

Incidencia de la cátedra de la paz en la construcción de ciudadanía en Ciudad Bolívar

Incidence of the peace chair in the construction of citizenship in Ciudad Bolívar

Incidência da cadeira da paz na construção da cidadania em Ciudad Bolívar

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RESUMEN

La cátedra de la paz es uno de los espacios de educación más importante del país en el siglo XXI. El artículo, derivado del proyecto Impacto de la cátedra de la paz en las instituciones educativas de Colombia, busca determinar el impacto que ha tenido la implementación de la Cátedra de la Paz en la construcción de paz y ciudadanía en las instituciones educativas de Ciudad Bolívar. Para tal fin, asume un diseño cualitativo, exploratorio e interpretativo, empleando el análisis documental, la encuesta abierta y la entrevista en profundidad, en los estudiantes del grado once, docentes acompañantes de la cátedra de la paz y egresados de los últimos cinco años del Colegio Arborizadora Alta IED y el Colegio República de México IED. La información recolectada, permitió evidenciar que se ha realizado la implementación de la cátedra, promoviendo un entorno de sana convivencia, con propuestas curriculares enmarcadas en el estudio del conflicto interno armado. Se concluye que, la cátedra de la paz fomenta habilidades para la mediación y resolución de conflictos, por lo que se sugiere incorporar temas coyunturales como la construcción de paz desde una perspectiva de género y alternativas al posdesarrollo.

Palabras clave: paz, educación, cultura, coexistencia pacífica, no violencia.

ABSTRACT

The Peace Chair is one of the most important peace education spaces in the country in the 21st century. The article, derived from the project Impact of the Chair of Peace in the educational institutions of Colombia, seeks to determine the impact that the implementation of the Chair of Peace has had on the construction of peace and citizenship in the educational institutions of Ciudad Bolívar. To this end, it assumes a qualitative, exploratory and interpretive design, using documentary analysis, open survey and in-depth interview, in eleventh grade students, accompanying teachers of the peace department and graduates of the last five years of the Colegio Arborizadora Alta IED and the Colegio República de México IED. The information collected made it possible to show that the implementation of the chair has been carried out, promoting an environment of healthy coexistence, with curricular proposals framed in the study of the internal armed conflict. It is concluded that the peace chair promotes skills for mediation and conflict resolution, which is why it is suggested to incorporate current topics such as peacebuilding from a gender perspective and alternatives to post-development.

Keywords: peace, education, culture, peaceful coexistence, non-violence.

RESUMO

A Cátedra para a Paz é um dos espaços de educação para a paz mais importantes do país no século XXI. O artigo, derivado do projeto Impacto da Cátedra da Paz nas instituições educativas da Colômbia, procura determinar o impacto que a implementação da Cátedra da Paz teve na construção da paz e da cidadania nas instituições educativas de Ciudad Bolívar. Para tanto, assume um desenho qualitativo, exploratório e interpretativo, utilizando análise documental, pesquisa aberta e entrevista em profundidade, em alunos do décimo primeiro ano, professores acompanhantes do departamento de paz e egressos dos últimos cinco anos do Colégio Arborizadora Alta IED e o Colégio República do México IED. A informação recolhida permitiu demonstrar que a implementação da cátedra tem sido realizada, promovendo um ambiente de convivência saudável, com propostas curriculares enquadradas no estudo do conflito armado interno. Conclui-se que a cadeira de paz promove competências para mediação e resolução de conflitos, razão pela qual se sugere incorporar temas atuais como a construção da paz numa perspectiva de género e alternativas ao pós-desenvolvimento.

Palavras chave: paz, educação, cultura, coexistência pacífica, não violência.

Background

The situation of poverty, exclusion, and inequality that Latin America has experienced in recent decades has worsened due to neoliberal policies (Álvarez et al. 2010, Martínez-Gómez et al. 2021, Rodríguez, 2020). These policies sought significant economic growth as the main strategy for consumption-based development, without imagining that it would increase the cost of living and decrease the quality of life for the inhabitants.

