

INTERCONNECTIONS BETWEEN PEACE STUDIES AND TEACHER EDUCATION: THEORETICAL AND PRACTICAL IMPLICATIONS

INTERCONNESSIONI TRA PEACE STUDIES E FORMAZIONE INSEGNANTI: IMPLICAZIONI TEORICHE E PRATICHE



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ABSTRACT

This contribution connects peace studies and teacher education, highlighting crucial competences for a culture of peace. It analyzes Galtung's TRANSCEND method (2014) for the non-violent transformation of conflicts (Galtung & Fischer, 2013) and the evolving teacher identity (Pillen et al., 2013) from a reflective perspective (Schön, 1983; Martino, 2022). According to this perspective, peace education falls within the scope of a transformative pedagogy (Freire, 2004; Milan, 2008), whose aim is the promotion of education oriented towards equity and civil coexistence (Bornatici, 2024; Malavasi, 2020).

Questo contributo collega i peace studies e la formazione docente, evidenziando competenze cruciali per una cultura di pace. Analizza il metodo TRANSCEND di Galtung (2014) per la trasformazione non violenta dei conflitti (Galtung & Fischer, 2013) e l'identità docente in divenire (Pillen et al., 2013) in un'ottica riflessiva (Schön, 1983; Martino, 2022). Secondo questa prospettiva, la formazione alla pace si inserisce nell'ambito di una pedagogia trasformativa (Freire, 2004; Milan, 2008), che ha come fine la promozione di un'educazione orientata all'equità e alla convivenza civile (Bornatici, 2024; Malavasi, 2020).

KEYWORDS

Peace studies, teacher education, reflexivity, professional identity, educational relationship.

Studi sulla pace, formazione degli insegnanti, riflessività, identità professionale, relazione educative.

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1. Why teach peace in schools?

Peace represents an educational issue of significant importance for today's society and, therefore, an unavoidable pedagogical question especially in our time.

It is not, in fact, a secondary matter or a marginal objective, but a challenge rooted in the very conception of the human being as a relational entity, capable of transformation, responsibility, and care. Human existence is ontologically plural, coexistent and relational; conversely, "a life essentially centered on itself, in its private space, is therefore destined to slide into a melancholic opacity.

If the possibility of infusing life with meaning is closely connected to expressing the plural consistency of the human being, then it is essential to learn how to care for the social world" (Mortari, 2012, p. 1). From this perspective, educating is never a neutral act, but rather an ethical and political gesture, as it directs one's gaze toward a certain idea of the world, of the future, of coexistence.

Hannah Arendt (1961) stated that to educate means to take responsibility for the world: it is an act of love for the world, but also of trust in the new generations, so that they may become initiators of a new time. Lévinas (1961/1986), for his part, also highlighting the social nature of human existence, emphasized the educational relationship, defining it as an encounter with the face of the other, with their vulnerability and irreducible alterity: ethics precedes knowledge, and it is in the response to the face of the other that the authenticity of the educational bond is enacted. In line with what has been said, an idea of education emerges as a continuous social process, oriented toward the transformation of reality; in this view, learning is never an end in itself, but rather aimed at active participation in collective life (Dewey, 1961). Rethinking education in a broad sense means today, even more than yesterday, being able to interpret the historical moment and to place the democratic habitus at the center again, along with the fundamental values related to human rights and peace. As Cambi affirms (2023, p. 35), "the task becomes more arduous and complex, requiring sophisticated elaborations necessary precisely to project ourselves toward the future that is already underway, but that we must correct here and now, radically, with respect to the present itself." The construction of a solid culture of peace is a project of education and constitutes the only possibility for overcoming fragmentation and the necessary premise for the experience of well-being of individuals and communities. Peace calls for a laborious commitment to interconnection with the Other, which takes shape educationally through an exercise of social responsibility.

