

Peace Education in Colombia: A Social Constructionist Perspective

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PEACE EDUCATION IN COLOMBIA: A SOCIAL CONSTRUCTIONIST PERSPECTIVE

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Abstract

Education in general, and especially peace education, is critical to help future Colombian generations to meet the challenges of the post conflict and to transform social practices that sustain a culture of violence. Thus, this dissertation proposes a framework for developing peace education programs from a constructionist orientation. For the purpose, through the systematization of the work done with the training schools of the National Police of Colombia and the Colombian Agency for reintegration, several principles of social constructionism are used to illustrate how these ideas can contribute to peacebuilding from classroom settings. In this way, a theoretical and practical framework to guide pedagogical practices from a constructionist stance that promote a culture of peace are presented.

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INTRODUCTION

The impact that the armed conflict and the associated violence have had on Colombian civilian population is large and complex. This is an intractable¹ conflict, difficult to explain, not only for the multiplicity of reasons that compromise the conflict, but also because of the changing participation of multiple actors, both legal and illegal², for its geographical extension and for the particularities that it assumes in each region of the country. This becomes evident if we consider that the conflict hasn't been experienced in the same manner throughout Colombian history, since at certain times and in some regions, those violent actions were not generally known mainly because it has never been an open civil war, but has instead taken place mainly on the country's rural margins. In the same way, the transformation of its actors and its interests, together with the social and institutional changes that have taken place in the last five decades, make of the Colombian armed conflict a case that differs from the traditional definitions of war (Penagos, Martínez & Arévalo, 2009).

Here I quote the definition of Fisas (2004) about armed conflict since it permits the conceptualization of the complexity of the Colombian armed conflict:

We understand by armed conflict every confrontation that involves groups of different kinds, such as military, regular or irregular forces, armed opposition groups, paramilitary groups, ethnic or religious communities that, with weapons or any other means of destruction, and organized, claim more than one hundred victims per year through intentional actions, whatever their justification. (p. 14)

Since 1990 to the present moment, some of the numbers associated with assassinations of civilians and other people as a result of war actions are only contrastable with those produced by

¹ According to Bar-Tal, Rosen & Nets-Zehngut (2010) intractable conflicts are characterized as lasting at least 25 years, where there is an involvement of a culture of conflict that is dominated by societal beliefs and collective memories of conflict.

² Such as guerillas groups, paramilitaries, drug traffickers, common criminals, among others.

the cruelest conflicts in Latin-American history. This is evident in the report made by the Historical memory group of Colombia that points out that between 1958 and 2012, the armed conflict has been responsible for 220,000 deaths (Historical Memory Group, 2013). “Colombia has lived not only a war of fighting but also a war of massacres” (Historical Memory Group, 2008, p.15).

The increase of displaced people, massacres, forced disappearances, kidnappings, terrorist attacks, theft of property and land, arbitrary detention, torture, landmines, extrajudicial executions, sexual violence, and forced recruitment of children has led the country to be perceived as a nation in crisis and a country where everyday life is permeated by uncertainty. Perhaps one of the most serious consequences of this extensive socio-political violence is that it has generated instantiation of cultural practices linked to the dynamics of the conflict. Specifically, there is a clear prevalence of dehumanizing relationships that legitimize the systematic and widespread human rights violation of the vast majority of inhabitants of the country. On this aspect, Joaquín Samoya (1987) points out that narratives on conflict allow dehumanization of individuals as the war causes changes in the behavior of people and in their cognitive schemes. These modifications are related to a degradation of certain attributes and human values that directly affect social coexistence; one of these qualities that becomes degraded is the capacity of individuals to be sensitive to suffering and show solidarity when facing it. For his part, Edgar Barrero (2011), in *Aesthetic of the Atrocious*, argues that war has polarized the population and has allowed the degradation of others, justifying in this way their disappearance and annihilation. This occurs because the subject, the other, contradicts the ideals or imperative narratives in the context in which violent acts take place. This also involves converting the subject into object from what he calls the disfigurement of Otherness where the human being is deprived

of his own human characteristics and is converted into an object.

As Martín-Baró (1994) pointed out, one of the most difficult war effects is that people accept these experiences and dynamics as something normal. According to Carlos Sluzki (1995),

political violence, in any of its many variants, has a devastating and far-reaching effect on those who have been its victims. Physical and emotional violence is perpetrated, precisely, by those who have social and legal responsibility of taking care of citizens, maintaining order in their world, preserving the stability and predictability of their lives, the State. (p.351)

This situation gives place to an inconsistency in people, because those who should give protection become victimizers. In addition to not guaranteeing the rights of its citizens, the State becomes an "actor", responsible for action or omission of acts of violence against the civilian population, thus generating a hostile social space for its members.

The empiric evidence taken from emblematic cases and the quantitative information recorded in different sources show that, in terms of violence repertoires, the paramilitaries carried out, to a larger extent, massacres, selective assassinations and forced disappearances and they made of brutality a recurrent practice in order to increase their power of intimidation. The guerrillas, on their side, have been centered principally on kidnappings, selective assassinations and terrorist attacks in addition to forced recruiting and attacks on civilian objects. Regarding illegal violence from the Public Forces, it has been possible to establish, based on testimonies and judicial sentences, the use of methods such as, arbitrary detentions, torture, selective assassinations and forced disappearances (Historical Memory Group, 2013, p. 21).

The consequences of such violations in individual, family and social lives have been very serious. "The social trauma affects individuals precisely in their social character, that is, in their wholeness as a system" (Martín-Baró, 1994, p. 124). Some of these consequences have been

recognized and analyzed by various national and international institutions, including the Constitutional Court, the Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights in Colombia and the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights.

According to Human Rights Watch

violations of international humanitarian law are not abstract concepts in Colombia, but the harsh reality of daily life. War breaks into the daily activities of a farm, a village, a public bus or a school with the arrival of armed combatants, who get there through trails or on ATVs. Sometimes the armed men choose their victims carefully from a list, or simply kill those who are nearer them in order to spread terror among people. In fact, the willingness to commit atrocities is one of the most shocking features of the Colombian war. (Human Rights Watch, 1998)

That is how, in 2003, the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights emphasized that the situation of human rights in Colombia has been characterized by massive and systematic violations of these rights. (High Commissioner of the United Nations for Human Rights, 2003).

Despite this situation, the current peace dialogues between the government and the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC), besides representing the hope of the end of a long war for the Colombian people, have led us to reflect on the issues that we have to engage in the post-conflict³ in order to live in a more just and humane society. “The postwar environments limit but also facilitate co-constructions of new social structures and social identities” (Lykes, 2001 p.28).

Although there are many and varied reconstruction strategies⁴ that the Colombian government and the citizens will have to undertake to lay the foundations of a lasting peace, these strategies

³ While there isn't a common definition of what a post-conflict situation is, we can say that, generally speaking, it refers to the period of time in which the armed confrontation stops.

⁴ Such as, economic recovery, strengthening of the State and political stability, health, agreements, pacts, reintegration of former combatants, destruction of weapons, reparation of victims, kidnappings, displaced people, land reclamation among others.

cannot be focused exclusively on economic and political results in the short-term. “We could almost say that peace is a too serious problem to be left only in the hands of politicians” (Mejía, 1999, p. 32). Clearly, political and economical reflections about violence and post-conflict are necessary and important, but the only way to transform social practices that sustain a culture of violence is education.

The emergence of the emphasis on a culture of peace and education for a culture of peace is part of a wider realization that the attainment of peace is not merely an institutional problem, but rather one that requires the subtle elements of cultural change. (Page, 2008 p. 81)

In this sense we can say that, if war is a socially organized activity, as Clausewitz (2005) points out, peace is even more. Such a construction is promissory if education is considered as the way to the construction of a culture of peace.

In line with the above, Bekerman and McGlynn (2007) emphasizes how in post-conflict situations, education is a prerequisite in order to establish lasting peace. Likewise, Wang & Zhao (2011) stress how education is the path for freedom and for the creation of informed and engaged citizenship. On the same line, Chernick (1996) suggests that it is only through education that peace processes can drive a society to revamp the underlying structures that need to be changed.

However, if we take into account that education is not neutral (Reardon, 1988), and that it is pervaded by multiple kinds of ideologies and biases (Freire, 2007), we have to be aware of the potential that it has for exacerbating or decreasing power dynamics and the conditions that contribute to violent conflict.

Schools are almost always complicit in conflicts. They reproduce the skills, values, attitudes, and social relations of dominant groups of society; accordingly, they are usually a contributory factor in conflict. Simultaneously reconstructing and reforming education is increasingly viewed as critical in the strategy to reduce the risk of conflict or relapse into conflict. (Buckland, 2005, p. XV)

Likewise, education can also be an indirect cause of conflict because it promotes, amongst other things, a reproduction of economic inequality and a can promote gender or religious segregation (Davies, 2004).

This analysis of the values, beliefs and assumptions that lay behind education and how they contribute to perpetuating cycles of violence has been strongly addressed by Critical pedagogy. Critical pedagogy sees education as a political, social and cultural practice and has centered its interest in studying “how power relations... operate in schools and how schooling operates as an apparatus that reproduces social control by the dominant class” (Bajaj, 2008, p. 137). Paulo Freire, one of its most important representatives, stressed that oppressed people need to know how oppression is presented and the way the dominant group tries to exploit their literacy (Freire, 2007), where a critical education will equip people to understand social systems of oppression and act to change the current situation (Bartlett, 2007). Doing so is very important to the critical consciousness of learners as a mean for social change. Freire, in developing his humanistic, liberating, and revolutionary pedagogy, coined the term "Conscientizacion" to define "learning to perceive the social, political and economic contradictions and to take action against the oppressive elements of reality" (Freire, 1970). Besides the critical consciousness of learners, educators as well need to reflect on their position in the system, be aware that education is not neutral, and decide whom they are working for (Freire, as cited in Bartlett, 2007).

Meanwhile, Giroux (2011) calls attention for the hidden curriculum (such as norms and principles experienced by students throughout their education life) and the social interactions that schools promote.

The idea of the hidden curriculum (Giroux and Purpel 1983) suggests, however, that socialization also happens behind the back of teachers and students, thus reproducing existing traditions, cultures, way of doing and being often, though not necessarily, in ways that benefit some more than others,

thus contributing to the reproduction of material and social inequalities. (Biesta, 2015, p. 3)

Only through this critical look, it is possible to develop conditions in which students can read and write within and against the existing cultural codes and create new forms of knowledge, subjectivity and identity.

Besides critical pedagogy, the feminist view of education challenges authoritative discourses and deepens the discussion by arguing that society's gendered view of life results in diverse manifestations of violence. "Gender is one of these processes, which would allow us to understand how structures of domination came about" (Confortini, 2006, p. 338). Along the same lines, Kristof & WuDunn, (2009) remark how education offers the chance to transform the power dynamics of ethnicity, gender, sexuality, religion, class, and colonization.

Therefore, the school becomes not only a stage for academic formation but also the space where it inculcates values, rules, patterns of behaviour, beliefs, prejudices and other guidelines that may or may not favor peaceful coexistence. In this line of thought, the role of the classroom refers not only to the traditional system of academic formation, but also to different educative contexts that promote the development of diverse capacities in people. In this regard Pinto de Costa, quoted by Freire (1989), states that "literacy is a cultural method; it tends to awareness and criticism, to prepare men able of facing difficulties found on the way to the construction of a new society" (p. 12 y 13).

All these reflections call for a more sensitive approach towards the hidden curricula, power relations, hegemonic discourses, and the political, moral, and epistemological stands that underlie our pedagogical practices. It also invites us to question what values are being reproduced and the mechanism used (Reardon, 1988; Snauwaert, 2011) and to ponder what type of education is required in a country where violence has become part of daily practices and where relationships

are based upon force, mistrust, and fear. What kind of social realities (through language, values, and learning contents) do we want to create? Furthermore, what type of education will help us to construct new understandings, subjectivities, languages, and social practices that should enable forgiveness and reconciliation?

An answer to these questions is peace education, especially if we consider that its main purpose is the reduction of violence by empowering people with the skills, attitudes, knowledge, beliefs, and behaviors to address direct and structural forms of violence (Harris, 2004; Harris & Morrison, 2003; Reardon as cited in Bajaj, 2008; Salomon & Cairns, 2010).

However, in the dynamics of peace education and the construction of such an exercise, there is a number of gaps and difficulties in terms of concepts and practices. One of the major problems that traditional peace education faces is its individualistic heritage where education has traditionally been defined as an individual, rather than a collective practice (Gergen, 2009a). In this tradition, the main purpose of education is on educating the individual mind and filling students with knowledge as if they were *tabula rasa* or what Paulo Freire (2007) called the *banking model*, in which education becomes an act of depositing contents into the minds of students.

Education is aimed at improving the minds of individual students. Thus, to ensure that each individual mind properly masters what is true - that each student 'possesses knowledge' - frequent assessment is essential. [...] Students are thus confronted with curricula that have little intrinsic interest, and are subjected to frequent examinations of their ability to repeat the truth as determined by the experts. (Gergen, 2009a, p. 130)

Being framed in an individualistic educative tradition focuses on the development of the individual and somehow, leaves aside the collective construction of knowledge. However, peace building is only possible in coordinated actions with others. Peace is a relational and collaborative

construction.

Another critical issue is how programs about post-conflict education stress the importance of a revolution in education. This transformation must emerge from the State taking into account that it must design and implement policies, contents and methodologies of what should be taught throughout the country. Although this macro social transformation is important, it runs the risk of homogenizing education and as a consequence it eradicates indigenous, peasant, and African descendant's knowledge about health, medicine, agriculture, philosophy, spirituality, ecology, and education. "Additionally, in many countries the school system is centralized under one Ministry of Education with almost dictatorial powers over the curricula, controlled by bureaucrats or communities unable to reflect new ideas or quickly incorporate the demands of younger generations" (Galtung, 2008, p. 52). On this aspect, Dunn, Woods and Mutuku (2008) point out that children may be more likely to benefit from pedagogical practices that are respectful of rural cultures and employ strengths acquired in rural life. In this sense, peace education programs in a country with such an ethnic and cultural diversity, must introduce activities that promote their local knowledge and the contents must be able to link the classroom with their context so that education becomes more relevant to their local life and values, and the very unique ways in which local communities coordinate their activities towards peace building.

Linked to this, another difficulty that peace education faces is that, in an attempt to institutionalize and make peace an obligatory school subject, the educative institutions fall easily into a curriculum centered program, which most of the time is a reproduction of experiences from other countries. Being centered in the content, rather than on the teaching-learning process, makes peace education programs repetitive and boring for students, mainly because the topics discussed have not come from their interests and their social reality. "More important for curricula

development are questions of pragmatics. What does a given curriculum enable students to accomplish in the world? And this question cannot be answered outside deliberation on issues of needs, values, and possibilities” (Dragonas, Gergen, McNamee & Tseliou, 2015, p. xi).

A different problem that arises with curriculum-centered programs is that there isn’t any coherence between content and the form in which it is presented, in other words, the pedagogical practices used for this purpose. This issue is particularly important when it comes to peace building as long as structural violence can be easily reproduced in daily pedagogical practices. “Peace education focuses on the processes involved in the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Not only the subject matter, but also how it is taught, in what context, and how this knowledge is reproduced later” (Spruyt, et al, 2014, p. 4).

A clear and very frequently used example of this incoherence between content and practice is hierarchical and teacher centered dynamics. This one-sided transactional relationship, in which teachers are seen as content experts and students are positioned as passive receptacles, empty of knowledge, gives the teacher power to decide all the activities about teaching (content, assessments, etcetera), and the student simply has to obey them.

Unfortunately, this kind of practice contributes to the perpetuation of unequal structures that reproduce violence by neglecting participatory and dialogical processes among students. “Using education as a sorting device is problematic for peace educators, since the idea of peace itself is antithetical to vertical social relations and hierarchies in any form” (Galtung, 2008 p. 52). The above involves a deep look at the microsocial space where we develop our everyday life as people involved in the educational field, and review aspects related to the pedagogical practices where conditions to support democratization processes that promote the sustainability of relationships among people are present. These conditions help participants coexist, to get to know each other in

a better way, and to create a disposition towards the fulfillment of common projects and peaceful resolution of conflicts.

In this sense, if we are looking to address content such as conflict resolution, justice and human rights, diversity and plurality, participation in politics, inclusion and reconciliation among others, teachers must not only model for their students the kind of citizens required in a post-conflict country, but the pedagogical practices used for this purpose must generate reflexive and transformative processes. “The form of peace education has to be compatible with the idea of peace, that is, it has to exclude not only direct violence, but also structural violence” (Galtung 2008, p.51).

That is why a relational view of the teaching-learning process is crucial in any peace education program. “When a relational process is placed in the forefront of concern, a major shift occurs. One begins to ask how pedagogical practices can become more participatory and collaborative; and to explore alternatives to the evaluation of individuals” (Dragonas, Gergen, McNamee & Tseliou, 2015, p. xii).

Now, in addition to a relational view of peace education, a field of special interest in this work refers to the non-formal contexts of education for the adult population.

In the decades of the sixties and the seventies, non-formal adult education has its most important and meaningful development from the impact caused by the Cuban Revolution. In those years, an extraordinary impulse is given to an adult education marked by the perspective of ‘community development.’ In the same way, Freire's ‘Pedagogy of Liberation’, as he originally calls his proposal, also emerges at that time. (Jara, 2010 p. 4)

Even though Latin American popular education has sought to rethink the pedagogical approach for different types of population and contexts (Jara, 2010), not much literature about peace education for an adult population can be found in Colombia.

These theoretical gaps, as well as the conviction that it is only through education that we, as members of a society, will be able to reject the naturalization of violence, have inspired me to create learning environments from a social constructionist perspective, one that fosters a way to collectively overcome violence, and creates the necessary conditions to live the peace process of Colombia in the exercise of participation, respect and recognition of differences.

Research suggests that incorporating positive values and building relationships with a teacher are essential conditions in preventing violence among youth (Smith & Sandhu, 2004). Educators have the potential to play a crucial role in building a culture of peace, especially in deeply divided societies that experience ongoing conflicts. (Abu-Nimer, Mahmoud & Nasser 2014, p. 33)

In accordance with a constructionist approach, this dissertation does not seek to be a universal truth of how curricula and methodologies of peace education should be conceptualized and practiced. Far from trying to build a corpus of closed truths that can be generalized and applied in all countries with sociopolitical violence, I seek to propose a theoretical and practical framework of reference for creating learning environments where relational engagement is the scaffolding for peace building in contexts of non-formal adult education. In this sense, the approach underlying this work is that education for peace is materialized not only in the contents but it also takes form and strength in the way the contents are addressed and in the pedagogical practices that are employed. Therefore, it is appropriate to speak within the topic of education for peace, not only about specialized educative practices, but to analyze any daily encounter in the educational context as a situation of collaborative communication, social and historically determined, in which social agents converge with differentiated reference frames that connect each other and dynamically co-construct a sense of the pedagogical practice in which they participate.

Thus, the invitation to the readers of this paper is to be curious, innovative, and to co-create new proposals for peace education from the very life of the community to which we belong.

