

Peace education in Croatia

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SUMMARY This is the first relatively complete account, but reduced review of peace education in Croatia. Peace education activities in Croatia start with the break of the Great-Serbian aggression against Republic of Croatia. There are no peace education courses in the formal school system, they exist only within non-governmental organizations (NGO's) which are members of The Antiwar Campaign Croatia. The author lists five NGO's which have been dealing with peace education, the value framework of peace education efforts (a non-violent transformation of conflict, communications and conciliation between divided groups, etc.; the protection of human rights and freedom of an individual or groups; and the appeasement of consequences of the war and violence), and different programs and forms of peace education which have been organized. She especially describes two current projects (Project on training for peace teams and Peace studies program). The account is based on the data collected in the first half of December 1998 by interviews led by the course participants and program leaders, observation of the classroom work and the analysis of the curriculum for the training. People who started to organise these programs are faced with a lot of difficulties and often with suspicious and unfriendly environment.

Key words: peace education, organization, value framework, programs, Croatia

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1. The Beginning, Organization and Value Framework

Peace education had not been taught in Croatia before the beginning of the 90-s.¹ Its appearance coincides with the break of the war and conflicts after dissolution of the Socialist Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. Up to this moment, peace education activities have only been carried out within non-governmental organizations (NGO's). There are no school courses in peace education in the formal school system, i.e. there are no peace education courses mandated by the Ministry of education.

All NGO's that carry out peace education programs are members of The Antiwar Campaign Croatia (ARK), that was founded in the time when the war started (1991). For better understanding of the idea and forms of peace education in Croatia, it should be mentioned that ARK is a network of organizations, which try to prevent and resist the violence in society and between the states. This includes 1. Peace education, a non-violent transformation of conflict, communications and conciliation between divided groups, etc.; 2. The protection of human rights and freedom of an individual or groups, and 3. The appeasement of consequences of the war and violence.

Based on such a value framework, the following organizations have been dealing with peace education in Croatia: Center for Civic Initiatives, Poreč; Center for Peace, Non-violence and Human Rights, Osijek; Center for Peace Studies (MIRamIDA), Zagreb; Peace and Well-being, éupanja; and Small Step - Center for Culture of Peace and Nonviolence, Zagreb. Most of them grew out of grass-roots peacebuilding activists in the war areas or were initiated by peace oriented intellectuals who were trying - during the war and after the war - to alleviate the war sufferings of people and create prerequisites for reconciliation and building a democratic society. It is also important to mention that international peace activists and academics from different peace organizations (including The International Peace Research Association, IPRA), institutes and universities as well as religious communities from Europe and the USA helped them.

Different forms of peace education have been organized: workshops in non-violent communication and conflict resolution methods for teachers and professional staff of primary and secondary schools (Small Step - Center for Culture of Peace and Non-violence, Zagreb); one year peace study pilot program for citizens and peacebuilding trainings for peace activists (Center for peace studies in Zagreb); trainings for peace teams, for the young and religious communities in the post-war situation (The Center for Peace, Non-violence and Human Rights, Osijek).

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¹ This account of the peace education in Croatia was written as a part of author's activities within The Peace Education Commission (PEC) of The International Peace Research Association (IPRA).

2. Two Current Projects of Peace Education

In order to illustrate the peace education activities two current projects will be presented in detail:

1. The project on training for peace teams conducted by The Center for Peace, Non-violence and Human Rights - Osijek (CPNHR) and
2. Peace studies program of The Center for Peace Studies in Zagreb (CPS).

The account of the CPNHR peace education activities is based on the following sources of information:

1. Interviews led by the course participants (5 participants), program coordinator and program director;
2. One-day observation of the classroom work;
3. The curriculum for the training: *Building a Democratic Society Based on the Culture of Non-violence - Postwar Peacebuilding in Eastern Croatia*.

The description of the peace studies program of The Center for Peace Studies in Zagreb is also based on the interview with its program director, the program of the Center and the report of the peace studies in Croatia (A. B. Fetherston, *Transformative Peacebuilding and NGOs: Peace Studies in Croatia*, Paper prepared for the International Studies Association Annual Convention 17-21 March 1998, Minneapolis, Minnesota).

