EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION:

TOWARDS SUSTAINABLE PEACE IN SRI LANKA

$\mathbf{B}\mathbf{y}$

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ABSTRACT

Early childhood education offers various intersectional points for integrating enriching education into a developmental framework. In Sri Lanka, the term "early childhood care and development" (ECCD) has been used when designing programmes that support children's development, learning, health, nutrition and other features. Yet, in those categories, Peace Education has hardly been realized nor incorporated in a systematic way into peace building theory and practice. More specifically, Sri Lanka has largely overlooked the potential role of early childhood in contributing to the construction of sustainable peace. After almost two decades of the beginning of peace education programmes, a re-conceptualisation in peace education approaches is necessary in order to enter into a new phase of responsive pedagogy; more importantly, an integrated policy of peace education based on a broad understanding of early childhood is vital.

This thesis provides an understanding of how by incorporating early childhood education in its formal settings and implementing peace education within this stage, Sri Lanka's endeavours to foster peace are more likely to have lasting positive effects in the society. John Dewey and Maria Montessori's approaches to education are reviewed and integrated into a comprehensive framework for peace education. To complement this examination, the thesis presents a review on the definition of 'basic education' and the activities advocated by the National Policy on Education for Social Cohesion and Peace, thus placing early childhood education within the greater context of sustainable peace.

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국문초록

어린이 조기 교육: 스리랑카의 지속 가능한 평화를 향해서

어린이 조기 교육은 풍성한 교육을 개발의 틀로 통합하기 위한 다양한 교차점을 제공한다. 스리랑카에서 "어린이 조기 돌봄과 개발"이란 용어는 어린이들의 개발과 배움, 보건, 영양과 다른 특성들을 지원하는 프로그램을 만들 때 사용 되어 왔다. 그러나 그러한 범주 안에서 평화교육은 좀처럼 평화구축의 이론과 실제의 체계적인 방법으로 인식되거나편입되지 않았다. 좀 더 엄밀히 말하자면 스리랑카는 지속 가능한 평화를 건설함에 있어어린이 조기 교육의 잠재적 역할을 대부분 간과해왔다. 평화 교육 프로그램이 시작 된지거의 이십 년이 지나서야 반응 교육학의 새 장으로 들어서기 위한 평화 교육 접근의 재개념화가 필요하게 되었다. 더욱 중요한 것은 조기 교육의 폭넓은 이해에 기반한 평화교육 정책의 통합된 정책이 필수적이라는 것이다.

본 논문은 어린이 조기 교육을 어떻게 공식적인 지정이 되도록 구체화하고 평화 교육을 이 범주 내에서 실행할 것인가에 대한 이해를 제공한다. 스리랑카의 평화를 촉진하기 위한 노력은 사회에서 긍정적인 영향을 지속해 온 것처럼 보인다. 존 듀이와 마리아 몬테소리의 교육에 대한 접근이 검토되었고 평화 교육을 위한 종합적인 틀로 통합하였다. 이러한 고찰을 달성하기 위해 본 논문은 '기초 교육'의 정의와 사회적 결속과 평화를 위한 국가 교육정책에 의해 주창된 활동을 검토하고 지속 가능한 평화라는 큰 맥락 내에 어린이 조기 교육을 제시 한다.

CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

The Democratic Socialist Republic of Sri Lanka (internationally known as Ceylon before 1972) is an island in the Indian Ocean located to the south of the Indian subcontinent with a population of approximately 19.5 million people and a long history of multi-ethnic and multi-religious tradition.

There are three primary ethnic groups: the majority who are Sinhalese (74%) followed by Sri Lankan Tamils (12.6%) and Indian Tamils (5.5%). Other groups include Moors, Malays, Burghers (of Portuguese & Dutch descent) and others (7.9%). Sri Lanka is a multi-religious country, incorporating four main religions: Buddhists (69.3%), Hindus (15.5%), (Muslims 7.6%), and Christians (7.5%). Language wise, Sinhala and Tamil are recognized as official languages while English is widely spoken throughout the country. According to the last Census Report in 2001, the Sinhalese majority mostly Buddhist is concentrated in the southern part of the country; Tamils, predominantly Hindus live in the North and Eastern Provinces; while the followers of Islam religion predominate in the Eastern provinces since large proportion of Moors are living there.²

1.1 HISTORY OF THE CONFLICT

¹ *Sri Lanka at a Glance.* (2009, April 23). Retrieved April 29, 2009, from Government of Sri Lanka Web Portal: http://www.gov.lk/info/index.asp?mi=19&xp=0&xi=62&o=0&t=0

² Population and Housing Statistics. (2008, June 26). Retrieved April 29, 2009, from Department of Census and Statistics – Sri Lanka Website: http://www.statistics.gov.lk/PopHouSat/index.asp

The history and cultural heritage of Sri Lanka covers more than 2,000 years; documented history began with the arrival of the Aryans from India, from where Sri Lanka developed its own culture, language, art, and architecture. The Sinhalese migrated to the Island from North India in approximately 500 B.C.; two centuries later Buddhism was introduced to Sri Lanka becoming an integral part of the Sinhalese culture (Richardson, 2005: 24), and playing a major role in the development of a new magnificent civilization. Likewise, Tamils were in Sri Lanka as early as 3rd century B.C. Descended from the Arab traders who settled on the island during the 8th century, Moors contributed to the multi-religious character of Ceylon with the introduction of Islam (Richardson, 2005: 31). Once Hinduism displaced Buddhism in Southern India during the 5th century, aggressive Indian states constantly invaded the island bringing substantial amounts of people to the country and establishing a permanent Tamil Kingdom in the North by the 13th century³. Tamil rule was supplanted by the 16th century, when Portuguese traders established control and initiated a process of Evangelization. In the mid 1700s, the Dutch occupied the country for more than one century until 1796, when the British established their rule over the whole island (Richardson, 2005: 27). Indian Tamils began a new journey in Sri Lanka when they were brought from India by the British to work in the newly introduced tea and rubber plantations (Richardson, 2005: 29). Colombo was established as the administrative centre, and

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³ Similar to Tutsis under European rule, Tamils were given social and economic privileges previous to Sri Lanka's independence; the British privileged the Tamils over the Sinhalese as well as Europeans raised the status of the Tutsis over the Hutus during colonialism. As a result, both, Hutus and Sinhalese showed grievances against Tutsis and Tamils respectively; after independence, the new rulers were chosen from the Hutus and Sinhalese with the Tutsis and Tamils becoming the groups that faced discrimination. Belgian favouritism towards Tutsis, triggered Hutu rejection and led to the genocide in 1994; likewise, Sinhalese resentment of privileges enjoyed by the Tamils during the colonial era in Sri Lanka prompted the discriminatory policies after Independence that in turn stimulated Tamil bitterness and the subsequent uprising. Colonial discrimination against Hutus and Sinhalese created a sense of belonging to a group that felt very much detached from the 'others'; this pervasive feeling gave rise to the Rwandan Patriotic Front, and the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam led by Tutsis and Tamils respectively.

the British established modern schools, colleges, roads and churches that brought Western-style education and culture to the native people. By the time of independence, both the Dutch and the British had already introduced in the island, a system that divided its people and identified the differences between Tamils and Sinhalese (Richardson, 2005: 27).

Sri Lanka became independent within the British Commonwealth of Nations, on February 4, 1948 (Richardson, 2005: 125). The country began as a free nation with what appeared to be extraordinarily good preconditions for a peaceful development scenario (Richardson, 2005: 50). In reality, during the sixty years since independence, Sri Lanka has been affected by an ethnic national conflict which degenerated into war in 1983. Fought between the government and the forces of militant Tamil nationalism, led by the Liberation Tigers of Tamil Eelam (LTTE), this war undermined the life of millions of Sri Lankans (Accord and Conciliation Resources, 1998: 5) Nevertheless, the conflict in Sri Lanka had a variety of causes and consequences that are strongly interconnected and should not be underestimated.

The LTTE had been trying to achieve Tamil self-determination in their own Tamil Eelam, or Tamil homeland in the northern and eastern regions where Sri Lankan Tamils have predominated for centuries. The war can be seen as an escalation of communal violence that broke out intermittently since independence due to government policies that favoured Sinhalese interests and culture (Winslow & Woost, 2004: 6). During pre-independence governments, Tamils benefited from a superior system of primary and secondary education established by Christian missionaries, which emphasized high-quality English language instruction. Young Tamils successfully accessed the limited openings at university and passed civil servant examinations with high marks. Consequently, as the colonial period drew to an end and during

the early years of independence, Tamils were disproportionately represented in professions and governments (Richardson, 2005: 27-28). Conversely, post-independence Sri Lanka has been characterized by the limitation of Tamil presence in education and as result in the professional life. The passing of the Official Language Act of July 1956 (Sinhala Only) was a major step towards defining Ceylon as a primarily Sinhala state. Under this legislation, Sinhala became the sole official language with clearly damaging implications for Tamil speakers (Accord and Conciliation Resources, 1998: 12). In fact, this was one of the first issues to evoke major conflict involving Sinhalese and Tamils since independence (Richardson, 2005: 128).

In the early 1970s, increasing numbers of Tamils felt the state considered them secondary citizens; as a consequence new militancy grew up within Tamil politics (Accord and Conciliation Resources, 1998: 14). After two decades of fighting, thousands of deaths and various efforts to achieve peace, including the unsuccessful Indian Peace Keeping Force and the attempt by Norwegian government to broker a peace agreement in 2001, a ceasefire agreement was signed in 2002 (Winslow & Woost, 2004: 7). However, since the withdrawal of the Agreement by the government in 2008⁴, the conflict intensified.

Today, after more than 25 years, the armed conflict finally came to a conclusion; yet, as Defence Secretary Gotabhaya Rajapaksa referred to the LTTE terrorism, "The war is like a cancer, even after curing a cancer, there is a period for radiation treatment". Likewise, treatment

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⁴ Government takes policy decision to abrogate failed CFA. (2008 January 3). Retrieved April 29, 2009, from Ministry of Defence, Public Security, Law & Order - Sri Lanka Website: http://www.defence.lk/new.asp?fname=20080102 12

⁵ Resentments in Sri Lanka Reflect Challenges to Peace. (2009 March 21). Retrieved April 29, 2009, from The New York Times Website: http://www.nytimes.com/2009/03/22/world/asia/22lanka.html

for a wounded country like Sri Lanka will take long time, and the results of it will only depend on the efforts taken to build sustainable peace.

1.2 OPPORTUNITIES FOR PEACE 2009

Early childhood education offers various intersectional points for integrating enriching education into a developmental framework. Early childhood programmes "should be comprehensive, focusing on all of the child's needs and encompassing health, nutrition and hygiene as well as cognitive and psycho-social development" (UNESCO, 2000: 15). In Sri Lanka, the term "early childhood care and development" (ECCD) has been used to refer to "early childhood care and education" (ECCE) when designing programmes that support children's development, learning, health, nutrition and other features described by UNESCO regarding ECCE (MoE, 2008: 17). Yet, in those categories, Peace Education has hardly been realized nor incorporated in a systematic way into peace building theory and practice. Generally speaking, an integrated policy of peace education based on a broad understanding of early childhood is lacking.

More specifically with regard to the peace education policies and documents reviewed, Sri Lanka has largely overlooked the potential role of early childhood in contributing to the construction of sustainable peace. Being Nation building and the establishment of a Sri Lankan identity in peace the fundamental purpose of the National Education system (Peiris, 2008); recognizing that schools not only prepare future citizens but can work immediately in and across communities to promote cohesion and understanding, sustaining a culture of peace and non-violence (MoE, 2008: 1); and acknowledging that early childhood is a period of great potential

for rapid conscious and sub-conscious learning never to be repeated in life⁶; it is indispensable for Sri Lanka to develop a policy that officially incorporates peace education programmes into early childhood education. This way peace education efforts in Sri Lanka will function as "preventive" agents of conflict, instead of as "corrective", as the current strategies carried out could be described.

The report is divided in five chapters:

- Chapter one identifies the underlying research problem and relates it to its broader context. First, an introduction to the conflict in Sri Lanka is given, so as to proceed with the opportunities for peace 2009. Based on that, the problem is narrowed down to focus on the potential of early childhood education as a tool to achieve the overall education national goals of national cohesion, national integrity, harmony and peace. Subsequently, the research questions, objectives, scope, and methodology of the study are presented.
- Chapter two is divided into two sections. The first part consists of a definition of the major concepts of the report and connects them to the Sri Lankan situation. The second part builds on a discussion of the two theoretical approaches that appear relevant so as to draw closer attention to the significance of early childhood for fostering peace in Sri Lanka. Based on the theoretical discussion, an integrated framework relevant to the current peace education context in the country is developed.
- Chapter three provides an account on Sri Lanka's education and peace education. It includes the background of the education system in order to proceed with the current situation of early childhood education and peace education.

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⁶ General Education Reforms of 1997.

- Chapter four builds on the relationship between peace and early childhood. The importance of widening the concept of 'basic education' is portrayed in order to illustrate how nation-building and a Sri Lankan identity can be more successfully developed when starting in early years. Subsequently, the activities for peace proposed in the National Policy on Education for Social Cohesion and Peace are reconsidered from an early childhood education perspective in order to present the contribution of this approach to the policy aims.
- In chapter five, the summary of the study, a set of recommendations, and the way forward are presented.

1.3 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM

As a result of the war Sri Lanka has suffered for more than two decades, peace education is a widely discussed concern. As Sri Lanka raises the world's attention each and every day anew the question of how to solve the conflict is part of the daily discourse and subject to a variety of studies. The Sri Lankan population's awareness of peace is affected by education action; some studies deal with educational peace building concentrating in basic schooling, and one of them devotes to the perceptions of peace education in Sri Lanka by different actors and their related actions (APCEIU, 2006: 20). The overall education policies in Sri Lanka aim at nation building through the promotion of national cohesion, national integrity, national unity, social justice, harmony and peace among other goals (MoE, 2008: 1). Nevertheless, the existing formal curriculum with peace related concepts caters to students in basic education, in particular from grades 6 to 11 (MoE, 2008: 8). Furthermore, the idea of early childhood peace education is not reflected in Sri Lankan national policies and strategies. To some extent this is because early childhood development is still not formal part of the Sri Lankan education system (The World

Bank, 2005: 8) and partly because Sri Lanka has a limited definition of early childhood age, which is five, in contrast with the international one, which is eight (MoE, 2008: 17). Despite the fact that much has been said about good practices and models of peace education in Sri Lanka; important educators in this field from other places have also identified peace education as an alternative curriculum in Early Childhood Education (Spodek & Brown, 1993 in Hinitz & Stomfay-Stitz, 1998: 3). To be sure, ideally peace education should begin with the youngest children (Hinitz, 1994; 1995 in Hinitz & Stomfay-Stitz, 1998: 3). Recognizing the significance of the first years of life as the foundation of subsequent human development, Sri Lanka is thus in need to broaden education policies and approaches that include early childhood education as a key to rebuilding society and preventing and overcoming future conflict. May those children become the next generation of people that improve the lives of other children and families in Sri Lanka. The study is particularly urgent as Sri Lankan president Mahinda Rajapaksa declared the end of the war in a speech to parliament on May 19th (The Economist, 2009) and the government will need to focus on immediate peace-building strategies.