Starting from the outlined premises, the theme of peace assumes strategic relevance in educational contexts, where it has the opportunity to be declined within the realm of knowledge and to become an integral part of students' educational experience. Only in this way can the school become a protected space for conflict management, where peace can be generatively practiced and where the conditions are created that allow each individual to put their abilities into practice (Nussbaum, 2013). The way this objective is intended to be achieved is crucial in helping new generations: placing students in the condition to discern knowledge from belief, to actively search for solutions to understand and transform the world starting from unpredictable questions, and to experience difficult learning processes connected first and foremost to overcoming an individual perspective in favor of a collective one, by analyzing the richness that comes from multiple perspectives, can represent a way to promote an "adult subjectivation" (Biesta, 2022). It follows that the teacher's stance moves toward creative rather than prescriptive teaching models, and their role is to be rethought in terms of the development of professional identity. In general, attention to the contribution that school can provide to the construction of a culture of peace and to the training of generations responsible for the civic, cultural, and social life of communities represents a relevant area of pedagogical reflection and investigation, as it is directly connected to addressing major educational emergencies and the development of democratic societies. The broader goal would be to try to reconnect school to life (Morin, 2015), placing the social problem of education (Dewey, 1949a; 1949b) at the center, through meaningful learning experiences connected to individuals' critical growth and the acquisition of tools useful for interpreting, managing, and transforming reality.

This is evidently not a disciplinary content, but a transversal perspective grounded in the interaction between students' knowing, being, and doing. This inevitably recalls the redefinition of teaching models and didactic practices, and thus the general theme of teacher education; in fact, the conditions through which the experience of peace can be realized fall within the scope of responsibilities that teachers assume toward young people, the common good, and the future. It is precisely in the weavings of the educational relationship and the redefinition of social practices enacted within the school context that we can trace the foundation of a peace-oriented education. In line with these premises, the article aims to explore the possible links between Peace Studies and teaching practices, in order to define possible implications for initial teacher education

oriented toward the non-violent transformation of conflicts and the construction of educational relationships based on equity, dialogue, and shared responsibility.

2. Transcending to Educate. From Dialogical Relationship to Mutual Transformation

In the contemporary debate on education, the promotion of a culture of peace constitutes a priority and cross-cutting challenge, which requires the improvement of training pathways aimed at strengthening teachers' competences and professionalism. In this perspective, Galtung (2014) offers relevant insights, suggesting the importance of creating a true culture of peace involving all members of the educational community. This proposal is placed in the context of a global crisis marked by widespread conflicts, whose effects end up affecting educational institutions and their actors, making it difficult to recover a value-based dimension founded on respect for the Other. In the field of peace studies, Johan Galtung inaugurated a radically innovative perspective, affirming that "the opposite of peace is violence, not war." With this statement, he shifts the focus of analysis from explicit war phenomena to the broader and more pervasive dimension of structural and cultural violence, thus founding his theory of nonviolent conflict transformation.

For Galtung, conflict is not a pathology to eliminate, but a potentially generative resource: it can be transformed creatively through analytical and relational processes that promote equity, justice, and mutual recognition (Galtung, 2014). One of the cornerstones of his thought is the distinction between three forms of violence:

- *Direct violence*, which is visible and recognizable, because it involves an intentional harmful action by an identifiable actor;
- *Indirect or structural violence*, invisible yet pervasive, which manifests through systemic inequalities and social injustice, when structures prevent equitable access to fundamental goods, rights, resources, and opportunities;
- *Cultural violence*, which serves as symbolic legitimization of the previous two, rooted in knowledge, languages, religions, the arts, sciences, media and – decisively – in education (Galtung, 2000).

It is precisely from this perspective that education acquires a crucial role: it is not neutral. As Annacontini (2014) emphasizes, education can become a tool of indoctrination, of internalization of dominant ideologies, to the point of producing a form of “dis-education” that consolidates hierarchical relationships and rigid models of thought. In this way, cultural violence is embodied in a double *paideia*: one visible and official – what is taught as “right” or “wrong” – and one underground, implicit, invisible, which unconsciously orients thinking and behavior, until they conform to what Galtung defines as the “collective subconscious” (Galtung, 2000, p. III). For this reason, educating for peace means making the invisible visible, making explicit those tacit cultural assumptions that justify, normalize or even glorify violence. The deconstruction of cultural violence requires a systematic pedagogical effort, oriented toward the construction of a new relational grammar based on the recognition of otherness, on nonviolence as a daily practice, and on the possibility of narrating reality with alternative paradigms (Quinto, 2023). In this sense, according to Galtung, peace is achieved through creative alternatives that overcome unjust social structures, through mediation, dialogue and the active involvement of all parties. He proposes transcending dichotomous oppositions to open up new horizons of coexistence: to transcend means to redefine the situation so that what appeared blocked opens up to new possibilities. The *TRANSCEND*¹ method unfolds in three phases – diagnosis, prognosis, and therapy – which shape a path of transformative analysis centered on creativity as a pedagogical and social lever (Galtung & Fischer, 2013). This conception of peace reveals a deep connection with Paulo Freire’s pedagogical proposal (2018), who, in his *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, defines the coordinates of a pedagogy of liberation based on conscientization, dialogue, hope, and critical thinking. Milan (2023) highlights how Freire identifies in education a radical force that acts on the foundations of the educational reality. His principle that “men educate each other in communion, through the mediation of the world” (Freire, 2018) reaffirms the idea that education is dialogical relationship and mutual transformation.

