crucial: “the hidden curriculum – i.e. the learning environment and teachers’ attitudes – exerts greater influence over the implicit transmission of values than the formal curriculum.”⁸⁰ Shor suggests that within a school environment: “the heart of the problem is that teachers are taught to lecture and give orders. These old habits have been overcome by many creative and democratic teachers... but the change is not easy.”⁸¹ Spies’ analysis of change showed that people who hold power (like teachers) are unlikely to be good facilitators of generative dialogue that leads to effective change.⁸²

On the other hand, “conversation is at the heart of peace pedagogy”⁸³ and so a critical pedagogy approach ensures that the teacher’s role is to elicit student initiatives and facilitate their transformation into action.

⁷⁸ Peter McInerney, ‘Toward a critical pedagogy of engagement for alienated youth: insights from Freire and school-based research’, *Critical Studies in Education*, 50:1, (2009), p30.

⁷⁹ *Ibid*, p31-32.

⁸⁰ Schell-Faucon, *op cit*, p5.

⁸¹ Shor, *op cit*, p27.

⁸² Spies, *op cit*, p6.

⁸³ Morrison, *op cit*, p92.

YPI Teacher Contact: students initially think of standard events or talks – good facilitation helps them think more deeply ... it validates the students knowing someone outside the school is interested in what they're doing. (YPI, 2010)

e. Sustainable: making a crucial time investment

“In order to be successful, peacebuilding must be viewed as a long and complex process that takes time and draws on a wide range of human capacities.”⁸⁴ This implies of course, that any evaluation of this process will also be complex, but also has crucial comment for peace education within schools. It must be based on more than simple knowledge from a curriculum and must have a longer term view than the duration of a class and a teacher.

Critical pedagogy involves a time investment in order to develop critical thinking and create relationships of trust but once a mind has been transformed, the effects are sustained by their very nature.

YPI Teacher Contact: Their Facebook group is active. Their very existence is raising awareness in their school community and beyond to the P&C. A human rights group has become part of the school life and culture. At a more personal level, when these students leave school their future directions will be informed by their involvement in this group. They will take their passion beyond school into their lives and make contributions to society. These are the sort of kids we want to be leaders in society. (YPI, 2010)

⁸⁴ Danesh, *op cit*, p2.

5. Applying critical pedagogy in the context of a schools-based mentoring program in NSW

These findings, together with the basic aims of peace education, therefore beg the question not only of whether components of the curriculum that simply inform students are effective, but whether this is even peace education at all. Much depends upon the way the teacher presents the syllabus, and more is dependant upon whether students are then given opportunity to act on this new knowledge. In order to bring peace education into a school, changes are needed in attitude and pedagogy, consonant with the characteristics outlined above.

This however, is problematic. As Haavelsrud says

*The question then arises whether the organizational structure can be changed through changes in form and content, or whether this is impossible until changes are brought about in the society which has produced an educational structure antagonistic to problem orientation and dialogue.*⁸⁵

Currently in NSW, only one third of all schools are private, yet the public schools are receiving disproportionately less government funding. A University of Sydney study has shown that by 2012, private schools will have received \$47 billion compared to \$35 billion planned for public schools.⁸⁶ There are also gross disparities in support offered to student-led peace projects between educational sectors. In some Catholic schools, students gain academic credit for community service projects.⁸⁷ Not only is this inequity operating, but the *My School* website implemented this year is causing further division. The website uses national numeracy and literacy test data to compare school's results with neighbouring and statistically similar schools. Critics warn that this test data is limited, yet may become the main indicator of school performance and have increasingly negative effects:

⁸⁵ Haavelsrud, *op cit*, p5.

⁸⁶ Daniel Challis, 'Public vs private school: funding row escalates', in *The Brisbane Times*, 18/01/2010, < <http://www.brisbanetimes.com.au/queensland/public-vs-private-school-funding-row-escalates-20100118-mg9w.html> >, viewed 8/6/10.

⁸⁷ YPI, *op cit*, p16.

*overseas experience had demonstrated school league tables narrowed school curriculums and stigmatised low-performing schools and their students, making it difficult for those schools to recruit high-quality teachers.*⁸⁸

This means that schools in NSW are operating in a divided and marketised system with a gap that's likely to widen. Funding and test data miss the point. The Catholic News points out that "current educational research tells us that the differences between school performance are miniscule" and that "our focus must be on the teaching, because we know this makes the biggest difference to student learning."⁸⁹ Which brings us back to pedagogy.