Structure of the dissertation

This document consists of eight chapters, the first called, *Problem statement*, describes the different places and groups of people with whom I worked and the relevance of the research proposal as it relates to the formulation of the research question. In the second chapter, Chapter 2 *A historical look at the Colombian context*, I outline some of the key milestones in the configuration of the Colombian conflict and the evolution that it has had from its beginning to the present. Chapter 3, *Peace Education*, is a theoretical review of concepts and developments of education for peace as a specific field of knowledge and the challenges that this construction of peace implies in the educational environment. In Chapter 4, *Social Construction as a philosophical stance*, I consider the basic principles and premises of social construction and the implications of this meta-theory in peace education. Chapter 5, *Method*, I give an account of the guidelines for the research that respond to the need presented by the contexts where the present research was carried out. Furthermore, in this chapter I explain the analysis of the qualitative information of the pedagogical experiences. In Chapter 6, I present a pedagogical experience conducted with the training schools of the National Police of Colombia, and Chapter 7 is a peace education experience with the professionals of the Colombian Agency for Reintegration (ACR)⁵ in peace education, conflict resolution and mediation. In both experiences, I give a descriptive account of the experience and show different stages of implementing peace education with different dialogical methodologies where several principles of social constructionism and a collaborative approach are taken to illustrate how these ideas can contribute to peacebuilding

⁵ The Colombian Agency for Reintegration (ACR) is the entity responsible for advising the National Government on the implementation of policies of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and reintegrating into civilian life the people or the armed groups operating outside the law who voluntarily demobilize, individually or collectively. For more information: <http://www.reintegracion.gov.co/es>

within classroom settings. In this way, theoretical and practical frameworks for guiding pedagogical practices from a collaborative stance, promoting a culture of peace, are presented. Chapter 8, *Framework to develop a peace education program from a Social Constructionist perspective*, is where I point out some guiding principles to develop learning environments that foster peace building. The principles propose in this chapter are the result of the systematization of the experiences described in chapters six and seven. The last chapter, *Conclusions*, I point out the contributions generated from the process, the successes and transformations that I would make to future research and some connections related to the national Colombian context.

CHAPTER 1: Problem statement

In this chapter, I present the general aspects of the contexts in which I developed the present dissertation, some clarifications regarding the relevance of the present work and some of the characteristics of the institutions researched and my positionality as a researcher. Thus, I intend to outline the meaning, pertinence and social relevance of this research. Finally, I pose the research question and the objectives that guided this process.

1.1 Description of the Research Context

The present dissertation was developed in two different contexts. The first one was at the training center of the National Police, Eduardo Cuevas School that is a high school aimed at training future professionals of the national police of Colombia. It is located in the outskirts of Villavicencio city. This process began in February 2016 and concluded in July of the same year. As I will deepen in chapter 6, the institutional request was to design a program of education for peace that would allow meeting the requirements of Decree 1038 of 2015, which demands that all educational institutions must incorporate within their curriculum the Chair of Peace. Likewise, the institution reports a desire of a pedagogy of agreement so the students could have full knowledge of the Havana negotiation and its implications in their work as Policemen. With this institutional need and considering the changes that the police will face in the post conflict, the design and implementation of a pedagogical proposal was started and transformed according to the particularities of the students and the development of the process. There were a total 4 courses, each one consisting of 30 students. The program had a time intensity of 4 hours per week with each group. With a total of 10 sessions with each group.

The second place where I applied the present work was in the Colombian Agency for Reintegration (ACR). The ACR is an institution attached to the Presidency of the Republic that is

in charge of the process of reintegration and was born in 2011, under Decree 4138. This process covers all Colombians who have been active agents of armed groups such as, FARC-EP, M 19, ELN, EPL or AUC. In this transit from illegality to legality, the ACR seeks to guarantee mechanisms and programs that provide protection from the government and that ensure a return to legality and the social and economic reincorporation of people. These programs are carried out in 26 territorial groups that are distributed throughout the country, this implies a national coverage. The program with the ACR began in August 2016 and ended in November of the same year. The initial request of the institution was the implementation of a peace education program that would train the reintegrated professionals of the ACR Bogotá, Cundinamarca - Boyacá and the demobilized people attending the course, in conflict resolution and mediation skills in an articulated way with a reintegration approach⁶. One of the main objectives of the training was that, once the program was completed, the selected people could carry out transfer and training work to more professionals and engage more people in the process of reintegration. In this process there were a total of 27 students, four of them were demobilized and the rest were professionals of the ACR. All of them had different academic backgrounds and held different positions within the institution.

The specificity of the contexts in which the programs were made involved developing skills for making observations and distinctions that highlight the particularities of the different systems involved in order to design pedagogical practices that fit these particularities. Therefore, the designs that was proposed for the present dissertation arise from the recursive, empathetic, and

⁶ The reintegration approach indicates that this process is aimed at overcoming the situation of vulnerability of people who demobilized, originated as a consequence of their participation in Armed Groups outside the Law (GAOML) and overcoming the elements of vulnerability that led that person to join the GAOML. In this sense, the situation of vulnerability is overcome by strengthening and developing capacities and acquiring assets that favor the autonomous exercise of their citizenship (Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración, 2014)

sustained negotiation between the national/institutional demands, the needs of the students and my interests, dreams and concerns as a researcher. From these understandings, it is possible to say that both participants and I talked from our beliefs, experiences and a network of unique and particular relationships that were combined in a specific space and time, which contributed to a particular shape to the pedagogical experience.

1.2 Positionality as a researcher

The development of both processes was characterized by a cooperative search in which participants and institutions were active as they played a central role in the design of the program. In this sense, a priority in this investigative exercise was to take into account the needs and expectations of the contexts in which the proposal was developed, to be flexible in the agreements established with the institutions and, at the same time, to negotiate elements that I considered important to address, taking into account my own formation and personal interests. This involved paying attention to the theoretical and epistemological frames of reference from which I adopted a position as a teacher and the implications of these choices in the pedagogical practice. In this respect, my position within the process as a teacher stood from the logic of second order cybernetics in which, not only what is observed is of concern, but also the observer system was analyzed since the descriptions and interventions that emerged told more of myself as an observer than of the observed system (Von Foerster, 1998).

What I want to point out is that an essential part of the process of construction of the programs not only referred to the institutional requests, but the active role that I played as an observer and as a participant. In this sense, I do not presume that there is a truth in the proposed designs and in the pedagogical principles outlined throughout the document, but they respond to a logic in which I became involved during the construction of knowledge, from the choice of themes,

identification of prejudices when choosing the theories and methodologies, the participation in activities and the subsequent analysis of the experience from my unique and private view as teacher.

Research represents a shared space, shaped by both researcher and participants (England, 1994). As such, the identities of both researcher and participants have the potential to impact the research process [...] Our own biases shape the research process, serving as checkpoints along the way. Through recognition of our biases, we presume to gain insights into how we might approach a research setting, members of particular groups, and how we might seek to engage with participants. (Bourke, 2014, p. 1)

In line with Bourke (2014), and as part of the exercise of recognizing my biases as a researcher, I can say that the pedagogical interests and methodological choices that I made in this work are strongly influenced by the ideas of popular education, systemic thinking and social constructionism. In the same way, this work is linked to my personal and professional life and to the social and political conditions of the country where I live. I will try to make an account of the most significant milestones and contexts that have permeated my way of working. I will begin by the form that I, as a Colombian citizen, have lived through the armed conflict. I was born at the beginning of the eighties in Bogota, Colombia when the country was going through what is known as the war of the cartels. In this period, the Colombian guerrillas began to enter the drug trafficking business, which complicates even more the national scene. News about the guerrillas, the paramilitary groups, and violent crimes are part of my biography. I was never a direct victim, but I know people whose family members were assassinated, kidnapped, or threatened. I witnessed how hope vanished when the peace process with the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) that had started in 1998 ended in 2002 with it becoming a stronger guerrilla and taking under its control part of our territory. I also lived eight years under an authoritative

government whose aim was to destroy the guerrillas using military force as revenge and paramilitarism taking an important force in the country. I have also experienced the failure of the negotiations in 1998, as well as the uncertainty and difficulties in the implementation of the peace process agreements that have generated polarization among those who support a negotiated search to the conflict and those who believe that the solution to the conflict lies in weapons. To this extent, part of the solutions thought by both the government and the civilian population has been thought in terms of black or white, all or nothing, which is translated either into the totalitarian pretension of exterminating the adversary or in the illusion of ending violence without changing anything in society. This feature of the Colombian conflict has led me to ask myself about pedagogical spaces that went beyond a pedagogy of agreements⁷ and that allow the recognition and respect for the difference and for the dialogue among these same differences as a possibility of building a culture of peace. It is here where my interest in social constructionism arises. I must say that my encounter with social constructionism, which is relatively new, gave me a new perspective of peace education. From this perspective I found a great resource to de-construct narratives that generate polarization, isolation, alienation and guilt, and a way to create multiple realities through conversation. I also found that the constructionist perspective dialogues with the systemic approach and popular education which are also sources of inspiration in my work.

These contributions which have, clearly, enriched my teaching practice, also led me to wonder about the values that are behind the topics and curricular structure that we establish, and the pedagogical practices we carry out in peace education. If we stand up from a constructionist

⁷ I also want to point out that an important part of my work in the last years has been in developing different forms of pedagogy of the agreements with different sectors of the population, however I always felt that it was necessary more reflexive process.

perspective, we necessarily have to ask ourselves, what notion of truth is behind these assumptions and what kind of pedagogical relationship are we going to construct? These questions represent a challenge and a responsibility for me as a peace education teacher; in this sense, this dissertation is also a way of expressing the social responsibility I feel for the national reality of Colombia.

In the same way, in the design and implementation of these programs, I assume an ethical and epistemological stance where I stand myself as a "context artisan" (Fucks, 2009), where, as a peace educator, I conceive myself as "a process caregiver, a co-builder of some conditions of possibilities for self-organization of groups, a scenario, device and dynamics designer, and an articulator of the complexities that involve the participatory monitoring of the whole process"(Fucks, 2009, p. 66). This means that in this work I made part of the network of relationships built in the classroom. This involved being present and very attentive to the identification of the needs and of the process of creating meaning with the institutions and with the students.

All of the above is reflected in the way in which I develop many of the theoretical elements of the present dissertation. In this sense, the reader will not find here a clear dividing line between theorization and my personal experience since both correlates are part of the same dialectical process of knowledge construction.

1.3 Justification and research question

In order to understand the relevance of the present work, I want to highlight that my desire for this dissertation is the production of local knowledge. As Jara (2010) points out,

the Latin American experience requires that we reflect on what the main objectives of education are and what kind of knowledge and skills will be needed to deal with problems, challenges and new situations at the local, national and global level. (p.2)

Likewise, Jara (2010) emphasizes the importance of developing an education that can contribute to the construction of new social structures and new relationships between people. In order to achieve the above, popular education literature emphasizes the importance of a curriculum that comes out of the concrete experience and material interests of people in communities (Crowther, Martin & Shaw, 1999). In this sense, an epistemological rupture is required, or what Vincent Martínez (2010a) calls, an epistemological shift, where the objective of peace education has to, in a contextualized way, respond to the relational needs of the population with which we intend to work.

This shift in the way of conceiving peace education has many implications. The first one is that the focus is no longer on the content or on the curricula, itself, but on the relational process of learning.

When we refigure teaching as a relational phenomenon (i.e., as conversation) and not as a private, individual ability (where some have more knowledge to impart or convey to those who have less knowledge and where some techniques or methods for teaching are more successful than others) we begin to attend to different features of teaching. Specifically, our attention is drawn toward the process of teaching as well as the teaching 'relationship. (McNamee, 2007, p. 319)

This implies that the content and process of peace education are mutually determined by the whole community (teachers, students, parents,) and unfolds as they interact with each other; they are not determined by a linear pre-structured curriculum that determines how the classes should be. Likewise, the expertise of the teacher resides in the generation of a space for collaborative and dialogic conversations more than in the development or transmission of content.

Another consequence is that the main concern is on how we build relations in the classroom and how we are accountable to each other.

The centrality of relationships has a special meaning since it is both the context where the cycles of

violence happen and the generated energy from which flows the capacity to transcend those cycles.

Over and over again, there, where the chains of violence are little or largely broken, we find a singular, central root that gives life to moral imagination: the ability of individuals and communities to imagine themselves in a network of relationships even with their enemies. (Lederach, 2008, p. 69)

In this sense, relational learning is considered as the core and the keystone of peace education. I should point out that, when I refer to relational learning, I mean a way of conceiving education such that all those involved create and contribute in the construction of a safe and collaborative learning environment.

Relational learning is action that invites both students and teachers/professors to enter into a dialogue about learning. The engagement of multiple parties with multiple perspectives in the activity of learning deconstructs the hierarchy that typically exists in the traditional teaching relationship and opens space for more collaborative experiences. (Chorba & Morris, 2015 p. 122)

A third consequence is that there is not one path for achieving peace; the idea of creating new learning environments within particular groups, each having particular values and needs, necessarily implies the creation of different shapes and ways of coordinating. If we assume that peace arises in our joint activities, we must be open to the unforeseen and learn to embrace the uncertainty of what may emerge from the multiple ways in which building peace can take place.

A constructionist orientation replaces the conservative leaning of the empiricist orientation with a *contextual* vision. Rather than seeking irrefutable propositions, the constructionist understands and appreciates the possibilities of multiple understandings, depending on time, culture, and circumstance. The greater the number of perspectives that can be assembled in a situation, the greater the range of possible actions. (Gergen, 2015, p. 52)

The contextual vision of peace building proposed in this research, leads us to a major question: In what other arenas can peace education be developed?

To answer this question, we need to consider that traditionally peace education in Colombia

has been considered for conventional levels of education (public and private schools, college and universities), since they are commonly assumed as the only institutions that society can formally, intentionally and extensively use to achieve the mission of peace education as it has the authority, the means and the conditions to carry out this task. Although this is true, in a country like Colombia with a diversity of populations, territories, traditions and contexts, as well as the impossibility of many people to access the traditional educational system due to the armed conflict, it's important to reconsider the traditional notion of peace education. Likewise, most of the popular education and adult education literature relates to educational initiatives with the poor and oppressed (Deem, 1993) but the pedagogical processes can be used in other context, for instance for peacebuilding.

According to the above, and based on the premise that the pedagogical cannot be reduced only to formal and institutionalized areas of education, but should include actors that are different in age, life histories and cultural horizons, I wanted to work with non-conventional levels of education such as training schools for police officers, demobilized combatants and professionals who work with those demobilized from the armed conflict. Thus, all the experiences described here aim to show how peace education can arise in multiple contexts, geographies and populations where, as Martínez (2010b) points out, peace education must penetrate all levels of education and all domains of life. That is, it must include all the levels of conventional education and learning and also the non-conventional ones.

So, in agreement with the above, the research question of this work was: *How to develop programs of peace education from a constructionist perspective in contexts of non-formal education?*

1.4 Objectives

The objectives of the research were:

General Objective.

To develop a proposal of education for peace from a constructionist stance in non-formal contexts of education in Colombia.

Specific Objectives

- Describe the pedagogical practices used in the pedagogical experiences that were developed.
- Identify the most meaningful practices for the participants.
- Establish the most relevant learnings of the students and identify differences and similarities between the two experiences carried out.
- To formulate criteria for the construction of programs of education for peace from a constructionist perspective, in non-formal contexts of education.

CHAPTER 2: A historical look at the Colombian context

Colombia just begins to clarify the dimensions of its own tragedy

(Historical Memory Group, 2013)

In his lecture, *War and mental health*, Ignacio Martín-Baró (1984) points out the importance of knowing and studying our social reality and the relationships that take place in our historical framework so that we can examine our theoretical assumptions in the light of their social relevance today and in the professional practice. In this regard and in order to build peace education programs, it is necessary to reflect on the particular way the Colombian conflict has been configured and how we have built in our social, economic and political relations, violence as a privileged way of interaction.

The Vinculos Corporation points out that:

The internal armed conflict is a dynamic and changing process. The strategies of war, the competing interests, the leading actors and even, the speeches used to make reference to the conflict don't remain unchanged so, it is necessary to characterize them constantly. (Penagos, et. al. 2009 p. 21)

Personally I consider that, one of the most important reasons for constantly characterize the Colombian conflict is that this exercise, besides allowing new insights and perspectives on what is happening, reminds us that violence is not a narrative about a distant past but a social reality rooted in our present; a present in which we can create new alternative ways of interacting and new futures.

Therefore, in this chapter, the reader will find a brief historic evolution of the Colombian conflict from its beginnings to the present moment. I will start with what historians consider the origins of inequality in the country and the setting-up of the Colombian State. Later I will point

out some of the most important governments that have been present in the national history and their relationship with the birth of the various guerrilla projects. Once I have addressed this, I will proceed to envisage how, besides the State and the guerrillas, some other violent actors, such as paramilitary groups, drug traffickers and common armed delinquency appear in the scene of war. Later I will point out the different peace building initiatives that have accompanied the country's violence and the challenges that the negotiations pose to the country. The chapter will end with some reflections about the implications of understanding violence as a social construction (and not as an inherent feature of the human being) and the implications that this understanding entails for the post conflict.

I do not pretend to offer a detailed analysis of the Colombian conflict, nor an objective history, but to provide some historical coordinates, which I consider important, so readers who are not Colombian have a comprehensive reference of contextual approach to the phenomenon of sociopolitical violence. In the same way, I intend to show how, regardless of the optic from which we consider the origins, causes, facts and consequences of sociopolitical violence, it is necessary to face the multiplicity and heterogeneity of the actors, discourses, narratives and historical decisions that characterize the Colombian conflict and de polarization that has permate and comlex the armed conflict.

Finally, a third reason I consider it important to make the journey that I present below is to underline how my historical context is part of the construction of reality and knowledge in this research.

The things that are 'discovered' in research are also always a construction of part of the world, and the researcher has a responsibility to make clear their own part in that construction so that the reader is in a better position. (Parker, 2005 p. 17)

2.1 Armed Conflict Sources

Although social Colombian conflicts date back to the very origins of the process of colonization and independence, it is not worth taking into account every detail of those times to understand the sources of the present inequality and violence. It would be enough to recall that throughout Colombian history, there has never been a real initiative for social reform or a fair agrarian reform, as it really happened in other countries of our continent. This has resulted in an unfair redistribution of the land and a constant expulsion of peasants to border zones where the presence of the State is minimal and their relationships with the whole society and the national economy is significantly reduced (González, 2004).

In addition to a rigid and backward agrarian structure, a second general political aspect of the conflict is that the setting-up of the Colombian State has been a gradual process, where the progressive incorporation of territories and populations resulted in a differentiated presence of the State in the various Colombian regions.

The two aspects mentioned above remain present throughout Colombian history and constitute factors that highly influenced the birth of a two-party system in political life, the liberal and the conservative parties.

The Colombian trend towards a two-party system wasn't, of course, unique in Latin America in the nineteenth century. The same model appeared in Mexico, Central America, Ecuador and other countries. But modern Colombia is the only nation where the conservative-liberal dichotomy has been kept since the mid- nineteenth century until the late twentieth. (Bushnell, 1996, p. 167)

Disputes between these two movements were determinant during the nineteenth century and the first half of the twentieth and they expressed not so much ideological confrontations between them, but rather problems arising from control of lands, rivalries among regions and populations, racial conflicts and disputes between families and groups.

