

ARTICLE




Culture of Peace: Art and Play in the Carmen Serdán Centre for Social Integration, Zinacantepec, Mexico State, Mexico

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Abstract

This article offers an analysis of theories of Xesús R. Jares, John Paul Lederach, Mario López, Pat Allen, Lilian Dabdoub and Violet Oaklander regarding the culture of peace, education for peace, non-violence and the way young children respond to artistic and play activities. This study is the result of research in the field conducted in the Centro de Integración Social N° 5 – Carmen Serdán, in the town Zinacantepec, Mexico State, Mexico.



Keywords

culture of peace, education for peace, art, play, toy library, conflict resolution

INTRODUCTION

This analysis was based on the model proposed in a 1999 declaration of the General Assembly of the United Nations. Article 1 refers to the values and attitudes of the culture of peace:

- a) Respect for life, ending of violence and promotion and practice of non-violence through education, dialogue and cooperation;
- b) Full respect for the principles of sovereignty, territorial integrity and political independence of States and non-intervention in matters which are essentially within the domestic jurisdiction of any State, in accordance with the Charter of the United Nations and international law;

- c) Full respect for and promotion of all human rights and fundamental freedoms;
- d) Commitment to peaceful settlement of conflicts;
- e) Efforts to meet the developmental and environmental needs of present and future generations;
- f) Respect for and promotion of the right to development;
- g) Respect for and promotion of equal rights and opportunities for women and men;
- h) Respect for and promotion of the right of everyone to freedom of expression, opinion and information;
- i) Adherence to the principles of freedom, justice, democracy, tolerance, solidarity, cooperation, pluralism, cultural diversity, dialogue and understanding at all levels of society and among nations; and fostered by an enabling national and international environment conducive to peace.



These points were used to observe the development of the culture of peace at the Centro de Integración Social N° 5 – Carmen Serdán (CIS N° 5) school, through the perception of the children and teachers with respect to it and the link with art and play.

The research was conducted from October to December 2010, with a population of 5th and 6th grade primary school pupils. These children were chosen because they shared specific characteristics instrumental to the study, such as participating in the plastic arts workshop, which, due to lack of resources, was not open to all pupils. School programmes of previous years meant the chosen group was more familiar with moral values, human rights and civic-mindedness – subjects related to education for peace – which increases the possibility of them having clear ideas of the topics that make up a culture of peace. They also receive a bilingual education at the school and, being old enough to understand its importance, and are able to provide information in this area. Within this context, the following question arose: How is CIS N°5 applying artistic activities and play to work on the culture of peace with these children?

The approach used for this article follows “it’s a process that collects, analyzes and links quantitative and qualitative data in the same studworks, in a series of researches that answers the outlining of the problem as well as to respond to researching questions of a statement of that problem” (Tashakkori y Teddlie, 2003).

Quantitative data were obtained by applying a Likert scale to the children’s responses, so identifying and distinguishing the reference points of culture of peace. The percentages gave a better insight into how majority and minority groups in the population felt about each of the points under consideration and about things related to the field of art and play.

For the qualitative results, questionnaires with open questions were used to reveal the games and toys that form part of the children’s daily routine. This led to an explanation of what for them were specific aspects of peace and violence. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with the teachers, referring to the same topics dealt with in the groups of children to identify similarities and differences regarding the culture of peace, education for peace and the perception of the artistic and play activities.

Education for peace is considered to have several forerunners. First of all, the UNESCO recommendation concerning education for international understanding, co-operation and peace and education relating to human rights and fundamental freedoms (18th General Conference, 1974). This highlights the importance for each Member State to “formulate and apply national policies aimed at increasing the efficacy of education in all its forms and strengthening its contribution to international understanding and co-operation, to the maintenance and development of a just peace...” Secondly, there are the initiatives

of John Paul Lederach (2000), and Xesús R. Jarés. Their conceptualisation is the most complete to bring together the elements for this research:

“A process that is educational, dynamic, ongoing and permanent, based on the significant and defining concepts of positive peace and a creative outlook on conflict. By applying socio-affective and problem framing perspectives, the process aims to develop a new kind of culture, a culture of peace that helps individuals to unveil reality with a critical eye so they can place themselves before it and act accordingly.” (Jarés, 1999, pp. 124, 2004, pp. 31 y 2005, pp. 124)