Peace education is difficult to implement in schools in general because it doesn't fit neatly into the curriculum, is hard to test and time-consuming, and because of the 'banking' nature of institutionalised schooling that shapes students' experience of what education is, and how they even learn about learning. In NSW, an increasing trend towards quantitative measures in education and subsequent teaching to the test, puts demands on teachers that don't allow for process-centred, relational style critical pedagogy as outlined above.

YPI's mentoring program exists as an 'add-on' solution to try to redress this imbalance. However its very necessity reveals that peace education is marginalised rather than at the centre of the education system in NSW.

6. The YPI Mentor Program

The purpose of the YPI mentoring program is to facilitate process-centred learning between high school students involved in social justice and community-building activities, and postgraduate students of Peace and Conflict Studies.⁹⁰ Postgrads learn what peace education looks like in the school context, and assist the students with

⁸⁸ Anna Patty, 'Evaluation of My School pushed aside, say critics', Sydney Morning Herald, 30/03/2010, < <http://www.smh.com.au/national/education/evaluation-of-my-school-pushed-aside-say-critics-20100329-r8eo.html>>, viewed 8/6/10.

⁸⁹ Greg Whitby, 'Government accused over My School website', in CathNews, 27/01/2010, < <http://www.cathnews.com/article.aspx?aeid=19009> >, viewed 8/6/10.

⁹⁰ Peace Links, YPI Update for Educators, Issue 6, January 2010, p5.

their projects while raising issues of theory throughout the learning. Mentors practice critical pedagogy in order to deepen dialogue and learning and build trust in order to facilitate transformation in the students. Similar to the principles Flowers uses for informal pedagogies, critical pedagogy has aims that evolve rather than relying pre-planned content; learning happens through experience, action and analysis rather than theoretical instruction; content relates to the context and situation rather than a curriculum; it may include a wide range of activities; and it relies on intrinsic rather than extrinsic achievement.⁹¹

Ideally, mentors visit their schools weekly or fortnightly for two school terms, and create ongoing links via the YPI website and facebook pages. This program is endorsed by the NSW Department of Education and Training⁹² and is designed to:

*help strengthen youth-led, school-based activities in peace and human rights education, social justice promotion, anti-racism, anti-bullying, community service, and/or peer mediation.*⁹³

This common project vocabulary needs to be linked by mentors to the word ‘peace’ to communicate its every day relevance which has been lost in ambiguity and tokenism.⁹⁴

Groups are formed in schools in a variety of ways that will influence the effective application of critical pedagogy for peace education. Variables that have proved important include whether students self-select membership or are appointed. Students with an existing motivation are more likely to understand and grow from the program. The stated purpose of the group matters too. A social justice group has a different agenda and focus to an SRC. Whether the group is student or teacher-led may affect student initiative and participation, and the size and ages of the students will affect the ability of the mentor to form relationships and the potential level of understanding. When mentor relationships have broken down, it has been attributable to these issues.

⁹¹ Flowers, *op cit*, p37.

⁹² Youth Peace Initiative (YPI), *Volunteer’s Manual*, (Sydney: Sydney Peace Foundation, 2010), p3.

⁹³ Sydney Peace Foundation, *op cit*, p1.

⁹⁴ YPI, *op cit*, p16.

The school can also influence the effectiveness of the critical pedagogy through variables like teacher involvement – are they authoritarian and dominating or relational and facilitating? The school can support the group with acknowledgement, opportunities for communication at assemblies and in newsletters, with resources or fundraising for activities, conferences etc, and simply by the history and culture of previous groups in the school.

7. Case Studies: Critical Pedagogy with NSW High School Student Groups

Before considering the constraints of the education system for facilitating peace education, two case studies from the YPI mentoring program will be considered to illustrate the process and strategies employed.

Hibiscus High – an ideal situation

Group formation:

In this school a student-led human rights group arose when senior students studying human rights in their curriculum wanted to turn their newfound knowledge into activism. The group included a teacher who had asked YPI to provide a mentor for the group. The teacher was involved but never dominant. The students were mature, friendly and articulate. These initial variables contributed to the motivation of the students and therefore the success of their endeavours. Their activities captured the interest of a local youth worker who will continue to support them.