2.2 The Period of Violence and the National Front

In the mid-thirties, during the tenure of presidents belonging to the Liberal Party, a series of economical, social and political changes occurred in an attempt to modernize the country. Such changes affected the level of violence since polarization becomes stronger. The cruelest violence was triggered during the fifties. Because of the murder, in 1948, of the popular liberal leader and presidential candidate Jorge Eliecer Gaitán (who represents a liberal radicalism with socialist characteristics), regional episodes of violence between liberals and conservatives were widespread throughout the country.

Hell exploded on April 9th when Gaitán was killed in the streets of Bogotá as he left his office. This directly resulted in the outbreak of mass protest riots known outside Colombia as Bogotazo [...] Bogotazo refers specifically to the disturbances that happened in the capital city, when in fact, it resulted in an explosion that covered almost the whole nation with manifestations of violence, not only in big cities but also in many villages with liberal majority. (Bushnell, 1996 p. 276-277)

People's reaction in Bogotá in April, and in other regions of the country, created space for the Conservative counter attack. As a response, Liberal and Communist people created rural guerillas of peasants for self-defense. Conservatives fought them with counter- guerrilla groups and bands of murderers. It is estimated that there were approximately 200,000 deaths between 1946 and 1953.

Altogether, it is a horrifying story which killed between 100.000 and 200.000 Colombians. The effort for explaining the wave of violence has generated a vast and growing number of historical and sociological studies in addition to an impressive number of literary works that recreate the era of *Violence*. (Bushnell, 1996, p. 280)

In 1953, General Gustavo Rojas Pinilla came to power. Until that time, this has been the only term of government led by a military regime. His government tried, unsuccessfully, to pacify the country through amnesty for the liberal guerrillas. However, given the heavy burden he had of

anticommunism, the resulting confrontation destabilized and reinstalled violence in the center of society. (Aguilera, 2014). Another fact that was added to this situation was that the traditional parties, which had been marginalized by the military regime, sought strategies to lessen his intentions, which eventually lead to the downfall of his mandate in 1957 (Aguilera, 2014).

The local nature of violence demonstrated the fragmentation hidden beneath the power networks of the two traditional parties. Additionally, confrontations between liberal and communists' guerrillas contributed to a further fragmentation of the peasantry. Nevertheless, violence strengthened the traditional parties as collective identities because belonging to them was the only explanation that made sense of violence.

This era ended with the necessary but insufficient initiative of providing an end to the conflict and the military regime by making an agreement between the two parties. This pact is known as the National Front. The agreement established that for the next sixteen years, both parties would take turns, alternating not only the presidency of the State but also the positions of the State power. Although this agreement contributed to the political stability in the country, the shared monopoly of power avoided the political expression of new local parties and appropriate responses to social problems that arose in the second half of the twentieth century.

2.3 Crisis and political instability, formation of new guerrillas

Over the next two decades, the political system in Colombia suffered what is perhaps, its worst record in the conflict, the social problems of the sixties and seventies. This period is characterized by rapid changes in society, the dynamics of new actors in the Colombian conflict and the evidence that the institutional framework of the state to respond to new social processes was inadequate. Within this framework the two-party regime faced many difficulties in introducing social and political reforms that would respond to the changing social situation. The heterogeneity

of the National Front created a situation where the reformist efforts seemed too timid to gain the support and mobilization of middle and low sectors, and were considered excessive by some regional and local elites (Tobasura-Acuña & Rincón M, 2007).

In this context, revolutionary guerrilla movements that operated in urban and rural areas throughout the national territory emerged in the sixties due to the persistence of problems for peasants, the influence of the Communist party in some peasant zones that survived violence, and due to the increasing radicalization of university students. All these factors highly contributed to the growing of the newly created guerrillas.

Thus, middle class students, intellectuals, trade union people and former liberal guerrilla members created the National Liberation Army (ELN), with a Cuban orientation, in 1964. In 1967, the People's Liberation Army (EPL) emerged as the armed wing of the Communist-Leninist Party, with a Maoist orientation. Moreover, the self-defense groups that were settled in more peripheral areas of peasant colonization, under the influence of the Communist Party, became guerrillas of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) in 1966, when the National Army attacked them. Later, in 1973, the Movement 19 of April, M-19, which had a more urban character, appeared as a reaction to the alleged electoral fraud that had prevented the General Rojas Pinilla reaching power in 1970. Since its beginning the M-19 made it clear that they were born as a protest against the alleged electoral fraud in the elections of 19 April 1970, won by Misael Pastrana and that they joined the clear dissatisfaction toward the traditional parties of the country.

In this period there were also two major movements that had nationwide presence and clashed directly against the State. The first one was the UNITED FRONT, whose founder and ideologist was the priest and sociologist Camilo Torres Restrepo, who fell in combat on 15 February 1966,

shortly after entering the ELN. The second movement was the NATIONAL POPULAR ALLIANCE (ANAPO), created and led by General Rojas Pinilla. A portion of this movement formed the armed Movement M-19. At present, the guerrillas that have presence and operate in different parts of Colombia are the FARC and the ELN.

2.4 Drug trafficking as an element of transversal violence

The distrust that permeated the two decades mentioned above produced a hiatus between the civil society and the state policy. The discrediting of the traditional political class grew and tensions due to patronage and demagoguery broke out very soon. In the same way, the picture of violence changed when the guerrillas expanded from the peripheral zones to richer areas that were more integrated with economic and national policies. In these areas, their increasingly frequent financing methods through extortion and kidnapping led Colombian society to change its perception of violence. All of that derived in the appearance of paramilitary forces and certain sympathy for the use of authoritarian solutions.

Among the activities that were incorporated into the national panorama, there was drug traffic. The decrease of crops in Bolivia and Peru led to a significant increase of coca plantations, especially in the country's periphery. Illegal crops found an ideal setting for their development in the peripheral colonization areas, where there was little state presence and there was a social base in the rural settler's scenario. Thus, powerful drug cartels arose, principally in Medellin and Cali that fought a war against the state during the eighties and the nineties.

Drug trafficking and the concomitant phenomenon of criminal violence and political corruption, arose in Colombia in the late sixties and seventies within a context of weak State institutions that were already permeated by high corruption and political clientelism (Bagley, 2000).

The drug traffickers, who little by little became landowners, supported the conformation of paramilitary groups. In 1982, in Puerto Boyacá, landowners, politicians, army members, rich farmers, traders and an oil company organized the group Death to Kidnappers (MAS) as a reaction against kidnapping carried out by the guerrilla. This phenomenon began to spread across the national territory, principally since 1984. Some other paramilitary groups started to appear such as, the Peasant Self-Defense Forces of Córdoba and Urabá (ACCU) created by Carlos and Fidel Castaño, former members of MAS. It is important to remark that even though the paramilitaries built a reputation of violence through massacres, selective assassinations and forced disappearances, excessive cruelty and torture were predominant as key factors of the paramilitary project. Thus, the incorporation of extreme cruelty in the repertoire of paramilitary violence contributed to build a reputation of terror and control over the population through fear.

Now then, the immediate effect of the expansion of illegal crops was the transformation of relationships between guerrillas and drug trafficking. Therefore, some authors argue that the emergence of drug trafficking transformed violence after 1980 and this represents a fundamental rupture with the past, although there are still some traces of continuity. In the case of the FARC, initially dedicated to regulate the relations of coca farmers among themselves and with drug traffickers, gradually became more involved by collecting a tax ("weight") on crops, and controlling later the cultivation and trade of coca. This recourse to money coming from illicit crops increased FARC's autonomy in the face of national and international dynamics and therefore, they became less dependent on their insertion in rural communities. In some cases, however, this autonomy resulted in an excess of territory control, where the FARC had systematically attacked the civilian population with repressive purposes. This shows that drug trafficking has an empowering face of violence.

The result of this crisis of political representation was the reform of the constitution held in 1991, linked to peace processes with different guerrilla groups. The new Constitution acknowledged the country's plurality related to ethnic, religious, cultural and regional traits and tried to correct the most evident vices in political life. Nevertheless, many of the reforms were frustrated or limited by the subsequent legislation and by the reality of political activity. The crisis became more complicated because the political and administrative decentralization approved in the new Constitution and the popular election of mayors and governors dislocated the traditional system of political "machineries". The traditional parties used such political machineries to mediate among localities, regions and the central State without creating new mechanisms of political cohesion.

At the same time, the infiltration of drug trafficking in Colombian society contributed to widespread corruption and to increased de-legitimation of the political class, which reached its climax in 1994, when president Ernesto Samper was accused of receiving money from the Cali cartel during his presidential campaign. This infiltration deepened even more the fragmentation and privatization of the State power and the crisis of legitimacy of the political system, and led to a blurring of boundaries between political violence and criminal practices such as extortion and bribery. Within this mixture of violent actions, war ceases to have an exclusively political rationality and becomes a blend that combines political and military objectives with economic and social purposes as well as individual initiatives with collective actions, and also struggles around the national territory such as local and regional confrontations. As a consequence, violence was spread throughout the whole tissue of Colombian society and it became the mechanism for resolving many private and group conflicts, due to the absence of the State as a public space for conflict resolution.

2.5 Development and geopolitics of the conflict actors

This historical development of the conflict dynamics shows a different logic of territorial expansion of the armed actors. The arbitrary expansion of guerrilla and paramilitary groups tends to show certain confrontation between two contradictory models of rural development and a differentiation of the relationships of the various regions with the State. This is how the guerrillas were born in peripheral areas and expand to areas with little government presence (González, 2004).

The paramilitary groups, by contrast, were born in areas that were relatively prosperous and integrated into the overall national or global economy; there, the local and regional authorities have been, to a certain point, semi-autonomously consolidated. The local elites in these zones have been extorted or threatened by the guerrilla, and they feel somewhat neglected by the institutions of the central government; they perceive that the State's modernizing and reformist policies are undermining their traditional power and interpret peace negotiations of the State as a betrayal in front of a common enemy that should be confronted by all of them together. From these areas, the paramilitary groups spread to more peripheral zones with the support of local authorities that are consolidating, both economically and politically.

This is how in Colombia, a national dynamic that expresses a struggle for geographical corridors takes place. These corridors give access to economical resources and weapons and also facilitate movements from refuge zones to conflict ones. Thus, various conflict zones can be distinguished: in the north, the AUC have achieved some control although the FARC make efforts to regain control of some of these areas, that formerly were their traditional strongholds and the ELN tries to defend its presence in the southern Bolivar department. In contrast, in the southeast the FARC has traditionally possessed great military power, for this reason, this area was chosen

for creating the demilitarized zone (DMZ) during the administration of president Andrés Pastrana in 1998.

On the other hand, pressure from the USA for the eradication of illicit crops introduces some variations in regional conflicts. Thus, south of the country, on the border with Ecuador, there's a struggle between the FARC and paramilitary groups for the control of Putumayo department where a great part of coca crops is concentrated.

We can also observe regional dynamics that correspond to the confrontation between guerrillas and paramilitary groups for the control of strategic resources of a region such as, oil, bananas and coca. Although the main theater of all armed actors (national army, guerrillas, paramilitaries and drug traffickers) has been the countryside, affecting negatively and directly peasants, indigenous peoples and Afro-Colombian communities, over the years, violence has crossed the rural area causing the conflict to stay alive all around the country.

The urbanization of the conflict is remarkable, taking into account that until recently it was mainly rural. The urban presence of the conflict is expressed in different aspects such as, the proliferation of armed actors belonging to paramilitary structures, urban militias, gangs of common criminals and institutional forces which display methods of intimidation for the “forced” or “deceitful” recruitment of children and youth, in order to enlarge their rank and file members. [...]. (Penagos, et al, 2009 p. 20)

The result of these conflict dynamics and their diffusion in Colombian society is the degradation of the conflict and a profound humanitarian crisis, which is expressed in countless violations of Human Rights and International Humanitarian Law.

A clear evidence of the above is the extreme cruelty that has characterized the conflict.

Among the documented cases of extreme cruelty, the HMG⁸ has been able of identifying

⁸ Historical Memory Group

mechanisms of violence such as, beheading, dismembering, decapitation, evisceration, incineration, castration, impalement and burns with acids, as well as the use of sharp weapons that have accompanied these practices of extreme cruelty. (Historical Memory Group, 2013)

According to information from the Historical Memory Group (2013), 63% of these episodes were perpetrated by paramilitary groups, 21,4% by unidentified armed groups, 9,7% by members of the Security Forces, 5,1% by the guerrilla and 0,7% by joint actions of paramilitary groups and the Security Forces.

On the other hand, the ability of the various armed actors for operating in the enemy territories and the instability of territory control produce a situation of total uncertainty among civilians. They stay in a fixed system of institutional references, exposed to counterpart retaliations, since in these regions the State apparatus is present as another local actor. They get mixed, in a very diffused manner, with the local powers that are being built there. In this situation, none of the armed actors can ensure their control and protection permanently, hence the use of terror to maintain the loyalty of the civilian population and to isolate the adversary from the support they could provide to any of them. Therefore, we can say that the Colombian conflict has been characterized as a war against civilians.

2.6 Walking towards the Post-Conflict

The history of the country has also been marked by various dialogues between insurgent groups and the State. In the Colombian academic literature there is a fairly large number of works that describe and analyze the negotiations between government and the guerrillas, generally called “humanitarian agreements”, “ceasefire” or “peace negotiations”. For the purpose of this work, I delve only into the most important negotiations in Colombian history.

This is how on 9 March 1990 peace was signed between President Virgilio Barco's

government and the guerrilla group M-19. This was the first armed group to sign a peace agreement with the government and the first one that, after demobilizing, became a political party and an alternative to the traditional two-party system in Colombia.

Hand in hand with the M-19, there were also demobilizations of other insurgent groups, the Indigenous Movement Quintín Lame, the armed fronts EPL and ELN and the Revolutionary Workers Party (PRT). These processes had an influence on the creation of the National Constituent Assembly in 1991, which facilitated the participation of a broad spectrum of social and political groups in order to rethink the State structure and the elaboration of a new constitution for the country. In 1998 the government of President Andres Pastrana started talks with the FARC in order to reach a negotiated solution to the armed conflict in Colombia. Caguan, name commonly used when referring to this process, had different difficulties including the decision of granting a demilitarized zone in the Caguan region where the dialogues with the FARC would be held. Once the zone was established, and due to a lack of military control, the FARC took absolute control of the whole area and its population. This situation generated great discrepancies among the government, which unfortunately, led to the finalization of negotiations in 2002 with a stronger guerrilla. After this process, during the government of Alvaro Uribe Velez, the military offensive against the FARC guerrilla was hardened and at the same time, a process of demobilization of the AUC was developed. Thus, since 2002, the government started a dialogue process and the subsequent demobilization of paramilitary groups in Colombia where 31.671 members of illegal armed groups laid down their weapons.

Later in 2013, the government of President Juan Manuel Santos began negotiations with the guerilla of the FARC in Havana, Cuba in order to reach a peace agreement that will allow the final demobilization of this armed group and define its reintegration into the social and political

life of the country. Five big issues integrate the negotiation agenda discussed in Havana by the government and the FARC. They are, Policy of integral agricultural development, Political participation, End of conflict, Solution to the problem of illegal drugs, Victims. The negotiation model has had three characteristics, a) Negotiation is held out of Colombia, in Havana, in a different country of the confrontation stage. b) They negotiate without ceasefire, amid the conflict and with intense National Army and FARC operations. c) The type of negotiation is bilateral, and d) the agreements are not public until negotiations are concluded.

Sitting at the same table, government and FARC, talking and establishing agreements, implies from the beginning the government acceptance of a social and political conflict in the country as well as tacit recognition of the FARC as a political entity. As for the FARC, there is recognition that war has no future and that political negotiation is the most civilized solution to the conflict in Colombia.

During this process, Colombia has faced the task of addressing one of the most difficult dilemmas in peace building that is, Victims and Demobilized. This is how, in one hand there is the need to establish the truth about atrocities committed during the conflict, penalize the perpetrators and compensate the victims, while in the other hand it ponders forgiveness and forgetfulness as necessary tasks. The latter task necessarily involves thinking about processes of DDR (Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration) that in most cases are launched following the signing of a peace agreement, which means that these processes are seen as a strategy to directly impact the conflict and influence its development. Now, even though the DDR processes are an effort to normalize the lives of people who have, for years, taken up arms (Fisas, 2011), we can not deny that these processes are a transition that involves a complex equation, conflictive and dynamic, between truth and justice, compensation and reconciliation

(Theidon & Betancourt 2006).

An answer to these dilemmas can be reflected both in the Justice and Peace Law (Ley 975 de 2005) and the so-called Victims and Land Restitution Law (Ley 1448 de 2011). The Justice and Peace law is a legal framework to enhance the demobilization process of armed outlaw groups. This law guarantees aspects of transitional justice for people belonging to armed groups outside the law who demobilize. It also establishes special conditions for victims, such as the right to truth within criminal processes against members of the guerrilla or paramilitaries. Besides the laws of Justice and peace, a recurrent concern in the current administration is the reparation of victims as a key element in the political process of peace. For this reason, and due to the lack of concrete results in order to reduce the phenomenon of forced displacement as well as the need of taking measures to mitigate and repair the damage caused by the armed conflict, the Congress issued the Victims and Land Restitution Law (Law 1448, 2011). This law recognized the victims of the conflict in a different way; they are not affected or displaced people anymore, but victims. That is to say, they are a distinct entity with a stronger discursive meaning. On this point Gaviria and Rodriguez (2014) in their research entitled *When Life wins, Voices of landmines Survivors*, point out how the victim is considered as a violated subject who has the right to be repaired. Meanwhile, Camila de Gamboa Tapia (2005) with her theory of the ideal value which was developed after an investigation on transitional justice, states that all human beings are worthy, so the moral value of the subject deserves to be repaired when it has been violated.

It is essential to deploy a look that surpasses contemplation or passive acknowledgement of the victims suffering and understand them as a result of actors and social and political processes also identifiable, against which we must react. In front of the pain of others, indignation is important but insufficient. Recognizing, making visible, dignifying and humanizing the victims are inherent

commitments to the right to truth and reparation and to the duty of the State's memory before them.

(Historical Memory Group 2013 p. 14)

Although, the legal system has imposed the condition of victim as a way to make war victims visible to society, recognizing their pain and furthermore recognizing their right to truth, justice and reparation, it is important not to totalize the identity of people as victims (White & Epston, 1993) but rather to facilitate the transition from victim to survivor status (Cobb, 1997).

This means that the State, in addition to providing human and dignified treatment to the victims and their families by supporting the possibility of reinventing themselves and facilitating the construction of new stories for the dissolution of the trauma and the mobilization towards the future (White, 1993, 2007), must implement in its legal order, provisions that protect them and restore their rights as subjects of special protection, both in administrative and legal procedures to prevent impunity and possible revictimization.

It is clear that no one is going to return to the imprisoned dissident his youth; to the young woman who has been raped, her innocence; to the person who has been tortured his or her integrity. Nobody is going to return the dead and the disappeared to their families. What can and must be publicly restored (are) the victims' names and their dignity, through a formal recognition of the injustice of what has occurred. (Martin Baró, 1990 p. 184)

In this way, recognition and repair have become guidelines that direct the work of public officials in various administrative offices. Similarly, reparation and restitution narratives have become elements in the public sphere that have allowed various political actors to start speaking about post-conflict and peace (Mora-Gamez, 2013). Nevertheless, these same post-conflict narratives also mobilize the assumption that the recognition of victims is one of the State actions that are required for building peace in our country.

