Addressing violent pasts

through education

A policy guide

UNESCO – a global leader in education

Education is UNESCO's top priority because it is a basic human right and the foundation for peace and sustainable development. UNESCO is the United Nations' specialized agency for education, providing global and regional leadership to drive progress, strengthening the resilience and capacity of national systems to serve all learners and responding to contemporary global challenges through transformative learning, with special focus on gender equality and Africa across all actions.

The Global Education 2030 Agenda

UNESCO, as the United Nations' specialized agency for education, is entrusted to lead and coordinate the Education 2030 Agenda, which is part of a global movement to eradicate poverty through 17 Sustainable Development Goals by 2030. Education, essential to achieve all of these goals, has its own dedicated Goal 4, which aims to **"ensure inclusive and equitable quality education and promote lifelong learning opportunities for all."** The Education 2030 Framework for Action provides guidance for the implementation of this ambitious goal and commitments.

Teaching about the past to shape more peaceful futures

Teaching about violent pasts and their legacies is a powerful way to foster sustainable peace.

Education can build a nuanced understanding of complex histories, raise awareness of the roots and legacies of violence, nationally and internationally, and sensitize learners for their own agency as actors of change for reconciliation and conflict prevention.

Educating about violent pasts is a challenging yet critical endeavour for policy-makers globally. It entails tailored approaches and an important support for educators to address traumatic pasts sensitively and to navigate related emotions and narratives successfully.

Building on UNESCO's programme on Global Citizenship Education, this guide offers education policy-makers a set of strategies, principles, and education practices to effectively integrate education about violent pasts into local education systems. It suggests a comprehensive approach that spans formal and informal education and aligns with the 2023 Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development, opening new perspectives on history education, dialogue, and conflict transformation.

Educating about violent pasts is a crucial investment in sustainable peace

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"Since wars begin in the minds of men and women it is in the minds of men and women that the defences of peace must be constructed"

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Foreword

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Violent pasts are a difficult yet undeniable part of world history. For centuries, the trajectories of war, conflict and related atrocity crimes have shaped societies and fundamentally marked generations to come. Failing to address these histories, or doing so insufficiently, leaves an important void in our understanding of humanity and contemporary societies. It can also fuel polarisation around historical narratives, deepen societal divides and increase the risk of renewed conflict.

Though challenging, educating about violent pasts is a crucial investment in sustainable peace. As both a defence of and a contributor to peace, education holds the power to disrupt and reshape the legacies of violence.

UNESCO was founded in the immediate aftermath of the Second World War and the crimes perpetrated by Nazi Germany and its allies and collaborators. The Organization's mission was fundamentally shaped by this experience. Since its inception, UNESCO has been committed to promoting the values, attitudes and behaviours that sustain peace through education. The recently adopted 2023 UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development echoes this commitment and emphasises the importance of critical history education.

UNESCO is also the United Nations-mandated agency for global Holocaust education and remembrance. Decades of work in this field have yielded principles and education practices that enable nuanced, sensitive and constructive engagement with complex histories of extreme violence. These approaches can inform education in other contexts as well.

Building on this expertise, the present guide expands its focus to include other experiences of violence, ranging from war and displacement to colonial oppression and enslavement, and their legacies in contemporary societies. It offers new perspectives on how to teach politically and emotionally charged topics through historical inquiry and demonstrates how such engagement can support the transformation of conflict and the prevention of future violence.

Pathways towards peace are as diverse as the violent experiences that precede them. Education about these pasts must be contextualized, adapted to the specificities of local histories and responsive to their distinct causes and consequences.

This publication presents UNESCO's first policy guidance on addressing violent pasts through education. It proposes concrete approaches and adaptable practices, outlines potential entry points and introduces strategies to engage with traumatic histories without causing further harm. Its aim is to foster more peaceful futures.

We hope this guide will encourage policy-makers to develop tailored education strategies to support critical reflection on past violence and to embed these efforts sustainably within broader education systems as a long-term commitment to peace.

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Director-General for Education, UNESCO

Acknowledgements

Executive summary

Educating about violent pasts and their legacies can powerfully contribute to shaping peaceful and just societies and foster international understanding and dialogue. Studying historical conditions in which human rights violations occurred can contribute to fostering respect for human rights, democratic values, and the rule of law. It can empower citizens to prevent violence and intervene when faced with injustice. Such reflections are also fundamental for understanding the obligations of the State to protect these rights and acknowledge and repair them when they are violated. Broadening education to encompass violent histories increases the visibility of victims and their descendants, recognizes their suffering, humanizes their experience, and highlights their agency and resilience. It equally provides opportunities to investigate perpetration and collaboration, to reflect on responsibility and to advocate for accountability and justice.

This guide supports education policy-makers in the difficult, yet critical endeavour of creating and strengthening educational spaces to address, acknowledge and discuss violent pasts in ways that bridge rather than deepen divides. It demonstrates how to approach complexity in history education and how to encourage critical reflections of contemporary legacies. It advocates pluralistic approaches that recognize multiple perspectives, emphasize critical thinking and allow for an informed and nuanced understanding of history. This includes supporting learners in understanding how we know what we know about the past.

Developing education policy and curricula about violent pasts requires care and sensitivity. The close relation of history education and remembrance policies to the formation of national identities can make them prone to political manipulation, including nationalist propaganda, historical distortion and denial. They can be used to discriminate and retaliate against groups, contributing to a continuing cycle of violence. Efforts to address violent pasts should seek to counter such narratives by building on historical research and inclusive and critical pedagogy, allowing learners to critically analyse how history is represented and used to shape contemporary discourses.

Addressing violent pasts and their legacies is difficult, sensitive, and ongoing work. There is no single best way to approach this task. Transparent, inclusive approaches that provide space for consultations with diverse interest groups, experts, and teachers is important for designing education programmes that address violent pasts in ways that encourage a proactive engagement instead of increasing societal divides. The pedagogical approaches and case studies outlined in this guide can serve as a model and inspiration for launching such processes at a national level.

Introduction

Violent pasts and their legacies affect all regions of the world. The trajectories of wars, authoritarianism, atrocity crimes, colonialism and enslavement have fundamentally shaped societies and have left long-lasting marks on individuals and communities. Drivers of conflict, like prejudice and discrimination, often persist or are even exacerbated after the violence ends. Leaving such violent pasts and their legacies unaddressed threatens the foundations of peace. Simmering conflicts and persisting divisions are precursors for future violence, while unacknowledged injustice and lack of accountability for past crimes can become obstacles to conflict transformation and reconciliation.

Past violence rarely stays in the past. Related trauma, resentment and stigmatization continue to shape individuals' and communities' sense of self and their relationships to others. This may hinder opportunities for dialogue, debate, and reform. Lacking governmental or societal acknowledgement of violent pasts and their legacies can further fracture societies, prolong trauma and deepen divisions, making societies more vulnerable to renewed conflict and violence. This stands in stark contrast to global commitments to uphold basic human rights and advance sustainable peace and conflict prevention.

Education has great potential to disrupt and reshape the legacies of violent pasts by acknowledging their causes and consequences and dignifying the experiences of victims and their descendants. Beyond strengthening awareness and knowledge of violent histories, education also opens opportunities for dialogue and supports the development of foundational attitudes and competencies for peacebuilding and the prevention of violence. Leveraging the transformative power of education, teaching and learning about violent pasts can support important processes towards more resilient and peaceful societies.

This UNESCO policy guide introduces a comprehensive approach to addressing violent pasts through education systems. It shares promising practices and recommendations to support education policy-makers in designing and implementing related policy which is tailored to local needs and in line with global education priorities, in both formal and non-formal education. To this end, the guide will:

1 Outline how education can contribute to addressing violent pasts and its important impact on peacebuilding and conflict prevention efforts.

2 Introduce key principles, approaches and promising practices that can be adapted and applied in a range of educational settings and contexts; and

3 Present strategies and recommendations for a system-wide implementation.

The foundation of this guide is UNESCO's programme on Global Citizenship Education (GCED). It supports and promotes the UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development, adopted by the General Conference in November 2023,[1] and in particular Paragraph 24:

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1   UNESCO, *UNESCO Recommendation and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development* (2023), https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000386924

'The teaching and learning of history, social sciences and related fields should provide learners with the opportunity to build a critical understanding of the complex relationships between past, present and future and of the legacies of violence, exclusion, and all forms of discrimination and their effects. This requires pursuing historical objectivity; promoting multi-perspectivity based on science, research and evidence; fostering critical views of and supporting the struggle against colonialism and neo-colonialism in all their forms and manifestations; sustaining a duty of memory; rejecting denial and distortion of proven historical events; highlighting the role of women in history and society; and exploring the factors that, over time, can either contribute towards violence and tensions, or foster reconciliation, peace and solidarity between and within countries.'

This goal is anchored in the global commitment for peace and sustainable development, in line with the 2030 Agenda.[2] Target 4.7 of Sustainable Development Goal 4 (SDG 4) emphasizes the role of transformative education in fostering a culture of peace and non-violence. Education on addressing violent pasts can further play an enabling role in reaching other SDGs, such as SDG 16 on peace, justice and strong institutions and SDG 5 on gender equity.

Within this context, the guide builds on experiences from the Organization's global activities in support of education about the Holocaust, education about genocide, and atrocity prevention education.

Addressing past violence also supports the global commitment to the 'Responsibility to Protect', affirmed by all Heads of State and government at the 2005 United Nation's World Summit. World leaders agreed that individual states and the international community as a whole have a responsibility to prevent genocide, crimes against humanity, war crimes, and ethnic cleansing. Education systems carry their own responsibilities in this regard.[3]

Present-day legacies of past violence threaten progress towards sustainable development in several ways, including by maintaining inequities and fuelling possibilities of further conflict and violence. To achieve the SDGs, it is necessary to comprehensively address violent pasts through education and to connect them to contemporary realities and challenges.

Learners and educators worldwide continue to witness and experience rights violations, injustices and discrimination that are connected to historic atrocity crimes. However, in formal education, these histories and their legacies often remain silenced. In other cases, they are presented in a limited or incomplete narrative that ignores complexity and may hinder societies from healing and learners from engaging with these matters as positive agents of change in their communities and beyond.

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2   United Nations. 2023. Sustainable Development Goals. THE 17 GOALS | Sustainable Development (un.org)

3   See United Nations Resolution 60/7 (2005) on Holocaust remembrance; UNESCO General Conference 34 C/Resolution 61 (2007) on Holocaust remembrance; United Nations Security Council Resolution (UNSCR) 2150 (2014) on Recommitment to fight against genocide and Human Rights Council (HRC) Resolution A/HRC/28/L.25 on The prevention of genocide (2015). The latter 'emphasizes the important role that education, including human rights education, can play in genocide prevention, and further encourages Governments to promote, as appropriate, educational programmes and projects that contribute to the prevention of genocide.'

Education systems that comprehensively address histories of violence within the framework of the UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development, build stronger societies by:

- **Situating learners and educators in history and empowering them to act upon the legacies of the past, such as racism and global injustices.** Education can encourage learners to become active and engaged global citizens working towards historical justice and reconciliation by sharing knowledge, understanding and different perspectives about shared violent pasts, how they are remembered, and how they continue to affect societies. Education can also build a sense of social responsibility, solidarity, and a desire to address local and global challenges, such as racism, discrimination or inequities.

- **Challenging stereotypes and biases about different cultures and people by providing a more nuanced and complex understanding of the historical and contemporary relationships between countries and within societies.** Through the teaching and learning of histories of violence, education can foster empathy and respect for cultural diversity and openness to diverse perspectives.

- **Developing critical thinking and analytical skills and promoting a sense of intellectual curiosity and engagement with complex historical and contemporary issues.** Education can deepen reflection about underlying issues of continued contemporary relevance such as propaganda, disinformation, violent extremist ideologies, the abuse of power, and group-targeted hatred and violence.

This guide draws on a growing body of empirical and theoretical work and presents case studies of promising practices from around the world. These case studies exemplify what education about violent pasts can look like in diverse contexts and do not represent an exhaustive global summary of related initiatives. It is hoped that the concepts and examples developed within this guide will be helpful for policy-makers in these and other contexts.

The guide recognizes the challenges of addressing traumatic histories and the dangers of teaching about violent pasts in a way that amplifies divisions. It thus provides policy-makers with guidance on identifying approaches that rely on tested pedagogy, favour multiple perspectives, and are anchored in historical research.

UNESCO also acknowledges that the description of violence can be triggering. While the following document is a technical guide, focused on concepts, approaches and practices that treat violent pasts mostly in abstract terms, contents will reference experiences of genocide, enslavement, torture, and sexual violence.

Who this guide is for

This guide is directed towards education policy-makers and other stakeholders involved in developing, implementing and supporting education programming and interventions around the world. It will be relevant for policy-makers responsible for history education, citizenship education, social sciences and political education, arts and literature education, education for peace, human rights education and other related subject areas. It is equally of interest for policy-makers concerned

with ensuring inclusive and quality education for all. This includes those addressing tolerance and non-discrimination issues with respect to race, gender, sexual orientation, ability status, religion, and other social identities. The guide will also be of help for teachers, teacher educators, civil society organizations, heritage professionals and researchers.

Education takes place across all contexts and throughout the life span of people.[4] This guide is designed with a focus on formal, institutionalized educational settings spanning primary, secondary, and post-secondary higher educational contexts. However, formal educational efforts about violent pasts can be strengthened through non-formal and informal educational interactions. Educational approaches that seek to integrate both formal, non-formal and informal educational and community actors, contexts, and processes can have even greater impact both within and beyond schools. With that in mind, the guide integrates recommendations in strengthening education about violent pasts across all levels and types of education. It furthermore incorporates examples and strategies to link formal education systems with established informal education and research intuitions, such as memory and memorial sites and, in support of this, encourages regional and international cooperation.

Organization of the guide

This guide is organized into four sections. Section 1 discusses what is meant by 'violent pasts', drawing on international legal definitions and reflecting on how past violence continues to impact the present. Section 2 discusses the importance of addressing violent pasts through education, and the risks of delegating young peoples' understanding of historical violence to political and societal commemorations of the past. Section 3 explores the different approaches and considerations when teaching about past violence in formal educational institutions. Section 4 outlines the ways in which the wider education system can support teaching and learning about violent pasts in the classroom context. Two annexes complete the guide. Annex I outlines an example of a roadmap for enhancing education programmes in support of addressing violent pasts, while Annex II proposes an assessment tool to evaluate the system-wide educational environment in which violent pasts are addressed.

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4   Heath, S. B., Bellino, M. J., & Winn, M. T. (2020). Adaptive Learning Across the Life Span. In N. Suad Nasir, C. D. Lee, R. Pea, & M. M. d. Royston (Eds.), Handbook of the cultural foundations of learning (pp. 247-260). New York: Routledge.

Figure 1: Comprehensive approach to addressing violent pasts through education
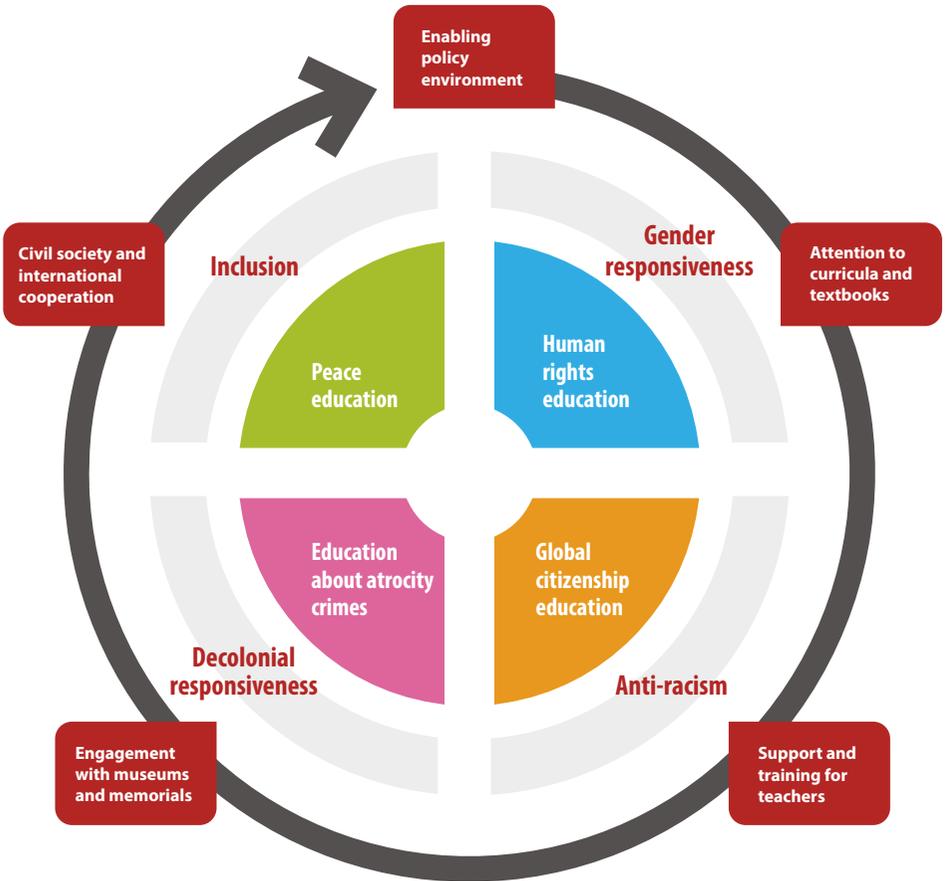
Section 1

What are violent pasts?

1. What are 'violent pasts'?

1.1 Defining violent pasts

For the purposes of this guide, **violent pasts** are defined as:

> Violence that is large-scale, widespread, that has civilian casualties, and that is no longer ongoing in causing direct physical harm or loss of life. This includes violence categorized as atrocity crimes (genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes) and armed conflict, as well as violence that temporally precedes, but nonetheless meets, the contemporary legal definition of these crimes, including colonial violence and violence of enslavement and dispossession.

Violence takes on many forms, including physical and psychological harm. It can be expressed through direct actions or through the denial of opportunities, oppression, and unequal access to power. It can be interpersonal or woven through the structures and practices embedded in societies. Understanding and assessing the nature of past and present violence, and their interrelation, is essential for defining the approaches that can be best applied in response and as prevention measures.

For example, peace scholar Johan Galtung describes three types of violence: direct, structural, and cultural/epistemic, which are causally interconnected and can reinforce one another.

> **Galtung's forms of violence**
>
> **Direct violence:** Violence that is seen and experienced, that hurts and harms, including physical violence like assault and killing, but also psychological violence and/or behaviour that causes trauma, anxiety, and stress.
>
> **Structural violence:** Violence 'built into' social structures that manifest as 'unequal power and therefore unequal life chances.'[5] Structural violence includes the uneven distribution of resources and the uneven distribution of power to decide on the distribution of resources and can include the uneven distribution of education and literacy.
>
> **Cultural violence:** Situations in which cultural practices, languages, cultural or religious institutions, knowledge, ways of knowing and knowledge systems of individuals and groups are undermined, erased, eradicated or ignored.[6]

Violence can often be further categorized by crimes that were codified into law after the end of the Second World War, in an attempt to prevent the recurrence of the atrocities carried out by Nazi Germany, its allies and collaborators.

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[5]   Galtung, J. 1969. Violence, peace, and peace research. International Peace Research, Vol. 6, No. 3, pp. 167-191.

[6]   See for example: Paulson, J. and Tikly, L. 2022. *Reconceptualising violence in comparative and international education. Bristol Working Papers in Education,* https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.7097150*; Fricker, M. 2007. Epistemic Injustice: Power and the Ethics of Knowing*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; de Sousa Santos, B. 2007. *Beyond Abyssal Thinking: From global lines to ecologies of knowledge*. Research Foundation of State. Vol. 30, No. 1, pp. 45-89.

Box 1.1: Atrocity crimes and key legal definitions

Genocide: As established in the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (the 'Genocide Convention'), genocide refers to the intentional and systematic destruction of groups of people. Specifically, the Genocide Convention defines genocide as the 'intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such,' which can happen through any of the following acts: 'a) killing members of the group; b) causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group; c) deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part; d) imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group; and e) forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.'[7]

Crimes Against Humanity: Are acts 'committed as part of a widespread or systematic attack directed against any civilian population' as defined by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. The specific acts listed include murder, extermination, enslavement, deportation, imprisonment, torture, rape (and other gender-based or sex crimes), group-based persecution, enforced disappearance, apartheid, and 'other inhumane acts of a similar character intentionally causing suffering or serious injury to body or to mental or physical health.'[8]

War Crimes: Codified by the Geneva Conventions and additional protocols, the term refers to a large number of different type of acts that are made criminal when they are committed within the context of an armed conflict against combatants or non-combatants who should enjoy protection under international law (e.g. civilians, wounded and sick combatants, prisoners of war etc.).[9] Some examples include direct attacks against civilian populations or those engaged in peacekeeping and humanitarian missions, torture, and the taking of hostages. War crimes also refer to attacks on protected property (e.g. schools, hospitals) and to using prohibited means of warfare (e.g. chemical weapons).

Ethnic Cleansing: Generally refers to the forced removal of an ethnic group from a territory, though there is no formal definition in international law.[10]

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7   UN General Assembly, Resolution 260/III, *Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide*, December 9, 1948, http://legal.un.org/avl/ha/cppcg/cppcg.html

8   International Criminal Court, *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*, Crimes Against Humanity, Article 7, July 1, 2002, A/CONF.183/9.

9   International Criminal Court, *Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court*, War Crimes, Article 8, 1 July 2002, A/CONF.183/9.

10 Straus, S. 2016. *Fundamentals of genocide and mass atrocity prevention*. United States Holocaust Memorial Museum.

1.2 When violence doesn't stay in the past

Even though violent pasts are commonly approached as historic episodes, they are of highly contemporary relevance. Experiences of violence fundamentally shape identities and frame relationships between individuals and communities for generations to come. Their legacies continue to affect the wellbeing and life chances of victim and survivor groups and their descendants. They can define social, economic and political patterns, including through ongoing discrimination and material inequities, and influence wider national narratives. The impact and duration of these legacies also depend on *whether, when* and *how* violent pasts are acknowledged and addressed. Given these many factors, violent pasts are not issues of the past but remain contemporary responsibilities.

Since violent pasts continue to be defined by their legacies, they need to be perceived and treated as processes rather than bracketed historical events. While acknowledging that systemic and structural violence exists in the present, this guide takes the view that a focus on violent pasts helps to foreground the origins and legacies of violence. A focus on violent pasts should help to clarify rather than obscure or distract from present violence.