In Colombia, the level of social breakdown caused by violence and its various manifestations—social, economic, political, familial, and educational—has been on the rise in recent decades, penetrating classrooms in various educational institutions and presenting a bleak and worrying picture. Efforts made by educational entities to counteract or reduce the level of aggression, such as “peaceful classrooms” or “citizenship skills,” seek to counteract aggression in childhood and prevent it from becoming permanent in adulthood, generating an even greater cycle of violence that becomes a spiral that is difficult to stop, as can be seen in everyday life.

The national government, through the Ministry of National Education (MEN), has been developing various initiatives and instruments aimed at reducing aggression and promoting coexistence, within the framework of the peace negotiations between the Colombian State and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia-People’s Army (FARC-EP) and currently in the post-conflict stage. Some of these initiatives include Law 1620 or the Coexistence Law of 2013, Law 1732 of 2014, issued by the Congress of the Republic, which establishes the mandatory teaching of peace in educational establishments, and Decree 1038 of 2015, issued by the Presidency of the Republic, which regulates it. This gives the course a role in the reconstruction of the country and the consolidation of the peace process advanced by the government of then-President Juan Manuel Santos Calderón (2010-2018), recognizing that education is the field where the culture of peace has the greatest impact by promoting social attitude and values training, among other things, in both students and teachers.

However, one of the aims of the peace process is to ensure that the territory is considered a space conducive to reflection and constructive dialogue on peace (Dueñas et al., 2022), which is of great importance in order to promote within communities the revision of historical memory based on experiences during the armed conflict and the reconstruction of the social fabric, encouraging the implementation of new civic values among the inhabitants. In this regard, Bogotá is a key city in the peacebuilding process in Colombia, as it is the place where the largest number of people displaced by the armed conflict, Venezuelan migrants, and demobilized members of irregular armed groups arrive.

“ Bogotá is a key city in the peace process in Colombia, as it is the destination for most of the population displaced by the armed conflict, Venezuelan migrants, and demobilized members of irregular armed groups. ”

“ Therefore, it is necessary to bear in mind the characteristics and imaginaries that shape the cultural and social environment of students, so that the pedagogy implemented within the peace studies course contributes to the formation of critical, participatory, and mediating students. ”

In this regard, the Monthly Bulletin of Security and Coexistence Indicators, issued by the Secretariat of Security, Coexistence, and Justice (2021), shows that in Bogotá, there are multiple problems related to citizenship and coexistence, mainly in the districts of Usme, Bosa, and Ciudad Bolívar, three of the places that have received the most victims of the conflict. This situation is highly concerning, given the number of homicides that have been recorded, which are on the rise not only in comparison to 2020, but also in terms of the traceability that can be seen month by month. This scenario reveals a possible relationship in Bogotá between the victims of the conflict and the progression of violence. However, the peace course could be just another law like many others that remain on paper and in good intentions. Basically, because it can become just another curriculum that seeks to teach interesting content but does not permeate student behavior, that is, it presents a gap between discourse and practice. In this vein, it is possible to conclude that the implementation of the peace studies course in educational institutions in Ciudad Bolívar has not had a significant impact on the construction of peace and citizenship.

Therefore, it is necessary to bear in mind the characteristics and imaginaries that shape the cultural and social environment of students, so that the pedagogy implemented within the peace education program contributes to the formation of critical, participatory, and mediating students who, from the classroom, impact their families and society in the construction of peace, without ignoring the fact that conflict is part of their daily lives and must be able to overcome it by drawing on the life experiences and values from their home and school, so that they can contribute to improving the educational processes of equality, freedom, and solidarity, and establish commitments to themselves and others within a framework of individual, social, and cultural responsibility required to achieve the transformation that the country needs (Oidor et al., 2021). Therefore, the study sought to determine the impact that the implementation of the peace course has had on peacebuilding and citizenship in two public educational institutions in the town of Ciudad Bolívar, the Colegio Arborizadora Alta IED and the Colegio República de México IED.

Ciudad Bolívar is one of Bogotá's neighborhoods located in the southern part of the district. Built through the efforts of its residents, many of whom are displaced people, it has made significant progress in shaping the territory and addressing basic needs in terms of sanitation, public health, and education (Cruz et al., 2024). However, some of its inhabitants exhibit behaviors that reveal a moral disconnect that affects the development of a citizenry for peace in the locality. From this perspective, as shown in the Management Report of the Comprehensive Plan for Security, Coexistence, Citizenship, and Justice [PISCCJ] of Bogotá D.C., issued by the District Secretariat for Security, Coexistence, and Justice of Bogotá (2023), the Ciudad Bolívar locality has a high rate of homicides, micro-trafficking, robbery, and extortion, affecting community life and the public policy actions that the nation and the government are carrying out to improve the living conditions of its inhabitants.