MEXICO AND THE CULTURE OF PEACE

The present situation of children in Latin America is increasingly becoming a focus of attention:

“In a region like Latin America, which continues to be characterised by gross inequalities, investing in early childhood is a moral imperative that offers opportunities to overcome or reduce some of the huge challenges that the region faces, such as persistent poverty, inequality, social failure, chronic unemployment and violence.” (Aasen, 2010)

This confirms the need to rethink what is being done, in terms of education, contextualising and taking into account the factors involved in each of the schools that wish to start functioning in the framework of the culture of peace. Historically, marginalization in Latin America has determined the lives and destinies of millions of people. While under certain circumstances, thinking of resorting to violence may be considered by educated groups, for others, it is a factor in their daily lives rather than intellectual exercise. These extremes have resulted in a lack of information and prevailed over European thinking.

This is an awareness that enables the rebuilding of people who are freer, in control of their lives. The Argentinean Adolfo Pérez Esquivel, awarded the Nobel Peace Prize, president of the Peace and Justice Service in Latin America and a teacher for almost 40 years, once had the opportunity to visit Maya communities in the Mexican state of Chiapas and, referring to their concept of development, stated:

“In our language the word *development* does not exist. What exists? What exists is the word *balance*, in balance with ourselves, with others, with the cosmos, with the supreme being, with god, the god of all names and the god without name, in balance with Mother



Nature. [...] peace as a permanent dynamic force in human relationships makes it possible to establish the balance we must have with life, with the universe, among ourselves.” (Pérez, 2004, pp. 7)

This suggests that every nation in Latin America is rooted in the basic notion of living in a non-violent way.¹ In the case of Mexico this dialogue with the world was based on observations of the dynamic cycles of nature, of the harmony of being in contact with a ‘whole’ (the idea of integral education), where each of the components of this universe is important, its existence being the roots of a cycle of life, and also its respect for life and death.

Exercising respect in education for peace means referring to and focusing on the pupil, starting with what violence, dialogue and human rights mean to them. “They also need to learn they can choose their own way of expressing their feelings. Children know how to familiarize with many variations of feelings to help them being in contact with what they are feeling.” (Oaklander, 2003, pp. 122). This allows us to see how, in play and art, children find the opportunity to produce representations of their conflicts, even of people they are afraid of facing in real life or situations they find difficult or impossible to resolve. At times they can be unreserved and release their emotions during these activities, making the individuals aware and showing them their reality.

According to the 2010 edition of the dictionary of the Real Academia Española, *art* (from Latin *ars, artis*) means virtue, willingness or skill in the performance of a task. It is a demonstration of human activity which expresses a personal and disinterested vision of things real or imaginary with plastic, linguistic or sound resources. The human body should be added to this definition, as another major resource.

“There was a time, before oncoming the industrialism and before the professional specialization was common, that one of the ways society had to produce culture was through a rich tradition of popular art. Common people made items and created images and icons to indicate births and deaths, as well as to commemorate important facts to intensify their way of living.” (Allen, 2009, pp. 12)

Both art and play have components that go back to prehistory and are a form of expression through which social progress became clear, not only in cognition but also in cultural aspects such as communication.

Therefore, thinking and acting within a framework of education for peace, requires taking into consideration that “play and artistic expression are fundamental for the integral development of the individual, throughout the whole process. This thinking and acting also has effects on personal development and on the relation to others and the environment” (Chávez, 2004, pp. 29). Integral development is fundamental for the conception and creation of educational programs, because the awareness of its importance includes principles and actions which take into account the possibility of educating for an intrinsic and common good.

Creativity, as a basic element of conflict resolution, is understood to be the form in which conflicts manifest themselves through certain capacities:

“Creativity, the capacity for constant learning and change, interrelate in a dance that translates into the transformation of the individual. Creative education is oriented towards the development of knowing how to create, allowing extension of the potential of knowing how to understand, knowing how to act, how to exist and how to coexist.” (Dabdoub, 2008, pp. 29)

Now we present the set of fundamental theoretical elements of the culture of peace that are important to observe in the daily lives of the children at CIS N°5.

FULL RESPECT AND FOSTERING HUMAN RIGHTS AND FUNDAMENTAL FREEDOMS

In virtue of the idea that the basic mission of education is enabling people to ‘grow’ in terms of dignity, freedom, rights and obligations, the field of human rights is part of a comprehensive education. The role education plays must be based on a complete pedagogical project that stimulates living and enjoying human rights (Jares, 2002, pp. 8).