Indeed, addressing violent pasts through education is crucial both to developing historical understanding about the causes and consequences of past crimes and to identifying and beginning to address and transform the negative legacies of these crimes in the present. This also means that educating about violent pasts is not confined to teaching about historical acts of violence but should also examine how violent pasts have been reflected in national discourse and have or have not been acknowledged and remembered.

Importantly, this guide *does not* focus on education in the midst of, or as an immediate response to, ongoing armed conflict or mass atrocity. Policy guidance for such situations is available from humanitarian actors, including from the Inter-Agency Network for Education in Emergencies and UNESCO.[11]

Equally, this guide does not focus on addressing the structural consequences of past violence as they pertain to the organization of education systems. Past violence frequently results in contemporary injustices and inequalities, including within education systems. Which groups have access to high quality schools, whose languages are prioritized as mediums of instruction, and what constitutes educational achievement may all be influenced by violent histories. Addressing the legacy of violent pasts in the education system might therefore require significant changes to educational structures.[12]

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11   INEE (2024). *Minimum Standards for Education: Preparedness, Response and Recovery, 2024 Edition.* INEE. https://inee.org/minimum-standards; O'Malley. B. (2010). *Education under Attack: A global study on targeted political and military violence against education staff, students, teachers, union and government officials, aid workers and institutions.* Paris: UNESCO.

12   Guidance on addressing the structural consequences of past violence as it pertains to education is available from Sriprakash, A., Nally, D., Myers, K., and Ramos-Pinto, P. 2020. Learning with the Past: Racism, Education and Reparative Futures, a background paper commissioned for the UNESCO Futures of Education report; UNESCO. 2024. Global outlook on racism and discrimination.

1.3 Where do people learn about violent pasts?

People learn about violent pasts from a range of sources, including formal schooling, informal learning, and societal structures.

Formal schooling typically refers to primary, secondary, and higher education institutions. In this context, young people most frequently learn about violent pasts in history classes, however social studies, literature, language, and art classes are also important contexts for learning. Both the extent to which young people engage with violent pasts through formal schooling, and the quality of that engagement, differ widely across contexts and indeed across individual classrooms. As this guide argues, improving the quality of engagement with violent pasts through formal schooling is one of the most effective ways to help societies learn and heal.

Non-formal education refers to learning opportunities offered by institutions outside of formal education systems, such as education programmes in museums, documentation centres and memorials. In countries where education about violent pasts is not formally institutionalized, museums and memorials are often first entry points to engaging with history and can serve as fora for conversations and exchange about experiences of violent pasts and their legacies. Places of non-formal education can serve as inspiration for the ways in which education about violent pasts can be integrated into formal education systems. Likewise, they can importantly add to formal education endeavours through focused expertise and opportunities of on-site learning, such as through the engagement with authentic historical artefacts and archival materials, encounters with survivors or subject-matter experts, and visits of exhibitions and historical sites.

Informal learning refers to the historical narratives and frameworks that young people absorb through their engagement with wider society. The personal experiences, memories, and silences of older generations can shape young people's understandings of the past and the importance that they attribute to it. Local or national memorials or remembrance events communicate messages – both implicit and explicit – about the nature of the violent past, and who 'we' are in relation to that past. Historical narratives may be affected by political events and can be misappropriated to support political agendas. Culture, arts and media also transmit historical narratives, including through documentaries, theatre, television, radio, novels, books, and games.[13]

While non-formal and informal learning regarding past violence is welcomed, it should not stand in for the work that schools and formal educational systems can do. Non-formal and informal learning may be the first spaces where societies feel comfortable to explore these topics. However, it is important to not assume that informal learning is synonymous with formally studying violent pasts, especially considering a risk of biased, simplified or one-sided representations of violent pasts and the potential lack of contextualization. Similarly, cinema and television have been shown to often offer singular and simplistic narratives that young people find hard to move away from even

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13   Sánchez Meertens, A. 2017. *Los Saberes de la Guerra: Memoria y Conocimiento Intergeneracional del conflicto en Colombia. Bogotá: Siglo del Hombre Editores*; Bermudez, A. and Epstein, T. 2020. Representations of violent pasts in memorial museums. Journal for the Study of Education and Development. 43(3), 503-543.

in light of contradictory evidence.[14] Online spaces pose an additional challenge with wide offers of unreliable sources of information and a variety of over simplified short-form content. In some cases, misinformation and hate speech are spread intentionally to foment violence, rather than understand and prevent it.[15] These initial impressions can be highly resistant to change, adding to the need for education institutions to address violent pasts, rather than allowing various cultural media to fill the gaps they leave.[16] Otherwise, educators miss opportunities to correct factual inaccuracies or to promote critical thinking about other perspectives and experiences of the past in question.

14   Kansteiner, W. (2018). History, memory, and film: A love/hate triangle. *Memory Studies*, 11(2), 131-136. https://doi.org/10.1177/1750698017754167

15   UNESCO. (2023). Addressing hate speech through education: A guide for policy-makers. Paris: UNESCO. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000384872

16   Bellino, M.J. 2017; Paulson, J. Abiti, N. Bermeo Osorio, J. Charria Hernández, C. A. Keo, D. Manning, P. O. Milligan, L. Moles, K. Pennell, C. Salih, S & Shanks, K. 2020. Education as site of memory: developing a research agenda. *International Studies in Sociology of Education*, Vol. 29, No. 4, pp. 429-451, DOI: https://doi.org/10.1080/09620214.2020.1743198.

Section 2

Why address violent pasts through education?

2. Why address violent pasts through education?

Education is an important component of any effort to address violent pasts and support sustainable peace. Educating about violent pasts serves multiple purposes and can inform a variety of mechanisms and processes necessary for rebuilding, reconciling and reforming societies following episodes of violence and conflict. Teaching and learning about violent pasts alone cannot heal societies from trauma or ensure justice for the victims of atrocity crimes. However, it can provide an important foundation for an active and critical engagement with violent pasts; an engagement that contributes to a culture of remembrance, reflection, critical thinking, and dialogue that does not deepen, but bridges societal divides. The present chapter therefore aims to introduce a rationale and overarching framework for developing education policy in support of a critical and proactive engagement with violent pasts, aligned with the following learning objectives:

→ **Strengthening historical literacy.** In order to make violent pasts accessible to learners, teachers support students in establishing a clear historical understanding that is fact- and research-based. Historical literacy is the ability to identify, analyse and interpret reliable historical sources and to understand historical events from within their contexts. It is key for an informed and proactive engagement with difficult histories. Historical literacy can guide learners in navigating complexity and deconstructing how narratives about violent pasts have developed over time.

→ **Fostering multiple perspectives.** Violent pasts are complex and cannot be understood from a victim's or perpetrator's perspective alone. Any educational intervention about violent pasts should therefore aim to help students understand a variety of nuanced factors and perspectives to highlight responsibilities, agency, and questions of choice. This includes perspectives of various victim and perpetrator groups, including those that have historically received less visibility such as women, children, and displaced people. Including multiple perspectives also offers the opportunity to highlight intersectionality and how identities affect the experiences of past violence, the impact of legacies, as well as recognition following conflict.

→ **Encouraging critical thinking.** When learning about violent pasts, learners may already bring their own preconceived opinions and biases to the table. Educators should recognize this reality and approach it as an opportunity to introduce and/or strengthen critical thinking skills that allow for a more nuanced reflection on history and today's society. Critical thinking involves meta-cognitive processes in which learners reflect on the quality of their thinking, re-examining beliefs and assumptions, in order to develop well-reasoned arguments, reach more plausible conclusions, and pose new lines of inquiry.[17] Thinking critically supports learners' ability to resist disinformation and hate speech and sensitizes learners to the potential of manipulated or distorted historical narratives. It further encompasses problem-posing and problem-solving or decision-making processes, which can also be applied to reflections on how to resolve conflicts and foster peace and justice.

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17 Bermudez, A. (2015). Four tools for critical inquiry in history, social studies, and civic education. *Revista de Estudios Sociales*, 52, 102-118; Ennis, R. H. (1996). *Critical thinking*. New York: Prentice Hall; International Bureau of Education, Glossary of curriculum terminology.

→ **Supporting understanding of contemporary legacies.** Learning about violent pasts can help learners understand the impact that past violence has on contemporary social structures, identities, and inequalities, and to make sense of why the world is the way it is. Without historical perspectives on contemporary events, students are at risk of developing overly simplistic explanations. Students from Europe or North America may for example falsely assume that the relative economic under development of many African countries is the result of a 'lack of initiative', rather than hundreds of years of European exploitation. A focus on legacies furthermore helps students to understand the long-term damage caused by violence, and thus to appreciate the stakes of peacebuilding and may motivate them to actively work toward it. This is particularly critical where the legacies of violent pasts interact with other structural hazards – such as environmental degradation, displacement, or systemic inequalities – contributing to cascading risks that undermine peace and sustainability. Education policies must recognize and address these compound threats to better prepare learners for an increasingly complex global risk landscape.

Box 2.1: Addressing violent pasts and the Sustainable Development Goals

Just societies are a necessary foundation for advancing all SDGs, and they can only be built when the inequities that led to, and that were created by, violent pasts are recognized and addressed. Inclusive, quality education and relevant history instruction are important in meeting SDG 4 and SDG 16, which set out goals for education and peaceful, just and inclusive societies. Addressing violent pasts through education contributes directly towards the objectives of SDG 4 on Education, and notably Target 4.7 which calls on countries to 'ensure that all learners are provided with the knowledge and skills to promote sustainable development, including, among others, through education for sustainable development and sustainable lifestyles, human rights, gender equality, promotion of a culture of peace and non-violence, global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development.' Education is also a key part of meeting the objectives of SDG 16 on Peace, Justice and Strong Institutions. Addressing violent pasts in ways that avoid conflict triggers and addresses the root causes of violence are key dimensions of education for peace. By strengthening educational approaches that support conflict transformation, promote transitional justice, and contribute to prevention, education can support efforts to strengthen national institutions and contribute to sustainable peace. Education that attends to gender inequality, and is gender sensitive and responsive when addressing violent pasts, will help to raise understanding of the role of gender stereotyping in driving violence and to appreciate the differential impacts of violence on men, women, and LGBTQIA+ people. This will further contribute to SDG 5 on Gender Equality, in particular Target 5.1 in support of 'end[ing] all forms of discrimination against all women and girls everywhere'.

→ **Contributing to peacebuilding and sustainable development.** Educating about violent pasts can contribute to intergroup reconciliation, supporting recognition, empathy and epistemic justice. Recognition or acknowledgement of the past allows for the validation of victims' suffering and can foster mutual understanding.[18] Likewise, it can enable learners to reflect on their relative power and privilege, such as wealth and status amassed intergenerationally through violent acts and structures. Changed relationships, grounded in increased tolerance, trust, compassion, and mutual understanding, are a critical dimension of reconciliation.[19] Teaching about past violence as well as efforts to understand societal endeavours to seek justice for past wrongs in educational spaces can be conceived as a process through which reconciliation occurs.[20]

→ **Fostering human rights knowledge and awareness.** By sensitizing learners to the histories of violence and atrocity crimes, education can promote values, attitudes and skills that are based on and instil respect for human rights, gender equity, and social justice.[21] Addressing violent pasts invites reflections on human behaviour and can inform ethical and responsible decision-making. Human rights knowledge and awareness, including a sense of the profound consequences for individuals, groups, and societies of human rights violation, can instil a strong commitment to the promotion and protection of human rights, be it the learner's individual rights or those of others.

→ **Supporting intercultural competencies and global citizenship.** Addressing violent pasts can promote intercultural competence. This encompasses historical understanding of cultural encounters and movements of people across borders (violent and nonviolent, voluntary and involuntary),[22] fostering recognition of hybrid identities and communities, and working against essentialized claims.[23] It also involves respect for diverse identities, viewpoints, and values, which

18   Barkan, E. 2000. *The guilt of nations: Restitution and negotiating historical injustices.* Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press.

19   Lederach, J.P. 1997. *Building Peace: Sustainable Reconciliation in Divided Societies*, United States Institute of Peace Press, Washington, DC.

20   Bellino, M. J., Paulson, J. and Worden, E. A. 2017. Editorial: Working through difficult pasts: Toward thick democracy and transitional justice in education. Comparative Education, Vol. 53, No. 3, pp. 313-332; Cole, E. A. 2007. Introduction: Reconciliation and history education. In E. A. Cole (Ed.), *Teaching the violent past: History education and reconciliation*, pp. 1-28. Lanham, MD: Rowman & Littlefield; Novelli, M., Mieke T.A. Cardozo, L. and Smith, A. 2017. The 4RS Framework: Analyzing Education's Contribution to Sustainable Peacebuilding with Social Justice in Conflict Affected Contexts. *Journal on Education in Emergencies*, Vol. 3, No. 1, pp. 14-43.

21   UNESCO. 2021. Strengthening the rule of law through education: a guide for policy-makers. https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000366771; Bajaj, M. (2018). Conceptualizing transformative agency in education for peace, human rights and social justice. International Journal of Human Rights Education, 2(1).

22   Bryam, M., Nichols, A., and Stevens, D. (2001). Introduction. In M.Bryam, A.Nichols, & D.Stevens (Eds.), Developing intercultural competence in practice (pp. 1-8). Clevedon: Multilingual Matters; Kenneth Nordgren & Maria Johansson. (2015). Intercultural historical learning: A conceptual framework. Journal of Curriculum Studies, 47(1), 1-25.

23   Bekerman, Z., Zembylas, M., & McGlynn, C. (2009). Working toward the De-essentialization of Identity Categories in Conflict and Postconflict Societies: Israel, Cyprus, and Northern Ireland. *Comparative Education Review*, 53(2), 213-234.

necessitate self-reflection of internalized bias.[24] Dispositions towards intercultural competence enable learners to decentre their world views, recognizing diverse views inside and outside particular country or community contexts, and to engage in dialogue across difference. In turn, understanding and respect for diversity allow for resistance against simplistic othering. Education that contributes to strengthening civic culture and trust among citizens as well as between citizens and the state is essential in societies emerging from mass violence.[25] Addressing violent pasts through education can, if embedded in wider contexts such as GCED, support democratic values such as plurality and equality. Meaningful civic learning can result from engaging with difficult pasts in schools, contributing to learners' civic knowledge, skills, and attitudes towards public participation and everyday actions to create more equitable and socially just conditions.

→ **Promoting atrocity crime prevention.** States have an obligation to prevent atrocity crimes. Countries in which violent pasts remain unaddressed are especially vulnerable to conflict and violence. This can be further exacerbated when different versions of history are taught to different groups in countries that have recently experienced violence.[26] Furthermore, the delivery of divisive historical narratives that foster and foment discrimination, dehumanisation, and hatred is a strong risk factor for the onset of atrocity crimes.[27] Fostering accurate knowledge about past crimes is essential for preventing the manipulation of history and an important antidote to narratives that seek to distort or deny the past. Further, learning about their causes and consequences can support conflict transformation and peacebuilding processes, strengthen understanding of basic rights, and assist in recognizing possible warning signs. Such education is fundamental for developing a climate in which violent conflict and atrocity crimes are less likely to occur.

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24   Council of Europe. (2008). White paper on intercultural dialogue: Living together as equals in dignity; Leeds-Hurwitz, W. (2013). *Intercultural competences: Conceptual and operational framework*. Paris: UNESCO.

25   Davies, L. 2004. Building a civic culture post-conflict. London Review of Education, Vol. 2, No. 3, pp. 229-244; Levine, D. H. and Bishai, L. S. 2010. *Civic Education and Peacebuilding: Examples from Iraq and Sudan*. Washington, DC: USIP.

26   Hayner, P. B. 2000. Past truths, present dangers: The role of official truth seeking in conflict resolution and prevention. In Stern, P.C. and Druckman, D. (eds.) *International Conflict Resolution After the Cold War*. Washington D.C.: National Research Council.

27   Bush, K. D., & Saltarelli, D. (2000). *The two faces of education in ethnic conflict: Towards a peacebuilding education for children.* Florence, Italy; King (2014); UNESCO. (2023). Addressing hate speech through education: A guide for policy-makers. Paris: UNESCO.

Box 2.2: UNESCO's commitment to Global Citizenship Education (GCED) and education for peace

UNESCO's approach to addressing violent pasts through education is informed by its global programme on GCED and wider commitment to education for peace. The UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development stresses the importance of education about violent pasts as an 'opportunity to build a critical understanding of the complex relationships between past, present and future and of the legacies of violence, exclusion, and all forms of discrimination and their effects.' [28] In line with Education 2030 Agenda and the SDGs, education about violent pasts seeks to be a holistic and transformative endeavour on an individual and societal level. As stated by the World Conference against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance, 'remembering the crimes or wrongs of the past, wherever and whenever they occurred, unequivocally condemning its racist tragedies and telling the truth about history are essential elements for international reconciliation and the creation of societies based on justice, equality and solidarity.'[29]

→ **Guaranteeing the right to truth.** Victims of grave human rights violations, their families, and wider society have a legally recognized right to access the truth of what happened. Education about mass atrocity helps to fulfil the right to truth in a comprehensive way, signalling a commitment to human rights as society reckons with a past in which these rights were violated. Doing so is also a moral obligation to victims and survivors of atrocity crimes and to the generations that follow them.

→ **Supporting efforts to remember violent pasts.** Educating about violent pasts contributes to awareness and therefore underpins remembrance processes that should be carried by societies as a whole and not victim communities alone. The UN Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights argues for the importance of public sites of memory on the grounds that 'by making memory of the victims a public matter, [memorials] disburden their families from the sense of obligation to keep the memory alive.'[30] Public recognition of past violence – including recognition in schools – can furthermore help to reduce the shame or taboos associated with violent pasts, increase the visibility of victim communities and their past and continuing suffering, and anchor their experiences more squarely in collective memory.

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28   UNESCO. 2023. *Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development,* https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000391686_eng/PDF/391686eng.pdf.multi.page=3

29   United Nations. 2002. *World Conference Against Racism, Racial Discrimination, Xenophobia and Related Intolerance: Declaration and Programme of Action,* https://www.ohchr.org/sites/default/files/Documents/Publications/Durban_text_en.pdf

30   Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights. 2008. Rule-of-Law Tools for Post-Conflict States: Reparations Programmes, https://www.refworld.org/docid/47ea6ebf2.html

→ **Contributing to transitional justice.** Transitional justice refers to strategies for reckoning with atrocity crimes, and is focused on accountability, truth telling, acknowledgement and redress.[31] Transitional justice processes increasingly recommend educational reforms,[32] identifying the ways in which education systems, curricula and practices may have contributed to violence, and viewing education as a key space for rebuilding social relationships and circulating historical narratives that truthfully represent the violent past and restore the dignity of victims.[33] Transitional justice can be supported in education through pedagogy, as teaching and learning processes themselves can support the dignification of victim/survivors, exploring responsibility for atrocity crimes, enabling truth telling, attending to multiple perspectives with a focus on excluded or silenced histories, and supporting learners' creativity.[34]

→ **Educating for reparative futures.** Teaching and learning about violent pasts can positively influence how generations today approach the future and commit to repairing fractured societies. Education for reparative futures would 'embed the practice of asking ongoing and difficult questions with the past: cultivating spaces to remember, create, explore and discuss injustices; fostering an ethic of listening and dialogue capable of generating new perspectives; seeking to understand the histories, voices, and experiences that have been silenced or erased through assimilative forms of education; and grappling with the irresolvable difficulties of redemptive thought.'[35] Educating about histories of violence can contribute to repair when it creates space for the experiences and knowledge of people whose histories have been silenced by, or made marginal in, educational systems and processes so that all have opportunities to be recognized, explored, debated and critiqued. Rather than reproduce the 'science' of history developed since the Enlightenment that is inherently Eurocentric in its epistemology, educating about the past for reparative futures opens the field of history to other interpretations, perspectives and sources such as 'the practices of oral history, the recording of life histories, the writing of autobiographies, public testimonies, performances of song and dance, and visual sources of all kinds.'[36]

31   International Center for Transitional Justice (ICTJ). 2023. *What is transitional justice?* What Is Transitional Justice? | International Center for Transitional Justice (ictj.org) https://www.ictj.org/what-transitional-justice; Palmer, N., Clark, P. and Granville, D. 2012. *Critical Perspectives in Transitional Justice*. Antwerp: Intersentia Publishers; United Nations Security Council. (2004). The rule of law and transitional justice in conflict and post-conflict societies.

32   Paulson, J. and Bellino, M. 2017. Truth commissions, education and positive peace: an analysis of truth commission final reports. *Comparative Education*, Vol. 53, No. 3, pp. 351-378.

33   Bellino, M. J., Paulson, J. and Worden, E. A. 2017. Editorial: Working through difficult pasts: Toward thick democracy and transitional justice in education. *Comparative Education*, Vol. 53, No. 3, pp. 313-332; Paulson, J. and Bellino, M. 2017. Truth commissions, education and positive peace: an analysis of truth commission final reports. *Comparative Education*, Vol. 53, No. 3, pp. 351-378; Keynes, M. Elmersjö, H.A., Lindmark, D. and Norlin, B. (eds.) 2021. *Historical Justice and History Education*. London: Palgrave Macmillan; Cole, M. 2006. Introduction. In Cole, M (ed), *Education, Equality and Human Rights Issues of gender, 'race', sexuality, disability and social class*. pp. 1-7. Routledge; Ramirez-Barat, C. and Duthie, R. 2015. *Education and Transitional Justice: Opportunities and Challenges for Peacebuilding*. UNECEF.

34   Paulson, J. 2023. Reparative pedagogies. In (eds.) Hutchinson, Y. Cortez Ochoa, A. Julia Paulson, J. and Tikly, L. *Decolonizing Education for Sustainable Futures*, Bristol University Press.

35   Sriprakash, A., Nally, D., Myers, K., and Ramos-Pinto, P. 2020. Learning with the Past: Racism, Education and Reparative Futures. Paper commissioned for the UNESCO Futures of Education report.

36   Sriprakash, A., Nally, D., Myers, K., and Ramos-Pinto, P. 2020. Learning with the Past: Racism, Education and Reparative Futures. Paper commissioned for the UNESCO Futures of Education report.

2.1 The risks of not educating about violent pasts

Addressing violent pasts through education is difficult, but failing to address them may be dangerous. Young people are exposed to a wide variety of narratives about past violence in families, communities and online, not all of which are always accurate or well-intentioned. Historical narratives are always revised in response to contemporary political events but sometimes histories of violence can be misappropriated to support divisive or exclusionary political agendas. These initial impressions that young people absorb from the world around them can be highly resistant to change.

