

Transformative Actions For Peace: Social Representations Of Youth Peace In Norte De Santander

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Abstract

The objective of this research is to understand the social representations of peace of the young people of the Foundation of Empirical Arts, Villa del Rosario, as the basis for a pedagogical practice for peace, in the context of a problematic social context that does not guarantee the effective enjoyment of their rights. From a theoretical perspective it is based on the Theory of Social Representations. The methodological design is supported in a qualitative study of hermeneutical type, using observation and semi-structured interviews as information gathering techniques; for the analysis of the data the open, axial and selective categorization process of the Grounded Theory is used. The discussion of results shows 5 emerging categories of representation called: neutral peace, negative peace, peace as culture, peace as artistic expression and peace as a transforming action, as well as their contributions to a pedagogical practice for peace.

Key words: Peace, pedagogical practice, social representations.

Introduction

Addressing the conflict in the Colombian context has direct associations with manifestations of the violence that for decades has affected millions of people in the country. Therefore, this thesis is part of the macroproject "The dilemma of war or peace: representations of children and young people about war and peace in Norte de Santander", whose central purpose is oriented to investigate the social representations about peace and war in subjects who were

born in a land with a history of violence and who at the same time find today a polarized country due to the peace process but with expectations of a different future. Consequently, children and young people (CNJ) are the central subjects of the research.

Likewise, the historical development of humanity has made possible the development of scenarios conducive to the construction of knowledge about the different social and pedagogical phenomena that concern society, thanks to the incessant instinct of human beings for knowledge, which has led them to create structured teaching-learning processes in the different areas of knowledge.

This has led to the appearance in history of great thinkers and the proliferation of different currents of thought that have defended particular ways of explaining how it is possible to know. Likewise, as civilisations advanced, value systems and cultural practices were consolidated, giving rise to education, which was closely related to the social characteristics of the context and the training needs to sustain the economic system of the time.

However, despite the dizzying changes in today's society, it is possible to see that schools and different university "cloisters" continue to base their pedagogy on traditional educational models that are less and less effective for the formation of citizens, which is why these lines are dedicated to reflecting on how it is possible to study the configuration of pedagogical practice in educational scenarios that go from the school to the neighbourhood and how this exercise makes it possible to build a model of pedagogy for peace.

Consequently, the SRs of peace, as well as their implications for children and young people, is the theme that guides the development of the research in the line of pedagogy for peace and coexistence of the Master's Degree in Pedagogical Practice. In this order of ideas, in this particular research, the Fundación de Artes Empíricas, Villa del Rosario, Norte de Santander, is identified as a referent of study, with the central objective of understanding the SR of peace of young people as a foundation for a pedagogical practice for peace.

The theoretical perspective of peace

According to studies and theoretical contributions, peace is presented as a notion present in everyday life, sometimes as a reality and at other times as a purpose. Thus, from Fisas' (2011) perspective, it encompasses the convictions that integrate, the ethics that transform and the understanding of conflict as part of everything, as it is expressed through different manifestations such as intolerance or unjustified social domination.

In this sense, several theories are taken up, each contributing an approach that allows for a deeper understanding of peace. Taking Galtung's (1996) vision of positive and negative peace as a starting point. The former consists, as Harto de Vera (2016) explains, paraphrasing the Norwegian sociologist, in the absence of any kind of violent expression or action, a situation

that would arise through respect for justice and human rights. In his perspective, the close relationship between peace and other values such as freedom, equity and justice is also evident.

With regard to Galtung's (1996) negative peace, Jiménez (2009) emphasises that it arises with the pedagogy of peace, after the end of the two World Wars, in which the existence of violent behaviour in people is recognised, which through pedagogy can be improved to favour the personal responsibility of each person in their social interactions. Thus, in order to abolish violence, it is necessary to analyse and study it in order to prevent its existence from being minimised.

Within Galtung's theoretical body, violence and the possibility of peace coexist, which is why he proposes three stages: the first consists of negative peace, also known as scientific studies for war; the second is positive peace, which encompasses the author's research on issues such as cooperation, development, disarmament and refugees; the third aims at the culture of peace, where he proposes new and possible realities.