¹ The TRANSCEND method, developed by Johan Galtung, proposes a conflict management approach that goes beyond the binary logic of victory/defeat through the diagnosis of root causes, the prognosis of possible developments, and therapy, that is, the activation of transformative interventions oriented toward the transcendence of the conflict itself, promoting solutions that meet the fundamental needs of all parties involved (Galtung, 2014).

An authentic peace education, therefore, requires that the teacher be trained and understood not as a passive transmitter of content, but as an epistemic subject, capable of reflecting on their own experience and of acting critically and creatively within the educational context. It is precisely on this level that the distinction is played out between negative peace – the mere absence of direct violence – and positive peace, understood as the active construction of justice and fair relationships. Only through a transformative, integrated and interdisciplinary educational and cultural commitment will it be possible to build relationships and societies not oriented toward the suppression of conflict, but toward its creative and just transformation.

3. Being Agents of Change: Agency and Reflexivity in Teacher Professionalism

The figure of the teacher is today increasingly challenged and questioned by the complex interplay between the organization of school work and the multifaceted demands posed by society (Meirieu, 2023). The process of teaching, in constant evolution, cannot be reduced to a technical and standardized repetition, but instead unfolds within a highly complex experiential dimension (McLean, 1999), which significantly affects both the professional and the personal spheres of the teacher. Indeed, becoming a teacher also entails, among other things, deciding how to adapt one's personal ideologies and ideals to institutional expectations (Carter & Doyle, 1996), while confronting significant identity tensions (Pillen et al., 2013). Throughout the teacher's training path, it is essential that they be supported in the construction of a professional identity capable of "incorporating personal subjectivity into the professional/cultural expectations of what it means to be a teacher" (Alsup, 2006, p. 27). In this sense, teaching is neither predetermined nor predictable; it is not regulated or prepackaged, nor does it follow a strictly logical progression. Rather, it demands an act of subjectivity, a personal investment that renders it unique and unrepeatable. It does not take shape through passive convergence toward the pre-existing, but rather through creative and generative action oriented to the new. The personal and creative value of teaching invites a rethinking of the scope of the act of teaching itself, situating it within a specific perspective of agency, which invokes the teacher's narrative capacity and one of the school's primary aims: teaching how to narrate, thereby fostering new forms of

freedom. This perspective aligns fruitfully with the notion of human agency, understood as the individual's capacity to reflect upon their actions, to plan with foresight, and to act with intentionality (Bandura, 2018). This conception has been expanded in the capability approach developed by Sen (1999) and Nussbaum (2011), in which agency is conceived as the personal freedom to choose and to pursue one's own objectives, in concrete relation to the resources and opportunities actually available. It is precisely in the dialectic between the personal dimension and the professional context that the reflection on teacher agency is located – understood as the teacher's competence to act intentionally and creatively within specific situations. According to Priestley, Biesta, and Robinson (2015), the growing interest in teacher agency reflects a clear trend in current educational policies, which increasingly recognize the teacher's active role in shaping school contexts and promoting instructional innovation aimed at fostering a culture of peace (Goodson, 2003; Priestley, 2011). Such policies are progressively moving away from a prescriptive and standardized paradigm, toward a model that values the educator's autonomy, responsibility, and reflexivity (Biesta, 2010). In this regard, a recent literature review by Ferrari and Taddei (2017), on the theme of agency in the development and professional learning of teachers, highlights that the meaning of agency must be interpreted within a continuum that considers, on one side, the teacher's individual characteristics (their capacity to act), and on the other, certain specific features of the context (the possibilities/opportunities to act). Within the dialectic between individual and context, it is possible to identify three different "forms" through which teacher agency can be expressed and realized. The first corresponds to the ecological definition provided by Biesta and Tedder (2007), who argue that agency does not stem from the teacher's "power," but is rather the result of their capacity to interact with a given environment. In describing agency, they note that "actors always act by means of an environment rather than simply in an environment" (p. 137). The second is offered by Calvert (2016), who defines teacher agency as the teacher's ability to act deliberately and constructively in managing their own professional growth and in influencing that of others. The third derives from the dialectical perspective adopted by Ferrari and Taddei (2017), which identifies the essence of agency in the interaction between individual efforts, available resources, and contingent and structural factors condensed within particular situations. This view emphasizes the dialogical relationship with the agency of other actors in the educational context, especially students. According to this perspective, promoting and/or supporting teacher