Classrooms represent one of the few spaces where young people can rigorously analyse evidence relating to past violence, in an environment that is safe enough to ask questions, provided teachers are adequately trained and equipped. In contexts where education about violent pasts is not yet institutionalized, well developed non-formal education institutions, such as museums or civil society organizations, may equally be able to provide such spaces in more limited capacity. The absence of rigorous and safe learning environments leaves a vacuum which other influences will fill. There is a substantial body of research that establishes the negative consequences of failing to address violent pasts through education or of doing so poorly. The dangers of not addressing violent pasts through education include:

→ **Historical silencing:** This is an intentional erasure within the dominant national narrative of a period or instance of violence, and/or an exclusion of a particular population and their identity-based struggles and contributions. Silence can range from explicit censorship – as in the suppression of histories of violence – to a silence in public discourse caused by the belief that specific instances of past violence (e.g. sexual violence) are taboo or controversial. Histories of violence may be characterized as silenced when they:

  - Sanitize representations of violence
  - Downplay scale and intentionality of harm (including the role of state actors)
  - Diminish the significance or long-term impact of violence
  - Fail to acknowledge the experiences of specific groups (e.g. women, Indigenous Peoples)
  - Discount the political agency and resistance of victims.[37]

  Silencing of violent pasts and historical injustices in education can foster strategic and selective ignorance towards the past in ways that maintain and reinforce power imbalances and structural inequalities.[38] For example, historical narratives around histories of enslavement and dispossession often present racism as a thing of the past, legitimising present-day structures of racial privilege and oppression.[39]

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37   Gellman, M., & Bellino, M. J. 2019. Fighting invisibility: Indigenous citizens and history education in El Salvador and Guatemala. *Latin American and Caribbean Ethnic Studies*, Vol. 14, No. 1, pp. 1-23.

38   Sriprakash, A., Rudolph, S. and Gerrard, S. 2022. *Learning Whiteness: Education and the Settler Colonial State.* London: Pluto Press; Mills, C. W. 2007. White Ignorance. In: Sullivan, S. and Tuana, N. (eds) Race and Epistemologies of Ignorance. New York: SUNY Press, pp.11-38; Khalidi, R. 2020. *The Hundred Years' War on Palestine: A History of Settler Colonialism*. New York: Macmillan Publishers.

39   Brown, A. L., & Brown, K. D. Strange fruit indeed: Interrogating contemporary textbook representations of racial-violence towards African Americans. *Teachers College Record*, 112(1), 31-67; Mills, 2007.

→ **Denial:** Denial rejects historical facts and the lived reality and suffering of victims of an atrocity crime. For example, Holocaust denial is an antisemitic conspiracy theory that asserts that the Nazi genocide of the Jews is a fabrication or an exaggeration and is imagined as part of a plot to advance Jewish interests. It was first instigated by the Nazi regime itself, who sought to disguise the genocide of Europe's Jews through euphemisms and the destruction of evidence. Today, the attempt to deny the Holocaust is an effort to exonerate National Socialism and historical antisemitism from guilt or responsibility in the genocide of the Jewish people, while spreading antisemitic ideas further.[40] Denial is insulting and injurious to victims, survivors, and their descendants, impedes our understanding of past violence, and creates conditions for future violence.

→ **Distortion:** Distortion occurs when historical facts are deliberately altered to serve a specific agenda and often involves the spread of lies or misinformation. In the context of the history of the Holocaust for example, distortion might include gross minimization of the number of Holocaust victims, attempts to blame the Jews for causing their own genocide, statements that cast the Holocaust as a positive historical event, attempts to blur responsibility for the establishment of concentration and death camps or limit that responsibility to an overly narrow set of actors. In the case of the transatlantic trade and enslavement of Africans, history is distorted by claims that seek to minimize the responsibility of countries and individuals that engaged in slavery. Distortion can be understood as a further act of injustice against victims, survivors and groups targeted and/or marginalized by violence.[41]

→ **Promotion of nationalist master narratives:** Some representations of the past – particularly when state sponsored – emphasize a singular national master narrative, that suppresses and excludes alternative historical perspectives. In some cases, these narratives venerate or excuse perpetrators of past violence, ignore instances of collaboration, or overemphasize acts of resistance to obscure widespread societal indifference. In other cases, they may be crafted to justify retaliation against groups associated with perpetrators of past violence. While nationalist narratives can contribute to feelings of belonging, they can also contribute to divisionism and othering that can in turn contribute towards interethnic tensions,[42] conflict and violence.[43] These narratives can also work to legitimise victimhood and/or supremacy of the 'in-group' and delegitimise and stigmatise the 'out-group' and their historical claims.[44] These narratives may

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40   See IHRA's non-legally binding working definition of Holocaust denial and distortion. https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-holocaust-denial-distortion and the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 76/250 on "Holocaust denial", https://digitallibrary.un.org/record/3956241/files/A_RES_76_250-EN.pdf

41   Sriprakash, A., Rudolph, S. and Gerrard, S. 2022. *Learning Whiteness: Education and the Settler Colonial State*. London: Pluto Press.

42   Jovanović, R. and a Marić, D. 2020. Controversy in the classroom: How teachers in the Western Balkans approach difficult topics. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 52(5), 636-653.

43   Euroclio. 2013. Manifesto on high quality, heritage and citizenship education: 15 principles for the recognition of the distinctive contribution of history to the development of young people. https://euroclio.eu/wp-content/uploads/2015/10/EuroClio-Manifesto-on-high-quality-history-heritage-and-citizenship-education.pdf

44   Goldberg, T. (2019). 'On whose side are you?': Difficult histories in the Israeli conflict. In T. Epstein & C. L. Peck (Eds.), *Teaching and Learning Difficult Histories in International Contexts: A Critical Sociocultural Approach* (pp. 145-159). London and New York: Routledge.

fail to adequately contextualize historical events, to recognize responsibilities and to consider multiple perspectives and experiences. There is also the danger of silencing and of favouring a simplistic historical approach that lacks complexity and nuance. The absence of an educational approach to challenge, nuance, or contextualise these nationalist master narratives can therefore prove dangerous.

Section 3

Frameworks to address violent pasts through education

3. Frameworks to address violent pasts through education

This section outlines several bodies of scholarship and practice that have addressed the question of how to teach about violent pasts. Each of these bodies of scholarship is supported by a robust history of empirical work, and each of these approaches has merit. Lessons and perspectives from these bodies of scholarship and practice can be applied individually and in tandem across diverse educational settings and adapted to differing developmental needs of learners across ages.

3.1 Human rights education

Human rights education advocates for educating about human rights norms, including examples of how human rights have been violated. Practitioners who use a human rights approach encourage respectful dialogue and foster an inclusive environment that protects all learners' rights. They aim to empower learners to recognize legacies of past violence and their effect on human rights and prevent future violence by defending and claiming rights. In particular, a human rights educational approach helps learners to define and categorize inflicted violence, as well as identify warning signs of future violence. Human rights education approaches align well with institutions charged with human rights protections, which may be introduced, reformed, or strengthened following rights violations. For example, following apartheid, the South African Human Rights Commission played an integral role in promoting human rights education.[45]

Human rights education has been linked to positive changes in learners' performance, self-awareness, commitments to social justice, school culture, and community relations, including in situations where violent conflict has occurred.[46] Because human rights norms are codified and protected in international law, human rights education has clear reference points to engage with learners. The language and categories of social, economic, and cultural rights can provide useful frames for recognizing and challenging structural inequities in learners' contexts, such as inequitable access to health care, education, housing, and other social services,[47] which may be the result of legacies of violent pasts.

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45   Tibbitts, F., & Keet, A. (2017). Curriculum Reform in Transitional Justice Environments: The South African Human Rights Commission, Human Rights Education and the Schooling Sector. In J. Zajda & S. Ozdowski (Eds.), *Globalisation, human rights education and reforms* (pp. 87-110): Springer.

46   Bajaj, M., Cislaghi, B., & Mackie, G. (2016). *Advancing transformative human rights education: Appendix D to the Report of the Global Citizenship Commission*. Cambridge, UK: Open Book Publishers; Bajaj, M., Canlas, M., & Argenal, A. (2017). Between rights and realities: Human rights education for immigrant and refugee youth in an urban public high school. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, 48(2), 124-140; Bernath, T., Holland, T., & Martin, P. (1999). How can human rights education contribute to international peacebuilding? *Current Issues in Comparative Education*, 2(1), 14-22; Flowers, N. (Ed.) (2003). A survey of human rights education. Gütersloh, Germany: Bertelsmann Verlag.

47   Flowers, N., & Rudelius-Palmer, K. (Eds.). (1993). *Human rights here and now: Celebrating the Universal Declaration of Human Rights* Minneapolis, MN: Human Rights Educators' Network & Amnesty International USA.

Box 3.1: The right to human rights education

The right to human rights education is outlined in the UDHR and reinforced through the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC). The UN Decade for Human Rights Education, from 1995 to 2004 further promoted human rights education. In 2011, the United Nations General Assembly passed a Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training, defining it as all educational activities 'aimed at promoting universal respect for and observance of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and was succeeded by the Word Programme for Human Rights Education to advacnce the implementation of human rights education.[48] The prevention of human rights violations and abuses by providing persons with knowledge, skills and understanding and developing their attitudes and behaviors, to empower them to contribute to the building and promotion of a universal culture of human rights.'[49]

Importantly, human rights education requires more than simply integrating human rights principles into curricula; rather, learners need opportunities to connect human rights to their everyday experiences and struggles.[50] Human rights educational approaches can risk learner scepticism, alienation, or disempowerment when human rights principles are emphasized in the absence of public recognition and accountability for historical violence.[51] Community-based education for adults and out-of-school learners can complement formal human rights education as an opportunity to bridge generational divides and potential resistance, particularly regarding tensions provoked over human rights and religious or cultural norms and practices.[52]

48   education. reference: United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, World Programme for Human Rights Education (2005-ongoing), https://www.ohchr.org/en/resources/educators/human-rights-education-training/world-programme-human-rights-education

49   United Nations General Assembly. 2011. *Resolution 66/137 on United Nations Declaration on Human Rights Education and Training,* https://docs.un.org/en/A/RES/66/137

50   Tibbitts, F., & Fernekes, W. R. (2010). Human Rights Education. In S. Totten & J. E. Pederson (Eds.), *Teaching and Studying Social Issues: Major Programs and Approaches* (pp. 87-117). Charlotte, NC: Information Age Publishing.

51   Bellino, M. J. (2014). Educating for human rights consciousness. *Listening: A Journal of Communication Ethics, Religion, and Culture* (Special Issue: The social construction of human rights), 136-157; Osler, A., & Yahya, C. (2017). Challenges and complexity in human rights education: Teachers' understandings of democratic participation and gender equity in post-conflict Kurdistan, Iraq. In M. Bajaj (Ed.), *Human rights education: Theory, research, praxis, edited by*, 69-95 (pp. 120-146). Philadelphia, PA: University of Pennsylvania Press.

52   Bajaj, Cislaghi, & Mackie, 2016.

Box 3.2: Human rights education approaches – key strategies

- Engage with human rights norms, principles, and mechanisms as codified through international law and frameworks, such as the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the Committee on the Rights of the Child.

- Analyse the historical contexts through which key human rights frameworks were shaped, including actions and debates.

- Examine examples of human rights frameworks as protective and preventative and apply a human rights lens when analysing the processes that led to past violence as well as efforts to restore human rights after conflict.

- Acknowledge the gaps that can exist between human rights ideals and realities and the importance of human rights advocacy for awareness and protection of individuals' rights and freedoms.

- Cultivate inclusive attitudes, respect for, and solidarity with diverse identities and experiences, spanning dimensions such as race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, and ability status.

- Connect learners' everyday opportunities, struggles, and priorities to the language and framing of human rights and encourage them to claim their rights and act on human rights issues.

3.2 Global citizenship education

GCED – a key commitment in the 2030 Agenda – emphasizes a sense of shared humanity, belonging, rights, and the interconnectedness between local, national, and global scales. UNESCO's GCED framework advocates that global citizens should be able to think critically and deliberately about issues of public importance and feel empowered to take action. Global citizenship is linked to enabling participation in democracy, and strengthening attitudes towards democratic processes principles such as plurality.[53]

Transformative pedagogy is central to UNESCO's vision for GCED: a learner-centred, value-based, practice-oriented education design that aims at changing previously adopted attitudes, values and behaviour. In the context of GCED, transformative learning enables the learner to grow, understand, discover and consequently develop into a positive and constructive member of a global society. It encompasses cognitive, socio-emotional, and behavioural domains of learning:

- **Cognitive:** To acquire knowledge, understanding and critical thinking about global, regional, national and local issues and the interconnectedness and interdependency of different countries and populations.

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53   Barton, K. C. and Levstik, L. S. 2004. Teaching history for the common good. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

- **Socio-emotional:** To have a sense of belonging to a common humanity, sharing values and responsibilities, empathy, solidarity, and respect for differences and diversity.
- **Behavioural:** To act effectively and responsibly at local, national and global levels for a more peaceful and sustainable world.[54]

GCED offers a powerful approach for addressing violent pasts, enabling learners to examine periods of human suffering and the rights, obligations, and communities that tie us together to prevent such violence.[55] It also offers a framework for posing critical questions about identity and foundational stories we tell ourselves about who we are as members of nations and a global community.

One value of a GCED approach is that it recognizes that membership, rights, and belonging pertain to both nation-states and transnational relationships, and that obligations span borders. This can be particularly valuable when learners feel sceptical or alienated from narrow nationalistic identities that have historically contributed to violence. GCED encourages individuals to feel a sense of inclusion and belonging to a shared humanity and therefore forefront a common human identity that can coexist with national or other local identities. This shift in scale changes the relationship between in-group and out-group members, so that out-group members are now considered in-group members in the context of a shared, superordinate identity group.[56] This approach does not imply that a homogenous globalized worldview is to replace localized knowledge systems and cultural practices, rather that commonalities are emphasized while differences are celebrated.

GCED is not a call to avoid addressing the specific contexts of local conflicts and divisions, nor is it a call to eliminate the nation-state as a source of belonging. When approaches focus on the global at the expense of the local, there is a risk of deflecting or obscuring internal divisions and power asymmetries, which are essential to understanding violent pasts, and core to the principles that underlie global citizenship.[57] Rather, the intention of GCED is to *connect* the local, national, and global perspectives and trends, as opposed to promoting one identity over the other. The ideal of global solidarity must be accompanied by inquiry and encouragement to act at local levels.[58]

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54   UNESCO. 2015. Global Citizenship Education-Topics and learning objectives. Paris: UNESCO, p. 15.

55   Stevick, E. D. (2017). *How does education about the Holocaust advance global citizenship education?* UNESCO.

56   Gaertner, S. L. and Dovidio, J.F. 2000. *Reducing intergroup bias: The common ingroup identity model.* Philadelphia, PA: Psychology Press.

57   Bellino, M. J. 2018. Is development 'the new peace'? Global citizenship as national obligation in postwar Guatemala. *Anthropology and Education Quarterly*, Vol. 49, No. 4, pp. 371-393.

58   UNESCO. 2018. Global Citizenship Education and the rise of nationalist perspectives: Reflections and possible ways forward. Paris: UNESCO.

> ## Box 3.3: Global citizenship education – key strategies
>
> - Promote knowledge about local, national, regional, and global issues and their interconnectedness.
> - Emphasize respect for diversity and a sense of shared humanity that unites across differences.
> - Develop a shared sense of belonging and humanity, alongside national inclusion.
> - Analyse and instil global commitments, such as those made to human rights and violence prevention.
> - Encourage civic responsibility and active engagement for a more just and peaceful world.

3.3 Educating about atrocity crimes

'Atrocity crimes' refer to three legally defined international crimes: genocide, crimes against humanity, and war crimes. The term 'atrocity crimes' has been extended to include ethnic cleansing which is not defined as an independent crime under international law.

The body of scholarship and practice that refers to teaching about atrocity crimes tends to focus on a specific instance of violence and related processes, e.g. the genocide of the Jewish people (Holocaust or Shoah), the 1994 genocide against the Tutsi in Rwanda, or the genocide committed by the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia. While taking into consideration the social and historical specificities of these atrocity crimes, UNESCO's guide *Teaching to prevent atrocity crimes: a guide for teachers in Africa* suggests that the study of atrocity crimes can help learners inquire about power structures and their legacies, along with the causes and impacts of hate speech and violent extremism, and advance peacebuilding within their own communities.[59] The guide argues that learning about the dynamics of atrocity crimes helps young people identify the societal risks posed by prejudice, hate speech, systemic discrimination and the exclusion of minoritized groups.

When teaching about atrocity crimes, the UNESCO guide suggests that teachers adopt a four-stage process:

→ **Reflect and prepare before teaching.** This involves the teacher reflecting on their own beliefs, biases, and emotions regarding the atrocity crime, while ensuring that they have accurate historical information in regard to it.

→ **Set up the classroom space to be a safe and engaging environment.** This means creating an environment where students' emotional reactions to learning about the atrocity crime can be supported and processed.

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59   UNESCO. 2023. *Teaching to prevent atrocity crimes: A guide for teachers in Africa*, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000386136

→ **Connect learner experiences to wider social, political and international dynamics.** This can be achieved in a number of different ways, such as connecting a wider atrocity crime to the experiences of local people or connecting past violence to contemporary events that learners may already be aware of.

→ **Historicize and humanize a study of atrocity crimes.** Learning about atrocity crimes gives learners the opportunity to explore the decision-making processes of individuals and institutions, including how those decisions were enabled or constrained by social or political factors. This helps learners to understand that atrocity crimes are not inevitable. By foregrounding stories about people, teachers can also remind learners of the humanity of those involved.

Box 3.4: Educating about atrocity crimes – key strategies

- Create a safe classroom environment which provides support for emotional responses and offers space for reflection.

- Ensure that lessons are strongly grounded in historical evidence and develop historical literacy and critical thinking; alert against denial and distortion and be prepared to address both constructively, if raised. Be precise in the use of language and define the relevant terminology i.e. genocide, atrocity crime, Holocaust.

- Be aware of how different learners in the classroom might be differently positioned in relation to the atrocity crime and prepare lessons with sensitivity to these identities.

- Draw connections between the local, national, and international, so that learners can understand how large-scale atrocity crimes were fermented by and impacted on local environments.

- If certain atrocity crimes feel too sensitive to teach, start with learning about the dynamics of atrocity crimes that do not directly impact learners' identities. Focus on the agency and decision-making of individuals as perpetrators, resisters, or bystanders, and ways in which individuals can make a difference. Create opportunities to examine the complicated nature of roles people played rather than reinforcing stereotypes. Do not attempt to explain away the perpetrators as 'inhuman monsters', rather provide context to highlight political and social circumstances and their impact on choices and motivations.

- Be reflective about purpose and rationale when using written and visual materials – especially those of a graphic nature.

Box 3.5: Teaching and learning about the Holocaust

The Holocaust is a mandatory or recommended topic of study in schools across most of Europe, North America, and several African, Asian, and Latin American countries.

Holocaust education focuses specifically on teaching and learning relating to the systematic, bureaucratic, state-sponsored persecution and murder of six million Jews by the German Nazi regime and its collaborators leading up to and during the Second World War. It can aim to contribute to specific historical understandings of mass violence, as well as human rights and genocide prevention. It furthermore aims to counter Holocaust and genocide denial and distortion.

UNESCO and the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) recommend teaching about precursors, key stages and turning points, the historical agency of victims and perpetrators, the role of bystanders and rescuers, long-term consequences and relevance to present-day contexts and issues. An in-depth study of the historical context and conditions that allowed for such systemic and hateful violence to occur, including the role of schools and teachers in sanctioning violence and enforcing antisemitic ideology and discrimination, is essential to understanding how the persecution of Jews escalated over time, was related to the targeting of other populations, and mobilized widespread popular support. In other words, coverage of atrocity crimes should account for the links between structural and cultural/epistemic violence, in addition to physical violence.

Related reflections may include:

- How can the study of the persecution of the victims of Nazi ideology advance the understanding of the impact of human rights violations on societies today? In particular, what can it tell us about the relationships between stereotypes, prejudices, scapegoating, discrimination, persecution, and genocide?

- How can knowledge about Jewish refugees before, during and after the Holocaust be relevant in understanding contemporary refugee crises?

- What can learning about the Holocaust tell us about the process of genocide, its warning signs, and possibilities for intervention that might strengthen contemporary efforts at genocide prevention?

- Are there contexts where the use of Holocaust imagery, comparisons and discourse are unhelpful or actively problematic? Are there representations of the Holocaust which are particularly problematic?

Further, the IHRA recommends that educators anticipate comparison and are 'prepared to examine other histories of genocide, racism, enslavement, persecution, or colonialism in the modern world,' while taking care not to equate or conflate circumstances.[60] To guide related reflections, the IHRA has published a set of questions that can guide educators in making comparisons that are historically adequate, sensitive, and accurate.[61]

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60   IHRA.2019. *Recommendations for Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust*, https://holocaustremembrance.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Recommendations-for-Teaching-and-Learning-about-the-Holocaust-%E2%80%93-IHRA.pdf

61   IHRA. 2024. *IHRA Reflections on Terminology for Holocaust Comparison*, https://holocaustremembrance.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/01/IHRA-Reflections-on-Terminology-for-Holocaust-Comparison-January-2024-1.pdf

3.4 Peace education and education *for* peace

Peace education is recognized as the principal means to build a culture of peace through teaching and learning of concepts, skills, and dispositions to resolve conflict peacefully.[62] As defined by UNESCO, education for non-violence and peace encompasses knowledge, skills, and attitudes necessary for a peaceful resolution of conflicts and the promotion of human rights and intercultural understanding.[63] It further aims to enable learners to 'contribute to the prevention, mediation and resolution of conflicts in a peaceful, constructive and negotiated manner and end cycles of violence and hostility.'[64] Socioemotional outcomes, such as respect for self and others, as well as skills such as cooperation and communication are central in reaching these goals.