Within this scenario, among other public educational institutions, is the Colegio Arborizadora Alta, a district educational institution and one of the largest public schools in the town of Ciudad Bolívar, serving a student population of 2,561 in preschool, elementary, and middle school levels in morning and afternoon sessions, with an educational approach outlined in the Institutional Educational Project (PEI) (Colegio Arborizadora Alta, 2019), which, since the implementation of the Critical Meaningful Learning pedagogical approach, seeks to educate critical and participatory individuals who are committed to their social environment. There is also the Colegio República de México, a district educational institution with a significant presence in the southern part of the district of Bogotá, which serves an educational population of 2,327 students, with an emphasis on strengthening secondary education, which includes the tenth and eleventh grades, from where it seeks to promote the construction of a better society and country, showing a clear commitment to the reality of the environment in which it is located (Colegio República de México, 2021).

The significance that the implementation of peace education can have in building a new citizenship is undeniable in Colombia. This situation is evident in the review of the state of the art in the study, *La Unión*: a school that builds guidelines for socialization towards peace, developed by Umaña et al. (2018), who found that the school builds guidelines for socialization towards peace, guaranteeing equity, tolerance, peace, and love. Similarly, the research *Education for a culture of peace in the post-Cold War world order*, by Duque-Vargas (2021), found that education for a culture of peace in the post-conflict era must be recognized in light of the consequences for the social fabric and collective identity. Also noteworthy is the project *Teaching the Peace Course through a Didactic Sequence from logotherapy for Grade 10*, developed by Buitrago (2020), who shows a significant change in the attitude of students who previously expressed aggression and apathy towards the peace course, based on the conception that it was only theoretical and did not provide an education for life. This research illustrates that, although there are limitations in the implementation and educational scope of peace education, it is valid to consider and reflect on its positive impact on education in peacebuilding and citizenship.

In this sense, from a theoretical perspective, it is possible to consider that the peace chair is an academic and research space that promotes pedagogical and curricular work in favor of fostering dialogue, citizenship, and coexistence at all educational levels in the country (Cediel et al., 2019). Educating for peace in the post-conflict context with the FARC-EP and the resurgence of armed groups should be a national goal in which all academic and productive institutional forces converge in order to achieve the training of the skills and knowledge proposed by the Chair in Culture of Peace, Education for Peace, and Sustainable Development (Acevedo and Báez, 2018). In this regard, Cardozo et al. (2020) highlights the participatory and youth-oriented nature of educational initiatives aimed at citizenship training through the peace chair, seen as “formative processes and reflective dialogue around a culture of peace based on knowledge of conflict scenarios and everyday practices of peace and coexistence” (p. 23). Reflections such as the above lead us to think of an education that contributes to the development of the characteristics of a true educational community through training in citizenship skills (Otálora, 2018), bearing in mind that these, for the most part, will give individuals the ability to relate harmoniously to the world. Under this consideration, the construction of peace and citizenship requires the promotion of social integration, attitudinal, and emotional competencies, as these are what individuals and communities must apply in their daily lives to resolve conflicts (Herrero, 2021).

Finally, it is important to note that the study provides new conceptual, theoretical, and empirical knowledge for reviewing the scope and pedagogical processes followed by educational institutions in implementing peace education, especially the two schools participating in the research. It also contributes to the current assessment of peace education as an educational policy implemented since 2014 and helps to stimulate the construction of peaceful environments in educational institutions, contributing to the achievement of Sustainable Development Goal 16 - Peace, justice, and strong institutions, within the United Nations (UN) 2030 Agenda (Marej, 2021).

