

Some Reflections on Elicitive Approaches to Peace Studies in Higher Education

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Since John Paul Lederach coined the term ‘elicitive’ to describe his approach to conflict transformation (Lederach, 1995), Elicitive Conflict Transformation (ECT) seems to have been slowly yet steadily gaining in popularity. The neologism reflects that the method of conflict transformation is elicited from and by the parties to a conflict and the energies that they bring with them. As Wolfgang Dietrich has posited that elicitive conflict transformation as the logical application of transrational peace philosophy (Dietrich, 2013), elicitive methods have been applied in programs of peace studies in higher education in a number of countries (Austria, Brazil, Cambodia, Colombia, Ethiopia, Georgia, and Iraq (Echavarría, Hamed & Taylor, 2019, p. 14)) as a holistic pedagogical approach. As it is both a young and expanding field, we will ask the question: what is the current state of the art of elicitive approaches in education with regards to peace? We will elucidate the state of the art by expanding on three aspects: facilitator, curriculum, and institution.

The foundational principles of elicitive approaches to higher education can be found in *Elicitive Curricular Development: a manual for scholar-practitioners developing courses in international peace and conflict studies* (Echavarría, Hamed & Taylor, 2019). The following six guiding principles were initially compiled as principles for curriculum development and we find them to be equally applicable here.

Focus on relationships: is a call to always take care of the relationships, be they between students and teachers, amongst faculty and staff, with an institution or university, or with other supporting institutions, such as governments, foundations, donor agencies, or armed groups.

Look beyond the episode: is a reminder to look beyond the horizon of what is immediately present to also bear in mind how it is nested in a web of relationships. Facilitators look beyond students' questions or conflicts to see the unique person in their constellation of political relations; curriculum is not just a program or course but serves student needs as well as societal needs; institutions provide an educational product but also serve the common weal.

The conflict is always in the room: relates to the importance of paying close attention to the people in the room, their body language, and what is said and not said, as indicative of the latent conflicts in the group that may be emerging.

The importance of communication: congruent communication is where witnessing and being witnessed meet, the fundamental reciprocity of building rapport and trust.

Collaboration, not competition: whether it is working with students, with co-workers, or with colleagues at the institutional level, keeping in mind a superlative goal and holding each individual's unique strengths and weaknesses are tools for the greater success of the endeavor.

Grounding in context and local knowledge: should come as a reminder to the importance of place and to seek to make the most of the unique inflections of the situation. What unique expertise do we have access to here? What can we do here that is not possible elsewhere? What works elsewhere that we cannot do because of the contextual limitations?

These six guiding principles inform, yet are distinct from, the methods of elicitive approaches to peace studies in higher education. To outline the methods in brief, we will follow the same structure as the overall article: facilitator, curriculum, and institution. Elicitive pedagogical approaches take the teacher as facilitator as a methodological choice; this means that the role and responsibilities of the educator extend further than the conventional teacher as one who imparts knowledge. On the level of curricular design, the student experience is the guiding method; the student experience should balance the discomfort of challenge with the comfort of safety. On the institutional level, it is taken as a methodological

choice that the framework of any educational program should be structured to be flexible; this means that in order to adequately respond to the ever-changing unique present moment and all of its circumstances and demands, the institutional framework must be clearly in place and allow for adaptation, permutation, and flexibility. The qualities of bamboo are an apt metaphor in this regard: rigid yet flexible; strong yet light; solid yet hollow.

State of the art of elicitive approaches within peace education

In order to outline the state of the art of elicitive approaches to education in peace studies, it must be positioned both within and in response to the larger context of the state of the art of peace education. This may prove to be a more difficult task than it first appears as “there is an absence of any universal consensus on what constitutes peace education” (Kurian & Kester, 2018, p. 1). We will attempt to frame peace education along four lines: purpose; postmodern critique; historical antecedents; and justice. This will conclude with setting up a justification for elicitive approaches to teaching and studying peace.

