

### Book Review

**Review of:** *Peace Education: International Perspectives*, edited by Monisha Bajaj and Maria Hantzopoulos, Bloomsbury Academic, London, 2016, 304 pp., \$124.69 (hardback), ISBN 9781474233682, \$38.05 (ebook), ISBN 9781474233712

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By presenting a mosaic of cross-cultural perspectives, Monisha Bajaj and Maria Hantzopoulos help fill a lacuna in the literature. Although peace education does not lack insightful research on non-Western contexts (see Bekerman & McGlynn, 2007; Burns & Aspeslagh, 1996), this book explores a striking variety of international settings. The twelve case studies span Cyprus, Lebanon, the Philippines, India, New York, South Africa, Northern Ireland, Trinidad and Tobago, Kenya and Israel. All sketch contextually sensitive portraits of peace education in practice. The chapters tend to challenge normative assumptions, advocating nuanced local perspectives over universalistic theory: in other words, uniting their geographical range is a commitment to critical peace education.

The book is well-organised. Its first section explores peace education in conflict and post-traumatic contexts, the second national landscapes, the third structures of violence and the fourth approaches and models for peace education. This analytical breadth offers several strengths; one is the ability to stress the manifold, ever-evolving forms peace might assume. Subramanian, Lee, Dollard and Kabba evaluate ideas of social change embedded in television media, namely *Sesame Street* (Chapter 12). Mendenhall and Chopra discuss

how peace education can unfold in Kenyan refugee camps (Chapter 5) while Horner presents a non-formal, faith-based, community-led programme in Mindanao, a region riven by religious riots (Chapter 7). Such discussions seem particularly relevant considering how conflict can disrupt the stable societal structures enabling formal schooling. Dynamic pedagogies for peace, that transcend the four walls of conventional classrooms, thus seem all the more necessary.

The book's analytical breadth has the additional advantage of mapping diverse landscapes. Zakharia deploys an example of peacebuilding during Lebanon's Civil War to make a case for transformative education (Chapter 4). She raises important questions about the need for peacebuilding initiatives to consider localised tensions and the positionality of the UN. Bajaj also delves into the complexities of a specific national context (Chapter 6). Elucidating the history of Indian peace education, she enriches its theoretical dimensions by devising categories for the different stakeholders and ideological approaches involved. Such chapters enable the reader to gain detailed insight into specific contexts as well as draw broader conclusions about peace education.

Another strength of the book's analytical range is that it succeeds in conveying the complications and contradictions inherent in praxis. Discussing the Israel-Palestine conflict, Bekerman reveals the dynamics of power and inequality in bilingual integrated schools in the United States, Northern Ireland and Israel (Chapter 3). Mendenhall and Chopra reveal how barriers such as inadequate funding and friction with ministries of education hinder the delivery of peace education in Kenyan refugee camps (Chapter 5). Bermeo explores the challenges faced by teachers in Trinidad. Demonstrating the potential of critical peace education in schools affected by urban violence, she focuses on teachers' everyday encounters with students involved in the drug trade (Chapter 9). The difficult realities of peacebuilding also emerge in Williams' critique of the anti-school violence policies initiated by Trinidad's Ministry of Education (Chapter 8). By showing how these policies ignore the persistence of exclusion and inequality, Williams demonstrates how peacebuilding attempts may fail to dismantle structural violence. Yet, alongside these helpful critiques, the book also offers hope. Hantzopoulos conveys the potential of schooling to subvert structural violence in her portrayal of a transformative high school in New York (Chapter 10). Another promising example emerges in Soetoro-Ng and Urosevich's "Ceeds of Peace", named after the 'C' skills the programme prioritises, such as compassion, critical thinking and civic engagement (Chapter 11). Without being prescriptive, Soetoro-Ng and Urosevich offer concrete suggestions for working with children and families. The book thus blends critique with practical guidance for change.

In addition, the range of themes has the advantage of letting the authors bolster their academic arguments with the emotional heft of lived experience. Zembylas colours his work on the politicisation of trauma with personal memories of primary school in Cyprus (Chapter 1). This engagement with authorial subjectivity hints at the book's support of self-reflexive peace education. Indeed, Murphy, Pettis and Wray's work on Facing History, a project to encourage critical thinking about historical narratives, suggests that peace educators must embrace the vulnerability of looking inward (Chapter 2). The discomfort involved therein emerges in the example of one trainee realising her internalised prejudices hinder her self-image as a 'lovely liberal person'. The image of the peace educator as a neutral witness to conflict and injustice is thus disrupted.

The book's analytical breadth is also beneficial in that the chapters collectively work to unsettle normative assumptions. Hantzopoulos states that she desires to overturn notions of peace education being 'superfluous' in American schools (Chapter 10). Indeed, her ethnographic accounts of caring teachers compellingly counter charges of irrelevance. Zakharia also challenges a prevailing trend: the UN's prioritisation of security over education (Chapter 4). By foregrounding the testimonies of participants in peace education in a fragile setting, she argues that the potential of education for sustainable, long-term change deserves recognition. The book also questions assumptions about peace itself. Horner shows how Muslims in Mindanao conceptualise peace differently from democracy-focused liberal views (Chapter 7). Zembylas argues that critical pedagogy must take more notice of affect (Chapter 1), while Bekerman, exploring the prolonged Israel-Palestine conflict, underscores the need for peace educators to turn their gaze beyond dominant curricula lest they simply reproduce knowledge (Chapter 3). The chapters thus question multiple norms and assumptions, pushing the field in new directions.

Perhaps the book could have strengthened its criticality by acknowledging the inescapable limitations of fieldwork. Some chapters present glowing reports from participants in peace education programmes. However, hidden forces frequently influence oral evaluations. Social desirability bias could have led participants to try and please researchers by praising the initiatives, while self-selection bias could have rendered only participants who enjoyed highly positive outcomes willing to report their experiences. While such biases would not invalidate the data, perhaps more reflection on the complexities of measuring 'impact' would have been pertinent. Nevertheless, the book is a valuable contribution to the field, charting voyages into peace education on a global scale and drawing rich, locally contextualised maps of the possibilities and tensions therein. The diversity of the contexts examined and the combination of academic critique with practical guidance will make it useful for a wide range of audiences,

from university professors, peace researchers and students to classroom teachers and policymakers.

### References

Bekerman, Z. & McGlynn, C. 2007. *Addressing Ethnic Conflict through Peace Education: International Perspectives*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan.

Burns, R. & Aspelagh, R. Eds. 1996. *Three Decades of Peace Education Around the World*. New York: Garland Publishing.