With regard to the culture of peace, the declaration of the United Nations General Assembly (Res. 53/243, 1999) on the culture of peace is understood as "a set of values, attitudes, traditions, behaviours and lifestyles" (p.2), which are based on a series of principles of which it is interesting to highlight:

(c) Full respect for and promotion of all human rights and fundamental freedoms; [...] (h) Respect for and promotion of the right of everyone to freedom of expression, opinion and information; (i) Adherence to the principles of freedom, justice, democracy, tolerance, solidarity, cooperation, pluralism, cultural diversity, dialogue and understanding at all levels of society and between nations (Res. 53/243, 1999, p.2-3).

It further adds that for the full development of a culture of peace it is necessary to integrate "the promotion of democracy, the development of human rights and fundamental freedoms and the universal respect for and observance of these" (Res. 53/243, 1999, p.3).

Along these lines, Muñoz and Martínez (2000) describe that peace is also considered a social desire in which values and political repercussions are involved, from which values and positions emerge that not only enrich its conception as a dynamic concept, but also the ways in which citizens seek it and build it. In short, he points out that "peace benefits everyone, it is synonymous with abundance and happiness for all, since peace is implicitly linked to the concept of political and social harmony" (Díez, 2000, p. 361).

Muñoz seeks to place us in a context where we reflect on peace, but a peace that is realistic, where the aptitude or disposition for a dignified life is promoted, although the author's aim is to explain that there is no perfect peace, and this implies being subject to the existence of conflicts, which is why he suggests that we must learn to coexist with conflicts, and that each one of them, when solved, generates peace.

The author invites us to leave aside the utopian aspect and work scientifically to find the most intelligent way to take one step at a time to perfect what has been found by permanently evaluating the process towards peace. Among his contributions, he proposed the theory of imperfect peace, which Moreno (2014) describes as the possibility of recognising in the same scenario the expressions of peace and war, a view that allows us to begin the transition that defends positive peace in its original conception.

Muñoz's (2001) definition of imperfect peace reflects:

All those situations in which we achieve the maximum possible peace in accordance with the initial social and personal conditions. In this sense, we could group under the denomination of imperfect peace all those experiences and spaces in which conflicts are regulated peacefully, that is, in which people and/or human groups choose to facilitate the satisfaction of the needs of others. We call it imperfect because, despite the peaceful management of disputes, it coexists with conflicts and some forms of violence (p. 4).

In Lederach's (2007) perspective, peace implies complexity and that is the reason why it involves conflict for people, to that extent he recommends thinking of it in terms of integration and not extremes, so that it can be part of the ever-changing and challenging lives of human beings, who desire it in different areas and scenarios of everyday life.

However, not all theories are committed to extremes, since Jiménez's (2014) theory of neutral peace is a proposal that seeks precisely to put an end to symbolic or cultural violence, those that generate division and exclusion, the author stresses that "this theory of peace consists of neutralising the violent elements (cultural and/or symbolic) that inhabit the cultural patterns that each society possesses to organise its relations between individuals, families, groups and society as a whole" (p.2). However, in the development of his vision he makes it explicit that he does not believe in neutrality, but recommends "to take sides, to be partial, to have a very concrete interest in working frontally and radically against them (cultural and/or symbolic violence)" (Jiménez, 2014, p.3).

This theory contrasts two notions that are usually present in different perspectives of peace, utopia and idealism, on the one hand, it motivates people to take action for peacebuilding, but on the other hand it recognises that in a mixed and hybrid society there will always be

conflicts, the important thing according to the author is to learn to resolve them in a tolerant, inclusive and peaceful way.

In this sense, this subject is a living and dynamic object of study in which researchers such as Chetail (2009) recognise a recent development that began only after the middle of the 20th century, as well as a profoundly reflexive character that leads to a review of their interests, given that:

Peace studies, together with the explicitness of the gender biases implicit in the supposedly neutral methodology of modern science, the recovery of indigenous knowledge subjected to the power of the knowledge of that science considered unique and universal, and postmodern critiques of Modernity, produce a convulsion in the notion of science inherited from Modernity, which helps us to understand ourselves in different ways about the multiple ways in which human beings can unlearn wars, violence and exclusions and learn to make peace (Martínez, 2000, p. 51).