Xésus R. Jares (2002, pp. 81) states that education for human rights is “a continuous and permanent educational process, based on the broad concept of human rights processes... and on a creative outlook on conflict, to develop the notion of a culture of rights whose purpose is the defence of human dignity, freedom, equality, solidarity, justice, democracy and peace”. The premise of this definition is that education is ultimately based on values, because it is important for children to know and identify their rights

¹ The concept of *non-violence* can easily be confused with situations of a-violence, that is, lacking violence, but also, many media organizations and official bodies (such as UNESCO) employ it to refer to social movements, historical processes or individuals who use or used it to motivate or bring about social change. When writing the word *non-violence*, the reference is not just to a set of techniques and procedures that renounce violence and the use of weapons, but to an entire constructive and open program of emancipation and justice that has ethical-political, social and economic characteristics (a form of social change) whose aim is to reduce human suffering as much as possible. (Federal District Government, 2010, p. 13)



as an essential part of their development and to grow up promoting justice, cooperation, solidarity, respect, responsibility and creativity.

For these matters, 61% of the children state the field of human rights is dealt with and only a small minority affirms the opposite. This coincides with their teachers, who confirm they promote equal human rights between boys and girls, so that there is no form of abuse or discrimination, emphasising their responsibilities in the boarding school. Human rights education is not just identifying that the precepts have to be defended at all times, but that they correspond to freedoms that every human being requires to develop in a harmonic and integral way.

Having a clear idea of the rights they are entitled to avoids injustice, and clearly pointing out the responsibilities that come with those rights helps them to be able to answer for their actions, this being one of the principles of education for peace. A base is also created for them to become citizens of the world (Jalali, 2001), since the identification of human rights as universal rights gives them the opportunity to transfer the principles and values to a global level. This enables them to identify themselves in other regions of the world and live together with the world's citizens, feeling they are one of them.

PUTTING NON-VIOLENCE INTO PRACTICE

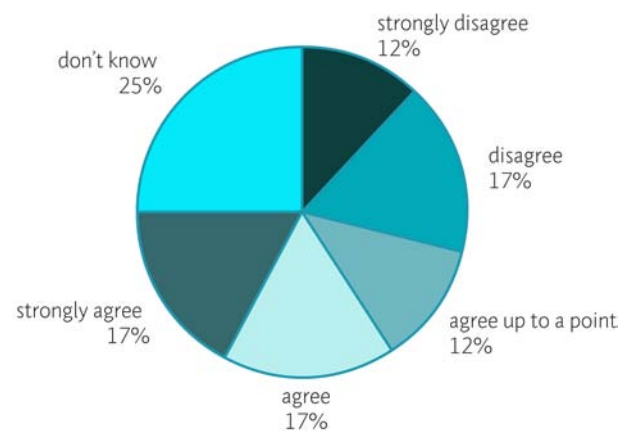
Non-violence, as defined by Mario López (2009), is a methodology, an ethical-political doctrine, a way to build peace that is oriented towards a coherent philosophy which seeks a love of knowledge, experimentation and life. The theory is inspired by Gandhi, Martin Luther King, Henry David Thoreau, John Ruskin and Leo Tolstoy, known for their messages of peace and their notable pacifist actions. Mario López (2004, pp. 785) defines the theory of non-violence as "an active methodology to influence the development and the peaceful outcome of a conflict, mixing with violence to denounce and transform it". He adds that non-violence is for inquiring, committed and determined individuals who want to both study and abide by the conditions required to achieve a more just, peaceful and lasting world. Its character is one of global responsibility, global brotherhood and universal love. This does not mean that a passive attitude is the best way to achieve peace: being passive is not synonymous with peace.

For the theory of non-violence, it is essential to use dialogue and negotiation as instruments because they stimulate thought and the construction of reality in a different way, unlike the many options that language and emotions lead us to. It is a method for action, opposed to passivity, fear or flight; it is like an ethical duty and conviction, demanding justice where a power capable of acting is needed.

One clear example can be found in the life and actions of Gandhi who peacefully carried out his actions. The future of non-violence lies in debating, spreading and consolidating a culture and education for peace, intertwining with democracy. These elements are vital for the construction of peace.