1.4 OBJECTIVE AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The present report is concerned with contributing to broaden current formal peace education approaches in Sri Lanka. The main objective of the study is to explain the significance of early childhood education to increase the possibilities of sustainable peace in the country. In light of this, the report builds on the following question:

✓ Peace in Sri Lanka: does early childhood education matter?

The research question is operationalised through the following sub-questions, thus giving meaning to the 'potential of early childhood education for sustainable peace in Sri Lanka':

- ✓ What is education for independence and interdependence?
- ✓ How can a wider approach of 'basic education' contribute to peace?
- ✓ Can early childhood education contribute to social cohesion and national identity in Sri Lanka?
- ✓ What are the advantages and the challenges of this approach in Sri Lanka?

1.5 PURPOSE

The present study aims at the understanding of how by incorporating early childhood education in its formal settings and implementing peace education within this stage, Sri Lanka's endeavours to foster peace are more likely to have lasting positive effects in the society. The study is based on the assumption that early childhood education has the potential to lay the foundation for nation-building and the formation of a national identity. The knowledge generated through this work will be used to advocate and influence policy or decision makers about the potential of early childhood programmes to contribute to peace, cohesive and respectful societies.

1.6 SCOPE AND METHODOLOGY

Before proceeding this section of the study, two clarifying points must be made. First of all, although formal education systems may sometimes contribute to the outbreak of conflict through lack of adequate educational opportunities or through promulgation of stereotypes and militant

ideologies in the curriculum, they also play a critical role in building and maintaining peace before, during, and after armed conflict. Education not only lessens the impact of conflict by providing safe spaces and developmental opportunities for children, but it can also actively transform the roots of conflict and build peace (Dupuy, 2008: 9). Second, while early childhood care and education involves children's survival, growth, development and learning from birth to entry into primary school in formal, informal and non-formal surroundings, this report merely builds on the formal education context. Consequently, the overall approach of this study has been exploratory, focusing on the formal education setting to describe how through expanding the concept of basic education and approaching peace education from early childhood, Sri Lankan ongoing initiatives can make a major difference in building long-term, positive and sustainable peace. For the report, certain theoretical approaches were chosen: Based on John Dewey's philosophy of education in and for public interest (Hansen, 2006), the idea that "Interest in learning from all the contacts and encounters in life is the essential peace education" is behind this research. In addition, the study adopts Montessori's basic principle that education must start with the development of *independence* in the child in order to become fully mature intellectually and morally, and achieve true interdependence (Powell, 2001: 33). These approaches are linked to national education policies and initiatives, as well as UNESCO documents and assessments in order to explain the early childhood peace education feasibility. Furthermore, in order to make a meaningful approach of the study, a conceptual framework based on general ideas and specific attributes to Sri Lanka was developed.

CHAPTER TWO

CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK AND THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

2.1 CONCEPTUAL FRAMEWORK

2.1.1 SUSTAINABLE PEACE

The word "peace" may mean the absence of war to some while it describes the presence of social justice to others (Fountain, 1999: 4). As for this research, the concept of peace connects to the definition of the leading peace theorist and researcher Johan Galtung. He describes peace as the absence of violence, not only personal or direct but also structural or indirect violence. Hence, peace embraces the absence of personal violence or "negative peace" and the presence of social justice, described as "positive peace". Negative peace refers to the absence of war or physical/direct violence whereas positive peace relates to the presence of non-exploitative relationships or conditions of social and economic justice (Choue, 1999: 164).

At this point, I would like to refer to my interview with Dr. A.T. Ariyaratne, founder of the Sarvodaya Shramadana⁷ movement of Sri Lanka, as being able to listen to his vision, was one of the most rewarding experiences during my stay. When discussing the most important elements of peace, Dr. Ariyaratne expressed that we can experience "spiritual awakening" and develop "outer peace" by developing "inner peace" or spiritual, moral and cultural values. In order to

⁷ Sarvodaya is Sanskrit for "Awakening of All", and it constitutes Sri Lanka's most influential indigenous organisation with a development strategy and programme of its own. Based on

organisation with a development strategy and programme of its own. Based on Buddhist and Gandhian principles, Sarvodaya was founded in 1958 by Dr A. T. Ariyaratne and it currently operates in more than 15,000 villages through out the country, providing comprehensive development and conflict resolution programs as well as relief efforts in the war-torn areas. Sarvodaya is a national movement with global

linkages through which women and men learn how to motivate and organise people in their own villages to meet their basic human needs, ranging from a clean and adequate drinking-water supply to simple housing and sanitation, communications facilities, an energy supply, education and ways of satisfying spiritual and cultural needs.

enjoy inner peace, human beings need "spiritual development" which is characterized by the development of approaches in the mind where negative thoughts about other people are not allowed. Furthermore, it is only by having a mind that is not conditioned by outside energies and by maintaining the five senses under full control that men can improve this capacity. More significantly, this spiritual development allows individuals to experience spiritual awakening, they become full of compassion and avoid conflict with others; hence, outer peace takes place, their relationships are improved and society enjoys a better social, economic and political life. Dr Ariyaratne concluded with the following statement: "it is unfortunate that human beings don't have those values because the lack of them is the cause of all disturbances" (Ariyaratne A. T., 2009).

In spite of the vast number of agreements, conventions, and meetings the world has witnessed, humanity has yet not been able to enjoy true peace, that "positive peace" the entire world strives for, but one we still do not know how in reality looks like. One could mention endless movements and approaches through out history that have attempted to enhance peace; however, perhaps we have forgotten that peace doesn't mean throwing oneself to activism without being in peace with the own-self. More specifically, what humankind has missed is the fact that in order to campaign for world peace one should start not by conquering or proclaiming it but by discovering it over and over again, gradually and accordingly to our changing circumstances. Increasing ethnic, economic, political, religious and social conflicts, and humankind's inability to effectively respond to them shows us that peace is not a given; rather, peace is like walking and running, in order to perform the latter, one should discover and master those skills that will allow us to develop further. What's more, peace is probably the most important aptitude human beings should ascertain in life, an aptitude that needs to be constantly

learned, experienced and created anew, and the sooner the better, because the ability to create that peace may be the line between extinction and survival.

2.1.2 EDUCATION

For the purpose of this report, education is "a powerful means of changing human psyche" (Balasooria, 2008) and implies any process whether in schools or in informal or non-formal educational contexts that develops in children or adults the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values leading to behaviour change (Fountain, 1999: 3). Furthermore, as the largest and most established non-governmental organization in Sri Lanka, it is important for this study to mention Sarvodaya's perception of an "educated community":

"An educated community understands its problems and challenges and analyses the factors – social, economic and political that caused them. They thus feel a real need within themselves to solve them, and for this purpose they need to organize themselves and rise as a force" (Sarvodaya, 2008: 2).

2.1.3 PEACE EDUCATION

This review draws from the definition of Ronald D. Laing cited by peace educator and activist Aluthgama Balasooria at the Sub-regional Consultation on Development of EIU Policy 2008: "Peace education is an attempt to respond to conflict and violence on scales ranging from global and national to the local and personal. It is about exploring ways of creating more just and sustainable futures". Balasooria's (2008) interpretation is closely linked to the purpose of this paper: "...it [peace education] is an attempt to inculcate nonviolent ways of behaviour, of conflict resolution, of communication in the coming generation. In essence, peace education's

function is to build a peace consciousness in children. It embraces all basic peace values, love, fairness, cooperation and reverence for human family and all forms of life on earth..."

A variety of terms are used by different countries to describe the various initiatives referred to peace education. The approach to peace education programmes is generally determined by local cultural and political contexts of each country, as well as by the scope and goals of the programme. Some of these terms include peace building in schools, education for peace, global education, education for intercultural understanding, values for life, multicultural education, etc. (Fountain, 1999: 4); as for Sri Lanka, peace education -most recently encompassed in the National Policy on Education for Social Cohesion and Peace-points out the need for the recognition of the multicultural situation of the country and the formation of a united society that contributes to build the Nation and lives in harmony and peace. Moreover, it reflects the need to provide peace education initiatives in the country with coherence and coordination (MoE, 2008).

2.1.4 EARLY CHILDHOOD

UNESCO defines early childhood as the period from birth to 8 years old (UNESCO, 2009). Furthermore, UNICEF recalls that "what happens – or doesn't happen – to children in the earliest years of their lives is of critical importance, both to their immediate well-being and to their future" (UNICEF, 2007). In Sri Lanka, early childhood is defined as the period of child's life from conception to age five (MoE, 2008: 17). Sri Lanka's upper limit of early childhood differs from the international one, which is eight.

2.1.5 EARLY CHILDHOOD CARE AND EDUCATION

According to UNESCO, "Early Childhood Care and Education supports children's survival, growth, development and learning – including health, nutrition and hygiene, and cognitive, social, physical and emotional development – from birth to entry into primary school in formal, informal and non formal settings". ECCE is often provided in conjunction with government institutions, non-governmental organizations, private providers, communities and families. ECCE programmes range from parenting programmes to community-based child care, centre-based provision and formal pre-primary education and typically target two age groups: children under 3 and those from age 3 to primary school entry – six to eight (UNESCO, 2006: 15). As mentioned before, Sri Lanka draws on the term "early childhood care and development" (ECCD) when referring to "early childhood care and education" (ECCE) programmes, as it is commonly used by UNESCO.

There is not one particular system of education identified as 'the right one'; different outlooks are instead important when attempting to educate for peace. The study in hand thus links Western definitions with the Sri Lankan context so as to provide a suitable approach to peace education with a perspective that is rooted within a Western tradition and that is worldwide accepted, and a perspective that is characteristic to Sri Lanka's vision of development of inner peace and consciousness in order to rise moving forces for change. These perspectives are not intended to appear as more relevant than others; however, it does mean that they are paramount to Sri Lanka's situation, and thus valid for the purposes of this study.

2.2 THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

When looking at the existing programmes of peace education, it is undeniable that great efforts have been made by humanity in order bring peace to our lives. On the other hand, it is also unquestionable that peace education is facing great challenges and complexities due to the ever

changing conditions of the world. As for Sri Lanka, more than a decade has passed since the implementation of peace education programmes began. It is now time to look at this educational process from an alternative perspective. A re-conceptualisation in peace education approaches is justified in order to enter into a new phase of responsive pedagogy. This study is not only concerned with knowledge but also with the changing nature of attitudes. To address the concerns of this paper, we need to conceptualise and apply educational and other theories relevant to the research. The two theorists who are guiding this work are John Dewey (1859-1952) and Maria Montessori (1870-1952).

John Dewey was an American philosopher whose moral belief was that "democracy is freedom"; thus, in order to educate for democracy the school had to become an institution in which the child is a member of a community life in which he experiences and feels that he participates, and to which he contributes. Moreover, the curriculum of the school was called 'occupation' or 'a mode of activity on the part of the child which reproduces, or runs parallel to some of work carried on in social life'; this way learning became meaningful and not just knowledge acquired without any contribution to the improvement of society (Westbrook, 1993). Maria Montessori, an Italian constructivist conceived children as active individuals eager for knowledge and prepared to learn, seeking perfection through reality, play and work (Edwards, 2002: 6). She called for a "New Education" where children were provided with a suitable environment in which to live and learn and where equal emphasis to internal and external development was given since they complemented each other. One of the key concepts of Montessori's educational system is 'independent activity' for self-realization whereby freedom is understood as going hand in hand with discipline and responsibility. Furthermore, education of children is to be conducted in a balanced manner from the beginning; otherwise the first

impressions will produce distorted or biased forms of understanding, expectations and behaviours which are then perpetuated (Röhrs, 1994).

In his Moral Principles of Education, Dewey states:

"I believe that the only true education comes through the stimulation of the child's powers by the demands of the social situations in which he finds himself. Through these demands he is stimulated to act as a member of a unity, to emerge from his original narrowness of action and feeling, and to conceive of himself, from the standpoint of the welfare of the group to which he belongs. Through the responses which others make to his own activities he comes to know what these mean in social terms. The value which they have is reflected back into them" (Dewey, My Pedagogic Creed, 1897).

This statement explains the decision to base the theoretical framework of this study on John Dewey's approach to Education in and for Public Interest (Hansen, 2006)⁸. A perception of education from this point of view guides *desire*, *effort*, and *action* in a way that human beings develop a shared habit of learning from all the contacts of life and the consequences of their actions; including those contacts that may have divergent interests. For Maria Montessori, the basic principle underlying the process of education must be the development of *independence* in the child, for it is only through achieving independence that the individual can become fully mature intellectually and morally, and achieve true interdependence (Powell, 2001: 33). Maria Montessori's approach to education will address the significance of enhancing human society by helping children realize their full potential as intelligent and creative persons.

2.2.1 JOHN DEWEY: EDUCATION FOR AND IN PUBLIC INTEREST

the humanistic roots of education in an era that for him, too often reduces education into a mere means to an end.

⁸ David Hansen is Professor of Philosophy and Education at Teachers College, Columbia University. He has been particularly interested in the moral dimensions of teaching and teacher education as part of a project to re-imagine

In spite of Sri Lanka's undertakings to enhance peace, it is significant to bear in mind that as peace processes begin, conflicts do not immediately or automatically come to end; instead, the strive for peace is a continuous process, one that does not end as the world never stops changing and humankind needs to constantly adjust to those changing circumstances. More specifically, whereas the armed conflict if finally over, every effort now should be directed to foster an environment where a wounded society can heal and have the opportunity to create a peaceful future for themselves and their children; a new opportunity to believe that a 'single Sri Lanka' can be real. In confronting these challenges that the future of Sri Lanka holds in store, education is a crucial asset in its attempt to attain the ideals of peace, national cohesion and social justice. Yet, mere knowledge will not reunite families, heal the wounds left, build bridges among people and create the peaceful country Sri Lankans are eager to see; what is more, eagerness is not enough for this task, but perseverance is crucial to make it happen. In this sense, education for and in public interest in Sri Lanka should be able to prepare future generations to improve everyone's conditions of living and to teach each member of the society to have a critical vision on arising problems of their country while acknowledging their significant role in taking appropriate decisions and actions needed to overcome those problems.

John Dewey views education as "that reconstruction or reorganization of experience which adds to the meaning of experience, and which increases ability to direct the course of subsequent experience" (Dewey, 1966: 76). Furthermore, in defining the moral responsibility of school as an institution erected by society, Dewey states that its particular role is "...to exercise a certain specific function in maintaining the life and advancing the welfare of society" (Dewey, 1909: 7). In other words, he tells us that the ultimate purpose of education is that of character-

forming (Dewey, 1909: 1-3) and its only moral aim is the harmonization of the individual and the society.

In differentiating between "moral ideas" and "ideas about morality"; Dewey describes as being moral those "...of any sort whatsoever which take effect in conduct and improve it, make it better than it otherwise would be". In addition, moral ideas "become a part of character and hence a part of the working motives of behaviour..." As for ideas about morality, he refers to them as information acquired being morally indifferent, immoral or moral, which "may remain as inert and ineffective as if they were so much knowledge about Egyptian archaeology..." Moreover, Dewey emphasises that "there is nothing in the nature of ideas about morality, of information about honesty or purity or kindness which automatically transmutes such ideas into good character or good conduct" (Dewey, 1909: 1).