The number of influences and problematic realities are always challenging and transforming the notion of peace, therefore, the conjunction of all the theories developed in this point are the ones that allow us to define it as a living ideal that leaves no one indifferent, neither victims nor perpetrators, as it is presented as one of the objectives that have always and continue to move the world.

The theoretical horizon traced by social representations

The publication in 1961 of Serge Moscovici's doctoral thesis, "Psychoanalysis, its image and its public", initiated the Theory of Social Representations (TRS). In this work, Moscovici explains the transformation that scientific thought undergoes when it is socially disseminated through common sense thinking.

Social representations are conceptualised by Moscovici as "cognitive systems with a logic and language of their own (...) They do not represent simple opinions, images or attitudes in relation to some object, but theories and areas of knowledge for the discovery and organisation of reality" (Moscovici, 1961, p.13, cited in Materán, 2008, p.244), in his line of thought they fulfil a double function, the first is to help people in the organisation of their thoughts and references, the second consists in providing them with a common code that favours their interactions and communication.

Moscovici (1979) establishes three types of dimensions or components of social representation: attitude, information and the field of representation. These dimensions vary depending on the classes and groups into which society is divided, which determine this complex cognitive system made up of opinions, beliefs, positions, evaluations, etc. that can

be held on a particular subject. Attitude defines "the overall orientation in relation to the object of representation" (Moscovici, 1979, p. 31).

Likewise, according to Araya (2002), the attitudinal component refers:

The most affective aspect of the representation, being the emotional reaction to the object or event. It is the most primitive and resistant element of representations and is always present, even if the other elements are not. That is, a person or a group can have an emotional reaction without the need for further information about a particular fact (p.40).

The second dimension, information, is related to the way in which each group in society organises and structures the knowledge related to a certain object or phenomenon (Moscovici, 1979). In some cases, this organisation is coherent and complete, in other cases the information is scarce or too dispersed, and in others it is practically non-existent.

The nature of the information and knowledge available about an event depends considerably on membership of a particular social group, because it is the cultural and normative criteria of each group that discriminate and select relevant information for individuals, as indicated above when describing the process of objectification.

Finally, the field of representation refers to the particular structure and hierarchy of the elements of the representation, the way in which the components are arranged to give meaning and significance to the object or phenomenon under study. A fundamental component of this field of representation is the figurative nucleus because it fulfils two functions: organising and giving meaning to the elements of the representation.

In Moscovici's perspective, representation is shaped by images, language and situations, and when it is not consciously identified it is presented as a social reflex, while when it is assimilated as something external it implies a remodelling of elements and visions, which come from social interactions. "After all, it produces and determines behaviours, because at the same time it defines the nature of the stimuli that surround us and provoke us, and the meaning of the responses we should give them" (Moscovici, 1979, p.16). In short, representations can be conceived of as a form of knowledge that arises through the reworking of the links and communications between people.

The hermeneutic approach to pedagogical practice

However, in the study of pedagogical practice carried out from the theoretical and research development in the specialisation and master's degree in pedagogical practice, and the proposal for a doctorate in education, it is understood that practice is not exhausted in the work of the teacher and therefore must be thought from other places (Urbina, 2018). Today's

teachers must approach their work from a plurality of perspectives. They must be up-to-date in epistemological, methodological and theoretical issues, so that they can provide their students with elements to assume a critical perspective.

A hermeneutic look at the pedagogical practice proposed from the work of the UFPS has required initiating an approach from the Theory of Social Practices (TPS), which groups together "those theories that define them as the fundamental component of the social world" (Aristía, 2017, p. 221).

From the TPS, it "places practice as the main unit of compression and generation of the social world" (Aristía, 2017, p.223). This theory seeks to focus the axis of analysis on the dynamics of practices, breaking with the individual/structure dichotomy, since practices are immersed in individual action and in the capacity of institutions to influence the world, they are a product of it (Aristía, 2017).

