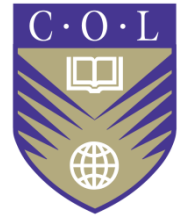


Peace and Conflict Resolution in a Globalised World: Issues of Culturalism: Can Higher Education Make a Difference?



INTERNATIONAL CONFERENCE: Peace and Conflict Resolution in a Globalised World: Issues of Culturalism Can Higher Education Make a Difference?

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Introduction

To have been asked to give the valedictory address at the conclusion of this conference on Peace and Conflict Resolution in a Globalised World: Issues of Culturalism is a great honour. I thank Professor Naresh Dadhich, now Vice-Chancellor of the Kota Open University, for giving me this singular privilege.

I speak to you with more than my usual humility for several reasons. First, I have come in at the end of this conference, so I have missed the speeches and debates that have nourished your reflections this week. Second, I am not a scholar of peace studies so I am unfamiliar with the frameworks of your disciplinary discourse and your academic assumptions. Third, this is India: a huge country where myriad peoples of different races, religions and languages have lived together in relative peace for thousands of years. Anyone from the warring West who talks about peace here does well to remember that.

India has both practiced peace and produced profound perspectives on peace. I think of Jawaharlal Nehru's statement that:

Peace is not a relationship of nations. It is a condition of mind brought about by a serenity of soul. Peace is not merely the absence of war. It is also a state of mind. Lasting peace can come only to peaceful people.

That thinking ties directly to the stirring sentence that motivated us when I worked at UNESCO: since wars are made in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace should be constructed.

Today another Indian, Amartya Sen, is the world's foremost thinker about the peaceful co-existence of peoples. I am inspired by the book he published last year, *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* and will refer to it later. I am delighted that he has been asked to chair the Commonwealth Commission on Respect and Understanding that has been established by the Secretary-General at the request of Commonwealth Heads of Government. Its task is to focus on the root causes of conflict, the break down of understanding within and between communities, and the implications for policy makers.

This Commission, which met for the first time last month, has a practical focus. It is charged to explore initiatives to promote mutual understanding and respect among all faiths and communities in the Commonwealth. It will look at the communities that work well in the Commonwealth - those that really manage 'respect and understanding' - and suggest how to replicate these successes across the Commonwealth's 53 member states and beyond.

So there are my caveats; there are my health warnings. I am a latecomer to your event; I am not versed in peace studies; and I wonder what I can say that India has not already thought.

Can Higher Education Make a Difference?

Arthur Koestler pointed out; in his book *The Act of Creation* that creativity and discovery occur when different planes of discourse intersect. I have lived for half a century in the plane of discourse of education, particularly higher education.

In these remarks I shall explore the intersection between the topic of this conference, *Peace and Conflict Resolution in a Globalised World: Issues of Culturalism*, and higher education. I ask the simple question: can higher education make a difference?

It is a simple question but without a simple answer. 80 years ago, in his book *The Outline of History*, H.G. Wells wrote that 'Human history becomes more and more a race between education and catastrophe'. Since he penned those words more people have had more education and more higher education than ever before. Yet, although the world has so far avoided nuclear catastrophe, the 20th century was the most violent in history.

Education for All: a worthwhile aim?

I shall focus on higher education, but before I do let me say a few words about the other levels of education. I spent the early years of this decade as Assistant Director-General for Education at UNESCO. We had the impossibly wide remit of helping nearly 200 member states expand and improve their education and training systems at all levels, but the guts of the work was the campaign to achieve 'Education for All' in the developing world. By this we meant particularly Universal Primary Education, although the World Forum in Dakar, where this campaign was given its latest impetus in 2000, set a series of goals covering most levels of education and training.

Coordinating the drive to education for all was a frustrating experience. For nearly twenty years targets have been set, missed and set again. Deadlines set at the first conference, held in Jomtien, Thailand in 1990 were missed. The Dakar Forum set new target dates for its different goals. On present trends most of those will also be missed in most developing countries. For example, the target of achieving numerical gender parity in schools by 2005 was missed by many countries, despite considerable progress.

But the issue for us here is not the technicalities of achieving basic education for all but whether this is a worthwhile aim anyway. I mean a worthwhile aim from the perspectives of culturalism, peace and conflict resolution in a globalised world.