Dewey devotes a great deal of thought to moral education; however, we should not misunderstand his conception as the indoctrination of a set of qualities or traits perceived as to be good or positive. In his words, "ultimate moral motives and forces are nothing more or less than social intelligence—the power of observing and comprehending social situations,—and social power—trained capacities of control—at work in the service of social interest and aims" (Dewey, 1909: 42). Therefore, any action whose aim is directed towards the well-being of society is without doubt moral in essence; and it is through education that the greatest number of ideas acquired by children and youth are acquired in such a vital way that they become *moving ideas, motive-forces in guidance of conduct* (Dewey, 1909: 1).

When looking at society, it is always the case that men are part of one or another association; any claim that one does not belong to any certain groups is very unlikely. In spite of this, the fact that associations are open to different groups of people does not make them what

Dewey calls *public*. For Dewey, the *public* evolves, goes forward; and it comes into being when the consequences of human activity in any particular group or association spill out beyond those local social boundaries and affect people elsewhere, and when the affected people take note of these consequences and seek to respond to them (Hansen, 2006: 2). Moreover, as Giarelli & Giarelli state, in Dewey's view "...the *public* sphere devolves into endless disputes among particular interests, and the forces of corporation fill the void"; therefore he urges the development of a new kind of knowing, a public science, a knowledge not of the public but rather by and for the public (Giarelli & Giarelli, 1996: 21). This leads us to realize that what Dewey calls public is not something static, rather it is a changing process that comes into existence only when there is interaction among human beings, and when this every-day interaction addresses and looks after different interests even if they are conflicting each other.

In this sense, Dewey distinguishes between *interests* and *interest*; referring to the former as objects of possessions and to the term *interest* as an attitude or disposition which is bound up in the completion of an activity or undertaking. Thus, *interest* is regarded as a movement or process that is always forward-looking, and yet also potentially generative in meaning and consequence as persons seek to bring activity to fulfilment; what is more, it is not a starting point or precondition for activity, and nor it is an outcome per se (Hansen, 2006: 3). Hence, it is of great importance to understand that whereas men have different interests, interest is an attitude or a process that does not bring tension among human beings, and it is precisely this interest that will define and guide their actions. Interest names a process of engagement as individuals or groups move to completion of a meaningful activity. Moreover, Dewey calls "the interest in learning from all the contacts of life, the essential moral interest". The term "moral" captures the sense of commitment and concern implied in an interest in learning from all one's contacts or

encounters. To learn from all the contacts one has, means not just being a spectator and looking on; rather, such learning necessitates participating, speaking up, sharing views and perceptions; hence, to learn from all the manifold contacts and consequences of human life requires a disposition to inquiry (Hansen, 2006: 4).

When bringing together both terms, public and interest, public interest then conveys an attitude or disposition, that both emerges from and is enacted by human beings seeking to bring activity to a meaningful completion; it is always emergent, evolving, developing, coming and going (Hansen, 2006: 3). In summary, for Dewey public interest is neither a claim, opinion, belief, nor a standpoint, position, or platform; rather, public interest constitutes a living, dynamic process that revolves around a concern for the very next moment of associated human life. Hence, Dewey's closing sentence to his book Democracy and Education: "Interest in learning from all the contacts and encounters in life is the essential public interest" touches upon the significance in Dewey's philosophy of an education in and for public (Hansen, 2006: 5). As this study is grounded in Dewey's philosophy, it follows that "Interest in learning from all the contacts and encounters in life is the essential peace education".

2.2.2 MARIA MONTESSORI: EDUCATION FOR INDEPENDENCE AND INTERDEPENDENCE

As a new era starts in Sri Lanka, some of the most urgent needs such as food, vaccinations, medicines and housing, are to be immediately met; yet, the sole silence of guns and the provision of the most basic supplies are not enough to ensure nation-building. After more than two decades of war were brought to an end and despite abundant endeavours for peace, the question put forward is how can Sri Lankans live in harmony in a 'single Sri Lanka', when individuals have

for long not managed to live together in a country to which they all naturally belong? As previously mentioned, education for and in public interest is essential to enhance those 'moving forces' that will enable individuals to overcome difficulties and act as contributing members of society when realising that their role is fundamental for a harmonious future. In other words, education should provide children with the necessary means to learn to know, learn to do, learn to live together and learn to be; further, it is probably time for Sri Lanka to reconsider that though the first steps on the course toward peace will not rapidly show significant changes, they will leave profound impressions with great impact in the future of the country. In this sense, education for independence and interdependence is paramount for it is only children able to recognise and make proper use of their abilities, those who will lay down the basis for a peaceful country that up to now elder generations have not succeeded to place. Moreover, an approach to education from this perspective, embraces the development of children's "heads, hearts and hands", adopted long time ago within the Sri Lankan education framework, which at this time represents an utmost matter to be taken into account.

Maria Montessori saw development as a sequence of six years periods, each with its own particular sensitivities (Edwards, 2002: 6); the first plane is birth to age six; the second plane, age six to puberty; the third plane, puberty to age eighteen; and the fourth place, age eighteen to twenty four. (Baker, 2001: 19). Among these stages, she regarded infancy as the critical phase in the evolution of the individual in which the basis for all subsequent development is laid (Röhrs, 1994: 1). Moreover, it is in the first years of life that each human child creates his or her unique own intelligence through an active interchange between the environment and the child's tendencies to explore, reason, imagine and create (Haines, 2000: 3).

In Montessori's approach to education, the central principle is the development of "independence" in the child, for it is only through achieving independence that the individual achieves true interdependence (Powell, 2001: 33). As human relationships presuppose entities to interrelate, the way child deals with others will depend upon what kind of individual the child is; hence, children need first to be educated for self-mastery, for individual ends, and then social cohesion and group ends will naturally follow (Berliner, 1974: 301). The key to fulfil this process and the necessary foundation of an organized society is *freedom*; the child needs freedom to act without help from others and become aware of himself as an autonomous being. According to Montessori, man seeks freedom not in order to go his own way, but in order to live in peace with others, and it is only through freedom that the human beings fully develop their personality and reveal their unconscious aspiration to struggle towards a more cooperative social order (Powell, 2001: 33).

On the other hand, Montessori also encouraged responsibility and *self-discipline* for children because freedom and discipline interact and neither one could be achieved without the other. The emphasis was on self-discipline, a challenge to become worthy of freedom rather than something imposed from the outside. Seen this way, Montessori conceived someone as disciplined when "he is his own master and therefore command himself to behave properly if a rule must be observed" (Röhrs, 1994: 4). Moreover, Montessori believed that "First glimmerings of *discipline* have their origin in work" when a child shows intense concentration and constancy in carrying out an activity that he is strongly interested in. According to her, "the first essential of the child's development," is *concentration*, and it is concentration that lays the basis for the development of an individual's character and consequent social behaviour. Children begin to respect the work of others and wait patiently for an object whereas before they may have

snatched it from a child; consequently, the changes brought about through *individual*, concentrated work promote healthy "habits of social life" (Haines, 2000: 5).

As for sociability, Montessori does not refer to the "social adjustment" of becoming a good member or a feeling of duty to some group, but rather it implies the capacity to become *independent* and also to respect the rights and value the independence of others (Berliner, 1974: 298). Thus, Montessori education is not to be reduced to freeing students in order to achieve higher cognitive levels; instead, its main purpose is to unite academic and social growth, using concretely intellectual endeavours as a tool to promote discipline and social awareness. An embryonic '*just community*' could then begin to develop and it would be created by the children themselves (Krogh, 1981: 45). Furthermore, during the period of three to six children begin to feel part of a group to which their activity contributes; hence, they no longer act thoughtlessly but begin to take an interest in the community and work on it to succeed for its benefit. "This unity born among the children which is produced by a spontaneous need, directed by an unconscious power, and vitalized by a social spirit," is what Montessori called *cohesion in the social unit* (Haines, 2000: 6).

2.2.3 INTEGRATING THE FRAMEWORKS: Public Interest and Independence for Peace Education in Sri Lanka

Despite official endeavours towards effective peace education, Sri Lankans, especially the young and children, have seen nothing but war their entire lives. Significant efforts, including peace education programmes and policies have been carried out with the aim of providing society with the necessary skills to deal with conflict situations, and enhance cohesion and peace. Furthermore, Sri Lankan officials have fully acknowledged the significant role schools play in

promoting cohesion and understanding as they have long-term effects in building and sustaining a culture of peace and non-violence (MoE, 2008: 1). More specifically, peace education is not the starting point or the end of a process in which peace will be automatically reflected; instead, peace education is the process itself, one that is always forward looking and generates engagement and outcomes. Hence, it is crucial for Sri Lankans to develop a sense of belongingness; so that a feeling that their contribution is central to peace in the country will engage them in this course of action. Yet, for people to commit in such process, it is necessary that the consciousness of their own situation becomes a source of motivation, a moving force that conducts their action towards a desired outcome. Likewise, for the self to be able to build on actions, means to be aware of his powers over conditions that largely depend upon himself, for it is only after mastering his own capacity that he will realize that his actions have an influence in bringing peace to society. In consideration of this, the following section undertakes an attempt to build on an integrated framework toward the rationale of early childhood peace education in Sri Lanka in light of Dewey's philosophy of education in and for public interest, and Maria Montessori approach to education for *independence*.

Dewey's educational philosophy in and for public interest refers primarily to education as a dynamic process of character-forming which only moral aim is to convey ideas that become moving forces in guidance of conduct for the well-being of the society. Put into his words, public interest is the "attitude or disposition that both emerges from and is enacted by human beings seeking to bring activity to a meaningful completion". Seen this way, education is a commitment or engagement that implies an interest or disposition in learning from all one's contacts or encounters in life. Furthermore, in order to bring this activity to a meaningful fruition and to contribute to the well-being of society, one needs to participate and interact with others even

when interests are divergent each other. Built upon Dewey's view of education in and for public interest, these statements lead this research to the proposal that "Interest in learning from all the contacts and encounters in life is the essential peace education". On the other hand, Maria Montessori calls for education for independence by which "normalisation through work" enables human beings construct social, moral, cognitive and emotional intelligence when their tendency to work manifests in the environment (Haines, 2000: 3), and allows them become contributing members of society (Shaefer, 2006). Moreover, the development of such independence should start during early childhood, as it is "during that period of their life when what is formed can never be shed or destroyed because this is the period of formation when the cornerstones of the human personality are definitely fixed" (Montessori, 1940). For Montessori (1940), it is only when education sets the stage for children to the realization and mastery of their own capabilities that it will become "a true and invincible armament for peace".

Bringing both approaches together leads to the proposal that for peace education to be successful in Sri Lanka, the development of skills and attitudes must start during early childhood. The mastery of capabilities and independence will lead children to make their own decisions, respect and recognise others' capabilities, contributing to harmony in the community. By approaching to peace education through Montessori's early childhood education this study does not imply that when this stage ends, the process does as well. More specifically, John Dewey and Montessori coincide in that the process continues throughout human life; however, according to

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⁹ The process of normalization occurs when development is proceeding normally. There are four characteristics that are signal that the process of normalisation is happening: Love to work, or the ability to choose work freely and find serenity and joy in doing it; concentration, when the child becomes absorbed in his work; self-discipline, which refers to the ability of persevering and carrying out activities that the child has freely begun; and sociability, when he is patient in getting what he wants, respects the work of others, helps, and shows sympathy and harmonious working relationships among members of the group (Shaefer, 2006).

Montessori it is during the first six years of life that the period of adaptation of human beings to society takes place. Whereas in the first three years the child forms a personality oriented to the world of human beings within his cultural environment and adapts to home and a limited area outside home, from age three to six his personality is oriented towards the world of human beings outside his cultural environment and the adaptation results in the child's feeling at home on the planet (Baker, 2001: 19). At the end of the four periods described by Montessori, at approximately the age of twenty-four, the individual has developed his personality and completed the acquisition of the aspects that will allow him to enter into society and take a mission (Baker, 2001: 19). Hence, in this study, Montessori's approach of education for independence and interdependence complements Dewey's education for public interest in the sense that individuals must first become conscious of their capabilities in order to be able to constantly engage in activities that contribute to the well-being of their society; for that consciousness is the key factor influencing individuals' behaviour; it is the way an individual thinks, his beliefs, faith, custom, attitudes, likes and dislikes, personal opinions and vision, all of which form the spirit of an individual. Furthermore, since individual's socialization takes place from birth to death, whatever he acquires from society will impact his consciousness; thus, education must start from birth, because the social contribution of the family, school, religion and culture towards the development of consciousness is enormous. Decisions made by individuals and the strength to carry them out is derived from consciousness; personal consciousness develops into community consciousness, community consciousness leads to national consciousness, and national consciousness leads to global consciousness (Sarvodaya, 2008: 1).

CHAPTER THREE

THE EDUCATION SYSTEM AND PEACE EDUCATION IN SRI LANKA

3.1 THE EDUCATION SYSTEM

Sri Lanka has a significant number of children below the age of 18 years, roughly 36 % of the population. Among them, infants correspond to 1.6%, children less than 4 years to 7.2% and the school age 5 to 18 years are 21% of the population (Sri Lanka Action Plan 2008-2015: 13). The long-lasting war had a critical impact on the lives of children; with increasing intolerance from parents who are affected by the situation, spanking of children is becoming a continuous feature since many children have become restless due to lack of educational facilities and play activities; what is more, the games they play have military connotations, which is nothing else but the consequence of the violent environment they have lived in during their short life. Leaving behind their homes, schools and friends, children have been deeply affected by conditions that have outgrown their youthful state (Tamil National, 2009). This section will provide a more detailed account of the education system in Sri Lanka in order to reveal the background against which peace education has taken place.

3.1.1 HISTORICAL OVERVIEW

Education in Sri Lanka has been a significant part of the culture ever since ancient times; Sri Lankan education system is widely known for its successful policies in providing widespread access to primary and secondary education and enabling the country to attain comparatively high human development levels for a low income economy (The World Bank, 2005: 1).

Ancient Period (543 BC - 1500 AD)

With the introduction of Buddhism to Sri Lanka 236 years after the death of Buddha, a firm foundation was laid for Buddhist Civilization and for a Buddhist Education System (Ministry of Education - Sri Lanka, 2007). Religion was an important feature of life, and education developed guided by strong religious purposes; it was mainly carried out by Buddhist clergy in Buddhist temples or monastic colleges known as Pirivenas (MoE, 2008: 5). As more monasteries or temples opened up in villages, more villagers started to come to listen to the Bhikkus¹⁰ preaching the Dhamma¹¹, and these temples became the institutions for primary education. During the Polonnaruwa period (1073 - 1215 AD) art, Sinhala, and other languages were included as well in the curriculum. Non formal education provided an education of a very high standard in subjects like weaving, metal work, gold and silver work, clay pottery, tailoring, architecture, town planning, construction of irrigation systems, art and painting, literature etc. By 1500 AD several Pirivenas became famous due to Bhikkus' contribution to the development of the Sinhala Language and Literature (Ministry of Education - Sri Lanka, 2007).

