The Urgency of Peace Education in Aceh's Educational Institutions

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Abstract

The protracted conflict in Aceh has inflicted significant damage upon the region's social and educational infrastructure, engendering an urgent imperative for the integration of peace education within educational institutions. This article aims to discuss the urgency of peace education in Aceh's educational institutions. A qualitative research methodology, employing a literature study approach, was adopted, gathering and analyzing data from various relevant sources to gain a comprehensive understanding. This study showed that peace education is not only critical for post-conflict recovery but also essential in shaping the attitudes of tolerance and conflict understanding among the youth. This need is underscored by Aceh's conflict history and its enduring impact on society. The article concludes that peace education is an urgent requirement in Aceh's schools, with the potential to equip students with knowledge and attitudes supportive of sustained peace and future violence prevention. Investment in peace education in Aceh is vital for regional stability and serves as a potential global model for post-conflict peacebuilding.

Keywords: *Urgency, Peace Education, Aceh Conflict, Educational Institutions*

Abstrak

Konflik yang berkepanjangan di Aceh telah menimbulkan kerusakan yang signifikan terhadap infrastruktur sosial dan pendidikan sehingga diperlukan pengintegrasian pendidikan perdamaian ke dalam lembaga-lembaga pendidikan. Artikel ini bertujuan untuk menganalisis urgensi pendidikan perdamaian di sekolah menengah atas di Aceh, menekankan generasi yang lahir pasca-konflik Aceh. Metode penelitian kualitatif digunakan dengan pendekatan studi literatur, mengumpulkan dan menganalisis data dari berbagai sumber terkait untuk mendapatkan pemahaman yang komprehensif tentang topik ini. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa pendidikan perdamaian tidak hanya penting untuk memulihkan keadaan pasca-konflik tetapi juga untuk membentuk sikap toleransi dan pemahaman konflik di kalangan generasi muda. Hal ini diperkuat dengan sejarah konflik di Aceh dan dampaknya yang berkelanjutan pada masyarakat. Artikel ini menyimpulkan bahwa pendidikan perdamaian merupakan kebutuhan mendesak di sekolah-sekolah Aceh, dengan potensi untuk membekali siswa dengan pengetahuan dan sikap yang mendukung perdamaian berkelanjutan dan mencegah kekerasan di masa depan. Investasi dalam pendidikan perdamaian di Aceh tidak hanya penting untuk stabilitas regional tetapi juga sebagai model global untuk pembangunan perdamaian pasca-konflik.

Kata Kunci: *Urgensi, Pendidikan Perdamaian, Konflik Aceh, Institusi Pendidikan*

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A. Introduction

Peace education remains a vital necessity for humanity and nations, as the world has not yet fully experienced a sense of security and non-violence (Djamil 2019). Amid ongoing global unrest, peace education emerges as an essential tool for fostering security and non-violence. This need is underscored by the United Nations' (UN) designation of September 21st as the International Day of Peace (Nurcholis 2015), reflecting a universal aspiration for enduring peace—a goal yet to be fully realized worldwide.

Numerous studies have elucidated the strong relationship between education and conflict, as well as peace, both directly and indirectly (Brown 2011; Davies 2010; Mamoon 2017; Shah and Lopes Cardozo 2014; Smith and Vaux 2003; Tidwell 2004; Zainal, Yunus, and Jalil 2019) asserts that education's relation to conflict is primarily through its indirect impacts, as it significantly interacts with numerous dimensions of conflict. Consequently, the international academic community and educational practitioners have emphasized the vital role of educational institutions as peacekeepers after conflicts (Averink 2013).

