



Peace Education and Restorative Justice in Post-Conflict Colombia: Constitutional Principles, Community Engagement, and Challenges for Social Transformation

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Abstract

This research explores the pivotal role of peace education and restorative justice in Colombia's post-conflict transformation, grounding its analysis in the constitutional principles established by the 1991 Political Constitution. Employing a qualitative, hermeneutic methodology, the study critically examines primary and secondary sources—including legal documents, academic literature, and testimonies—to interpret the meanings, experiences, and perceptions associated with justice and peacebuilding in Colombian society. The research adopts a descriptive and reflective approach, facilitating a comprehensive understanding of how educational initiatives can foster reconciliation, strengthen civic competencies, and promote human rights in a context marked by decades of armed conflict. Key findings highlight that peace education transcends the mere transmission of knowledge, serving as a transformative social instrument for cultivating ethical values, tolerance, and respect for diversity. The study underscores the importance of integrating both restorative and retributive justice paradigms within educational frameworks to achieve genuine reconciliation and social healing. Challenges such as limited resources, cultural resistance, and political polarization are identified, emphasizing the need for inclusive policies and the active participation of conflict victims in program development. The article concludes that coordinated efforts between the State, civil society, and educational institutions are essential for advancing peace education and restorative justice. By promoting open dialogue, critical reflection, and context-sensitive curricula, Colombia can build a more just, inclusive, and peaceful society. This research contributes to the broader field of transitional justice by demonstrating how education, rooted in constitutional values and community engagement, can serve as a foundation for sustainable peace and social transformation.

Keywords Peace Education, Restorative Justice, Post-Conflict Colombia, Human Rights, Social Transformation

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Introduction

The pursuit of peace in Colombia has been shaped by a unique set of circumstances that highlight the fragility of justice and the capacity of various social sectors to hinder efforts to repair the harm suffered by victims. Beyond the work of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), a crucial reflection emerges on the role that education must play in Colombian society and the collective commitment required to build a peaceful future in the post-conflict era (Acosta, 2016).

In the global context of the 21st century, humanity has witnessed the brutality and degradation that human conflict can reach. Within the framework of restorative justice, preventive action is essential and must be led by the central government, which possesses both the constitutional and moral authority to unite citizens around ethical values and principles grounded in Human Rights.

The Colombian system has demonstrated the need to promote respect for these universal values from within governmental institutions, especially among officials responsible for dealing with victims of armed conflict. However, increasing corruption in these arenas has generated profound impunity, diverting attention from Truth, Justice, Reparation, and Guarantees of Non-Repetition—fundamental pillars of the Special Jurisdiction for Peace and human rights education in Colombia (Guerra, 2017).

The armed conflict has left a legacy of pain across Colombian generations, exacerbated by drug trafficking, dissident illegal groups, and a pervasive sense of impunity in judicial processes. This reality has led civil society to demand a fairer and more equitable society, where leaders ground their actions in ethical and social values, give voice to victims, and prioritize Human Rights (Caviedes, 2017).

State corruption has obstructed comprehensive reparation for victims and undermined confidence in justice, leaving the human dimension of citizens unprotected. Following the signing of the Final Agreement with the FARC, the Colombian state committed to building a more just and free society, yet the lack of concrete actions has allowed violence to re-emerge across the country.

It is crucial for the Colombian state to prioritize the education of its citizens in Human Rights, promoting ethical and social values that drive both individual and collective development, and prevent the control of mafias and corruption over the nation. This approach seeks not only to repair the damage caused by decades of armed conflict but also to build an inclusive and resilient society (Suárez, 2018).

Human Rights education must become the foundation of Colombian society, fostering an understanding of cultural diversity and promoting mutual collaboration from an early age. Investing in educational programs that nurture citizens committed to peace and collective well-being is essential, preparing them to face the challenges of the post-conflict period with wisdom and solidarity (Álvarez, 2016). Now is the time to reflect on how education in the post-conflict era can benefit the country through restorative justice. This chapter will examine three fundamental pillars for this transformation.

The chapter is structured into three main parts: (1) a conceptual and referential analysis of peace education and its theoretical foundations; (2) an exploration of the challenges and opportunities for implementing Human Rights education in Colombia; and (3) a discussion of practical strategies and case studies that illustrate the transformative potential of education for peacebuilding in the Colombian context.