Colonial Era (1500 - 1948)

During colonial times, education was used as a means of conversion of religion. Throughout the Portuguese era (1505 - 1658 AD), the teachers were mainly Catholic Priests and the curriculum

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¹⁰ A Bhikku is a fully ordained male Buddhist monastic.

¹¹ The Dhamma may be seen as an ultimate and transcendent truth which is beyond worldly things; it is one of the Three Gems of Buddhism of which practitioners of Buddhism seek their lasting happiness. The three jewels of Buddhism are the Buddha (mind's perfection of enlightenment), the Dhamma (teachings and methods), and the Sangha (awakened beings who provide guidance and support). Dhamma refers both to the sayings of the Buddha, and to the later traditions of interpretation and addition that the various schools of Buddhism have developed to help explain and expand upon the Buddha's teachings given to various types of people based on their needs.

consisted of Catholic religion, reading, writing, arithmetic and languages (MoE, 2008: 5). The Dutch period (1658 - 1796 AD) was characterized by the set up of a well-organized system of primary schools to support the missionary efforts of the Dutch Reformed Church, the spread of Protestantism, and the establishment of a 'Normal School' to train teachers in Colombo through both, Sinhala and Tamil medium (Ministry of Education - Sri Lanka, 2007) as well as a Scholarichal Commission to supervise schools (MoE, 2008: 5).

Finally, it was during the British era (1796 - 1948) that the foundation for a mass education system was laid as the Government started its support to education in the 19th century. A major feature of education during this period was the dual system of schools where government assisted English medium schools, which were mainly for the elite, and a system of schools administered by the state in the local languages was intended for the common people (EFA National Plan 2004: 2). Moreover, with the adoption of the Donoughmore Constitution, ¹² several achievements were made from 1931 to 1947 with great impact on education, such as the provision of free education, student welfare measures, use of English medium education in government schools, enactment of the Education Ordinance No. 31 of 1939¹³ (MoE, 2008: 5), and the introduction of a curriculum for children which would develop their "heads, hearts and hands", recognizing that the education of the emotions were as important as the education of

¹² With the adoption of the recommendations of the Donoughmore Commission in 1931, universal suffrage was adopted and seven Executive Committees chaired by Sri Lankans were appointed as an experimental system of self-government (Russell & Matles, 2002: 119). Dr. C.W.W.Kannangara in charge of implementing the measures listed above was the first Chairman of the Executive Committee for Education and the country's first Minister of Education (Ministry of Education - Sri Lanka, 2007).

¹³ The Education Ordinance No. 31 of 1939 provides the principal legal basis for the system of education. This ordinance was amended in 1947 to address the needs that surfaced subsequently. It advocates compulsory school attendance, regulated under Regulation No. 1 of 1997 which requires schooling for all children between the ages of five to fourteen years (MoE, 2008: 7).

intellect for the well-being of the child (Ministry of Education - Sri Lanka, 2007). This approach emphasized the development of academic knowledge, aesthetic values and practical skills by introducing subjects such as agriculture, handicraft, art, music, and dancing to the curriculum. The impact of free education has been regarded as the greatest achievement of the nation and one of the most vital contributions that brought about a high quality of life to Sri Lanka in spite of its low-income (EFA National Plan 2004: 4). On the other hand, in contrast with its positive features, the modern education system that took shape under the British colonial administration was highly centralized, academically and examination oriented, and based on social class and language differentiation. Consequently, it left a legacy of socio-economic, ethnic and gender disparities in access to education (Jayaweera & Gunawardena, 2007: 18).

Post Independent Period

After Independence, succeeding governments continuously followed progressive policies in education; a variety of institutions were created, and several reforms were carried out in order to improve the quality of education (MoE, 2008: 6). The difficulties of educational planning caused by the system of dual control and the resulting lack of coordination were finally removed by the nationalization of schools in 1960 (Ministry of Education - Sri Lanka, 2007). In order to change the privileges of minorities, the District Quota System was introduced in 1974, establishing university entrance quotas for students in rural and educationally disadvantaged regions; however, these measures were considered as discriminatory by many Tamils (Cardozo, 2006: 39). In 1985, the National Institute of Education (NIE) was established in order to develop education through out the country and in 1991 the government established the National Education Commission (NEC) with the authority to formulate the National Education Policy

(MoE, 2008: 6). In 1990, zonal education offices were established in 92 'zones' in order to implement and evaluate national policy at the local level (Cardozo, 2006: 39). In 1997, the government decided to implement the national education policy formulated by the NEC and which includes provisions such as promoting access and equity in education, and improving the quality of education. After those reforms, the NEC made some recommendations such as increasing equitable access and improving the quality of basic and education, incorporated into the Education Sector Development Framework and Program 2006-2010 (ESDEP) of the Ministry of Education (MoE, 2008: 6). At the international level, Sri Lanka is also part of the UN-Declaration of Human Rights and Convention on the Rights of the Child-education as a human right, Millennium Development Goals, and "World Declaration on Education" and "Education for All" Jomtien (MoE, 2008: 7).

3.1.2 CURRENT SITUATION

At present, there are more than 10,000 schools in Sri Lanka; a majority government schools, private, Buddhist centres and international schools teaching in English medium (MoE, 2008: 9). For more than two decades now, the budget allocated to education has been around 3% of the GDP and about 8 to 9% of the annual Government expenditure (MoE, 2008: 13). Sri Lanka provides universal access to primary and secondary education, with 97% of children enrolled in grade 1 and nearly all of them completing grade 5 (The World Bank, 2005: 5). In addition, Sri Lanka is committed to the MDG plus of universal junior secondary education in consonance with its compulsory education requirement (Jayaweera & Gunawardena, 2007: 19). Nevertheless, the most important feature of education is not mere school attendance but learning, and school enrolment numbers can easily give a false impression of the efficiency of a particular education

system where learning achievement is often low; thus the quality of education is more important than mere access to schooling (Osttveit, 2000: 1).

The current education sector is organised into four major stages. The earliest, being that of Early Childhood Development, caters to children aged 3-5. This stage is mainly outside the formal government education system with nearly all pre-schools such as nurseries, kindergartens and Montessoris being in the private sector. The other 3 stages are primary (grades 1-5) and secondary (grades 6-13), both included within the general education framework; vocational training and technical education; and tertiary education and training respectively (The World Bank, 2005: 3). According to 2006 School Census, around 73% of the total student population receive instruction in Sinhala medium, 26% in Tamil and 1% study in English (MoE, 2008: 8).

While one of the existing challenges of education in countries seeking to forge a national identity is to maintain peace within their own borders, the main task of public schooling is to create "harmony" within a nation of divergent peoples. Moreover, when seen as an investment, education will benefit not only those who experience schooling, but more significantly the wider society (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000: 6). As stated in the Sub-regional Consultation on Development of Education for International Understanding Policy 2008, the core purpose of the overall National Education system is "Nation building and the establishment of a Sri Lankan identity through the promotion of national cohesion, national integrity, national unity harmony and peace, and recognizing the cultural diversity in Sri Lanka's plural society within a context of respect for human dignity" (Peiris, 2008). Nation building, generally characterized by the development of programmes directed toward developing electoral processes and establishing democratic governance, training security forces, providing humanitarian assistance and building

physical infrastructure (Vargas-Baron & Bernal, 2005: 8), entails the creation of democratic and secure states (Watson, 2004: 2). On the other hand, it has been acknowledged in Sri Lanka that peace building is also an essential component of nation building in a sense that sustainable peace "is secured by building political cultures, institutions and economies that are fully inclusive of young people of all ethnic and social backgrounds" ¹⁴. Moreover, the National Policy on Social Cohesion and Peace Education aims at raising citizens capable of: living in a multicultural society with democratic principles, respect and ensure other's rights, transform conflict, serve others without expectation, participate in the development of the world and protect Sri Lankan traditions, culture and values, among others (MoE, 2008: 4). Hence, education in Sri Lanka can contribute to achieve its endeavour to "nation building"; furthermore, education can also play an important role in what is called "building nationhood", that broadly defined means "ensuring that the citizens feel they belong to and can contribute to their country" (Vargas-Baron & Bernal, 2005: 8). When the sentiment of belongingness gives rise to a construction activity, it develops into the process of nation building (Atal, 1981: 6).

3.1.3 EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION

Early Childhood is defined in the Sri Lankan context as the period of child's life from conception to age five, and terms such as Preschools, Montessori schools, Day Care Centres and Crèches are frequently used when referring to Early Childhood Development Centres; likewise, Preschool teachers, ECCD officers, ECCD instructors, care givers and crèche workers describe ECCE care providers (MoE, 2008: 17). It has been recognised in Sri Lanka that "these institutions should not

¹⁴ Speeches: President Mahinda Rajapaksa addressing the Seventh Meeting of the Commonwealth Youth Ministers in Colombo. (2008, April 27). Retrieved April 30, 2009, from President Mahinda Rajapaksa Web site: http://www.president.gov.lk/speech_New.asp?Id=49

be places where something is taught to the child but centres with multiple activities for the overall development of personality including child's education"; moreover, those conducting preschool programmes should be properly trained in child development of children between 3-5 years of age (EFA National Plan 2004: 35).

While early childhood development is not officially part of the Sri Lankan general education system, policy makers have recognized the importance of integrating early childhood development into the scheme. Further, Sri Lanka has seen a rapid growth in early childhood education during the last decades: whereas in the 1970s the existence of 2,000 pre-schools and nurseries were estimated, by 2003, this number had increased to approximately 12,500 (The World Bank, 2005: 8). With an enrolment of nearly 90% of children in preschool education 15, this represents a major opportunity for future analysis and policy development for Sri Lanka.

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¹⁵ National Survey on Children who do not attend preschools (Children's Secretariat 2006). From Education for All Mid-Decade Assessment Report – Sri Lanka (2008). Ministry of Education – Sri Lanka.

Grade 1 Entrants with ECCE Experience

- Total: 90% F: 90% M: 80%
- Ethnicity:
 - ✓ Sinhala: F: 93% M: 93%
 - ✓ Muslim: F: 80% M: 80%
 - ✓ Tamil: F: 85% M: 84%
- Plantation Sector: F: 92% M: 56%
- Language of Instruction:
 - ✓ Sinhala: F: 93% M: 92%
 - Tamil: F: 81% M: 81%
- Location:
 - ✓ Urban: F: 96% M: 96%
 - ✓ Rural: F: 96% M: 89%

School Census (MoE) 2005. Source from Education for All Mid-decade Assessment – Sri Lanka, MoE

The data above illustrates that overall, more girls experience ECCE programmes; however, the disparity does not show great differences, except for the plantation sector, where the participation of boys in ECCE programmes is the lowest among all categories. Regarding ethnicity, gender is not a discriminatory factor; nevertheless, Tamil and Muslim children do not enjoy the same advantages than Sinhala with ECCE experiences. Similarly, language-wise, Tamil children are less likely to be taught in their mother tongue than Sinhala kids; this should be highly considered by authorities, since the expression of emotions and the development of social skills are tightly linked to that of language; in addition, children also make culture part of themselves through it (Ariyaratne, 2008). In general, mother tongue programmes have been recognized by UNESCO as more effective than those taught in the official language (UNESCO,

2006: 5). Lastly, urban and rural areas reveal little difference; however, the Central and North Western Provinces appear to have the highest rates of children who do not attend preschools. Likewise, among 28,384 children that do not attend preschools in Sri Lanka, poverty and the belief that preschool is not an important part of education come out as the main reasons that place children in disadvantage¹⁶.

More significantly, under the war situation the education system was very much deteriorated; in 2003 the National Institute of Education estimated a dropout rate of 15% in the conflict affected areas whereas dropout rates from schools in other regions were estimated officially to be overall around 4% (Jayaweera & Gunawardena, 2007: 21). Furthermore, among 65,000 school age children who were affected by the long-lasting war, approximately 7800 children who should have entered grade one have lost the chance of doing it this year, whereas 13,000 pre-school children will not be able to access education¹⁷. In general, children between the ages of 0 and 8 represent the highest percentage of those affected by crises; moreover, a great number of these children under five fail to reach their full potential in cognitive and socioemotional development. While further opportunities for skill growth and behaviour adaptation will occur throughout their lives, trying to build new skills or modify behaviour on a developmental foundation that was not adequately cultivated in the early years is difficult (INEE, 2009: 6). Given the importance that early childhood represents for subsequent development, these matters provide major indications to Sri Lankan policy makers about the need of urgent

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¹⁶ The National Survey to identify children who do not attend preschools (2006). From Education for All Middecade Assessment – Sri Lanka, MoE

¹⁷ Tamil National. (2009, March 30). *News flash: Psychological situation of civilians in Vanni is alarming*. Retrieved April 27, 2009, from Tamil National Website: http://tamilnational.com/news-flash/newsflash/491-report-of-psycho-social-coordinating-committee-in-vanni.html

measures. Without a doubt, education is a fundamental element towards the achievement of a peaceful society; nevertheless it is frequently overlooked that early childhood education set the stage for the development of all behaviours, features and skills, including those needed for peace. Considering the significant number of children that as a result of the war missed a critical education period in their lives, Sri Lanka faces a challenge not only of developing effective programmes for peace but also that of building on additional strategies in order to provide those children with the skill growth missed during the most important stage of stimulation in life.

The National objectives of the Early Childhood Care and Education in Sri Lanka are twofold:

- To create a qualitative and quantitative improvement in the programmes with the assistance of Non-Governmental Organizations under the leadership of the Government through a National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Education and,
- To provide Early Childhood Care and Education to every child so that the skills required at the admission to Grade One are acquired in a systematic manner and the foundation necessary for the balanced personality developed, could be fulfilled (EFA National Plan 2004: 31).

In 1990, the government approved the UNESCO Universal Convention on the rights of the child (EFA National Plan 2004: 25); however, comparing to general education, Sri Lanka's involvement in early childhood education is rather recent. Early Childhood education was for the first time given major significance under the General Reforms of 1997 where the Ministry of Educations recommended actions such as:

- Strengthening the Children's Secretariat and the Non-Formal Education Branch of the Ministry of Education.
- Designing programmes to create awareness in the public and among caregivers.
- Developing training programmes on early childhood development for mothers and caregivers with the participation of NGOs and local authorities.
- Setting up of more preschools for greater participation of children between 0-3 years in education.
- Making legislative provisions for the regulations of preschools.
- Designing basic curriculum guidelines for preschools.
- Setting up a Department of Early Childhood Education and a Child Study Centre in one of the Universities¹⁸.

While it is stated that "it would be counter-productive to bring it [pre-school education] under the control of the State System", there is as well, recognition that guidance and supervision are needed¹⁹. Yet, in spite of having attained the last recommendation, according to the Education for All Assessment Report 2008, the success of the reforms has been undermined due to the limited involvement of the MOE and Provincial and Provincial Ministries of Education (MoE, 2008: 18).

¹⁸ General Education Reforms of 1997.

¹⁹ Ibid.