The relationship between conflict and education in social life is multifaceted, encompassing both positive and negative dimensions. Education can serve as a catalyst for conflict itself, in addition to being a means of maintaining peace. This duality arises because, in practice, education is not always utilized to generate positive values but is sometimes directed towards producing values that can create adverse conditions (Smith and Vaux 2003). D. Bush and Saltarelli (2000) support this assertion, stating that education can be manipulated to incite new conflicts within society while also serving as a force to preserve peace. By emphasizing peace education, classroom initiatives can focus on nurturing a generation committed to peace by fostering the acquisition of knowledge, abilities, and mindsets that actively deter conflicts, facilitate peaceful conflict resolution, and cultivate a harmonious social atmosphere conducive to peace(Peace Insight 2022).

One region in Indonesia that has experienced a prolonged period of conflict is Aceh Province. The conflict in Aceh destroyed the social and educational infrastructure, depriving the population of access to education. During this period, the education sector suffered significant impacts and became one of the most adversely affected sectors. Between 1989 and 1998, approximately 527 schools in Aceh were burned or destroyed, and an estimated 880 schools were closed due to the failure of the peace process in 2003 (Barron 2008). A World Bank study revealed that the conflict in Aceh destroyed around 49% of high schools, 47% of junior high schools, 54% of elementary schools and madrasahs, and 74% of kindergartens. Additionally, from 1992 to 2002, an estimated 180,000 people were forced to leave Aceh, and when a military emergency was declared in 2003, 100,000 residents left the region (World Bank 2009).

The extensive impact of conflict on all aspects of community life has caused the memories of past conflicts to persist in the minds of the Aceh population to this day. The suffering experienced during the conflict cannot be regarded as ordinary because it has the potential to be reproduced, giving rise to new conflicts in Aceh's social life post-conflict. Hutagalung et al. (2013) emphasize in their research that the trauma, suffering, and sadness resulting from the conflict are more deeply ingrained in the minds of the Aceh population than the trauma and sadness resulting from the tsunami. In this context, it is essential to establish a mechanism that can use past conflict events as a means of learning to nurture sustainable peace in Aceh.

Averink (2013) asserts that in post-conflict societies, education offers significant opportunities to safeguard and nurture peace through ongoing learning activities. This means that if educational institutions can transfer peace values to students, who are the future generation of Aceh, the sustainability of peace can be ensured. Normatively, education has significant potential to halt conflict and preserve peace. Therefore, to safeguard and nurture sustainable peace in Aceh, sincere effort and seriousness are required. In this context, educational institutions are effective mediums, as the sharing and transfer of

knowledge occur within these institutions. Educational institutions, with all their resources, have the potential to produce a generation that is pro-peace (Wulandari 2015). Additionally, educational institutions have a substantial responsibility to produce future generations with a solid understanding of peace education, especially in Aceh. If educational institutions in Aceh can fulfill this role, they can raise a generation that recognizes the importance of peace, even if they did not experience the conflict firsthand, unlike previous generations.

This article aims to discuss the urgency of peace education in educational institutions in Aceh. We argue that the importance of peace education in senior high schools in Aceh aligns with the current educational landscape, which is populated by a generation born after the Aceh conflict. The students pursuing senior high school in Aceh belong to a generation not directly in touch with the Aceh conflict. Therefore, it is necessary to equip them with positive knowledge about Aceh's past and future through peace education.

B. Metode

This article adopts a qualitative research methodology, utilizing a literature study approach as its foundational framework. This approach facilitates an in-depth exploration and elaboration of essential information drawn from a variety of relevant secondary sources. These sources include scholarly articles, journals, books, and other literature pertinent to the subject matter discussed herein.

The data collection for this study was conducted through a meticulous process of summarizing and organizing information from these diverse sources. The gathered data underwent qualitative analysis, serving as the cornerstone of our investigative process. This method of analysis was instrumental in achieving a deeper comprehension of the topic and in exploring the various perspectives, arguments, and findings that have emerged from the existing literature.

The results of this qualitative analysis are presented in a descriptive format. This presentation style was chosen to provide readers with a comprehensive overview of the issue or topic under discussion. Our aim through this methodology is to offer a profound understanding of the subject, to explore

diverse viewpoints, and to present the information in a manner that is both thorough and accessible to our readers.

