

Building Backroads to Coexistence: Promoting Arab–Jewish cooperation through indirect approaches to peace education

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Panelists:

1. Novak, Shawna and Noyek, Arnold, Canada International Scientific Exchange Program (CISEPO), University of Toronto Faculty of Medicine, Dalla Lana School of Public Health, and York University. “A Bi-Level Model of Global Cooperation: Strengthening Arab and Israeli Health Care Systems through Knowledge Transfer Networks.”
2. Stuart Schoenfeld, Sociology, Glendon College – York University. “Challenges of cultivating peace through environmental education in the Eastern Mediterranean”
3. James Torczyner School of Social Work, McGill University. “Promoting coexistence and social justice in Israel, Palestine and Jordan: the McGill Middle East Program in Civil Society and Peace Building”
4. Asaf Zohar, Chair, Sustainability Studies Program, Trent University. “Building Backroads to Coexistence: Promoting Arab–Jewish cooperation through anti-conflict-resolution approaches to peace education”.

Panel Chair: Asaf Zohar

Panel Abstract:

Traditional approaches to peace education surface and negotiate the conflict directly in attempts to find common ground, often focusing on divisive political and societal conditions. Alternative approaches avoid this approach, and identify creative ways of circumventing the core issues driving the conflict. These unique programs have often experienced significant success where traditional approaches have fallen short. They are able to redirect attention and effort on creating a cooperative context among program participants away from the core pillars of the conflict, and towards select domains of common interest and value. Our aim in this panel is to compare and contrast distinct ways of tackling ongoing, seemingly intractable conflicts through peace education. Based on a series of case of studies of unique experiential educational programs, the contributors to this panel describe and critically review the feasibility and practical impact of such alternative approaches to peace education. These are compared and contrasted with the traditional ‘direct’ approaches to peace education undertaken in the context of the seemingly intractable Israel-Palestinian conflict.

A recent typology of peace education initiatives has identified two distinct models of peace education. According to Bar Tal and Rosen (2009), ‘direct’ models purposefully surface and address the intractable conflict in which the society in question is involved. In contrast, indirect peace education, “does not directly address the conflict (i.e., its goals, its historical course, its costs, or the image of the rival). Instead, it concerns itself either with very general themes relevant to peace making - avoiding direct clashes with the culture of conflict, especially the ethos of conflict - or with an array of themes and skills that do not refer to the ongoing conflict at all. This type of peace education may focus on a choice of themes such as

identity, ecological security, violence, empathy, human rights, and conflict resolution skills”.¹

Similar distinctions have been made by others seeking possible directions for peace education under political-societal conditions that are highly unfavorable for the development of traditional, direct approaches to peace education. A study of the international NGO *Ashoka* describes an ‘anti-conflict-resolution’ approach to peace-building that shares many of the characteristics of an ‘indirect approach’ to peace education. Through a series of case studies of social entrepreneurship initiatives undertaken in societies involved in intractable conflict, Praszkiec and others identify a series of basic principles for undertaking an ‘anti-conflict resolution’ approach, which involves “...working constructively with conflict by working away from conflict”.²

What are the strategies, pedagogies, approaches and methods adopted by successful peace education programs that enable them to circumvent potential conflict situations and make constructive improvements in communities? This panel explores these questions beginning with a number of case studies of successful educational initiatives that have implicitly or explicitly adopted ‘indirect’ or ‘anti-conflict-resolution’ approaches to peace-building. The papers in this panel present a discussion of the implications of this model for future research and practice on meeting the challenge of resolving “the unresolvable” dimensions of peace education undertaken in the context of complex, long-term conflicts, and ultimately bringing about innovation and change.

¹ Bar-Tal, D. and Rosen, Y. (2009). Peace Education in Societies Involved in Intractable Conflicts: Direct and Indirect Models. *Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 79, No. 2 (Jun., 2009), pp. 557-575.

² Praszkiec, R, Nowak, A. & Coleman, P. (2010). Social Entrepreneurs and Constructive Change: The Wisdom of Circumventing Conflict, *Peace and Conflict*, 16: 153–174.

1. “A Bi-Level Model of Global Cooperation: Strengthening Arab and Israeli Health Care Systems through Knowledge Transfer Networks.”

Shawna Novak and Arnold Noyek, Canada International Scientific Exchange Program (CISEPO), University of Toronto Faculty of Medicine, Dalla Lana School of Public Health, and York University.

Knowledge transfer networks involving hospitals, universities, public research organizations, and other health care stakeholders, strengthen health care systems and build capacity for care in both conflict-ridden and conflict-free regions. Brokering knowledge through the networks is effective precisely because it bypasses political boundaries in a culturally sensitive and pedagogically relevant manner. Content is tailored to achieve specific medical education learning outcomes and allows for the development of improved competencies.

Global cooperation with robustly diverse participation in the networks is essential to ensure academic credibility. As well, it is the academic credibility that provides additional incentive for participation since knowledge transfer is bi-directional. Given that scholarly work, peer-reviewed publications, research, and citations are critical to academic advancement; academic cooperation itself constantly maintains its innate value. Conversely, exclusion without academic premise calls into question both academic and institutional credibility.