We have taken the elicitive aspect of ECT (Lederach, 1995; Dietrich, 2013) and posit that its relevance extends beyond the sphere of conflict transformation as it captures an orientational attitude towards the unfolding present moment that is characterized by permeability and creativity (Lederach, 1995). It is in applying these same principles to education that we refer to elicitive approaches; we maintain the broad categories of ‘elicitive approaches’ and ‘peace studies’ to include many kinds of educational settings. There may be some confusion as to the separation of peace studies, as an academic discipline, and peace education: we understand a discursive relationship in which peace education falls under the larger rubric of academic peace studies, which in turn also attempts to implement the pedagogical and philosophical insights of peace education; therefore, educational programs in peace studies and conflict transformation, in higher education or elsewhere, often use peace education methods. Finally, since our combined backgrounds are mostly concerned with peace studies and peace education within higher education, we place our focus there; however, we believe the experiences to be applicable to all levels of education.

Although at first blush the answer might seem quite obvious, we start this process to be asking the question of what peace education is actually for? Peace education seems to cluster around three typologies: non-violent problem solving; recognizing structural violence; and educational reform (e.g. Harris & Synott,

2002). These typologies all seem to point towards a teleological goal of social justice as the purpose of peace education (e.g. Snauwaert, 2011).

Peace education is a postmodern response to education and the perceived unpeaceful or even violent tendencies inherent in systematized education. It emerged as an academic discipline amidst the postmodern condition (Lyotard, 1973) of the twentieth century and the traumatized soul-searching of Europe and the USA in the wake of the World Wars (Harris, 2011). It is another in the list of (post)modern phenomena that are required to adopt an adjective in order to regain their meaning from the perversion of modernity (e.g. organic farming, holistic health care). Although peace education was a virtually unheard-of concept before the end of the Great War, it gained in popularity near the end of the twentieth century with the writings of Elise Boulding, Betty Reardon, and Johan Galtung.

Peace education, as it is currently understood in a secular sense, can only be a postmodern phenomenon. Education, as the institutionalization of learning primarily through the framework of the nation-state, is itself a completely modern endeavor. Learning is a neutral act and only carries moral weight when it is directed, or “educated,” as to what to learn, and when, where, and how to learn it.

Systematized learning with the goal of peace existed before the twentieth century. Institutions of peace education have historically existed all around the world; they are just known by different names: monasteries, temples, cloisters, and orders: whether they are Franciscan monks, Kagyu Buddhists, or the Mevlevi Order of Sufis, they are long-standing educational institutions with the purpose of knowing peace. Peace studies itself has been largely an extension of religious doctrine in the Anglo-American world, with the substantial contributions of the Doukhobors, Mennonites, and Quakers (Morrison & Harris, 2010, pp. 81-98).

With moralistic origins, it should come as no surprise that peace education is oriented towards the cardinal theme of justice. Following the model of Elicitive Conflict Mapping (ECM)(Dietrich, 2018), conflict episodes can usually be seen to favor one cardinal theme: harmony, truth, justice, or security. Recalling the previously mentioned typologies of peace education, justice is clearly the dominant theme. Educating the young in skills for non-violent conflict resolution is rooted in fear of repeating the violence of the past in hopes of a more peaceful future, which is to say, the definition of a teleological justice. Recognizing structural violence may have an element of trying to achieve security; however, it is ultimately oriented towards a notion of justice in the future. Mitigating the oppressive and deleterious consequences of contemporary modern education is striving for a more fair and just educational system.

Peace education is not just about justice and requires a holistic approach. Cremin and Archer (2018) make the case that peace education (and education in general) demands new approaches that draw on transrational principles and therefore include harmony, truth, and security alongside justice in order to develop “curious, confident, wise, compassionate and knowledgeable learners” (Cremin & Archer, 2018, p. 298). Taken from this perspective, peace education can continue to serve as a vehicle for secular justice as outlined, while at the same time not being confined to postmodern reactions to prescriptive, rational, and linear paradigms of education, and furthermore drawing on traditions of energetic wisdom. To try to understand what it takes to perform the dance of elicitive approaches to education in peace studies, let us now look at the facilitator, curriculum, and institutions.