Theoretical Framework

On Colombia's complex path toward peacebuilding, it is essential to understand the different perspectives on justice that shape this process. Two main approaches have been debated and implemented in the country: **restorative justice** and **retributive justice**. Both perspectives, with their distinct tools and methodologies, offer alternatives for addressing conflict and contributing to national reconciliation (Zehr, 1997; Bohórquez, 2016).

Restorative justice is grounded in an approach that centers on the needs of victims, offenders, and the broader community (Zehr, 1997). Its main objective is to repair the harm caused by crime and to promote reconciliation among all parties involved (Bohórquez, 2016). Rather than focusing solely on punishing the

offender, restorative justice seeks to heal damaged relationships and rebuild the social fabric (Centro de Estudios de Memoria, Paz y Reconciliación, 2018).

A fundamental pillar of restorative justice is open and honest dialogue between the parties. This may include meetings mediated by neutral facilitators, where victims can express their suffering, offenders can take responsibility for their actions, and the community can actively participate in finding solutions to repair the harm. In Colombia, restorative justice has found application in initiatives such as the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), established as part of the peace process with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) (JEP, 2018). The JEP aims to investigate, judge, and sanction crimes committed during the armed conflict, while also promoting truth, reparation, and non-repetition as fundamental pillars for national reconciliation.

In contrast, retributive justice is based on a punitive approach, where the main goal is to impose punishments proportional to the severity of the crimes committed (Hampton, 2002). This approach focuses on the offender's culpability and the application of the law as a means to ensure security and social order (Walker, 2001). In the retributive model, punishment is seen as a form of retribution for the harm caused and as a way to deter future crimes (Instituto de Estudios Penales y Carcelarios, 2004).

Historically, retributive justice has been predominant in Colombia, especially during the armed conflict, when the state sought to impose severe punishments on those responsible for violent crimes. However, this perspective has been criticized for its inability to address the needs of victims and for perpetuating cycles of violence and revenge (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, 2016).

Colombia's experience demonstrates how the interaction between restorative and retributive justice can influence the search for peace and reconciliation. While retributive justice has been necessary to ensure accountability and the rule of law, restorative justice has emerged as a crucial complement to address the roots of conflict and promote lasting peace. The implementation of the JEP and other restorative justice initiatives in Colombia has shown the importance of including victims in the process of truth-seeking and reparation. By providing a space for the narration of their experiences and the pursuit of reconciliation, restorative justice has helped to heal the wounds of conflict and rebuild the social fabric (JEP, 2020).

Nevertheless, the effective application of restorative justice in Colombia faces significant challenges, including resistance from some sectors of society and a lack of resources and training to implement effective programs (Centro de Estudios de Memoria, Paz y Reconciliación, 2018). Furthermore, the coexistence of restorative and retributive justice raises questions about how to balance accountability with the pursuit of reconciliation.

Peacebuilding in Colombia requires a comprehensive approach that incorporates both restorative and retributive justice. While retributive justice is fundamental for ensuring accountability and the rule of law, restorative justice offers a path to heal the wounds of conflict, rebuild the social fabric, and promote a lasting and sustainable peace. Striking the right balance between these two perspectives is a crucial challenge for Colombia's future (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, 2016).

Methods

This study adopts a qualitative, reflective approach to examine the role of restorative and retributive justice in peacebuilding processes in Colombia. The research is grounded in a descriptive methodology, aiming to analyze the lived experiences, perceptions, and meanings that individuals attribute to justice within the post-conflict context. Such a qualitative paradigm is particularly suitable for exploring complex social phenomena, as it allows for an in-depth understanding of subjective realities and the nuanced interplay between individual and collective narratives (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

To achieve this, the study employs hermeneutics as its primary interpretative framework. Hermeneutics, understood as the theory and methodology of interpretation, is especially relevant for analyzing both primary and secondary sources, including official documents, testimonies, legal texts, and academic literature. This approach facilitates the exploration of the deeper meanings embedded in texts and

discourses, moving beyond literal readings to uncover the contextual significance shaped by Colombia's unique post-conflict realities (Gadamer, 2004).