The UNESCO Recommendation on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Sustainable Development recognizes that peace is not just the absence of violence and conflicts, but also the positive, participatory, and dynamic process that nurtures our ability to value human dignity and take care of oneself, each other, and the planet. Education *for* peace therefore expands beyond the notion of teaching learners *about* peaceful conflict resolution. It considers education as a holistic vehicle to scrutinize and transform the root causes of violence,[65] with the understanding that transformation is required to address underlying drivers of violent conflict.[66] Transforming relationships that contribute to violent conflict includes addressing gender-based violence and gender hierarchies in schools and society.[67] Educational spaces, actors, interactions, and systems can inflict various types of violence.[68] Thus, critical education for peace looks beyond the formal curriculum into everyday practices, structures, and relationships, to remove active and passive contributors to negative conflict. Moreover, the school environment itself needs to be a space where conflicts and disciplinary matters are resolved peacefully, so that children learn through 'peace in

62   Bajaj, M. and Hantzopoulos, M. 2016. *Peace Education: International Perspectives.* London: Bloomsbury.

63   UNESCO. 2008. UNESCO's work on education for peace and non-violence: Building peace through education.

64   UNESCO. 2023. *Recommendation on Education for Peace and Human Rights, International Understanding, Cooperation, Fundamental Freedoms, Global Citizenship and Sustainable Development*, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000391686_eng/PDF/391686eng.pdf.multi.page=3

65   Woodrow, P. and Chigas, D. 2009. A Distinction with a Difference: Conflict Sensitivity and Peacebuilding Reflecting on Peace Practice Project. Cambridge, MA: DA Collaborative Learning Projects; Clarke-Habibi, S. 2015. Distinguishing Peace Education, Peacebuilding through Education, and Conflict-Sensitive Education. https://saraclarkehabibi.weebly.com/blog/distinguishing-peace-education-peacebuilding-through-education-and-conflict-sensitive-education [Accessed 22/04/23]

66   Smith Ellison, C. and Smith, A. 2012. Youth, education and peacebuilding: International Institute for Educational Planning, UNESCO Centre, University of Ulster.

67   Bickmore, K. and Farahani, N. K. 2022. Peacebuilding Education to Address Gender-Based Aggression: Youths' Experiences in Mexico, Bangladesh, and Canada. *Journal on Education in Emergencies*, Vol. 8, No. 2, pp. 14-43.

68   Harber, C. 2004. Schooling as violence: How schools harm pupils and societies. New York: Routledge.

practice'.[69] Critical pedagogy invites the participation, dialogue, and inquiry of learners to ensure inclusivity, active learning, and locally relevant analyses of peace and power.[70]

Addressing violent pasts is critical for educating *about* and for peace. To do this successfully, violence should be de-normalized, i.e. by countering claims that violence is inevitable or intrinsic in cultural practices through critical inquiry about the causes, consequences, and non-violent alternatives available to historical actors.[71] Discussing past violence and its consequences should also extend to peace movements and failed and successful efforts to mediate conflict and establish peace.[72] Exploring the agency of past actors, in turn, evokes reflections on the agency of citizens to contribute to peace through everyday actions and decisions.[73] Acknowledging the co-existence of multiple perspectives and the legitimacy of the other's historical narrative, if based on empirical evidence, is an ideal outcome of history taught through a peace education lens.[74]

The possibilities for teaching peace vary greatly depending on the context, allowing for both 'narrow' approaches focused on skills and dispositions, and 'broad' approaches that encompasses critical inquiry into structural and societal dimensions of violence.[75]

Education *about* and *for* peace is more effective and meaningful when it is adapted according to the social and cultural context and the needs of a country. It should be enriched by its cultural and spiritual values together with an emphasis on universal human values, underpinned by international human rights law.

69   Thapa, M., Dhungana, R. K., Mahalingam, B. and Conilleau, J. 2010. Peace by piece: Mainstreaming peace education in South Asia. *Peace Education Campaign*, pp. 8-10.

70   Bajaj, M. and Hantzopoulos, M. 2016. *Peace Education: International Perspectives*. London: Bloomsbury; Bajaj and Hantzopolous, 2016 Bajaj, M. and Brantmeier, E. J. 2011. The politics, praxis and possibilities of critical peace education. Journal of Peace Education, Vol. 83, pp. 221-224.

71   Bellino, M.J. 2014. Educating for human rights consciousness. *Listening: A Journal of Communication Ethics, Religion, and Culture*. Special Issue: The social construction of human rights, Fall, pp. 136-157; Bermudez, A. (2021). Narrative justice? Ten tools to deconstruct narratives about violent pasts. In M. Keynes, H. Åström Elmersjö, D. Lindmark, & N. Björn (Eds.), *Historical Justice and History Education* (pp. 269-289). Cham, Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan.Bickmore, K., Salehin Kaderi, A. and Guerra-Sua, Á. 2017. Creating capacities for peacebuilding citizenship: history and social studies curricula in Bangladesh, Canada, Colombia, and México. *Journal of Peace Education*, Vol. 14, No. 3, pp. 282-309; Padilla, A. and Bermudez, A. Normalising conflict and de-normalising violence: Challenges and possibilities of critical teaching of the history of the Colombian armed conflict. *Revista Colombiana de Educación*, Vol. 71, No. 1, pp. 187-218.

72   Bermudez, A. (2021). Narrative justice? Ten tools to deconstruct about violent pasts, in M. Keynes, Å Elmersjö, D. Lindmark and B. Norlin (Eds.) (2021). *Historical Justice and History Education*. Switzerland: Palgrave Macmillan Cham, p. 269-289.

73   Barton, K. C. and Levstik, L. S. 2004. Teaching history for the common good. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates; Bellino, M. J. and Selman, R. L. 2011. High school students' understanding of personal betrayal in a socio-historical context of ethnic conflict: Implications for teaching history. International Journal of History Teaching, Learning and Research, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 29-43; Selman, R. L. and Barr, D. 2009. Can adolescents learn to create ethical relationships for themselves in the future by reflecting on ethical violations faced by others in the past? In Martens, M., Hartmann, U., Sauer, M. and Hasselhorn, M. (Eds.), Interpersonal understanding in historical context, pp. 19-41. Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense.

74   Salomon, G. 2004. A narrative-based view of coexistence education. *Journal of Social Issues*, Vol. 60, No. 2, pp. 273-287.

75   Bar-Tal, D. and Rosen, Y. 2009. Peace education in societies involved in intractable conflicts: Direct and indirect models. *Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 79, pp. 557–575.

Box 3.6: Education *about* and *for* peace – key strategies

- Emphasize commitments to constructing a culture of peace inside schools and communities.
- Review existing education structures and practices to remove any obstacles to sustainable peace and emphasize education that raises awareness about the continuing legacies of past violence.
- Study violent pasts in tandem with reflections on peace negotiations, including failed and successful attempts to mediate and establish peace, transitional justice processes, and reconciliation efforts.
- Learn about peace movements and other forms of nonviolent resistance.
- Cultivate skills for peaceful conflict-resolution and emphasize the agency of citizens to contribute to peace and conflict-transformation through their daily actions.
- Recognize and commit to transforming the root causes of violence.
- De-normalize violence and emphasize the non-inevitability of violence.
- Include multiple perspectives in narrating and remembering the past, especially marginalized voices.

3.5 Cross-cutting perspectives to consider

The nature of violent pasts is as diverse as their causes and consequences. Adopting an intersectional approach, recognizing the overlapping impacts of gender, disability, ethnicity, language, displacement status, and sexual orientation, helps to capture the complexity of violent histories and their legacies and identify adequate connections between shared experiences from diverse contexts. Applying this lens ensures that education not only reflects diversity but actively dismantles exclusion and structural disadvantage, especially in contexts where past and present harms intersect.

3.5.1 Gender-responsiveness

Direct, structural, and cultural or epistemic forms of violence are influenced by, and continue to influence, the social construction of gender and gendered identities. Addressing violent pasts necessitates engaging with gender stereotypes, gender-based violence, and the ways in which men, women, boys, girls and LGBTQI+ people experience and are targeted by systematic violence. This includes addressing the prevalence of sexual and gender-based violence across violent conflicts, and the differential roles and experiences of individuals based on gender and intersecting social identities such as sexual orientation. It should extend to gendered perspectives on resistance

to violence, prevention, and peacebuilding movements, many of which have been led by women.[76] Importantly, gender should be included as a cross-cutting perspective with the aim to investigate how gender identities have influenced the experience of past violence, their legacies and representation in memory discourses, rather than being exemplified in isolated cases.

Teaching about gendered perspectives and experiences is part of a comprehensive strategy to address and prevent gender-based discrimination, inequality, exclusion, sexual violence and exploitation, and their root causes. The topic of gender-based and sexual violence remains pedagogically and ethically sensitive. It is among 'the most silenced, ignored, and under-addressed topics in the history curricula.'[77] To navigate related sensitivities, gender perspectives should be introduced in recognition of local beliefs and practices about gender, histories and legacies of sexual violence, as well as present-day reporting mechanisms for victims of gender-based violence and sexual assault.[78]

Gender perspectives are also important because of the gendered experience of persecution beyond sexual violence. Violent pasts are often perceived differently by women, men or people who identify as LGBTQI+, because of the gendered treatment they received and how legacies continue to affect them. In the first decade of apartheid in South Africa, for example, the intranational movement of women was not restricted under the 'pass' laws as it was for men. During the Nazi regime, German gay men in particular were targeted by Nazi persecution and were subject to extremely harsh treatment in concentration camps where they were differentiated with the symbol of pink triangles.[79]

3.5.2 Anti-racism

In many societies, violence is both influenced by racialised identities and contributes to the construction of racialised identities. Education which is racially responsive or anti-racist, recognizes the ways that race and racism shape unequal life chances and enduring societal inequities and then aims to actively dismantle racial inequity in educational spaces and society. It furthermore ensures that the experiences and agency of differently racialised groups are represented in narratives of historic violence, while also helping students to understand the non-essentialised and historically contingent nature of racial identities.

76   Jana Krause, Werner Krause, and Piia Bränfors, 'Women's participation in peace negotiations and the durability of peace,' International Interactions 44, no. 6 (2018): 985-1016; Naraghi Anderlini, S. (2020). *Recognizing Women Peacebuilders: Critical actors in effective peacemaking*. International Civil Society Action Network.

77   Mocnik, N. 2021. A lesson on war-related sexual violence in a history classroom: Discussion points for educators, *Review of Education, Pedagogy, and Cultural Studies*, Vol. 43, No. 2, pp. 103-118, p. 103.

78   Engel, K. 2020. T*he Grip of Sexual Violence in Conflict: Feminist Interventions in International Law.* Stanford University Press; Okech. A. 2020. African feminist epistemic communities and decoloniality. *Critical African Studies*, 12(3), 313-329.

79   United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Gay men under the Nazi regime*, Holocaust encyclopaedia, https://encyclopedia.ushmm.org/content/en/article/gay-men-under-the-nazi-regime

Through anti-racist education, students can come to understand the practices, processes and ideologies of racialisation along with the effects of racialisation on individuals and wider society. This includes an understanding of how racism disadvantages some and advantages others, including through social processes that construct whiteness as superior. Importantly, anti-racist education demonstrates that racism exists and is maintained not only (or even primarily) through individual prejudices but by the ways in which racism is structurally and institutionally embedded in societies, including in education systems, policies, and practices.

3.5.3 Decolonial perspectives

Decolonial approaches to addressing violent pasts through education are explicitly oriented towards acknowledging and dismantling the legacies of colonialism and ongoing coloniality in education structures and processes. They draw on a long tradition of decolonial thought and praxis by theorists and activists who have described and sought to challenge coloniality. Decolonial processes are concerned with all aspects of education, from its institutional structures through to the contents of curricula and the relationships between teachers and learners.

Policy-makers need to pay attention to the ways that educational structures and systems have been founded and developed alongside, within and often to serve, colonial projects that oppressed, denied life to and marginalised particular groups and histories. Curricula have historically been reflective of colonial (often Eurocentric) traditions and ways of knowing, while excluding and devaluing histories, knowledge systems, and educational practices of Indigenous and local peoples.[80] Dominant historical narratives in educational spaces have served to rationalize and reproduce these power hierarchies. Schooling was, and in many cases continues to be, delivered in colonial languages, jeopardising linguistic and cultural sustainability.

Approaching past violence through education in a way that incorporates a decolonial perspective would emphasize: 1) the contemporary legacies of past violence, particularly as they relate to resource distribution, status, and identity, 2) the forms of knowledge that are considered valuable or powerful, 3) the perspectives of marginalized groups, and 4) the world that existed before the violence, thus drawing attention to what was lost.

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80   Choque Apaza, J; Robinson, N (2024) *Representation, responsibility and legacy: a comparative analysis of how colonial history is narrated in Bolivian social science textbooks, pre- and post-070 Educational Reform.* History Education Research Journal.

CASE STUDY

Teacher- and civil society-driven decolonial and reparative approaches to learning about legacies of enslavement in Bristol, United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland

Many schools in England teach about the transatlantic slave trade in connection to lessons on the British Empire, colonialism and the industrial revolution. To support and improve teaching on these topics, teachers and civil society organizations in the city of Bristol, England, have developed several initiatives drawing on decolonial perspectives, which seek to grapple explicitly with the localized history and legacy of enslavement in Bristol.

For example, a group of history teachers, reflecting on the existing curricular content around enslavement as 'narrow and macabre' and non-specific to Bristol, came together to create their own resource. The teachers partnered with academics from local universities and with the Bristol Museum to write a complete textbook focusing on the origins, impacts and legacies of the Transatlantic Slave Trade in the city. They consulted with Black teachers and Bristol-based African and Afro-Caribbean community organizations. The result is a wide and deep narrative that works across time and space and includes images of artefacts from the Bristol Museum's Collection and items from the city's archives. The guide was distributed to local teachers, is for sale in the museum's gift shop and is used in history teacher training at Bristol universities.

In addition, the Bristol-based civil society organization CARGO created a series of freely available digital resources that centre African and African-heritage individuals whose resistance, resilience, leadership and innovation made a major historical contribution. The CARGO resources use poetry, collage, imagery, historical and archival research and video to tell the stories of historical figures such as Imhotep, Queen Nzinga, Nanny of the Maroons, Samuel Sharpe, Marcus Garvey and others. The resources invoke images of dignity, freedom, celebration, pride, healing, recovery and self-repair, resonating descriptions of anti-racist, reparative and pro-Black pedagogy as co-constructed, intentional, caring and loving. The resources support socio-emotional as well as historical learning, developing a sense of confidence, pride and recognition in learners of African descent and fostering respect, dialogue and the recognition of common humanity for all learners. The CARGO resources are not intended to replace teaching about enslavement or about the British Empire, but rather to complement and expand upon it. They highlight the previous silences about wider African histories and about leaders of African descent and open possibilities to discuss why these silences exist.

In consultation with history teachers and teacher educators, CARGO has developed clear links to national curriculum and the resources include lesson guides for secondary teachers. A free online teacher training and capacity-development course accompanies the resources, including guidance on their relevance beyond history classrooms, with linkages to teaching

English, arts and STEM subjects. The CARGO resources are being adopted by schools and teachers in the Southwest of England where they were developed and trialled, but also more broadly across the United Kingdom and globally.

3.5.4 Inclusion

People with disabilities and mental health needs have been part of the fabric of all societies, past and present, yet their stories are often hidden or marginalized. This is particularly problematic when addressing violent pasts, as violence both impacts people with disabilities differently, and leads to an increase in disability and mental health challenges. For example, birth defects associated with exposure to Agent Orange following the 1955-1975 war in Viet Nam are an important and lasting legacy of that particular violent past. To marginalize the history of disabilities is to avoid a full discussion of how violence impacts societies.

Inclusive approaches to addressing violent pasts through education make a concerted effort to include the lives and perspectives of those living with disability and mental health needs. This includes reflecting about past violence directly targeted at people with a disability, and ensuring that education about violent pasts is accessible to all. The Memorial and Museum at Schloss Hartheim in Austria, for example, commemorates the systematic murder of over 70,000 adults and children with physical disabilities, chronic illness and mental health conditions by the German Nazi regime. In Schloss Hartheim alone, over 30,000 persons were killed. The memorial ensures full accessibility to the historical site and hosts a permanent exhibition that reflects on human rights and the societal treatment of individuals based on their perceived 'ability'.[81] Teaching about disability and mental health should seek to reduce ableist stigma, particularly that which may result from a history of violence. This can be achieved by emphasizing the agency of those who lived with disabilities. It should also help learners with disabilities or mental health needs to see themselves represented in the history that they learn about. Inclusive approaches therefore contribute to the Education for All agenda, which works under the assumption that every learner matters equally and has the right to receive effective educational opportunities.

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81   Lern-und Gedenkort Schloss Hartheim, *Value of Life exhibition*, https://www.schloss-hartheim.at/en/memorial-exhibition/value-of-life-exhibition

Section 4

System-wide approaches to address violent pasts through education

4. System-wide approaches to address violent pasts through education

Classroom encounters that help learners engage with violent pasts can be supported by a range of decisions, approaches, and resources across the education system. The following section outlines ways in which policy environments, curricular resources, teacher training, memory sites, and civil society actors can improve learning and teaching about violent pasts. Further guidance regarding a possible path towards related policy revision and reform is included in Annex I of this guide.

4.1 An enabling policy environment

> **Box 4.1: Promising practices and recommendations for education policies**
>
> - Include explicit rationale for addressing violent pasts through education in overarching policy frameworks, which outline education sector goals.
> - Encourage coherence and joined-up thinking within the Ministry of Education and in its relationships and partnerships with other sectors and actors, including civil society and international partners.
> - Engage in open, deliberative, and participatory policy-making processes that include opportunities for diverse social groups to participate, be consulted, and to build trust and buy-in in the policy reform process.
> - Ensure policy frameworks lay out practical support for the implementation of curricular and content changes around violent pasts, including clarity around how and where this learning will be assessed and ongoing support for teacher professional development (accounting for pre- and in-service teachers).
> - Support and collaborate with those able to offer contributions beyond the education sector, including from civil society organizations, research institutions, heritage and memory site professionals, and other government sectors whose work can contribute to an enabling policy environment,
> - Anchor approaches in policy and/or legal frameworks that can ensure sustainability in case of changing government.

A supportive policy environment for addressing violent pasts in education is crucial for the success of specific initiatives, be they structural reforms, curricular change, the development of new teaching materials, teacher training or others.[82] Overarching education sector policies indicate

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82   Tawil, S. and Harley, A. 2004. *Education, Conflict and Social Cohesion*. Geneva: UNESCO International Bureau of Education.

intentions, set goals, and connect national education sectors to global policy initiatives and objectives. Enhancing education's potential contributions to peace is often an implicit intention of governments, or indeed a justification for educational planning.[83] However, education sector plans do not always explicitly include rationales for key policy and sector changes. In order to address violent pasts successfully through education, it is necessary to have a clear policy mandate that explains and justifies the rationale and goals for this kind of learning.

These wider policy frameworks are important. They provide guidance and support for education officials, teacher trainers, and teachers – particularly in cases where they encounter resistance. They help to generate support and buy-in from other sectors and stakeholders, including parents and communities. In the absence of explicit policy rationales and requirements for teaching about violent pasts, ministry of education officials may find it difficult to implement history and peace education curricula reforms when faced with opposition. The political commitment of governments to addressing violent pasts must be matched by support and resources for the implementation of such reforms.

It is also important for policy frameworks to include practical elements and foresee the implementation of curricula reforms and the dissemination of educational materials, for example by establishing clear linkages to assessment and introducing and financing support for pre-service and in-service teacher training. The inclusion of these elements helps teachers and educational stakeholders understand the underlying rationale for reforms and anticipate some of the challenges of implementation.

Successful policy implementation depends upon the actions of individuals – education officials, teachers, students, parents, community members, stakeholders in other sectors – and these are not always rational or easily predicted;[84] however they can be supported by clear and enabling policy environments and discourses that explicitly justify policy goals.[85] Educational policy reforms in Colombia show the value of linking education and transitional justice processes, developing explicit policies to justify and require addressing violent pasts and working in collaboration with civil society.

Lastly, inequities in access to and outcomes from education are often a consequence of violent conflict and mass atrocity. These inequities can remain as persistent legacies of the violent past, and education policy-makers must take steps to redress and transform these inequities, including by devoting educational resources and special programming to regions and groups disadvantaged

83   Bellino, M. J., Paulson, J. and Worden, E. A. 2017. Editorial: Working through difficult pasts: Toward thick democracy and transitional justice in education. *Comparative Education*, Vol. 53, No. 3, pp. 313-332.

84   Russell, G. S. 2019. *Becoming Rwandan: Education, Reconciliation and the Making of a Post-Genocide Citizen*. Rutgers: Rutgers University Press; Coburn, C. E. 2004. Beyond Decoupling: Rethinking the Relationship Between the Institutional Environment and the Classroom. *Sociology of Education*, Vol. 77, No. 3, pp. 211-244.

85   Ball, S.J., Maguire, M., Braun, A. and Hoskins K. 2011. Policy actors: doing policy work in schools, Discourse: Studies in the Cultural Politics of Education, Vol. 32, No. 4, pp. 625-639, DOI: 10.1080/01596306.2011.601565; Mitchell, M., Agbaire, J., Paulson, J., Sprague, T. and Tikly, L. 2022. Endogenous systems leadership for education in crises: A framework for inclusive and equitable quality education in low- and middle-income countries. *Bristol Working Papers in Education* 03/2022.

by conflict and violence, and by addressing misrepresentation, omission and epistemic injustice in curricula and textbooks.

The legitimacy of educational reforms to address the legacies of violent pasts can be built from transitional justice initiatives, which often identify such needs for educational change and make recommendations. For example, the Peruvian Truth and Reconciliation Commission recommended educational reform. This reform included support and resources for rural and intercultural education and for Indigenous language education, given the degree of educational inequality experienced by rural and Indigenous communities, who were the primary victims of the country's armed conflict. The Canadian Truth and Reconciliation Commission on residential schools also called for the redistribution of educational resources to address the underfunding of education for Indigenous Peoples. In Timor Leste, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission included several education reform recommendations which led to the creation of a civic education programme and a stronger focus on teaching methods that contribute to a culture of peace, respect and non-violence. In all cases, the commissions called on policy-makers to develop educational approaches to embed anti-racism and actively challenge discrimination in the entire population to prevent future violence and indifference.

CASE STUDY

Argentina's comprehensive policy approach to teaching violent pasts

Until recently in Argentina the Ministry of Education hosted a department focused specifically on teaching about the country's violent history and its legacies. From 1976 to 1983, Argentina experienced a civil-miliary dictatorship under the leadership of a tripartite military junta. During this period, political opponents were kidnapped, imprisoned, tortured and killed – an act of state terrorism now known under the euphemistic term 'disappearance'. The crimes of the military junta also included the secret and illegal appropriation of hundreds of babies born in military prisons, who grew up without knowledge of their true identities. An important political shift towards recognition and justice in the early 2000s levelled the path for broader policies to address this violent pasts. Since 2005, the Ministry of Education has been working in close collaboration with civil society to develop public policy around education, justice, the rule of law and memory, ensuring curricular and textbook revision and support and training for teachers. Related work was supported by the creation of a dedicated Ministry of Education programme on education and memory, allocating capacities and gathering expertise to support the development of related education approaches and materials. Further, the government declared 24 March a federal holiday in Argentina. This day marks the beginning of the civil-military dictatorship and commemorates its victims and highlights the need to protect democracy and prevent state terrorism and related crimes under the premise 'nunca más!' (never again!). Many teachers use this occasion to explain to their students why this day is important. On the day, some schools also participate in marches in commemoration of the

victims. These extracurricular activities significantly contribute to learners' understanding of their national past and the consequences of mass violence.