The role of the facilitator in elicitive approaches to education in peace studies

Elicitive approaches require facilitators with a broad set of abilities. Due to the relational nature of the orientation and its fundamental transgression of conventional disciplinary boundaries, the necessary skill sets are not limited to those of any single pre-established profession (Mitchell, 1993). Although the individual involved must be an expert in theories of peace and conflict transformation, the conventional profile of a university professor does not encompass what the role requires. Norbert Koppensteiner has argued that the skills of the elicitive peace studies facilitator draw from psychotherapy, counseling, peacebuilding, and conflict work, without completely taking over those practices (Koppensteiner, forthcoming). Conversely, they are also dissimilar enough to warrant differentiating an elicitive approach to peace studies from the aforementioned disciplines. For the purposes of this essay, we will break them down into three simplified and archetypal categories: academic skills, interpersonal skills, and self-reflective skills.

Starting from objective and verifiable observations about external reality, it is, of course, necessary to possess adequate background knowledge of conflicts, theoretical knowledge, and skills of writing and research. However, being a facilitator of elicitive approaches to peace requires expert academic skills and yet goes beyond the classical understanding of a teacher. The limitations of the prescribed institutional role of a “sage on a stage” who is there to impart their knowledge into the blank minds of the students (Freire, 1970) have been thoroughly critiqued and need not be repeated here. Students are not empty containers to be filled; they are co-creators in a complex relational system that works with the facilitators using their own personal experiences as grist for the

proverbial mill in the academic learning environment (e.g. Bovill, Cook-Sather & Felten, 2011). Facilitators need to be able to impart knowledge and download information to students effectively in the banking style of education; however, this needs to be only one dimension of their skills.

The second category, which we have named interpersonal skills, moves from the external facts of the matter to the relational dimensions of facilitating. It thus requires teachers and facilitators to be trained and prepared by a pedagogy that combines cognitive knowledge acquisition with personal unfolding grounded in Humanistic Psychology (Lederach, 1995, p. 64; Curle, 1971). This can include but is not limited to counseling students, mentoring them professionally, supervising their projects, and recognizing moments of healing and transformation. This requires communication skills that are trained in therapeutic settings, such as active listening and speaking calmly and prosodically, however, we should point out that therapy is not the objective even though therapeutic moments may arise. Furthermore, facilitators require levels of subtle awareness of themselves and others of their emotional states, psychological states, and body language cues. This aspect of peace studies facilitation, being open and aware in the present moment, can be understood by Lederach's concept of serendipity, which is "to see and move with the unexpected" (Lederach, 2005, p. 118). Thus, soft skills of communication, openness, and awareness lend themselves to skillful and adaptive action.

Self-reflective skills move from the interpersonal dyad to the intrapersonal layers of the Self as a semi-permeable contact boundary (Perls, 1973). This means to be able to observe and critically reflect on one's internal subjective experience as well as one's situatedness in a web of relations. It is an inward gaze that can be characterized by curiosity and a focus on process. From the perspective of an elicitive approach to facilitation, all aspects of an individual's persona become part of a system by their mere presence. This means that the facilitator brings along the entirety of his or her biography, identities, perspectives, and shadows. This ability to look inwards is reflected, through the principle of correspondence (Dietrich, 2018), in the ability to connect outwards. In the words of Bai, Park, and Cohen (2016), who share a similar approach:

We believe that the ability of the educator to be aware in the moment, self-regulate, and attend with love and care to his embodied experience is the measure of his or her ability to model this behavior to students and develop warmth, connection, and trust in the context of the teacher-student relationship (p. 123).

For effective and authentic communication the facilitator guided by an approach of elicitive inquiry needs to be keenly aware of all of these as well as have clarity of who they are in relation to the specific endeavor of the educational program.