Methodology

In relation to the design adopted, the methodology used in the project is qualitative, with an exploratory and interpretative scope of the narratives studied, which leads to consideration of the experiences lived by each of the people involved in the research (Hernández et al., 2014). The techniques chosen for the development of this project are: documentary analysis, open survey, and in-depth interviews. Documentary analysis is a process of careful review of sources related to the categories of the research to be carried out. It is a process that establishes data collection strategies, design, and application of a documentary review format, so that the sources of information can be reviewed in relation to the categories highlighted in the research (Tamayo, 2004). This technique was developed through a content file. In the case of the open survey, this tool is considered to be a tool that facilitates the collection of information in an agile and objective manner, in accordance with the categories stated in the research (Hernández et al., 2014). A questionnaire was used to develop the research. The focus group interview is considered a complementary tool that allows study participants to expand on their contributions, enabling the collection of subjectivities expressed in their feelings and opinions (Tamayo, 2004). For its implementation, a focus group interview guide was used.

For the purposes of this research, the peace studies course was taken as a category of analysis, with the following subcategories: curricular characteristics of the Peace Studies Course Project, scope and limitations in the construction of peace and citizenship, and lessons learned from the implementation of the peace studies

course. In this regard, the information collected was systematized, coded, analyzed, and interpreted using categorical analysis. The participating population included eleventh-grade students, teachers accompanying the peace chair, and graduates from the last five years of the Colegio Arborizadora Alta IED and the Colegio República de México IED, located in the town of Ciudad Bolívar. A convenience sample was selected from among them, consisting of 16 teachers, 120 students, and 36 graduates.

With regard to ethical considerations, the right to dignity and protection of the well-being of the study subject prevails, as established by Resolution 8430 of 1993 of the Ministry of Health and Social Protection. To this end, the study population had complete freedom to decide whether to participate in the research, as well as to withdraw if they so choose. In this regard, an informed consent form was signed, which clearly explained in simple language the objectives of the study, the activities to be carried out, and the possibility of participating or not.

“ En ese sentido, desde la reflexión teórica, es posible considerar que la cátedra de la paz es un espacio académico y de investigación que propicia el trabajo pedagógico didáctico y curricular en pro del fomento del dialogo, la ciudadanía y la convivencia en todos los niveles educativos del país (Cediel et al., 2019). ”

Resultados

The information collected was analyzed according to the subcategories assumed in the project.

Curricular Characteristics of The Peace Education Project

A review of the documents designed for the implementation of the peace education program—the PEI, peace education project, peace education implementation guides, and work materials—revealed that the projects are aimed at encouraging reflection, debate, and student participation in the construction of a more inclusive and tolerant school and social community. As shown in Table 1.

Table 1. Curricular characteristics of the Peace Chair Project

Category	Subcategory	Findings
Peace Chair	Proposals for the implementation of the peace chair	CPRD101- Read the UNESCO Universal Declaration on Cultural Diversity. Each group must define what cultural diversity, cultural plurality, and cultural rights are.
		CPRD102- Analyze and understand the basic concepts and tools that contribute to addressing conflicts in a timely manner.
		EPRD101- Investigate and present an obstacle to “quality of life” and how it influences human happiness: Negative attitudes, addictions, violence, low self-esteem, social inequality, social awareness.
		CPRD201-The Sociocultural Thought Field has proposed the “Hagamos las Paces” coexistence project, part of the peace studies program, a mandatory academic space for all educational institutions in Colombia.
		EPRD201- Amidst the problems in which we are permanently immersed in our educational institution, the primary motivation of the “Hagamos las Paces” project remains constant in the human growth of students.

Note: Description of categories. Prepared by the author based on this research.

Based on the information collected, as shown in Table 1, it is possible to see that both institutions have a project for the implementation of the peace course linked to the PEI, but there are profound differences, since at the Colegio Arboleda Alta IED it is incorporated into the social sciences area and at the Colegio República de México IED it is an independent pedagogical project. Similarly, it is important to note that both institutions have guidelines and materials that encourage reflection on the internal armed conflict, civic competencies, the reconstruction of the social fabric, and the culture of peace. Likewise, the curriculum design adopted by both institutions seeks to promote environments of healthy coexistence, articulating the concerns and educational needs of students and the community.

Scope and Limitations in the Construction of Peace and Citizenship

Based on the information collected through the open survey and focus group interview conducted with teachers, it was evident that the implementation of the peace curriculum, beyond the formal curriculum designed, has been reduced to the initiatives of some teachers, who briefly touch on the proposed topics in their disciplinary content. On the other hand, the peace curriculum tends to be present only in the teaching and learning of social sciences and not in the pedagogical practice of all areas of the curriculum, giving rise to an interdisciplinary exercise. This can be seen in Table 2.

