BOOK REVIEWS

Peace Pedagogies in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Theory and Practice in Formal Education

LARISA KASUMAGIĆ-KAFEDŽIĆ AND SARA CLARKE-HABIBI, EDS.
Springer, 2023, 343 pages.

Humanity has always aspired for peace; across the long tract of time, people continue to strive toward that ideal. Peace is both a necessity and an aspiration, a beacon for humanity's collective advancement and the progress of civilization. From the ancient thinkers to contemporary visionaries, the pursuit of peace and tranquillity has resonated throughout cultures and continents. Nevertheless, peace is more than the absence of hostility or the end of wars. Instead, it is the harmonious symphony that resonates when conflicting decisions and ambitions give way to cooperation and mutual respect. Education can help communities construct the mindset and attitude necessary to refrain from future conflicts and tragedies. It also gives all members of society the knowledge, values, and abilities they need to work together to find constructive solutions to problems and to create societies that are more inclusive, just, and sustainable.

Peace education remains an effective tool for (re)building peace in post-conflict contexts by lessening social and ethnic polarization and fostering the foundations for persistent concord and a culture of dialogue rather than violence. Peace education is also essential to create the basis for historical injuries to be healed, to ensure that they do not recur, to rebuild trust among former adversaries, and to forge a firm foundation for a shared future in communities with recent histories of mass violence, such as Bosnia and Herzegovina.

Twenty-seven years have passed since the Dayton Peace Agreement was signed in 1995, ending the war in Bosnia and Herzegovina. Yet, that agreement has not translated into a peace that is essential to every citizen's daily existence. The country remains an ethnically divided and fragmented society with an extremely complicated and disenfranchised administrative structure. As recent studies have noted, it is quite concerning that

after 27 years of post-war peacebuilding efforts nationalistic tensions have returned to Bosnia and Herzegovina's society. Many experts regard the current social and political climate in the country as a "frozen peace" or as a state of "peace as war" which feeds into and widens the rifts created by war-oriented narratives.

Who is responsible for establishing peace in a nation such as Bosnia and Herzegovina with all its transitional pains and accumulated social, economic, and political issues? Are international players, politicians, and policymakers the only ones in charge of directing peace processes, and who is to blame for the failure? Otherwise, is peacebuilding a shared duty in which every citizen should participate? Then how to educate so that every citizen feels responsible for promoting, building, and maintaining peace in their society?

Into this enduring discussion over the role of peace education in constructing the mindset of every citizen in the society, and their attitude to refrain from further possible tragedies, arrives the recently published book co-edited by Larisa Kasumagić-Kafedžić and Sara Clarke-Habibi titled *Peace Pedagogies in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Theory and Practice in Formal Education*. The 15 chapters in this volume, written by both national and international researchers and practitioners, present a wide range of interdisciplinary case studies that cover both formal education (schools and universities) and community engagement as essential forces in guiding youth on how to live together in peace with respect, tolerance, and mutual understanding despite their cultural differences and practices.

The book's fundamental contention is that, despite 27 years of efforts to promote peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina, its population and educational system remain divided along ethnopolitical lines. The national education system, through its textbooks, the ethnic capsulation of the school curricula, and the practice of "two schools under one roof," perpetuates social segregation and division. The current educational system in Bosnia and Herzegovina, as the chapters argue, is the result of a political climate that was determined and regulated by the 1995 Dayton Peace Agreement. The administrative organization of the state is divided into two entities, the Federation of Bosnia and Herzegovina (comprising 10 cantons) and Republika Srpska, plus the independent Brčko District. Thus, in its current form, rather than fulfilling its natural function of intercultural competence training and the promotion of peace and mutual respect, education

in Bosnia and Herzegovina fosters societal division and hatred based on ethnic and religious distinctions.

