

Educating for peace in Colombia: impact, challenges and lessons learned

Educar para la paz en Colombia: impacto, retos y aprendizajes

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Resumen

El objetivo de este artículo es analizar la incidencia que tienen en su población el Programa Nacional de Educación para la Paz y el Programa de Desarrollo para la Paz del Magdalena Centro, durante el periodo 2021-2022. La técnica de investigación es cualitativa basada en el análisis documental y se estudian categorías de análisis como población atendida, proyectos desarrollados, herramientas utilizadas, recursos y ejecución presupuestal, entre otras. Se encontró que los programas de educación para la paz tienen una alta incidencia en los procesos de transformación de las realidades y la creación de ambientes en donde prima la resolución pacífica de conflictos. Dentro de las recomendaciones para futuros programas de educación para la paz se plantearon la priorización de alianzas estratégicas, la integración de las familias a los procesos de aprendizaje, el aprovechamiento de las TIC, adaptar los procesos de educación para la paz a las dinámicas propias del entorno y la creación de material pedagógico para los docentes y padres de familia.



Palabras clave: paz, educación, incidencia, valores cívicos, liderazgo.

Abstract

This article analyzes the impact the National Program for Peace Education and the Magdalena Centro Peace Development Program had on the target population during the period 2021-2022. The research technique is qualitative, based on documentary analysis, and analysis of categories such as population served, projects developed, tools used, resources and budget execution among others. It was found that peace education programs have a high impact on the processes of transformation of realities and the creation of environments where peaceful conflict resolution prevails. The recommendations for future peace education programs include prioritizing strategic alliances, integrating families into learning processes, taking advantage of ICTs, adapting peace education processes to the dynamics of the environment, and creating educational material for teachers and parents.

Keywords: peace, education, impact, civic values, leadership.

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Introduction

In Colombia's context, peace education has become significant, especially as a consequence of the signing of the Peace Treatise and all the different dynamics that took place during the post-conflict period. Several civil society organizations, along with universities, governmental entities, and non-profit organizations, started to develop projects that will promote skills, abilities, and values to help in the construction of violence-free societies. In that context, the main goal of this research is to analyze the impact that the National Peace Education Program, hereinafter Educapaz, and the Magdalena Centro Peace Development Program, hereinafter PDPMC, had on their target population in the years 2021 and 2022.

In order to answer the question, what is the impact of peace education programs on their target population in Colombia? We have divided this research paper into four sections. First is the framework, in which we go through the different stages that took place in developing Peace Education as a concept. It will also explain and explore different perspectives of the concept. The second section encompasses the analysis and explanation of the research's results, focusing on the two peace education projects chosen. Also, this segment will study the qualitative and quantitative indicators to help clarify the project's incidence in the target population. Moreover, the challenges and lessons learned due to the COVID-19 pandemic are explored in this area, too. The third section defines some action points and recommendations for future projects that approach the matter of peace education. Finally, the research conclusions are stated.

Subsequently, to the signing of the Peace Treatise between the Colombian Government and the illegal group denominated FARC-EP in 2016, a national conversation pertaining to the participation and role of civil society and civil organizations arose. The frame for this conversation was the post-conflict. Within the Peace Treatise, there was a segment that had as a main goal to strengthen the citizens' political participation with the purpose of influencing all the actions that affected them, among other things, the joint construction of peace (Gobierno Nacional de Colombia, 2016, p. 32). Furthermore, the peace treatise advocated for creating spaces that will encourage peaceful coexistence and acknowledgment of human rights (Gobierno Nacional de Colombia, 2016, p. 42). In this context, education as a tool to achieve peace becomes relevant not only in the academic setting but in the pragmatic arena. Due to the peace treaties, the interest in designing and implementing programs oriented to enhance peace education in the Colombian territory developed.

Thus, the analysis of the subject pertaining to peace education is relevant not only in the Colombian political context but also from the academic perspective; studying these programs, which are being implemented currently, will allow the generation of new knowledge that

could be applied in many other areas of the country that needs them. For that reason, the enrichment of the peace education programs through analysing their results is pertinent in the context previously described.

A deep look into the concept of Peace Education

The concept of Peace Education is vast and can encompass connotations in the political incidence and peace training, such as conflict resolution, human rights, and equality. It aims to achieve a tangible transformation in human reality, which is affected by the violation of its rights as a consequence of the conflict. It was during WWII that the issue of education for peace got its relevance (Sharma, 2013, p. 60). Later, in the 70s, feminist studies introduced the gender perspective in this issue. The main argument was that in order to achieve structural changes on violence and conflict, transformations in human relations needed to be nurtured, as well as in societal values and worldviews; this approach opened new perspectives regarding the scope of peace education (Jenkins, 2019, p. 2).