In order to approach the TPS, it is important to begin by approaching a definition of practices that Schatzki understands as "nexuses of ways of saying and doing that have a certain spatial and temporal dispersion" (1996, p.89, in Aristía, 2017, p.221), which are constituted by three fundamental elements: competences, meanings and materialities.

Practice is a routinised form of behaviour that is composed of different interconnected elements: bodily activities, mental activities, objects and use, and other underlying forms of knowledge such as meanings, know-how, emotions and motivations (...) practice forms a unity whose existence depends on the specific interconnectedness between these different elements (Reckwitz, 2002, p. 249).

In this sense, practice is a form of activity located in a time and space that allows it to be identified as a unit, and which is made up of at least three elements: bodily (what the body does), mental (senses and meanings of what is done) and material (objects of the performance).

Shove et al. (2012) propose "understanding practices as ways of doing and/or saying that arise from the spatio-temporal interrelation of three elements: competences, meaning and materialities" (Aristía, 2017, p. 224). These elements are defined below:

- Competences: "set of practical knowledge and skills (know-how) that make it possible to carry out a practice" (Aristía, 2017, p.224). It implies knowing how to carry out a practice and how to evaluate the same practice carried out by others. Competences are associated with the bodily, i.e. they are mechanised and often

performed without reflection. In certain practices, competences are established in manuals that allow their mechanical execution and their permanence over time.

- Sense: "a broad set of tele-affective aspects, valuations and cultural repertoires on which the meaning and necessity of a practice is established for those who carry it out" (Aristía, 2017, p.225). Meaning allows activities to be valued, gathering the different meanings and emotions that are associated with a particular practice.
- Materialities: "encompass the totality of tools, infrastructures and resources that participate in the realisation of a practice" (Aristía, 2017, p.225). Materiality constitutes the possibility of existence and transformation of the practice, as they enable some forms of execution and hinder others (e.g. technological resources existing in the classroom for the development of a class).

Aristía's (2017) interpretation of this triad is that "practices exist when these three elements actively coexist and cease to do so when any of these elements disappears or changes substantially, making the practice's existence impossible" (p. 225).

Methodological Horizon

This research aims to explore the relationship between young people's representations of peace in relation to the reality of the social and educational context in which they find themselves, which is characterised by violence. In this sense, a flexible, emergent and inductive approach is required for the development of the process.

Approach

In order to understand young people's social representations of peace, it was necessary to approach this research from a qualitative approach. In this sense, for Hernández, Fernández and Baptista (2010) this approach allows "understanding and deepening the phenomena, exploring them from the perspective of the participants in a natural environment and in relation to the context" (p. 12).

Research Method

It assumes a hermeneutic exercise that according to Ferraris (1998) "does not deal with objects, but with linguistic objectivations of the spirit, which is deposited in texts and documents, and that the interpreter is called to reproduce in life, overcoming its initial state of alien, to finally recognize them as their own" (p.16). In other words, it places its object of study within the human sciences, since its intention is to understand the social representations of peace in order to contribute to the consolidation of a pedagogical practice for peace.

Research participants

The research participants are 13 young inhabitants of the Buena Vista II neighbourhood, who are part of the Empirical Arts Foundation, municipality of Villa del Rosario. The following table shows the coding assigned to each of them for the protection of their identity.

Table 1. Characteristics of the participants

Assigned code	Age	Gender	Schooling
E1	15 years	F	Eighth grade
E2	20 years	M	First semester of university
E3	20 years	M	Ninth grade
E4	19 years	M	Baccalaureate
E5	16 years	F	Tenth grade
E6	15 years	M	Ninth grade
E7	16 years	M	Tenth grade
E8	12 years	M	Sixth grade
E9	14 years	F	Seventh grade
E10	12 years	F	Seventh grade
E11	16 years	F	Eighth grade
E12	16 years	M	Ninth grade
E13	15 years	F	Ninth grade

Data collection: techniques and instruments

The techniques used for data collection were semi-structured interviews and non-participant observation:

The interview is defined by Díaz Bravo (2013) as "the interpersonal communication established between the researcher and the subject of study, in order to obtain verbal answers to the questions posed about the proposed problem" (para. 3). In the context of this research, the interview design is semi-structured and is based on a list of questions where the interviewer is free to introduce additional questions to specify concepts or expand the information on the intended topics (Hernandez 2015), it is more of a dialogue interview in the form of a conversation about peace that contains open-ended questions.