Management of Early Childhood Care and Education in Sri Lanka

- Private Sector
- Government:
 - ✓ Local government authorities such as Municipal Councils and Urban Councils.
 - ✓ Ministry of Social Welfare conducts preschools for the government sector.
 - ✓ The Children's Secretariat formulates policies and programmes for ECCD, coordination with the
 provincial committees and follow up plans.
 - ✓ Divisional Councils conduct preschool and teacher training programmes.
 - ✓ Open University of Sri Lanka offers programs for the professional development of ECCE providers.
 - ✓ Plantation Trust Fund conducts training programmes for crèche workers.
- UNICEF: provides support in order to reach International level for ECCE (EFA National Plan 2004: 30).
- NGOs:
 - ✓ Sarvodaya Movement manages preschools in urban and rural low income sectors and provides short term training for their preschool teachers.

Source from Education for All Mid-decade Assessment – Sri Lanka, MoE

In keeping with the EFA goals, the former Ministry of Women's Empowerment and social welfare outlined a National Policy on Early Childhood Care and Development in 2004 (MoE, 2008: 19). The policy aims at ensuring that all children in early childhood receive equal opportunity to develop their full potential; moreover, the policy states as its mission, "...holistic growth and development of all children by providing a safe, caring and conducive environment in the homes and other settings, well supported by a comprehensive and integrated system of early childhood care and development services" (The World Bank, 2005: 82). In the same way, due to the increasing awareness of the importance of ECCE, various ministries in a joint effort prepared The National Plan of Action (NPA 2004-2008), which educational main objectives are to increase participation of children between 3-5 years in preschool education from 62% to 82%,

improve the quality of preschool education and train all preschool teachers, and create awareness of the needs of preschool children among stakeholders (MoE, 2008: 19).

According to the Ministry of Education, "good early childcare is a process aiming at improving readiness to formal school and enabling children to make optimal use of the educational opportunities provided improving their life chances to be productive citizens" (MoE, 2008: 20). Nevertheless, Sri Lanka has not established standards to identify or define "developmental readiness" (MoE, 2008: 23), and still stays behind in establishing connection between the curriculum of pre-school and primary education (The World Bank, 2005: 82). Having said that early childhood education is the key to building a great foundation for children's life, it is a major responsibility for Sri Lanka to fill this gap. In addition, it has been argued by policy makers and researchers that the quality of ECCD services in Sri Lanka is quite unsatisfactory. A UNICEF (2003) study indicates that the majority of ECCD centres included lack adequate physical facilities such as an appropriate building with enough space and appropriate furniture and play material. Similarly, only about 29% of teachers have school qualifications while just 17% of teachers receive any systematic training in ECCD. What is more, there is a prevalent tendency to follow the primary curriculum in pre-schools, rather than a curriculum appropriate for pre-primary aged children; centres which follow the play way method advocated by ECCD experts and developmentally appropriate curricula are small in number (The World Bank, 2005: 83). The lack of an appropriate curriculum for pre-schoolers, results not only in poor education at this stage but it can also be detrimental to children's education and development since the significance of social and motor skills, problem-solving, and a variety of non-cognitive skills such as sharing, team-working, etc. that are known to determine success in life are excluded.

With the rapid expansion of pre-schools in Sri Lanka, especially within the private sector, it is of great value to establish regulations, specifications on curriculum development needs, quality standards and appropriate measures to provide training to early childhood education caregivers. The Children's Secretariat has drawn upon some minimum requirements for registration for pre-schools, but these have not yet been implemented; in fact, it has also prepared a standard curriculum for pre-schools; however, it is currently only reference material due to the lack of supportive training and authority's supervision (The World Bank, 2005: 83). Furthermore, there is a lack of coordination between provincial policies and the National policy; although there is no significant difference between both of them, collaboration involving national and provincial authorities is required for the proper implementation of the National policy on ECCD (MoE, 2008: 23).

It is worth noting that Sri Lanka has undertaken a variety of efforts to improve the quality of ECCE; on the other hand, given that there is no government policy relating this field, there are high possibilities that teachers do not acquire adequate training and that a proper curriculum is not being widely implemented. More importantly, during the past years the minds of Sri Lankan children have been nourished by the spirit of conflict; in contrast, the spirit of peace has been lacking. With the beginning of a new era, it now the time to cultivate that strength and understand that children do not simply dream, but they imagine the realisation of those dreams in their future; whereas they recognise in their present life how adults have problems and how they live in a complex world - homes, neighbourhoods, communities, schools - they also dream and imagine that some day they are capable to overcome such obstacles. It is thus critical to realise that unless all children are supported in the acquirement of knowledge and abilities to understand the character of a nonviolent lifestyle, the enhancement of a peaceful country will be far more

difficult to achieve. As such, it is paramount to establish mechanisms to develop professional training and curriculum standards; in addition, a network of the institutions involved in the management and provision of early childhood education is to be created in order to ensure that all children participate in quality programmes that equally enhance their capacity to contribute to Sri Lanka's growth. What's more, recognising that children represent the future of humanity and acknowledging the necessity of peace, it seems right for Sri Lanka and everyone else to start working with those that will shape the future and not with those who have been already shaped by the past.

3.2 OVERVIEW OF PEACE EDUCATION

The impact of the long war in the country, ethnic disharmony and national disintegration correspond to some of the greatest challenges for Sri Lanka's education. For decades, children's minds have been damaged by the experience of war; their education has been disrupted and they have been recruited to engage in violence (Sarvodaya, 2008: 6). When a war finally ends after more than 25 years and thousands of deaths, the word 'peace' represents more than 'good intentions', and Sri Lanka recognises that although educational institutions cannot achieve social harmony on their own, they have long-term effects in building and maintaining peace (MoE, 2008: 1); likewise, students are to be sensitised to moral and social issues and to be alerted to a sense of social duty (Weeramantry, 2004: 390). Being a multi-cultural society, and after experiencing the trauma of ethnic conflict, learning to live together is one of the basic aims of Sri Lanka's education (EFA National Plan, 2004: 11). Moreover, since the choice of language used to describe peace education programmes is determined by local cultural and political sensitivities, as well as by the scope and objectives of the programme (Fountain, 1999: 4), in Sri

Lanka, the existing conditions and challenges have been most recently expressed in the National Policy on 'Education for Social Cohesion and Peace'. The Social Cohesion and Peace Education Unit (SCPEU) under the Ministry of Education, is a reflection of the significance of education in the acievement of national goals (MoE, 2008: 2).

The Ministry of Education and the National Institute of Education are the two institutions in charge of the formulation of policies and implementation of peace education throughout the country (Cardozo, 2006: 52). Likewise, UNESCO, National Programme Unit (NIPU), the basic Education Sector Programme (GTZ), and UNICEF in collaboration with these institutions, have conducted programmes from 1991 on education for peaceful living and conflict resolution (APCEIU, 2006: 15).

Peace education and 'peace values' matters were included in the General Education Reforms of 1997 (Cardozo, 2006: 41) with a new emphasis in teachers pre-service and in-service education on human values, human rights, national cohesion, democratic principles, gender rights, the environment and language skills in all three languages (MoE, 2008: 1). The reforms suggested extra-curricular activities to develop qualities of leadership, teamwork, cooperation, concern for others and a sense of justice and fair play; likewise, the teaching of values, morals and religion were given strong significance to understand and respect other cultures (Cardozo, 2006: 41). According to the Education for All National Plan 2004, values and morals cannot be taught as separate subjects; rather they should be learned continuously through all subjects and through all the years of schooling (EFA National Plan, 2004: 11). However, as argued by Judge C. Weeramantry, education systems tend to focus in equipping children with the knowledge and the skills they need to obtain employment, whereas the moral dimensions of education have stayed far into the background (Weeramantry, A call for National Reawakening, 2005: 118).

Moreover, while education has been a priority in governments' agendas, too many commitments remain unmet, such as the lack of early childhood care programmes in most of developing countries (Osttveit, 2000: 3).

The Ministry of Education, specifically the Peace Education Unit, conducts programmes to promote peace and understanding among children of different ethnic groups such as peace camps with children from north and the south and cultural festivals of different ethnic groups to create understanding and appreciation of diverse cultural values (Peiris, 2008). Moreover, NIE has published a variety of Teacher Guides on Peace Education and distributed to schools through out the country, as well as provided training in peace education to teachers, principals and education administers, in addition to radio and TV programmes were to raise public awareness (APCEIU, 2006: 21). Among NGO's, Sarvodaya has been extensively involved in peace education for the most disadvantaged by promoting peace, reconciliation and acceptance across all cultural, religious, regional, political and economic boundaries (Sarvodaya, 2008). Furthermore, the Weeramantry Centre for Peace Education and Research has carried out and successfully contributed to several activities related to peace education, such as youth camps for children from multi-ethnic and multi-religious backgrounds where they are taught about each other's cultural traditions; conferences for school principals and peace seminars for school leaders; free distribution of publications of peace studies; as well as having the plan for a Peace University in Sri Lanka for students from all the member states of the United Nations.

As a result a project called "education for conflict resolution" funded by UNESCO, a Model of Peace Education for the children in Sri Lanka was developed. The model proposes ten broad peace concepts to inculcate in children: positive attitudes and self-esteem; cultivating feelings for others; discovering inner peace; cooperative attitudes and skills; conflict resolution

and problem solving; assertive skills such as learning to be one's true; critical thinking and responsible decision making; global outlook; caring for the planet; and community development (APCEIU, 2006 21). More recently, in line with its collaboration with the Asia-Pacific Centre of Education for International Understanding, Sri Lanka has introduced themes related to EIU within the national curriculum framework.

Education for International Understanding related themes within the Curriculum Framework

- Objectives of subjects related to National Cohesion, National Harmony, and Peace and Cultural Diversity
 - ✓ Secondary Level: **Life competencies**: communication skills, decision making, critical thinking, interpersonal skills, concern for others; **History and Social Studies**: cultural heritage, respect for diversity, multi-culturalism and interdependence; **Languages**: study of Sinhalese, Tamil and English; and **Religion**: understanding that all religions propagate values and ethics conducive to peace and harmony.
 - ✓ Primary Level: Understanding and recognition of different cultural practices, promotion of favourable attitudes for multi-cultural settings and conciliatory methods.
- Objectives of subjects related to Democracy, Justice, Social Equality, Security and Human Rights
 - ✓ Secondary Level: Languages: appreciation and acquisition of human, social and cultural values through language and literature; Social Studies and History: abilities to live with an awareness and sensitivity towards one's duties, responsibilities and rights: Life Competencies: self-development through self-esteem, identity and goal oriented vision in life; and Civic Education: importance of democratic structures of life.
- Objectives of subjects related to Economy and Poverty Alleviation
 - ✓ Secondary Level: **Practical and Technical skills**: awareness of the expansion of the global market; **Life Competencies and Civics Education**: international migration of labour; **Science**: understanding of the role one should play in society and access to international knowledge through IT; **Social Studies and History**: think freely and creatively about man and society; **Language**: development of skills for successful living; and **IT**.
 - ✓ Primary Level: Develop positive attitudes towards disadvantage communities.
- Objectives of subjects related to Health
 - ✓ Secondary Level: **Biology**: prevention of diseases, and **Health and Physical Education**: contributes to the building up of a healthy society.
 - ✓ Primary Level: **Environment Studies**: good health practices, appreciation of the environment, development of interpersonal relationship and sharing.

- Objectives of subjects related to Environmental Protection and Natural Resource Management
 - ✓ Secondary Level: **Social Studies and History**: development of abilities of creativity, honesty and success in a changing world oriented towards sustainable development; **Life Competencies**: sensitivity about the environment; **Science**: basic understanding of the natural resources of the country, benefit and utilization for national development; **Civics and Governance**: appreciation of the need for environmental protection to ensure sustainable development; and **Geography**: understanding of the diversity of the world to live in harmony with one another and the environment.

Source from National report: Sri Lanka – Sub-regional Consultation on Development of EIU Policy 2008

The information provided above shows the strong commitment of Sri Lanka's education not only towards national peace and social cohesion, but also towards international understanding and global issues, expressed in a holistic curriculum. Together with the overall national education goals, they combine the ethics relating to unity, harmony and dignity with the political notions of justice, democracy and rights (MoE, 2008: 2).

A research on peace education in Sri Lanka (2006) has pointed out the lack of cooperation and coordination between the different actors (policy and programme makers, and implementation levels) involved in the field. Disagreement among these actors on what should be part of peace education and how it should be taught, undermine efforts towards peace. For instance, whereas some argue that peace education at school should focus on multicultural, religious, environmental, inter-group, inter-personal and/or intra-personal levels, others tend to concentrate in non-violence, social justice, human rights and/or ethnic and emotional dimensions. Furthermore, while there is a consensus on the need for a whole approach in which peace education is implemented in all subjects, as well as in the 'school culture and environment', disagreement was shown regarding community and media participation. Likewise, school-staff training for successful implementation was emphasised for successful

implementation; however, only a small number of peace educators received training. Finally, three main obstacles were identified by the majority of actors as necessary to overcome for the success of peace education: shortcomings, such as lack of resources, follow-up and guidance after training, lack of evaluation and long-term commitment; structural challenges, for instance the country's situation and poverty; and challenges related to the education system, such as language barrier, exam oriented system, segregated and unequal schooling and cultural exclusive textbooks (Cardozo, 2006). As a result of the variety of peace education initiatives in schools and the lack of coordination and sustainability, the Ministry of Education, decided to formulate a policy that brought cohesiveness to current and future activities within the ministry, while acknowledging the 'respect for diversity' activities in other education units (MoE, 2008: 2). The National Policy on Education for Social Cohesion and Peace is of foremost importance as it constitutes the most recent policy related to Peace Education in Sri Lanka; hence, a brief description on it will be given.

ESCP aims at generating innovative strategies which build on existing provisions, providing coherence across the various organisations and activities involved, providing coverage and avoid gaps, avoiding unnecessary duplication, and ensuring sustainability. Likewise, the policy calls for teacher training in peace education and second national Language (2NL), development of school culture, sharing experiences among schools, creating a research network to develop ESCP programmes, establishing a monitoring and evaluation body, and creating awareness of social cohesion through religious amity. The strategies to be applied in order to promote social cohesion and peace are: forging peace through the curriculum, re-skilling teachers and educational leaders, 2NL for cross-cultural understanding, co-curricular activities, fostering the culture of peace at school and the community, revitalising integration of different

groups at schools and broadening the research base to ESCP. Moreover, there is a set of recommended activities to be implemented at school level so as to make schools places of peace, as well as activities to put into practice at the National level (MoE, 2008: 2). Of special significance within the policy framework is the implementation and impact evaluation of "Life Competencies and Citizenship Education" from grade 6 to 9, and "Citizenship Education and Governance" from grade 10 to 11 which as previously mentioned, include several peace related concepts such as multicultural society, conflict resolution, interpersonal skills, democracy and human rights.

While there has been a great amount of efforts done towards peace, both by Sri Lankan government and the non-governmental sector, and within formal and the non-formal education frameworks, this study only attempts to portray a broad understanding on the current policies and strategies developed by government, so as to explain the importance of the inclusion of early childhood as a critical part of education efforts towards sustainable peace. As it could be noticed, the activities and approaches previously described, exclusively cater to students within primary and secondary education. What's more, whereas there is a National Policy on ECCD, and it has been recommended that development of harmony among ethnic groups should be a major aim of ECCD/ECCE, the aims of the existing policy do not reflect the multicultural context of Sri Lankan society (MoE, 2008: 49). This section thus brings the study to its core purpose: Peace in Sri Lanka; does early childhood education matter?