In this same period, Johan Galtung, founder of the International Peace Research Association, emerged as one of the most remarkable academics in developing research around peace education. Galtung defined peace in two ways: first, as “the absence/reduction of violence of all kinds” (Galtung, 1996, p. 9). Second, as “nonviolent and creative conflict transformation” (Galtung, 1996, p. 9).

Under Galtung’s peace definition, the study of conflict intervention processes has three elements: first, a diagnosis marked by states of violence. Second, a prognosis, which can maintain reduce or increase the state of violence. Lastly, the therapy, among others, can include education and research for peace as a tool to reduce the states of violence (Galtung, 1996, p. 30, 33). One could say that education for peace aims to achieve the reduction or transformation of conflict through nonviolent tools.

A third approach to the concept of peace is homeostatic peace, defined as “a state of equilibria among international powers, a status quo with pull and push maneuvers over a limited amount of power keep a balance—homeostasis—among contestants. Under this account, peace is not achieved by a ‘common effort towards’ but, rather, it reaches an equilibrium vis-à-vis” (Savelyeva & Park, 2024, p.4). Under this more pragmatic approach, different power dynamics can coexist and be maintained under control; here, the natural tensions of a global scenario are not being ignored, but peace is conceived as long as these power relations can be maintained in a non-aggression state. Peace education, in this concept, means to form the the students in civic education, moral education, and, in some cases, patriotism (Savelyeva & Park, 2024, p.5).

Alternatively, in the 90s, some common factors were identified when it comes to analysing the peace education concept:

- “Peace education is aligned with a radical/counter-hegemonic paradigm for social change through education.
- Peace education, to which they couple international education, can be analysed as a strand of comparative education.
- The core conceptual components of peace education were developed particularly through the writings, conferences, and pedagogical practices of members of the Peace Education Commission of the International Peace Research Association” (Sharma, 2013, p. 60).

At the same time, the role of the United Nations in the international scenario becomes more relevant, the search for a culture of peace as a main goal is solidified, and the education gets established as a primary tool to obtain it. More recently, the United Nations in its recommendations regarding education expressed openly that “education for peace and human rights [...] should be provided to all learners, teachers, education personnel and educational communities.” (UNESCO, 2023, p.15). Thus, the member states have the task of securing resources and supporting all activities aimed at achieving peace education that promotes human rights, diversity, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts.

In general, peace education can be defined as

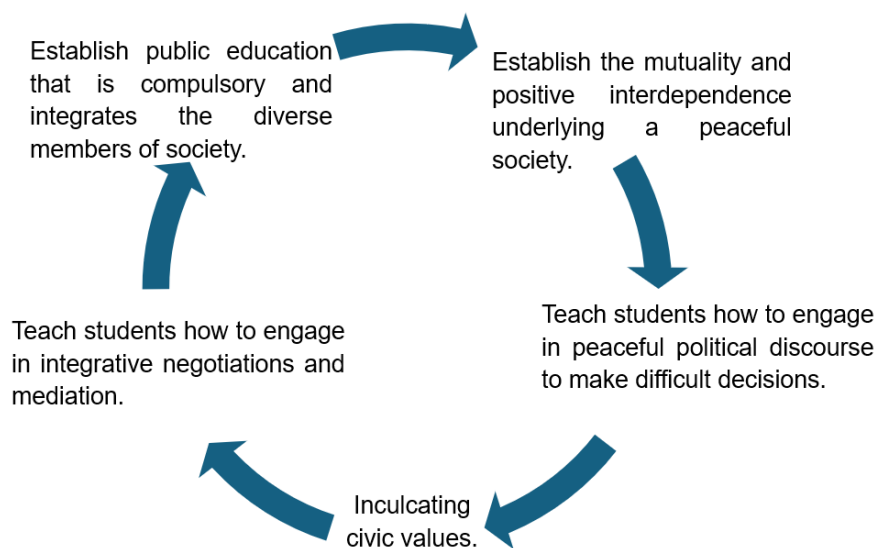
The process of acquiring the values, the knowledge and developing the attitudes, skills, and behaviors to live in harmony with oneself, with others, and with the natural environment [...] (and therefore) helping students to understand and transform conflict in their own lives, in the community and in the world at large (Mondal, & Ghanta, 2018, p. 1843).

In the same perspective, Navarro-Castro and Nario-Galace (2010) emphasized the transformative essence of peace education because “it cultivates the knowledge base, skills, attitudes and values that seek to transform people’s mindsets, attitudes and behaviors that, in the first place, have either created or exacerbated violent conflicts” (Navarro-Castro & Nario-Galace, 2010, p. 27).

In contrast, more pragmatic studies about the development of the implementation of education policies, Johnson & Johnson (2005), present a five-step strategy (Figure 1):

Figure No. 1

Steps to establish consensual peace through education



Source: author's creation.