This is true for the individual facilitator as well as a team or group. Ideally, education in peace studies at any level should be carried out with teams of facilitators who have spent sufficient time developing their own self-awareness on the individual and team levels, and who can work on their own dynamics as a facilitative system so that the individuals can be well aware of each other's limits, strengths, and communication styles. This team building goes beyond those who are directly involved in the role of facilitation and also includes the support, logistic, and administrative staff as each individual is a contact point for the entire learning experience. This may be very difficult to achieve both in content, due to the inherent difficulty self-reflection, and in logistics, due to the complications of arranging time for team-building exercises for various parties all together (e.g. teachers, admin, support staff etc.).

Facilitation necessitates a unique blend of abilities that are both skills and an art. Norbert Koppensteiner elaborates on the skill and art of being a peace studies facilitator.

As a skill, it necessitates structure, order, a concept or plan, the practiced use of the tools adopted and the patience to meticulously polish the details until each element fits. As an art, it requires a willingness to go with the energetic flow of the unexpected, curiosity, openness towards intuition and inspiration, readiness to take risks and the capacity to tolerate a high amount of uncertainty. (Koppensteiner, forthcoming)

It is in the tension of this ostensible paradox of structure and surrender, of tested plans and improvised flexibility, of skill and art that the facilitator guided by elicitive approaches truly emerges.

Elicitive curriculum design

The creation of a curriculum is an essential concern when creating an educational program. Through its structure and design, the plan of the course can facilitate a synthesis of academic, interpersonal, and self-reflective skills. The curricula and the academic standards of the program are two of the themes that shape the relationships between the facilitators and students (Echavarría, Hamed & Taylor, 2019). Finally, all of the curricular elements should contribute together to an

overall flow that extends from and feeds back into the fundamental objectives of the program in question.

While it is possible to run an educational program entirely based on an elicitive methodology, the circumstances when such an approach is warranted are few. The expectations of participants, the preparation of the facilitators, the requirements of the institutions, and the requirements for diplomas, certifications, and accreditation often necessitate the establishment of a pre-established curriculum. Building the formal structures of a curriculum with elicitive approaches in mind requires extensive preparation on the part of the facilitators, a high degree of competence in the didactical teaching style of the facilitators, and familiarization with the context in which the training will take place.

The question of elicitive and prescriptive design and methodology is an essential consideration in building a curriculum for a higher education program in peace education, peace studies, or conflict transformation. In recent literature, there have been calls for the importance of elicitive methodologies within the wide frame of peace studies, conflict transformation, and peace education (Cremin & Archer, 2018; Dietrich, 2013). The essential components of curricula for peace studies and conflict transformation in higher education are similar from program to program, usually containing combinations of short lectures, discussions, embodied and experiential learning, simulations, facilitated group work, role plays, case studies, reflection and feedback sessions, critical thinking and skill based-practicums and one-on-one coaching.

The contextualization of these components into the social, cultural, and political environment, in which they will be used, and the didactical skills and sensitivities of the facilitator are where elicitive approaches can be incorporated into the educational program. This will be broken down into three points: know the audience; know the objective; know the context. These three points have a parallel in Ruth Cohn's Theme Centred Interaction, in which the audience is the *I* or *WE*, the objective is the *theme*, and the context is the *globe* (Cohn, 1975).

The first level of the process of contextualization involves knowing the audience. This means understanding who the participants in the program are, their motivations, and the organizational dynamics in which the program is operating. The span of these considerations can vary significantly depending on the intention of the program.

The second consideration is knowing the objective or the theme of the program, course, or training. If the program is intended to provide conflict transformation training to a group of people who work together in a peace

organization, there can be an implicit or explicit emphasis on team building, leadership, and strategic planning. Conversely, if the intent of the training program is understood as an explicit effort in transforming a conflict, as in the case of bringing together participants representing groups involved in an ongoing conflict, the design of the curricular components can be significantly different.