The hermeneutic process in this research involved several key steps:

- **Critical Reading:** All sources were subjected to a thorough and systematic reading to identify recurring themes, patterns, and contradictions.
- **Reflective Analysis:** The researcher engaged in continuous reflection to interpret both explicit and implicit meanings, considering the socio-political context in which these discourses were produced.
- **Contextualization:** The analysis situated individual perspectives within broader historical, cultural, and institutional frameworks, recognizing the influence of structural factors on the construction of justice in Colombia.
- **Synthesis:** The findings from various sources were integrated to develop a comprehensive understanding of how restorative and retributive justice are conceptualized and operationalized in the Colombian post-conflict setting.

This methodological approach enabled the identification of relationships between different elements—such as legal frameworks, victim experiences, and state practices—as well as the tensions and synergies between restorative and retributive paradigms. The use of hermeneutics ensured that the interpretation remained sensitive to both the explicit content and the underlying assumptions, values, and power dynamics present in the discourse (Patton, 2015).

By employing this rigorous interpretive methodology, the study provides a nuanced and contextually grounded analysis of justice in Colombia's peacebuilding process, contributing to the broader field of transitional justice research (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Gadamer, 2004; Patton, 2015).

Educating for Human Rights is Educating for Peace

Educating for peace stands as the most crucial civic competence in Colombia's current post-conflict scenario. The aftermath of decades of armed conflict has left deep scars on the population and the nation's institutions, making it imperative to adopt a renewed approach that strengthens the collective sense of citizenship and the resilience of the state and its people (Acosta, 2016). In this context, peace education is not merely an ideal but a practical necessity for rebuilding the social fabric and fostering sustainable development.

A scientific and participatory perspective is essential to determine how collaborative and cooperative actions should be implemented to advance Human Rights work. Central to this approach is the meaningful inclusion of victims, who must become protagonists in the processes of forgiveness and reconciliation (Bohórquez, 2016). Historically, retributive justice has fostered a mentality of vengeance and retribution—an “eye for an eye” mindset—that has hindered true healing. The emergence of restorative justice offers a transformative opportunity to shift this paradigm, emphasizing institutional and social cooperation, and integrating art, culture, and community engagement into the pursuit of peace (Zehr, 1997).

This educational perspective is explicitly embedded in Colombia's Peace Agreement, which provides victims with opportunities to participate in resocialization initiatives. It also commits the state to ensuring that citizens are informed about the realities of the armed conflict. Both victims and perpetrators are encouraged to participate in cooperative processes before the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP), promoting resocialization through education and the safeguarding of Human Rights (JEP, 2018).

The transition from war to peace requires the state to lead these processes with procedural rigor, ensuring that new violations of Human Rights are prevented. Technical assistance is necessary to fulfill the criteria established in the Peace Agreement, with a focus on employment, health, and education as fundamental pillars for national development (Suárez, 2018). The state's leadership must be visible and effective, setting a precedent for future generations.

Dialogue among the various branches of government must be grounded in Human Rights and promote the respect enshrined in Colombia's Constitution. It is vital that all citizens understand Colombia as a Social State of Law, where offenders and corrupt actors are held accountable. To achieve this, educational cooperation must be supported by the Ministry of Education, guided by consistent political advice, and reach all regions of the country through mass media and dynamic, honest pedagogy (Álvarez, 2016).

Human Rights education is fundamental to peace education. This process should be based on the acquisition of diverse components within civic competencies, enabling individuals to develop attitudes, skills, and behaviors necessary for living together justly and equitably. The goal is to strike a balance between the legacy of conflict and the vision of a prosperous future (Guerra, 2017).

For Colombians, peace in the post-conflict era represents both the physical and psychological structure of the community, intimately linked to social balance and the development of activities aimed at harmonious coexistence. Here, education for peace, grounded in Human Rights, promotes justice and equality, thereby ensuring progress and peaceful coexistence (Centro de Estudios de Memoria, Paz y Reconciliación, 2018).

A comprehensive peace education program must integrate the voices of victims, former combatants, and communities, fostering spaces for dialogue and mutual understanding. Such programs should encourage critical reflection on the causes and consequences of conflict, empowering citizens to challenge narratives of violence and exclusion (Comisión de la Verdad y Reconciliación, 2016).

Furthermore, peace education must be context-sensitive, adapting to the diverse realities of Colombia's regions. This requires a flexible curriculum that incorporates local histories, cultural expressions, and indigenous knowledge, ensuring that education is relevant and transformative for all learners (Walker, 2001).