In this strategy, the fundamental pillars that must be developed in order to transform behaviors and realities are the integration of various members of society, establishing synergies and interdependence, teaching students about mediation techniques, civic values, and making difficult decisions. Within this strategy, the issue of civic values requires special attention. These include cooperation, respect for different points of view, compassion, appreciation for diversity, and equality (Johnson & Johnson, 2005, p. 290).

It is necessary to highlight that peace education can be taught in different stages of human development. Peace education serves different purposes from early childhood to adulthood in creating peaceful social relationships and building strong communities. In each life stage, the instruction's focus changes. For example, in primary school, the formation should emphasize celebrating diversity, harmony with nature, and the development of abilities necessary to live peacefully with others in the homes (Mondal & Ghanta, 2018, p. 1845). In adulthood, peace education should be centered on self-esteem development, social conscience, understanding the culture, and civic harmony (Mondal & Ghanta, 2018, p. 1845).

Generally speaking, peace education integrates the following topics (Figure 2):

Figure No. 2

Fundamental matters in peace education



Source: author's creation.

All these topics can be addressed using different methodology tools, for example , cooperative learning, discussion groups, storytelling, dialogs (Mondal y Ghanta 2018, p. 1846) and through the tools that the information and communication technologies (ICT) offer nowadays.

In a post-pandemic context, in which educational institutions and organizations of all kinds rely on information and communication resources, more frequently, as education tools, peace education can also be conceived in such terms. Thus, ICT “facilitates access to education and learning through the understanding of learnings that can become deeper, according to the teaching topics being covered” (Álvarez y Pérez, 2019, pp. 289-290). All these digital tools allow to encompass more people efficiently, and for the school-age population, promote an interactive environment that allows independent learning.

Education for peace can be instrumentalized in a comprehensive strategy that embraces online and offline learning tools that allow reaching diverse age and ethnic groups. However, internet access in rural areas and teacher training are challenges that the government must face if a public policy for peace also impacts the target population and transforms violent scenarios education is to be implemented.

In the Colombian framework, peace education has focused on studies of “violence, violent acts, peace culture, and recovery of experiences with different social actors” (Torres, 2018, p. 152) [author’s translation]. Likewise, the Colombian government developed strategies such as The National Plan for Education in Human Rights in 2016 and “Eduderechos” in 2012 (Torres, 2018, p. 152).

Recently, ex-president Juan Manuel Santos’ government created the peace course through “Colombia Aprende.” This program provides teachers with guides for implementing the peace education course in the classroom. These guides can be used from pre-kindergarten to eleventh grade. The materials explain what is peace education?, their goals, and the different understandings of the peace concept. These resources give a route, and also, games and didactic advice in order to address each of the suggested topics. However, the analysis did not find a clear directive from the National Government for teachers to follow and evaluate in the classroom the results of the peace education course; this can leave the teachers without clear support. Neither was it found that specific financial resources were allocated for this program or for the delivery of the booklets or materials.

Regarding the Laws, in Colombia, several regulations address the peace education program. For example, the Law 115 of 1994, by which the General Education Law is issued, includes in its fifth article, as the primary goal of education, the instruction in respect to the peace; in the fourteenth article, peace education is declared a mandatory education. In addition, the Law 1732, by which the Course of Peace is established in all educational institutions of the country, aims to consolidate a space for learning about peace culture in order to strengthen the coexistence and the improvement of the population’s quality of life.

Subsequently, the Decree 1038 of 2015 regulates the Peace Education Course and includes its main topics: peace culture, sustainable development, and peace education. This last topic is understood as “the appropriation of knowledge and civic competencies for peaceful coexistence, democratic participation, equity development, respect for plurality, Human Rights, and International Human Rights” [author’s translation] (Gobierno Nacional de Colombia, 2015).

The Decree 1038 of 2015, in its fourth article, determines the topics that must be developed (Figure 3):

Figure No. 3

Peace Education Course topics



Source: author's creation.

With the 1038 Decree of 2015, it was made compulsory for educational institutions to include at least two topics from the graphic in their curriculums for the peace education course. Also, the seventh article mentions that the competent territorial entities will support the committees responsible for teacher training so that there is monitoring every two years, and adjustments can be made pertaining to the financial needs, design, and evaluation of the projects focused on teacher training.

In this way, the concept of peace education, as it was exposed in this section, has had a complex development enriched by the different contexts of the actors that apply the concept to their own lives. In the Colombian case, the subject of peace education in the context of a prolonged armed conflict was adjusted not only to political agreements that had been signed but to the needs of the victims on topics such as historical memory; with the minorities in issues such as the protection of cultural treasures; and, in general, had to be adjusted to the own country dynamics.

Methodological approach

This research's main goal is to analyze the incidence that the National Peace Education Program and the Magdalena Centro Peace Development Program, have on their target population in the years 2021 and 2022. To achieve this goal, four specific goals were set: first, examine the results of *Educapaz* and the PDPMC; second, discover the social impact of *Educapaz* and the PDPMC; third, identify the challenges post-pandemic for *Educapaz* and the PDPMC; and four, suggest points of action for future programs for peace education based on the analyzed experiences.