The design of the interview guides was based on the state of the art and the theoretical framework, and was validated by experts in the field, researchers from the GIESPPAZ group. The questions were divided into 6 blocks covering the components of social representations: context, information, field of representation, attitude, objectification and anchoring.

This form of non-participant observation is described by Hernandez et. al. (2010) as the search for interpretation in reality, however, in its non-participant variant the researcher assumes an attitude of presence, but without interfering in the actions or decisions taken by the research participants.

Analysis of the information

In this sense, for the analysis of the qualitative information, the Grounded Theory of Strauss and Corbin (2005) was used, which defines the coding of the information in three moments:

- Open coding: the results of the semi-structured interview were taken as data in text format that were read and compared line by line, in order to identify relevant facts that facilitated the grouping of the units of analysis. This exercise was carried out in an artisanal way through the use of colour coding.
- Axial coding: secondly, categories and subcategories were established through a reading matrix, in which it is possible to specify the emerging categories on social representations. In this phase, the emerging categories are consolidated and subsequently contrasted with the theoretical references.
- Selective coding: finally, the broad categories are selected into macro-categories, so as to facilitate a hermeneutic reading of the findings that enables triangulation between the participants' accounts, the researcher's analysis and the contributions of the theoretical references.

Findings

It includes an exercise that puts in dialogue the testimonies of the participants, with the conceptual and methodological elements, allowing an analysis of the central category "peace" in the light of the theory of social representations, which the young people of the Empirical Arts Foundation of the municipality of Villa del Rosario possess.

In this sense, the results describe the representations of peace that emerge from the application of grounded theory as a methodological process for the categorisation and systematic analysis of the participants' accounts, and their triangulation with the theoretical foundations of the research.

Consequently, 5 selective categories of social representation of peace emerge, which are named through the live codes of the participants, being approached and presented taking into account the dimensions of representation: information, field, attitude, objectification and anchoring.

It is each person who forms his or her own peace”

It refers to neutral peace to neutralise violence, it is a look at conflicts and social phenomena from the interdisciplinary analysis of social reality to "neutralise the violent elements that inhabit the cultural patterns that each society possesses to organise its relationships" (Jiménez, 2014, p.20), and encompasses the categories that originate in the internal dimension of the human being, which in the light of pedagogical practice configures elements of the meaning that the teacher imprints on his or her exercise, which implies recognising the importance of generating pedagogical situations in which the student experiences the tranquillity of the school as a protective scenario, love in a practice of "agape-pedagogy", forgiveness and reconciliation as practices of peaceful coexistence, harmony as a permanent element in the classroom, union promoted through teamwork and dialogue as a tool for conflict transformation.

Let the conflict end now”

It is understood as a negative peace in order to eliminate violence in educational contexts. From this negative representation of peace, it is understood that it has its origins in the studies carried out in the 20th century, marked by the context of the world wars, which required a theoretical reflection from the social sciences on the problem of world war conflicts (Jiménez, 2009). In this context, the proposal of negative peace arose, understood as the opposite of violence, and mainly associated with the absence of war.

This representation in the educational context is associated with the forms of school violence and the actors involved, assuming that in practice teachers must develop competencies so that their pedagogical work is not a vain repetition of a mechanised script lacking in reflection that sometimes reproduces practices of violence and exclusion that do not take into account the characteristics of populations, such as those affected by the armed conflict.

“We all have the right to be free”

Peace as culture, a possibility of life. It is important to consider that peace as culture, culture of peace or cultural peace have the same convergence despite their differences in naming. For Galtung (2003), cultural peace is defined as "those aspects of a culture that serve to justify direct peace and structural peace" (p.261), while UNESCO refers to the culture of peace as "a set of values, attitudes, traditions, behaviours and lifestyles" (Res. 53/243, 1999, p.2), and from the interpretation we make to the proposal of Muñoz (2010).