CHAPTER FOUR

EARLY CHILDHOOD AND PEACE: WHAT IS THE RELATIONSHIP?

The moving force that should guide Sri Lanka in the necessity to implement early childhood peace education is that "young children have capacities to be active agents of change now" (Davis, 2008: 20). The emphasis is once again in that investment in the early years promotes "optimal development", which refers not only to children's cognitive skills, but to their ability to acquire culturally relevant skills and behaviours, which allow them to function effectively in their current context, adapt successfully when the context changes, or bring about change (Evans, Meyers, & Ilfeld, 2000: 2).

Early childhood education has not yet been part of great national decisions when other challenges, aims and objectives are considered; nevertheless, it is necessary that Sri Lanka acknowledges the importance of early education in building sustainable peace. Children should be part of the national agenda, not only because integrating ECCD activities and services has a multiplier effect for reducing poverty and increasing national productivity (INEE, 2009: 9); but mostly, because by neglecting the connections between early childhood and peace, Sri Lanka is missing the power of the early years sector as a foundation stone upon which to re-build communities and as a vehicle for peace building. Perhaps the reason for such an absence is that the effects of ECCD are recognized only in the medium and long term, or because children are still seen as citizens of secondary importance (Didonet, 2007: 30); nevertheless, "education for world citizenship needs to begin early", because "as soon as children engage in storytelling, they can tell stories about other lands and other peoples" (Nussbaum, 2007: 15). While it would be unjust not to recognize Sri Lanka's efforts towards peace, it is fundamental for policy makers to

extend the scope of peace education approaches in a way that not a single opportunity to raise citizens that contribute to a peaceful and cohesive Sri Lanka is missed. In this sense, it would probably be a good start to reconsider the concept and the goals of 'basic education' in Sri Lanka.

4.1 'BASIC EDUCATION': AN OPTION OR A NEED?

Since 1990, several UNICEF documents have stressed the vision of 'basic education' as a process that encompasses the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to live peacefully in an interdependent world (Fountain, 1999: 1). In addition, since the Jomtien Conference, the scope of 'basic education' has also been understood to include the 'basic learning needs' of young children before they reach school-going age; 'early childhood care and initial education' (Temathical Framework UNESCO, 2007). As a result, many countries have committed to give precedence to this goal at their agendas, and Sri Lanka is not the exception. In fact, as discussed in Chapter three, the right of all children between five to fourteen years to education was long ago recognized in Sri Lanka, in 1939, even before the country became independent. Yet, a major concern for this study is that while the value of basic education for the creation of the conditions for a peaceful world has been acknowledged, preschool years, the critical time to teach children the fundamental of social interaction (Tremblay, Gervais, & Petitclerc, 2008: 2), have been largely overlooked within the framework. More importantly, the awareness of the importance of early life has led some scholars and practitioners to conclude that "8 is too late". Because physical, cognitive, emotional social and moral competencies that are crucial in later life begin to take shape during early years, a child's development must be already on firm basis by that age (Barrow, 2008: 2). As for Sri Lanka, an issue to be concerned about is that in light of the present situation, to what extent does the current 'basic education' framework provides the settings for

all young children to develop the knowledge, skills attitudes and values needed to live peacefully in an interdependent world? By looking at the international instruments that Sri Lanka is signatory, the following section connects with the importance of early childhood education for sustainable peace.

Jomtien World Declaration on Education for All, Thailand 1990

In its preamble, the World Declaration on Education for All stresses the importance of meeting 'basic learning needs' considered as the 'ultimate goal' (Temathical Framework UNESCO, 2007). Moreover, it calls for an "...expanded vision that surpasses present resource levels, institutional structures, curricula, and conventional delivery systems while building on the best in current practices..." (World Declaration on Education For All, 1990) This 'expanded vision' of basic education is regarded as means to enable everybody, children, youth, and adults, to meet these basic learning needs "...required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning..." (Temathical Framework UNESCO, 2007). Furthermore, in acknowledging that "Learning begins at birth", the declaration calls "for early childhood care and initial education". It is recognized as well, that "the scope of basic learning needs and how they should be met" is not a determined standard, but "varies with countries and cultures, and inevitably, changes with the passage of time" (World Declaration on Education For All, 1990). In this sense, it identifies educational matters that need to be addressed but leaves to the criteria of every country to act according to their own situation. Despite the fact that within this framework 'basic education' in formal schooling is regarded as 'primary education', basic education is considered as a broad framework of knowledge to which

everyone, children, youth and adults are equally entitle to, at any stage of their lives (Temathical Framework UNESCO, 2007).

World Education Forum, Dakar Framework for Action, EFA 2000

Re-strengthening that "education is a fundamental right", The Dakar World Education Forum also acknowledges that "it [education] is the key to sustainable development and peace and stability within and among countries, and thus an indispensable means for effective participation in the societies..."; therefore "the basic learning needs of all can and must be met as a matter of urgency". Up to the year 2000, "of more than 800 million children under 6 years of age, less than a third benefited from any form of early childhood education" (UNESCO, 2000: 12). Thus, in pursuing the goals of Education for All, countries should commit to "expanding and improving comprehensive early childhood care and education, especially for the most vulnerable and disadvantaged children" (UNESCO, 2000: 8). The declaration calls upon the responsibility of governments to formulate early childhood care and education policies and promote programmes appropriate to their age and not "mere downward extensions of formal school systems" (UNESCO, 2000: 15). Furthermore, the term 'basic education' is the most frequently used in the framework to refer to education that would respond to basic learning needs for all ages, although it is not related to a specific structural level of education. Parallel to the Jomtien Declaration, the framework does not establish fixed standards to describe basic education; on the contrary, it asserts that "All children must have the opportunity to fulfil their right to quality education in schools or alternative programmes at whatever level of education is considered basic" (UNESCO, 2000: 15). Since national contexts are different, the framework gives autonomy to all states to approach the concept of 'basic education' as most convenient according to their own situation.

Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) 2000

The Millennium Development Goal 2, targets to "Universal Primary Education"; specifically, ensure that all boys and girls complete a full cycle of primary schooling. While the text does not make further references to the level or scope that primary education should cover, the explanatory note refers to 'primary schooling' implying formal education (Themathical Framework UNESCO, 2007).

Education for All Global Monitoring Report 2008

The EFA Global Monitoring Report 2008 makes extensive reference to the gap in defining 'basic education' referring to it as "a central policy concern" to be understood as encompassing preprimary, primary education, programmes for youth and adults, 'that makes basic education "a synonym for the broad EFA agenda" (Themathical Framework UNESCO, 2007).

As explained in chapter two, peace education (and education as a whole) is not the starting point or the end of a process; rather, it is a way of living, a dynamic process that is constantly changing according to new circumstances. If this is the case, Sri Lanka should be able to respond to these changes in order to make that process suitable to meet the 'basic needs' that enable human beings to fully develop and continue learning in a changing environment. Hence, basic education should not be taken anymore as 'primary or secondary schooling'; absolutely not in the case of Sri Lanka, where after almost three decades of war, the vast majority of people, whether Sinhalese, Tamils and Muslims aspire to live in a spirit of peace, unity and brotherhood while preserving their ethnic identities (Sarvodaya, 2008: 5). The situation of the country does not allow limiting the provision of 'basic learning needs' to certain school levels; particularly when those levels exclude the most fundamental period for future development. Basic education is barely a question simply related to a certain number of school levels; on the contrary, it is a

question of survival, of learning the skills and values needed to live in harmony, learning which begins at birth and to which peace education is specifically concerned as a whole. While it is undeniable that in searching for peace the world must engage young people in finding the solutions and support them through education, it is indisputable as well that the support given must begin with early childhood, "...because we know that a child's future is largely determined in the first years of life..." (Wolfensohn & Kircher, 2005: 501). It is time for Sri Lanka to realize that the best of the means to achieve social cohesion and integration does not lie in a manual, but in the opportunity given to children, because it is those children who recognize "little actions" such as the necessity of treating friends in a fair and just manner who are already in the "big battle", a battle towards harmony and peace.

4.2 'BUILDING NATIONHOOD' FOR 'NATION BUILDING'

It has been already said that nation building and the establishment of a Sri Lankan identity are the core purpose of national education. Since nation building develops when a sentiment of belongingness gives rise to construction activity (Atal, 1981: 6), 'building nationhood' becomes a primary task for Sri Lanka as it ensures that citizens feel they belong to and can contribute to their country (Vargas-Baron & Bernal, 2005: 8). In other words, neither the formation of a Sri Lankan identity, nor nation building can come into being without forming individuals with positive identities themselves and a sentiment of belongingness that prompts them to a construction activity. On the other hand, individuality and connectedness are not dichotomous qualities; indeed, the process of developing a sense of self is a process of connecting an individual's personal identity to their social identity; "they develop together in the same child, within the same skin" (Nsamenang, 2008: 20). Moreover, since the first years of every human

being's life are the most favourable ones for developing the attitudes and values that form the basis of their personalities (Didonet, 2007: 26), education plays a major role in helping individuals and communities in creating identities for peace. Children with identities that give them security, capacity for contact and empathy, are beings of peace, whereas those who are regarded as weak, isolated and lonely become hostile and sad beings. As such, those children with positive identities that value themselves without deteriorating the values of others will contribute to peace, to nations and communities. (Simonstein, 2008: 40). Thus, governments and policy makers must recognise that effective investment in the early years is crucial for human development and central to society's success (INEE, 2009: 10). By looking at the formation and interaction of identity and belongingness during early years, a broader understanding of the significance of early childhood education towards cohesion and peace in Sri Lanka will be portrayed.

Consistent with the need of widening the approach to basic education and with its commitment to inclusive education as stated in the Dakar Framework for Action, Sri Lanka would benefit from early childhood in its aims towards peace. By achieving inclusive education, all children have access to the whole range of educational and social opportunities offered by school, avoiding segregation and isolation and enabling them to fully participate in their school and community (Dupuy, 2008: 28). As a diverse society, it is especially relevant to strengthen social solidarity and cohesion in Sri Lanka. There is growing evidence that children recognise racial differences and hold opinions about race by the age of three (Friendly, 2007: 11) and that values of social inclusion and respect for diversity are more applicable to young children that have previously appreciated (BvL Foundation, 2007). On the other hand, children may experience exclusion or discrimination when living in environments characterised by conflict or

inequalities; these experiences will shape children's growing identity, the sense of who they are, where they belong, and how far they feel valued and respected (Woodhead, 2008: 4). What's more, since early life is the period when children learn about their world from everything that is around them, this is a good place to start fostering and strengthening children's identities, and to raise positive awareness of diversities (Lee, 2007: 29). Thus, inclusive childhood programmes can enhance respect for diversity through their impact on children as future adults (Friendly, 2007: 11). Exposing children to inclusive and respectful environments early in life facilitates development of positive long-term outcomes (BvL Foundation, 2007); nevertheless, not only mere exposure is significant, but the programme content and the value of proactive pedagogies and practices are also critical (Friendly, 2007: 11). Inclusion is essential to facilitate the interaction of children with a variety of individuals, and to socialize children into attitudes and behaviours that are more conductive to building peace (Dupuy, 2008: 43). As such, an inclusive system, facilitates the continuation of the process of 'nationhood' for 'nation building', allowing the formation of identities that will later manifest in a sense of belongingness.

By interacting with others, children begin from birth their journey of constructing a unique personal and social identity characterized by a growing awareness of the importance of markers such as gender, ethnicity, age and status within the community (Woodhead, 2008: 4). Through family relationships children acquire culturally valued skills, knowledge and behaviours (Brooker, 2008: 12); moreover, diverse experiences in families determine how children view the self, and how they enter into interpersonal encounters and engage with the world (Nsamenang, 2008: 18). By the time they begin school, they are already conscious of their role in society and of the way they are treated according what their senses tell them who they are. Nevertheless, identity grows and changes, and children continue to develop a sense of their personal identity,

throughout their childhood, through their active and guided participation in the cultural life of their community (Woodhead, 2008: 4). As such, the transition to early childhood education and care will often be children's first encounter with values and norms that are different from what they have known at home. In this environment, children will discover that there are certain ways of being (symbolised through appearance, clothes, possessions, activities, etc.) that are preferred over others; that certain family compositions are more 'normal' than others or that certain attitudes a more 'polite' than others (Vandenbroeck, 2008: 26). In this sense, the variety of individuals with which children come into contact through school can teach them how to positively interact with individuals who do not come from their families, communities or ethnic, religious, or language groups (Dupuy, 2008: 46). Moreover, the preschool years are the critical time to teach children the fundamental of social interaction: compromise, cooperation and verbal communication. Those who fail to learn these lessons early in life are more likely to show aggressiveness later (Tremblay, Gervais, & Petitclerc, 2008: 2). School thus, is a place where children learn to undertake pro-social interactions, control their behaviour to complement that of others, and where they learn the values of being socially responsible, responsive to group aims and behaving cooperatively with peers (Dupuy, 2008: 44). In brief, children create their identity, receiving from others what they are able to accept, until it becomes part of them, and giving what they can share. In this sense, how they define themselves always implies a difference with the values, characteristics and lifestyle of others. That is how they start being different, until they adopt their own identity (Simonstein, 2008: 40).

Identity always has two aspects; that of the unique individual, which involves children's subjective feelings about their distinctiveness from others and their sense of uniqueness, and that of a shared social person, which refers to the ways they feel they are (or would like to be) the

same as others, through identification with some groups (Woodhead, 2008: 6). Nevertheless, as previously mentioned, socialisation and individualisation are processes that evolve in an interdependent way (Wagner, 2008: 21); it is not possible to have personal identities without collective identities or vice versa (Simonstein, 2008: 40).

Social identities tend to be constructed by reference to others; consequently, children will define themselves not only by reference to the things they share in common with others but also by emphasising how they are different from those outside their group (Connolly, Developing Positive Identities, 2008: 42). When children categorise human beings, they understand that they are one of the many human beings in the world with specific characteristics and who belong to particular sub-groups as well (Wagner, 2008: 21). This is initially evident in relation to gender identities; boys tend to define themselves in terms of how different they are from girls and vice versa (Connolly, Developing Positive Identities, 2008: 42). More significantly, in the case of Sri Lanka, its multicultural reality makes this matter of special importance as a variety of studies have demonstrated that children become aware of racial differences from about the age of two or three and that they are capable of developing negative attitudes and prejudices from about the age of three onwards. What is more, children often show no awareness of physical distinctions between them; yet, they may develop negative attitudes without an understanding of the nature of ethnic divisions (Connolly, 2007: 50). In fact, we can not expect children to feel natural empathy for those who do not belong to their own subgroups because empathy is not something we own from birth; empathy is something human beings have to work hard for, maybe for their whole life, and this work has to begin in early childhood, as soon as children begin making categorisations (Wagner, 2008: 20). For this reason, Sri Lanka should bear in mind how young children make meaning from experiences of stigma and discrimination and how the attitudes

than underlie prejudice and bias are formed in early years of life. Research has shown that targeted interventions during early years prevent the development of bias and prejudice in very young children (BvL Foundation, 2007); moreover, they make an important contribution to addressing ethnic divisions and creating more integrated and socially cohesive societies (Nussbaum, 2007: 19).