The role of teachers is central in this endeavor. Educators must be equipped with the tools and training necessary to facilitate difficult conversations, manage classroom diversity, and model democratic values. Ongoing professional development and institutional support are critical to sustaining these efforts (Patton, 2015).

Evaluation and monitoring mechanisms should be established to assess the impact of peace education initiatives. These mechanisms must be participatory, involving students, teachers, and community members in the process of continuous improvement and adaptation (Creswell & Poth, 2018).

In conclusion, educating for Human Rights is synonymous with educating for peace. It is a multidimensional process that requires the commitment of the state, civil society, and educational institutions. By fostering a culture of respect, inclusion, and solidarity, Colombia can move toward a future where peace is not only an aspiration but a lived reality for all its citizens.

Peace as a Constitutional Principle and Education as the Foundation for Restorative Justice

The 1991 Political Constitution of Colombia enshrines peace as a fundamental symbol and guiding ideal of the nation. The preamble articulates a basic purpose: to strengthen social relations and place human dignity at the center, ensuring that personal development is rooted in the free expression of individuality within the political order. This framework not only shapes society but also defines the responsibilities of all citizens in contributing to peace. The Constitution projects a vision of values and a commitment to peaceful relations as part of daily life, providing a meaningful platform for every individual to promote human rights and distance themselves from negative forces such as tyranny or barbarism (Arévalo, 2014).

The essential condition for harmonious coexistence is the principle that inspires Colombia's internal legal order. It shapes the social relationships of all individuals, both as members of a community and as citizens of a nation that aspires to participate in the global system. This vision is grounded in freedom, justice, equality, and pluralism, enabling the recognition of liberties as an expression of each people's sovereignty. At the same time, it fosters a mutual agreement for balance and non-violence, which is integral to the constitutional project (Arévalo, 2014).

These constitutional manifestations, present from the preamble, establish the necessary bonds that every inhabitant must cultivate to build meaningful social relationships. They promote in the community the constitutional values of safeguarding order, respect, and human rights, as well as the recognition of human dignity. Moreover, they explicitly affirm the Universal Declaration of Human Rights as a foundational element for society as a whole, reinforcing the idea that peace and dignity are inseparable from the nation's legal and ethical framework.

It is crucial to recognize that peace is oriented toward interaction among peoples and individuals of free thought and conviction, fostering an open society of knowledge and exchange. However, Colombia's recent tragic history has revealed the dangers of totalitarianism and internal conflict, which have hindered constitutional development and the possibility of national reconciliation. The legacy of armed conflict continues to threaten the prospects for peace, making forgiveness and the cessation of hostilities urgent yet challenging goals.

The Constitution, as the supreme law, adopts peace as a basic principle and commits the Colombian people to a teleological mandate: to pursue the necessity and precise meaning of peace both as a concept and as a legal precept. This commitment is not merely aspirational but is anchored in political foundations that demand an articulated effort among all citizens to resolve conflicts within the framework of state sovereignty, liberties, and respect. In this way, the Constitution seeks to ensure peace and justice, while simultaneously promoting cooperation for the progress of humanity.

Within this context, peace education must become a daily practice, shaping every Colombian as part of the ongoing relationship between the people and the state. Education for peace is not only a necessary principle for conflict resolution and the preservation of public order, but also a proactive measure to prevent and eliminate threats to peace. The task is to ground the principles of justice and law in national discourse, while simultaneously fostering peace through non-aggression, understanding, and tolerance (Pérez, 2016).

Educational initiatives generated in the debate over peace must be oriented toward what ought to be, as part of a constructive process that supports and integrates all necessary actions to achieve social harmony. These initiatives should avoid fostering attitudes or actions that undermine the legitimate desire of every individual to live in peace, harmony, and prosperity within their community. The Constitution makes clear that peacebuilding is both an individual and collective endeavor, requiring measures to maintain national and international security, as well as the support of all governmental entities and international organizations such as the United Nations and NGOs.

In this sense, educating for peace means teaching individuals to develop broad, visionary perspectives on reality, fostering commitment and empathy for others' concerns. It requires openness to diverse viewpoints, whether from the right or the left, and the cultivation of autonomy in free individuals—untainted by hatred, fanaticism, or any action that might lead to conflict. At its core, the foundation is reconciliation and dialogue as primary means for resolving differences (Márquez, 2014).