I argue that it is worthwhile for three main reasons. The first, to quote Amartya Sen, is that education is the royal road to freedom: the royal road to that fundamental freedom of the human spirit that underpins other more practical freedoms. Furthermore, to continue with Sen's thinking, development is freedom. That has a double meaning.

First, increasing the freedoms that people enjoy is the measure of development. But second, freedom is also the means of development. That is because free people, acting as free agents, do more to develop their families, their communities and their nations, than people who are not free.

My second argument for basic education is that it improves livelihoods. In a world where half the population is less than 25 years old securing livelihoods for billions of young people is the core challenge of development. It is also an issue of peace. People with reasonable livelihoods are more likely to live at peace. There is truth in the adage that the devil finds mischief for idle hands to do.

The third argument goes directly to the issue of peace. The Delors Report suggested four aims for education: learning to know, learning to be, learning to do and learning to live together. Stating such aims does not guarantee they will be achieved; but it seems plausible to assume that enabling people to expand their horizons through reading, writing and abstract thinking will help them to see beyond their own culture.

These three arguments link together. The crucial point that Amartya Sen stresses in his book *Identity and Violence: The Illusion of Destiny* is that we all have multiple identities such as our race, our religion, our social class, our work, our country of residence, our education, and so on. Trouble starts, according to Sen, when people are persuaded to focus on just one of their multiple identities as the only route to their destiny.

Basic education, especially if it follows the Delors precepts of learning to know, to be, to do and to live together, must foster this crucial sense of multiple identities by expanding the dimensions of an individual's freedom. The challenge then is to ensure that subsequent education, especially higher education, continues to foster the value of multiple identities. Sadly, we cannot assume that it will.

The International Baccalaureate

Forty years ago the realisation that more education does not necessarily lead to greater international understanding, less conflict and more peace inspired a group centred in Geneva to create the International

Baccalaureate Organisation. Permit me one more digression to reflect on the IB before I focus your lens of peace, conflict and culturalism on the generality of higher education.

Initiatives in international education usually have multiple motivations, some noble and others less noble. This was the case for the International Baccalaureate.

As the globalisation of commerce and government took hold after World War II more and more children had to attend schools in the foreign countries where their parents were posted. Some of those schools, such as Geneva's Ecole Internationale, had pupils from many nations, most of whom wanted to go on to universities in their own countries. Because no single national qualification, such as the UK's 'A' levels, France's Baccalauréat, or the US High School Diploma suited the pupils' diverse needs for university entry, the International Baccalaureate was born.

The first aim was to devise a secondary school-leaving qualification that would be accepted by universities across the globe. However, partly because they were idealists, and partly because the pupil body was so multinational, a second aim was to create an international curriculum: a curriculum for citizens of the world. The story has been well told by A.D.C. Peterson, one of the prime movers behind the IB; in his book *Schools Across Frontiers*.

Today the International Baccalaureate Organisation is at the centre of a thriving movement that includes nearly 2000 schools in 124 countries. As well as the 2-year diploma programme with which it began, it now offers Primary-Years and Middle-Years curricula. Its reach now extends well beyond the international and private schools that initiated it. The majority of new adherents to the IB are now public schools in various countries, notably the United States, where the organisation has successfully fought off accusations from the far right that the IB Diploma is a United Nations plot to subvert the youth of America. No doubt the way that universities across the world now compete hard to attract students with the IB Diploma had an impact!

The question for us today is whether the IB's international curriculum really does produce international citizens who are, on average, a greater force for peace than the generality of the world's secondary school leavers. This is a tricky question to answer because one first has to distinguish between the impact of the curriculum and the effect of studying in an international environment.

For example, the International Baccalaureate schools known as the United World Colleges set out, through generous scholarship programmes, to attract pupils from all over the world. Usually, in a school such as the Mahindra United World College near Pune, here in India, you will have young people from at least fifty nationalities amongst the 200 pupils. It is almost impossible for a child who spends two years as a boarder in such a setting to avoid acquiring greater international understanding.