The success of this comprehensive approach was notable. A large-scale study found that the majority of young people noted school as the first and most important place where they learned about the history of dictatorship.[86] The same study showed that shared ownership of education policy development processes, transparency around decision-making processes, and community participation have been identified as key features of education policy-making processes that reduce rather than exacerbate drivers of conflict. Policy frameworks that enable and model democratic processes, distributed leadership, and inclusive decision-making reinforce values central to addressing violent pasts.[87]

CASE STUDY

Policy frameworks support teaching about the violent past in Colombia

Colombia experienced more than five decades of internal armed conflict between state forces, rebel groups and paramilitary organizations. In 2016 the government signed a peace deal with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), establishing a comprehensive set of transitional justice measures known as the integrated system of justice, truth, reparation and non-repetition.

Educational efforts to address the conflict predate the peace agreement. There has been a policy requirement for schools to teach about the armed conflict in the country since 2011. This requirement was introduced as part of the Victims and Land Restitution Act, which lays out formalized processes for recognizing victims of conflict and the forms of reparation to which they are entitled, including symbolic reparation via history education about the realities of the war. This same act founded Colombia's National Centre for Historical Memory (Centro Nacional de Memoria Histórica or CNMH in Spanish). The CNMH is an independent national institution, funded by the state and tasked to operate with autonomy to bring together and recover documentary material and testimony in order to understand and acknowledge the experience of victims during the armed conflict.

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86   Adamoli, M.C., Farías, M., Flachsland, C. 2015. Educación y memoria. La historia de una política pública. *Historia de la Educación – Anuario*, 16(2).

87   Davies, L. 2009. Capacity development for education systems in fragile contexts, ETF, Turin, [Accessed 24/04/2023], https://www.etf.europa.eu/en/publications-and-resources/publications/capacity-development-education-systems-fragile-contexts; Shah, R. 2012. Goodbye conflict, hello development? Curriculum reform in Timor-Leste, International Journal of Educational Development. Vol. 32, No. 1, pp. 31-38. Miller-Grandvaux, Y. 2009. Education and Fragility: A New Framework. Journal of Education for International Development, Vol. 4, No. 1, pp. 1-14.

Further transitional justice processes in Colombia bolster education policy initiatives, including through active collaboration with Ministry of Education policy-makers, local educational authorities, and teachers. Colombia's Truth Commission, which operated between 2018 and 2022, was the first in the world to include pedagogy as one of its operational pillars. This meant that the Commission was aware of the pedagogical project around building support for its work and mandate and worked from the beginning with educators, students and the education system more widely in order to share key findings. The Commission made a number of innovations, including the establishment of an education team within the commission; a programme of youth ambassadors; the publication of a chapter on children and adolescents in the armed conflict (including considerable focus on education) as part of the final report; and an extensive production of Truth Commission resources for education and communication.

The civil society organization EDUCAPAZ collaborated closely with the truth commission including on the *Escuelas de Palabra* project. The project created methodological maps for approaches to making 'truth a public good' in schools, creating five paths that offer differing levels of direct engagement with teaching about armed conflict given school and community possibilities. An online diploma course in teaching about armed conflict in Colombia emerged from the first phases of the project as teachers and EDUCAPAZ mutually recognized the need for capacity development and opportunities for dialogue and mutual learning. Because of the truth commission's commitment to education during its mandate and its active collaborations with education policy-makers and civil society organizations, projects like *Escuelas de Palabra* continue beyond the presentation of the truth commission's final report, ensuring that its findings are shared in classrooms.

CASE STUDY

Establishing a policy framework to address the legacies of enslavement in the Kingdom of the Netherlands

In December 2022, the Government of the Netherlands apologized for the past actions of the Dutch State: 'to enslaved people in the past, everywhere in the world, who suffered as a consequence of those actions, as well as to their daughters and sons, and to all their descendants, up to the present day.'[88] The prime minister gave the apology at the National Archives in The Hague, in the presence of representatives of organizations that have pressed for acknowledgement of the effects of slavery.

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88   https://www.government.nl/latest/news/2022/12/19/government-apologises-for-the-netherlands-role-in-the-history-of-slavery

The prime minister's apology and the dialogues elsewhere are a part of the government's response[89] to the report entitled 'Chains of the Past',[90] which was presented by the Slavery History Dialogue Group in July 2021. The Dialogue Group focused on the impact of the transatlantic slavery past on present-day society and on a broader acknowledgement of and active engagement with this shared past. The Dialogue Group conducted many interviews and consulted a wide range of people and organizations in the European Netherlands, and also facilitated the discussions held in the countries Aruba, Curaçao and Sint Maarten, and the public bodies Bonaire, Sint Eustatius and Saba, and included the resulting advice in its report of findings. In addition a working group, consisting of representatives from all the islands of the Caribbean part of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, submitted proposals on behalf of these islands. The report advised the government to proceed with acknowledgement, apology and recovery, in relation to slavery in the Kingdom of the Netherlands.

In line with the report and the apology, the government launched an integrated package of measures aimed at:

- knowledge and awareness;
- acknowledgement and commemoration;
- a better understanding of the impact of slavery and the
- psychological processing of that past.

In formal education, the government committed to making themes such as the colonial past, slavery, racism and discrimination a staple element of the curriculum for primary and secondary education. In addition, the government will also contribute to the development of a national slavery museum in Amsterdam, which will have a pivotal function in deepening and disseminating the knowledge and awareness about this past in the Netherlands and beyond, for instance via knowledge centres associated with the museum.

The government also announced a fund for initiatives to end the harmful impact of that past on the present, alongside support for research.

This policy environment has enabled civil society to establish independent projects. For example, in continuation of the apology of the government of the Kingdom of the Netherlands, a coalition of Dutch libraries proposed the development of an educational project for schools, produced by a coalition of scientific and public libraries and archives in co-creation with organizations of descendants.[91]

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89 Government of the Netherlands. 2022. Letter to Parliament on government response to Slavery History Dialogue Group Advisory Board report. https://www.government.nl/topics/discrimination/documents/parliamentary-documents/2022/12/19/letter-to-parliament-on-government-response-to-report-of-findings-issued-by-advisory-board-of-the-slavery-past-dialogue-group

90 Slavery History Dialogue Group Advisory Board. 2021. Chains of the Past. https://www.government.nl/documents/reports/2023/07/20/chains-of-the-past---report-of-findings

91 Pruijn, L. 2023. *A Dutch libraries follow-up to formal apologies for historical slavery and enslavement*, https://repository.ifla.org/server/api/core/bitstreams/81fc925d-92cd-4d90-9bc7-20bb4d9109cb/content

4.2 Attention to curricula, textbooks and educational resources

Box 4.2: Promising practices and recommendations for curricula, textbooks and educational resources

- Develop clear curricular guidance to support addressing violent pasts through education, including with linkages to broader education objectives and assessment. This guidance can be developed in consultation with key stakeholders including teachers, teacher educators, education researchers, and representations from diverse identity groups and civil society organizations, to ensure inclusion of multiple perspectives and to contribute to shared ownership.

- Identify entry points and overlapping education priorities to introduce education about violent pasts in ways that do not add curricular time but integrate into available curricular space or replace outdated elements while also ensuring adequate articulation of the subject matter.

- Ensure that revised or new curricula are introduced with clear plans and sufficient resources in place for in-service teacher training and for incorporation into teacher education.

- Textbook revision processes can positively model democratisation, peacebuilding, and conflict transformation processes. Whenever possible, ensure the make-up of textbook drafting teams is inclusive across conflict-affected groups and operates with mutual respect to acknowledge differences and model constructive dialogue. Textbook revisions should also be established as a continuous and reiterative process. They should be responsive to shift and changes in educational needs, societal discourse, academic research etc.

- Ensure a range of accredited textbooks, allowing for a multiplicity of authors and perspectives from which teachers can select. Additionally, ensure that teachers are authorized to draw on supplementary materials, which can expand the number and type of primary source documents utilised in planning and instruction.[92]

- Educational materials should encourage multiple perspectivity, to support reconciliatory, reparative and conflict transformation goals. Materials should be fact-based and dignifying for victims and their descendants.

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92   United Nations General Assembly. 2013. Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Farida Shaheed: Human Rights Council Sixty-eight session.

- Civil society organizations and memory site and heritage professionals are key partners with whom to work to develop educational materials, complement classroom-based teaching and learning, and to provide teacher training. When these relationships are well defined and linked to curricular revision/introduction, they can be very fruitful.

- Anticipate opportunities for cross-curricular approaches. Connections between different teaching subjects can make historical learning more meaningful, promoting analytical and critical thinking skills across disciplines; not only in history education, but also in civics, social science and other related subjects.

- Civil society groups can and do independently produce materials. Education policy-makers can collaborate with these organizations to adopt and/or learn from these resources. Discretion is important, as the quality of materials can vary greatly.

School curricula are often sites of societal contestation and debate due to their important roles in shaping (national) identities, transmitting dominant ideologies, and adjudicating the knowledges worthy (and unworthy) of passing on to subsequent generations.[93] Especially at times of political upheaval, as after violence, curricula for history, social studies, social sciences and citizenship education along with the textbooks that guide learning in these subjects are often a major focus for revision and reform.

The contested nature of past violence often means that curricula and textbook reform are rarely made solely by education or curricular experts[94] and are often, though not always, subject to debate in committees and political and media settings.[95] Considering the sensitivity of curricular content on education about violent pasts, policy-makers should anticipate and facilitate adequate time and opportunity for consultation. They should furthermore encourage consultation and input from a variety of groups affected by the past violence and prepare a strong rationale from the outset to navigate concerns or opposition and build consensus around the need to teach about past violence.

Curriculum reforms often provide an opportunity for the revision or development of textbooks and other learning materials. Research finds that in countries emerging from conflict, there is an overreliance on single narrative approaches, which seek to promote a 'consensus' or dominant narrative of conflict, to help to instil peace in the present and future.[96] Yet a single narrative approach is complicated by the multiple historical narratives and legacies which often coexist after

93   See for example: Apple, M. W. 2008. Can schooling contribute to a more just society? *Education, Citizenship and Social Justice, Vol. 3*, No. 3, pp. 239-261; Tawil and Harley (2004).

94   Connelly, F.M. and Connelly, G. 2010. Curriculum policy, In Kridel, C. (Ed.) *Encyclopedia of Curriculum Studies*, pp. 224-227.

95   Miles, J. 2021. Curriculum reform in a culture of redress: How social and political pressures are shaping social studies curriculum in Canada. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, Vol. 53, No. 1, pp. 47-64.

96   Lerch, Julia. 2016. Embracing diversity? Textbook narratives in countries with a legacy of internal armed conflict, 1950 to 2011. In Denise Bentrovato, Karina V. Korostelina and Martina Schulze (Eds.) *History Can Bite: History Education in Divided and Postwar Societie*s V&R Unipress; Bentrovato (2017); Bellino, 2014.

violence. Particularly in post-colonial contexts, violence may be linked to nation-formation and thus adds complex ethical dimensions to foundational narratives of the nation as presented in textbooks.

Such singular narrative approaches can further compromise the reconciliatory and reparatory opportunities opened by textbook revision. A 'consensus narrative' risks becoming a hegemonic, overbearing, and exclusionary one. Though good intentions may be motivating, the introduction of a new dominant narrative at the expense of diverse perspectives can risk perpetuating simplistic binaries and othering, exclude victim experiences, or trigger new grievances. Together, these risks can jeopardize peace and lead to renewed violence.

For this reason, a historical inquiry approach that supports learners' ability to account for multiple perspectives and evaluate evidence and truth claims can protect against the imposition of one-sided historical narratives. Such approaches can further ensure a more inclusive discussion of violent pasts that fosters the skills of critical thinking, historical reasoning, and a commitment to 'never again'.[97] The production of textbooks that are jointly authored by representatives from across historical conflict lines or that seek to include multiple voices and perspectives alongside one another can underpin a historical inquiry approach and emphasize the need for historical literacy.[98] Producing and supporting the introduction of textbooks that infuse historical inquiry approaches and/or foreground multiple perspectives is a challenging process, but can be aligned with democratic, peacebuilding, and conflict transformation objectives. The process of textbook reform can itself encourage and model dialogue, mutual respect, acknowledging difference, and the value of listening to alternative perspectives.[99]

Whilst textbooks can provide context, outline historic developments and introduce diverse perspectives, they can also help to create broader understanding of the various forms of violence inflicted over time, including their persisting legacies. They can be an important resource for educators and learners to establish connections and dependencies of experienced violence and injustice and assist with related reflections.

Reparative and decolonial approaches (see Section 1) are particularly attentive to recovering and including previously silenced and excluded perspectives and can inspire the production of educational materials about histories and groups previously excluded from curricula.

97   Bellino, Michelle J. 2014. What kind of history, for what kind of citizen? *Dialogues on Historical Justice and Memory Research and Advocacy Network, Working Paper Series* (1); Bellino, 2017; Cole, 2007.

98   Korostelina, Karina V., and Simone Lässig, eds. 2013. *History education and post-conflict reconciliation: Reconsidering joint textbook projects*. London: Routledge.

99   Korostelina & Lässig, 2013.

C A S E   S T U D Y

Textbook revision in Cambodia

In Cambodia, partnerships between civil society, heritage sector organizations, the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport and the Ministry of Culture are supporting the development of educational resources and teacher training for education about the genocide committed by the Khmer Rouge regime in Cambodia of the late 1970s.

For example, the Cambodian Ministry of Education, Youth and Sports is partnering with the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum, an important memory site in Phnom Penh, to further institutionalize teaching and learning about the crimes committed by the Khmer Rouge regime through textbook revision and accompanying teaching materials and training. Based at the former Khmer Rouge interrogation and detention site 'S-21', the Museum is operated by the Cambodian Ministry of Culture and hosts a permanent exhibition as well as an extensive archive documenting the fate of the many victims that passed through the detention site. Whilst the Museum has established an education department, much of the history of S-21 is little known to Cambodia's younger generations and not reflected in nationally distributed textbooks. To respond to these issues, the Museum works closely with the Ministry of Education, Youth and Sport to introduce broader knowledge and historical context in history textbooks covering the Khmer Rouge period. The project, implemented within the framework of the UNESCO and U.S. Holocaust Memorial Museum International Program on Holocaust and Genocide Education (IPHGE), further aims to adapt existing Museum materials to support teachers in addressing the history of the genocide and will develop training for teachers. The teacher training is aimed specifically at teachers in remote regions that do not have an opportunity to visit the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum with their students and prepares them to autonomously deliver lessons on the genocide. The trainings also encourage teachers to reflect upon their own relationship to the genocide and the ways that this may impact on their teaching.

The manual used for these teacher trainings introduces a learner-centred approach that favors an active engagement of students with their country's history and encourages enquiry and research. It includes a series of activities that teachers can select to use with students when they fit their lesson plans; teachers can also complement these with their own materials. Several activities draw on content from or use items in the collection of the Tuol Sleng Genocide Museum which is being made accessible in a comprehensive digitization project. Therefore, the materials can complement a visit to the Museum or an exploration of the Museum's website, but the guide can also work to support an active exploration of the genocide in Cambodia without needing to physically or virtually visit the Museum.

Curriculum revision in Canada in response to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission

The Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada explored the history of residential schooling in the country, publishing its final report and calls to action in 2015. The calls to action include many aimed at education, with attention to funding inequities, support for Indigenous languages and approaches for teaching and learning about the violent past of residential schooling. From the 17th century to the late 1990s, Indigenous Peoples in Canada were subjected to forced attendance in church-run and government-funded residential schools, many of which aimed at destroying the rich cultures of Indigenous Peoples and exposed children to psychological, physical, and sexual violence.

Importantly, the Truth and Reconciliation Commission calls for teaching about residential schooling are accompanied by calls for age-appropriate and mandatory curriculum on 'treaties, and Aboriginal peoples' historical and contemporary contribution to Canada,' signalling education about Indigenous Peoples that invokes the responsibilities of all Canadians as treaty-peoples; and presents dignifying and diverse historical narratives about Indigenous Peoples alongside historically accurate information about the crimes of residential schooling. Prior to the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's work, Indigenous histories in Canada were largely excluded in mainstream curricula or were taught selectively and largely separately from histories of non-Indigenous Canadians.[100] This enabled a learned disconnection between colonial violence and current day inequities and discrimination, and an ignorance amongst non-Indigenous Canadians of Indigenous cultures, sovereignty and ways of knowing.[101]

Indigenous organizations and elders, provincial Ministries of Education, teachers, teachers' associations and teacher education programmes have been leaders in developing responses to the Truth Commission's Calls to Action across Canada. All of Canada's ten provinces and three territories now include the history of residential schooling in their curricula, though it is not mandatory in all jurisdictions.[102] While much work remains to be done towards the calls to action around education and reconciliation, particularly in light of some provinces scaling back on their commitments in recent years, the Calls to Action have led to curricular innovation and positive change across Canada. In particular educational materials and curriculum revision has

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100   Donald, D.T. (2009) Forts, curriculum and Indigenous Métissage: Imagining decolonization of Aboriginal-Canadian relations in educational contexts. *First Nations Perspectives*, 2(1), 1-24.

101   Coulthard, G.S. (2014). *Red Skin, White Masks: Rejecting the Colonial Politics of Recognition*. Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press; Tuck, E.and Gaztambide-Fernández, R. (2013). Curriculum, replacement, and settler futurity. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 29(1), 73-89; Miles, J. (2021). Curriculum reform in a culture of redress: how social and political pressures are shaping social studies curriculum in Canada. *Journal of Curriculum Studies*, 53(1), 47-64.

102   CBC. 2025. Beyond 94: *Truth and Reconciliation in Canada; KAIROS. 2018. Education and reconciliation report card*. Toronto: KAIROS.

occurred across subject areas, bringing topics often confined to social studies into discussions in the sciences, mathematics, arts, physical education and language arts. Various initiatives support teacher training and teacher education programmes have increased their inclusion of Indigenous education and reconciliation across their programmes, as well as launching or enhancing Indigenous teacher training initiatives grounded in Indigenous cultures and ways of knowing.[103] In some jurisdictions, provincial governments, school divisions, universities and other organizations have invested in enhancing the provision of Indigenous language education, including with immersion schools and university programming.[104]

4.3 Support and training for teachers

Box 4.3: Promising practices and recommendations for pedagogies and teachers

- Engage teachers in processes of policy change and curriculum review, recognizing their role as key actors in enacting and potentially obstructing reforms. This could include conducting teacher needs assessments and surveys ahead of curricular review; including teacher representatives on working and revision groups, and budgeting for teacher consultation and training as part of new initiatives.

- Plan for teacher training around new or revised curricula and/or educational resources, including for pre-service teachers (via teacher education) and in-service teachers (via opportunities for teacher professional development and training). Trainings should integrate new content and also engage with pedagogies for addressing violent pasts, including practices for navigating classroom discussions and emotional responses in students.

- Teacher training on addressing violent pasts should provide space for teachers to reflect on their own social and political identities, their understandings of past violence, and connected emotions and biases.

- Pilot new interventions with teachers from diverse identity groups, working in diverse educational contexts, and collect their feedback and suggestions to inform these interventions.

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103   For a summary of Indigenous Teacher Education programmes, see Rideau Hall Foundation. 2025. ITEP Story Maps.

104   CBC. 2025. Beyond 94: *Truth and Reconciliation in Canada*

- Evaluate professional development initiatives, seeking teachers' feedback, suggestions and ongoing needs, before scaling up. This may include opportunities for teacher dialogue, resource-sharing, learning and unlearning, including spaces where teachers can process their own experiences with conflict and their own learning about conflict dynamics.

- Provide support and ensure institutional backing of teachers when approaching sensitive topics related to violent pasts and provide mechanisms to constructively engage with parents on these topics.

Teachers play defining roles in the success of initiatives to address violent pasts through education.[105] While curricula and textbooks can prescribe *what* is taught, *how* this content is presented to students and *with what impact*, eventually depends on teachers and their pedagogical skills. Their inputs, support, attitudes and pedagogical orientations are crucial for the messages and learning outcomes that learners take away from their encounters with violent pasts in classrooms and educational materials.

Teaching about violent pasts is not easy, as it requires educating about complex and often emotionally loaded topics. It is therefore important to provide teachers with adequate guidance and support so they feel prepared and confident to engage with their students on these difficult subjects. Teachers occupy a challenging dual role; they are members of society with views, opinions and often experiences of violent conflict and human rights violations, and they are also professional mediators of history and its social uses.[106] For teachers to effectively and professionally engage with teaching about violent pasts, they must first have opportunities to explore their personal relationships to the violence being taught. They will almost inevitably have knowledge gaps and biases related to violent pasts given the ways in which the legacies of these pasts engender silences, ignorance, inequities, stereotypes, and discrimination. Teachers will therefore need support to develop skills to critically reflect on their own pre-conceptions.

Teachers also need pedagogical support in how to address sensitive, contested, and political topics like conflict and peace.[107] Teachers may not feel safe teaching directly about conflict, and in some contexts, when teachers do address violent conflict in their classrooms, they have experienced

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105   Lopes Cardozo, Mieke T.A. and C.C.M.Q. Hoeks (2015). Losing ground: A critical analysis of teachers' agency for peacebuilding education in Sri Lanka. *Journal of Peace Education*, 12(1), 56-73; Shah, Ritesh and Lopes Cardozo, Mieke T.A. (2016). Transformative teachers or teachers to be transformed? The cases of Bolivia and Timor Leste. *Research in International and Comparative Education* 11(2), 208-221.

106   Psaltis, C., Carretero, M., & Čehajić-Clancy, S. (Eds.) 2017. *History Education and Conflict Transformation: Social Psychological Theories, History Teaching and Reconciliation*. London: Palgrave Macmillan.

107   Pace, Judith L. 2019. Contained risk-taking: Preparing preservice teachers to teach controversial issues in three countries. T*heory & Research in Social Education* 47 (2):228-260.

threats to their safety.[108] Without a safe space, institutional backing, supportive pedagogical training, and assured freedom of expression, teachers may be reluctant to address certain subjects, including violent pasts. School directors should provide the conditions in which teachers can safely, effectively and constructively address violent pasts, and provide related support. Teachers may also doubt their professional capacity and skills to engage with violent pasts or may feel that they lack time and support to undertake this teaching.[109] They need support in preparing for related classroom interactions, sensitively introducing the topic, and creating a classroom climate that allows for constructive exchange on difficult issues. This may require careful attention to the attitudes and emotions of learners. Indeed, in some circumstances even experienced teachers correctly judge that direct teaching about a violent past is too risky and will result in negative outcomes. This means that considering plans, resources and support for both teacher education for pre-service teachers and ongoing in-service professional development for existing teachers is of crucial importance for addressing violent pasts through education.