The implications of these laws in the process of peace refer basically to reconciliation and

construction of a new country in post-conflict. It is through transitional justice that rules of criminal justice will be established and members of the FARC guerrilla will have to submit to them after signing the agreement of peace. On the other hand, more mechanisms for legal and material reparation of the armed conflict victims will be created and executed. This represents a first step in the legal field to achieve a real reconciliation. However, even though policies, regulations and processes related to victims have gained force and meaning in the last years, typical difficulties of a complex process begin to be evident in practice. The need to think about those who have been called victimizers and their reincorporation to civilian life should also be taken into account.

Although the challenge is great, we can say that, within the national spirit, a definite ending of the armed conflict itself suggests the need to consider post conflict together with processes of reconciliation that allows reparation of victims, non-repetition and adequate inclusion of ex combatants in a society that welcomes them and change their horizon to the future.

2.7 Violence as a social construction

Going through the historical background of the violence in Colombia is fundamental to show how violence is not something given, but that the product of certain relationships that happen in specific time and space coordinates . This allows us to see that violence in Colombia is a phenomenon that has been growing, developing and becoming more complex, long before the armed conflict, and therefore it is present far beyond those who had engaged in battle. It is part of everyday life and involves each one of us.

To recognize that through the Colombian history there has been a process that has led to the consolidation of certain values, beliefs, ways to establish relationships and to deal with conflict, gives us a starting point that enables us to understand violence. However, from my perspective

as a researcher, violence is a complex phenomenon that brings together both individual and social aspects. In this sense, violence is not an intrinsic, genetic Colombian heritage. Observing violence from this standpoint is quite dangerous because it does not only justify violence but it darkens the capacity for love, tenderness and care and the capacity of doing things in different manners. For these reasons, the first step towards peace building, is to stop the justification of using the concept of violence as the only social repertoire to solve conflicts, to educate, to do politics, or to make our voice be heard.

That is why in this work violence is understood as a phenomenon that has been built in social, economic, family and political relationships within a framework of beliefs culturally patterned. According to Schutz and Luckmann (2009), a cultural pattern consists of all the peculiar valuations, institutions, and systems of orientation and guidance (e.g. mores, laws, habits, customs and fashions), which characterize or constitute any social group at a given moment in its history. In this sense a cultural pattern consists of a recipe for interpreting and handling things, as well as for acting in order to gain certain results in the social world. Furthermore, cultural patterns condition how the world is represented to a person and they function as an unquestioned scheme of reference.

On this aspect McNamee (2010) explains how the configuration of cultural and historical realities emerges in the coordinate activities of people, where, through interactions and repetition a pattern emerges. Those patterns create standards and expectations, which people use to assess their own and others actions. These practices lead to future interactions where they will be confirmed and sustained, questioned or processed.

Joint action is another way to describe what happens when people communicate; our joint actions construct on-going scenarios and routines. These routines (or patterns) give rise to standards and expectations that eventually construct what interacting communities to be real and good. These

beliefs and values (realities) give way to future joint activities, sometimes changing the realities that had been previously established and sometimes confirming and further reifying (literally, “making real”) those beliefs and values. (McNamee, 2010, p. 12)

Through this coordination process, we create violence as we create local cultural norms, values and patterns of influence, which become the justification of the common sense for future coordination. The interesting thing about this is to see how we have the capacity of developing different practices, rituals and relational patterns where violence is not necessary. This leads us to the possibility of creating new ways of coordinating in order to create a culture of peace with values and forms of practice that foster a peaceful coexistence.

The worlds of meaning are built within relationships. What we take as real, rational and given is born inside relationships. Without relationships meaning would be poor, new worlds of meaning are possible. We are not held or determined by the past. We can give up, transform or dissolve forms of life that do not match the present situations, painful or traumatic, and create alternatives all together. If we find appropriate conditions to sustain processes of creation of values, realities and relations or create a new future, carrying it out requires participation in social schemes that support this reconstruction. (Fried Schnitman, 2010 p. 53)

Thus the challenge of Colombia is not only to make peace with the oldest guerrilla group in Colombia, but to make this peace process a chance to relate differently. It is clear that Peace is not an easy path but, there are several ways of understanding the reality of violence and the construction of peace in this country where education plays a fundamental role.

CHAPTER 3: Peace education

3.1 Peace, utopia or possibility?

Utopia or not, the ideas of a just and peaceful world have accompanied humanity since the rational discourse took a speaking voice and human beings became the center of the universe. However, the idea of peace refuses a unique universal definition or an abstract theorization since, more than a concept, it responds to a deep, social aspiration that determines man. That's why we can find so many different characteristics all along History.

Anthropologists have located on this planet at least 47 relatively peaceful societies (Bonta, 1993).

Although there are few written records, human beings throughout history have employed community-based peace education strategies to preserve their knowledge of conflict resolution tactics that promote their security. (Harris, 2008, p. 15)

For the above reason, and because conceptualization of peace cannot come only from the West or from a unique theoretical model, I will present in the first part of this chapter, some of the major historical milestones and religious traditions which have contributed to the conceptualization of peace. This aims both to diversify the different approaches and values on peace and to show how the very nature of humans, although it has not always appeared in the same manner through its historical development or its social complexity, has reached some agreements in its social tissue about the need of peaceful coexistence.

Later I will present the origins of peace education and the evolution of the existing international literature about this topic. In a third moment, I will address the main definitions, currents and authors that have theorized on this subject and how they have articulated the concepts of peace and education in order to consider educational proposals. In the last section of the chapter I will present the developments achieved in Colombia and the challenges that our country has on the subject of peace education facing the post-conflict.

3.2 Elements of spirituality in the construction of peace

Concepts and practices of what constitutes a peaceful coexistence have been suggested long ago by the world's most ancient religions. For this reason, religions and with them, their spiritual leaders have been and continue being important frameworks in which to place many of the experiences, ideas and peaceful practices, since almost all of them envisage non-violence, love and respect for others, reconciliation and forgiveness as constituent elements of spirituality. "Major spiritual leaders such as Buddha, Muhammad, or Jesus Christ are sometimes considered "peace educators" as their lives and teaching are considered by millions to be examples of ethical and peaceable living" (Duckworth, 2008 p. 33).

I'll start with contributions that have been made from the East, especially those that have consolidated concepts such as Non-violence and peaceful interactions.

Hence, in India in the sixth century BC, we find testimonies such as those of Mahavir, founder of Jainism, who would have been the person that, according to the tradition, expressed as the highest moral precept for his followers, the today famous concept of *ahimsa*. It is a Sanskrit word that refers to the rejection and resignation of the willingness to kill or hurt and that in English is named with the expression *non-violence*. In the same age and place, Buddhism would offer a close interpretation of *ahimsa*, which takes the meaning of an attitude of mercy for all beings.

Ahimsa consists in not to cause harm or injury to living beings and it is perhaps the most fundamental concept of the Jain ethics. With its wide notion of sensibility, Jain ethics inevitably reflects an unconditional respect for all kinds of life. (Bilimoria, 1993, p. 93)

At present, we can interpret this attitude with what we understand by empathy. Thus, we already find in both heterodox, religious movements inside Hinduism, the concept of non-violence and care for the other.

Another important religious tradition to be addressed is Buddhism. Buddhists believe that the

Buddha awakened to the laws of the universe. The most relevant of these laws is the law of karma, or, in Buddhist terminology, dependent origination, which claims that nothing can exist on its own and everything is interdependent. All the elements of the universe are interconnected. What's interesting of the principle of dependent origination is that invites people to realize the interdependent nature of existence and develop a strong sense of responsibility for our actions, as well as appreciation and empathy for others. It is from this realization of the nature of existence that non-harming, compassionate, caring and altruistic action would arise.

The Buddhist principle of dependent origination mandates a world composed of dynamic exchanges and interconnections among all entities existing in the world. The complex web of causes and conditions in any given event engenders a focus on process and causes, over a focus on end results. In the past, peace used to be reified as an absolute ultimate: transcendent, idealistic, and thus unreal, unattainable. People worshipped peace with awe but knew deeply in their hearts that peace is unlikely to be realized in this world. Nowadays, most peace researchers agree that peace is no more a stable state to be reached at the end of the tunnel, but a composite of dynamic interactions demanding continued striving because of the constantly changing conditions of all forces/factors involved. (Der-lan Yeh, 2006, p. 104)

Other important element of Buddhism is the Five Precepts that Buddha prescribes as the minimum moral obligations for living a harmonious life in the secular society, which are: To abstain from taking life, to abstain from taking what is not given, to abstain from misconduct, to abstain from false speech, to abstain from toxicants as tending to cloud the mind (Der-lan Yeh, 2006, p. 104).

In the sixth century BC, as well, the legendary founder of Taoism in the ancient China, Lao-Tse, would show a strong pacifist tendency through the Tao concept that means *path*. Such path is based on the peace that can be achieved when we are in harmony or consonance with the forces of nature. Tao is the flow of life in harmony with the movement of nature. It will be from the mystic of Tao

and from the concept of non-action as action, that this tendency will be strongly linked to the rejection of violence and the avoidance of war.

Furthermore, Christian Spirituality and Jesus of Nazareth's proposal about interiority development are the basis of many already existing proposals for Peace Education. Undoubtedly, his non-violent pacifism pervades all his life and teachings; hence, I would like to highlight three fundamental concepts in the figure of Jesus. First of all, there is the commandment of universal love (Mt. 5, 44-45; Lc 5, 27-28) that involves both love for our neighbor and for all the others, including those who don't love us, annoy, abuse or offend us. On the other hand, there is the precept of non-violence implied in the lesson of the Sermon on the Mount (Mt. 5, 38-42) by offering the other cheek to whom slaps you and considering the mild ones as blessed, that is to say, the pacifists. Finally, there is the precept of peace that arises as a result of love and gentleness, which appears with great emphasis in the New Testament and was picked up in the Catholic church liturgy with the words: "I leave you peace, my peace I give you." (Jn. 14, 27), "Let us offer each other a sign of peace". Ronald Preston (1993), points out that one of the distinctive features of Jesus' ethical doctrine is the way in which he radicalizes the common morality. This means that there is no limit to forgiveness, not to win thereby the offender, but because God's forgiveness concerns us all. In this sense, it is forgiveness that is given as a present, as a free and unconditional gift, as a base for renouncing to a new exercise of violence or retaliation.

As we can see these religious worldviews characterized by its moral codes stressing non-violence and kindness suggests rich resources for thinking peacebuilding. I would like to emphasize the fact that the non-violent principles proposed by the three spirituals leaders I have presented here, were not understood as individualized mental and psychological attitudes but as a way of life and relationship with others. In the same way we can see that the concept of non-violence comes

together with other notions such as, respect and acknowledgment of the other, empathy, equality and forgiveness. As we will see, all these ethical principles are crucial for the construction of new realities where violence isn't the privileged interaction.

3.3 Peace and education in the modern world

Undoubtedly, one of the most important referents in education is the Swiss philosopher Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1762). Although he didn't go deep into the topic of peace, I bring him up because he states that human beings are "naturally good", therefore, education must seek spontaneous, physical and spiritual development of children, inspired by autonomy and freedom. As we will see afterwards, the current educative proposals centered in freedom and those looking for personal development in a spontaneous way have been inspired by Rousseau; they feed some of the approaches developed in Education for Peace.

Another essential referent for building ethical categories that allow the exercise of educating for peace is the Prussian philosopher Emmanuel Kant, where the work with notions such as, duty, freedom and responsibility becomes relevant. This is how, in his canonical text *The Perpetual Peace* (1795) the German philosopher reflects on the relationship among States in order to eliminate war. Here, Kant becomes optimistic and enthusiastic about the power of revolution events in the world of law and their consequences for duty in international solidarity (Bilbeny, 1989). In the same way, it's worth highlighting his work "Critique of Pure Reason" (1781) because in this work he expresses his belief in freedom as a fundamental element of the human being, freedom that comes from the exercise of reason, and which is the base of moral action.

3.4 Milestones of the twentieth century

All currents of pacifism meet in the figure of Mohandas Karmchand Gandhi, the highest exponent of contemporary pacifism. Knower of all variants I have explained earlier, Gandhi

revitalized pacifism through the philosophy and practice of non-violence, concept considered as the keystone or foundation of his spiritual, philosophical and ethical system, a culture of peace. The characteristics of non-violence are: Life philosophy and ways of behaving, conditioned by *satyagraha* (firmness of truth) and *ahimsa* (non-violent action), emphasis on mental and materialistic autonomy, central importance of the conflict theory and of the learning of non-violent strategies. For Gandhi and his followers “the conflict must be focused not as a factor of separation but as an element that unites the opposing parties, forcing them to work together and to cooperate in finding solution” (Jares, 1999).

There are two key elements for the comprehension of the concept of non-violence. First, non-violence arises from a genuine interest for the nearest thing, that is to say for the daily actions, for our attitudes with others, with the family, in the work, with the neighbors, etc. Another characteristic is the perseverance, as it is a way of life rather than sporadic or isolated actions.

Development of non-violence from a life experience, centered in the *satyagraha* and the *ahimsa* opened doors to many of the proposals that are already present in Education for Peace. The necessity of an education that includes non-violence techniques and inner strengthening is explicit now, as it is also, the linking of the whole community in such a process.

This is how Gandhi’s commitment for peace as the way, allows us to reflectively and experientially understand the values of respect to human rights, solidarity, recognition of differences as well as the assumption of responsibilities regarding coherence with these values. Through this process we learn to leave the justifications for the different forms of violence including indifference and to build new knowledge and peace behavior.

Finally, another iconic moment of the fight for equality and peace is the answer against *apartheid* in South Africa. In a system where there were many places of segregation and the right to

vote was banned for the majority of Afro by racial sectors, the effort conducted by Nelson Mandela succeeded through mechanisms of negotiation, transformation of the society and support of the transition to a more democratic society. And not only the South African president strategies revolutionized the national scene and changed the political practices but also became a symbol of reconciliation and coexistence after the change. In that sense, Mandela succeeded in building, from his own existence and personal crisis, a lasting legacy in one of the most precarious areas in the world, the African Continent.

Although none of these people mentioned a formal peace education theory as such, they do propose peaceful models of interactions and practices. In this sense, certainly, we can say that all of the above have inspired the evolution of peace education. Also, we can see how the topic of Peace and Education for Peace is not new since it has been presented in different ways, but hasn't been considered as a specific field of knowledge, "those interested in peace education have a considerable debt with cosmopolitan ideas and with ethical concerns about peace in previous centuries" (Hutkinson, 1986. p. 23).

3.5 Origins and evolution of peace education

According to Harris (2008), the development of peace education has been strongly influenced with the development of peace movements. These movements can be traced from the Nineteenth Century when the Napoleonic wars finished. In this period, appeared the first peace organizations in Belgium, Britain, and France conformed by politicians and intellectuals concerned about the effects of war. A second movement, in the same century, was related to workingmen associations and socialist political groupings. These groups were concerned about human rights and their fulfillment.

Later, and as a result of the First World War, Europeans and Americans formed peace movements to adopt more pacifist policies to prevent militancy. After the First World War, different

pedagogical renewal movements appeared, being the New School proposal an outstanding one. This proposal presents a criticism to the traditional pedagogical practices and it is based on the need of developing an education for international understanding on behalf of world peace. The focus of education for international understanding was: teaching how people of other cultures live, solidarity as a common factor to all human beings, cooperation among nations and international organizations and how to effectively appropriate in schools the principles of democracy, liberty and equality.

Inside the New School, it is necessary to remark Maria Montessori's thought whose contribution to this initial stage of education for peace is of great importance. For Montessori, global citizenship, personal responsibility and respect for diversity had to be part of everyone's education (Duckworth, 2008). She defined peace as a

goal that can only be attained through common agreement, and the means to achieve this unity for peace are twofold: first, an immediate effort to resolve conflicts without recourse to violence -in other words, to prevent war— and second, a long-term effort to establish a lasting peace among men. (Montessori, 1949, p. 27 cited in Duckworth, 2008, p. 38). She not only produced theory, but also designed a concrete pedagogy for peace which “focused on the development of the whole child and prized the creative and critical thinking skills, as well as relational skills, which are so critical in men and women who will be both inspired and equipped to build lasting peace. (Duckworth, 2008, p. 38)

Contemporary to María Montessori we find the American philosopher and pedagogue John Dewey. For this philosopher, as it is for Montessori, the development of critical thinking in children is essential. For this reason, Dewey states, the need of replacing traditional education based on transmission of information for an education that promotes curiosity and is based in the reconstruction and reorganization of relevant learning experiences for the child.

In the same way, Dewey pleaded for a conception of school as an axis of the social reform and the democratization of society. For the purpose, he encouraged the creation of a curriculum for all

school and nations where values of peace, global cooperation and world patriotism were promoted, instead of an extreme nationalism (Howlett, 2008) With this in mind, Dewey proposes to use the social sciences especially Geography and History, as a bridge for understanding other cultures and rectifying the more sinister aspects of patriotism and nationalism that have been a basic cause of war between nations. “The real key to Dewey’s peace education program, however, and one that is relevant today, is transforming the notion of nationalism into a more transnational perspective” (Howlett, 2008, p. 29).

At the same time, and with the aim of finding solutions to international conflicts in 1919, the League of Nations was created in the political field. Even though the League of Nations wasn’t strong enough in the pedagogical field, concerns about world peace construction through relationships among nations, international conflict mediation and the need of generating a greater democratic movement in different countries, became evident. It was the first international organization whose principal mission was to maintain world peace.

During the Second World War, human being capacity of destruction becomes more evident and there are worries about rebuilding and preventing future wars of that type. Education is faced to the responsibility of preventing war through formation of the new generations as a consequence, the need to renew the political relations of respect, cooperation and security among countries arises and so, the UN (United Nations) is created. Another organism, specialized in education, science and cultural themes, UNESCO (United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization), emerges from UN.

In fact, peace education is central to the constitutional mandate of UNESCO: the preamble to its constitution (1945) commences by noting that, as war begins in the minds of individuals, so too should the defenses against war be constructed in the minds of individuals. Indeed, most of the declarations within the Preamble deal expressly with either building peace or preventing war. (Page,

2008, p. 76)

Although peace education continued with the idea of international understanding and cooperation, the UNESCO introduces two new elements, education for disarmament and education for human rights.

The education for disarmament seeks to respond to two punctual objectives: establishing new methods and teachings designed to the comprehension of international education, peace and human rights and facilitating the exchange of information and pedagogical material, teachers and students among schools around the world. In turn, human rights education seeks to guarantee the condition of human dignity and consequently the moral, ethical and pedagogical principles that should be considered in any pedagogical approach. Thus, UNESCO makes a series of meetings and General Assemblies in which they seek to strengthen and boost the proposals of work on Education for Peace. During the 90's its role will be definitive in promoting and consolidating this field of knowledge, as it will be presented later.