The interviews show that peace education activities in Croatia have been significantly conditioned by specific situation in the field, which is characterised by the war and ethnic conflicts as well as the war consequences generally in the post-war period (return of refugees, destroyed lives, hatred, anger, unemployment, insecurity, etc.). It is especially characteristic of the region where The Center for Peace, Non-violence and Human Rights - Osijek operates (Eastern Croatia). Therefore its peace education programs have mostly been based upon the Center's own experience in peacebuilding and its enrichment with experience from other countries. Consequently, they often bring about innovations in the implemented educational programs, what also happened with the curriculum for training for peace teams (*Building a Democratic Society Based on the Curriculum of Nonviolence - Postwar Peacebuilding in Eastern Croatia*). Originally, it is a curriculum from Sweden adjusted to the Croatian situation.

Twenty-eight participants (4 future peace groups or teams) of different ethnic origin, religious, political orientation, sex and age are attending the program. They have been taught to work as a group in peace building and reconstruction of community life in four local communities caught by the war by helping and empowering local people to organise themselves in reconstruction of their future common life in community on peaceful and democratic principles (courses of democracy for citizens, work with the young, women, etc.). The program lasts for

10 weeks (originally 12 weeks) with a 7 hour daily program. The participants and trainers are local people and internationals (from England, Germany and the United States of America).

A big innovation is an effort to implement the program in the area immediately after the war ended and an introduction of practical work of the participants in the communities where they were going to work after the training. Evaluation of the training (its content, methods of teaching, insufficiency, etc.) was carried out after every lesson and at the end of the course. It was done through questionnaires as well as discussions, by participants and trainers (who were especially responsible for the content structure of the curriculum and methods of teaching). The evaluation showed that introduction of practical work is of particular importance for the success of such a curriculum. It empowered participants as peace team activists. For most of them it was the first confrontation with challenges, difficulties and dangers (risks) in their future work. As they told, it helped them to overcome their inner fears, suspicions about whether they were able and qualified enough to accomplish their future duties, etc.

Although some of them were not accepted friendly by local people (some of them were accused to be were pro-Serb oriented, one of them was even slapped, etc.) they returned highly motivated for the training. After their visits to the communities they realised how much their work was needed, that there were also people who want to be listened to, people who wanted to do something about their community lifes, who still wanted to live in peace, to collaborate with people of other ethnic origins, including people who were "on the other side" in the war, etc. The biggest results of the training were readiness of the participants to face the "truth of the war" of others and to accept the fact that there are "different truths". All of them who were interviewed, said that they went through personal changes and that they are highly motivated for peacebuilding activities! The first association they have when they hear the words "peace education" is about communication between people, tolerance, democratic society, peace, Quakers (they were the first people from whom some participants learned about peace education), etc. Both the coordinator of the program and the participants mentioned a lot of other difficulties and obstacles they have to overcome in their work. First of all, it is the struggle with the following problems: how to design an appropriate curriculum, how to find enough trainers and peace activists to come to this area, how to ensure funding for a longer period which would enable them to plan and carry out their work systematically in contrast with current, ad hoc arranged activities, lack of experience, textbooks, literature, etc.

Contrary to such a type of peace education, *The Peace Studies Program* carried out by The Center for Peace Studies in Zagreb, is a peace education for citizens. It is the first regular year of carrying out the 1-year peace education curricula, mostly attended by university students from Zagreb, some teachers from primary and secondary schools, housewives, retired people.

Participants (altogether 30 of them) are also of different ethnic origins, sex, age (20-65 years), professions, etc. Through workshops, discussions, lectures, miniresearch and field trips, the following issues were explored: non-violence, conflict management, understanding violence, women culture of resistance, civil society, human rights, and similar. Most teachers are from Croatia, but several (3) of them are internationals. In this year's evaluation the similar methods as the above mentioned ones, were used - questionnaires, discussions. Within this program, in addition to that, a research project on its results was accomplished (by A. B. Fetherson Department of Peace Studies, University of Bradford, United Kingdom). Beside the typical problems which such program is usually faced with (lack of experience, teachers, literature, etc.), evaluation showed some specific ones: sceptical reactions of its participants about the program and especially about its participatory model of teaching, which is relatively a new experience for most of them; some of them did not know what to do after they finish the program, some of them had to hide from their families and boy- or girl-friends that they attended the program, etc. The coordinator of the program thinks that it is as a big success that after the last year's program (pilot program) even one third of participants became peace activists in different ways, that most of them also went through a transformative personal process, and the fact that some of them attended the program in spite of the difficulties in families and with friends.