C. Result and Discussion

1. Peace and Peace Education

Peace is crucial for global human progress, serving as a cornerstone for worldwide development. Progress becomes unattainable without a peaceful environment. The absence of peace leads to widespread physical and economic hardships, impacting individuals, families, communities, businesses, entire nations, and regions significantly (Wawira 2013). Peace is more than just the absence of war or physical violence, akin to how health is more than just the absence of illness (Johnson and Johnson 2005). Scholars have strived to provide precise definitions of peace. Upadhyay and Pandey (2016) note that the notion of peace has evolved significantly throughout human history. Initially, peace was perceived merely as the absence of conflict or war. However, this understanding has broadened to include societies devoid of structural violence, exploitation, injustice, global cooperation, mutual understanding, ecological harmony, sustainable development, and personal inner peace.

Furthermore, scholars describe peace as a dynamic and evolving process (Johnson and Johnson 2005; Reardon 1999). In critical approaches, some authors use the term "positive peace" interchangeably with "just peace," positing that peace is unattainable without justice (Snauwaert 2011). Peace is more than the absence of war and violence; it also encompasses the presence of justice. Peace lacking justice, often termed negative peace, is considered unstable. In contrast, just peace, which aims to minimize not only physical but also structural and cultural violence, is seen as more robust and enduring. Recognizing the perpetual existence of conflict and violence, individuals can strive to mitigate their destructive impact, even if complete eradication remains unattainable.

The term "peace education" traces its roots back to the 17th century with Czech educator Jan Amos Komenský (Comenius). The term and the movement reached their zenith and rapid development through the renowned Italian

educator Maria Montessori in the early 20th century (Frljak 2023). Comenius's overarching mission was education for all, regardless of gender, social background, or ethnicity, to nurture a new generation for humanity, collaboration, and a better world. He was also a pioneer in human rights, respect for mother tongues, local cultures, ethnic diversity, and democracy in education. His teaching and learning methodology, working with and not against what is natural, transcended his time and remained relevant. In his humanitarian education, he emphasized the quality of relationships between parents and children and teachers and students. He posited that education should be conducted with love and appreciation for the child's personality.

It is important to note that forms of peace education existed long before both Comenius and Montessori. According to Harris (2011), generations have formally practiced peace education to settle disputes without resorting to violence. Indigenous societies have traditions of conflict resolution passed down for thousands of years, promoting peace within their communities. Additionally, the teachings of religions that have supported peace education efforts for thousands of years must not be overlooked. Religious and spiritual figures such as those in Islam, Buddhism, Christianity, and other faiths are often regarded as peace educators (Harris, 2011).

Peace education has emerged as a field in academia aimed at promoting peace and justice. This goal is achieved through increasing awareness, understanding, and effective actions in pursuit of secure peace. Peace education is a collective effort within a community to combat oppression and injustice that threaten peace. This process includes studying the causes of violence, oppression, and war and exploring alternative approaches at personal, local, national, and international levels. The core idea is that through improved education, mutual understanding, and consideration of sociocultural factors, a more peaceful and just world can be achieved(Alnufaishan 2020).

Bar-Tal and Rosen (2009) explain that peace education programs vary worldwide in terms of their ideologies, objectives, focus, curriculum, content,

and practices. Despite these differences, the fundamental purpose of peace education remains consistent: to provide knowledge, attitudes, values, and behaviors essential for resolving conflicts peacefully and fostering harmonious relationships. Early experts in peace education, including Comenius, Jane Addams, Maria Montessori, John Dewey, Paulo Freire, Johan Galtung, Bigit Brocke-Utne, Betty Reardon, Ian M. Harris, and others, concurred that education has the transformative potential to cultivate a new awareness, paving the way for a more peaceful future (Salomon and Cairns 2011).