While social identities can have negative effects, it is equally important to recognise the positive ones, and the way they contribute to the formation of positive identities. Indeed, achieving a 'positive' identity is a core goal as it is the essential prerequisite for developing the resilience that enables a child or a young person to meet the challenges of growing up, especially for children living in adverse environments (Brooker, 2008: 12). In this sense, friendships made at school are important because friends help each other understand the world in which they live and the quality of children's friendships affects the development of personal and social identities (Danby, 2008: 38). Moreover, as young a three or four, children can be engaged in conversation as about how their behaviour hurts others; they can begin to understand why teasing children because of certain traits they have is hurtful, and why jokes based on race or disability harm others (Nussbaum, 2007: 15). In this sense, friendships can also promote positive feelings in situations where children feel vulnerable. The discovery of peer cultures enhances the acquisition of a 'child identity' (Danby, 2008: 36). Children's capacity to conceive an individual identity with an adequate self-esteem, and recognizing positive qualities of other individuals, will help them to establish relationships with others. Similarly, nations or communities who conceive their identities positively and are able to recognize in other nations or communities their characteristic distinctive qualities, are able to share a relation in peace (Simonstein, 2008: 40).

Positive identities enable children to feel a sense of both individuality and belonging in their social world (Brooker, 2008: 12). Identity thus covers simultaneously two core human motives: the need to be unique and the need to belong (Woodhead, 2008: 6). To feel that we are part of a culture and that we have the possibility to continue building during our life, with our ideas, our beliefs and dreams allows us to feel that we belong to something that trascends us (Simonstein, 2008: 40); this acquisition of a sense of 'belonging' within their own culture is a fundamental task for all young children because it allows them to accept and coexist with individuals of others beliefs and cultures (Nsamenang, 2008: 18). More importantly, belonging is the 'glue' that connects people to each other, is about relating to people and places, to beliefs and ideas, to ways of dressing, talking, playing, learning, laughing and crying (Woodhead & Brooker, A Sense of Belonging, 2008: 3). If children are supported in this phase of recognizing differences and similarities between themselves and other people, they can recognise that 'people find different ways of doing things and living their lives, and my way of doing things is acceptable as other ways'. This can help them to construct a positive sense of themselves and of others, guided by a fundamental belief that all human beings have the right to be in this world (Wagner, 2008: 21). In this sense, early childhood education can be major means of supporting and strengthening social inclusion in a meaningful way (Friendly, 2007: 11), and an investment in the creation of a more educated citizenry in the sense that by active learning, preschool education produces those traits considered essential for democracy. Whereas primary schooling continues to be oriented toward an unquestioning authoritarian relationship between teacher and children, the major force of preschool programmes is that the child learns best by doing, exploring, problem-solving, while the teacher facilitates rather than dictates the process (Evans, Meyers, & Ilfeld, 2000: 11). By allowing the child to develop these traits, the process of

belonging is completed; children's needs are recognised and met, respected and included, while at the same they have the opportunity to express personal agency and creativity, being able to contribute, to take responsibilities and fulfil roles, to identify with personal and community activities, and to celebrate in collectivity (Woodhead & Brooker, A Sense of Belonging, 2008: 3).

In this sense, children will thus remember that they are not only part of a family, community or school, but they are part of a nation that though has undergone difficult encounters; it will as well be stronger to overcome further obstacles with their contribution. Likewise, just as friendships enhance positive attitudes in uncertain situations, they also involve a commitment to take care and love each other, and to cherish those relationships that make our lives better while learning to meet those that bring difficulties to life. This sense of connectedness not only to those close relationships but to the country as a whole will empower children to create harmony within themselves and their environment for it is not only with people that we create emotional bonds, but we also create them with the natural and cultural environment to which we feel we belong. To learn to love nature, to feel part of it, to take care of it as we take care of our lives, allows us to create this bond that involves our feelings, our thoughts and our acts (Simonstein, 2008: 40). If as Zhong Chang Tong, a Chinese politician who lived towards the end of East Han Dynasty, said, "harmony is the basis of peace and tranquillity, and disharmony is the cause of chaos and calamities", we now recognise that 'harmony' involves the harmony between human beings and nature, the harmony between people and society they live in, and the harmonious development of the individual (Yan & Fengfeng, 2008: 43). More importantly, while living in a world of 'production-consumption-replacement-garbabe', marketing strategies drive people to buy the most recently launched and sophisticated products,

discarding those in use but which are still useful; thus behavior of substitution is created in individuals' minds and habits, an attitude of disregard for the old, an annoyance with what is already used. Most alarming is however its consequences on human relationships, when love is seen as an momentary emotion, friendship as a superficial feeling, or human relationships are placed under the same utility criterion. As a consequence, people may be easily abandoned, deceived or substituted; they may be viewed as discarded objects and a little misunderstading would be enough to cut ties. Re-evaluating some discarded objects by finding a new meaning in people's lives will arouse a feeling of permanence, a sense of belonging; recycling and using discarded materials for didactical activities by transforming its first purpose into another one has not only and economic and ecological value, but a psychological and philosophical one: the reassigning of meaning, the permanence and the belonging, especially in the case of the attitudes related to people (Didonet, 2007: 27). As for Sri Lanka, this demonstrates that the enhancement of positive identies and a sense of belonging in children will not only contribute to the development of strong relationships, but will help individuals to function more effectlively in all phases of community life. It is precisely this sense of belonging connectedness to their community and its surroundings what will help them to settle down firmly and to stand up in front of the world with a calm, peaceful and creative attitude (Simonstein, 2008: 40). In this way, the process of building nationhood will thus have laid the setting necessary to bring about the commitment to act towards nation building.

As to conclude this section, it is needless to say that one of the humankind's permanent aspirations, and of major importance, is the yearning for peace. However, manifested not only in the absence of war but in the presence of a system of justice, peace still remains to be an Utopia of all nations; a dream we are far from reaching and one that sometimes it seems we are

destroying (Simonstein, 2008: 38). As for Sri Lanka in particular, the circumstances are not far from those described; "there is a felt need among people for national integration, religious amity and peace; the desire to live without fear in dignity" (Sarvodaya, 2008). With the historical end of the long-war in the country, the question is more urgent to address: to whom do we turn to achieve this dream? As previously mentioned, for individuals to take action for the completion of a meaningful activity, there is a need of sense of 'belonging', of being part of a group upon which human beings can carry on their dreams. However, ensuring a sense of belonging, requires two factors: that all individuals feel that they are respected and recognised, both for their uniqueness as individuals and for their qualities they share with their community, and with all other humans; and that they feel empowered to participate and contribute to their settings by being active taking responsibility, rather that being recipients of services provided for others (Woodhead & Brooker, A Sense of Belonging, 2008: 6). That sense of belonging will be only acquired through the development of a positive identity that allows individuals to accept and coexist with other people. As such, preschool years are critical for the development of these abilities; optimal outcomes are not likely to be obtained once a downward cycle has begun, and the older a child is, the more intense the intervention must be to have positive impacts (Evans, Meyers, & Ilfeld, 2000: 18). In Sri Lanka, this is another reason why strong efforts are to be carried out on order to implement inclusive early childhood peace education in its policies. As mentioned above, the age of "8 is too late" for an intervention, because by this time children have already perceptions and understandings of the role they play in society and that of 'the others; hence, they need to be supported in the development of positive identities in an inclusive environment, where children are able to interact with various sub-groups and are guided to respect diversity. With its strong commitment to social cohesion and the formation of a national

identity, education policy makers are to start looking at those who can transmit positive messages and values from school to home and the playfield and vice versa, provided the environment and programmes allow them to acquire the skills needed for survival, development, protection, and participation in society. It is thus children to whom Sri Lanka needs to turn to so as to bring about the change they are eager to see.

4.3 DEVELOPING 'LIFE SKILLS'

Sri Lanka's endeavour towards peace is best illustrated by the recent formulation of the National Policy on Social Cohesion and Peace. Hence, any proposal of education plans would need to draw from existing positive practices and policies within the field and it would be concerned with what it has been successfully achieved, so that local strengths can be built upon.

The need is for the incorporation of early childhood in major peace education strategies and its inclusion in national policies. Furthermore, with the wide array of providers and sectors involved, the challenge is to systematize this sector in order to achieve better integration, development, assessment and coherence of peace education approaches in accordance with the measures already taken at higher levels, so that consistency is ensured through out the whole education cycle. The role of government is of foremost value since an education system that is 'truly inclusive' is the starting point for the creation of a national identity where everyone feels their contribution is significant for the well-being of "their country". It is widely known that inequalities in access to education and exclusion are major obstacles for social cohesion; therefore, from perspective of this study, Sri Lankan government is fundamental to achieve successful outcomes in the implementation of peace education programmes. Furthermore, keeping in line with the contribution of key education stakeholders to the National Policy on

Education for Social Cohesion and Peace (MoE, 2008: 5), major early childhood providers should as well be involved in the formulation or integration of early childhood into the national peace education framework. Drawing on the plan of actions of the National Policy on Education for Social Cohesion, a brief analysis would be made as to widen the understanding of early childhood education for Sri Lanka's aims of peace and social cohesion.

As explained in chapter three, the National Policy on Education for Social Cohesion and Peace aims at facing Sri Lanka's challenges on ethnic cohesion and national disintegration; in particular, it acknowledges social cohesion and peace education as fundamental in Sri Lanka's development. Within the plan of actions, ESCP identifies a set of activities to be implemented at school level or practices that would make school a place of peace; namely developing codes of conduct for classes, developing a school discipline guide, practices for developing self-esteem, special activities and exercises for developing peaceful competencies, moral instruction of the day, school/classroom wall paper, displaying peace mottos, peace day/week, appointing class mediators, appointing peace committees, morning assemblies, and school link programmes (MoE, 2008). By reviewing some of the proposed activities, this section attempts to draw on the need for Sri Lanka to approach peace education from early years. As most of the activities are interconnected, reference will not be given to all of them.

Developing codes of conduct for classes

According to ESCP, students are to be encouraged by teachers to develop a code of conduct that guides student's behaviour in the classroom and school. They are to form groups and discuss each of the proposals in order to come up with a common framework that meets their needs while keeping discipline at the same time (MoE, 2008: 19). This suggests that students should engage in behaving not according to their own desires but towards the well-being of the group;

what's more, they are to be active in developing a code that will 'lead their school life' for at least one year. However, discipline is not something that comes with us at birth, but rather we should learn how to behave and control our desires through out life; furthermore, it has been found that discipline has positive aspects when it is regarded as a form of teaching and guidance in order to help children learn in ways that encourage socially and culturally appropriate behaviour, develop self-control and enhance self-esteem (Rodd, 1997: 8). In keeping with the theories in which this study is based, Montessori's metaphor, "The musicians need to be individually competent in playing their instruments, but they also need to act as an orchestra, a collective association in following the voiceless commands of the conductor" is paramount to portray that children should learn how to balance their individual freedom and collective order (Montessori, The Montessori method: The Origins of an Educational Innovation, 2004: 57). It would be impossible for a musician to follow the group if he has not previously mastered his own instrument; hence, common sense would lead him to develop the abilities required before coming to stage. The above equally applies to students; is it feasible to expect them to build up a common code of behaviour when they have been previously subject to outside impositions? This does not imply to allow them do anything they wish; rather, as with the case of the orchestra, guidance is required in this task, but children should be allowed to develop self-discipline, so that each of them will voluntarily contribute to the whole. In this sense, the children learn how to greet and respect the adult but the notion of constructing the self in relation to others is best accomplished by relating to other peers, since only a peer can be in a position of a need that small child can satisfy such as "you can't walk on my mat"; the adult is still needed at this stage to prepare the environment, to teach activities of courtesy and to nurture the construction of the individual child, but not to be a scold (Baker, Grace and Courtesy: A foundation for Moral

Development, 1999: 89). Discipline from this perspective refers to helping young children appropriate ways of behaving as well as controlling and changing those that are considered inappropriate without the adult presence (Rodd, 1997:8). As such, by the time they are to contribute in developing a plan, they will have acquired the knowledge that respecting others and their work is essential for harmony in their 'small society'. Hence, an activity for "public interest" comes into being when the behaviour of each student affects not only their own situation but that of everyone else within the classroom; moreover, it becomes a 'commitment', as in daily activities, children contribute to harmony in class by respecting others. During early years this process may be unconscious in the sense that by concentrating in an activity freely chosen, children are not tempted to interrupt anyone else since they are intentionally working on an activity and no one else is disturbing them and they do not interrupt others in their task. By developing a common code of conduct, a commitment to it is consciously made when students decide by themselves what is best for everyone in the classroom, including the teacher. Furthermore, they will compromise to meet the expectations as they contributed to the setting; in this way self-action will be taken according to what is the best for the class. In both settings, early childhood and later stages, Montessori and Dewey interconnect in their education for independence and public interest respectively when "the child's liberty is limited if it interferes with the collective interest and freedom of other children" (Montessori, The Montessori Method: The Origins of an Educational Innovation, 2004: 57).