The third consideration is the over context or globe. Every educational program exists within a web of cultural, social, and political contexts. If programs are operating during an ongoing peace process or protracted cycles of violence, the dynamics of this and their relationships to the participants need to be understood by the facilitators. These considerations can apply to the compositions of working groups, the selection of case studies and the use of role-plays. A facilitator may want to consider if in a given moment it is more skillful to select specific cases for use in role plays or simulations that mirror current conflict dynamics or if it may be wiser to select an example that is further removed temporally, geographical and thematically from the students' context in order to focus on the relational dynamics and process of the group.

In addition to these concerns, the context, or globe in Cohn's terminology, extends well beyond the immediate scope of the educational environment. Sensitivity to the timing of the training with regards to ongoing political events could be very important. For example, a program occurring near or during a contentious election can require that certain considerations be made from the level of logistics to the specific content of the program to the visibility of the program in the media. These concerns make up the context in which the program operates. The facilitator need not design the curriculum of the program to fulfill every need in the system, but they should be aware of how these needs affect the participants of the program.

Another aspect in which elicitive methodologies enter the process of curriculum design is through the structure and flow of the different elements of the program. These elements of process design are done with a specific emphasis on the interpersonal skill sets of the facilitator. From the outset of each program, it is crucial to establish the participants as a learning group, the learning environment as a safe space, acknowledge the difficult nature of working with conflicts and perceptions and uncover hidden assumptions which shape understanding the dynamics of conflict and approaches to its transformation.

When the strengths and weaknesses of the facilitator are harmonized with the structural and institutional elements of the program, the flow of the curricular elements should seem natural and effortless. This flow is achieved by being

deeply intentional in which elements are included in the program, when they are included, how they link to the flow of the day and the overall program. Every activity must have a purpose: icebreaker activities should be done in such a manner that connects to the purpose of the program and the relational dynamics of the participants and the facilitator. Interspersing the different components of the curriculum with spaces for individual, small group and whole group reflections is important for establishing feedback between the facilitator and the group and amongst the group members. These reflection spaces encourage the use of the self-reflective skills of the participants and the facilitators and are vital for the integration of the experiential learning aspects of the program and for linking any content presented to the participants' own experiences. Further, well-designed and facilitated spaces for reflection encourage the development of reflective thinking skills on the process of learning itself. Distinctions should also be drawn between reflection on the dynamics of the group and engagement with the contents of the program and the feedback directed from the group to the facilitator regarding the program itself.

The creation of a curriculum is a dynamic interplay between structure and flexibility that acknowledges the skillful selection of the curricular content. Furthermore, the design of the pedagogical process can provide the space and the spark that invites the participants into the learning space. Contextualizing the curriculum to the current reality of the participants allows for the selection of the intellectual content of the program that can be engaged with through more embodied pedagogical methods and integrated through intentionally held spaces for reflection.

Educational institutions and elicitive approaches

A holistic perspective on elicitive approaches to peace studies must include the educational institutions themselves. The structure and function of these institutions make them ideal vectors for the transformation of cultural perspectives and social structures. Through holding the charge of educating and socializing young adults, schools and universities contribute to the generation and propagation of cultural views and collective knowledge. As institutions, they are what Lederach designates as "middle range" actors (Lederach, 2005). They provide space and means of connection between those in "elite" positions and the "grassroots," this is true both of the educational function of universities and the potential of individuals and groups within universities to leverage their connection and respect amongst the community to build relationships and challenge perspectives. This role of education as an essential component in the

transformation of conflict is well known in the literature on multi-track diplomacy (e.g. Diamond & McDonald, 1996).

The social placement and cultural function of educational institutions is not values-neutral and does not necessarily predispose them to contribute constructively to the transformation of conflicts (Cremin et al., 2018, pp. 298-300). However, these institutions, by their nature are inherently resistant to elicitive approaches, since elicitive approaches emphasize dynamic and relational aspects.