3. Instead Conclusion

This is only a reduced outline of peace education activities in Croatia. This time I did not give more details about peace education programs for teachers which are also of great importance and which have achieved great results. Special attention attracts peace education program for teachers from primary and secondary schools conducted by Small Step - Center from Zagreb, which carries out more than 20 trainings for teachers in regions that were caught by the war. Although peace education programs have not been mandated by Ministry of Education and although they are not a part of the regular school life, such work is a way to create prerequisites for its future official and formal recognition as a part of the school system.

What to say about the peace education in Croatia as a conclusion? It is really a young field. People who started to organise it are faced with a lot of difficulties: a lack of experience, a lack of teachers, a lack of textbooks and literature, a lack of money - and the most difficult obstacle - their work is not supported by the official, governmental institution and by media. They have often been faced with suspicious and unfriendly environment. They work in the post-war situation, where a lot of people are still "inside" the conflict, suffering from inner trauma and stress, etc. Optimism, high motivation and, most of all, their deep devotion to peacebuilding activities and a democratic society give us hope for success of their work.

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Obrazovanje za mirotvorstvo u Hrvatskoj

Sažetak

Ovaj prvi razmjerno cjelovit pregled, ali ograničeni prikaz, mirotvornog obrazovanja u Hrvatskoj proizišao je iz autoričinog djelovanja u Odboru za mirotvorni odgoj Međunarodnog udruženja za istraživanja mira (The Peace Education Commission of The International Peace Research Association). Obrazovanje za mirotvorstvo otpočelo je u Hrvatskoj s prekidom velikosrpske agresije na Republiku Hrvatsku. U hrvatskom školskom sustavu ne postoje nastavni predmeti iz obrazovanja za mir, nego se obrazovanje za mirotvorstvo jedino odvija u nevladinim organizacijama, koje su članice Antiratne kampanje Hrvatske (ARK). Autorica navodi nevladine organizacije koje u Hrvatskoj izvode obrazovanje za mirotvorstvo (Centar za građanske inicijative, Poreč; Centar za mir, nenasilje i ljudska prava, Osijek; Centar za mirovne studije - MIRami DA, Zagreb; Mir i dobro, Županja i Mali korak - Centar za kulturu mira i nenasilje, Zagreb), vrijednosni okvir mirotvornog obrazovanja (nenasilna preobrazba sukoba, komunikacije i pomirba između zavađenih skupina itd.; zaštita ljudskih prava i slobode određenih pojedinaca ili skupina; i ublažavanje posljedica rata i nasilja), te različite programe i oblike mirotvornog obrazovanja koji se izvode. Ona posebice opisuje dva projekta u tijeku (*Projekt osposobljavanja mirotvornih timova* koji izvodi Centar za mir, nenasilje i ljudska prava u Osijeku i *Program mirovnih proučavanja* Centra za mirovne studije u Zagrebu). Pregled je izložen temeljem podataka prikupljenih u prvoj polovici prosinca 1998. godine interviewima s polaznicima tečajeva i voditeljima programa, opažanjem neposrednog obrazovnog procesa u skupinama i analizom nastavnog programa osposobljavanja. Ljudi koji su otpočeli s izvođenjem takvih programa sučeljavaju se s nizom poteškoća, a često sa zazornim i neprijaznim okruženjem.

Ključne riječi: obrazovanje za mir, organizacija, vrijednosni okvir, programi, Hrvatska

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Education pour la paix en Croatie

Résumé

Dans cet article l'auteur souligne que l'éducation pour la paix a commencé en Croatie avec la cessation d'agression grande-Serbe. Ce sont seulement les cinq organisations non-gouvernementales qui s'en occupent. L'auteur énumère les organisations non-gouvernementales qui réalisent les programmes de l'éducation pour la paix, le cadre de valeur de cette éducation et ses programmes et formes. Elle donne la description particulière des deux projets dont la réalisation est dans le courant. A la fin de l'article l'auteur énumère les difficultés qu'on confronte dans l'accomplissement de ces programmes.

Mots clés: éducation pour la paix, organisation, cadre de valeur, programmes, Croatie

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