agency requires efforts aimed at strengthening teacher empowerment within the school/classroom setting. Recalling Hays (1994), the authors note that the analysis of teacher agency shows that what is described by this term is never neutral with respect to context; in other words, the actions encompassed by the notion of agency always have an impact on the context, and this impact can be either reproductive of existing dynamics (of power, teaching, instruction, planning, etc.) or transformative, aimed at generating new patterns of action (Sloan, 2006). A fundamental reference is the work of Emirbayer and Mische (1998), who argue that agency should be interpreted within a transformative dynamic, situated in the interplay between past influences, future orientations, and present engagement. From this framework emerge three core dimensions for analyzing the impact of agency on the context: the iterative, projective, and practical-evaluative dimensions.

Specifically:

- The iterative dimension of agency refers to the selective reactivation by actors of past patterns of thought and action, typically incorporated into practical activity, with the aim of stabilizing and ordering “social universes” to help sustain identity, interactions, and institutions over time (reproductive agency).
- The projective dimension refers to the imaginative generation of creatively reconfigured possibilities, based on actors’ hopes, fears, and desires.
- The practical-evaluative dimension involves the actors’ capacity to formulate practical and normative judgments that guide possible courses of action in response to emerging issues, dilemmas, and ambiguities in evolving situations.

Emirbayer and Mische (1998) stress that these dimensions do not always operate in harmony, as it is not easy to act effectively on all three levels in a coordinated and complementary manner. During this process, teachers may experience conflicts between what they consider relevant to the profession and what they personally desire or perceive as good (Beijaard et al., 2004, p. 109). If a connection cannot be established between teachers’ subjectivity or personal ideologies and their professional self, a tension may arise between the personal and professional spheres (Alsup, 2006; Beijaard et al., 2004). Indeed, we know that professional identity cannot be understood as “a stable entity, but rather as an

active and constantly evolving process” (Pillen, 2013, p. 16), which unfolds in a sequential and long-term manner. This means that it is essentially a problem-function that is almost always unfinished, or more precisely, one that follows a temporally extended structure. Indeed, it is often the case, particularly in the field of educational professions, that fragments of theoretical, academic knowledge become unconsciously intertwined with personal memories of one's own educational history and with the pedagogical theories and representations expressed by one's environment (Riva, 2004, p. 15). This interweaving of personal and professional knowledge constitutes the teacher's identity reservoir, which becomes the foundation of their transformative action. The identity shift that training can facilitate concerns the assumption of a specific intentionality: that of transforming oneself from a product of education into an educator of others.

4. The Construction of Reflective Professional Identities

Within the framework of the most recent pedagogical reflections on professional development, it becomes evident that the formative processes shaping teacher identity are nourished by a complex dialectic between individual agency and contextual demands. Thus, learning the profession originates primarily from within the individual, without denying the importance of external learning (Beijaard, 2009), in a constant interplay between personal and professional knowledge, between informal and formal learning processes. As Olsen (2010, p. 80) states, “the growth of professional learning and the refinement of teacher identity never end, but the initial difficulties give way to new forms of hope and new challenges.” In this direction, professional identity takes shape as a dynamic construct, open to transformation, capable of integrating conflicts, reformulating practices, and regenerating educational visions—thus also becoming a tool for social and cultural change. In this sense, the teacher is not an executor of predefined models, but a *reflective practitioner* (Schön, 1983), who interacts with the complexity of educational situations through problem-solving strategies that are not merely instrumental, but critically reflexive. Schön proposes a distinction between technical rationality—which presumes the automatic application of theories to known problems—and reflective rationality, which instead implies the capacity to operate in unstable, uncertain, unique, and conflictual contexts. Specifically, within the technical rationality model, the professional is merely an executor of standardized procedures based on the application of tested theories and