When we speak of peace as culture, we refer to the approach to a perspective that allows us to build an active, dynamic and achievable idea of peace, which allows us to act from ourselves as social subjects; a peace that is a path, method, mentality, pedagogy and paradigm (Urbina et al., 2017, p. 9).

This peace implies that teachers redefine their practice in terms of behaviour and/or actions that promote human rights and the fundamental freedoms of students, i.e. the possibility of expressing themselves freely within the framework of relationships mediated by respect and acceptance of differences.

“Peace is art”

Art as a possibility for peace is a category in which young people state that Peace is art and encompasses the different artistic expressions that young people carry out in their environment, materialising in a social dimension through painting, music, dance, poetry and other forms of expression associated with young people's abilities.

From the reflections of some authors on peace, there are some relationships in the approaches to peace from art. In this respect, Jiménez (2009) states that:

As active human beings, we must vindicate the use of words, language, art, science, thought, etc., as the main instruments for creating increasingly fairer spaces for coexistence, where dialogue under conditions of symmetry is increasingly a fact to be taken into consideration (Tortosa, 2018, as cited in Jiménez, 2009, p. 175).

In other words, from this point of view, art is a way of generating spaces for peaceful coexistence. Hicks (1999) mentions that peace education has generally been approached from three points of view: one in which war and armed conflict are factors that limit social well-being; another in which it is assumed that violence is not inevitable in human nature; and finally the view that peace can be learned at the social level. It is for this reason that the relevance of studying the way in which young people's artistic experiences of peace can be learned as an element to be incorporated into the materialities and competencies of the pedagogical practice of teachers who take on the challenge of educating for peace is highlighted.

“We must build peace”

Peace as transformative action is a category that emerges in the analysis of the young people's stories, comprising the subcategories of generating change, building peace in the family, building peace in the neighbourhood, building peace with young people, building peace through dialogue, building peace through sport and building peace through art.

Assuming peace as a transformative action poses the challenge of studying peace as a possibility to develop a pedagogical strategy that is not only innovative but also consistent with the needs of the population to be intervened, which requires the analysis of the intersubjectivities that mediate this process. In other words, if talking about peace implies for a child or young person the protagonism of his or her home and family, then it is also necessary to work with the other members of the family nucleus in order to decipher their

collective representation of peace. Therefore, the idea of peace as a social construction is reinforced, because it is within the family and its relationships that particular ways of living and feeling peace are configured.

Conclusions

Approaching pedagogical practice from a hermeneutic perspective is not the negation of the elements of the triad Subject, Knowledge, Institution proposed by the group of histories of pedagogical practices, nor is it the negation of carrying out the study outside the framework of an educational institution; these contributions are advances for the understanding of a teacher who, being a subject of practice, assumes his social role that demands an understanding of the reality in which the students live.

However, the role of the teacher cannot be limited only to a comprehension exercise, but this reflection must lead to action in order to be transformed in terms of a practice that is relevant to the training of citizens committed to caring for others and for the home that is "common" to them.

Therefore, the social representations of peace of these young people show that the reflections and approaches that GIESPPAZ has already been addressing are not far from the reality and the way in which they represent it. For this reason, there is evidence of points of convergence between the proposal that emerges from the SRs and the principles of the Peace and Life Approach, highlighting the following aspects:

- Peace is real, it is lived and made tangible in human acts; it is created continuously from the abilities of each one, and is more subject to the attitude with which it is assumed than to the limitations of the available resources.
- Peace is not approached from a single epistemological stance; it is precisely the imperfection, the unfinished nature of the concept, which allows it to be assumed in everyday life, to be constructed on the social level.
- In the field of practice, the teacher should not feel solely responsible for the student's learning and mobilisation for peace, because starting from the basis of an internal dimension that assumes peace as a way of life, the autonomy of the subject of learning will always be necessary.
- It is essential for teachers to recognise the everyday knowledge and practices of young people as valid knowledge that allows for learning and unlearning, understanding that in the framework of peace education it is essential to get rid of prejudices.
- Pedagogy as an act of affection is necessary and conditioning in the challenge of recreating pedagogical practices for peace; it requires the mobilisation of the competences, senses and materialities of the teacher to connect body, mind and emotions in the pedagogical act.

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