In this category there was a wide variety of responses with most being unaware of what the term *non-violence* stood for.

Graph 1. During everyday activities in the classroom I practice non-violence.



Source: authors, based on questionnaire results

Due to the varied responses and the experience during the presentation of the questionnaire, where the students immediately asked for the meaning of this question, it was clear that the term was confusing for some and completely unknown by others and subsequently the children had to be asked what *violent child* meant to them. For them it was related to direct violence inflicted physically by either hitting, pushing or forcing them to do things they do not like. But they also found words offensive, calling each other names, lies and humiliation. Violent people are seen to be those who do not obey anyone, do not work, steal things, damage buildings and forcefully demand money. Children who do not do these things and also are happy, smile, speak politely to everybody, respect and obey their teachers, were those considered to be not violent (pacific).

For the adults in the study, non-violence means treating each other with respect, and this is stressed before the children so that they do not hurt or discriminate each other. The teachers also believe that acting as a parent or a friend during the school period, gives the children the opportunity to express themselves and talk about their problems, and develop the ability to listen to people who have problems at home. They believe that non-violence means encouraging the children to share their belongings in the classroom. However, nobody provided specific details of the set of techniques and procedures: what it is, how it is used and its enormous potential. While the effort being



made by the teachers is beneficial, the children show clear signs of lacking tools to practice non-violence, and they are confused.

COOPERATION AS A PRINCIPLE TO ACHIEVE COMMON GOALS

Cooperation between children is often complicated: they have different tastes, ideas and forms of expression which are the result of the varied environments in which they grow up. Having goals in common is part of the training that helps foster respect and develop the ability to adapt to differences present in their classes. During childhood, it is very important that cooperation is not only addressed theoretically, but also put into practice among the children, stimulated by adults as part of the study plans and programs, and also in out-of-class activities such as games and art workshops.

Of the children at CIS N°5, 48% affirm they find it easy to cooperate with the group to achieve common goals. To a certain extent, this can be explained by their everyday living conditions since, being in a boarding school, they do things together outside of class, such as maintaining the garden and preparations and activities for festivals and special celebrations. These activities stimulate their perception of the importance of teamwork in achieving positive results. The teachers also have a positive view of the matter.

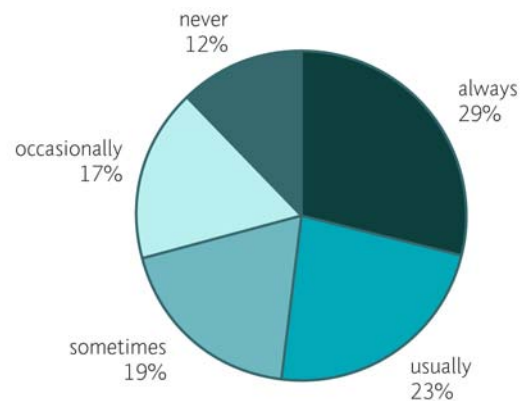
However, a significant 23% of the answers were “strongly disagree” and a further 11% was “disagree”. As in all groups, it is important to consider the opinions of those who say they have difficulties in cooperating. The culture of peace implies being able to analyse and reflect before sentencing or judging those whose response is not that of the majority, more so in the case of children still growing up. For these groups, detailed observation, promoting dialogue, providing non-violent options and timely attention are required to prevent possible antisocial behaviour and encourage behaviour in favour of peace.

THIRD PARTY INTERVENTION IN YOUNG CHILDREN’S CONFLICTS

Conflicts exist in every stage of life. As mentioned above, they are part of normal development: support is required in the early stages of life to meet basic needs and later to meet the needs that derive from a person’s adaptation to the environment where they grow up and learn. At certain moments, children require external support to help solve their conflicts. It is important that their educational environment has a very clear view of when it is best to leave

children to resolve an interpersonal conflict themselves, and at what point third party intervention becomes necessary.

Graph 2. When I have differences or problems with somebody at school, I solve them with the help of somebody else.



Source: authors, based on questionnaire results

Third party intervention is important for children: 52% stated they “always” or “usually” solve their problems with the help of another person. This could be due to their age and lack of information on how to deal with their problems in a non-violent way. Also, in a cultural sense, it may be that they are not being taught to handle conflict creatively. As for the teachers, most confirmed that they do intervene when conflicts occur, although some indicated there were none and hence there had been no need to act. While the replies of these children and adults are coherent, 12% of the children claimed they needed no help and part of the adults seemed to deny the existence of conflicts.