Strategy:

The passionate but inexperienced group required a critical pedagogy dialogue that asked them to think more deeply about the best way to raise awareness amongst students. For example, when the group wanted to gain support for a fair trade issue, they were challenged to think about how to impact a Year 8 boy in the audience. They came up with a chocolate tasting demonstration that proved very successful!

The group required facilitation to improve focus as they had many causes, and they were encouraged to investigate organisations they considered supporting. They were also regularly asked to consider the learning they were gaining, and an awareness of the process of running a campaign.

Highway High – overwhelming constraints

Group formation:

This large SRC group was made up of a wide age-range from Years 7-12 and while the students were motivated individuals, some of whom had some experience working together, they had little interest in social justice. The SRC teacher was new to the role, but had strong, authoritarian visions for the group, some of which were in direct contrast to the aims of peace education. This, as well as a general level of disorganization from the teacher, placed distinct constraints on the process, and eventually derailed the process entirely.

Strategy:

Mentor tried to ensure meetings were restricted to years 10-12 to decrease numbers and a strong explanation of critical pedagogy was communicated at each meeting. Students were keen to plan events for the year, which had chiefly been fundraising via ‘mufti’ days, but the mentor sought to slow these plans down to ensure critical thinking about why these events occurred and how they could have maximum impact in the school community.

Students were given activities that required them to get in touch with their own emotional responses to the issues of respect and bullying that they had raised as school issues, in order to better understand them before trying to communicate them. It emerged that the students actually had little belief in their ability to affect the situations.

8. Constraints of the education system and strategies for mentors

The institutionalisation of education can place constraints on best practice for achieving the characteristics of peace education outlined above. While some strategies exist that might reduce their effects, these constraints are also able to obstruct the students and YPI’s efforts.

a. transformative

McInerney's recent study of student engagement and alienation in schools considered systemic constraints.⁹⁵ He pointed out that while all schools had (for example) anti-bullying policies, it nevertheless remained a real problem, and "that the debilitating effects of poverty and social exclusion" were rarely taken into account by teachers.⁹⁶ That participation in innovative social justice programs is less likely to include those from low socio-economic backgrounds has already been noted. Ineffective policies and a superficial treatment of systemic issues constrain possibilities for deep understanding and transformative change, let alone action by students.

The YPI mentoring program can encourage students to explore issues more deeply with the dialogue of critical pedagogy. One mentor arrived at an SRC planning day as students filled a whiteboard with proposed events for the year. Before launching into these, the mentor suggested the students explore the underlying issues more deeply. Small groups were asked to make 'human statues' depicting their own issues of respect, commonsense and consideration by seeking to use their own experience and emotions. Useful discussion ensued about how they could help make these concepts more 'real' in their school and two action plans were made.⁹⁷

b. process-centred

McInerney also found that many teachers were "under some pressure to teach to the test" and were "trying to navigate a pathway between system requirements and their own knowledge of what actually works for students in their own community."⁹⁸ Whilst educational outcomes are measured by the results of assignments and tests, teachers have little opportunity to divert from leading students down a narrow curricular path.

YPI mentors operate outside of these constraints, so can focus on what will work for students, although allowances will need to be made for study requirements and the

⁹⁵ McInerney, *op cit*, p29.

⁹⁶ *Ibid*, p30.

⁹⁷ YPI Volunteer's Manual, p15.

⁹⁸ *Ibid*, p30.

school or teacher's desired outcomes for the program. Mentors must be very clear to remain partners in the learning process, resisting urges to 'take-over' for expediency. One mentor's first meeting with SRC students at *Highway High* began with an introduction by the newly appointed SRC teacher full of her own agenda (policing uniforms and cleaning up the playground) and authoritarianism (using a shrill 'teacher-voice'). Students were seated classroom style and so the mentor's first step was to ask the students to move the seats into a circle and to focus on their agenda for their SRC membership. The students were soon talking vibrantly about their own ideas for serving the school community. The mentor followed up with the teacher, reiterating YPI's pedagogic practices.⁹⁹

c. participatory

Similarly, and as already mentioned, whilst the full (and expanding) curriculum drives educational outcomes, little space exists for student-led initiatives. Participatory policies may be reduced to the often token opportunities for SRC groups to influence their school communities.