UNESCO defines peace education as the process of promoting knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values of peace, enabling children, adolescents, and adults to prevent conflict and violence, resolve conflicts peacefully, and create conditions conducive to peace at interpersonal, intrapersonal, intergroup, national, and international levels (Cuga, Budimansyah, and Maftuh 2020). This definition highlights the process of improving knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values to promote peace, prevent conflicts, and resolve issues at various levels (Hendry 2015). Peace education is grounded in philosophies of non-violence, compassion, trust, integrity, justice, cooperation, mutual respect, and appreciation for all living beings worldwide. Hence, peace education can be understood as an effort to build self-reliant communities capable of independently constructing peaceful societies and addressing all arising issues (Hendry, 2015).

Kester (2010) provides a clear and comprehensive description of peace education, emphasizing that "in practice, peace education is problem-based education that seeks to build universal values and behaviors as the foundation of a culture of peace, including the development of nonviolent conflict resolution skills and a commitment to collaborate in realizing a desired and needed shared future." He adds that "peace education includes nurturing peacebuilding skills (such as dialogue, mediation, and artistic efforts). Peace educators, therefore, impart values of respect, understanding, and nonviolence, provide skills for analyzing international conflicts, educate about alternative security systems, and

employ democratic and participatory pedagogical approaches. Thus, peace education as both practice and philosophy refers to aligning complementary elements between education and society, where the social goals (i.e., why we teach), content (i.e., what is taught), and pedagogy (i.e., how it is taught) of the educational process contribute to fostering peace".

According to Johnson and Johnson (2011), the ultimate goal of peace education is "to enable individuals to uphold peace across various dimensions of their existence: intrapersonal peace, interpersonal peace, intergroup peace, and peace within nations, societies, and cultures, often referred to as international peace". To achieve this objective, peace education must concentrate on the following aspects: "(a) Fostering cooperative, rather than competitive, relationships among all relevant parties; (b) ensuring that all concerned parties are proficient in engaging in political discourse and creative decision-making that encompasses open discussions of diverse viewpoints; (c) ensuring that the involved parties seek mutually beneficial agreements and maximize collective outcomes; (d) Instilling in all relevant parties the values that underpin consensual peace."

In alignment with Johnson's perspective, Reardon, as cited in Arslan et al. (2015), posits that peace education strives to peacefully resolve conflicts, promote shared harmony, and change individuals' mental frameworks. Through peace education, students and educators embark on a transformative process oriented towards peace, and this orientation continues permanently beyond the scope of peace education. As a result, this input promotes an environment focused on finding solutions and devoid of violence. This approach is immensely valuable for education, development, and enhancing quality of life through peaceful means. In educational institutions, the promotion of peace can be exemplified by students as they develop and apply attributes and abilities like kindness, understanding, affection, accountability, dedication, esteem, bravery, determination, reliance, truthfulness, teamwork, moral uprightness, virtue,

open-mindedness, appreciation, diligence, fairness, sagacity, self-control, and fondness (Global Ed Leadership 2022).

Furthermore, the evolution of peace education from its historical roots to its contemporary applications underscores its transformative potential in society. The pioneering work of educators like Comenius and Montessori laid the foundation for understanding peace beyond the mere absence of conflict. This historical perspective enriches our current understanding of peace education as a multifaceted approach, integrating knowledge, skills, and attitudes toward building a culture of peace. The principles and methodologies developed by these early educators resonate with today's needs for peace education, particularly in diverse cultural and sociopolitical contexts like Aceh. Their emphasis on holistic education, respecting human dignity and diversity, and fostering a sense of global responsibility aligns with the contemporary challenges of achieving lasting peace in post-conflict societies. By drawing on these historical insights, peace education in modern contexts can be more effectively tailored to address the specific needs of communities recovering from conflict, such as Aceh. The integration of historical perspectives with contemporary practices in peace education not only honors the legacy of these early educators but also provides a richer, more nuanced approach to cultivating peace in today's world.

2. **Implementation and Urgency of Peace Education in Educational Institutions in Aceh**

In Aceh, as well as across Indonesia, schools serve as the primary environment for most children. Integrating knowledge, skills, and attitudes that foster a culture of peace into official curricula and school activities offers the potential to empower students to address conflicts and violence within the school setting (Alferez 2018).

