

Introduction

We exalt peace as a human achievement, and justly so. But the reality of peace is flawed. The rewards of peace are elusive for the men and women who live in the post-conflict societies of our time. Why is it so difficult to make a good peace when it is so easy to imagine?

Gary Knight in “Imagine: Reflections on Peace” (2020)

The notion that the reality of peace is flawed may be difficult to accept because it seems contradictory to the purpose of the fight for human rights in the twenty-first century. As Knight says, for the men and women, and more importantly, children across the world – peace and its rewards are elusive. Teachers and educators who make the choice to address peace and human rights in their classrooms can certainly attest to that elusiveness and complexity.

We are a group of teachers who make that choice every day. Little did we know that the materials that we were asked to design for the book *Imagine: Reflections on Peace* would eventually become a curriculum for educators. Most of our team members do not live in the same city, country, or even on the same continent. Many of us have had our human rights violated. Some of us have lived through and survived conflict and persecution or know firsthand the generational impact of war and violence.

To offer a comprehensive curriculum, we reflected on our previous experiences in working with teachers and students. Inspired by our diverse settings, we worked on different modules for the curriculum. And yet, in teaching human rights we learned to transcend the understanding of inherently different histories and accept the universality of human experience. Whether it is the history of slavery and social injustice, ethnic division and mass atrocities, human rights violations, or genocide; we in fact explore the human connection in how we make sense and meaning from our experiences. Eventually, it is necessary to analyze the potential flaws of a peace after war and conflict, the layers of post-conflict reconciliation, and the almost (im)possible achievement of equity and justice in a post-conflict society.

Considering all of the above, we feel grateful for the opportunity to introduce this new resource titled *Imagine: Reflections on Peace – A Curriculum for Educators*. We do not presume that this curriculum will offer a definitive solution to all the complexities that arise when teaching conflict-related themes, but we do hope that it will be a reliable resource to start with. The International Commission on Education for the Twenty-First Century (Delors Report, UNESCO, 1996) suggests that education should be built upon four pillars: learning to know, learning to do, learning to be, and learning to live together.

In a globalized world of expanding mobility, technology, economic competition, disasters, and conflicts, we need to learn more on how to ‘live together’, by setting aside our fears and differences, nurturing more harmonious relationships, and developing mutual understanding of one another. This starts in the classroom. Education is the most important tool for equipping young people, our future

generation of leaders, with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to tackle prejudice and hostility and to build more peaceful, tolerant, and equitable societies.

Learning to Live Together, UNESCO, 2014, p. V

This curriculum is dedicated to all our fellow teachers and educators who believe in the power of learning to live together, in support of our joint mission to teach as much the hearts as the minds of our students; and especially to those who explore human rights, critical thinking, respect for diversity and facts in context, and the ongoing complexities of peace in their everyday educational settings.

As you read through the Curriculum, you will notice that it largely focuses on photojournalism and the impact of images on our understanding of the world. The 1982 UN Declaration on Media Education states that “we live in a world where media are omnipresent,” and that education should add to its purpose the development of knowledge, skills, and attitudes which will encourage the growth of critical awareness among the users of electronic and print media. The Declaration started an ongoing worldwide movement on teaching media literacy, including visual literacy which promotes critical viewing skills – engagement with images and an understanding of how visual form constructs meaning (Newfield, 2011). Images from wars and conflicts add another layer to the complexity of interpretation and understanding, which is why we decided to use the D.A.R. reflection model for image work (Dawson & Kiger Lee, 2018). D.A.R. (Describe, Analyze, Relate) supports teachers in paying attention to how each question they offer scaffolds, or builds upon, prior ideas to support individual and collective meaning-making and understanding when working on images with their students. We hope that this step-by-step approach will not only facilitate your work but also encourage those teachers who feel hesitant in using conflict-related images in their classrooms.

The source material *Imagine: Reflections on Peace* (2020) reveals stories of redemption and rebuilding in:

- 1) Bosnia and Herzegovina
- 2) Cambodia
- 3) Colombia
- 4) Lebanon
- 5) Northern Ireland, and
- 6) Rwanda

which is how modules in this Curriculum are titled and explored in detail. Each of the six modules consists of a foundational lesson with three connected parts: a) the timeline activity, b) photography records, and c) a student-driven action plan.

In addition to exploring the role of photography in times of conflict and in times of peace, the foundational lesson analyzes the interrelatedness of historical events, individual stories, and international response, offering multiple perspectives from various groups affected by the events. Each module also offers two extension lessons that build on the foundational lesson but can be used individually depending on the lesson goals. The lessons (and modules) provide accounts of different events, but they explore common themes universal to all individuals, communities, and

societies. All of them encourage students to draw their own conclusions and to reflect on their role as agents of change on both the local and the global level. While we embrace the genuine need to respect and investigate individual and local contexts, we urge you to welcome this curriculum as a whole – an attempt in bridging our different histories and exploring them critically in relation to universal values.