Peace must become the natural action of human beings, the most important tool for discerning social processes and criteria related to the very conception of life. The pursuit of understanding should illuminate the path toward recognizing that all humans share the same planet and possess the rational virtue to live peacefully, resolving problems through dialogue and mutual respect.

The consciousness that peace generates is rooted in each person's potential and ability to maintain social and personal balance. It also relies on mutual cooperation, which is embedded in the axiological content of the Constitution. This promotes peace as a worthy effort for every individual, based on personal and social protection, and strengthens peaceful cooperation across all social entities.

This process demonstrates the practical realization of peace, enabling sustainable development within the normative framework and, especially, in the social value it can attain. It is grounded in the political and institutional development of the state, which aspires to the highest ideal of legal benefit—peace—while maintaining an ethical and normative perspective that encompasses all pragmatic values related to the interpretation and application of a tranquil and dignified life (Collado, 2014).

The legal framework described here highlights the importance of the Constitution and its protection, reinforced by the actions of the Constitutional Court and the aspirations of Colombians who long for peace as a supraconstitutional value. Peace is thus part of the legal, economic, and cultural order of the country, supported by education that promotes values and Colombian folklore within the system. This approach is focused on valuing all precepts of peace, forming citizens under judicial oversight and a value-based order that shapes the educational process.

Support for peace processes in Colombia is embedded in the post-conflict era, with the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) grounded in the theory of restorative justice. This framework enables the nation to interpret the conflict and pursue legal manifestations of peace, reconciliation, and forgiveness. However, not everyone is prepared to confront the horrors of the conflict or to generate peaceful environments for those who have been stigmatized, victimized, and marked forever by the violence. For this reason, education for peace is the most suitable instrument for fostering the necessary conditions for peaceful coexistence and the pursuit of new opportunities for social, cultural, and economic progress (Acosta, 2016).

The arguments presented thus far underscore the need for a context in which peace enhances the necessary links for the personal, entrepreneurial, and productive development of all Colombians. This must occur under conditions that foster harmonious and educational activities, protecting human rights for every citizen and projecting Colombia onto the world stage.

The interpretation of justice for peace connects retributive theory with the relationship between the state and individuals, aiming to restore legal protection and link it to personal progress. Here, education plays a fundamental role in providing the means for individuals to develop new skills and techniques for economic and harmonious progress in the 21st-century society of consumption (Acosta, 2016).

A constructive critique of this situation points toward the need for assertive connections that enable individuals to work with the support of all state entities and segments of society. This raises crucial questions: What kind of society are we building? What means do we have for genuine reconciliation? Are Colombians capable of forgiving without forgetting?

Ultimately, these reflections converge on the question of reconciliation and the role of forgiveness as the true model of restorative justice. While many questions remain, the central focus for the current and future governments must be the pursuit of peace as a constitutional mechanism, supported by the pillars of human rights and education. Only through these means can violence be prevented, and spaces of tolerance, encounter, and personal and social progress be generated for **all** Colombians.

Educational Work with the Colombian Community on the Path to Peace

Throughout history, armed conflicts have underscored the urgent need for **Peace Education** as a means to prevent violence and foster lasting coexistence. In the Colombian context, the community itself must become the living example of peaceful interaction, demonstrating that harmonious coexistence is attainable through collective action and shared values. Peace education is not simply a theoretical construct; it is a practical necessity that emerges from the lessons of conflict and the imperative to build a culture that rejects violence in favor of dialogue and social cohesion (Márquez, 2014).

Educating for peace equips communities with vital tools for living together based on social justice, equality, respect, and human dignity. This process requires the development of civic competencies that drive social change, solidarity, autonomy, and the strengthening of institutional development—particularly within the educational sector. Such competencies are essential for empowering individuals to participate actively in democratic life and to contribute meaningfully to the reconstruction of the social fabric in post-conflict Colombia.

Education thus becomes a foundational, cross-cutting competence within the academic curriculum, permeating all areas of knowledge. It encourages the adoption of proposals that efficiently foster coexistence, respect for human rights, intercultural understanding, biodiversity, and sustainable economic development. By integrating peace education into every discipline, schools can nurture citizens who are not

only knowledgeable but also ethically committed to the well-being of their communities and the environment (Cabezudo, 2013).

