

# YOUNG PEOPLE'S EXPERIENCES WITH PEACE EDUCATION: FROM INNER TO OUTER PEACE

OTILIA ROSE-MARIE MEDEN  
SUPERVISOR: DR. ALICE KÖNIG



I extend my gratitude to Lord Laidlaw and the Laidlaw Scholarship Programme for Research and Leadership Development which has funded my research



SCHOOL OF INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS &  
SCHOOL OF CLASSICS

## SUMMARY

I was interested in asking how young people across different countries have learned about peace in education. I have looked at what extant literature aims to teach the youth about peace, which led me to explore the field of Peace Education (PE). Furthermore, I have collected data through surveys and interviews with young people, asking them about their experience with PE, and how they perceive the connection between inner and outer peace. All in all, this study has contributed to what is known about young people's understanding of peace across Argentina, Denmark, and the United Kingdom. Through the findings, I recommend directions to take the research further by largely gathering more data to map how education can play a pivotal role in cultivating sustainable peace in society.

## EDUCATION, PEACE, AND INNER PEACE?

### The promise of education:

What is taught in schools will shape the minds of our future society. When wishing to build and sustain peaceful lives, attention must be paid to how peace is taught in schools.

### What does peace mean, anyway?

The concept of peace is incomplete without context. Importantly, peace means more than just the absence of war, it is also the presence of relationships that work well.

### Communal and individual wellbeing:

The connection between inner and outer peace asserts that to build communal peace, it is important to know what peace with oneself looks like and vice versa.

## METHODS & PROCESS

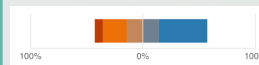
- **Review of extant literature** about PE that largely is developed within the context of the UK. From the literature, the concepts were defined.
- **Data collection: Surveys were sent** out to young people aged 18–35 years on various online platforms (total responses: 66)
- **Data collection: Interviews** were conducted with four participants, two from Argentina and two from Denmark.
- **Semi-structured interviews** with academics and practitioners in the field who shared their expertise/experiences with teaching peace in classrooms.
- **Research findings** were analysed to map how young people have learned about peace in school, and how they understand the connection between inner and outer peace.
- **The next steps** are that the preliminary findings will be used in further research with the Visualising Peace Project in St Andrews. Additionally, this research has been discussed in the Resilient Researcher Podcast.

**“Peace starts  
with ourselves  
and then sharing it  
with others.”**

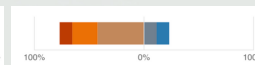
–Young person from  
Argentina

**“How connected would you say that inner peace and wider  
(local/national/global) peace are?”  
(1 = not at all connected ; 5 = strongly connected)**

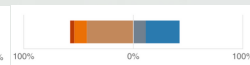
### ARGENTINIAN RESPONSES



### DANISH RESPONSES



### BRITISH RESPONSES



A note relates to how different the word inner peace translates across the languages.



**SCAN TO READ ABOUT THE STUDIES  
THAT HAVE INFORMED THIS RESEARCH  
AS WELL AS THE RESEARCH FINDINGS**



From the literature

- Several excellent scholarships and materials about peace, inner peace, and young people. Predominantly available in English.
- Wide-spread work is being done to promote PE with support from institutions such as the United Nations, the European Union, and the World Bank.
- Dominant discourse about peace (as the absence of war) risks reinforcing gendered stereotypes of ‘women as peaceful’ and ‘men as violent’
- Decolonising Peace and PE requires to consider both perspectives from the Global North and South.
- A large gap between those who study and those who practice peace across the world.
- Difficult to find work done in collaboration with young people

## RESEARCH FINDINGS

From the surveys and interviews

- Most respondents feel that they have been taught about peace in school (64–73%).
- Few respondents feel that they have been taught about inner peace in school (21–31%).
- Across all three countries, most respondents have learned about peace in relation to war and conflict in school.
- Most respondents reply that inner peace is important or extremely important to their experience of the world (57–80%).
- Responses from Argentina were generally positive toward the term inner peace in comparison to the Danish youth.
- While there are cross-national differences in experiences with and attitudes toward peace education and inner peace, the youth calls for more education about peace and inner peace in school.

## REFERENCES

- 1) Bajaj, Monisha, and Brantmeier, Edward. 2011. “The Politics, Praxis, and Possibilities of Critical Peace Education” In Journal of Peace Education, 8 (3), 221–224.
- 2) Berents, Helen. 2022. “Power, Partnership, and Youth as Norm Entrepreneurs: Getting to UN Security Council Resolution 2250 on Youth, Peace, and Security” In Global Studies Quarterly 2 (3): 1–11
- 3) Gee, David, Brooks, Ella, and Gerwings, Isabel. 2022. “Peace at the Heart: A relational approach to education in British Schools.” Quakers in Britain
- 4) Global Campaign for Peace Education and UNESCO. 2023. “What can education concretely (and realistically) do to mitigate contemporary threats and foster lasting peace?”
- 5) Hanley, Adam W., Dehli, Vincent, Krzanowski, Daidra, Barou, Daniela, Lecy, Nathalie, Garland, Eric L. 2022. “Effects of Video-Guided Group vs. Solitary Meditation on Mindfulness and Social Connectivity: A Pilot Study.” In Clinic Social Work Journal 50, 316–324
- 6) Jenkins, Tony. 2018. “Transformative Peace Pedagogy – Fostering a Reflective, Critical, and Inclusive Praxis for Peace Studies.” In In Factis Pax, journal of peace education and social justice 10 (1): 1–7
- 7) Obregon, Gloria Maria Abarca. 2019. “Education for peace in contexts of violence.” In Mexico: Tracing opportunities for peace: 37, 1–8.
- 8) Ogunnusi, Michael. 2020 “Young people situated learning and peace praxis at the margins of everyday life.” De Montfort University.
- 9) Ogunnusi, Michael. 2006 “Keep It Together, Keep It Safe – Violence, Peace, and Young People” In Development: Peace Education 13 (1): 12–14
- 10) Oxfam Education and Youth. 2015. “Education for Global Citizenship – A guide for schools”
- 11) Quakers in Britain. “Peace Education – teach peace pack” Available at: <https://www.quakers.org.uk/documents/updated-teach-peace-pack-full.pdf>
- 12) Schonert-Reichl, Kimberly A., and Rosser, Robert W. 2016. Handbook of Mindfulness in Education: Integrating Theory and Research into Practice, edited by Kimberly A. Schonert-Reichl and Robert W. Rosser. New York: Springer
- 13) Sztompka, Piotr. 2008. “The Focus on Everyday Life: A New Turn in Sociology” In European Review 16(1): 23–37.
- 14) Xinghua, Liu, Wei, Xu, Yuzheng, Wang, Williams, J Mark G, Yan, Geng, Qian, Zhang, Xin, Liu. 2015. “Can Inner Peace be Improved by Mindfulness Training: A Randomized Controlled Trial” In Stress Health 31 (3): 245–254.