“ These findings show an educational approach focused on promoting reconciliation, diversity, peaceful coexistence, and the construction of a national identity based on respect, the reframing of the armed conflict, and the protection of natural and cultural wealth. ”

Table 2. Scope and limitations in the construction of peace and citizenship

Category	Subcategory	Findings
Peace Studies	Peacebuilding and citizenship achieved through the implementation of the peace chair	CPEES004/ One of the major achievements of the peace chair has been to greatly improve coexistence within the institution.
		CPEEA005/One of the major achievements of the peace chair has been to greatly improve coexistence within the institution.
		CPEES006/The main impact is being able to see the different ways there are to resolve a conflict passively and calmly. We call peace everything that is done to find a solution, provide support, and bring peace of mind to the person.
		CPEES003/One of the limitations was fighting, but thanks to the Let's Make Peace project, we were able to have a little more peace.
		CPEES004/One of the limitations is that at first, they didn't pay much attention to the project, but as time went by they began to enjoy it because they knew it wasn't good to have problems

Note: Description of categories. Prepared by the author based on this research..

Given this consideration, it can be said that teachers perceive the peace course as a significant opportunity to reinforce teaching and learning about conflict as the cornerstone of relationships and new forms of citizenship. In the dialogues established in the focus groups, participants described their experiences with the implementation of the peace curriculum, which clearly shows that it has not been implemented in a way that involves the entire community.

Lessons Learned from the Implementation of the Peace Course

The open survey and focus group interview conducted with students and graduates showed that school is a genuine setting for life experiences. Consequently, conflict will not only arise in personal and community relationships but will also become a central element of education that involves not only students, but also all actors, both in understanding the violent events that have historically occurred in the territory as a result of the country's armed conflict (Rubio et al., 2019). as shown in Table 3.

Table 3. Lessons learned from the implementation of the Peace Chair

Category	Subcategory	Findings
Peace Chair	Lessons learned from the implementation of the peace chair	EPEES007/It taught me a lot: living in peace means accepting differences and being able to listen
		EPEES008/I learned about my rights and the rights of others to be a citizen, to always know how to manage my expressions so as not to offend anyone
		EPEEA009/The lesson is that we know about the conflicts in Colombia and we don't want to repeat them, and we start to change from home
		EPEEA010/Now we respect each other's opinions even if they are not the same as ours, and mistreatment has decreased
		EPEES011/critical thinking, knowing ourselves and recognizing others

Note: Description of categories. Prepared internally based on this research.

Under this premise, the implementation of the peace course promotes a sense of historical responsibility in students, as it encourages them to reflect on civic transformations in favor of a culture of respect and care that dignifies their personal and social future through citizenship in and for peace.

“ Through the peace chair, skills are promoted to address differences and divergences, as well as skills for mediation and conflict resolution, resorting to non-violence and peacebuilding. ”

Discussion

With regard to the curricular characteristics of the peace studies program, as shown in Table 1, educational institutions are committed to and interested in implementing peace studies, recognizing its contribution to the construction of environments of coexistence. This situation is in line with the findings of Buitrago (2020), who highlights the contributions that the implementation of the peace course can make to the revision of the historical memory of the Colombian internal armed conflict and the creation of a scenario framed by values such as respect, tolerance, and dialogue (García-Noguera and Vásquez, 2022). These curricular commitments are, in turn, fundamental to promoting a citizenship for peace among students, generating in them a commitment to their social environment (Perdomo, 2021).

Similarly, the design of the peace chair promotes a culture of coexistence and reconciliation in the school community, which is particularly important in the context of Ciudad Bolívar, given the significant number of victims of the conflict living in the area. These findings show an educational approach focused on promoting reconciliation, diversity, peaceful coexistence, and the construction of a national identity based on respect, the reframing of the armed conflict, and the protection of natural and cultural wealth. Given this reality, the conflict must be considered “as the core of peace education, and cannot be understood as a battle to be won or lost, but as a problem to be solved with openness and fairness to the interests of all parties” (Funes, 2020, p. 43).