Lastly, teachers need secure knowledge of the past violence that they are teaching about in order to develop high quality lesson plans, and answer learners' questions with the nuance and complexity that characterizes violent pasts. In the absence of a secure knowledge of past violence, teachers risk teaching a distorted history that relies on stereotypes or propagandic narratives. Teacher training therefore needs to engage with the latest historiography and social analysis of past violence, and provide teachers with access to adequate resources, including suggested classroom activities to adapt as needed, in their language, so that they feel confident in what they are teaching.

CASE STUDY

EUROCLIO work with teachers across the Western Balkans

The European Association of History Educators (EUROCLIO) was established in 1992 at the request of the Council of Europe, who hoped to build connections between history education professionals from all parts of Europe following the fall of the Berlin Wall. The network includes educators across 47 countries who engage in annual meetings and exchange online resources. The organization is committed to innovative and responsible history and citizenship education, offering professional development opportunities, connecting professionals internationally, sharing research and best practices and creating educational resources, often with a transnational and/or multi-perspective focus.

Since it began, EUROCLIO has focused on history education in European countries in transition and transformation and/or those that have experienced recent violent conflict, including

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108   See FECODE (Federación Colombiana de Educadores) (2019). *La Vida por Educar: Crímenes de lesa humanidad de persecución y extermino Contra Maestras y Maestros Sindicalistas, Miembros de FECODE entre 1986 y 2010*, Bogotá: FECODE; Horner et al. (2015); Novelli, Mario. 2010. Education, conflict, and social (in) justice: Insights from Colombia. *Educational Review* 62 (3):271-285 for teacher threats in Colombia.

109   Zemblays, Michalinos (2003). Emotions and teacher identity: A poststructuralist perspective. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice*, 9(3), 213-238; Worden & Smith, 2017.

the former Yugoslavia. The topic of the wars from 1990 to 2001 that led to the dissolution of the country of Yugoslavia is a sensitive and divisive one, creating challenges for history teachers and education policy-makers in multiple country contexts. Teaching about the wars is now a mandatory part of history curricula in each country in the region. However, the national narratives explaining causes and consequences of the conflict often compete and obscure, including in their accounts of victimhood and responsibility. In many cases, substantial educational reforms, including to curricula, pedagogy and resource delivery, began in the 2000s and continue, meaning that teachers work in the context of considerable change. Despite ongoing reforms, history textbooks still often contain single, ethnonationalist narratives, a challenge to reconciliation in the region.

EUROCLIO sought to support teachers across Balkan countries with the challenges posed by teaching about the recent conflict in classrooms. They launched the 'Learning History that it is not yet History' project, which is now in its second phase. Working with teachers' associations across the region, the project promotes a pluralistic approach to teaching about the recent wars, seeking to support mutual understanding in the region. The project has created a dozen ready-to-use educational materials available in all participating languages, along with accompanying teacher guides to support their use. Materials are co-developed by participating teachers working in collaboration with teachers from other participating countries. The materials focus on developing critical thinking, cultural awareness, tolerance and versatility, while addressing the violent past.

The materials and project dialogues with teachers prioritize truth seeking and multi-perspectivity to balance the recognition of multiple experiences and viewpoints with a commitment to fact. Teachers' guides are particularly focused on teaching sensitive and controversial content. Research in the region has found a strong connection between membership in national and international associations working on history education and the willingness to take risks and teach about controversial topics in history classrooms. This indicates a positive impact of the EUROCLIO project and others like it in building teachers' confidence, skills, and motivation to teach about violent pasts.

CASE STUDY

Teacher training on history education for peace in Timor-Leste

Since 2021, UNESCO is partnering with the Ministry of Education, Chega National Center (CNC) and the National Institute for Training of Teachers and Education Professionals (INFORDEPE) to enhance the quality of history education to advance peace and reconciliation in Timor-Leste. The project includes developing a comprehensive and inclusive historical narrative for, by and about the people of Timor-Leste. The narrative reflects on the country's colonial past and the period of Indonesian occupation – marked by severe human rights violations and violence – and the subsequent struggle for independence.

Teachers across Timor-Leste continue to have little access to relevant information and education materials that guide them in teaching local histories. Further, research is mostly developed outside of Timor-Leste and not available in Tetum, the lingua franca in Timor-Leste or other local languages. To address this gap, the project developed modules for teachers that also served as a basis for a series of trainings in Tetum and Portuguese, the two official languages of the country.

Supported by five committee meetings between 2022 and 2023 and two expert consultations with academics, researchers and civil society organizations, the project team collaboratively developed a comprehensive framework for teachers, providing a rationale for teaching history, outlining relevant historical context, and providing helpful methodologies. Some of the key methodologies include utilizing CNC archive materials (such as photographs, videos, and documents), organizing visits to historical sites to encourage reflection on past events, and inviting victims or survivors to classrooms to share personal accounts of history. Additionally, the framework highlights the connections between history education, peace, and reconciliation, while aligning with broader educational frameworks such as the SDGs and GCED.

Based on this framework, UNESCO, CNC, and the in-service teacher training institution INFORDEPE organized five workshops and three training sessions for teachers, with a strong emphasis on pedagogical training to introduce alternatives to traditional teaching methods. By the end of 2024, the programme had reached over 300 teachers, with a goal of training an additional 400 teachers and 100 inspectors throughout 2025. Additionally, the initiative has had a positive impact on teacher trainers at INFORDEPE. A Training-of-Trainers programme, organized by module developers and UNESCO for CNC and INFORDEPE teacher trainers, provided an opportunity to raise awareness of Timorese historical narratives, introduce new pedagogical approaches, and highlight the connection between history education and peacebuilding.

The project has benefited from strong political commitment to promoting quality education for peace and justice in Timor-Leste, in line with the recommendations of the Commission for Reception, Truth, and Reconciliation in East Timor (CAVR in Portuguese). For instance, during the 2017 curriculum revision for Years 5–6 (Cycle 2 of basic education), the government integrated a human rights framework into lesson plans and learning materials. This framework focused on key historical periods, including the colonial era up to the Second World War, the independence struggle, the occupation years, and themes of human rights and solidarity. In 2024, as part of the curriculum revision for Years 7–9 (Cycle 3 of basic education), the government reaffirmed its commitment by further emphasizing the importance of human rights and civic education.

The close collaboration between UNESCO, the Ministry of Education, the National Teacher Training Institutions, and the Chega National Center allowed the combination of local and international expertise to develop unprecedented education materials and teacher training opportunities, establishing a positive basis for further strengthening related education programmes, including at curriculum and teacher training-levels.

Developing history teachers' capacities in Lebanon

The Lebanese Association for History has collaborated with the international non-profit organization Pro Peace (formerly Forum ZFD) to guide Lebanese teachers in navigating sensitivities and controversy in history education. Through a series of workshops conducted between 2023 and 2024, teachers explored opportunities and challenges in dealing with various perspectives and interpretations of history and brainstormed strategies and methodologies to address complex histories sensitively.

The workshops reviewed various periods of violent pasts in Lebanese history and their significance, historically and contemporary, and presented possible approaches to actively engage learners in critically analyzing historical events and broader contexts. It also presented participants with an opportunity to connect with fellow teachers who were facing similar challenges when trying to introduce reflections on violent pasts in their history classes.[110]

The Lebanese Association for History's initiative builds on a broader engagement of Pro Peace to strengthen local efforts of dealing with Lebanon's violent past. The Lebanese Civil War (1975-1990) and post-war period were marked by important human rights violations, which remain largely unaddressed due to a 1991 amnesty law. National and regional efforts to remember and reflect on past injustice are mostly undertaken by civil society initiatives. To capture these initiatives, Pro Peace and the American University of Beirut launched a mapping project in 2015, which resulted in the establishment of an exhaustive online database, providing an overview of over 150 projects.[111] Based on this extensive expertise, the Lebanese Association for History is part of an expert pool advising the Lebanese government in their ongoing curriculum review, backed by a memorandum of understanding to support the development of teacher training, education materials and assessment tools on history education across Lebanon.

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110   Lebanese Association for History, *Eye on the Past – Eye on the Future: Capacity-building program for fostering historical thinking and addressing dealing with the past in history education*, https://lahlebanon.org/eye-on-the-past-eye-on-the-future-capacity-building-program-for-fostering-historical-thinking-and-addressing-dealing-with-the-past-in-history-education/

111   ProPeace, *Mapping initiatives addressing the past in Lebanon (2015 - 2017)*, https://www.propeace.de/en/mapping-initiatives-addressing-past-lebanon-2015-2017.

4.4 Engagement with museums, memorials, archives, and commemorative dates

Box 4.4: Recommendations for working with memory sites

- Map out existing memory sites and assess gaps in coverage, including with reference to geography, identity groups and significant historical events relating to addressing violent pasts. Also consider the scope, capacities and resources of existing educational programmes at relevant memorial sites and museums.

- Explore existing connections between memory sites and education and develop ways to deepen and expand these, including with resourcing for visits, on-site teacher and professional trainings, and accompanying educational materials.

- Strengthen historical inquiry through teaching how to study and examine primary sources through visiting archives.

- Consider the pedagogical value of arts-based expressions of memory, including poetry, theatre, textile art, painting, muralism, music and other art forms that victims, civil society groups and arts organizations produce and share.

- Include memory sites and heritage professionals in the development of educational materials.

- Take advantage of possibilities for digitisation, app-based, arts-based and multi-media learning in order to connect memory sites and education while broadening their reach.

- Explore and support movements to decolonise and/or democratise heritage and memory sites with care taken to acknowledge and redress colonial and/or exclusionary practices and narratives.

Memory sites are spaces (e.g. memorials, museums, archives, sites of violence, etc.) and expressions (e.g. commemoration on specific dates, marches, art projects, etc.) that materially, symbolically and functionally express past events, including violence and mass atrocity. They draw on memories of those events, including through tangible objects, written and oral records and testimonies, and artistic interpretations, often to invoke a sense of group membership and connection with the past.[112] Memory sites and practices express what a society or community values or considers important about the past and what they hope to pass on to subsequent generations,[113] often invoking the duty to remember.[114] They are also examples of the struggle, constant flux, and

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112   Nora, Pierre (1989). Between memory and history: Les lieux de memoire. *Representations*, 26 (Spring), 7-24.

113   Deacon, H., L Dondolo, M. Mbulelo and S. Prosalendis (2004). *The Subtle Power of Intangible Heritage: Legal and Financial Instruments for Safeguarding Intangible Heritage*. Cape Town: HSRC Publishers.

114   Laing, J. and W. Frost (2013). *Commemorative Events: Memory, Identities, Conflict*. London: Routledge; Sarah Gensburger, Marie-Claire Lavabre, "Entre 'devoir de mémoire' et 'abus de mémoire': la sociologie de la mémoire comme tierce position", in Histoire, Mémoire et Épistémologie. Autour de Paul Ricoeur, Bertrand Müller, ed. (Lausanne, Switzerland, Éditions Payot, 2004).

potential fragility of formal remembrance – processes and sites that themselves can be historicised and analysed for their connections to conflict dynamics, as well as efforts to engage in transitional and reparative justice.[115]

Memory sites, museums, memorials and other spaces where violent pasts are commemorated are intended to be both private, reflective and public, pedagogical spaces.[116] Supporting the creation or preservation of memory sites is therefore an important contribution to young people's engagement with violent pasts. However, young people engage with and interpret memory sites in ways that are difficult to predict.[117] There are therefore growing efforts to support visits and develop accompanying pedagogical materials and linkages to formal curricula.

Schools often organize visits to local memory sites, museums and memorials or take field trips to more geographically distant sites within and beyond their national borders.[118] Such visits can provide valuable opportunities for students to place knowledge into concrete contexts, to further explore the local ramifications of violent pasts, and to engage with testimonies of victims and survivors. Memory sites, memorials and museums also regularly appear in textbooks, with descriptions of the exhibitions, artefacts and artworks that they hold and/or the stories behind their creation. Finally, teachers are increasingly inspired by the possibilities of curatorial pedagogies, including when addressing violent pasts, creating, for example, museums of memory with their students to explore personal and intergenerational connections to violent pasts via objects chosen by students.[119] Such pedagogical activities allow for young people to embrace their role as citizens and peacebuilders who actively shape public memory, rather than simply consume sites and narratives of memory as they are.[120]

115   Jelin (2003).

116   Bickford, L. Memoryworks/memory works. In C. Ramírez-Barat (Ed.), *Transitional justice, culture, and society: Beyond outreach* (pp. 491-528). New York: International Center for Transitional Justice.

117   Burgard, K. L. B., & Boucher, M. L. (2016). Same Story; Different History: Students' Racialized Understanding of Historic Sites. *The Urban Review*, 48(5), 696-717; Cooke, P., Hodgkinson, K. And Manning, P. 2022. Changing the story: Intergenerational dialogue, participatory video and perpetrator memories in Cambodia. *Memory Studies*, https://journals.sagepub.com/doi/10.1177/17506980221108474

118   Mantilla-Blanco (2022); Pennell, C. (2018). Taught to remember? British youth and First World War centenary battlefield tours. *Cultural Trends*, 27(2), 83-98.

119   Bermeo, J. D., Paulson, J. and Charria, A. (2022). Schools as sites of memory: The musealization of armed conflict by students and teachers in Colombia, in C. Cross and J. D. Giblin (Eds.) *Critical Approaches to Heritage for Development*. London: Routledge; Facing History and Ourselves. (2016). Analyzing and creating memorials. https://www.facinghistory.org/resource-library/analyzing-creating-memorials

120   Velez, G., Bellino, M. J., & Moeschberger, S. (2021). Supporting Peace by Broadening "Youth" and Attending to Their Diverse Development in Transitional Societies. In W. López López & L. K. Taylor (Eds.), T*ransitioning to Peace: Promoting Global Social Justice and Non-violence* (pp. 247-267). Cham, Switzerland: Springer.

Integrating peace and values education into the national curriculum in Rwanda

In Rwanda, the government and the Aegis Trust have a long history of partnership that supports the integration of peace and values education into the national curriculum. Identifying the need to establish educational initiatives that work to address the sensitive social issues connected with the 1994 Genocide against the Tutsi, the partnership has been leveraged to develop peace and values education fit for the Rwandan context that works to address the history of the genocide and other episodes of violence.

This follows the opening of the Kigali Genocide Memorial in 2004 and recognizes the need for educational content not only embedded in the past, through commemoration and remembrance, but also turned towards the future, through prevention. Together, the Aegis Trust and the Rwanda Education Board collaborated to integrate Peace and Values Education into the national curriculum. Due to this collaboration, in 2015 Peace and Values Education became a cross-cutting theme taught in all Rwandan pre-primary, primary and secondary schools. While maintaining the importance of historical literacy and violent past education, the curriculum weaves the approach of peace and values into every subject and every level, promoting learning skills such as active listening, cooperation, problem-solving and critical thinking and the development of values such as empathy, honesty and trust. To support teachers, the Aegis Trust and the Rwanda Education Board developed a teacher guide and model lessons plan for peace and values education as well as trainings of selected in-service and pre-service teachers.[121] The collaboration continues to improve and strengthen peace and values education in Rwanda, ensuring and adapting to the needs of teachers and learners to support reconciliation and sustainable peace.

There are also notes of caution to be aware of when working with memory sites. Historical narratives can be monolithic, exclusionary, and top-down. This can also be the case with the messages explicitly and implicitly communicated by memory sites and in processes of remembrance.[122] To mitigate against these risks and to enrich learning opportunities, memory sites should not stand on their own as pedagogical openings for addressing violent pasts; rather, they should be integrated into ongoing opportunities for historical inquiry, dialogue, and engagement, including discussion of the memorialization process itself.[123]

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121   Aegis Trust, *Ubumuntu Digital Platform*, https://ubumuntu.rw/#1

122   See for example Winter, Jay (2006). R*emembering War: The Great War between Memory and History in the Twentieth Century*. New Haven: Yale University Press; Heathorn, S. (2013). *Haig and Kitchener in Twentieth-Century Britain: Remembrance, Representation and Appropriation*. Farnham: Ashgate.

123   United Nations General Assembly. (2014). *Report of the Special Rapporteur in the field of cultural rights, Farida Shaheed: Memorialization processes*: Human Rights Council Twenty-fifth session.

4.5 Civil society and international collaboration

Box 4.5: Recommendations for working with civil society and international collaborations

- Draw on the publications, recommendations and standards set by international organizations to support and justify national-level policy and curricular changes.
- Become familiar with the resources – including training – that are available from civil society and international organizations.
- Identify regional or international fora that could be supportive for enhancing education about violent pasts and, in return, consider advocating for education about violent pasts and atrocity crime prevention in relevant international bodies.
- Organize or participate in opportunities for educational stakeholders to share experiences and work collaboratively with stakeholders from other countries and contexts to learn from good practice and identify possible synergies and areas for partnership and joint international advocacy.

Working closely with civil society organizations and exploring opportunities for international collaboration can offer valuable support for, and opportunities to learn about, addressing violent pasts through education. Where there are political tensions around introducing teaching about the violent past or revising the ways in which past violence is currently taught, the support of key international allies, be they international organizations, national governments or sub-regional consortia, can be helpful. The support of international and sub-regional allies and organizations can lend credibility and help to justify the importance of addressing violent pasts.

International exchange can also help to promote best practice by identifying approaches and distinct pedagogies that have been applied successfully to address violent pasts through education. They can provide important inspiration and guidance for developing localized approaches, considering needed adaptation, and supporting capacity development, including through consortia projects that include training and support for cohorts of policy-makers around the world. The possibility for international discussion opens alternative perspectives, shows their value and enables the construction of historical narratives in new ways.

CASE STUDY

International cooperation towards more inclusive historical narratives

Museums and memorial sites can provide important perspectives on violent pasts and shape related reflections. Supporting such sites in the development of more inclusive narratives and leveraging international exchange, the International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (ICSC) launched the Correcting the Record Project in 2022. The project sought to introduce a methodology to review and enhance the representation of diverse groups and voices in museum exhibitions, operations and partnerships. Over the course of two years, ICSC worked with museums and other memorial institutions across Africa, Asia, Latin America and the Caribbean to pilot the methodology with regard to revisiting exclusions in existing historical narratives and mitigating contemporary discrimination. Using a holistic approach, the project aimed at transforming participating sites and communities, through capacity-building and peer-learning.

As part of the project, the *Museo de la Memoria y los Derechos Humanos* (MMDH) in Chile developed a temporary exhibition on women's resistance during the dictatorship from 1973 to 1990. The exhibition explored themes such as the search for truth and justice and the women's movement and feminism in the 1980s, and aimed at making a connection with the current generation of feminists. The exhibition provided a basis for the development of a museum-wide framework supportive of introducing decolonial, anti-patriarchal and feminist perspectives.

In Mauritius, the Intercontinental Slavery Museum (ISM) developed collaborative practices with local Afro-Malagasy communities in order to change perceptions and stereotypes towards the Rastafari community and address the violence committed against it. ISM developed an exhibition concept with the Rastafari community as a basis for further co-creative collaboration for all future museum activities.

In Brazil, the *Museu da Imigração do Estado de São Paulo* challenged the legacy of Brazil's 'whitening' policies and colonial history by expanding their oral history collections to include the voices and narratives of Black and Indigenous communities. The museum aimed to present memory and heritage as a means of symbolic reparation and influence understandings of the history of Afro-Brazilians and Indigenous Peoples.[124]

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124   International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (2023), *Correcting the Record: building inclusive, equitable, and engaged societies one narrative at a time. Impact report*, https://www.sitesofconscience.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/03/ICSC-Global-Networks-Impact-Report-EN-final-web-1.pdf

The project resulted in the publication of a toolkit for sites of conscience and like-minded institutions that seek to promote more inclusive and equitable historical narratives, and confront intolerance, discrimination and exclusion within their societies.[125]

ICSC is a global network of museums, historic sites and grassroots initiatives dedicated to building a more just and peaceful future through engaging communities in remembering struggles for human rights and addressing their modern repercussions. Founded in 1999, the ICSC now includes more than 350 Sites of Conscience members in 65 countries.

CASE STUDY

Mainstreaming UNESCO's General History of Africa

UNESCO's General History of Africa (GHA) is a pioneering corpus of research with the ambition to cover the history of the entire African continent to reconstruct Africa's history, freeing it from racial prejudices ensuing from slave trade and colonization, and promoting African-owned perspectives. The dissemination of the GHA and its mainstreaming into education systems is contributing to decolonizing education systems across Africa and beyond. Kenya has been at forefront of these efforts, mainstreaming the GHA into its education system as part of a broader curriculum reform. Its holistic approach recognizes that the GHA's value to educational transformation extends far beyond history or social sciences, enriching all dimensions of learning. UNESCO, through the development of a Resource Pack for Mainstreaming the General History of Africa into Education Systems and through targeted regional and national interventions, is now supporting other countries such as Côte d'Ivoire, Ghana, and the Gambia to contextualize and integrate the GHA into their own educational frameworks, ensuring that all learners engage with Africa's history through authentic, empowering, and inclusive narratives.

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125   International Coalition of Sites of Conscience (2023), *Correcting the Record: a toolkit to foster more inclusive historical narratives*, https://www.sitesofconscience.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/04/Correcting-the-Record-Toolkit-2023-single-pages.pdf

CASE STUDY

International cooperation to foster Holocaust remembrance and education

The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) was created in 2000 on an initiative of the then Swedish Prime Minister Göran Persson to ensure closer international cooperation and coordination to strengthen remembrance, research and education about the Holocaust. Today, the IHRA is an intergovernmental body of 35 Member Countries, nine Observer Countries and ten Permanent International Partners that meets twice annually to discuss priorities and challenges in relation to enhancing policy, research, and education about the genocide of the Jews and the genocide of the Roma by the German Nazi regime and its collaborators. IHRA reflections and decisions are supported by leading institutions, researchers and subject-matter experts in the field of Holocaust and genocide studies who participate in IHRA working groups and committees and actively contribute to IHRA projects.