During the first half of the 20th century there was a necessity for more rigorous studies that allowed to understand the dynamics of conflict within the human being and among nations, seeking to respond to the consequences of World War II through the understanding of the events that took place. This moment is identified as the birth of peace research, which is highlighted by the emergence of the journal of Conflict Resolution in 1957, and the foundation of the Center for Research on Conflict Resolution in Michigan (USA), and also the research department on conflicts conducted by Johan Galtung at the Social Research Institute in Oslo, in 1959 (Jarés, 1993).

This is how in the fifties, research on peace comes to universities through the concept of conflict and through the first inquiries about the concept of violence, which had been understood by many as the direct action of a person against another one generating harm and the concept of peace

understood as absence of war.

During the 60's, and to further distinguish between types of violence, a renowned Norwegian scholar and peace researcher Johann Galtung (1969) developed the concepts of positive peace, direct violence, structural violence, and cultural violence. Later I will take all these concepts again as they are essential for the construction of any proposal of education for peace.

Another important theorist, the Brazilian pedagogue Paulo Freire will have a great influence around the world, mainly after being named "UNESCO expert" in 1969, where he develops different educational programs. Although he was not a peace educator, he contributed to the development of peace education with his ideas of liberating people from structural violence, through education (Freire, 2007). He suggested a liberating education as practice of freedom, in which the individual is considered dependent and attached to the world, and that the world exists jointly with the people. Likewise, this education must make of the educators, critical people about the social structures in which we are immersed (Freire, 2007).

Thus, the research for peace becomes a new dynamic and open discipline under construction, linked to the reflection on human and social aspects. This new discipline will focus much of its attention on the concepts of peace and violence, transcending the readings so far done in the field of Social Sciences. This growth of peace research had a great impact in the development of peace education. Therefore, peace activists and researchers start leading social consciousness and strategies to warn people about the dangers of war, colonial and cultural aggression and structural violence, among others (Harris, 2008). Some important aspects to be highlighted about peace research during this period are, the foundation of IPRA (International Peace Research Association) in 1964, whose role was the coordination of diverse study initiatives and the creation of the PEC (Peace Education Commission) responsible for developing the activities of the IPRA and those of

education for peace.

In this point, it is important to differentiate between peace education and peace research. We can say that peace research focus in higher education, at Universities, Colleges and research Institutes, where the major focus relies on history: “Understanding how slavery was abolished, how socialist policies improved the material conditions of the masses, how colonization movements came into being and ultimately were somewhat successful” (Harris, 2008, p. 50). Meanwhile peace education is as a way to respond to all forms and levels of violence by the exercise of concretizing peace studies into the formal education system.

In the 80s the threat of nuclear war moved educators all around the world to warn of impending devastation. Three books were produced and can be regarded as milestones in peace education: *Education for Peace* by Birgit Brocke-Utne (1985), *Comprehensive Peace Education* by Betty Reardon (1988), and *Peace Education* by Ian Harris (1988). Brocke-Utne (1985) pointed out the damage that masculine aggression, manifested in militarism, war, and domestic violence, causes upon males, females and children. She argued that feminism is the starting point for effective disarmament. Additionally, she pointed out that societies not at war, are not necessarily peaceful because they still contained domestic violence.

Reardon (1988) point out that there are three phases in peace education; the reform phase, dating from the end of World War II, the Reconstructive phase developed in the 1960s, and the transformational phase that is the one that is currently evolving. The goal of the reform approach is basically to prevent war, in this sense it focuses on the prevention of war and the control of arm races. The main objective in this approach is a behavioral change, if citizens and nations changed their behavior and gave more considerations to nonviolent interactions, war would be prevented. The Reconstructive approach looks to reconstruct international systems and searches for ways of

changing institutions to resolve conflicts and keep the peace. Finally, the transformational approach seeks for the rejection of violence not only arm races or war, the goal is to make violence unacceptable. Although in this approach there is a behavioral change and an institutional change, primarily the change is in the way of thinking and in values. From each of these models follows a different pedagogical models. For Reardon (1988) the transformational approach is where we need to do focus while we develop a *Comprehensive peace education* that would be peace education that takes place at every level of formal education.

Harris (1988) stressed a holistic approach to peace education that could apply to community education, elementary and secondary schools, as well as college classrooms. He also emphasized that a peaceful pedagogy must be integral to any attempt to teach about peace. Additionally, Johan Galtung, writes in 1985 *about peace*, where he analyzes the role of education in the creation of a new conception of peace, not seen since the role of the school but from education itself.

In the 90s, there is a strong international movement, promoted by the United Nations and specifically by the UNESCO, supporting the consolidation of Peace Education proposals, focused in the fulfillment of a comprehensive peace, based on social justice and on the exercise and experience of Human Rights and democracy. The Declaration on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy was adopted at the 44th International Conference on Education held in 1994. The principal conclusions of this conference where:

- Education must have principles and methods that favor the development of students and adults' personality so values such as, respect to each other, human rights, democracy and peace will prevail.
- Generate an environment that fosters the development of tolerance and respect for difference and diversity; this will enhance international understanding and respect for cultural differences.
- Take measures to eliminate all forms of discrimination, direct and indirect, against women in education systems and have access to appropriate conditions for their total development.

- Review and adjust teaching materials (books, manuals, etc.) to support the consolidation of values such as, solidarity, respect, non-violent transformation of conflicts and achievement of an open attitude to others, especially to those who are perceived as different.
- Teachers' training in Peace Education.
- Develop and evaluate new methodologies that favor the formation of responsible citizens, committed to peace, human rights, democracy and sustainable development.

In this same conference, the integrated Plan of Action on Education for Peace, Human Rights and Democracy was presented and then adopted, on November 1995 by the UNESCO General Conference. This Plan of Action proposes, together with the fulfillment of Peace, the achievement of a sustainable social and economic development. At the same time, it implies questioning the traditional forms of educational activities, reviewing study topics, educative methods and materials, stimulating research and promoting the training of teachers (UNESCO, 1995).

Thus, UNESCO decides to launch, after the 28th General Conference in 1995, its interdisciplinary project, Towards a Culture of Peace, with four main themes:

- Education for peace, human rights, democracy, international understanding and tolerance.
- Promotion of human rights and democracy.
- Cultural pluralism and intercultural dialogue.
- Prevention of conflicts and post-conflict consolidation of peace.

In the resolutions that followed, UNESCO pointed out education as the most effective means to prevent war culture and generate conditions for a culture of peace; education for peace becomes an urgent action. It also commits to support and implement research programs on education for peace, improving teacher training, curricula, textbook, course contents, and educational material. The aim is to bring up aware citizens, responsible and open to other cultures, able to appreciate the value of

freedom, respectful of human dignity and human differences and willing to avoid conflicts or to resolve them by non-violent means. (UNESCO, 1995)

Among the debates carried out during the 45th International Conference on Education in 1996, it is important to highlight two of those that had to do with teaching practice: “Teachers in search of new perspectives” conducted by Jacques Delors, president of the International Commission on Education for the Twentieth-First Century, and “The role of teachers in the construction of a culture of peace” directed by Federico Mayor, General Director of UNESCO at the time. Likewise, in the Latin American Conference on History and Culture of Peace held in Cartagena (Colombia) in November of the same year, they discussed the need of reviewing the educative material and the curricula so it responds to peace building.

Thus, we can observe that starting from the decade of the 90s, literature about peace education evolves due to the necessity of promoting new teaching methods passing from theoretical production to useful methodological tools for teachers and schools.

3.6 Current initiatives and models in Peace Education

The debate within the literature regarding peace education begins with a definitional problem (Snauwaert, 2011; Reardon, 1988) where there is not a unique definition or agreement about the meaning and objectives of this discipline. This is largely due to the diversity of the contexts, types of conflicts, theories, approaches, goals, curricula, and conceptions about peace and violence (Harris, 2008; Nario-Galace & Navarro Castro, 2010; Bar-Tal, 2002).

A great variety of theories, definitions and practices are referred to in peace education. Since both “peace” and “education” are abstractions without any concrete and absolute meaning, it is not surprising that it is rather difficult to find widespread agreement about what peace education actually is. (Haavelsrud, 2008, p. 59)

One of the main reasons for this definitional problem relies on the diversity of conceptions of

peace and violence. Depending on how these concepts are defined and conceptualized, the strategies for achieving peace and the objectives and practices of the peace education programs will be different. According to Johann Galtung (1969) we can define violence as anything that limits the possibilities of development of the human being. The author distinguishes three types of violence, direct, indirect and cultural violence. The first one refers to material violence, verbal violence, actions or omissions that hurt physically or emotionally another person. This type of violence is more evident and easily recognizable and it's the one we usually refer to, when speaking about violence. Examples of direct violence are acts of war, torture and fighting, physical and emotional abuse. The fundamental ingredient in direct violence is the process of making violence a personal act.

Meanwhile, structural violence, also known as indirect violence, relates to a social order supported on exclusion, unequal distribution of welfare and opportunities and inequity. Thus, structural violence, exists as a continuous state of violence due to societal mechanisms such as exploitation, penetration, segmentation, fragmentation, and marginalization (Reardon, 1985).

Finally, cultural violence, which is the most difficult to observe, is the set of attitudes, beliefs, opinions, prejudices, behavior patterns and historical landmarks among others, which given populations share and make them prone to violent interactions. This kind of violence serves to legitimize direct and structural violence; likewise, direct violence is the consequence of structural and cultural violence (Galtung, 1969). It is worth mentioning that all of these conditions are experienced in Colombia whereas there is a systemic, structural violence against most of the population; it goes together with a cultural and a direct violence that make of the socio-economic condition one of the most unequal and unfair in the world, in a country flooded with natural and environmental wealth.

Direct violence can be divided into verbal and physical violence, damaging body and mind or spirit (...) Structural violence is divided into political, repressive and economic exploitation supported by structural penetration, segmentation, fragmentation and marginalization (...) Cultural violence is divided by its contents (religion, law and ideology, language, arts, formal/empirical science, cosmology -deep culture-) and by its transmitters (schools, universities, media). (Galtung, 2003, p. 57)

These forms of violence, which result from social, political and economic systems that limit the possibilities of full realization of the human being, are interconnected, with one causing the other and vice versa. Therefore, achieving peace implies changing social structures in favor of a fairer and more equitable social organization.

On cultural violence it is important to refer to the work of Vincent Fisas, who makes a series of studies identifying factors of cultural violence. Among these factors we find patriarchal models marked by exercises of control and use of force, inabilities to solve conflicts in a non-violent way, social disintegration and competitiveness. Furthermore, elements as militarism, violent state monopolies, legitimization of violence, world power interests and extremism in religion interpretations, ethnocentrism, lack of participation opportunities and, most importantly, prevailing dehumanization are all elements that feed cultural violence. (Fisas, 2011). For him, a culture of peace should arise from the solution of economic, political and environmental factors that may generate violence in a structural manner, and by promoting human rights and responsibilities in everyday life, living in justice, compassion, construction of cultural respect, reconciliation, solidarity and harmony with the planet.

In consonance with the distinction about cultural violence made by Galtung and Fisas, Humberto Maturana (1997) presents a view on violence that invites us to reflect about the relational and cultural space where it arises. This author considers that violence is not a natural condition of

human beings, but on the contrary, it's a form of relationship that is learnt in coexistence, which is characterized by the denial of the other as a legitimate being and where the values and beliefs of a patriarchal culture are privileged.

Thus, when amplifying the perspectives of violence, we can establish the necessary paths and actions to build peace. It is not only to stop violent actions against each other, but to generate changes in the different systems that feed violence. This is how each different form of violence requires a unique form of peace education to address strategies that could resolve its conflicts.

At this time there exist many different names for the various forms of peace education. In Japan it is called A- bomb education, where the emphasis is upon understanding why atomic bombs were dropped upon that country and preventing their further use (Fujita and Ito 1992; Mukurami, 1925). In countries of the south development education provides alternatives to colonial models of development. In Scandinavian countries peace education is often concerned with disarmament and problems of structural violence in the so- called "third world". (Harris, 1993 p. 5)

Peace as well as violence, has had different definitions among the literature, "peace has different meanings within different cultures as well as different connotations for the spheres in which peaceful processes are applied" (Harris, 2002, p. 17). Galtung (1969) distinguished between positive and negative peace. Negative peace can be defined as the absence of war, physical aggression, and direct violence. From this point of view, peace is linked to a situation of peace and to a scene where conflict should not exist. This kind of peace is conceived in terms of two phenomena: the maintenance of the indoor unit and the external defense. In both circumstances, the capacity of acting in front of peace is reserved to the State, leaving citizens out of its construction. Thus, peace is achieved and defended by means of arms. Now then, although negative peace appeals to non-war, it does not necessarily mean changes in the relationships that generate structural violence. In this sense we can say that the concept of negative peace, while important, is limited as

long as it refers almost exclusively to the State's role in preventing war.

On the other hand, positive peace presumes the absence of structural violence and reduced levels of direct violence. It requires a joint and coordinated construction for the common welfare. Positive peace doesn't mean to give up disagreements, but the commitment to find methods to solve conflicts in the light of justice, dialogue and cooperation. In this sense, its construction is slow but it has the richness of being a participatory process that involves multiple visions, theoretical and methodological perspectives as well as the civilian population. This is how, when questioning the elements that generate violence in all its dimensions, the civilian society begins to take an outstanding role in the construction of a culture of peace. This shift involves the construction of peace from local perspectives and from cultural and community practices. Thus, positive peace refers to collaboration, integration, cooperation and absence of structural violence (Galtung, 1969). As for negative peace, absence of mistreatment, rape, child abuse, etc. should be included as war weapons. For positive peace, we should add absence of inequalities in life and absence of repression, which leads, from a gender perspective, to less freedom of choice and implementation.

In addition to negative and positive peace, the notion of imperfect peace has recently emerged and it is imperfect because it is in permanent construction and transformation. In this sense, besides there isn't a single manner or path to achieve peace, it demands learning to identify, coexist and constantly regulate the conflicts (Muñoz, 2004). This is how imperfect peace emerges as a theoretical commitment, framed in a methodological commencement that allows "the extension of the field of study to all those elements which can be considered related to a broad concept of peace" (Muñoz, 2004, p. 38). This concept of imperfect peace is very interesting as long as it says that peace is not a static concept but a dynamic and unfinished one that is always in construction and deconstruction (Muñoz, 2004).

It is important to highlight that from the notions of imperfect peace and positive peace, conflict is understood as a natural part of human life. Therefore, conflict is not rejected as long as it is seen as an opportunity for growth, meeting, communication, change, adaptation and exchange. Thus, a comprehensive approach to peace does not assume that it matches with the absence of conflict but with the possibility of finding joint solutions to disagreements in a non-violent way.

In consonance with the above, Johnson & Johnson (2010) define peace as follows: “Peace may be defined as the absence of war or violence in mutually beneficial, harmonious relationship among relevant parties” (Johnson & Jonhnson, 2010, p. 223). These authors emphasize the following characteristics of peace: First, peace emerges in relationships and is a dynamic an active process. Secondly, the maintenance of peace takes an active involvement that is not an easy process. Finally, “peace is characterized by continued conflict (not the absence of conflict) managed constructively (rather than destructively)” (Johnson & Johnson, 2010, p. 224).

From these peace comprehensions the topic of conflict resolution becomes an axis for any peace education program. This is how Johan Galtung proposes perspectives for peace education that focus on the need of peaceful resolution of conflicts. It doesn't guarantee the elimination of acts of violence, but ensures that violence is no longer legitimized or justified. In the same way the author proposes an exercise of transformation and comprehension of the conflict, under the approach of categories such as mediation, negotiation and peacebuilding. Thus Galtung, as a pioneer of reflection on conflicts, forces us to think about the cycle of violence before, during and after the violence. In that way, a proposal about the meaning of peace emerges from a theoretical thought, its paradigms, the standard models of maleness and feminism, the theory of conflict, the cultural violences and the model of civilization in which the construction of reflections on peace could be framed (Galtung, 1996; Galtung,2005; Galtung, Fischer, & Fischer, 2013)

In the same line of thought we find the work of Harris and Morrison (2003), who set out a series of aims and goals for a peace education program that include; appreciating the richness of the concept of peace, addressing fears, providing information about security, understanding war behavior, developing cultural understanding and promote a concept of peace complemented by social justice with the aim of manage conflicts non-violently.

Moreover, and in accordance with the definitions of positive peace and imperfect peace, John Paul Lederach (1998) assumes that interpersonal, social and international relations can not be free of conflict. In this vein, the challenge is to turn conflicts in an opportunity to be creative and learn to solve them satisfactorily so they are no obstacle to the social consensus. Another element that I rescue from Lederach's proposal is his concern about the consequences of the negative character of the definition of "peace", that is, absence of violence or war, which means that it places desires and forms of acting of people in pursuit of situations that shouldn't be present. Instead, he argues that a positive conception of peace would point out the positive aspects which we should strive for. For this reason, it is crucial for this author that anyone working on peace starts by stating what he/she understands by this word because depending on the way this term is approached, primary consequences for establishing contents and forms to address it will be derived.

Another mandatory reference is Xavier Jares (1993; 1999 and 2002) who proposes an education for peace that should approach us to the construction of a culture of peace from the study of reality and that is visible in teaching and social transformation, through mechanisms of peaceful resolution of conflicts, constructive dialogues, non-violent political actions and solidarity. This education must allow a clear reflection on justice, rights, equity; concepts that should be lived rather than simply declared. Thus, the principles of human rights should be reflected in the organization and management of school life, in pedagogical methods, in the relationships between

teachers and student and among teachers themselves and in the contribution of the school community to the welfare of the community in general (Jares, 1999).

Apart from the distinction of positive, negative and imperfect peace, it is crucial to allude to the different concepts of the peace missions proposed by the UN, while these notions are frequently used in the field of education for peace. They are: Peacemaking, Peacekeeping and Peacebuilding.

Peacemaking is defined by the UN as the: “action to bring hostile parties to agreement by peaceful means” (Boutros-Ghali, 1992, p.11). There are a wide variety of peacemaking methods, including negotiation, mediation, arbitration, and the use of the World Court or regional courts. Peacemaking begins with the commitment to talk about tensions and relies upon the tools of problem-solving—genuine communication, effective listening, step-by-step problem solving, and shared decisions about actions. Peacemakers are facilitators – ones who help conflicting parties negotiate a peaceful resolution of differences. Peacemaking is also used by ordinary people in everyday life in families, communities and the workplace.

Peacekeeping as used by the United Nations, refers to the deployment of a United Nations presence in the field to help prevent or stop violence between hostile parties. The purpose of peacekeepers is to prevent armed combat and assure that preventive diplomacy, peacemaking and peacebuilding processes can effectively proceed.

Finally, Peacebuilding is employed by the UN in post-conflict situations once violent hostilities have ceased. It is a comprehensive strategy to prevent a recurrence of violence and to sustain peaceful relationships among and between different sectors of society at local, national and regional levels. Methods employed may range from “disarming previously warring parties, repatriating refugees, monitoring elections, advancing human rights, reforming or strengthening governmental institutions, and promoting a vibrant civil society and formal and informal processes

of political participation” (Boutros-Ghali, 1992, p. 32). Whereas peacekeeping and peacemaking search to end and resolve conflicts, peacebuilding seeks to prevent this recurrence by redressing the causes of conflict. In this sense Peacebuilding is related to both negative and positive peace in that it aims to prevent the recurrence of physical violence and war, but does so in a way that addresses underlying conditions of structural violence and social injustice that cause conflict. To that end, peace educators teach peacebuilding strategies for resisting and overcoming norms and institutions that may lead to violence and war.