Tools for mediation are needed to ensure that not only adults intervene in conflicts – the traditional top-down hierarchy – but that a horizontal approach is also possible, with children themselves engaging in an act that, beyond simply avoiding or denying violence, can become a form of conduct for life. This is a way to help shape citizens who are able to express their ideas and settle their differences peacefully by engaging in dialogue. Mediation is a technique that requires practice. From the very beginning its great advantages must be highlighted and the children made aware of what it means if they try to face problems without it.

Freedom is based on not being dependent on third parties to solve conflicts, as third parties are influenced by interests and ideas different from those directly affected by the problem. Freedom is to help children acquire the ability to find an equilibrium between their differences and be able to resolve them in the best way possible without being victims or transgressors.



RESPECT FOR AND PROMOTION OF EQUAL RIGHTS AND OPPORTUNITIES FOR MEN AND WOMEN

Today, the gender issue is of utmost importance and the children in this study have reached the age where they require instruction in the subject. Coherent theoretical and practical models are fundamental since gender violence is extreme and present in the whole country, up to the point of Mexico being among the countries with the highest levels worldwide. This can have adverse effects on younger generations.

Many of the victims are mothers, teachers, sisters, or people who are in direct contact with the children. A basic condition for creating more assertive and non-violent relationships is children knowing how to recognize or identify discrimination. For the children here, discrimination also means degrading people, either physically or verbally, and not doing anything together with them. While a large majority of the children (54%) state that they realise when acts of discrimination occur, there are others who are not sure.

The culture of peace requires constant analysis and reflection on the cultural patterns that are passed on from one generation to the next and impede the progress of gender equality, forms of behaviour which first appear at home and later at school. For the pupils under study, the school is also their home as they spend most of their time there and the role of the staff becomes hugely important. The teachers acknowledge that gender violence is closely linked to the cultural patterns of the children's place of origin as the source of the continued belief that men are superior to women. As a result, the girls unwittingly assume their 'role', which significantly affects the course of their lives and the effects are seen while they are at the CIS N°5.

EXERCISING FREEDOM OF OPINION AND EXPRESSION IN THE CLASSROOM

One of the basic human rights promoted by the culture of peace is freedom of expression, which requires dialogue, an ongoing effort to listen, participation and reciprocity. Constructive and non-violent conflict management needs children to express themselves, be able to express their ideas and emotions in various ways, and show respect towards other people who also exercise their freedom of expression. One of the features of the pedagogy of liberation is the possibility to use the spoken word as a

basic tool to get out of the alienating spirals of unfair and unbalanced systems.

In this context, education should no longer mean acquiring technical skills and political or economic training – or indoctrination (the criticism voiced by Freire). Nor can it be limited to instruction, memorisation or the typical reproduction of knowledge. It must be devoted to the conscious search of personalized education. To achieve this in children, the teachers need to radically change the way they understand and put into practice their teaching activity, and start building a new educational culture based on values.

The humanist educator Paulo Freire aimed to put freedom into practice through his ideas. Stating that in authoritarian societies the “dominant pedagogy is the pedagogy of the dominant classes” (Freire, 2005, pp. 11), he set out to find the opposite, to ensure that children have the freedom to propose teaching methods in which the oppressed are in a situation where they can discover and reflexively realise themselves. Wherever there is an oppressed individual, the act of love lies in committing to their cause, their liberation. This commitment, by its caring nature, is founded on dialogue. Therefore, for Freire, dialogue means the constitutive movement of consciousness, which opens to the finite and overcomes the barriers aiming to be reunited beyond oneself. One has to be humble, not ignorant, recognise the other. And not feel superior to them, be exclusive or set in one's ways. One must strive to overcome, not feel self-sufficient, but feel mature when communicating, have faith in doing and undoing, creating and recreating. There must be true and critical reflection. The logical consequence is that dialogue, once based on love, humility and faith in humankind, is transformed into a horizontal relationship in which trust resides in both poles.

As consciousness is developed, education for peace also suggests that the possibility arises, given a free context, to make decisions for change and social action. Freedom of expression in the social sense is a constant source of theoretical and practical reframing, and the basis for avoiding stagnation and maintaining a constant flow. At the individual level, games and artistic activities are the most assertive way to enable children to manage the wealth of information, ideas, emotions and concerns they come across every day.