The level of research is descriptive, since it is intended to present the topic of peace education through the study of *Educapaz* and the PDPMC, with the end goal of suggesting action points for future programs in the country. The research technique is qualitative, based on documentary analysis. The main source of data collection was official governmental Colombian documents, such as Laws, reports, studies, and statistical sources. In the same way, archives and documents from *Educapaz* and the PDPMC were used.

To achieve the general main goal of this research, the *Educapaz* and PDPMC programs were chosen, taking into consideration that both are oriented specifically to the promotion of a peaceful culture through education. The categories of analysis are: served population, resources, resources execution, geographical coverage, obtained results, learning topics, project developed, teacher training approach and tools, and integration of the information and communication technologies training and integration.

Perspectives for peace education in Colombia: analysis of the peace education programs

This section studies the National Peace Education Program (*Educapaz*) and the Magdalena Centro Peace Development Program (PDPMC), focusing on quantitative and qualitative indicators previously mentioned in the methodological approach. It aims to examine the results and identify their social impact.

Educapaz was created in 2015 at the initiative of the Fe and Alegria Foundation, Nueva Escuela Foundation, Foundation for the Reconciliation Classrooms in Peace program, Center for Research and Popular Education (Cinep/PPP), the Pontifical Javeriana University, and other individuals. The program's geographical coverage is high nowadays, as shown in the next map (Figure 4).

Figure No. 4*Presence of Educapaz in Colombia 2024*

Source: author's creation.

Educapaz's leading program is *aulas en paz* (classrooms in peace), and it has five strategies: *Crese*, Rural support, Jacobs, Schools of the Word and *Justamente*. On 2021, after the COVID-19 pandemic, the program reactivates the communities' support. In that year, the program impacted 220 educational institutions and more than 10.234 people in the departments of Tolima, Chocó, Cauca, Huila, Tolima, Cundinamarca, and cities like Bogotá, Cali, Ibagué, Chaparral (Programa Nacional de Educación para la Paz, 2021, p. 3-10). In 2022, *Educapaz* accompanied 135 educational institutions and had an incidence in the same number of people than 2021. Likewise, it achieved a technical compliance of 88.9%, executing a Budget of \$701.954.851 COP (Programa Nacional de Educación para la Paz, 2022, p. 6).

Among the topics that *Educapaz* covers are etnoeducation, historical memory, coexistence, civic education, school coexistence, right to the truth, emotional management, ethics of care, and gender equality.

Regarding the Schools of the Word program, one can say that it is an initiative in which the main goal is to open spaces for dialog in the schools focused on the students, teacher personnel and school boards. This platform invites an open debate about the truth and its importance in conflicts; it also promotes a peaceful coexistence and, especially, the “non-repetition”. (Programa Nacional de Educación Para la Paz, 2018, p. 15).

This strategy has been focused on the departments of Guajira, Magdalena, Sucre, Atlántico, Bolívar, Cesar, Córdoba, San Andrés, Boyacá, Cundinamarca, Huila, and Tolima. It also has open spaces to build with the students paths that lead to understanding what the right to the truth is. Also, to discover truths in their territories; this component involves social dialog through events, such as, Summits For Truth (Cumbres de la Verdad). In 2022, the program made 24 Summits for Truth in the Andean Region; these assemblies aimed to teachers. There were also some summits that allowed the exchange of knowledge and the construction of networks (Programa Nacional de Educación Para la Paz, 2022, pp. 27-28).

The main tools used by Educapaz in developing the Schools of the World strategy are school museums, an approach through the arts and the culture, research, the use of information and communication technologies, and social mapping (Programa Nacional de Educación para la Paz, 2018, p.26). Also, the topics around gender equality and peace education were deliberated in “gender panels”.

Another strategy that is important to analyze is Crese. This initiative is focused on civic education for reconciliation and the socio emotional. It encompasses work within the classroom that includes students, teachers, and the school board. In the years 2019 and 2020, Crese worked with 12 educational institutions in Bogotá and Cali. In 2021, it engaged with 30 educational institutions and grew its reach to Ibagué and Chaparral. Regarding the program tools, Crese has handbooks not only for the professors but also for the facilitators that accompany this initiative.

Among the fundamental cornerstones of the strategy are: first, peaceful school coexistence, with emphasis on creating agreements, conflict resolution, bullying, school climate and restorative practices (Programa Nacional de Educación Para la Paz, 2021a, p. 55-62). Second, orientation for the student’s life plan with emphasis on developing individuals that build peace (Programa Nacional de Educación Para la Paz, 2021a, p. 73). Third, an inclusive school life with an emphasis on including individuals with different capacities and disability (Programa Nacional de Educación Para la Paz, 2021a, p. 85-87). Lastly, the empowerment of the scholar government. All this can be achieved only by including the parents, students, and the school board in transforming the school environment (Programa Nacional de Educación Para la Paz, 2021a, p. 98).