3.7 Context and type of conflicts

In addition to understanding what peace and violence are, an important factor that makes peace education a dynamic and changing field has to do with the nature of the conflicts and the socio-political context of each country. Bekerman, and McGlynn (2007) propose that before the conflict, in a situation of social unrest, educational initiatives should aim at prevention. After the conflict, they should contribute to social reconstruction and ultimately development. In post-conflict situations, the main thesis is that peace education is a prerequisite in order to establish lasting peace.

Salomon and Cairns (2010) propose three sociopolitical contexts that help classifying the different types of peace education. These are: Contexts of belligerent ethnopolitical conflicts, contexts of nonviolent intergroup tension, and contexts of relative tranquility. This categorization serves to differentiate among different strategies, goals and practices depending on the context in which they take place.

Peace education in intense conflicts attempts to demystify enemy images and urges combatants to withdraw from warlike behavior. Peace education in regions of interethnic tension relies upon multiculturalism and awareness about the sufferings of various groups involved in the conflict to promote empathy for the suffering of others and to reduce hostilities. Peace educators in areas free

from collective physical violence teach about the causes of domestic and civil violence and try to develop an interest in global issues, the problems of poverty, environmental sustainability, and the power of nonviolence. (Harris, 2010, p. 15)

Other authors who have deeply worked this issue are, Bar-Tal, Rosen & Nets-zehngut (2010). In the article "Peace Education in Societies Involved in Intractable Conflicts: Direct and Indirect Models" these authors explain the importance of peace education to change intractable conflicts, and the factors that are necessary in the political, societal and educational fields so that peace education can succeed in creating viable changes in conflicts. For this authors the objective of peace education is to advance and facilitate peacemaking and reconciliation. They deepen on four factors that are important in the political-social area of the conflict in order to have successful peace education. The first factor is what they called *Progress toward peace* and it refers to the desire for conflict resolution in the society. The second factor is *Support for peace* where there must be support for a peace process. The third factor is *Ripeness for reconciliation*, this implies a readiness for the messages of peace education and a ripeness for the change in collective memory. And the fourth factor is *Governmental and political support* where the authors make clear the necessity of support for peace education by the Government, leaders and the administration to see conflict resolution and reconciliation as a national goal. In the Colombian case we can say that the first three conditions are a reality but the fourth one still has a way to go.

In addition to the above, three educational conditions are also vital for the success of peace education in the school systems. They are: Ministerial support for the implementation of peace education; Well-defined peace education policy on how to carry out peace education; and lastly; there must be authority for the peace education as well as the appropriate infrastructure, resources and the continual desire for learning.

Because these conditions may not exist in some countries, the authors propose two methods of

peace education which can be used in cases that do not fit the above criteria. These two models of peace education are the indirect and direct programs. Indirect peace education does not address the conflict but instead works around general conflict resolution themes such as violence, empathy, conflict resolution, human rights and identity. Five themes are highlighted by the authors as potential training concepts for indirect peace education are: 1) Reflective thinking, 2) Tolerance, 3) Ethno-empathy, 4) Human rights, and 5) Conflict Resolution. The authors chose these five themes because they have a potential contribution toward changing their understanding of the conflict in an indirect manner.

Direct peace education is administered when the societal and educational conditions are ready, as defined by the conditions listed above. Five themes for direct peace education are proposed by these authors. They are: 1) Conflict and peace where the idea is to teach the essence of the conflict, the meanings of violence and wars, and the nature of the peace process. 2) Peace process, and process toward reconciliation. 3) Presentation of the rival, where the main objective is the equalization of the parties 4) History of the conflict and 5) New affect and emotions where collective hatred and fear of the other must be reduced, while at the same time hope, trust, and mutual acceptance must be developed.

The main argument that Bar-Tal and Rosen pose throughout the article is that peace education can be used in an effective manner in any type of conflict. Likewise, they propound that peace education must support humanism and core values shared by all societies.

Within the wide range of peace education programs, a common general objective can be found.

They all aim to foster changes that will make the world a better, more humane place. The goal is to diminish, or even eradicate, a variety of human ills ranging from injustice, inequality, prejudice...

(Bar-Tal, 2002, p. 2)

Recently in the field of peace education have emerged important studies and education on

forgiveness and reconciliation. This type of education can be utilized in countries with sociopolitical violence or intractable conflicts, to prepare students for encounters with the “adversary” and for reducing stereotypes, anger, resentment, hatred, revenge caused by conflict (Abu-Nimer, 1999). In the same way, these types of programs seek to promote and establish a political culture of forgiveness and reconciliation as a means to reconstruct the social tissue and restore peace. "Reconciliation consists of mutual recognition and acceptance, investing in the development of peaceful relations, mutual trust, and positive attitudes, and fostering sensitivity and consideration of the other party's needs and interests" (Bar-Tal 2002) The authors state that the main objective of peace education is to advance reconciliation and peacemaking. Peace education hopes to change the constructed worldview and beliefs of the society members as well as preparing them for living in a post-conflict peace environment. The process of reconciliation is therefore carried out through peace education with a goal of establishing a collective history of the conflict and developing a collective forgiveness.

Within this line we found the work of Lederach (1998; 2008) His works are based on an extensive field experience as mediator and negotiator in different parts of the world, Somalia, Northern Ireland, Nicaragua, Colombia and Nepal. His experience in these processes has given him great recognition on reconciliation issues. He proposes an exercise on sustainable reconciliation to rebuild relations and the analysis of the dynamics of conflict progression. He starts with the following question: “How do we transcend the cycles of violence that subjugate our human community when we are still living in them? (...) the possibility of overcoming violence is forged by the ability to generate, mobilize and build moral imagination” (Lederach, 2008 p. 33). To this question Lederach proposes the concept of moral imagination as the ability to begin building a common notion of humanity, to reduce discrimination and promote reconciliation.

Moral imagination is then the creativity that we should seek to develop with the aim of building relationships where violence is not necessary and where reconciliation is a possibility.

This approach of peace education is very important in Colombia while, as noted in the first chapter, one of the major challenges that the country faces is to learn to live with demobilized in a peaceful and inclusive way. This is only possible as far as Colombians can imagine possible worlds from forgiveness and reconciliation.

3.8 Different emphasis and organizing principles on peace education

Besides the comprehension we have of peace and violence, as well as the type and context of conflict, scholars have developed notions that can be considered foundational ideas, values and core concepts in peace education.

Among them we find the work Betty Reardon (1988) who points out the need of a *Comprehensive peace education* where there should be core values of schooling. These values should be: Care, concern, and commitment, and the key concepts of peace education should be: planetary stewardship, global citizenship, and humane relationships (Reardon, 1988). Reardon's concept of peace education also incorporates a variety skills and attitudes like the development of reflective and participatory capacities for applying knowledge to overcome problems and achieve possibilities for change.

Regarding the proposal of Reardon, we find the work of Nel Noddings who seeks to integrate the concept of caring in education. From this theory, caring is a quality of the relationship between two people where one of them is caring and the other is responding to that caring. In young children this relationship is basically unilateral, that is to say that the adult-educator cares and the child accepts and responds to that care. As the person grows, a more reciprocal relationship is achieved until reaching an adult relationship where the roles of caring and being cared alternate according to the

circumstances and needs. But it will not be possible to reach this level of adulthood if the experience of having been cared has not been lived. Hence this is the importance of establishing this relationship from early childhood.

In connection with education for peace, Noddings says that the most important goal is to teach children the meaning of: “establish caring relations and then work patiently to expand the circles of care through chains of common interests. To establish these chains, we must engage in a continuous, unconditional dialogue” (Noddings, 2008 p. 90). The importance of dialogue, common projects and chains of connection is that through these elements physical harm to others becomes unthinkable. Thus the challenge is to make students feel cared and thus grow becoming loving people who love and care for others. This is the key to reducing violence and for the prevention of physical conflict and the preservation of life (Noddings, 2008; Broke-Utne, 1985; Reardon, 1985)

Besides care theory, peace educators in many countries focus mainly on human rights. Human rights education aims to promote awareness about the rights and freedoms and the procedures that exist for the redress of violations of these rights. This education includes values such as peace, non-discrimination, equality, justice, non-violence, tolerance and respect for human dignity among others. This stream of education for peace starts from the notion of human dignity as an inalienable value that has to be respected and shared by all human beings. “Peace, as a cosmopolitan moral order, is in turn contingent upon the capacity of individual persons to respond to the inherent dignity, the intrinsic value of others” (Snauwaert, 2008, p. 70). Now then, in the environments directly affected by war, like the case of Colombia, peace is still defined through basic security; the freedom to go on a road trip, for example, whilst in environments that were not directly involved in violence, peace is more related to the matters of level of democracy, openness

of society, social justice, and discrimination against those with less power.

HRE in post conflict or postcolonial countries tends to be associated with the rule of law and authorities trying to establish the legitimacy. Among groups that experience a high amount of discrimination, and within countries that are highly repressive and undemocratic, HRE tends to be focused on popular empowerment and resistance in relation to these issues. [...] of course, in any country in any given time, HRE can take on different forms and purposes depending upon the context of the program. (Tibbitts, 2008 p. 102)

Another current in peace education is the concern of a military culture, or what is known as Militarism. Although in there is no a unique definition, we can say that this concept refers to a value system and attitudes where the military spirit pervades the civil society. “Qualities and values such as hierarchy, obedience, competition and force are exaggerated and revered under militaristic conditions. Militarism, however, is not a precise term as it encompasses ideological and cultural components” (Mirra, 2008, p. 94). In educational settings, militarism has different manifestations, like for example, hierarchal structures, gendered violence, competitive environment, bullying, and the use of force as a privileged way to handle conflicts. Betty Reardon (1985) points out that militarism is intimately related sexism and with patriarchal structures. “Both patriarchy and the war system exaggerate the qualities of hierarchy, force, coercion and the preoccupation with protecting oneself against a hostile adversary and/or competitors” (Mirra, 2008, p. 96). From this perspective it is essential to look for a culture of peace and not for a culture of war. That is to say that the main objective will point to disassembling war structures which impose hierarchical models of control, power, authority and domination of others.

Another concept very important in the literature of peace education is the concept of Global citizenship. This idea refers to the someone who is concerned with social justice and who identifies and acts like being part of a world community and whose actions contribute to building

this community's values. According to this idea, education for global citizenship will enable young people to develop the core competencies which allow them to actively engage with the world, and help to make it a more just and sustainable place.

A global citizenship education for peace would be a highly political education, not simply a bland multiculturalism, unquestioning "tolerance" or "being nice to each other." It has four interrelated components: knowledge, analysis, skills, and action (KASA). First, there is knowledge of world current events, economics and international relations. Second is the capacity to critically analyze media, religious messages, dogma, superstition, hate literature, extremism, and fundamentalism. Third, it involves political skills [...] forth are disposition for joint action. (Davis, 2008, p. 114)

Now, although there are different emphases on peace education, like for instance: human rights, global citizenship, gender equality, conflict resolution or disarmament; there are some unifying elements that provides a shared understanding of peace education. The first and most important common denominator is the idea that peace education denies violence and promotes a culture of peace. "Within the wide range of peace education programs, a common general objective can be found. They all aim to foster changes that will make the world a better, and more humane place" (Bar-Tal, 2002, p. 28). In this sense we can say that nonviolence is an indisputable premise of peace education.

The second idea is that any attempt to teach peace, implies a peaceful pedagogy (Galtung, 2008; Harris, 1988) which seeks to develop skills to analyze, understand and transform conflicts creatively and in a non-violent way. In this sense, a peaceful pedagogy aims to develop attitudes and values that are more coherent with equity, respect, tolerance and dialogue. It also should encourage the development of knowledge and expertise which make possible the analysis and comprehension of reality, its relations, identify inequality, injustice, violence and conflict, and from here, take position on such reality, assume decisions and develop strategies for a peaceful

coexistence.

A third agreement is that any peace education program seeks for the transformation of domination relations and power in the various areas of society. Therefore, tries to explain the dominant values and what lies behind them in order to raise awareness and generate action to transform reality from a non-violent action.

A third agreement is that conflict is a source for change, therefore conflict is not necessarily negative. “Most peacebuilders perceive conflict as often leading to needed change and therefore potentially a creative force that can generate new options for solving existing problems” (Abu-Nimer, 2010 p. 15).

Finally, we can say that the problems and challenges that peace education seeks to tackle are multi-faceted and interwoven. Therefore, the field of peace education is wide and depends on the problems or issues that peace educators are seeking to address. “Even though their objectives may be similar, each society will set up a different form of peace education that is dependent upon the issues at large, conditions, and culture, as well as views and creativity of the educators” (Bar-Tal, 2002, p. 35).

3.9 Popular education

Popular education is a pedagogical mainstream that is characterized by being a sociocultural movement and a conception of education. As a socio-cultural movement, Popular education refers to a multitude of diverse educational practices: formal, non-formal and informal, with a common transformative intentionality (Jara, 2010). As an educational conception, this mainstream emphasizes the construction of a new educational paradigm, which confronts the dominant authoritarian education that has dissociated theory and practice. “Popular education is a methodology of teaching and learning through dialogue that directly links curriculum content to

people's lived experiences, inspiring political action in turn” (Rivera, 2004 p. 133). This kind of education has many traditions, however and for the purpose of this dissertation I will discuss popular education for adults.

According to Crowther, Martin, & Shaw (1999), the process of popular education for adults has the following general characteristics: The curriculum comes out of concrete experiences and material interests of people in communities, the pedagogy is collective, focused primarily on groups as distinct from individual learning and development, and it attempts, where possible, to forge a direct link between education and social action. Likewise, popular education seeks to connect the local with the global. In every context it proceeds from contextualized forms of education and action, and seeks for a wider impact by making the local learnings part of the wider struggle, for instance, peace building.

In relation with the previous enunciated general characteristics, Kolmans (2008) states that the fundamental pillars of Popular Education are four: a) Critical and dialectical thinking in order to discover and own the conditions that lead to oppression, b) Recognition that people are always in a particular context, c) The use of those resources that are familiar to people, in most of the cases those are oral resources. d) Every theory in Popular education must have practical implications. These elements show that Popular education is centered in people that are involved in the process, which makes each process unique.

Processes of popular education aim to help people achieve some fundamental skills such as: a) the possibility of taking distance from the reigning social order that is given to us as the only historical opportunity. B) The ability to question stereotypes, ethical values and ideological patterns that are taught as unquestionable, and c) The constant dynamic of unlearning and learning. These skills allow people to be promoters of social change (Jara, 2010).

As point out by Jara (2010), social change is an essential element in popular education, so it is important to show some of the central ideas of this kind of education. First, social change can be seen as a change in society, a partial change in one or more aspects of society, or a change of society, a more structural change that is closer to a social revolution. Second, it is important to acknowledge the multiplicity of changes that can be done thanks to the different interactions of the elements of the system. Third, another fundamental aspect is the impact of those changes and its interrelation with the personal, group and social level (Jara, 2010).

An important aspect of popular education is that its methodological approach is cooperative, participatory and dialogical (Freire, 1973). Likewise, it tends towards a horizontal pedagogical relationship (Jara 2010; Freire 1973) where the focus is mainly on the needs and interests of the learner, in community and in context. According to Freire (1973) the pedagogical processes should have problematization as an axe. The problematization allows the learners to locate themselves in their reality, in the "here and now", which offers the contents of the pedagogical process (Freire, 1973). In this sense the center of the pedagogical experience are the participants, situated in their sociocultural context; they are the protagonists of their learning process and therefore, they must participate in the selection of their learning. Likewise, instead of seeking the transmission of information, the goal of popular education is the creation of situations that facilitate the expression of personal experiences and the collective dialogue of knowledge.

Finally, it should be noted that the participatory and collaborative nature of popular education has a strong relation with the relational perspective in education from a constructionist perspective since both focus their attention more in the relationships that people build than in specific curricular contents, they both have a strong ethical and political commitment, and they both recognize the central place of the context of those involved in the process. Taking this into account

it is possible to say that both seek the creation of a space for the coordination of multiple local realities or voices, without imposing one on the other.

3.10 Peace Education in Colombia

After having seen a brief overview of the process of education for peace I will approach two elements in a general way; on one hand, the legal framework that the National Ministry of Education has built to encourage peace education in Colombia, and on the other hand, some of the efforts made by theorists and organizations of the country on this area.

The first thing to identify is that in the Political Constitution of 1991, Colombia begins for the first time to legislate about peace and defense of human rights in the country. Thus, the article 22 of the Constitution states: “Peace is a right and a mandatory duty of constitutional fulfillment” and in the article 67: “[...] “Education will bring up Colombian people in the respect for human rights, peace and democracy.”

Together with the above, the General Law of Education or Law 115 of 1994 recognizes human rights as a key goal in education. Likewise, the Decennial Plan of Education, 1996-2005, states among its general aims “Achieve recognition of education as the axis of the human, social, political, economic and cultural development of the nation” and in order to get it, “education should contribute efficiently and systematically to deepen democracy, citizen participation, construction of a coexistence culture and respect for human rights and the conquest of peace.”

In line with the foregoing, the Decennial Plan proposed the following goals: To build in educative institutions spaces for debate, participation and agreement for the whole members of the educative community; the creation of Coexistence Manuals in a democratic and collective way; promote teaching and systematic study of the Constitution and encourage the principles and values of citizen participation.

Jaime Niño Díez, Minister of Education at the time, not only recognizes the importance of the four basic pillars of education stated by UNESCO (learning to learn, learning to do, learning to be and learning to live together), but he also proposes to address the difficult situation of the country by emphasizing the importance of a pedagogy for peace, coexistence, pluralism, respect and tolerance among us. In this sense, all educative institutions should commit to peace building and as a result, all schools become stages of practice of coexistence and respect of human dignity; spaces where actions of solidarity are carried out on a daily basis and where the exercise of ethical and citizen values commits educative communities permanently, linking them in a great corridor of peace (Ministerio de Educación Nacional, 1999).

In accordance with the above, in 1998 the Ministry of Education designed the citizenship education program. This program looked to develop cognitive, emotional, communicative, and integrative competencies in students as part of the national curriculum. This program comprises national civic skill standards that specify what the Ministry of Education expects from students in terms of peaceful coexistence, democratic participation and plurality/diversity, and a national citizenship skills test to assess how well they are meeting those standards in all institutions of basic education in the country (Ministry education of Colombia, 2004).

Subsequently the program called Classrooms in Peace emerged. This is a multicomponent program that seeks to prevent aggression and promote forms of peaceful coexistence through the development of citizenship skills in children (Ramos, Nieto & Chaux 2007). This approach of citizenship skills has been a big step in developing social interactions that promote peaceful relationships. This approach of citizenship skills has been a big step in developing social interactions that promote peaceful relationships. However, besides that there was no training on the model, this initiative has focused on the contents that a citizenship program should have, but it

has not taken into account the meaning systems and social practices of the schools. “Peace education focuses on the processes involved in the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Not only the subject matter, but also how it is taught, in what context, and how this knowledge is reproduced later” (Spruyt, et al, 2014, p. 4). This invites us to ask ourselves not only what should be taught in a peace education program but how should it be taught? And who should be involved?