During the Aceh conflict, peace education was implemented in educational institutions, particularly at the senior high school level. UNICEF trained teachers and supported 96 schools in Aceh in implementing peace education, resulting in a peace education model with modules and teaching

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materials. As peace returned to Aceh, efforts were made to integrate peace education into other subjects to reduce the burden on students. However, this integrated model did not significantly impact students' understanding of conflict and peace, as noted by Zainal et al. (2019). Teachers and school principals reported that integrating peace education with other subjects was ineffective in helping students grasp peace education concepts and had limited success in changing behavior.

Given these observations, the urgency of peace education in Aceh, especially at the senior high school level, cannot be overstated. Based on previous studies that are several factors underscore this urgency:

(1) UN organizations, including UNESCO and UNICEF, have emphasized peace education in post-conflict regions to foster peaceful behavior, reduce violence, and cultivate tolerance and mutual respect. UNESCO stresses the importance of adapting peace education to the social and cultural context and specific national needs.

(2) The narrative of the Aceh conflict and peace is underrepresented in senior high school curricula in Aceh, which follows the national curriculum of Indonesia. This lack of coverage hinders understanding of Aceh's history of conflict and peace.

(3) Peace education can help students become individuals free from resentment, capable of tolerance, committed to peace, and averse to violence. Research by Sukendar (2011) on post-conflict child education supports this notion.

(4) In Aceh, conflict victims have often fared worse than those affected by the tsunami. Addressing this requires building and strengthening institutions through education, preventing resentment from being passed to future generations (Barron, Clark, and Daud 2005).

(5) Without peace education, the narrative of the Aceh conflict may perpetuate resentment. Education plays a crucial role in building and maintaining peace.

(6) Peace education is urgent for several reasons: it heals trauma, empowers conflict management and resolution strategies, and equips students for peaceful political participation (Sariyatun, Joebagio, and Akhyar 2019).

(7) Current senior high school students in Aceh were born during the late stages of the conflict and early years of peace. Their parents' experiences and narratives of the conflict indirectly influence their perspectives.

The above points collectively emphasize the critical need for peace education in Aceh. The unique historical and sociocultural context of Aceh, emerging from a period of conflict, necessitates an education system that not only imparts conventional academic knowledge but also fosters understanding, tolerance, and conflict resolution skills. The failure to effectively integrate peace education into the curriculum, as observed by Zainal et al. (2019), highlights a gap in addressing the psycho-social needs of students who are the future of a peaceful Aceh. The emphasis by UNESCO and UNICEF on adapting peace education to local contexts resonates strongly here, suggesting that a customized approach, sensitive to the nuances of Aceh's history and culture, is essential. This need becomes more pronounced considering the current generation's indirect exposure to the conflict through familial experiences, underscoring the role of education in shaping their perceptions and attitudes towards peace and conflict.

Following this analysis, it is pertinent to explore the comprehensive objectives for implementing peaceful education as outlined by UNICEF and UNESCO in their Working Paper Series of July 1999:

(1) Creating a "peace zone" where children feel safe from violent conflicts.

(2) Implementing the basic rights of children as outlined in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC).

(3) Cultivating a peaceful learning environment and mutual respect among community members.

(4) Demonstrating principles of equality and non-discrimination in practice and administrative policies.

(5) Providing knowledge about various forms of peace and effective, non-violent conflict resolution methods, rooted in local culture.

(6) Respecting the rights and dignity of all parties in conflict resolution.

(7) Integrating understanding of peace, human rights, social justice, and global issues into the curriculum.

(8) Offering forums for discussion on the values of peace and social justice.

(9) Employing teaching methods that emphasize participation, cooperation, problem-solving, and valuing diversity.

(10) Empowering children to practice peaceful behavior in educational settings and society at large.