To achieve those fundamental cornerstones, the program designed six didactic strategies to promote restorative justice, awareness about everyday conflicts, understanding the emotions of oneself and others, emotional management, and communication. The strategies are: restorative justice, the labyrinth of the senses, Ser-es, story cubes, *mentemoción*, and tribunal of emotions. The handbooks for these strategies are easily understandable and are sectioned at different levels depending on the student's school grade.

Regarding the training of the teaching staff, Educapaz is active in several departments in Colombia, including Chocó, Caquetá, Meta, and Norte de Santander. In 2021, the program trained 425 teachers; 296 of those were oriented on topics like knowledge and practices to incidence in peace in the departments of Chocó and Cauca (Programa Nacional de Educación para la Paz, 2021, pp. 6-7). In 2022, the number of teachers trained was 177. In the department of Cauca, the program provided workshops about ethno-education, interculturality, pedagogies for peace, advocacy, and solidarity service; In Chocó, the educational effort focused on topics like ethno-education, continuing education, and public policy with emphasis on finances (Programa Nacional de Educación para la Paz, 2022, p. 13, 17). Likewise, Crese included an educational component for the teachers that included methodological elements for implementing the Crese strategy.

One particularly important aspect to point out within Crese is family integration as a fundamental basis for developing peace education in students. This program proposed a diagnosis for the students' families. This diagnosis includes the state of the parent-children (student) relationship, student-student relationship and student-teacher relationship. According to the results there are two models of action: direct intervention with the families or group encounters (Programa Nacional de Educación para la Paz, 2021a, pp. 47-48).

On one hand, in the direct intervention model, after analyzing the student issue, the family is given tools to overcome the problem from a systematic approach. On the other hand, in the group encounters, also called school for parents, the issues are approached according to the student's psychological and social development. Some of the issues are cyberbullying, conflict, and emotional management, amongst others (Programa Nacional de Educación para la Paz, 2021a, pp. 48-49).

Lastly, it is essential to highlight the incidence of the Educapaz program between 2021 and 2022. In 2021, the IV National Network Meeting was held in six cities of the Colombian territory, with 578 in-person attendees and 790 virtual attendees (Programa Nacional de Educación para la Paz, 2021, p. 13). Also, alliances with the Constitutional Court and The Commission for the Truth were forged. These aimed to create a bridge or link between these institutions and the children and adolescents who are the program's target population. In 2022, the political incidence was also influenced by the connection to other political institutions,

presidential candidates, and government officials from the departmental education sector (Programa de educación para la paz, 2022, p. 41).

In the same way, Educapaz was a participant in the construction of the National Development Plan 2002-2026 and created technical documents pertaining to the Congress' advancements in the issue of peace education; it also gave input for the process of handing over the Government of former President Juan Manuel Santos and President Gustavo Petro. Likewise, its website published tools for implementing processes for peace education; in 2022, 465 new materials were uploaded to its website (Programa de educación para la paz, 2022, p. 44).

The second case study analyzed in this section is the Development Program for Peace in Magdalena Centro (PDPMC). This program was created in 2004 with the goal of promoting peace in the territories. It is mainly focused on four departments in Colombia, Caldas, Cundinamarca, Boyacá y Antioquia, particularly in 17 municipalities, such as Caparrapí, Chaguaní, Guaduas, La Dorada, La Palma, Manzanares, Marquetalia, Marulanda, Norcasia, Pensilvania, Puerto Boyacá, Puerto Salgar, Puerto Triunfo, Samaná, Sonsón, Victoria, and Yacopí (Figure 5).

Figure No. 5

Presence of the PDPMC in Colombia in 2024



Source: author's creation.

In this regard, the program has allies, including Caldas University, Manizales University, Enel Foundation, La Dorada Dioceses, and companies like Isagen E.S.P., Interconexión eléctrica ISA- S.A.E.S.P., and Isa Intercolombia S.A. E.S.P. All these partners not only serve in the board of directors but also contribute with financial resources for funding the projects. All these synergies created between the private sector, universities, non-profit organizations, and the catholic church show the importance of including several different social actors to facilitate the transformation of the territories. These transformations include pacific conflict resolution, understanding the various social realities, working with young people, and, in general, facilitating processes that allow the achievement of peaceful communities.

The total number of participants in all its work front was in 2021 of 1793, and in 2022, a total of 2730 people (Programa del Desarrollo para la Paz del Magdalena Medio, 2022, p. 55). In the line of culture, peace, and reconciliation, in 2021, a total of 68 events were held with 148 participants and 589 participations (Programa del Desarrollo para la Paz del Magdalena Medio, 2021, p. 26); these numbers increased in 2022, with 86 events, 447 participants and 4322 participations (Programa del Desarrollo para la Paz del Magdalena Medio, 2022, p. 40).