In the dynamics of violence, freedom of expression offers people the possibility to avoid being victims, and for those who are already unfortunate victims to start the healing process, while others can learn through these acts of expression. In this study, 86% of the children assured they have the freedom to give their opinions and participate in their classes, to create and express themselves – a positive point in their upbringing, not only in the academic sense but also for their personal lives. The teachers' views match the perception of their students. In the classroom, they are not stopped from giving their ideas, and in the art work-



shop they have the freedom to choose colours, textures, materials and the subject matter of their creations. As for play and games, the same procedure is followed as in their free time: the children can choose what games to play and how to go about it, although, obviously, care is taken to make sure these games do not lead to situations in which they may hurt themselves.

ART AND ITS LINKS WITH THE CULTURE OF PEACE

The study included several questions regarding the relation between artistic activities and the culture of peace to identify the perception of both the children and their teachers. Additional open questions and direct observation also gave meaningful information for a better understanding of the situation at CIS N°5. Firstly, 21% of the children replied “strongly agree” and 54% replied “agree” on the issue of their artistic activities being directly linked to the culture of peace. They based their opinion on their experience at their young age – ideas that come mainly from their family background and the social environment in which they are growing up. The teachers, coinciding with the children’s perception, mentioned that the artistic activities are occasionally held daily and feature prominently in the special events that are held monthly.

The children’s understanding of the field of peace and art is important because 42% replied “agree” and 37% “strongly agree” on the question of their classes including artistic activities that help them to understand and practice peace. There is a discrepancy among the views of the teachers in this regard. While some state that the activities are held daily but not specifically to encourage a culture of peace, others said various activities are carried out daily, without specifying, and yet others openly stated that there is no specific number of activities or related planning.

The teachers also consider that there are artistic activities with a direct relation to the culture of peace, such as music. As the children learn and rehearse, they have to cooperate and create an atmosphere of harmony both musically and as a group. They need to listen carefully to stay in tune and play the music correctly, while at the same time being understanding and respectful to classmates who may be out of tune or do not pay attention.

Their readiness to do this shows the good work that has been done at the school with regard to artistic activities, which, added to the interest and adequate information coming from parents and teachers, will greatly help to consolidate the culture of peace. Conflicts did occur in the form of the children fighting over which instrument each could play, but the teacher solved this by naming them so that each pupil could take responsibility for their own in-

strument. The arguments stopped and there have been no problems about this since.

According to the teachers, the children have found the relation with peace through music, using songs with a positive message, rather than commercial material from the music industry. An interesting process involves working with melodies and changing the lyrics to Nahuatl or Otomi, since they have to think carefully about the meaning of the words and the rhythm to do it properly. Songs that tell legends or have historical meaning are also used, as the children enjoy them and they appear to help develop their imagination. Among the musical legends, *La Llorona* is their favourite.

The plastic arts teacher uses Mozart to create a special atmosphere in the workshop and, although the children do not like it very much, he observed it relaxes and helps the children work better. It also makes it easier for them to discuss problems they may have at home or with other people, and they are much calmer when they leave the workshop. The children being under less pressure in the workshop than in their classrooms also helps, as well as the fact that they are constantly being encouraged to think about how to use waste materials, such as medicine packaging, drink containers or even objects that are discarded in the kitchen, such as boxes.

The artistic activities are in the library and a temporary classroom that was adapted for those purposes. The teacher in charge has taken up recycling material from the old building. The playground is also used for the children’s ‘military band’ rehearsals. When asked if the spaces reserved by the school for artistic activities actually favour the learning process, 42% of the children affirmed “agree” and 26% “strongly agree”. The school has made good use of the space available but it is still important to make sure that the plastic arts workshop is not limited to 5th and 6th grade pupils, since a culture of peace involves all children: the youngest also need activities that complement their training and gives them an equal opportunity to create and share. The teachers mentioned economic difficulties and lack of space making it impossible to organise evening activities for all pupils and that they are waiting for the authorities to help them finish off the building project for new workshops.

Direct observations revealed that art occupies a fundamental place in the daily routine at CIS N°5. Although it is true that there is no conceptualisation of the culture of peace, respect for nature has been achieved indirectly, by recycling waste materials in the arts sessions and music has encouraged cooperation, respect, tolerance and the importance of multiculturalism.