techniques. These are only effective when the professional is dealing with well-defined and familiar problems or situations. According to this model, the professional applies only theories and techniques drawn from scientific research to solve practical problems. In the case of routine situations, the professional who operates with technical rationality can simply resolve the issue through the routine application of facts, rules, and procedures. It is evident that this model is insufficient—particularly from the perspective of a pedagogy of peace—because in practice, one inevitably encounters new problems and unforeseen situations, which compel the professional to formulate new interpretative hypotheses and construct new knowledge. And this is where the model of reflective rationality comes into play—a model according to which professionals must be active and creative agents of their actions and choices within the context of practice (Schön, Striano, 2006). Reflection-in-action requires the professional to possess an artistic ability, understood as the capacity to develop new interpretative hypotheses. This artistic ability is not merely a process of trial and error, but rather a continuous transaction between thought and action, theory and practice, creativity and practical experience. Professionals who possess this artistic ability, when faced with surprising or unexpected situations, are inclined to reconsider their own knowledge of rules, facts, and theories. It is in this sense that the teacher becomes a “reflective practitioner”—to use Schön’s well-known term (1983)—as they reflect on their experience and their actions in order to derive new and effective models of action from them. Reflexivity, defined as the ability to consistently reflect on one’s professional practice, is therefore considered a fundamental trait of the teacher. It is “a process by which we critically assess the premises and content of our efforts to interpret experience and give it meaning” (Mezirow, 2009). Reflexivity is thus nourished by new knowledge generated through sharing, collaboration, and the transfer of existing competences, as well as by the ability to co-create, in a group, the knowledge and skills that enable one to enhance or enrich one’s role and social value. Within this framework, Schön compares professional work to the “swamp metaphor,” where the problems that matter most to society are found in the unstable terrain of practice—requiring creativity, situated judgment, and reflective thinking (Schön, Striano, 2006). He offers this now-famous metaphor to describe the complexity of professional practice, distinguishing between two levels of problem situations. At the upper level lies solid ground, representing situations where problems appear clearly, are well-defined, and can be resolved through the application of consolidated, research-based

theories and techniques. However, while these problems are technically manageable, they are often marginal in terms of their human and social impact. Beneath this terrain extends a swamp—a symbolic space in which problems characterized by ambiguity, uncertainty, and indeterminacy are found, which cannot be easily addressed through standardized approaches. Paradoxically, it is precisely in this “swampy” dimension that the most meaningful human and social issues are located. The professional, therefore, is faced with a choice: to remain on the secure surface of solid ground, dealing with technically solvable but socially insignificant problems, or to descend into the complexity of the swamp, confronting significant challenges that lack prepackaged solutions. Such a decision implies an ethical and reflective stance on one’s role and responsibility as a professional. In a world that offers seemingly simple—yet often illusory—solutions from the outset, only the true reflective practitioner is capable of teaching how to transcend those illusions, choosing a path that is perhaps more complex but authentically aware. Thus, from a peace education perspective, we may choose to superficially address the issue—educating through ready-made solutions handed to others, in this case students—or we may choose to educate through process, acting as reflective professionals who actively engage students in critical reflection. This would enable them to understand that the complexity of conflict cannot be dealt with through instant, ready-made solutions, but rather through conscious reflection on their own actions and by privileging the path of dialogue. In this sense, the teacher immersed in this dynamic environment is transformed through practice, in a continuous transaction between thought and action, between theory and praxis. This vision is further reinforced by the concept of a professional community of practice, in which knowledge construction occurs through the negotiation and exchange of meanings among peers, where knowledge, resources, and experiences are shared, and where both individual and collective identity are strengthened. As Fabbri, Striano, and Melacarne (2014) affirm, “professionals are epistemic subjects who learn from what they do,” producing knowledge capable of interpreting and transforming reality. The reflective teacher is thus a teacher in action, who moves with flexibility within their environment, engaging with the complexity of context and the people involved. Within this framework, the concept of reflective practicum emerges, understood as a formative experience capable of developing the teacher’s “artistic ability”: the capacity to imagine, invent, and experiment with new, context-sensitive solutions beyond rigid standardized protocols. Educational action thus

becomes a transformative practice, capable of uniting ethics and knowledge, experience and creativity.