A key strategy for disseminating the principles and values of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights is through effective communication and interaction, particularly via television and the internet. These media platforms play a crucial role in promoting self-care, the adoption of non-violent social habits, and the rejection of physical or verbal abuse. They also facilitate the spread of information that encourages critical thinking and the cultivation of peaceful behaviors across diverse social groups.

It is vital to foster a rich philosophical, artistic, and representative culture that encourages creative expression through folklore and regional traditions. Such cultural initiatives promote respect, solidarity, and integration, reflecting Colombia's pluralistic identity. Educational development must focus on enabling citizens to acquire new knowledge and skills that support social integration and progressive economic growth, while honoring the unique contributions of each region (Guerra, 2017).

Learning, in this context, also involves unlearning obsolete traditions that have historically punished individuals for their autonomy of thought and action. In post-conflict Colombia, it is essential to embrace diversity and multicultural knowledge, ensuring that educational content is inclusive and responsive to the varied backgrounds and experiences of all learners. This approach promotes comprehensive understanding and acceptance of difference as a source of collective strength.

Post-conflict Colombians must recognize, through education, that tolerance and respect are central to community integration and peaceful conflict resolution. Logical reasoning, order, and empathy must guide interactions within society, fostering a culture where disputes are addressed constructively and with consideration for the well-being of others (Cardona, 2010).

Justice, in this framework, promotes ethical and social values for all, but it is incumbent upon each individual to participate actively in society, respecting Colombia's cultural diversity. Educational activities should be designed to build a just society through didactic strategies that reflect regional identities and support the ongoing work for peace. These efforts must be rooted in personal and social actions that exemplify the pursuit of peace and the common good.

The significance of educating for peace is reinforced by international treaties that advocate for the construction of better societies, poverty reduction, and investment in youth. By promoting knowledge and peaceful conflict resolution, education empowers individuals and groups to protect peace and develop the capacities necessary for non-violent problem-solving. This includes the application of ethical and social values as both legal practices and adaptive strategies within the framework of human rights, gender equality, freedom of thought, and participatory decision-making (Pérez, 2014).

Education supports the development and application of new concepts and skills, guiding individuals through manuals and curricula that enhance negotiation abilities and critical thinking. This facilitates inter-institutional collaboration and the creation of national initiatives aimed at peacebuilding. It is imperative that education is grounded in the principles of life, liberty, justice, and fraternity, enabling the pacification of territories affected by conflict and fostering a culture of peace.

Victims of the armed conflict are often the first educators in these territories, embodying social value and resilience. It is essential to empower them with the tools and knowledge necessary for sustainable livelihoods and the practical application of skills for life. The teaching of human rights is thus integral to the development of negotiation, critical thinking, and communication skills among all actors, ensuring that those directly or indirectly affected by violence have the resources to address their challenges effectively (Arévalo, 2014).

There is a pressing need for diverse educational models that promote social change and participation at group, community, and national levels. Education for human rights must aim to leave behind the negative legacies and traumas of conflict, fostering sensitivity and a commitment to the protection of others among students of all ages. This approach nurtures a sense of shared humanity and responsibility for the planet.

Sensitizing all individuals to the importance of peace strengthens educational, pedagogical, and social processes, helping families and communities to improve their environments and quality of life. Such efforts are inspired by Colombia's peace processes and contribute to the creation of a society where peace is not only valued but actively pursued (Caviedes, 2017).

The promotion of peace is an educational quality with global reach, rooted in meaningful experiences of sharing, exploring, and addressing the needs and achievements of communities striving for progress. The knowledge and dedication of educators are crucial, yet challenges remain: What happens if individuals are consumed by resentment from the armed conflict? What tools can foster greater awareness of human rights? Can indirect actors in the conflict contribute to forgiveness? How can human rights education facilitate restorative justice and reconciliation? Are human rights the most effective instrument for achieving restorative justice?

These questions highlight the ongoing need for reflection, innovation, and commitment in the educational work with Colombian communities as they continue on the path to peace.