The strategy for YPI groups is to encourage student-led initiative at all times. Mentors will therefore have no agenda for events, but will seek to support student efforts and outcomes. This sometimes involves negotiations with teachers who have formed the group with an agenda of their own. At *Hijinx High*, dialogue with students raised problems they saw in their school and their proposed solutions. However, when these didn't align with the school's agenda for the group, the mentor advocated for the student's ability to follow their initiatives, resulting in the school supporting the students' plans.¹⁰⁰

d. relational

Institutionalisation requires the discipline of large numbers of students in a confined space, and this requires teachers to have power over misbehaving students. Research cited above has shown that a more effective outcome is to bring outside youth

⁹⁹ *Ibid*, p15.

¹⁰⁰ YPI Volunteer's Manual, p15.

workers into the school who are not constrained as tightly by these bounds, nor by the need to produce specific results.

Aware that the means of peace education must match the ends, mentors will seek to build and maintain warm and friendly relationships with students that enable a trusting and supportive working environment. Mentors may also regularly raise the issue of power and control in their groups. One student group had a teacher overseeing them who regularly made disrespectful comments about students, under the guise of humour. YPI mentors understand the importance of language (for example, using 'students' rather than 'kids') and in this case talked with the students about their right to challenge this teacher's behaviour. Another group who had little understanding of their SRC role, were reminded of the power and responsibility they had as representatives of the school's students to the school administration and group dialogue explored the potential in this.¹⁰¹

e. sustainable

UNESCO's International Conference on Education in 1994 proposed peace and human rights education in schools, however they also suggested that traditional forms of education require 'fundamental changes'. "The hallmarks of the formal education system are stability and continuity, but it is also cumbersome and slow to change. The non-formal sector is more flexible and has different scope for action".¹⁰² This implies that informal forms of peace education may be more effective in adopting the aims of critical pedagogy. As Jenkins puts it:

*Learning with and from one another may seem a simple idea, but in so many ways it is foreign to our experience in highly individualized and competitive educational systems.*¹⁰³

Perhaps YPI has a part to play in advocating for changes in the education system that better facilitate informal peace education. For example, the semester-long nature of

¹⁰¹ YPI Volunteer's Manual, p15.

¹⁰² Schell-Faucon, *op cit*, p8.

¹⁰³ Jenkins, *op cit*, p172.

the mentor program is less than ideal for sustainability, so exit strategies must be planned for early. Encouraging students to consider how they might pass their passion on to other students will be important, as well as developing a continuing relationship with YPI via social media. At *Hibiscus High*, members of the social justice group invited key students from younger years to a leadership conference they were attending and made links to a local community justice project.¹⁰⁴ A better, more sustainable scenario would see programs like YPI's fully integrated into the education system, funded not by donations, but by a government that recognised the importance of effective peace education with all young people.

Conclusion

With very little fanfare, YPI is changing the world. The work is not glamorous, but this project is showing that young people are not the vandals and no-hopers that the media tediously projects. As an intern with YPI, I've visited schools where students are giving up their lunchtimes to care for students in Afghanistan, to make movies against racism, and to raise awareness of human rights issues with their school communities.

In practice, when students enthusiastically say they want to run a fundraiser for charity, mentors ask them questions like: What do they really hope to achieve? Will the younger boys care more about this issue afterwards? Is there a more creative way to present their information? Is this part of a long-term strategy? What do they know about the organisation they're raising money for? Students are rising to these challenges, exceeding expectations and then taking the challenges to their peers and their teachers with their own thoughtful questions and innovative ideas.

In competitive education systems with jam-packed curricula, students need to absorb knowledge fast and replicate it in exams. Critical pedagogy however, is interested in helping students look more deeply into the root causes and personal consequences of events and policies, organisations and experience. It is a relational and time-consuming method of education, but one more likely to have long-lasting effect in the hearts and minds of the students.

¹⁰⁴ YPI, *op cit*, p15.

Education at its best – this profound human transaction called teaching and learning – is not just about getting information or getting a job. Education is about healing and wholeness. It is about empowerment, liberation, transcendence, about renewing the vitality of life. It is about finding and claiming ourselves and our place in the world.¹⁰⁵

That sounds like good peace education.

¹⁰⁵ Parker Palmer, in bell hooks, *Teaching Community, A Pedagogy of Hope*, (NY: Routledge, 2003), p43.

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