5. The Teacher as a Builder of Possibilities: “Teaching the Impossible”

The figure of Paulo Freire represents a fundamental reference point for conceiving teacher education oriented toward social transformation. As Milan (2023) emphasizes, Freire remains relevant not only because of his radical pedagogical vision, but also due to his capacity to explore the deep roots of educational change. Education, in his thought, does not begin with the “consequences,” but with the foundations of human and relational existence. Freire begins with a fundamental awareness: «changing is difficult, but it is possible» (Freire, 2004, pp. 61–64). Rebellion, in order to become pedagogical, must transcend sterile indignation and be transformed into active hope, into an “operative rebellion capable of realizing new things in the name of improvement and humanization” (Milan, 2008).

From this perspective, educational conflict is not an obstacle but a generative space—a point of rupture from which the possibility of building a different world emerges. Hope, for Freire, is a constitutive element of educational praxis: «I move in hope insofar as I struggle, and if I struggle with hope, then I hope» (Freire, 2018, p. 102). This hope is not passive waiting, but active engagement, an educational intentionality that takes shape in daily relationships, in dialogue, and in the co-construction of meaning. Freirean pedagogy thus calls every teacher to be a “dialogical educator”—someone who believes in the other even before seeing them, fostering a maieutics of liberation. The transformative education proposed by Freire can only be political, insofar as it aims to overcome the “historical schizophrenia” that alienates the individual from reality. It calls each person to be “soaked in reality”—that is, fully present and responsible in the world. The educator/learner and the learner/educator thus co-inhabit a dynamic pedagogical space, in which mutuality becomes the condition for reciprocal growth. Such a perspective transforms teacher education into a continuous process of conscientization, of lifelong learning, of identity and civic construction. In this sense, teacher agency also assumes a deeply political and emancipatory significance. Rancière identifies the key to emancipation not in the transmission of knowledge, but in a form of teaching that invites the other to exercise their own intelligence in a context of radical equality (Rancière, 1995). The emancipatory

teacher does not merely transmit content, but acts so that the intelligence of the other may recognize itself as such, breaking the often internalized belief of not being capable of knowing or understanding. When teaching moves in this direction, it functions as dissent: it does not confirm the order of what is already known, but rather interrupts it; it asks for the impossible—in the sense of that which is not yet present, that which cannot be foreseen, and which for this very reason eludes any form of certain or programmable knowledge. And it is precisely this openness to the impossible—understood as a possibility that exceeds what is expected—that creates a new space in which the student may emerge as a subject.

Within this vision, Biesta (2022) offers a further transformative reflection on the role of the teacher. In *Rediscovering Teaching*, he asserts that to exist as subjects means to be in a state of dialogue with the other, a dialogue in which subjectivity is not defined solely by internal intentions or desires, but takes shape in the ways we respond to alterity: to those who speak to us, who address us, who call upon us. If the subject is to be understood in these relational terms, then teaching assumes a new significance: not as an obstacle to the subject's freedom, but as a constitutive event of subjectivity itself, capable of opening up possibilities for existence in the world. The task of education thus becomes that of igniting the desire—in another human being—to exist in and with the world in an adult way, understanding adulthood not as a developmental stage, but as a mode of being capable of recognizing the integrity and alterity of the other. Within this framework, the figure of the transformative teacher is neither one who leads from above, nor one who simply “lets be,” but rather one who is committed to creating the conditions for the activation of students' agency, understood as a conscious and situated response to the educational call. The teacher thus becomes one who calls the other into existence, evoking in them the possibility of becoming a subject, through a teaching that does not impose itself, but invites, unsettles, provokes, and opens.