In addition, in 2021, the program's financial resources were \$1.241.096.159 COP, with a 100% financial execution (Programa del Desarrollo para la Paz del Magdalena Medio, 2021, p. 7). In 2022, the program was allocated \$1.418.909.840 COP and, just as the previous year, had a 100% execution of the resources (Programa del Desarrollo para la Paz del Magdalena Medio, 2022, p.9). Within the budget, the resources allocated to the line for the Peace Culture and Reconciliation, in 2021, was \$72.860.588 COP (Programa del Desarrollo para la Paz del Magdalena Medio, 2021, p. 7), for 2022, \$81.153.207 COP (Programa del Desarrollo para la Paz del Magdalena Medio, 2022, p. 9), in both cases, these resources represented the 6% of the total budget.

The program's main action lines are infrastructure, environment, and society; sustainable integrated development; and the line on which this section will focus, culture of peace and reconciliation. Within the peace culture and reconciliation program, the PDPMC has five lines of action: family cell of peace, youth leadership, gender equality, ethnic groups, and the school of forgiveness and reconciliation. One of the topics covered is strengthening youth leadership, especially regarding the peaceful coexistence and acceptance of differences. Also, gender equality, strengthening the network and groups of the afro-descendant population, mediation, forgiveness, and reconciliation.

The family cell of peace strategy was built on the idea that it is from this unity of society that awareness begins to develop around the territory, social relations, and the culture of peace. In 2021, the PDPMC reported work with two groups in the municipality of Pennsylvania

(Caldas) “allowing residents to develop their capacities in family and community relationships” [author’s translation] (Programa del Desarrollo para la Paz del Magdalena Medio, 2021, p. 25).

In this regard in 2021, 26 events were held, with 143 participants (Programa del Desarrollo para la Paz del Magdalena Medio, 2021, p. 25). In 2022, the PDPMC worked on the strategy with three groups in the municipality of La Dorada (Caldas). There, “democratic relations between men and women were strengthened as a platform for the construction of daily peace based on co-responsibility, family communication, and democratic parenting” [author’s translation]; a total of 41 events with 2,081 participants were reported (Programa del Desarrollo para la Paz del Magdalena Medio, 2022, p. 40).

It is interesting to identify concepts such as democratic parenting within the principles that guide the family cell of peace strategy. Democratic parenting chooses to prioritize communication, autonomy, respect, and learning; when developed within the families, these values can be extended to other scenarios in which society requires a peaceful resolution based on emotional intelligence. This means that democratic parenting instills in the students the tools they can use in the future, which will help society be more patient with others, choose nonviolent ways of resolving conflicts, a healthy political debate, and strengthen the communitarian network.

The youth leadership line of work instills in the young responsible ways to influence the dynamics of their territories through spaces of participation such as the Municipal Youth Councils. In 2021, 25 young of 7 municipalities were elected as youth counselors thanks to the support of the program (Programa del Desarrollo para la Paz del Magdalena Medio, 2021, p. 25). Also, in 2022, “161 children of the Dorada and Samaná municipalities, in the department of Caldas, were trained as great leaders in miniature” [author’s translation] (Programa del Desarrollo para la Paz del Magdalena Medio, 2022, p. 43). Likewise, 25 youths participated in the construction of strategies for the Development Plan [National Afro-Colombian Conference] and the CONPA [National Afro-Colombian Peace Council] valid until 2023 (Programa del Desarrollo para la Paz del Magdalena Medio, 2022, p. 44). Also, the “let us take charge of Democracy” (*apersonémonos de la democracia*) program seeks “strengthen and promote student ownership towards the school governance entities” according to Edwar Machado (in an interview conducted by the author), Coordinator of the infrastructure, environment and society line of the PDPMC.

The PDPMC instructed 170 students and teachers who are active participants in the school government and worked with 19 youths from the Leadership School around abilities that will eventually allow them to participate in the electoral process for the Youth Municipal Councils (Programa del Desarrollo para la Paz del Magdalena Medio, 2022, p. 48).

On gender equality, in 2021, the PDPMC accompanied the creation of nine projects with a gender-based perspective and held 19 events with 25 participants (Programa del Desarrollo para la Paz del Magdalena Medio, 2021, pp. 25-26). In 2022, the program financed 27 events with 171 participants; together with the Regional Counsel for Gender Equality for the center of Magdalena, held five projects around violence prevention and two entrepreneurship fairs (Programa del Desarrollo para la Paz del Magdalena Medio, 2022, p. 40). The issue of addressing gender equity in this case is aligned with what was stated in Añaños et al. (2020), where this issue is a fundamental factor in developing topics for peace education.