In many cases, higher education programs in peace studies are focused on the nation-state as the primary actor and mediator for working with conflict, neglecting other community-based approaches (Cremin et al., 2018, p. 296). In many cases, educational systems have been misused to exacerbate conflicts through reifying forms of cultural and structural violence by intensifying and entrenching inflexible identities and lines of discrimination (Paulson, 2019). It is precisely the power and ambiguity of educational institutions in regards to peace and conflict that make them an object of inquiry within peace studies and peace education broadly and why there is need for careful analysis of their structures and dynamics at all levels.

Alternative methods of education, while growing in acceptance in their use for children and young adults are still sparsely found in institutions of higher education. Furthermore, higher education has been slow to adopt new insights into the learning process from neuroscience and other fields (Dietrich, 2019). These institutions tend towards conservative approaches in pedagogical didactics, and pedagogical structure, with the structure of universities, having stayed largely the same over the last two centuries. Possibilities to include aesthetic conflict transformation methodologies, such as dance and theatre, or trans-institutional training, such as civil-military cooperation (CIMIC), are lacking at the structural level.

There are two main possibilities when considering elicitive approaches to peace studies at the institutional level within higher education. The first is to develop a program specifically in the field of peace and conflict studies or conflict transformation. The second is the incorporation of elements of elicitive methods into other fields of study and practice. A “peace lens” can be of benefit to any field that involves a high degree of relational skills such as medicine, law enforcement, social work, and psychology. Further disciplines that may not emphasize this relational component but rather their potential effects on society, such as science, engineering, and technology, can also benefit from the integration

of a “peace perspective” into their field of study. These two options are by no means mutually exclusive: elicitive approaches to education could be conceptualized like mathematics in that most students receive a fundamental level of education in the field while far fewer pursue it to the doctoral level.

At the structural level of educational institutions, the most expedient and prudent efforts will be those that aim at a series of realistic and incremental changes. Elicitive peace education requires skill sets and capacities that are usually outside the requirements used for faculty selection, evaluation, and training. If there is to be a shift from the teacher as a disseminator of knowledge to an elicitive facilitator who can synthesize relevant intellectual engagement with deeper relational levels of being these capacities will need to be specifically called for in faculty and further encouraged through ongoing faculty training. The need to dedicate time for focusing on internal development is especially true for faculty that work in facilitation teams.

The formal structures of institutions of higher education provide for the legitimacy, sustainability and efficacy of higher education to be a force for change at multiple levels and in a variety of sectors. Through applying the logic of ECT to the educational system and praxis, these existing structures can be slowly modified so that through their programming, curricula and pedagogical practices, institutions of higher education can better support ongoing efforts of transforming conflicts and contribute to an increasing depth and nuance of education. Due to its normative orientation (in that it seeks to work towards peace and the elimination of violence), transdisciplinary nature, and emphasis on holistic modes of learning, the overall field of peace studies is an ideal discipline for the exploration, experimentation, and reification of divergent and elicitive pedagogical approaches.

Conclusion

Education, in general, requires a total paradigm shift. Peace education, which emerged as a postmodern response to education and the perceived structural violence inherent in its presuppositions, has largely been concerned with transforming the institutions, the ministries, schools, and universities, in which education takes place. Adopting a transrational perspective and integrating elicitive methods shifts the focus from the transformation of institutions to the transformation of learning (Cremin & Archer, 2018, p. 298). An elicitive frame can re-orient (peace) education from focusing solely on the cardinal theme of justice to including security, truth, and harmony.

We highlight some essential elements of the transrational shift towards elicitive approaches to peace studies, in general, and more specifically to peace education, by looking at facilitators, curricula, and institutions. Facilitators should aspire to combine the cognitive prowess of a scholar, with the insight of a psychologist and the self-awareness of Buddhist monk. Curricula have to combine a clear logic and structure that builds on previous material to a logical conclusion while remaining open, permeable, flexible, and adaptable. Institutions ultimately need to adapt to the shifting paradigm or perish. As we both describe and advocate an elicitive paradigm in the sphere of peace studies and peace education, this is not a new invention: it attempts to hold in a dynamic balance the knowledge of science, the wisdom of the ages, the order of structure, the chaos of uncertainty, and the unfolding mystery that is the human experience.

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