THE CULTURE OF PEACE AND ITS RELATION WITH PLAYING GAMES

To promote a culture of peace through play, it is essential for all children to be involved (Jares 2004b). This leads to the introduction of cooperation games as necessary strategies to achieve participation, communication and cooperation. The main idea of these activities, where there are no winners or losers, is that everyone has the same opportunity to join in. This helps to develop communication, mutual appreciation, distension and cohesion between the participants: everybody joins in for pure enjoyment and earns the esteem of all.

The teachers note that, although the children play individually every day, during breaks and after school, most of the time they play together and even form groups according to the communities they come from. There is no doubt that the leisure activities generate multiple benefits, specifically in 10 to 11 year-olds where it is important to feel part of a group. Playing alone will give an idea of the importance that it has both at the individual level as in the future in group integration. A majority of the children affirmed they always play with others and 24% said they feel lonely during breaks. The fact that a majority play together may cause conflicts, which stresses the importance of fostering cooperative games.

For T. Orlick (cf. Jares, 2004b, pp. 9), the four features of cooperative games are cooperation, acceptance, participation and enjoyment. These games are said to be a positive reality, generating empathy, cooperation, communication, participation, esteem, a positive concept of oneself and enjoyment. These features are involved in non-violent education because it produces happy children. It has been demonstrated that cooperative work in education leads to substantial improvements in students of all areas of knowledge and in personality development.

It is important to foster both individual and collective games. At this stage of their lives, it is regarded positive for children to predominantly play together. However, opportunities to explore individual games foster the development of other important skills needed during adolescence: being able to identify your needs and preferences through playing games is fundamental for coexistence with other people. While the children experience changes in a natural way without pressure, these activities strengthen coexistence and integration of differences at school.

Playing games happens mostly in groups and sometimes the teachers join in. Games such as football, volleyball and basketball are played with the teachers, meaning their intervention is greater: they do not only coordinate the games but participate and are directly involved.

Games with rules are basic in that they enable the teachers to guide the children during the activity. It gives the children a feeling of security while playing the game and drawing the activity to a close. It also makes them feel confident timely intervention will be made in the case of disputes or aggression. In the culture of peace, the equivalent to the school monitor on the playground is the conflict-management mediator.

The children confirmed that in most cases there is an adult overseeing the games and giving instructions. A significant detail is that some children responded that there is never an adult present during playtime and 14% state that there is an adult only in a minority of cases. Games played without the presence of an adult can be a double-edged sword. On one hand, disorder is more likely to occur and can lead to moments of chaos and injustice, while on the other there exists the opportunity for the children themselves to mediate, help each other and experience non-violence.

The children have balls, sports equipment, skipping ropes, marbles and tops. Game themes are linked to traditional games such as tag, *la víbora de la mar* and *los encantados*. Preference is given to games that do not require many toys (since there are not enough) and are easy to play.

The teachers believe that the link between play and training for a culture of peace lies in the fact that concentrating on specific activities makes the children care about doing things well and takes away opportunities to bother other children or misbehave. As younger children are attracted by games played by older ones, playing together creates opportunities for older children to invite the younger ones to participate.

The toy library is a shelf where eight board games are kept, in the school library. These games are connected with traditional values and topics, such as lotto; however, they are still unopened. The librarian commented that the toy library is, unfortunately, rarely used because the games are listed on the inventory and cannot be given to the children that easily. There is more possibility of a teacher being allowed to take it out on request because the librarian is assured somebody is in charge. Still, at times, children come to ask for games and the librarian, who is also the music teacher, claims to be "between a rock and a hard place", worrying that the game may be damaged or get lost.

On visits made to the CIS N°5, the children were seen playing with balls, carts, marbles, cup-and-ball, skipping ropes, dolls, stones, sticks, bits of wood from pallets, water, sand and objects from the playground. The amount of toys varies from child to child since their families do not have enough resources or because their parents or tutors do not allow them to have more. Some children do not play and limit themselves to watching, finding it very difficult to interact with other children. It should also be pointed out that some children only play with relatives or members of their group.



CONCLUSIONS

Since education for peace aims to be coherent with the idea of respect for the environment and living beings, the school should consider the possibility of keeping animals. One of the advantages of CIS N°5 is the amount of land it has, suitable for growing plants and even for keeping farm animals.