Moreover, for the program, the work with ethnic groups has a special relevance since it ignites debates about diversity, plurality, and inclusion; all these topics make a policy for peace education comprehensive, especially if we take into consideration that in Colombia, the Afro-Colombian, Raizal and, Palenquero population constitutes a total of 4.671.160 people, according to the last census (DANE, 2021, p. 27). The ethnic group work line reported, in 2021, 10 events and 35 participants; in those events, learning experiences were held around ancestral traditions (Programa del Desarrollo para la Paz del Magdalena Medio, 2021, pp. 25-26). In 2022, within the political incidence program, support was given to the Afro-Colombian, Raizal, and Palenquero populations to participate in the construction of the National Peace Agenda and in the budget planning for the National Conference of Afro-Colombian Organizations (Programa del Desarrollo para la Paz del Magdalena Medio, 2022, p. 41).

Lastly, according to Edwar Machado, the coordinator for the infrastructure, environment, and society work line, the School for Forgiveness and Reconciliation uses a clerical methodology developed by the Episcopal Conference. Through the program, logistic tools are provided, and the methodology is implemented by certificated facilitators. It is essential to highlight that the training is a central axis in all PDPMC work lines. Machado asserts that in the line of “integral sustainable development”, there is a training process aimed at the community associations because peace is based on generating income for vulnerable communities and allowing them to have businesses and entrepreneurship initiatives.

In the same way, there are programs that focus on political incidence in what the PDPMC calls the incidence route. “There are two schools, the first aimed at Community Action Boards (Juntas de Acción Comunal) (...) the Politeia Diploma seeks to strengthen the leadership capacity of the communities,” says Machado [author’s translation]. The second one is “Let us take charge of Democracy” (apersonémonos de la democracia), which was described previously. It is essential to emphasize at this point how the concept of building peace in this program is vast; it includes topics such as community entrepreneurship as a tool to create peace.

Ultimately, the comprehensive approach for each program analyzed in this section reflects a broad concept of peace education, where the training requires instruction in values and peaceful

conflict resolution, as well as other areas like entrepreneurship, gender equality, and ethnic inclusion. All these topics are aligned toward the same goal: to transform conflict realities and build peaceful societies that understand that the participation of several stakeholders is crucial to maintaining good relationships and a healthy social network.

Also, the topic of the challenges and lessons that the pandemic brought to the peace education programs is considered. The COVID-19 pandemic created several challenges for the implementation of social projects in Colombia, considering the mandate confinements and isolation policies executed in 2020 and 2021. The social realities were transformed, and the world became even more digital. The virtual world became a new reality not only for the citizens but also for the community organizations that had to deal with this scenario and had to transform themselves from within. For both Educapaz and the PDPMC, the COVID-19 pandemic resulted in the interruption of activities that entailed meetings and crowds. However, this context brought new opportunities for innovation.

It is relevant to showcase the diagnostic actions developed for the program Educapaz to learn about the new challenges that the program's target population faced regarding school virtuality as a new reality and the new family dynamics as a consequence of confinement. Some of the obstacles were the difficulty of accessing the internet, the excessive homework load, and the lack of understanding of the assignments left by the teachers. (Programa Nacional de Educación para la Paz, 2022a, p. 18).

However, most of the families did not report significant adverse changes in the family dynamic by asserting that the conflicts within the home did not increase (Programa Nacional de Educación para la Paz, 2022a, p. 19). As a result of these challenges, Educapaz implemented the distribution of physical booklets, pedagogical support to the educational communities, webinars, and virtual spaces to share experiences and support, among other ideas, as strategies that would help overcome those challenges found in the diagnostic activities (Programa Nacional de Educación para la Paz, 2022).

Thus, strategies such as community tutors and radio education generated new opportunities for innovation. The tactic of having community tutors "is an initiative for academic support oriented by community members with a vocation for service, in which they assist students that do not have family support in the process of education and learning" [author's translation] (Programa Nacional de Educación para la Paz, 2022a, p. 29). That approach includes all the student learning community and showcases the growth in values such as group work and compassion.

Nevertheless, the COVID-19 pandemic brought a new obstacle for the PDPMC: the impending digital transformation. To counteract that challenge, the PDPMC implemented a program

based on digital learning, building communication pieces, and consolidating databases. The last one, creating databases, had the goal of generating indicators that would allow them to track the executed activities performed.

Strategies and guidelines for future projects in the Colombian territory

One of the guidelines that can be proposed for future projects in the peace education area in Colombia is that strategic alliances play an essential role. A point to consider is that the synergy between academia, non-profit foundations, and the government brings good results when implementing peace education strategies. However, in several instances, the private sector has been taking leadership in implementing peace education projects in the territories. Despite the government's efforts to implement strategies around this topic, other stakeholders are the ones that have shown systematic and comprehensive efforts to implement peace education initiatives.

Second, it is key to integrate families into the learning process. Peace education and peaceful coexistence processes are enriched within the family because it is the first level in which one should implement strategies for peaceful conflict resolutions and the teaching of values. Although the peace education scenarios studied in the framework tend to focus mainly on the school environment, the programs studied show that the family component is essential for the continued development of children and young people.