Over the years, the IHRA has produced working definitions and recommendations that have strongly guided international efforts towards the preservation of Holocaust memory and strengthened close international exchange and collaboration on related education efforts. The IHRA notably published Recommendations for Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust in 2019 in partnership with UNESCO, providing an overview of recommended key themes, principles and approaches to educate about the genocide of the Jews sensitively and effectively.[126] The Recommendations were complimented by Recommendations for Teaching and Learning about the Persecution and Genocide of the Roma during the Nazi Era in 2024, also in partnership with UNESCO, which offered possible pathways and reflections for strengthening education about the history and legacy of the persecution of Roma in Europe.[127] To further support formal and non-formal education programmes, the IHRA has also established a grant scheme for impactful external projects which counter distortion and safeguard the historical record of the Holocaust and genocide of the Roma.[128]

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126   International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (2019), Recommendations for Teaching and Learning about the Holocaust, https://holocaustremembrance.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Recommendations-for-Teaching-and-Learning-about-the-Holocaust-%E2%80%93-IHRA.pdf

127   International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (2024), Recommendations for Teaching and Learning about the Persecution and Genocide of the Roma during the Nazi Era, https://holocaustremembrance.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/Updated_Digital_IHRA-Roma-Resource-V5_A4.pdf

128   The International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, https://holocaustremembrance.com/

Section 5

Pedagogical strategies to address violent pasts

5. Pedagogical strategies to address violent pasts

This section provides strategies that are important for educators to consider when teaching violent pasts. These include the importance of sound historical inquiry approaches, creating safe classroom climates, working with emotion as a pedagogical strategy, and opportunities to address violent pasts through direct and indirect means.

5.1 Historical inquiry approaches

Generally, historical inquiry approaches emphasize that students learn about the nature of historical evidence – rather than specific historical facts – and engage in the practices of sourcing and corroboration to contextualize past decisions and events, and support narrative arguments with factual resources.[129] It also involves recognizing the evolving and interrelated relationship between history and memory,[130] and allows learners to understand and apply important epistemic concepts and practices, such as how we know what we know about the past. Several disciplinary concepts have become salient, including historical significance, evidence, cause and consequence, continuity and change, perspective, empathy, and ethical dimensions. These concepts are recognized as interlocking competencies that should be privileged throughout teachers' planning, teaching, and assessment.[131]

Inquiry approaches are associated with positive outcomes such as students' increased comfort with posing questions of primary sources and enhancing historical and general literacy skills. They support a research-based understanding of history and can guard learners against misinformation and attempts to manipulate or instrumentalize history.

129   Martens, M., Hartmann, U., Sauer, M. and Hasselhorn, M. (Eds.). 2001. I*nterpersonal understanding in historical context.* Rotterdam, The Netherlands: Sense; Seixas, P. and Morton, T. 2013. *The big six: Historical thinking concepts.* Toronto, ON: Nelson Education; Seixas, P. 2015. A model of historical thinking. Educational Philosophy and Theory, Vol. 49, No. 6, pp. 593-605; Stearns, P. N., Seixas, P. and Wineburg, S. (Eds.). 2000. Knowing, teaching, and learning history: National and international perspectives. New York: New York University Press; VanSledright, B. 2004. What does it mean to think historically . . . and how do you teach it? Social Education, Vol. 68, No. 3, pp. 230-233; Wineburg, S. S., D. Martin, and C. Monte-Sano. 2011. *Reading Like a Historian*. New York: Teachers College Press; Wineburg, S. 2001. *Historical thinking and other unnatural acts: Charting the future of teaching the past.* Philadelphia: Temple University Press.

130   Seixas, P. (2016). A history/memory matrix for history education. *Public History Weekly.* Retrieved from https://public-history-weekly.degruyter.com/4-2016-6/a-historymemory-matrix-for-history-education

131   Seixas, P. and Morton, T. 2013. *The big six: Historical thinking concepts.* Toronto, ON: Nelson Education.

However, inquiry approaches tend to emphasize students' cognitive learning processes, with less attention to behavioural, social and emotional dimensions.[132] Therefore, historical inquiry must be accompanied by socio-emotional and ethical approaches that develop learners' broader understanding of the past and its legacies.

Currently, inquiry approaches are rarely implemented globally,[133] despite the growth of relevant resources.[134] Educators working in contexts without consistent access to material or digital resources may find this approach more challenging. The emphasis placed on primary and secondary resources places additional pedagogical burdens on teachers, necessitating teacher education and professional learning opportunities that orient teachers to inquiry practices and how to support student learning.[135] Partnerships with museums, archives and memory sites are promising ways to introduce and expand access to source material

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132   Barton, K. C. and Levstik, L. S. 2004. *Teaching history for the common good*. Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates; Bellino, M. J. and Selman, R. L. 2011. High school students' understanding of personal betrayal in a socio-historical context of ethnic conflict: Implications for teaching history. *International Journal of History Teaching, Learning and Research*, Vol. 10, No. 1, pp. 29-43; Bellino, M. J. and Selman, R. L. 2012. The intersection of historical understanding and ethical reflection during early adolescence: A place where time is squared. In M. Carretero, M. A. Asensio and M. Rodríguez-Moneo (Eds.), History education and the construction of national identities, pp. 189-202. Charlotte, NC: Information Age.

133   Paulson, J. 2015. Whether and how? History education about recent and ongoing conflict: A review of research. *Journal on Education in Emergencies*, Vol. 1, No. 1, pp. 14-47.

134   E.g., Fogo, B. and Breakstone, J. 2019. An inquiry-based history design for difficult history. In M. H. Gross & L. Terra (Eds.), *Teaching and learning the difficult past: Comparative perspectives*, pp. 59-8). New York: Routledge.

135   Monte-Sano, C. 2012. Learning to open up history for students: Preservice teachers' emerging pedagogical content knowledge. *Journal of Teacher Education*, Vol. 62, No. 3, pp. 260–272; Monte-Sano, C. and Budano, C. 2013. Developing and enacting pedagogical content knowledge for teaching history: An exploration of two novice teachers' growth over three years. *Journal of the Learning Sciences*, Vol. 22, No. 2, pp. 171–211.

Box 5.1: Inquiry approaches – key strategies

- Analyse, contextualize, compare, and corroborate primary and secondary historical sources

- Examine changes over time.

- Emphasize cause and consequence, e.g. how the decisions and actions (or inactions) of historical actors led to short and long-term consequences – intended and unintended.

- Emphasize continuity and change in historical trends regarding violent pasts.

- Consider why and how historical significance or interpretation shifts over time.

- Integrate ethical discussion, considering historical context and present-day consequences for past actions.

- Consider multiple perspectives and reflect on whose voice dominates the current historical narrative, as well as perspectives that have been minimized, silenced, or are missing from the historical record.

5.2 Creating open classroom climates

Granting students opportunities for open discussion in educational spaces is associated with several positive civic outcomes such as increased likelihood to vote, greater support for democratic values, and deeper interest in understanding public issues.[136] Discussion and student-driven inquiry are also associated with academic outcomes such as enhanced critical thinking, communication, and media literacy skills.

Classroom climate – the cultural norms, practices, and values promoted in a classroom – is influential in young people's approaches to diverse perspectives.[137] When classroom climates are

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136   Hess, D. E. 2009. Controversy in the classroom: the democratic power of discussion. New York: Routledge; Hess, D. E. and McAvoy, P. 2014. The political classroom: Evidence and ethics in democratic education. New York, NY: Routledge; Parker, W.C. 2003. Teaching democracy: Unity and diversity in public life. Teachers College Press; Hahn, C.L. 1988. *Becoming political: Comparative perspectives on citizenship education*. Albany: SUNY Press; Kahne, J., Crow, D. and Lee, N. J. 2013. *Different pedagogy, different politics: High school learning opportunities and youth political engagement. Political Psycholog*y, Vol. 34, No. 3, pp. 419–441; Schulz, W., Ainley, J., Fraillon, J., Losito, B., Agrusti, G. and Friedman, T. 2018. *Becoming Citizens in a Changing World: IEA International Civic and Citizenship Education Study 2016 International Report*. Cham, Switzerland: Springer.

137   Barber, C., Clark, C. H. and Torney-Purta, J. 2021. Learning Environments and School/Classroom Climate as Supports for Civic Reasoning, Discourse, and Engagement. In Lee, C. D., White, G. and Dong, D. (Eds.), *Educating for Civic Reasoning and Discourse*, pp. 273-318. Washington, DC: National Academy of Education; Campbell, D. 2008. *Voice in the Classroom: How an Open Classroom Climate Fosters Political Engagement Among Adolescents. Political Behavior*, Vol. 30, No. 4, pp. 437-454; Gniewosz, B. and Noack, P. 2008. *Classroom Climate Indicators and Attitudes towards Foreigners*. Journal of adolescence, Vol. 31, No. 5, pp. 609-624; Hahn, C. 2015. *Pedagogy in citizenship education research: A comparative perspective*. Citizenship Teaching and Learning, Vol. 11, No. 2, pp. 121–137; Torney-Purta, J., Lehmann, R., Oswald, H. and Schulz, W. 2001. *Citizenship and Education in Twenty-eight Countries: Civic Knowledge and Engagement at Age Fourteen*. Amsterdam: IEA.

characterized as *open*, they are more democratic, and young people report the ability to disagree and share conflicting points of view. *Closed* classroom climates shut down avenues for discussion and promote singular correct answers at the expense of ambiguity and complexity.

How discussions about past violence are addressed in the classroom will depend on learners' relationship to and distance from the violence. Engaging in open discussion in contexts with recent violence – particularly gender-based or sexual violence – is especially challenging for both those who directly experienced violence, and the descendants of victims and perpetrators.[138] However, there is also evidence that direct victims and their descendants value opportunities to address violent pasts in their classroom, when they are approached with sensitivity.[139] In divided societies, additional strategies for discussing past violence and normalizing the navigation of positive conflict include acknowledging emotional attachments to certain positions, allowing 'extreme positions' to be shared, and exposing students to diversity within identity groups.[140]

Crucially, sharing diverse perspectives and allowing for flawed perspectives is not a permission for distortions and denial of past violence. Rather, emphasis is placed on evidence-based arguments and perspectives. Inviting divergent perspectives contributes to a learning environment where surfacing 'troubled knowledge'[141] is permissible, allowing teachers to address inaccuracies and underlying biases. Teachers facilitating discussions should point learners to historical evidence and inquire as to how they reached conclusions.

Managing disagreement can be emotionally and professionally challenging for teachers and requires significant pedagogical skill. Supporting teachers requires providing opportunities for them to examine their own identities, socialization, as well as internalized biases and stereotypes related to past violence. They can be further supported through trainings on moderation of these kinds of difficult conversations and provision of curricular materials that are inclusive and representative of diverse identities, so that no student feels excluded or marginalized.

5.3 Working with emotions

Emotion is an important element in addressing violent pasts through education, and feelings of discomfort should not be conflated with harm. Learning about violent pasts can stimulate strong

138   Barton, K. and McCully, A. 2007. *Teaching controversial issues... where controversial issues really matter. Teaching History*, Vol 127, pp. 13-19; Bellino, M.J. & Bermudez, A. (2025). Too close and too far: Constructive conflict pedagogy in Bogotá, Colombia. In Bickmore, K. (Ed.). *Constructive Conflict Pedagogies for Building Peace: Teaching Strategies from around the World* (pp. 41-58) London: Bloomsbury; Kitson, A. and McCully, A. W. 2005. "You Hear about It for Real in School." Avoiding, Containing and Risk-Taking in the History Classroom. Teaching History, Vol 120, pp. 32-37; Pace, J. L. 2021. *Hard questions; Learning to teach controversial issues*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield.

139   Bellino, M.J., Barber, C., Ortiz, M., Cruz Moreno, C., & Paulson, J. (Under review). The right to truth: Students' proximity to conflict, classroom climate and opportunities for teaching about conflict and peace in Bogota, Colombia. *Comparative Education Review*.

140   Barton, K. and McCully, A. 2007. Teaching controversial issues... where controversial issues really matter. Teaching History, Vol. 127, pp. 13-19.

141   Jansen, J. D. 2009. *Knowledge in the blood: Confronting race and the apartheid past*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

emotions among learners, including sadness, anger, and confusion. In many cases, learners and teachers will already have some kind of emotional connection to this content, which may be linked to their own or their family's lived experience and to wider social processes of identity formation. In the absence of personal connections, learning about past injustice and violence can still be upsetting, even if done sensitively. Such emotions are normal reactions and expressions of empathy. Recognizing and providing space for emotions as an inherent part of addressing violent pasts, rather than as an impediment to teaching and learning, is critical. It is important that students 'feel, as well as think' their way through this learning.[142] Highlighting and helping them to understand the emotional dimension of history can be useful in building learners' understanding about how historical narratives are socially constructed and their importance in identity processes.[143] They likewise offer opportunities for students to learn more about themselves, and their attitudes towards broader values, morals and justice. To accompany learners in their emotions, it is important to anticipate time for reflection and exchange ahead of teaching about violent pasts and to incorporate approaches that allow for learners to express their emotions freely, such as creative and arts-based activities within lessons.[144] Teachers should also be provided with the tools and network needed to provide students with additional support when required. This may mean developing linkages with relevant Civil Society Organizations or Non-Governmental Organizations with capacities to facilitate Mental Health and Psychosocial Support (MHPSS), particularly in contexts of trauma.

C A S E   S T U D Y

Working with teachers' emotions in South Africa

In 1994, the decades-long system of racial apartheid ended. As South Africa transitioned towards a democratic state, education was regarded as a critical site for intervention to shape a democratic citizenry that respects human rights and could prevent future violence. The horrors of life under apartheid rule were revealed through the Truth and Reconciliation Commission's (TRC) public hearings.

Facing the Past – Transforming our Future (FtP) was formed in 2003, a collaboration between the Western Cape Education Department (WCED), the Cape Town Holocaust Centre (now the Cape Town Holocaust and Genocide Centre, the first Holocaust memorial centre in Africa), and the US-based non-profit, Facing History and Ourselves. This professional development was organized to address needed gaps, including preparing teachers to engage with new content and pedagogies, and to acknowledge their own inherited histories of apartheid. Initially, it was

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142   Illingworth, I. 2000. Hearts, minds and souls: exploring values through history. *Teaching History*, 100, 20-24.

143   Levy, S.A. and Sheppard, M. 2018. "Difficult knowledge" and the Holocaust in history education. In S.A. Metzger and L. McArthur Harris (Eds). *The Wiley International Handbook of History Teaching and Learning*, 365-387, Wiley Blackwell.

144   McCully, A. 2006. Practitioner perceptions of their role in facilitating the handling of controversial issues in contested societies: A Northern Irish experience. *Educational Review*, 58(1), 51-65.

conceived as a six-month pilot involving 40 South African educators across the Western Cape. Emphasis was placed on involving diverse educators who were unlikely to be in dialogue with one another, given the divided nature of schools. This early phase of work showed positive attitudinal changes among teachers and reflections on internalized racism and prejudice, while building trust in a community of (diverse) teachers who were teaching history through constructivist paradigms.

The partnership was subsequently managed by a South African non-profit organization called Shikaya. As the original name suggests, the assumption underlying this approach is that transforming the future through education necessitates 'facing the past'. Importantly, it is not only students who are expected to face the past through the formal study of history, but also teachers who lived through apartheid and were educated (i.e. indoctrinated) into white supremacist ideology. Black teachers endured the harms of systemic racism, everyday cultural/epistemic violence of apartheid, and many also experienced physical violence because of their race and potentially their political involvement in resisting the apartheid regime. Some white educators actively participated in violence in order to uphold the system; many others passively benefited from the system. Thus, teachers are positioned differently with respect to the history of apartheid, as victims, perpetrators, bystanders, and upstanders.

FtP/Shikaya recognized the need for educators to tell their own stories, both for their own learning and healing, and in order to engage productively with young people around such difficult content. As teachers began to confront and question their own assumptions about race and racism, teacher professional development and personal development became linked.

Initially, FtP/Shikaya relied on the resources developed by Facing History and Ourselves, including focal historical cases centred on the Holocaust and the failure of democracy in the Weimar Republic, eugenics, and the African American civil rights movement. Today, the training includes apartheid alongside other cases. Nonetheless, FtP/Shikaya has created space for teachers to engage in 'personal reconciliation processes', as a precursor to teaching about difficult histories and their legacies. More than 500 teachers have participated in formal trainings, and thousands have utilized resources developed by FtP/Shikaya. This case illustrates the importance of teachers' learning and unlearning, addressing skills and emotions in addressing the trauma of violent pasts.

5.4 Remembrance in education

Remembrance – the act of remembering and honouring someone or something from the past – is often considered an important aspect or outcome of education about violent pasts. Ideally, education about the past should help students make a connection between the object of remembrance and their own lives and places in history.[145] Young peoples' emotional response to remembrance – and indeed, the reverence that they are often expected to display at remembrance

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145   McKay, C. (2017). Active remembrance: the value and importance of making remembrance relevant and personal. *Teaching History*, 166, 20–27.

events – should ideally be founded on an understanding of what and why they are remembering. This includes broadening understanding of how remembrance narratives and practices have been formed and how they have evolved over time. Studying the politics of remembrance and related discourses can further raise awareness of the legacies of violent pasts and provide learners with a sense of agency to shape related practices constructively and innovatively.

An emotional disposition of reverence towards the object of remembrance is at times in tension with the complex realities of what past violence entailed. In part, this is because remembrance is often entwined with ideas about national identity and may be explicitly designed to help imagine the nation into being.[146] Remembrance activities can therefore risk encouraging young people to glorify their own nation vis-à-vis an external threat, or to perceive violence justified or heroic. While remembrance is an important emotional and ethical response to collective violence, educators should be aware that nationalistic approaches to remembrance education can be ahistorical and, in extreme circumstances, might risk future violence.

5.5 Teaching with testimonies

Introducing testimonies in education about violent pasts can help to humanize history and strengthen awareness for the complexity of individual choices as well as the important long-term impact of trauma.

Testimonies, whether transmitted as written text, audio or video recordings or personal encounters, allow learners to make personal connections with the past. Such encounters must be framed carefully and cannot replace a broader review of historical processes and context. Instead, it is recommended to put testimonies in dialogue with historical inquiry approaches to better understand nuance and the human impact of otherwise often abstract historical processes. Testimonies can be a rich source for exploring angles of violent pasts that are not addressed in other primary sources. They can provide valuable insights into the daily lives of people who lived at the time of past conflict, highlight their individual coping mechanisms and struggle for survival and demonstrate how history has affected individuals on a personal level.

Personal accounts of history are based on human memory and highly subjective. They bear value for illustrating individual experiences and emotions evoked by past violence. Educators should prepare learners for engaging with testimony by explaining the unique nature of such sources to help learners recognize their historical value as well as possible limitations.

Considering the highly individual perspectives of testimonies, it is recommended to introduce multiple sources so that learners can engage with different perspectives. Educators should endeavour to always contextualize testimonies so that learners can understand how personal experiences have been shaped by broader factors such as geographical location, social status and gender. If recorded, learners should also be informed of when and how the testimony was taken and by whom, so that they are able to assess other external factors that may have influenced the witness's account.

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146   Anderson, B. (1991). *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. London: Verso; Carretero, M. 2011. *Constructing Patriotism: Teaching History and Memories in Global Worlds*. Charlotte: Information Age Publishing.

5.6 Teaching about violent pasts in victim communities

It is important to ensure that education about the violence is victim-centred. Victim-centred education is necessary even when only a small minority of students in a group identify as the victim – or are related to a victim – of past violence. Victim-centred education therefore requires an understanding of who the students are and how they relate to past violence.

Victim-centred education prioritises three key aspects.

→ *Trauma-informed.* Being trauma-informed means acknowledging the impact of trauma on individuals and actively incorporating that understanding into interactions and practices. In an educational context, it involves creating a safe and supportive learning environment, where students have a trusting relationship with the teacher and each other. Trauma-informed approaches also require an understanding of the impact of trauma and how it might manifest in students' behaviour, particularly when triggering subjects are being discussed. Skilled educators know when to 'park' a subject that risks traumatising or retraumatising the students they are responsible for.

→ *Designed with/in consultation with the affected community.* Involving the affected community in programme design helps to ensure that triggering or offensive content about past violence is not unintentionally or unnecessarily included in education about past violence. It furthermore increases the chances that victims will engage in learning about past violence if they see the educational content as relevant to their experiences.

→ *Highlights the voices of victims.* Including the perspectives and testimonies of victims of past violence is essential for all students. For victims of past violence, seeing voices like theirs represented in learning materials can be healing and help validate their experiences. Including these voices can furthermore help all students to understand the diversity of victim experiences and responses, as well as the agency and resistance of victims.

5.7 Addressing violent pasts indirectly

The learners' relationship to past violence will shape appropriate ways to address the violence in the classroom. In situations where the violence feels distant from learners' lives and identities, and/or where narratives surrounding the violence are largely uncontroversial, it is possible to teach about the violence in a direct way.[147]

However, often the protracted nature of violence and the intergenerational legacies that it leaves means that past violence can feel personal and existential to learners. Furthermore, narratives regarding past violence may be considered controversial or unsettled within public or national discourse. In such circumstances, an indirect approach may be important for addressing past violence. Indirect peace education may include teaching skills such as reflective thinking, tolerance, empathy, human rights, and conflict resolution, while avoiding direct references to past or ongoing/protracted violence. Through supportive pedagogy, students can transfer the skills and knowledge

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147   Bar-Tal, D. and Rosen, Y. 2009. Peace education in societies involved in intractable conflicts: Direct and indirect models. *Review of Educational Research*, Vol. 79, pp. 557–575.

they learn to their history and contemporary contexts. Even 'small openings' to navigate and question contested narratives matter.[148]

Examples of indirect teaching might include the use of fictional narratives, such as through graphic novels, series or radio programmes. Rather than speak directly about genocide and violence for example, radio dramas in Central Africa educated in more general terms about the dangers of othering in fomenting identity-based violence and strategies to resist and prevent violence. Evaluation of these programmes has shown positive effects on intergroup attitudes.[149]

Another indirect approach involves engaging students in the arts to educate about past violence. The arts – poetry and literature, performance arts, visual arts – have historically been used in all stages of violence; as a warning of impending violence, as resistance to current violence, and as ways of commemorating, learning about, and recovering from past violence. In societies recently emerging from violence, the use of metaphor and imagery so common in the arts can be a useful way to reflect on the violence before critical analysis feels timely. The arts can also create spaces of dialogue, empathy, and active listening between those who may have experienced the violence differently. According to Naidu-Silverman,[150] memorialization initiatives and other artistic endeavours can provide alternative narratives about conflict and, through metaphor and symbolism, address the silences and taboos that conflict has left in its wake.