The discussions in this edited volume highlight the need for Bosnia and Herzegovina's educational system to be drastically reformed to put peace pedagogies into official education policy and practice. Nevertheless, the book's main proposition goes beyond merely highlighting the value of peace education in post-war multicultural communities like Bosnia and Herzegovina by introducing specialized courses or social initiatives with peacebuilding purposes. Instead, peace education and teachings are proposed to be incorporated into a complete curriculum, covering all courses, themes, and educational levels, thus moving toward an educational approach known as "a pedagogy of responsibility." In that direction, teaching needs to shift from the delivery of knowledge to an interrogation of knowledge, values, and experiences through different social practices and settings. For example, a university's responsibility for social concerns becomes more pressing and difficult when the local population is still antagonistic and polarized, as is the case in many regions of Bosnia and Herzegovina. Therefore, in addition to higher education institutions' primary missions of teaching and research, they ought to have a "Third Mission" that addresses societal challenges and shapes thought and action around these issues in a sense of moral obligation to the community.

A noteworthy aim of this volume is to underscore the variety of peace pedagogical frameworks that educators and actors in related sectors might use for peacebuilding objectives, emphasizing a close look at the pedagogical aspects of teaching in general. The contributors define peacebuilding as necessarily interdisciplinary, and emphasize that teaching in every field has implications for conflict and peace dynamics in society. Their principal argument is that peace pedagogy has transcendent value and can be integrated into the full spectrum of subject areas across the entire curriculum at all levels of education. The contributors urge a broader exploration of peace-oriented concepts in every discipline, particularly history, literature, and language, as demonstrated by the case studies included in the volume. The whole-school approach emphasized is crucial because it guarantees the desired peace education learning will be sustainable by incorporating peace values and messages into various aspects of schools and communities. Hence the book's recommendation that desegregating education will desegregate the entire society.

The other significant idea running through the book's chapters is that attaining a positive and long-lasting peace in Bosnia and Herzegovina will require an all-embracing societal transformation, and this is feasible only through an education that nurtures values, moral principles, and character. Likewise, men's mindsets and attitudes must be structured to prevent further conflicts and hostilities. This concept is discussed in several chapters that recommend using methods of "odgoj" and "vaspitanje," terms related to character education and values that are systematically integrated into the entire syllabus. These are primarily concerned with infusing good virtues and humanistic values into the character of youth and can be translated as "upbringing" to denote the process of shaping the child's behavior and cultivating humanistic and positive values. A person can only truly engage in intercultural and interreligious learning if they are willing to listen to and accept contrasting opinions and worldviews. Thus, every member of society ought to embrace a peace-oriented worldview centered on fostering unity rather than cultural divergence, and an all-encompassing education and peace-oriented upbringing are the means by which that is accomplished.

The book's most important contribution to the existing scholarship on peacebuilding is its consideration of societal reform outside the parameters of conventional pedagogical approaches, disciplinary borders, bureaucratic procedures, and time spent mentoring students outside of the classroom. It includes a wide range of unique studies that may be employed as models for implementing various strategies and innovative initiatives that aim to integrate peace values into education in general and peace education in particular through non-formal and formal methods. Similarly, the recommendations and proposed initiatives put forth by the authors are not necessarily exclusive to the situation in Bosnia and Herzegovina. The book's debates could be a helpful manual on peace pedagogy and a set of suggestions for other conflict-affected countries looking to develop constructive peace through intercultural learning opportunities. Another valuable aspect of this book, hence, is its possible application to other similar post-conflict scenarios.

As with any compilation from multiple authors, this volume includes some unnecessary discussions, presents too wide a scope, and has chapters that lose their thematic focus. For instance, the author seems to spend too much time in chapter four discussing how COVID-19 is affecting the modernization of school curricula rather than delving into the difficulties

associated with peace education. Nevertheless, such minor flaws do not undermine the volume's richness and significance. *Peace Pedagogies in Bosnia and Herzegovina: Theory and Practice in Formal Education* deserves to be read not only by educators and policymakers in Bosnia and Herzegovina, but also by a broad audience of educators, policymakers, and intellectuals interested in peace pedagogy, its theory and practice.

Elmira Akhmetova
Associate Professor
Institute of Knowledge Integration
Tbilisi, Georgia

DOI: 10.2979/jems.00020