Discussion

The issue of **peace education** in Colombia's post-conflict context is of profound relevance, generating a wide array of scientific debates and critical reflections. This chapter has explored the multidimensional importance of peace education, analyzing its transformative potential, the challenges it faces, and its implications for Colombian society as it seeks reconciliation and sustainable development.

Peace education emerges not only as a pedagogical strategy but as a powerful social instrument capable of transforming mindsets, fostering reconciliation, and laying the groundwork for a peaceful and prosperous future (Acosta, 2016; Márquez, 2014). Its scope transcends the transmission of academic knowledge, aiming instead to cultivate ethical and moral values in new generations—values that empower individuals to become agents of positive change and social cohesion.

A robust peace education framework promotes **tolerance, respect for diversity**, peaceful conflict resolution, and a commitment to building a more just and equitable nation. This approach aligns with international standards and the Colombian Constitution, which enshrines peace as a fundamental right and principle (Arévalo, 2014). Peace education, therefore, is not an isolated field, but an interdisciplinary endeavor that integrates skills for conflict resolution, human rights education, and the promotion of democratic values across all educational levels (Cabezudo, 2013).

However, the effective implementation of peace education faces significant challenges. These include limited resources, cultural resistance, and persistent political polarization, all of which can undermine the reach and impact of educational initiatives (Cardona, 2010). Overcoming these obstacles requires not only increased investment and policy support but also the active inclusion and representation of conflict victims in the design and execution of peace education programs. Their participation is crucial for building authentic narratives and collective memory, which are essential for reconciliation and the prevention of future violence (Guerra, 2017).

A central theme discussed in previous chapters is the dynamic interplay between **restorative and retributive justice** within peace education. While retributive justice has historically dominated Colombia's response to conflict, often emphasizing punishment and deterrence, restorative justice offers a complementary path focused on healing, forgiveness, and social repair (Zehr, 1997; Bohórquez, 2016). Integrating both approaches within educational settings can foster a more holistic understanding of justice, promote empathy, and support the construction of a shared historical memory (JEP, 2018).

The **role of the State and civil society** is pivotal. Effective peace education requires coordinated action between government institutions, educational authorities, and grassroots organizations. This collaboration is vital for developing, implementing, and monitoring comprehensive programs that are contextually relevant and inclusive. Public policies should be designed to guarantee equitable access to peace education, particularly in regions most affected by violence and marginalization (Suárez, 2018).

Looking ahead, peace education in Colombia must remain adaptive and forward-looking. As the country continues to evolve, educational strategies should respond to emerging challenges, such as environmental sustainability, digital citizenship, and the integration of diverse cultural perspectives. Peace education should be seen as a living process—one that is continuously renewed through dialogue, reflection, and the participation of all social actors (Álvarez, 2016).

Open and constructive dialogue is essential for advancing a deeper understanding of peace education's role. Through ongoing research, critical debate, and the sharing of best practices, Colombia can continue to refine its educational approaches, ensuring that they contribute effectively to peacebuilding and national reconciliation.

Conclusions

In conclusion, **peace education** stands as a cornerstone in the construction of a more just, equitable, and peaceful Colombian society in the aftermath of conflict. By promoting values such as tolerance, respect for diversity, and peaceful conflict resolution, peace education establishes the foundation for harmonious coexistence and a lasting culture of peace (Caviedes, 2017; Centro de Estudios de Memoria, Paz y Reconciliación, 2018).

Despite the significant challenges—ranging from resource constraints to cultural and political resistance—it is imperative to overcome these barriers. The active inclusion and participation of conflict victims in peace education programs are essential for fostering genuine reconciliation and social healing.

The ongoing debate between restorative and retributive justice remains central. Both paradigms, when integrated thoughtfully, can contribute to authentic and enduring reconciliation. The joint efforts of the State and civil society are crucial for strengthening and expanding peace education, ensuring that it reaches all sectors of the population.

Looking to the future, it is vital to consider the evolving challenges and long-term perspectives of peace education in Colombia. This educational approach must continually adapt to the changing needs of society, promoting justice, equality, and environmental stewardship as pillars of sustainable peace. Peace education thus represents an invaluable opportunity to transform mindsets, foster reconciliation, and build a more prosperous and peaceful future for all Colombians. Through sustained commitment and constructive dialogue, Colombia can advance toward a more inclusive, just, and peaceful post-conflict society.

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