In the same vein, with regard to the scope and limitations of peacebuilding and citizenship, more intentional pedagogical interventions are needed that are better suited to a pedagogy for peace. “Peace education proposes the development of new pedagogical practices based on other references and models. For this reason, it proposes, for example, the design and implementation of emotional, participatory, and dialogical methodologies” (Cely-Fuentes, 2021, p. 30). Similarly, it is important to highlight the commitment of teachers to the implementation of peace education, which underscores the assertion by Cardozo et al. (2020), who emphasize the role that teachers can play in promoting environments of coexistence, using peace education as a setting for the development of social behavior in students.

Given this assessment, it is important to highlight the support that the implementation of the peace curriculum must receive from the Ministry of Education and other regulatory bodies in order to enhance the achievements of institutions, promoting, among other things, networking and to manage the limitations that arise, highlighting the importance that this educational initiative can have in promoting a culture of peace and non-violence (García-Noguera and Verdugo, 2023).

In this dynamic, with regard to the lessons learned from the implementation of the peace course, it has fostered active, pluralistic, and critical dialogue, which encourages the appropriation of the topics proposed in the peace course (armed conflict, environmental crisis, sustainable development, and the exercise of citizenship). This is in line with the observations of Perdomo (2021), who highlights the participatory and youth-oriented nature that educational initiatives aimed at peace education should have, viewing them as “formative processes and reflective dialogue around a culture of peace based on knowledge, scenarios, conflicts, and everyday practices of peace and coexistence” (p. 23). Similarly, it is important to consider that teaching not only promotes a reflection framed within the humanities and social sciences, but rather an interdisciplinary exercise that can promote learning in various areas of knowledge, encouraging, among other things, reflection on the environmental commitment that must be assumed within the framework of sustainable development (Tapia et al., 2023), on the understanding that environmental education also constitutes an action aimed at promoting a culture of peace (Aguirre et al., 2021).

“ Estos hallazgos muestran un enfoque educativo centrado en el fomento de la reconciliación, la diversidad, la convivencia pacífica y la construcción de una identidad nacional basada en el respeto, la resignificación del conflicto armado y la protección de la riqueza natural y cultural. ”

Given these considerations, the impact of the peace chair is formally explained in the proposals that the two institutions under study have designed for building a culture of peace and citizenship in institutions. These initiatives emerged in 2015 with the implementation of the peace studies program and have gradually fostered a space for reflection within institutions that did not previously exist on a permanent basis with a formal proposal. It was developed informally and somewhat improvisationally to commemorate historical events or current situations in the country. Under this premise, the implementation of the peace chair fostered an academic and pedagogical dialogue within institutions that was of great importance in responding to the educational needs associated with peace among actors in the educational community. This dynamic is in line with the findings of Toro et al. (2021), who highlight the importance of the peace chair in promoting the transformation of educational institutions through the implementation of educational and pedagogical tools that foster a culture of peace in Colombia.

Finally, this impact can also be seen in the civic skills developed in students at the two educational institutions consulted, who, based on what they have learned about the internal armed conflict and peacebuilding in the territories, as well as skills for peaceful conflict resolution and prosocial attitudes, have become more committed to transforming their social context. This situation reaffirms the importance of peace education in training individuals capable of reflecting on and working to transform their reality (Amador-Baquiro et al., 2022).

Conclusion

Through the peace chair, skills are promoted to address differences and divergences, as well as skills for mediation and conflict resolution, resorting to non-violence and peacebuilding in the exercise of citizenship, and rejecting the reproduction of violent patterns, which have historically been present in our cultural environment, affecting the values and purposes of citizenship and coexistence.

In this regard, it is important to note that, although the peace curriculum appears at an important moment in the country's history, its limited dissemination within educational communities and the absence of a clear and central focus in the curriculum model means that its importance is diluted among the school's many academic objectives. Similarly, it can be said that the peace curriculum has had an impact on the Arborizadora Alta IED School and the República de México IED School, in the curriculum designs that have been developed and in the civic skills developed by the students.

Finally, it is suggested that the cross-cutting themes addressed by the peace studies course be reviewed, considering the incorporation of topical issues such as understanding internal armed conflict from a gender perspective, nonviolent mechanisms developed in the context of internal armed conflict, and post-development initiatives that go beyond the traditional capitalist system.

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