But what of the pupil in a public school composed mainly of local nationals who study the IB curriculum? There is evidence that they also come away with a greater sense of being citizens of the world, not least because the IB is more demanding about studying foreign languages than most national curricula, at least in Anglophone countries. Another indicator that the IB does have a special impact is that students with IB diplomas, no matter what school they attended, tend to seek each other out and form networks when they get to university.

I conclude that the International Baccalaureate is a worthy initiative in international education. It is also a rare example of a credible qualification that is managed and awarded by a non-governmental organisation. I hope that researchers are studying the careers and lives of IB graduates to see if they do make a measurable contribution to a more peaceful world, because that is the declared ambition of the programme.

'We cannot change the world', says the slogan of one IB school, 'but we educate people who can change the world'.

What of Higher Education

I turn now to higher education. However good the International Baccalaureate and the schools that teach it, it can only reach a tiny fraction of the population. Sensitive to the accusation that it is simply perpetuating an international elite; the IBO is trying to expand its reach through an international open school teaching at a distance. It will be interesting how vigorously it pursues this initiative.

Most people will obtain their higher education at the universities of their country. What is the general record of universities in relation to peace, conflict and culturalism? Can it be improved?

The historical record is not encouraging. In the years before the Second World War Germany and Japan had the most developed higher education systems in Europe and Asia respectively, yet this did not prevent them from initiating invasions and genocides of unique barbarity. Just before that war, after a famous debate at the Oxford University Union, their debating society, students voted that they would not fight for King and Country, yet this had a negligible impact on individual behaviour.

Universities and Nationalism

Lest we think of the Second World War as comfortably in the past, let me give some more recent and specific examples for which I am indebted to my UNESCO colleague Stamenka Uvalić-Trumbić.

Examples from the 1990s and the civil wars in the Balkans that led to the disintegration of Yugoslavia into six different states demonstrate the negative roles played by universities. Rather than contributing to peace and conflict resolution, universities were tools for strengthening nationalism and inter-cultural conflicts.

What was called 'brotherhood and unity' was the foundation of education in former Yugoslavia and education was tailored to meet the needs of different linguistic and ethnic groups. For example, in the multicultural province of Vojvodina, primary education was provided in 12 languages, while higher education was provided in six different languages across the country as a whole. However, this did not prevent the disintegration of the country, nor stop inter-ethnic wars.

On the contrary; in a world marked by a general crisis of leadership, nationalism was the easiest route to power for rising politicians and, along with language and religion, universities were used as tools of nationalist ideologies.

Thus the idea of a Greater Serbia stemmed from a Memorandum of the Academy of Sciences of Serbia drafted by well known academics. It provided the basis for the wave of Serbian nationalism that triggered similar developments in neighbouring republics as a counter reaction.

Under the nationalistic regime in Serbia universities lost their autonomy and the state took control of teaching and learning. The Faculty of World Literature was abolished and reduced to Serbian Literature. University professors had to sign a contract with the State if they wanted to continue teaching in higher education.

A similarly nationalistic spirit led Croatia to replace a reputable international institution, the Dubrovnik Inter-University Centre for Post-Graduate Studies which attracted professors and lecturers from all over Europe, by the International Centre of Croatian Universities. Its activities were then further marginalised by a series of repressive administrative measures.

Just after the signature of the Peace Agreement in December 1995 UNESCO and the UNDP conducted a review of higher education in Bosnia and Herzegovina. It found that universities were bastions of nationalism. New higher education institutions were mushrooming in the new cantons of the Muslim-Croat Federation, with analogous Serbian institutions emerging in the Serbian entity.

The university system then experienced a double whammy in the form of a massive brain drain of young intellectuals from the whole region of South-East Europe towards countries in all continents of the world, notably Canada, South Africa and New Zealand.

International Education

These examples from former Yugoslavia are not unique. Universities have nourished nationalist fervour in many similar situations around the world. They contrast sharply with the warm words you hear at conferences on international education, where those countries and universities that attract large numbers of foreign students are at pains to stress the great contribution they are making to international understanding.

Such protestations of virtue should be taken with a pinch of salt. The plain fact is that most universities recruit foreign students primarily for economic reasons. In countries like the UK they can charge foreign students much more than their own nationals. The added revenues keep the universities financially solvent, creating the odd situation where foreign students, mostly from poor countries, are subsidising the studies of the richer local students. Were the financial incentives to change there is no doubt that universities would rapidly change their patterns of student recruitment.