Recently, within the framework of the peace process that takes place in the Habana, Cuba, the law 1732 of 2015 and the decree 1038 were created in order to regulate the obligation of the Peace Cathedral. The aim of this cathedral is

to promote the process of appropriation of the knowledge and competences related with territory, culture, economic and social context and the historical memory, with the aim of reconstructing the social tissue, promoting general prosperity and ensure the effectiveness of the principles, rights and duties established in the Constitution. (Decreto 1038 de 2015)

This initiative intends to provide educative institutions with tools to build coexistence and peace in the schools through the implementation of citizenship and peace competences in the Colombian educative institutions. Nevertheless, one of the difficulties that this law has presented is that the educative institutions still do not have the pedagogical and structural tools (in the Educative Institutional Project – PEI, Coexistence manual, pedagogical projects and other instruments that guide pedagogy) to be created and supported daily and neither real methodologies of peace building. Policy guidelines exist but there are no curriculum guidelines, not enough Departments of Education and teachers to carry out exercises of peace building in a transversal and generalized way. Every institution interprets it as they want and according to their capacities.

In addition to the peace cathedral, many institutions and individuals have been working inside the civil society for the consolidation of new more tolerant, civic relationships and a more civilized coexistence that allows, through an educational and formative process in values, to settle

differences by means of dialogue, conciliation or consensus and not through violent aggression. Thus, there are alternative citizen projects that claim human rights and ethical values obtained from NGOs

In general, peace education can be divided into two groups, those who are enrolled in non-formal education and which are based on the structures and institutions of formal education. Regarding formal education, we can say that there are some experiences that are centered on the formation of groups of students committed with peace building. An example is the school Hacienda los Alcaparros and its program of conflict resolution and peace observatory. There is also the school Santo Angel with its formation for democracy. Other programs have aimed at the implementation of programs for the whole educative community as in the case of *Fe y Alegría* (Faith and joy) in partnership with the World Health Organization and the Ministry of Health with the program of Skills for Living. In other places of the country the experience has arisen from the teachers as in the case of Educators Network for the HR.

Concerning non-formal education, it is generally directed to young and adult unschooled population. Some of these proposals raise a central problematic and is the lack of awareness of people about their rights, duties and possibilities of political and civic participation. For these reason they focus their work on the development of methodologies for accessing to such information. Among them we can mention the work done by “Viva la Ciudadanía”. Other initiatives seek to give elements and tools to enable people to cope with situations of their context, such as the formation of “Popular Therapists” and “Psychosocial Multipliers” (Camilo, 2002).

Other important experiences are: The Assembly for Peace, University Network for Peace, Women for Peace, Common Social Path for Peace, Network against Hunger and Poverty, Congress for Peace, Peace Community of San José de Apartadó, and Communities Network for

Peace, Initiatives Network for Peace (Redepaz) and the Congress of People's. With converging and diverging on peacebuilding visions, these social movements have expressed in forums, meetings and conferences, the importance of addressing structural violence.

As we can see there are several initiatives in Colombia however, we need further development in the field of Peace education and the role of education in building long-lasting peace or perpetuating unequal structures that reproduce violence.

3.11 Peace education focused in relationships

According to Fisk (1997) there are two very important things that has to be taken into account when working in Peace education: first, the words “peace education” do not mean the same to everyone, and not always have a positive connotation for some reasons like there have been used for people who have not achieve what they had promised, or in some cases words like “peace” had been used by violent groups in order to justify their actions. Second, peace education is a process that is part of everyday life, each time that someone chooses to forgive someone, or to deal with conflict in a not violent way, that is peace education, therefore, it is a process that must be done outside institutions.

Taking into account this two aspects and going through all of these developments in Peace education it is evident that there are very different comprehensions and therefore approaches to Peace education, but there is one thing that all of these different points of view have in common, they all trying in one way of another to change how people live with each other, in other words, the focus on relationships.

Peace education is meant to help us build better ways to deal with conflict, which is part of life itself, and the impacts it has in those involved. But there are countless conflicts and therefore countless ways to deal with them, each solution depends on the creativity and possibilities of

each person or group, so focusing on ways to deal with conflicts will be a never ending task. Something similar happens if the focus is in beliefs, because there are ways of making sense of the world as there are people on it. But focusing in relationships and how to think of them with reflexivity and creativity allows people to deal with conflict and change, beliefs and interactional patterns that will work as the foundation of change.

CHAPTER 4: Social construction as a philosophical stance

In this chapter I will address the central premises of social constructionism and the theoretical and practical revolution that these ideas represent in the way we understand reality. For this purpose, I will begin by addressing some of the most significant sources of constructionism and later I will focus on the conceptual pillars of this meta-theory. Afterwards I will point out the implications and challenges of integrating the theoretical underpinnings of constructionism to peace research and peace education.

4.1 Sources of Social Constructionism

As part of the vast and diverse scenario of post-modern thought, social constructionism emerges as an alternative, a critical and anti-essentialist meta-theory, to modern scientific paradigms and analytical forms of thought where absolute and universal visions about truth, objectivity and knowledge are searched. Burr (2003) argues that Social Construction

challenges the naive realism, which maintains an unquestioning faith in reality as we perceived it. Rather, it is proposed that, as culture and society, we construct versions of reality among ourselves.

A dramatic transformation is taking place in the world of ideas. Everywhere, traditions are thrown into question. There is growing doubt in universal and authoritative standards of truth, objectivity, rationality, progress, and morality. [...] There are many names for this revolution in thought and practice. Terms such as post-foundationalism, post-empiricism, post-enlightenment and postmodernism are often among them (Gergen and Gergen, 2004, p. 7)

In his work *The Postmodern Condition* (1979), the philosopher Jean Francois Lyotard defines postmodernism as the incredulity of the meta-narratives that can adequately explain or describe our world. In this sense, the idea of intervention as a monologic action and the determinist model of causality, truth and objectivity in Hegelian or Kantian style, are put into question.

Postmodern knowledge poses significant challenges to fundamental assumptions of individual knowledge, objectivity and truth. Instead we find an emphasis in the communal construction of knowledge, objectivity as a relational achievement, and language as a pragmatic means through which local truths are set up. (Gergen, 2007 p. 93)

According to Harlene Anderson (2003) postmodernism can be considered as a broad umbrella under which we can find different practices and streams of thought, yet interrelated. They are interrelated as long as, having emerged from hermeneutic philosophies, language, narrative and social construction theories, they all have argued that the dialogical process that occurs between specific people in specific settings who are engaged in specific activities is the originating and ongoing source of self and society.

These thinkers substantially contributed alternatives for a linguistic and narrative analysis of knowledge (e.g., truths, beliefs, and expertise) and knowledge systems, leading a movement away

from an inherited classical view of assumed often invisible traditions of knowledge and related notions of language, understanding, interpretation, reality, subject object dualism, and core self.

(Anderson, 2012, p. 9)

Denzin (1991) argues that postmodernism is marked by the linguistic turn and the image's significance, where image has tragically replaced reality.

On her part, McNamee (2010) points out that the common thread among most of the postmodern or poststructuralist movements is a concern with processes of communication as opposed to concern with discovering phenomenon. This becomes clearly evident in different authors who are grouped within the linguistic turn, whose main concern is how we coordinate actions, sense and meanings through language games.

Now, although in postmodernity we find convergence points in different theoretical orientations that comprise it, it is important to note that it is not homogenous. For this reason and for purposes of this chapter I will now delve into some of the authors, discussions and theories that have most contributed to the development of contemporary constructionism.

The first stream, which I want to talk about, is critical theory. This theory has dealt with uncovering and questioning biological, essentialist and universal premises underlying scientific theories, as well as binary and hierarchical logics where they find support. This aims to problematize exclusion, silencing or biased treatment of some populations or sectors of society. According to Gergen (2009b), from critical theory, constructionism recognizes the importance of reflecting on the implicit values that are behind hegemonic discourses, and the impact that these discourses have on the minority.

[...] all authoritative accounts of the world contain implicit values, all carry an ideology, that is, implicit ideas of what the political and social order should be like. Whether a scientist, scholar, Supreme Court judge, or news commentator, all are subject to ideological critique, that is, critique

aimed at revealing the interests, values, doctrines or myths that underlie seemingly neutral claims to truth. (Gergen 2009a, p. 15)

An example of critical theory is feminism, where a systematic criticism about conventional notions of masculinity and femininity is performed, circulating not only in common sense speeches, but also in those designated as scientific and that, in some way, have provided explanations that we assume to be “legal” or “true” about sexual and social differences between men and women. Other examples of critical theory are post-colonialism and, in general groups that find themselves oppressed or marginalized where it is sought to denaturalize positions such as, gender, Eurocentrism, class, ethnicity and sexual option from the currents that preceded them.

Besides critical theory, the work of the linguist Ferdinand Saussure and his contribution to structural linguistics is important for postmodern discussion as he observed to what degree the relationship between signifier and signified is arbitrary, therefore, “the world makes no demands as to how we talk about it. We can, in principle, use any signifier to refer to any signified” (Gergen, 2009b, p.17). In this same line of research on language we find the work of the philosopher Ludwig Wittgenstein. In the *Philosophical Investigations*, Wittgenstein (1953) says that that the meaning of words is derived from their public use. In this sense, language, through its enunciations, has characteristics that show its use and rules (as in the rules of a game); each type of enunciation acquires properties and uses rules to make explicit how it operates and what the purpose of the enunciation in question is. In this sense language acquires intelligibility as long as it marks meaning. Now, Wittgenstein makes two observations, which I consider important to note because, as we shall see, they have a great influence on the development of the constructionist thought. First, he points out that the rules of legitimation of language do not exist by themselves; the strength of their use lies in the agreement among

individuals. Secondly, every statement must assume “game-like” qualities where there isn’t anything such as a private language, because language develops in the social space (Wittgenstein, 1953). In this exercise, it is important to remember that our resources to name things, for example our use of nouns, are only one possibility. There may be other possible forms of naming reality.

Just like Wittgenstein (1953) authors such as Buber, Bathkin, Gadamer, and Bohm are usually identified as most influential dialog philosophers that represent what has been known as the *dialogical turn*; this means a meta-theoretical framework that reflects on the way in which human beings construct meaning with language.

If we are dialogic, conversational beings, we cannot be understood by probing inside for personal and private processes taking place deep within each individual. All that is central to human nature and human life –and here I mean mind, self and society itself- is to be found in processes that occur between people in the public world of our everyday lives. (Sampson, 2008 p. 98)

According to Bakhtin (1981), there is not an “individualistic and private I”; the “I” is essentially social. In this sense each person is constituted in contact with different voices. In the same way, Sampson (2008) understands *the dialogical turn* as the “celebration of the other”. To celebrate the other is to analyze the speech role in all aspects of the human being and to look at what people do together is language as communication in action.

In addition, we find the contributions of Thomas Kuhn. Kuhn notes that, regardless of the method by which science is produced, it does not depend entirely on the observation of an individual who postulates universal laws, but rather on the contexts and paradigms of the scientific community to which the scientist belongs.

As demonstrated in early works by Fleck (1979) and Kuhn (1962), what we call scientific knowledge typically emerges within communities that share certain assumptions, values,

vocabularies, research practices and research instruments about which they agree. Following Kuhn, one often refers to this agglomerate as a paradigm. (Dragonas, Gergen, McNamee & Tseliou, 2015)

In this way, the paradigm is what defines a certain scientific community including its theories, its assumptions about the world and the experimental methods by which certain communities proceed.

Other sources that had influenced this current of thought include Goffman's dramaturgical approach (1959), and the publishing of *The Social Construction of Reality* by Berger and Luckmann (1966), which brought extensive attention to the term of Social Construction and of the role of language in the construction of our symbolic universe. These authors state that people construct the reality socially by their use of agreed and shared meaning communicated through language. Thus, our beliefs about the world are social inventions. "At any time, a whole world can be updated through language. This transcendent and integrative power of language is preserved, even though, in fact, I am no longer talking to another. Even when I am "talking to myself" in solitary thinking, a whole world can be presented to me at any moment through linguistic subjectivities (Berger & Luckmann, 1966, p. 56).

Another author that from the Dialectical Materialism, contributes with many of the ideas of social constructionism is undoubtedly Lev Vygotsky. This psychologist points out that the origin of meanings is found in the new connections that human beings establish through signs. These signs arise in the culture-context where the subject takes ownership of them, contacting the subjective world of others, influencing them and he himself and they fulfill fundamental roles based on the understanding of meanings (Arcilla, Cañón, Jaramillo y Mendoza, 2009).

Thus, the meanings in Vygotsky, as representations that the person builds through the use of signs, are brought about in two moments; first in the interpsychological level and later in the intrapsychological, in other words, initially they occur in the relationship and then in thinking.

On his part, Jerome Bruner defines meaning as a consensual construction between the human being and culture in which the former is immersed. Its development goes in two lines, one of biological origin in which "protolingüistic" representations, biologically organized, emerge and allow interacting more easily with the environment. The other line, of cultural origin, where symbolic systems (language) are immersed and with which people build meaning (Ballesteros de Valderrama, 2005).

When both lines meet, negotiation emerges -agree on the meanings to participate in a culture- and it opens possibilities to the transformation of meaning. Now, at some point protolingüistic representations fade and those of social origin predominate.

In this regard, two functions attributed to meanings can be pointed out from Bruner's point of view. The first one is that the construction of the transactional self is favored through meanings - distributed in an interpersonal, historical-cultural and multiple forms- that configure individuals. The second is that meanings serve as mediators between human beings and culture.

Furthermore, John Shotter and Barnett Pearce recognize that "the concepts with which both, the world and the mind are denominated, are constitutive of discursive practices, integrated into language and, therefore, are socially refuted and subject to negotiation" (Agudelo y Estrada, 2012, p. 366).

As outlined below, the contributions of these movements in contemporary constructionism can be clearly seen in the call not to naturalize the scientific explanations, assumin that they are something beyond disciplinary or social constructions and the comprehension of language as a means by which, what we assume as true, is constituted. Moreover, they share a critical option to the understanding of reality and values as far as they commit to the removal of any authority or any attempt to impose a certain hierarchy to intellectual orders or any perspectives or ways

of conceiving reality over others.

4.2 Main principles of Social Constructionism

Anchored in a postmodern discourse, social constructionism has stated the situated character of knowledge, the partiality of all the claims and their close relationship with the social context in which they emerge. Ultimately, Social Constructionism has questioned the universal narratives of what we take to be objective, real, valuable, or rational as long as there is not a foundation on declaring the superiority of a tradition, a theory, or a religion over another. Therefore, a constructionist theory implies a position of curiosity and respect for the different ways of naming and valuing things, as well as an invitation to explore alternatives to our view of what is real, good or true. According to Shotter (2001), we used to conceive reality as homogeneous, the same everywhere and for all. In contrast, SC understands reality as distinct, heterogeneous, as a continuous social activity.

In this sense, Social Constructionism moves away from ontological and epistemological principles that support knowledge in modernity “connoted as positivist, demonstrable, verifiable, generator of universal truths, through standardized methods in which the separation of subject and object is defined” (Agudelo & Estrada, 2012, p. 355). However, while Social Constructionism suggests reflections about the social genesis of what we take to be true and real, this way of thinking should not be understood as a unified and close theory, because if it were the case, (or pretended to be the case) it would fall into the trap of committing to a fundamental truth. For this reason, SC applies this same skepticism to its own assertions.

Constructionism does not seek to establish the truth of its own premises. It recognizes that constructionism is itself socially constructed. Constructionism is not, then a candidate for the truth. Nor is it a belief system. Rather, the constructionist dialogues represent invitations to a way of understanding. (Gergen, 2009a, p. 29)

Social Constructionism, the way Gergen sees it, is ontologically mute “Whatever exists, simply exists. However, in the process of co-action whatever there is takes shape as something for us” (Gergen 2009b, p. 37).

Scholars involved in social constructionism avoid to regard it as a paradigm because that act in itself might be a construction of a reality with power over other definitions or paradigms, and hence with the exclusion of other possibilities (Van der Haar & Hosking, 2004). Therefore, constructionism must then be seen like a meta-theory or a set of ideas, dialogues and conversations that invites us to be more inquiring about alternative framings of reality (Van der Haar & Hosking, 2004). The argument is then to broaden our local reality, looking for new alternative constructions, new values, language games and new understandings. In this sense, the challenge is not to find the best way, but to create those types of human relationships that allow us to build together everyone’s future.

Below, I will explain in greater depth some characteristics and invitations of a constructionist perspective.

4.3 Social Construction of Knowledge

Social construction poses a dependency relationship between context and reality, stating that the assumption that the world can exist independently of social and historical conditions, is an unsustainable belief. “The knowledge we can produce in a given historical period is dependent of the sociocultural framework that characterizes such period” (Ibáñez, 1989, p. 112). It is then, as Gergen (2007) states, giving back to culture what modernity declares as natural. That is to say, “replace the assumption of verified truth by the nature of the truth created in community” (p. 218). This means that reality is socially constructed, thus questioning the classic distinction between the subject, producer of knowledge and the object of knowledge. Constructionists

view suggest that every phenomenon, including the “natural” world, as well as the social world, is given meaning through human conversation and cultural process, or is “constructed”. Burr (2003) proposes that, from a constructionist standpoint, if we consider the social world, including ourselves as individuals, as product of social processes, there can be nothing given which determines the world. There are no essences within things or people that make them whom they are. Phenomena are not “discovered” and then described, as positivists would suggest. Established communities of practice operate to legitimate constructions (Jha, 2012). In this sense, any statement of what is true or real is not attributable to a single person or a group, nor is it singular or unified, but corresponds to a construction rooted in a context and system of socially shared values (Jha, 2012).

Therefore, the validity or truth of phenomena is related to how we interpret events and the contexts where we are situated. Hence, for constructionism there are no absolute truths in so far as those stories are only one of the multiple forms of explaining the world, society and the human being. This does not mean that constructionism denies reality or the notion of truth, but simply invites us to understand that claims of truth of any kind are rooted in a cultural tradition. Thus, explanations with which we operate in the world can be very diverse in nature and some of them are grouped into disciplinary fields (Bourdieu, 2002), others, in sets of social practices or bodies of concepts, such as, “common sense” (Geertz, 1999), appropriate for a particular community, but that in any case, they respond to social forms of life in which people are engaged. In this sense, truth must be understood as a functional category that helps us to encompass the value that has a consideration regarding reality (for a specific community), but can’t be understood as absolute, universal or transcendental.

Where traditional knowledge making attempts to avoid issues of values, morals and politics, a

constructionist orientation sees these as central. Elsewhere I have characterized constructionism as a reflective pragmatism (Gergen, 2015). That is, Knowledge should not be equated with Truth, but with utility. However, utility must be judged in terms of values -useful to whom, and for what purpose. (Gergen, 2015 p. 53)

Likewise, knowledge is also conceived as a relational activity because it is expressed in and through a relationship (Anderson & Gehart, 2007; Steyaert et al., 1996). In this sense people can only know the world through their relatedness with or experience of the world. From this perspective, knowledge is about the construction or making of knowledge (Bouwen, 1998).