The school has handled the issue of human rights in the best possible way, however, it is important to focus on promoting duty as shared responsibility. Human rights education needs to be a school subject in its own right since it implies not only being informed of each of the principles it promotes, but also analysis, discernment and, above all, helping people to assimilate the knowledge.

It is necessary for all at the school to have the same information on the implementation of non-violence practices: during the research it was found that pupils and teachers were confused in this regard. Working on this means offering help in the field of information and even more so in training, being a tool for life. Involving parents in this is also very important since there is a need to group, in the best possible way, the people involved in the human development of the children. In addition, this will provide a tool for decision-making at CIS N°5 to deal with conflicts without causing injury or hurt.

It is clear that the school community realises the importance of paying attention when listening to a fellow pupil's ideas or emotions. The ability to listen is an important part of conflict management, as is the ability to create things together. Without this skill it is very difficult to get to know people. Even people who are deaf can use sign language to show they are paying attention to what another has to say.

In the field of cooperation, children need to be guided by people who have full knowledge of what it means to work in groups, the main features of the age groups that correspond to each activity, as well as willingness, interest and patience in cooperating on tasks.

At CIS N°5, third party intervention is necessary for solving conflicts. Workshops focussing on this could be set up, which must be based on the interests and concerns of the children. This requires listening to them and perhaps giving them options of possible courses of action. In this process, dialogue is essential, as part of the development of their creativity lies in talking about their problems, as well as getting them to come up with ideas for non-violent intervention themselves. Above all they should be given information on mediation, what it involves, its elements and relevance to their daily lives. The way these tools are transmitted is very important as they are to be seen not only as a preventive measure, but also as a way of learning to live with less violence.

Respect for and promotion of equal rights and opportunities for men and women were seen to occur naturally when the children play freely, as, given a choice, they played indistinctly with all toys whether or not stereotypically for boys or girls. Collective games encourage equal participation through equal interaction, when acting as a leader or captain in the course of the game.

Regarding the exercise of freedom of opinion and expression in the classroom, the children generally perceive that they are allowed to express themselves freely. This must be enhanced on a daily basis through activities outside teaching hours that improve their ability to develop dialogue and communication capabilities.

One of the stronger points of CIS N°5 is the application of art and its relationship to the culture of peace. Adequate use has been made of time, space and, particularly, resources such as recycled waste material. The plastic arts activities are an area of opportunity if they are extended to include the younger pupils. The diversity of workshops should be increased and people should be involved in collaborating on them.

The school needs more activities that require group participation, not necessarily sport but rather cooperation and education activities. Through practical experience a wide repertoire can be built up so that the children do not depend on the constant presence of an adult to monitor the activities and the opportunity arises for the children themselves to take on the role of leader.

The toy library is the area that requires most attention. This is understandable as the librarian in charge has so many responsibilities that there is not much time left to organise the toy library. A person with the profile of a peace toy librarian is required to enrich this service, in dire need of more toys, and to set up games sessions and workshops. Above all there is the need to create and maintain games which will offer the opportunity to have a more equal and fair environment, since not all the children have access to toys or the financial resources to buy them.

The school has good prospects for continuing the process of building and maintaining the culture of peace. Specific attention is required in each of the areas that have been studied, and specific support is needed to make this possible.

Civil society can participate in projects that are beneficial to the children and generate cohesion with the culture of peace, the project to which everyone can contribute. Mexico State has a large number of talented people in various fields, particularly in the Autonomous University of Mexico State which has promising young individuals who are able to contribute to a school such as CIS N°5.

It is important to realise that, at this school, the culture of peace has been built up gradually through the efforts of those who work there, particularly through activities set up by the teachers, even though they lacked some



of the means required for a pedagogy that frees people and leads to a more just society. Activities like the art workshops, a fundamental part of daily life at the school, have caused the school environment to be more dynamic. The culture of peace has been maintained through active and ongoing participation of the children who, in their free time activities, can find more possibilities for comprehensive growth.

Efforts and actions that deconstruct violence are beneficial if they are realized from a position of knowledge and perseverance, and if there is continuous reflection and feedback by the individuals involved. The present situation in Mexico urgently requires active implication of all – we need to learn to coexist and grow together. At CIS N°5 the basic elements are present for this, and even more, to be possible. ■

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