Looking to the Future

These examples show that universities can be easy prey for nationalist governments. Moreover even their policies of internationalism mainly reflect the financial incentives created by state regulation.

Can higher education do better in future? Can universities contribute more positively to a more peaceful world and more explicitly to cultural respect and understanding?

Expansion: the major trend

There is now a tremendous opportunity for them to do so simply because the key trend in global higher education is massive expansion. With ten million students India has the world's third largest higher education system. Yet this only accounts for some 10% of the age cohort. The general view is that, to consider itself developed, a country should have 40% or more of the age cohort pursuing higher education. That would mean 30 million more students in India alone and well over a hundred million if you apply such figures to the developing world as a whole.

How is this expansion to be achieved? Most developing countries simply do not have the funds to expand state provision at the pace necessary, especially if they perpetuate the very expensive models of provision inherited from the West. In a recent paper two colleagues and I argue that much of the expansion will occur in three ways (Daniel, Kanwar & Uvalić-Trumbić, 2006).

First private institutions, both not for profit and for profit, will multiply. Second, the rapid expansion of distance learning will continue, notably in public institutions such as the Kota Open University of which Professor Naresh Dadhich is now Vice-Chancellor. Third there will be steady growth in cross-border higher education, both by distance learning and through campuses of foreign institutions.

Will these developments help higher education make a difference in terms of peace, conflict and culturalism? There are grounds for optimism.

Looking at the learners of the 21st century blurs notions of nationalism. The link between higher education and migration means that the routes taken by diasporas moving across the globe are acquiring greater importance than national roots and ethnic identities. The learners of today see the world as one city where national and ethnic borders no longer seem as significant as they did to their parents and grand-parents (Daniel & Uvalić-Trumbić, 2006).

Can this renewed sense of global citizenship and the reinforcement of multiple identities in the learner of the 21st century contribute to peace and conflict resolution? Will the new forms of higher education help to sustain them? I take in order the three developments that I mentioned: starting with private institutions.

Private Provision

Some of you hold Chairs in Peace Studies mostly, I imagine, in state rather than private institutions. Will the growth of private institutions not result in a reduction of curricular breadth? After all, don't private institutions today focus heavily on Business Studies and Information Technology? The answer is that private institutions follow opportunities. The popularity of Business Studies and IT is already declining and as private institutions become better established they will offer a wider range of subjects. Moreover, since state control has been responsible for some of the worst manifestations of academic nationalism, the independent status of private institutions is a promising development.

Distance Learning

The growth of distance learning is also promising. Quite apart from making it possible simultaneously to increase access, improve quality and cut costs, distance learning has the great asset of transparency.

Learning materials are there for all to see and examine. The sunlight of scrutiny by academic peers and a large student body strongly discourages tendentious teaching and rhetorical rabble-rousing. Moreover, distance learning will allow you to take your small programmes of peace studies and conflict resolution to much larger audiences, especially if you take advantage of the open content revolution and constitute a global repository of open educational resources in your areas of interest.

Cross-Border Higher Education

Finally, the growth of cross-border higher education has the potential to keep everyone honest. Governments will need to keep an eye on it and collaborate internationally to discourage the growth of degree mills and fraudulent providers.

The Guidelines for Quality Assurance in Cross-Border Higher Education published by UNESCO and the OECD will help them sort out the wheat from the chaff. Quality cross-border higher education can provide useful competition for local providers and, if the local curriculum is too stultified or nationalistic, give students a breath of fresh air from the rest of the world.

Conclusion

It is time to conclude. I thank you again for the honour of addressing you and for your indulgence in allowing me to do so without having attended your earlier sessions. I have suggested that the record of higher education with respect to peace and conflict is nothing to be proud of. Things are changing fast, however. Today higher education is expanding more rapidly than ever before. This will occur through the multiplication of private institutions, the expansion of distance learning and the growth of cross-border education. Each of these provides the opportunity for higher education do to more for peace than it has in the past. I urge you to get involved and ensure that it does.

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