The third guideline is that the peace education process must be shaped according to social, political, and cultural dynamics of the community to generate a bigger incidence in the target population and incorporate the country's political climate. For example, the concepts of historical memory, right to the truth, special justice for peace, and reparation are an integral part of the genesis and development of the Colombian peace process. For that reason, those concepts must be incorporated into the different topics addressed in the peace education processes because, by doing so, the debate and political participation are enriched. At the same time, the notion of political conscience is instilled in the population.

Fourth, creating educational material for teachers and parents is fundamental to implementing the strategies as closely as they are designed. These booklets can cover topics such as peaceful conflict resolution in the family; they can be a great instrument for parents who sometimes need orientation for a particular aspect of the family dynamic. Also, family diaries can help the family reflect and strengthen their communication.

Teacher guides, especially those with detailed didactic strategies, are valuable materials because they not only effectively instrumentalize the activities but also generate a uniform

standard of measurement. Those guides lighten the teachers' workload by giving them paths to put into practice all the theories about effective communication, recognition of emotions, and approach conflicts in the classroom from a peaceful resolution perspective.

The fifth guideline is the use of communication and information technologies. Considering the new digitalized state of the world, using these tools will help reach more people simultaneously. Despite the challenge of internet coverage in Colombia, in those places where there is access to the internet, those tools can help reduce the costs associated with teachers' transportation for training and meetings. Similarly, new pedagogical tools associated with ICT can awaken students' interest and facilitate teaching processes.

Lastly, after analyzing the research findings about the peace education programs, one must note the high level of community commitment. These programs have principles and comprehensive values that allow the involvement of different actors in society. It is crucial to understand that the process of transforming behaviors, frameworks, and realities towards a peaceful coexistence and resolution of conflict entails knowing the context, the different stakeholders, and the dynamics that conform it. The political incidence of those programs is important because they make the results and impact visible, and the facilitators who implement them serve as a bridge between the public policymakers and the communities when discussing issues such as the budget and the government plans in different levels.

Conclusions

According to the information assessed in this document, one can conclude that, first, the concept of peace education is vast because it is intrinsically connected to the definition of peace itself. In this regard, it can encompass topics from conflict resolution, civic values, and build of social networks to the formation of entrepreneurial projects and gender equality. Likewise, peace education is not an exclusive topic in the classrooms, even though the majority of efforts are put in young students. A shared idea in all the perspectives of peace education analyzed is the search for transforming scenarios in which rights can be violated, or social conflict can be identified. This transformation can be achieved through education, using different pedagogical tools, such as games, collective learning, spaces for debate and exchange of ideas, and interactive virtual toolkits.

All these strategies allowed changes in the school context, in which the youth learned to manage their emotions, be empathetic with their schoolmates, work on topics like bullying, and create agreements to overcome difficulties in school.

Likewise, after examining the results for the peace education programs Educapaz and PDPMC, one can identify how both place the family as a fundamental basis for transforming society.

By working directly with families, several generations are impacted, which will turn into multipliers of what they have learned in the different environments in which they operate.

In like manner, after analyzing the components of both programs, it was possible to determine that they are making a positive impact on their target population in both rural and urban areas. Carrying out strategies that promote training in human rights, political participation, and peaceful conflict resolution, generates transformations in the individuals who went from being spectators to builders of social realities. They go from being victims of the conflict to empowered actors capable of giving their opinions and proposing alternatives to social challenges. An example of this was the young people who participated in the elections for the municipal youth councils, thanks to the support of the PDPMC.

Also, several challenges were identified due to the COVID-19 pandemic; Educapaz and the PDPMC overcame them by continuing the formative and support processes with their population through innovation and the creative use of information technologies. Two strategies worthy of mention are the community tutors developed by Educapaz and the migration to the virtual teaching model done by the PDPMC.

There are five main points regarding the guidelines for future peace education programs in Colombia. First, strategic alliances are a focal point for creating peace education programs; the diversity of actors provides methodological enhancement and improves the probability of success. Second, integrating the whole family strengthens the communication, guarantees that the programs reach more people, and can be internalized easily. Third, shape the programs to the dynamic of the contexts and enrich them with cultural and political knowledge. Fourth, the parents should be included in the methodologies, especially while creating the toolkits. Fifth, the information and communication technologies should be explored as instruments to reach more people and facilitate the teaching process.

Lastly, it is essential to reiterate that developing programs that focus on education for peace in the Colombian context is important. Not only due to the country's long history of violence but also because, despite that, several stakeholders are willing to work on developing actions that will change the scenarios of political and social life that generate inequalities and conflicts. For this reason, it is imperative to continue the research in this area so that new knowledge and debates around the challenges, successes, and incidences around peace education in the territory can take place.

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