Conclusions

In educating younger generations “to new ways of observing, thinking, imagining, dreaming, learning to elaborate and experience complex relationships, to decenter themselves in order to discover multiple meanings” (Pinto Minerva, 2017, p. 174), an authentic path is created toward a culture of peace. The reflections developed so far clearly show how peace education—based on the principles of nonviolent

conflict transformation (Galtung, 2014) and on critical and dialogical pedagogy (Freire, 2018)—must be organically integrated into both initial and in-service teacher education programs. This is not merely a curricular “adjustment,” but a deep rethinking of the identity and professional role of the teacher, conceived as an architect of educational relationships capable of promoting justice, equity, and coexistence. In this sense, the paradigm of reflexivity must become a cornerstone in the design of educational experiences. Reflective practicum pathways therefore take on a strategic role: they must not be reduced to mere opportunities for the technical application of theoretical knowledge, but rather become true laboratories of action research, in which strategies can be tested, educational dynamics critically observed, and experience reinterpreted in light of flexible and open interpretive categories. From this perspective, the teacher assumes the role of reflective agent, not limited to applying pre-formulated knowledge produced outside of concrete action contexts, but becoming an active subject in the generation and use of new forms of knowledge. Such knowledge emerges through reflective processes activated “in the course of action”, in what Schön refers to as the “indeterminate zones of practice,” where the reflective teacher is called to confront unique, indeterminate, and conflictual situations, for which no pre-established solutions exist, and which therefore require an investigative-reflective stance, capable of continually restructuring theories and practices (Schön, Striano, 2006). The interweaving between theory and practice, therefore, does not take shape as a linear and sequential process, but rather as a fluid and circular movement that requires a constant oscillation between context analysis, formulation of intervention hypotheses, experimentation, and the subsequent critical revision of educational action. Schön re-elaborates this vision by drawing inspiration from Dewey’s thought, and in particular from his method of inquiry, which is taken as an epistemological paradigm of reference for professional action. Referring to this method, Schön clarifies that his critique is not directed at science itself, but at a reductive view of science that tends to rigidly separate theory from practice. On the contrary, he emphasizes that the fundamental task of the reflective practitioner consists in acting according to the principles of the method of inquiry (Schön, 2024). The practitioner thus activates a path of exploration and understanding to address a problematic situation. The triggering element of this process is a surprise—an unexpected event that interrupts the continuity of professional action, generating a dissonance that requires a re-elaboration of one’s action. From this rupture, an inquiry process begins in which the situation is reinterpreted through a series of

cognitive objects: the surprise is objectified, and the professional formulates interpretive hypotheses aimed at defining its contours and orienting action.

In this way, the practitioner:

- analyzes the factors that characterize the situation;
- imagines possible intervention hypotheses;
- critically reflects on these hypotheses, evaluating how they interact with other elements present;
- finally arrives at a solution—while remaining aware that it will never be definitive or certain.

If the solution proves effective, similar situations will no longer generate surprise; otherwise, it will be necessary to recalibrate the process by restarting the inquiry. Schön thus seeks to restore an image of the professional as a subject fully immersed in the situation, not as an external observer, but as an integral part of the problematic context. The crucial question then becomes how to act in the face of surprise—and this question constitutes the heart of the reflective posture (Schön, Striano, 2006). In this regard, the concept of capability (Martino, 2022) invites us to consider the teacher not only as a competent professional, but as a subject in continuous formation, capable of orienting themselves and choosing responsibly in all phases of life, thereby contributing to a more equitable and democratic society. In this perspective, teacher education is configured as lifelong guidance, aimed not only at the acquisition of competences, but also at the construction of an active educational citizenship. A culture of peace can only take root where relational models alternative to subordination, hierarchy, and homogenization are promoted. To educate for peace, therefore, means to educate to complexity, decentering, the plurality of meanings, listening, shared action, and responsibility. Only in this way will it be possible to form aware teachers, capable of becoming promoters of social transformation and of authentically democratic coexistence. The interconnection between peace studies and teacher education outlined in this contribution highlights the urgency of reformulating teacher training in a reflective, dialogical, and transformative key. Galtung's nonviolent approach, combined with Freire's critical pedagogy and the paradigms of reflective-transformative professionalism, provides a solid theoretical and practical foundation to orient curricula toward a peace-oriented educational culture. Through the adoption of training models that value experience, creativity, and participation, it is possible to develop professional

competences oriented toward the constructive management of conflict and the construction of inclusive, equitable, and democratic learning environments. This is the necessary direction for training teachers who are up to the challenges of our time—capable of becoming agents of change and builders of the future.

Author contributions

Although this piece is the joint work of both authors, Alessandra Priore wrote the first, third, and fourth paragraphs, while Federica De Marco wrote the second and fifth. The conclusions were prepared collaboratively.

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