(11) Expanding opportunities for ongoing reflection and skill development for educators in peace, justice, and individual rights.

In Aceh, the implementation of a robust peace education program is essential for transcending traditional learning paradigms. This program focuses not only on the cognitive development of students but also emphasizes the cultivation of empathy, respect for diversity, and active participation in peace-building processes. Integrating these aspects into educational institutions equips students with both academic knowledge and the moral and social capacities to contribute positively to their communities and the world.

The 11 aspects of peaceful education, as outlined by UNICEF and UNESCO, provide a comprehensive framework crucial for fostering an environment conducive to peace, particularly in post-conflict areas like Aceh. This framework addresses immediate needs for safety and security while also delving into the deeper roots of conflicts and principles of human rights, equality, and justice. By incorporating these aspects, students gain essential tools and perspectives to navigate and positively transform their societies toward lasting peace.

Given Aceh's history of conflict, this comprehensive approach to peace education is particularly relevant. It effectively addresses the lingering effects of conflict, helps prevent the recurrence of violence, and promotes a culture of peace

and mutual understanding. This approach is not just theoretical; it's a practical tool for societal transformation in Aceh, aligning with broader peace education objectives.

Peace education in Aceh extends beyond the mere absence of violence. It involves creating conditions for positive peace by targeting three main aspects: knowledge (cognitive domain), skills (psychomotor domain), and attitudes (affective domain). The curriculum includes a wide range of topics, from self-awareness and conflict resolution to global issues like environmental concerns, justice, and human rights. Practical skills taught include effective communication, empathy, critical thinking, and conflict resolution, while the values instilled encompass ecological consciousness, tolerance, and global citizenship.

In the classroom, interactive learning techniques are used to develop children's skills, attitudes, and knowledge. This approach fosters an environment of tolerance and respect, where both teachers and students engage collaboratively. Peace education thus enriches learners' well-being, promotes fairness and equality, and instills a sense of individual and social responsibility.

Applicable across various educational settings, peace education in Aceh adapts its content and methods to suit different social, cultural, economic, and political contexts. This flexibility ensures that peace education remains relevant and effective in diverse environments, from rural to urban areas and in both formal and non-formal curricula.

As guardians of peace, educational institutions in Aceh play a crucial role in shaping future generations. They must provide peace education that not only addresses past conflicts but also equips students with attitudes supportive of peace. Without a significant focus on peace education, the commitment of Aceh's youth to maintaining peace may wane. Therefore, peace education is an indispensable part of nurturing a generation equipped with a positive understanding of the past and the skills for a peaceful future. Investing in comprehensive peace education in Aceh is a strategic initiative crucial for the

region's stability and prosperity, molding young minds into ambassadors of peace and tolerance, and ensuring Aceh's sustained peace and development.

D. Conclusion

Peace education is a vital aspect of human development, encompassing more than just the absence of physical violence. It represents the presence of justice, cooperation, and solutions to structural violence. As a dynamic and evolving process, peace education spans various dimensions of peace, with the aim of establishing a culture rooted in justice.

In Aceh, a region marked by its history of conflict, the implementation of peace education is particularly crucial. It offers a unique opportunity for Aceh to be a global model for post-conflict peacebuilding. However, challenges remain, as evidenced by the limited effectiveness of current practices where peace education, integrated with other subjects, has not sufficiently impacted students' understanding of peace and conflict.

The need for peace education in Aceh is underscored by several factors: international recognition of its significance, the underrepresentation of Aceh's conflict history in educational curricula, the necessity to cultivate tolerance and resilience among the youth, and the opportunity to prevent future conflicts by addressing lingering resentments in the community.

To overcome these challenges, educational institutions in Aceh must prioritize and enhance their peace education programs. Developing a comprehensive and effective curriculum that instills values of peace, social justice, and conflict resolution skills is essential. Such an approach is key to ensuring that future generations in Aceh are equipped with the knowledge and attitudes necessary to uphold and reinforce the region's hard-won peace.

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