A third indirect approach involves the use of 'distant' historical cases which can be an important pedagogical entry point to studying, critiquing, and understanding violence that is closer to home. For example, in several non-European contexts, the Holocaust has served as an entry point for addressing other violent pasts.[151] In these contexts, the Holocaust has been perceived as less threatening than directly examining more local and recent violence and divisions, thus allowing for a concerted study of the historical conditions that enabled an atrocity of such magnitude to occur. Beyond the particularities of the Holocaust in historical context, studying the discourse and behaviour of various groups in the context of violent atrocities allows for a reflection on human behaviour, identity, and the psychology of othering, as well as compliance and obedience to authority. Evaluations of programmes that use the Holocaust as an entry point to learning about

148   Bekerman, Z. and Zembylas, M. 2012. *Teaching Contested Narratives: Identity, Memory, and Reconciliation in Peace Education and Beyond*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

149   Bilali, R. and Staub, E. 2016. Interventions in real world settings. Using media to overcome prejudice and promote intergroup reconciliation in Central Africa. In C. Sibley, & F. Barlow (eds.), C*ambridge handbook of the psychology of prejudice*, pp. 607–631. Cambridge University Press.

150   Naidu-Silverman. 2015. The contribution of art and culture in peace and reconciliation processes. *Centre for Culture and development*.

151   UNESCO. 2017. *Educating about the Holocaust and preventing genocide*. p. 30. Paris: UNESCO; Robinson, N. (forthcoming). Can Holocaust education serve as a 'bridge" to learning about apartheid? Developing "interpretive frames" when learning about human rights abuses in the South African history classroom. The article title I found was this - Using Holocaust Education as a "Bridge" to Learning about Apartheid in a South African History Classroom: The Development of "Interpretive Frames" through Comparative Histories.

local violence show that this strategy plays a critical role in fostering open discussion, as well as strengthening understandings of sources and drivers of violence.[152]

However, as with all distancing approaches, understandings are not guaranteed to transfer to the local or national context and thus their impact may be limited. Both fictional narratives and comparative approaches can risk distortions and historical inaccuracies.[153]

CASE STUDY

Addressing violent pasts through the exploration of heritage in Iraq

In collaboration with the University of Duhok, through the UK Research and Information project Reconfiguring Heritage: Present Engagements with Communities' Pasts for Resilient Futures a team of peer researchers have designed a series of participatory workshops for young people aged 20-30 from different ethno-religious communities in Iraq and the Kurdistan Region of Iraq (KRI). Alongside exploring how youth define their heritage and the ways in which they engage with it, through a focus on the role of heritage in social dynamics, peer researchers have been working alongside workshop participants to further understand how heritage might contribute to everyday peace and resistance to different forms of marginalization and oppression.

To do this, the peer researchers have facilitated two-day workshops with groups of youth from the same ethno-religious communities who engaged in creative and visual methodologies including storytelling, body mapping, and photovoice to further explore perceptions of and relationships to heritage (as well as the emotional and embodied sensations it elicits). As part of the next stage in the project, workshop participants were then invited to express their interest to undertake further research and develop an initiative – such as an exhibition or other creative output – as part of a mixed ethno-religious group. Through a focus on heritage and its connection to socio-political frameworks and mobilizations, young people were able to indirectly engage with their experiences of the 2014 conflict with the Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) in a way that they felt safe and comfortable to address.

152   Murphy, K. and Gallagher, T. 2009. "Reconstruction after violence: How teachers and schools can deal with the legacy of the past." *Perspectives in Education*: The Pedagogical Transition in Post-Conflict Societies, Vol. 27, No. 2, pp. 158-168; Murphy, K., Sleeper, M. and Strom, M. 2011. "Facing history and ourselves in post-conflict societies." *International Schools Journal Vol. 18*, No. 2, pp. 65-72, p. 67.

153   Bellino, M.J. 2017. Ligado por el tiempo e identidad: Enseñando la injusticia en Guatemala a través de la historia. In Sanchez Meertens, A., Ariza, A., Cortés, I., Ritschard, S. (eds.), R*e-conociendo el conflicto: Foro internacional sobre pedagogía, memoria y violencia*, pp. 39-51. La Carreta Editores de Medellín. Medellín, Colombia; Gray, M. 2014. The Boy in the Striped Pyjamas: A Blessing or Curse for Holocaust Education? Holocaust Studies: A Journal of Culture and History, Vol. 20, No. 3, pp. 109-136; UCL Centre for Holocaust Education. 2022. The boy in the striped pyjamas in English secondary schools. Continuity and Change Research Study.

While the aim of the project has been to understand how youth produce, encounter and engage with their heritage and its transformative potentials for both individuals and collectives, by inviting young people to lead their own discursive processes and research initiatives connected to heritage, they have themselves become agents in unravelling and reckoning with violent pasts both within and across different social components. By creating opportunities for young people to share their heritage with one another and to communicate it externally, they have been able to take ownership of the narratives that they deem important in learning and educating about their own and one another's communities. In this way, the dissonance and contestations surrounding heritage were recognized, but this did not preclude possibilities for understanding and, while there were many similarities such as shared heritages and shared experiences, it was through difference that meaningful discussion and collaboration was made possible. Consequently, heritage became part of a future-oriented process for creating new and informal public education initiatives arising from violent pasts and recognizing ongoing injustices.

5.8 Summary of approaches

UNESCO recommends an educational approach to violent pasts that is proactive, comprehensive and holistic, including supportive policy, curricula, pedagogies, and training for teachers and educators. Box 5.2 summarizes the key pedagogical strategies for addressing violent pasts, which can also guide curricular reform and policy decisions. Section 5 of this guide shares examples of approaches and practices applied in multiple country contexts. It also accounts for other educational priorities in outlining a comprehensive approach to addressing violent pasts.

Box 5.2: Key pedagogical strategies to address violent pasts

- Consult primary and secondary historical evidence and engage in processes of sourcing and corroboration.
- Account for multiple perspectives across sources, with an emphasis on victim and survivor accounts. Connect events, trends, and concepts to individual stories of those who experienced the violent past.
- Ensure that victims of past violence are represented with complexity, dignity and attention to historical contextualization, i.e. including histories prior to and following violence, emphasizing cultural assets, resilience, and contributions.
- Analyse the causes, conditions, precursors and turning points in violent pasts, including failed or missed opportunities for resolving conflict through nonviolent means.
- Account for different expressions of violence over time, including physical, structural, and cultural/epistemic forms.
- Address the legacies of violent pasts and, where relevant, how violence has evolved over time and translated into systemic inequities.
- Engage with transitional justice and reparative processes and artefacts, such as truth commissions, testimonies, public hearings, and memorial sites.
- Emphasize that violence was not inevitable in the past and is preventable in the future.
- Contextualize international obligations to human rights, violence prevention, gender equality, and other global commitments.
- Integrate gender-responsiveness in the curriculum and pedagogy.
- Promote awareness, respect for, and solidarity with diversity across dimensions of race, ethnicity, religion, gender, sexual orientation, and dis/ability status.
- Instil a sense of membership and belonging in local, national, and global contexts.

- Support students in taking action to address root causes of violence, participate in peacebuilding activities, and to defend and claim their human rights and the rights of others.

- Encourage reflection on the ethical dimensions of violent pasts and present-day legacies.

- Recognize emotions as an essential dimension of this learning, and ones that may manifest differently across distinct identity groups.

- Consider opportunities for arts-based expression to help students respond to their learning creatively in personal and collective ways.

- Create space for open discussion, including opportunities to disagree, without tolerating denial or distortions of violent pasts.

- Consider when violent pasts can be addressed directly, and when indirect approaches, such as a distant historical case or fictional representations, are more feasible.

- Encourage comparative analysis that is attentive to historical context and is not aimed at creating a hierarchy of suffering.

Annexes

ANNEX I: Example roadmap for enhancing education programmes in support of addressing violent pasts

The roadmap below exemplifies possible policy actions towards strengthening education systems in view of addressing violent pasts. It should not be understood as a prescriptive trajectory, nor a linear process, rather as a source of inspiration for policy-makers who seek to engage in similar review and reform processes in their country. Depending on context, proposed actions may be adapted, switched around, implemented in parallel, or skipped. The framework builds on and incorporates recommendations set out in the policy guide. The case studies included in the guide can serve as inspiration for possible application of some of the proposed policy actions.

Action 1: Review current policy environment and establish political support

Consider education as part of broader conflict prevention and peacebuilding efforts and **conduct a review of the current policy environment** and identify favourable frameworks for introducing or strengthening education about violent pasts. When doing so also consider broader international education frameworks as well as overarching education objectives that may be helpful for anchoring a more constructive engagement with violent pasts, such as commitments towards GCED, education for peace or human rights education as well as recommendations set out in relevant UN frameworks such as the UNESCO 2023 Recommendation on Education for Peace Human Rights, and Sustainable Development.

Baseline considerations for review:

- What are the intentions and goals established within the current policies that align with the project of establishing or strengthening education about violent pasts?
- Does a clear policy mandate for addressing violent pasts through education exist that justifies the rationale and goals for this kind of learning? If not, is the current political climate supportive of establishing such policy mandate?
- Is there denial, distortion or silencing regarding specific areas of history present in society or important tensions or prejudice regarding local or international experiences of violent pasts?
- Are there specific upcoming opportunities that may be beneficial for harnessing political support for such review or reform processes, such as planned curriculum or textbook reviews, historical anniversaries etc.?
- Are the current policies coherent? Are the policies in line with partnerships of the Ministry of Education across sectors and with other actors?

- Has practical support for implementation been laid out within policies?
- How are current policies supported and complimented by non-state actors working in non-formal and informal education, i.e. museums, victim groups, teaching associations, unions, civil society? Can they provide impetus and expertise to future review and reform processes?
- Are there relevant international policy or guidelines that could be applicable or integrated within the context?

Action 2: Curriculum review and identification of entry points

- **Identify possible entry points** by conducting a review of existing relevant curricula and assessing the status and quality of relevant education media and resources. Consider mapping of non-governmental education resources, such as materials developed by museums and civil society organizations.

Baseline considerations for review:

- Do current curricula cover violent pasts, locally or internationally, and if so, to what extent? Do existing curricula consider the broader contexts of violent pasts, including processes leading up to them and/or their immediate and long-term legacies?
- If incorporated in existing curricula, how much time is allocated to teaching about violent pasts, locally or internationally? Is teaching these histories mandatory or optional?
- Are there additional violent histories, including regional or international cases, with connections to your country that could be considered for inclusion?
- If violent pasts are not explicitly mentioned in existing curricula, what other existing themes could serve as possible entry points? Do existing curricula include reflections on human rights, citizenship, identity, peace or intercultural dialogue? Is international law or related concepts, such as the prevention of conflict or atrocity crimes, being taught?
- How do current textbooks and other education media reflect existing curriculum contents? When were history textbooks last revised?
- Do textbooks and educational materials present a particular narrative, or rather focus on processes and skill building? Are there narratives that are missing and might be included to provide a broader perspective of the past?
- What other educational resources that address local and international violent pasts exist? Are relevant resources publicly accessible and available in local languages?
- Do the current curricula take into consideration cross-cutting perspectives including anti-racist, decolonial, inclusive and gender-responsive perspectives? What steps can be taken to strengthen consideration of these perspectives?
- What research or academic scholarship is available on a national level regarding education about violent pasts and related themes?
- Is training on the curriculum and related materials available to both in-service and pre-service teachers?

Action 3: Identification of relevant actors

- **Identify relevant actors** in the Ministry of Education, other related government bodies (including from federal, regional or municipal levels, depending on the nature of the education system), including entities in charge of curricula and textbook development, pre-service and in-service teacher training in relevant subjects, such as history education, civics, citizenship education and social sciences, human rights education and peace education. Also consider relevant non-state and civil society actors, such as NGOs engaged in relevant fields, museums and memorials, victim and survivor interest groups, universities with relevant research chairs etc. The mapping should respect diverse perspectives and experiences linked to violent pasts as well as their legacies.

Action 4: Establishment of working groups

- **Establish one or several working groups** with a diverse representation of critical actors and perspectives from government and civil society, including from victim communities. Gender balance should be anticipated. Members of the working group should be able to contribute relevant expertise on the history and broader context of the violent past, pedagogy, and development of supporting educational materials and teacher training. Possible gaps in expertise could be balanced out by establishing a broader advisory body that includes international experts in relevant areas.

- Hold an **initial consultation with the working group** to lay out intentions for the review and reform process, to surface possible obstacles and to identify key objectives and goals. This includes presenting the established baselines, discussing the thematic scope, and reflecting on the historical instances and developments to be included. This initial consultation may result in a first working document that outlines the following procedures as well as requirements for successful implementation, e.g. fundraising needs, technical support, political support, consultative needs etc.

Action 5: Establishment of a supportive infrastructure

- Based on the outcomes of the working group meeting, establish the necessary **supportive infrastructure** to successfully prepare and implement the review and reform process. This may include identifying internal capacities and/or hiring additional personnel, securing adequate funding, including through additional fundraising, the establishment of institutional partnerships, such as with relevant non-governmental bodies, international partners and/or organizations, where relevant and necessary, and establishing transparent avenues of communications both internally and public-facing, taking into consideration diverse interest groups.

- If appropriate, consider officially launching the programme, possibly paired with a public event to foster public support.

Action 6: Teacher assessment

• Conduct an **assessment of teachers'** existing capacity for teaching about violent pasts and closely related subjects. The assessment should evaluate teachers' knowledge, confidence and professional capacity to teach about violent pasts and gather information on specific obstacles that teachers may be facing in this regard. The assessment should aim to include teachers from diverse backgrounds and different social and geographical areas. It should further assess the capacities of teachers who have recently completed their training and those who are further advanced in their careers. Part of the assessment should also consider teachers' personal views and potential biases that may affect their attitudes towards teaching about violent pasts. The assessment should result in a report that is circulated and discussed with the working group. Outcomes should directly inform considerations for pre-service and in-service teacher training, curriculum time/design as well as the development of further guidance materials on the topic.

Action 7: Establishment of an action plan

• Based on these outcomes, establish a detailed **action plan** with the working group including curriculum reform, development or revision of educational materials, in-service and pre-service teacher training and dissemination of materials. The action plan should outline clear roles and responsibilities of involved actors, foresee regular consultative processes, including with relevant experts and key stakeholders from diverse interest groups, foresee piloting and testing phases, adequate time and capacity for the familiarization of teacher trainers, as well as translation into local languages. Adequate budget should be allocated to the various phases of the programme.

• The action plan should be signed off by relevant authorities, including those on the federal, regional and/or municipal level, depending on the nature of the education system.

Action 8: Curriculum reform

• Following the established action plan, conduct **consultative curriculum reform** ensuring clear guidance to support addressing violent pasts though education, including linkages to broader education objectives and assessment.

Baseline considerations for reform:

• Have teachers, teacher educators, education researchers, representatives of diverse identity groups, including victim groups, and civil society organizations been consulted? What other groups need to be consulted?

• What are potential curriculum entry points that do not add curricular time? How can new contents be best linked with existing themes and topics to support shared learning objectives and outcomes? Are there themes and topics in the existing curriculum that require revision? Is there available time or space in the existing curriculum?

- Are there existing, quality resources from civil society, academia and international organizations that can be leveraged?
- What related academic institutions, archives and sites of memory exist and what are the educational capacities of these sites? What role can memory sites play in supporting the curriculum?
- How will the reformed curriculum be rolled out? How will this be funded/sustained?

Action 9: Textbook revision and/or development

- Aligned with the curriculum reform and identified need, **revise existing textbooks and educational resources AND/OR develop new textbooks and educational resources**. An advisory board, including historians, social scientists, curriculum and pedagogical experts, teachers, teacher educators, and education experts, should be established and consulted throughout the process of revision or development. Whenever possible, ensure the make-up of textbook drafting teams is inclusive across conflict-affected groups and operates with mutual respect to acknowledge differences and model constructive dialogue.

Baseline considerations

- Do textbooks and resources take into consideration cross-cutting perspectives including those that are anti-racist, decolonial, inclusive, equitable and gender-responsive? What steps can be taken to strengthen consideration of these perspectives?
- Are representations of violent pasts and their broader context aligned with state-of-the-art research? Do they adequately reflect complexity?
- Do textbooks and resources fully complement recent changes to the curriculum? May it be necessary to develop additional content and/or remove or further contextualize content?
- Is the language and terminology used inclusive and up to date with historical research?
- Are mentioned sources or references still relevant?
- Is the use of illustrations and photos adequate, non-stereotypical and gender inclusive?

Action 10: Enhance teacher training opportunities

- Aligned with the curriculum **reform, review and enhance pre-service and in-service teaching curricula and pedagogies**. Allocate sufficient time for familiarizing teacher trainers with new contents and approaches to ensure their full capacity to transfer knowledge and skills to teachers. Pilot teacher training in various regions/contexts to further enhance its efficiency before rolling it out at larger scale. Provide continued training opportunities for teachers and ensure full accessibility of supportive guidance and educational materials. Consider establishing mechanisms of peer support for teachers to share experiences and classroom practices on the topic of violent pasts. Consider the involvement/formalized cooperation with non-state actors such as museums and memorial sites to further enhance teacher training and to introduce them to the possibility of on-site education and/or project-based learning.

Continued follow-up and development

- If adequate, consider organizing a conference or other public event to conclude the review and reform process, to report on achievements/result and to gather public support. Continue to promote implementation of the new reforms through formal and informal activities related to addressing violent pasts including commemoration days, and extra-curricular activities, such as encounters with survivors, visits to historical sites and museums, writing competitions, theatre performances, etc.
- Establish regular reviews and assessment of the programme, including through teacher and student surveys, as well as continuing to provide opportunities for professional development through updated teaching resources, regular teacher training, academic and/or professional conferences, international exchange, continued partnerships with non-governmental institutions etc.

ANNEX II: NEEDS ASSESSMENT TOOL

This section provides guidelines and recommendations on how to assess the system-wide educational environment in which violent pasts are addressed. In particular, it outlines guidelines and recommendations for 1) curricula and learning resources, 2) teacher training, 3) teaching and learning in schools, and 4) informal education programmes. Policy-makers are encouraged to evaluate educational provision in light of these recommendations.

Curricula and learning resources

Curricula and learning materials	Assessment	Action point
What key challenges need to be overcome in order to address violent past(s) through education comprehensively? Are there social processes of denial, distortion and silencing that must be overcome? Have some histories and experiences been excluded from curricula?		
Is adequate funding available to support curricula reform or development of education programmes related to addressing violent pasts, GCED, peace education, and related approaches? If not, what avenues are available for resource mobilization?		
Are teachers given clear curricular guidance and/or teaching materials, such as lesson plans, on addressing violent pasts?		

Curricula and learning materials	Assessment	Action point
Is the rationale for addressing violent pasts clearly articulated in the curricula?		
Are topics relating to violent pasts appropriately assessed in the curricula?		
Have diverse stakeholders – teachers, teacher educators, victim communities, perpetrator communities – contributed towards the development of curricular and learning materials?		
Are multiple perspectives and identities represented in the curricula and learning materials?		
Are the contemporary legacies of past violence explored in the curricula and learning materials?		
Are histories of violence explored in an inter-disciplinary way?		
Have new curricula and learning materials been piloted with teachers?		

Teacher training

Teacher training	Assessment	Action point
Have teachers been trained on the topics and skills related to addressing violent pasts?		
Have teachers been offered the opportunity to reflect on their own social and political identities, their understandings of past violence, and their related emotions and biases?		
Have teachers been offered the opportunity to meet with teachers who are differently positioned in relation to past violence?		
Have teachers been trained in pedagogical strategies for managing controversial or emotive classroom discussions?		
Have teachers been trained in both direct and indirect approaches to teaching about past violence?		
Are teachers sufficiently knowledgeable regarding the empirical details of the past violence they will teach about?		
Do teachers have professional support networks that they can consult when teaching violent pasts?		

Teacher training	Assessment	Action point
Are teachers at risk of violence, discrimination or political persecution when teaching violent pasts? Are support measures in place, including at school level?		

Teaching and learning in schools

Teaching and learning in schools	Assessment	Action point
Is the Ministry of Education aware of what is currently being taught in schools regarding past violence?		
Are classrooms safe and open spaces?		
Do learners have the opportunity to meet with peers who are differently positioned in relation to past violence?		
Are learners given the opportunity to engage with multiple sources regarding violent pasts? Are learners given the opportunity to incorporate or discuss different forms of knowledge, including oral history, visual sources, and art-based practices of history?		

Teaching and learning in schools	Assessment	Action point
Do learners have the opportunity to visit heritage or memory sites?		
Does teaching about violent pasts consider the behavioural, socio-emotional, and cognitive dimensions of learning about the violent past?		
Are learners given the opportunity to reflect on the violent past in an interdisciplinary way?		
Does teaching about the violent past promote ideals of peace and justice?		
Are the intended learning outcomes from addressing violent pasts included in formative and summative assessments for students, including within schools and with regional or national frameworks for assessing learning, such as standardized tests?		
Are there mechanisms in place to support students' socioemotional needs and wellbeing, while addressing violent pasts?		

Teaching and learning in schools	Assessment	Action point
Are teachers at risk of violence, discrimination or political persecution when teaching violent pasts? Are support measures in place?		

Informal education programmes

Curricula and learning materials	Assessment	Action point
Is there active collaboration with the Ministry of Education with informal education programmes and initiatives that support teaching and learning about violent pasts?		
Are there gaps in informal education coverage, with reference to geography, identity groups, and significant historical events relating to addressing violent pasts?		
Are heritage and memory sites appropriately reinforcing curricular content and learning materials?		

Curricula and learning materials	Assessment	Action point
Are heritage and memory sites equipped to support teacher training on teaching about violent pasts?		
Do heritage and memorial sites have opportunities for national and international cooperation?		

ANNEX III: SUPPORTIVE UNESCO RESOURCES

Within its broader programme on GCED, UNESCO has published several resources that can further support education policy-makers in developing tailored approaches to dealing with violent pasts. The following selected UNESCO resources touch on root causes of violence and provide guidance to policy-makers and educators on thematic areas of relevance for strengthening more peaceful societies.

UNESCO (2025), *Countering Holocaust denial and distortion through education: a guide for teachers*, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000392455

UNESCO (2024), *Unmasking racism: guidelines for educational materials*, https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000388802

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Notes

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Addressing violent pasts

through education

A policy guide

This UNESCO guide proposes strategies for policy-makers to strengthen education approaches that address violent pasts with the intention to support sustainable peace. It outlines helpful education frameworks, principles and recommended practices to allow for an informed, yet critical engagement with complex histories and their legacies that favour historical literacy, conflict transformation, and global citizenship.

4 QUALITY EDUCATION

Sustainable
Development
Goals