



## Educating for peace and human rights: An introduction

by Maria Hantzopoulos and Monisha Bajaj, London, Bloomsbury, 2021, 181 pp., £24.29 (paperback), £72.00 (hardback), £19.43 (e-book), ISBN 9781350129719

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## BOOK REVIEW

**Educating for peace and human rights: An introduction**, by Maria Hantzopoulos and Monisha Bajaj, London, Bloomsbury, 2021, 181 pp., £24.29 (paperback), £72.00 (hardback), £19.43 (e-book), ISBN 9781350129719

*Educating for peace and human rights: an introduction* is a novel volume that addresses the intersection of two fields, peace education (PE) and human rights education (HRE). The authors, Maria Hantzopoulos and Monisha Bajaj, are prominent scholars whose works (e.g. Bajaj and Hantzopoulos 2016; Hantzopoulos 2016) focus on the bridging of both fields. They stated that the book 'launches, came about after multiple conversations between the two authors and among their colleagues and students about the similarities and differences in the fields' (p. 1). While both PE and HRE have developed as independent fields for decades, it may be timely – as reflected from the presence of the book, to examine the possibilities of their amalgamation.

Intended as an 'introduction' to the creation of a new field, peace and human rights education (PHRE), the text successfully provides a pack of goals, conceptual frameworks from which PHRE is built upon, its histories, pedagogical practices, critiques, and recommendations for future research within the field. The book is well organized, comprising six chapters. Chapters One and Two focus on the theoretical and conceptual frameworks of PE, future research recommendations, and its empirical evidence from the context of the United States. Following the same format, Chapters Three and Four address key concepts of HRE, future directions, from two countries in South Asia, India and Bangladesh.

As the highlight of the monograph, Chapter Five attempts to provide a rationale within the integration of PE and HRE. Drawing on the concepts of *dignity and transformative agency* that rooted from Paulo Freire's theories of education, the authors build the foundations of a potential new field, PHRE. The chapter reviews larger theoretical bodies of literature, provides a critical analysis of another related field, social justice education (SJE), as well as paves the way to the overlap of PHRE. It is interesting that, in an attempt to find the root of connecting PE and HRE, the authors adapt Freire's (1970/2000) *problem tree*, 'a heuristic or visual device that allows people to explore the root causes of a particular issue that affects their daily lives by mapping these causes in relation to quotidian experiences and larger systemic policies and practices' (p. 2). As an adapted concept, the authors create the so-called *possibility tree* as a metaphor for the intertwined fields of PHRE, providing a visual catalyst for the creation of new worlds and possibilities. This novel heuristic approach is so much helpful to the reader in visualizing a world with peace and justice. It also demonstrates how PE and HRE are both separate and intertwined in a creative way. To emphasize peace and HRE as works-in-progress, the final version (p. 97) takes the form of a banyan tree with fresh roots developing. The primary notion of this book, as well as the ethos of the series it introduces, is to think of these two fields as intertwined, dynamic, and changing fields of praxis.

The volume ends with a concluding chapter that uniquely provides readers with reflections on key developments and future directions from world peace and human rights scholars and advocates, namely Nancy Flowers (US), Asha Hans (India), Michalinos Zembylas (Cyprus), and Margo Okazawa-Rey (US). Different from the typical concluding

chapter, the conclusion is interestingly presented by sharing excerpts of personal communication with these scholars giving the impression that we are conversing with experts in their subjects.

The volume's core strength lies upon the notion to integrate two different fields, PE and HRE, into a new single field, PHRE. It therefore significantly contributes to both fields. This text could stimulate generative debates about how to learn about and through peace and human rights in a variety of educational settings. As Freire's followers and supporters, the authors clearly ground their work in robust theories and frameworks to revisit the intertwine of peace and human rights. The authors are also successful in provoking us, the readers, to accept the idea that PE and HRE are non-separable, and therefore they need to be taught together that peace cannot be gained unless justice is served first.

However, from the pedagogical dimension, implementing PHRE may not be easy. Even as an independent field, teachers are still struggling in teaching peace and human rights in the classrooms. Their pedagogical practices are mostly based on personal perceptions with a lack of legal knowledge and an uncertainty to overcome daily injustice or racism (Osler and Skarra 2021). It is also difficult to ask the students to keep in peace, while they are also taught to fight for their basic rights. We know that conflicts and wars are mostly caused by injustice or the imbalance in rights distribution affecting the absence of peace within this situation. In other words, it is difficult to put peace and human rights side by side. As a teacher myself, I imagine the practice of PHRE is a practice of pouring water and fire at the same time: (almost) impossible.

Despite these concerns, this book is essential for those within the fields of PE and HRE. Future researchers, policymakers, and activists can use the book as a starter for them in deciding future studies and making educational policies. Although it might be challenging, teachers and practitioners from various educational contexts and settings may find it a useful resource, particularly as a practical guide to teach peace and human rights together in the classrooms.

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