Practices for developing self-esteem

As stated in ESCP, schools should implement methods of identifying students' potentials and promoting them through methods of rewarding, encouraging, guiding and facilitating such as selecting the best students –the scientist, mathematician, orator, actor-, awarding certificates,

special occasions for display of talents or recognition in morning assemblies (MoE, 2008: 20). This approach may appear successful when all children have had 'the same opportunities' and when they actually did develop the abilities to do so; however, is there any standard to measure whether 'all of them' have mastered the 'proper skills' to 'equally' perform a task so that the best deserves to be rewarded? In case there is not such a standard, how do we know a child did not 'perform as well as others' as a result of cognitive aptitudes and not other factors? On the other hand, what happens when the following month, a student did not achieve the same outcomes than previously attained? Would his self-esteem be reduced or would it stay stable? As human beings are all different and react in diverse ways to situations, unless we are sure every student has developed the same abilities and they are equally empowered to achieve high marks, 'selective rewarding' methods would not only not create peace and self-esteem, but a sense of superiority of some and the opposite feeling of others will be fostered. In this sense, self-esteem is critical to social competence as it implies the ability of children to reach out to others and to build relationships that helps them to survive and succeed; self- esteem provides children with the inner confidence to reach out and explore the unknown, and form a base from which they will form respectful relationships with others (Bertram & Pascal, 2002: 250). Moreover, children acquire competence in direct relation to the scope available to them to exercise action over their own lives, and the most effective preparation for a sense of self-efficacy is to achieve a goal for oneself and not merely to observe someone else achieving that goal (Lansdown, 2005: 7). As such, when students are judged not from their personal contribution but from that of comparativeness, the feeling of superiority of others is appealed to, while timid children are depressed (Dewey, Moral Principles in Education, 1909); however they are not better, said Montessori, but simply "more fortunate than their companions" (Haines, 2000: 9). As previously

discussed, the formation of identity is influenced by human beings' relationships with others; hence, if students have not learnt earlier to respect differences among individuals, categorisation according to mark achievements could lead to negative feelings, deteriorating the feasibility of a sense of belonging and in consequence social cohesion. On the other hand, it is undeniable that individuals feel good and proud of themselves when they achieve something, they become confident and recognize their abilities as well as others'. As such, research underscores the importance of the early childhood years as a critically important period for the development of future mental health and self-esteem (NAEYC, 1998); moreover, major studies have found that children with high aspirations, independence and who experience an early curriculum that encourages a mastery orientation are significantly more effective learners and achievers in the long term (Bertram & Pascal, 2002: 248). Likewise, the point of engaging the education process in the task of peace building is not to homogenize the curriculum or to create uniform students from different social or cultural groups; rather, it should seek to initiate or support an educational process that allows students to articulate, accommodate and accept differences between and within groups, mostly where there is latent or manifest violence (Bush & Saltarelli, 2000: 24). Furthermore, there is growing evidence that programmes which develop attributes of self-respect and respect to others directly benefit a child's cognitive and social development and educational progress. When young children are encouraged to express their preferences and opinions, to articulate their view point and to have acknowledged and given credence by peers and by their educators, such children are more likely to be able to acknowledge that there are other alternative views held by others which are equally valid and should be given respect. This understanding of multiple perspectives has shown to reduce classroom tensions and advance learning achievements (Bertram & Pascal, 2002: 251). As such, this activity is connected to the

development of peaceful competencies, which calls for the constant use of active and participative learning methods in lessons as peace education practices, in order to make learning happy; increase motivation; energizing; improving cooperation, critical thinking and problem solving capacities, improving social skills, experience inner peace and release stress (MoE, 2008: 21). Hence, Sri Lankan's early childhood educators' ability to set an environment where self-esteem is enhanced is a critical task to be concerned about. Children should be enabled to recognise their potentiality to develop activities as well as that those of others' because as Ball pointed out, "the most important learning in pre-school education has to do with aspiration, socialisation and self-esteem...no one learns effectively, without motivation, social skills and confidence" (Bertram & Pascal, 2002: 250).

Moral instruction for the day

In order to provide children with inspiration, ESCP recommends starting the day with moral or spiritual thoughts during the morning assembly at the school level, by giving short talks related to character building. As for classroom practice, putting up a motto and discussing the message is as well recommended (MoE, 2008: 21). This is an excellent practice to enhance moral development since according to Nucci, the connection between the moral identity and behaviour does not have much force until middle school (Johansson, 2006: 62); however, according to Montessori, morality would not emerge suddenly through sermons or warnings, but years of growth are needed to create this power (Haines, 2000: 8) Thus, early childhood is a stage of major significance for the moral development of a child as it is during the first 6 or 7 years that children develop knowledge structures and social understandings through interaction with their environment; they gain experience in negotiating cognitive conflicts and reorganizing their moral thinking (Court & Rosental, 2007: 407). Furthermore, keeping in line with Piaget's argument

that moral knowledge is to be constructed by the child and schools must be a place where experiments are carried out both individually and with others, researchers suggest that rather than implementing moral rules, teachers ought to help children to gradually develop an autonomous morality based on their inner beliefs about principles for right and wrong (Johansson, 2006: 57). When a child acquires independence, he is as equally comfortable in exercising choice as he is in taking responsibility for his decisions and actions and consequences (Bertram & Pascal, 2002: 248); as such, Dewey's argument that "moral ideas" are those moving forces which take effect in conduct and make it better that it otherwise would be, becomes apparent (Dewey, Moral Principles in Education, 1909). On the other hand, whereas morality develops within the individual, interaction is essential for this development (Johansson, 2006: 58) since according to Montessori, for the self to develop individuality, he must put himself into relationship with his environment in contact with the events of his life (Haines, 2000: 3). Finally, given that the foundation for moral identity is formed in early childhood, some aspects of the process that link the children's conduct to the self should be enhanced: the generation of a world view and the placement of self in relation to that view, and the construction of self-discipline that enables the child to engage in actions in harmony with his moral identity (Johansson, 2006: 62). In a similar way than the previous activity, this one is linked to the appointment of class mediators that suggests the selection of a child to resolve conflicts in the class in order to make students understand that it is their responsibility to solve their differences; since the child's role will be critical to the peaceful settlement, school will need to provide effective training. However, as previously discussed, when the child fails to meet optimal development during his first years, later interventions will require more efforts to enhance the skill growth missed in earlier stages. Once again, it is significant to mention that independence is not disconnected with

interdependence; rather, they come together in the same process; one is not posibble without the other. Likewise, it is essential to consider that such a process starts during early years, and it is when identity is defined, that human beings decide the way to conduct themselves in relation to their surroundings. Early childhood thus keeps on showing that the foundation for later development and behaviour is inherent to learning during this period of life.

CHAPTER FIVE

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Children won't wait...

There is a time to answer his questions, all his questions,

Because there may come a time when he will not want any answers

There will be a time when there will be no slamming of doors, no toys on the stairs, no

childhood quarrels, no fingerprints on the wall.

Then may I look back with joy and not regret

God, give me wisdom to see that today is my day with my children

That there is no unimportant moment in their lives

The time is short and my time is now – for children won't wait

Helen M. Young

5.1 CONCLUSION

The study at hand examined the potential of early childhood education as a significant element for sustainable peace in Sri Lanka. While awareness exists that peace is affected by education action in the country, the role of early childhood education has been studied less frequently. As an exploratory report, the overall goal was to provide broader light on the significance of early childhood education as a standpoint for the development of behaviours and attitudes conducive to peace.

While the armed conflict has recently ended, disintegration and resentment stayed for the government to be unravelled. Based on this report, there are a number of significant reasons for turning peace efforts to the youngest members of the society; the most compelling is that "young children have capacities to be active agents of change now" (Davis, 2008: 20), and it is precisely a change what Sri Lanka needs after several decades of disharmony and conflict. Furthermore, peace education is not a standpoint for the solution to Sri Lankan's situation; instead, the challenges faced by the country will probably take several more decades to be overcome. Therefore, it should now be acknowledged that peace education is a way of life, one that is constantly adjusted to the changing environment and that is immersed in every aspect of our existence; more importantly, that it is absolutely not limited to those who have been shattered by war, but it is an 'inclusive' dynamic process in which every individual in the country should be engaged.

A continuation of the research in the field, a more in-depth analysis of the significance of early childhood education for sustainable peace, may be useful for policy-makers, peace educators, and people working in both fields, early childhood and peace education. A broader, more representative study, including non-formal and informal education, is required in order to assess the general potential of early childhood education as a tool for sustainable peace in Sri Lanka. Moreover, a comparison of various efforts around the globe may be useful for establishing a pool of experience and knowledge in the field that does not exist to this day. The findings of such an overall study could be applied or be adjusted to the Sri Lankan context. The following section briefly recaptures the process that was applied for the study and provides an array of recommendations relevant to the purpose of the report.

5.1.1 RECAPTURING THE STUDY PROCESS

The study process applied for the sake of shedding light on the main question essentially consisted in four broad steps. The first step (Chapter 1) aimed at identifying the overall research problem and presenting it in its broader context. Based on the background of the conflict and the opportunities for peace 2009, the problem was narrowed down to four sub-questions that served as the basis for giving meaning to the potential of early childhood education for sustainable peace in Sri Lanka. The second step (Chapter 2) concentrated on reviewing the main concepts of the report that could serve as a basis for answering the research question and secondly, it provided a discussion on the two theoretical approaches that appeared most relevant in the context of the research question: education for and in public interest and education for independence and interdependence by John Dewey and Maria Montessori respectively; finally, an integrated framework relevant to the current peace education context in the country was developed. The third step (Chapter 3) aimed at providing an account on Sri Lanka's education and peace education so as to describe the background against which early childhood and peace education have taken place. Finally, the fourth step (Chapter 4) followed the aim of developing the main argument through building on the relationship between peace and early childhood. The starting point was to describe the importance of widening the concept of 'basic education' for the enhancement of nation-building and a Sri Lankan identity from early years. For Sri Lanka, the activities for peace proposed in the National Policy on Education for Social Cohesion and Peace were reviewed from an early childhood education perspective in order to give more light on the implication for existing peace education strategies. Based on that, a broad assessment about the significance of early childhood education for sustainable peace in Sri Lanka took place

5.2 RECOMMENDATIONS

When looking at the existing peace education in Sri Lanka, several efforts have been devoted to target children in primary and secondary education; the most recent achievement is illustrated by the National Policy on Education and Social Cohesion. On the other hand, whereas in ECCD policies, young children are mentioned in terms of health, malnutrition, social services, children with "special needs" and even education; few undertakings have been dedicated to implement a policy that effectively regulates the latter, and even less that considers it within the peace education course of action. Based on the above conclusions, an overview of what an early childhood education programme oriented towards peace would look like and a range of policy recommendations can be derived from the overall discussion. Due to their broad nature, they are addressed in a very general terms to be considered not only by Sri Lanka but by the international community as a whole.

5.2.1 WHAT WOULD AN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION PROGRAMME ORIENTED TOWARDS PEACE LOOK LIKE?

An early childhood education plan oriented towards peace does not necessarily mean the creation of a whole new strategy; rather, it should build on the existing peace education strengths of the country, such as ongoing programmes and on the whole policies, particularly the National Policy on Social Cohesion and Peace since it draws from the most critical challenges to peace in Sri Lanka: ethnic disharmony and national disintegration. Moreover, in line with the approach to peace education not as separate subject but as integrated in the overall curriculum, an early childhood programme would follow the same pattern. More specifically, a plan within this stage oriented to peace would be holistic as harmony is related to every aspect and activity of life;

hence the following dimensions, all interconnected, will help children to meet the needs proper of their age and develop peaceful and positive behaviours. The methods, objects and contents may vary, but the proposed elements apply the four basic education pillars pointed out by Dr. Delors at UNESCO: "Learning to know, learning to do, learning to live and learning to live".

- Sensorial strengths: Children are active learners and the construction of the understanding of their surroundings is accomplished by their interaction with the environment. Further, as every experience takes from the sensorial activity, all senses need to be properly developed in order to acquire information from the environment and organize it. By strengthening the senses, self-esteem development and confidence in their environment are as well enhanced when activities are completed and children become conscious of their abilities.
- *Intellectual strengths:* By nature children are curious and when they are given the opportunity to explore and experience, their curiosity and a 'desire to know' are stimulated. Their desire to understand enables children to think and to inquire; moreover, it enhances the development of language and communication, and the knowledge acquired allows to them to build up concrete concepts from specific situations.
- Social strengths: Beginning with a 'truly inclusive' environment, children should be supported in developing a positive personal and social identity and understanding relationships in the family, neighbourhood and school. Children are to be 'taught' and not 'corrected' so as to allow them feel free to ask about certain situations and cooperate while feeling comfortable in their environment. Further, this will allow them to perform without expecting anything for their actions but personal satisfaction.

Moral and emotional strengths: Moral and emotional development should be developed in the same way that abilities, knowledge and capacities are: through guidance but without overlooking children's freedom and their natural instinct to learn. Rather than teaching through well reasoned moral lessons, they are to be guided in their process of learning what they need to know to relate to themselves and to others; such as learning to feel and to be able to know what one feels; to understand what others feel; to have confidence in himself and in others; to decide what is wise and what is not; to express emotions and accept frustrations and mistakes while maintaining a sense of security; to undertake new actions and persevere; to be able to protect oneself and others, and to make a positive assessment of oneself and respect others.

As for the complexity of the current situation in Sri Lanka, it would be very difficult to propose a homogeneous curriculum for the whole country; in any case, the four elements considered above are fundamental for the design of an effective early childhood education programme oriented towards peace. Furthermore, they keep in line with the "desired citizen" illustrated in the National Policy on Education on Social Cohesion and Peace, providing an integration of the whole cycle of education. The study in hand suggests as well the following features to be considered in Sri Lanka's context when formulating an effective plan for children in early years: cultural diversity and their characteristics, age within the framework of early childhood, background and experiences of the communities at which the programme is directed, identification of needs of the community and kids, and development of holistic curriculum that meets those needs and interests of children. Likewise, for a programme to be successfully implemented, a partnership and coordination among the main actors involved in the provision of ECCD – national and local authorities, UNICEF, private sector and institutions with programs

for professional development - is needed; in addition, collaboration with government institutions and organisations within the field of peace education is fundamental, as they are an important source for the formulation of suitable plans of work; lastly, grass-roots organizations should equally be considered as their interaction with communities through out the country would give a better understanding of their needs. Nevertheless, the role of Sri Lanka's government is critical in setting the stage cooperation, coordination and the creation of the legal and policy frameworks. As a result of the long conflict, the education system severely deteriorated since a great portion of government expenditure was highly allocated to the war; hence the country may not be currently in the condition to afford extensive levels of coverage. Yet, at the minimum, the government should take immediate action to make early childhood education policy that regulates and establish proper standards for the provision of 'truly inclusive' education; more significantly, development of curriculum oriented to peace and adequate training of education providers are urgent actions to be taken.

5.2.2 POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

Any Peace Education strategy in Sri Lanka should be directed towards the attainment of the overall national education goals. Moreover, consensus would need to be sought and sometimes it would be necessary to clarify different opinions and ensure success. In addition to the above programme, a set of policy recommendations are drawn from the report in hand:

Improve the coordination between stakeholders active in the field of early childhood care
and development: In order to make the most of early childhood education, it is essential
to enable a better coordination among the actors involved in the provision of ECCD –
national and local authorities, UNICEF, private sector and institutions with programs for

- professional development. This is foremost so as to increase the overall coherence and effectiveness of early childhood education.
- 2. Develop cooperation between early childhood care and development and peace education: Within the process of peace education not only in Sri Lanka but in every country, it is crucial to enhance cooperation between these two fields in order to capitalize on existing formal peace education strategies and adjust them to education in early years.
- 3. Ensure the commitment to 'universal education' by broadening the concept of 'basic education' and providing access to a high quality early childhood education for all children, including the development of a national framework focused on the current situation and the educational needs of the country.
- 4. Analyze the impact of existing formal strategies and activities on peace: Based on the idea that peace education is a way of life and adjustment to all circumstances and in all learning environments, peace education strategies and activities should promote the development of a positive identity, a sense of belonging, and a lifelong learning perspective right from the first years of children's lives so as to increase subsequent successes of existing peace education practices.
- 5. Develop a national plan for early childhood education that includes the overall national education goals, minimum standards and a policy framework aimed at ensuring that all children have equitable access to early childhood education and the coherence of peace education practices with those of subsequent grades. Effective consistency between early childhood education and the overall general education is essential in ensuring the best possible opportunities for sustainable peace.

- 6. Empower parents and families with knowledge, skills and adequate resources to care for their children, including the development of mechanisms for ensuring a well-informed society on the significance young children have in shaping their future and that of the country as a whole.
- 7. Allocate adequate resources and increase implementation capacity in the field of early childhood education: In order to being able to benefit from early childhood education's capacity to foster sustainable peace, it is crucial to provide sufficient and equal implementation capacity through out the country, particularly given the variety of education providers.

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