The Canadian bi-level model of global cooperation, integrates project-specific goals for improving health services, clinical outcomes, and population health outcomes, with meta-level goals for building cross-border cooperation and furthering knowledge exchange. Ongoing programs in Israel, Jordan, Palestine, and Qatar, under a Canadian umbrella, which develop skill sets leading to improved standards and consistency of care, provide real-time examples of the effectiveness of knowledge transfer networks and global cooperation in strengthening Arab and Israeli health care systems

The further the cooperation networks extend, the greater the social capital and opportunity for professional development. Accordingly, with more skilled and informed clinical intervention, regional health outcomes and health equity improve as a whole for the greater public good.

2. “Challenges of cultivating peace through environmental education in the Eastern Mediterranean”

Stuart Schoenfeld, Sociology, Glendon College, York University

Indirect peace education provides opportunities to promote peaceful relations between adversaries when other strategies – political negotiations or direct person-to-person peacebuilding – have stalled or failed. In the Eastern Mediterranean, where political negotiations between Israeli governments and Palestinian governments have so far failed, intermittent warfare continues, and almost all person-to-person initiatives have been abandoned, there has been some success in maintaining organizations working on the agenda of shared regional environment challenges.

The two most active organizations – the Arava Institute for Environmental Studies and EcoPeace - can be seen as sharing a common strategy: 1) involving participants in activities related to a shared problem, 2) involving participants in activities that provide immediate practical benefits, and 3) while acknowledging the reality of adversarial relations, building empathic personal networks that incorporate people from adversarial societies. This is not a strategy of conflict resolution but a strategy of building support for peaceful conflict resolution that recognizes the needs and interests of the various sides to a conflict while at the same time improving the lives of those involved with the organization.

The paper reviews how each organization implements this strategy. It then explores challenges to maintaining this strategy during the continuing unresolved conflict and asks how these challenges might be addressed.

3. Promoting coexistence and social justice in Israel, Palestine and Jordan: the McGill Middle East Program in Civil Society and Peace Building

James Torczyner School of Social Work, McGill University

For more than 20 years, ICAN McGill (formerly the McGill Middle East Program in Civil Society and Peace Building) has advanced its twin goals of promoting coexistence and social justice in Israel, Palestine and Jordan. The program has established 11 rights based practice centers located in the heart of disadvantaged communities in these three countries and assists about 100,000 persons a year to access rights and advocate for change in social policies which affect them.

When the political climate permits, our 9 institutional partners work together across borders. Most often, it is the McGill network which provides the vehicle for regional coordination and activity. The main engine for these innovations are ICAN's more than 50 graduates who have studied together as cohorts, developed relationships and understandings, and obtained masters degrees in social work with an emphasis on community rights based practice. The program has survived turbulent times both in the region and in the shift in Canadian policy. Negotiating turbulence while promoting coexistence and social justice is never an easy task. The overall turbulence in the Middle East compounds these difficulties. This paper will review the ICAN program and identify critical issues facing academic institutions which seek to advance coexistence and social justice through research, teaching, and definitive practice.

4. “Building Backroads to Coexistence: Promoting Arab–Jewish cooperation through anti-conflict-resolution approaches to peace education”.

Asaf Zohar, Sustainability Studies Program, Trent University

While environmental issues have often been positioned as exacerbating factors in ongoing conflicts, the interdependent nature of Israeli-Palestinian eco-systems have led several initiatives to identify environmental issues not only as critical in their own right, but also as an opportunity for peace education. Building on a body of literature that points to peace education opportunities through sustainability-centered initiatives, this paper identifies factors that facilitate peace building ‘indirectly’ through unique sustainability-centered, versus conflict-centered, approaches. This paper builds on existing models that have argued that peace education programs can be driven by initiatives that take ‘indirect’ paths towards conflict resolution. According to Bar Tal and Rosen (2009), ‘direct’ models purposefully surface and address the intractable conflict in which the society in question is involved. Similar distinctions have been made by others seeking possible directions for peace education, including social entrepreneurship and enterprise initiatives undertaken in societies involved in intractable conflict. Praszkiec and others, for example, identify a series of basic principles for undertaking an ‘anti-conflict resolution’ approach, which involves “...working constructively with conflict by working away from conflict”.³

This paper examines case studies of peace education initiatives that leverage the pursuit of environmental and social sustainability as a common currency for regional reconciliation. Through both formal and informal learning processes, these programs have created unique contexts that often lead to students’ profound questioning and inquiry on core assumptions and perspectives about the fundamental nature of the ongoing, seemingly intractable conflict in the Middle East. The paper presents a theoretical framework that can serve as the basis for further examination of similar peace education approaches.

³ Praszkiec, R, Nowak, A. & Coleman, P. (2010). Social Entrepreneurs and Constructive Change: The Wisdom of Circumventing Conflict, *Peace and Conflict*, 16: 153–174.