4.4 The language role in the construction of reality

Since what is defined as real is inevitably framed within a cultural tradition, constructionism is interested in the way people create and maintain realities. This means focusing in what people do together, because it is in the shared action where worlds, cultures and traditions come to value certain beliefs and practices. Consequently, constructionism is concerned about language as far as it permeates the whole social activity (Barnett, 1994). In other words, what happens among human beings acquires meaning from social interaction expressed in language/action, so it has a central place because, as it is proposed, rather than representing reality, language constitutes it.

The focus on relational process is the hallmark of a constructionist orientation where there is a shift from examining entities (whether they be individuals, groups, organizations, matter) to attending to what we refer to as language or language processes. To the constructionist, language is not simply a tool or vehicle used to transmit or exchange information about reality (referred to as a representational view of language). Rather language is seen as constructing reality. (McNamee, 2014, p. 1)

In this way, the world is constructed through social and cultural practices that are formed from the language arising in everyday conversations (Shotter, 2001). In other words, what

happens among human beings acquires meaning by the social interaction expressed through all embodied activities. Thus, a central notion of social construction is the coordination of meanings as an interactive process, where meaning and coherence of our social worlds are negotiated, by means of a complex process of interchanges and meaning negotiations in which it is possible to recognize the strength that multiple contexts have, from which we operate in a multidimensional form, both in the meaning we give to a message and in the way we propose the coordination with other messages and relevant contexts (Pearce, 2008).

In this regard, language is the expression of a kind of social action that shapes small distinctions, great stories and hypertexts networks in which we move asynchronously, coordinated and coherently, among scripts of different levels and forces. Therefore, we are constantly creating meaning through our collaborative activities, and negotiating senses and meanings in a kind of contextual transaction with ourselves and with others. We respond and argue by tying up the ends of multiple stories where we live, building and narrating ourselves and being narrated, too (Bateson, 1979; Gergen & Gergen, 2003; Shotter, 2001; Pearce, 2008).

The essential function of language would therefore be the construction of contextualized human worlds, interpreted and instituted discursively in everyday interaction. Thus, language stands as a tool that enables the co-construction of joint actions among those who share contexts and frames of reality comprehension, giving meaning to the human act for those who are involved and want to understand it.

Similarly, it can be said that personal education and socialization processes are formed in the interweaving of conversations and narratives that allow the reciprocal knowledge of those who communicate with each other. So much, that different human social systems are differentiated by the characteristics of the different established conversations (Maturana,

1974). Conversations run between frameworks that allow recognizing shared realities and interact with them. Human action, from this perspective, involves the effective ability of creating new reality horizons, using symbolic resources and materials that a given culture offers. These reality horizons translate into networks of images, sensations, affections, ideas, judgments and perspectives which determine and define a world inhabited with others, linking experiences and particular identities with the contexts in which they interact. Therefore, the poet Rainer Maria Rilke sang in his *Duino Elegies* that we feel at home in an “interpreted world”.

It is necessary to identify some complementary considerations that derive from the central postulates of social constructionism. A first consideration to take into account is the *principle of indeterminacy*. According to Gergen (2007), unintelligibility and comprehension, are never complete. Any meaning remains open to multiple re-significations and interpretations. Therefore, there is not a point where the unintelligibility process is consumed or ends; it is however, open and dynamic.

Another principle to consider from constructionism is *polivocality*. In this regard, Gergen (2007) claims that partners, who engage in new relationships and try to create opportunities for joint intelligibility, rely on a substantial vocabulary of words and actions loaded with meaning and that are the product of the multiplicity of previous interactions. This means that we enter each relationship as polivocals: we carry with us numerous voices that we have appropriated from the past. Consequently, “any phrase can be a pastiche of past words, arranged coherently and put afloat in an unexplored sea with no particular destination” (Gergen, 2007, p. 220). However, Gergen (2007) argues that, by force of tradition or circumscribed history of interchange, the creation of meaning in a given relationship will tend to reduce the range of

usable resources. “Voices point to not only the explicit embodiment of the speaker but to the implicit polyphonic nature of life: all thought, all consciousness, and all communication are potentially multi-voiced, dialogical process” (Olson, E., Laitila, A., Rober, P., & Seikkula, J., 2012, p. 423)

Contextualization is another central principle for a constructionist approach. Regarding this aspect, Gergen (2007), recognizes that the relational construction of meaning (world/reality) uses much more than the words and actions of partners. This means that the coordination in human interactions turns to multiple kinds of objects that support the emission and reception of language taking place in specific material conditions. Following Wittgenstein (1953), we can talk about language games that happen in the context of life forms. Precisely, Gergen (2007) retakes this notion of forms of life and warns, “every form of life can make a contribution to the resources brought by the individual to any new relationship” (p. 220). Now, polyvocality and contextualization are crucial in peace education because an essential part of what is sought to achieve in any program is that students can understand the multiple realities and stories that configure the armed conflict. In this sense the experiences and learning that students have had in their life generate a way of being in the world, which can be re-signified or transformed through speech, conversation and the story that occurs in the interaction with other individuals belonging to various relational systems

This leads to recognize that we don’t get involved in an interaction merely as *polivocals*, but as *polipontencials*. This concept, introduced by Gergen, permits us to articulate social constructionism with the appreciative approach that will be discussed later. For the moment, it should be noted that, with this, the idea of participating in interactions as *polipotencials*, refers to “the capacities of introducing objects or generating contexts to build meaning in any specific

relationship” (Gergen, 2007, p. 220). This approach to interaction and joint construction of knowledge and reality becomes significant because it allows recognizing that:

The richer the range of capacities for the coordination of a person, the more flexible and effective it will be when they enter the constant challenge of the new and novel. Metaphorically, life can approach a series of jazz concerts where a constant arrangement of new partners and places requires an endless improvisation. (Gergen, 2007, p. 221)

From the above derives a comprehension of meaning as a coordinate action, contrary to the idea of meaning as something that resides in the mind of the individual, typical of an individualistic tradition, where the individual is assumed as a source of all meaning. Therefore, the concept of self emerges only in relations with other. “At the outset, the constructionist account replaces the individualist orientation to knowledge with a relational view. In this case, it is proposed, the world itself makes no demands of the individual in terms of how it is understood” (Gergen, 2015, p. 52).

4.5 Relational Practices

As I pointed out, one of the basic constructionist premises is that the world becomes meaningful in relationships (Gergen, 2009b). From this perspective, the central theme is the priority of relationships and relatedness, which is contrary to the western individualistic tradition. From this perspective, relationships -and not individuals- constitute the foundations of society. For this reason, social constructionism places relationships and relational practices at the center of what it means to be human, and challenges the idea of society as simply a collection of individual entities.

When the self is the essential atom of society, we find invitations to isolation, distrust, narcissism, and competition; we find relationships reduce to manipulation and artifice; and we find a stunning simplification of the problems we confront. In all these ways we might wish for more promising

alternatives, new conceptions of the self that might render social life less chilling- and possibly, create a more promising global future. (Gergen 2009a, p. 88)

Thus, this perspective opens us to a deep appreciation of our lives with others, where we should concentrate on the generative power of relationships and on the power of coordinate actions to create new forms of life.

Hosking & McNamee (2012) prefer to speak about Social Construction as Relational Construction because the center of attention is the relational process, as opposed to pre-existing structures (individual or social) and its influence on how we construct the world. They point out three fundamental characteristics of these relational processes: a) both, human and non-humans actors, contribute to and are products of the process of reality construction; b) construction of reality is described as an inter-action process between actors, not as individual action and c) “textuality” refers to all relational realities and not only about written or spoken texts. As Hosking (2011) said, this invites us to a comprehensive inclusion of various ways in which relationships go, such as non-verbal gestures, posture, movement and tone. The consequences of this emphasis on the relational are important as it not only challenges the entrenched tradition of individualism, but also invites us to reconsider many of our institutions and even the professional practice in psychology, education and, of course, peace education.

Taking up different elements addressed in this section, it can be mentioned that in order to give an account of the ways people understand and relationally build their realities, certain aspects can be studied in an articulated form, aspects such as, pragmatics of human relationships, language processes used in social interaction, the cultural framework established in a determined human group, the historical framework of the community experiences, the communication processes they develop and the participation practices of the community members. Next, I will address the implications of the constructionist orientation in peace

education and peace research.

4.6 Appreciative Inquiry and Collaborative Practices

Constructionist ideas have given origin to new practices. Now I will delve into two approaches that have emerged from the constructionist dialogue which are an important reference within the postmodern approximations to the processes of change in the different social systems, they are the appreciative and the collaborative approach. Both approaches share central ideas already discussed: there are no universal truths, knowledge is not independent of the one who knows, language is not representational, the meaning of a word is in its use and, every situation is immersed in multiple context, flexibility in the point of view versus fundamentalism, consciousness that the worlds are built versus essentialism. These two perspectives have valuable elements for peace education and as we will see in chapter 4, several of its principles can be included in the design of peace education proposals.

Appreciative Inquiry (AI) originated in the organizational development field, focuses on what's already working inside organizations, families or communities. It is defined as:

The cooperative search for the best in people, their organizations, and the world around them. It involves systematic discovery of what gives a system "life" when it is most effective and capable in economic, ecological, and human terms. AI involves the art and practice of asking questions that strengthen a system's capacity to heighten positive potential. (Cooperrider and Whitney, 1999, p.10)

A primary assumption of AI is that in all human systems there are things that work well, or have in the past, and that these can be identified, analyzed, and built upon as the foundation for envisioning, designing, and implementing system change. Cooperrider and Srivastva (1987) point out five principles that govern and determine the generation of change in AI. They are: The constructionist principal of simultaneity, positive, poetic and anticipatory (Cooperrider y Srivastva, 1987). The constructive principle refers to the importance of replacing the notion of

individualistic knowledge by the relational one. Likewise, this principle notes the value of language and discourses to create our sense of reality, of truth, of the good and of the possible. On the other hand, the principle of simultaneity derives that exploration and change are not separate moments but simultaneous. Thus, from the first exploratory questions asked during an interview or a work with a community or system, the “seeds of change” are implicit, that is to say, thoughts and expressions, discoveries and learning, dialogues and sources of inspiration to project the future. The poetic principle alludes to how human systems look more like an open book than a machine since they are susceptible to multiple interpretations and to be described from multiple metaphors. The anticipatory principle refers to how collective imagination and discourses about the future become the most valuable tools to generate a constructive change. Finally, the positive principle refers to how to generate and sustain moments for change; positive affection and social union are required.

The AI methodology follows a process known as the 4D Stages (Cooperrider & Whitney, 1999). These stages are: Discovery, Dream, Design, and Destiny.

The key task in problem solving is to identify and remove gaps or deficits. The process usually involves (1) identifying problems 2 analyzing causes 3) searching for solutions and 4 developing an action plan. In contrast, the key in AI is to identify and leverage strengths. The steps include (1) Discovery (2) Dream (3) Design and (4) Destiny. (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2003, p.10)

Discovery refers to the importance of discovering the positive capacity of a system regardless of the situation at hand (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2001). The Discovery Stage aims to find, emphasize, and illuminate any factors that have led to the best in a given situation (Ludema, Cooperrider & Barrett, 2001).

The Dream stage looks for “Uncover values and aspirations [you] might not have been aware of” (Bushe, 2007) the idea is to invite people to dream of what could be or needs to be. The next

step in the process is the Design Stage and it is time for creating or designing what people or organizations desires as an ideal scenario. Generally, the Design Stage is “a process of finding common ground by sharing discoveries and possibilities, dialoguing and debating” (Ludema, Cooperrider & Barrett, 2001) which gets you to the point where everyone agrees on how they are going to make it happen.

In the Design Stage, the group has to identify concrete ideas and steps that will move the organization to its newly envisioned potential. The last D stands for Destiny, which is defined as “an invitation to construct the future through innovation and action” (Ludema, Cooperrider & Barrett, 2001). The Destiny Stage is when people commit to the aspirations they want to achieve (Cram, 2010).

In peace education appreciative inquiry can help teachers to broaden perspectives and to innovate their practice. As I will point out in the following chapters, peace researchers or peace educators can use AI employing the entire 4-D Cycle or using parts of it. This will depend to a great extent on the stated aims and the particular needs of each community.

On the other hand, the collaborative perspective, influenced by postmodern philosophy and mainly by language philosophy emerges from the understanding of human systems as language systems. In the words of Harlene Anderson the collaborative action is “a language system and a linguistic event that brings people together in a relationship and in a collaborative conversation, it is a joint search for possibilities” (Anderson, 1997, p. 28)

In this way, Harlene Anderson (1997; 2003) emphasizes that it is more about a philosophy or a posture regarding how we approach people or systems that consult us and how we relate to them. Point out that this philosophical stance becomes evident in an attitude that tells the other that it is worth listening to what the other one has to say, that we see him as a unique human

being, that we recognize him as a legitimate Other and therefore we do not categorize him as a member of a certain group or type of person. If a therapist, consultant or researcher stands from this perspective, he/she will be connected authentically with the other and will be able to collaborate and construct with the person in a collaborative and participative process. Anderson describes the collaborative posture in terms of a set of interconnected concepts: conversational societies, shared/mutual research, client as an expert, “not knowing”, public being, incertitude and therapy as part of daily life (Anderson, 2003).

The following is a brief definition of these ideas and how they are translated in the therapeutic practice. Conversational societies. The collaborative therapist and his/her clients become “partners” or conversational mates by establishing collaborative relationships and participating in dialogic conversations. To achieve this, it is necessary to focus on what the client has to say and that the therapist constantly listen learn and try to understand the client from the client’s perspective and language (Anderson, 2003). Therapy as research. There’s an interest for the “local knowledge”, that is to say, for the knowledge of the client about his/her experience and situation more than for a general theory that explains it. Together the therapist and the client generate knowledge through shared research where they both explore the familiar aspect and co-create new things. A very important part of this process is that the client tells his story and so doing in the context of co-research; he clarifies, expands and transforms it (Anderson, 2003). The client is the expert. As I have already mentioned, the therapist or collaborative consultant considers the client to be the expert about his own life. Anderson (2003) says that the client is the therapist’s teacher. The therapist respects the client’s history and takes seriously what he/she has to say and the how he/she wants to express it. “Not knowing” posture. The idea of the client as expert/teacher is related to one of the proposals that has generated more controversy regarding

collaborative therapy: that the therapist must work from a «not knowing» posture. Anderson (2005) explains that it doesn't mean that the therapist knows nothing or do nothing, "not knowing", according to Anderson, refers to the attitude and belief that the therapist doesn't have access to privileged information, he can never fully understand another person and always has to learn more about what has been or not been said. Not knowing means that the therapist is humble about what he knows and involves listening respectfully in an active and responsive way (Anderson, 2005). This means that the therapist lets the client be in the center of the stage so it is he who conducts the story he/she wants to tell and how he/she wants to do it. The therapist tries to follow the pace and rhythm of the client's narration and to maintain his questions into the parameters of the problems and solutions described by the client (Anderson, 2003).

Now, thinking about people and systems as experts doesn't mean that the therapist isn't an expert at all. Anderson says that the therapist is an expert in conversational processes. This means that the therapist assumes the responsibility of creating a conversational space that invites to dialogue, to joint exploration and collaboration (Anderson, 2003). Another important element to take into account of a collaborative perspective is the uncertainty while from this perspective, we can never know a priori where a conversation is going to take us, where a session will end. This is because language is a generator. Anderson (2007) says that in the light of the postmodern vision about language, we cannot think of causality in human interactions. We cannot predict that if the therapist says or does this, the client will say or do that. An implication of this, for Anderson (2003), is that the therapist addresses each consultation as a unique situation; this includes what the client presents and the possible outcome of the therapy. From this position, the therapist does not cause a change in the client, but both of them are transformed through their interaction. On the other hand, "being public" refers to being willing to share the internal

conversation instead of keeping it hidden or veiled. The therapist shares his/her ideas to participate in the conversation and not to guide or direct it. Placing these ideas on the table can also prevent them from biasing the conversation since, what is not said can influence the form in which the therapist makes questions or contribute to conversation (Anderson, 2005).

Although the collaborative approach emerges in the therapy field, these ideas provide us with indispensable elements to consider the teacher-student relationship. Thus, the collaborative perspective in peace education favors the construction of knowledge as something that is relational and the interdependence of knowledge and of who knows through dialogue. It also invites us to work from a non-expert and non-hierarchical place. In this way, we use the expertise in the art of creating a dialogic space, which facilitates conversations about the difficulties in the different systems we work with and introduces us to a new form of communication that allows the construction of new ideas and solutions for peace building.

4.7 Implications of a Social Constructionist Stance in Peace Education

Throughout the years, two key questions have been the focus of the field of education, pedagogy, and more recently of peace education: What and how should be taught (Bennett & LeCompte, 1990; Bruner, 1977; Dewey, 1930). In response to these questions we find a multiplicity of epistemological traditions and ideological commitments about knowledge that inform, justify and sustain certain pedagogical practices over others.

In the case of education, perhaps the pivotal concept is that of knowledge itself. How, then, do we define or conceptualize knowledge such that educational processes are desirable or demanded; what is knowledge such that certain educational practices are favored over others? Clearly disparate concepts of knowledge will lend themselves to differing views of the educational process. (Gergen, 2007, p. 213)

Among the different educational traditions, Gergen (2007) distinguish two of the most

important tendencies, the exogenic and the endogenic tradition. Both views embrace a mind/world dualism, however the exogenic tradition is world centered (traced in empirical philosophies) and the endogenic tradition is mind centered (rationalist orientation).

From the exogenic standpoint, however, knowledge is achieved when the inner states of the individual reflect or accurately represent (or serve as a mirror of) the existing states of the external world. [...] whereas the endogenic tradition treats careful observation of the world as the key to acquiring knowledge, the endogenecist places the chief emphasis on the powers of individual reason.

(Gergen, 2007, p. 214)

Each of these orientations to knowledge, as well as the different currents that derive from them, justify certain pedagogical practices, which in turn prefigure particular values and ways of life. In this connection, Packer and Goicoechea (2000) points out that depending on the cognitive practices privileged by schools, different kinds of people will emerge. In the same way, Corcoran & Billington (2015) emphasizes how education, and the skills promoted in any educational system, is socialization into certain ways of being.

Educational discourse over millennia has kinked the “what” and “how” of learning to the kind of human beings we might become, as part of a community [...] Education clearly incorporated matters of moral, spiritual and political concern and offered the prospect, variously, of either the pinnacle of secular achievement or else the route to a heavenly eternity. (Corcoran & Billington, 2015, p. 31)

In Western educational system, where exogenic and endogenic models of education have had a prevalence, the emphasis has been on the individual accomplishment (Gergen, 2001a; Corcoran & Billington, 2015; McNamee, 2007).

Both exogenic and endogenic traditions locate knowledge within the minds of the single individual who observes and thinks, and who is challenged to acquire knowledge. It is only by virtue of the individual's possession of knowledge, it is held, that he or she can survive or thrive in a complex world. (Gergen, 2001b, p. 118)

From this conceptualization of knowledge, we can track several implications in teaching practices, for instance: in some cases, students are assumed as a *tabula rasa* that should be imprinted from the outside with specific knowledge which, according to adult criteria, must be learned. In hand with this perspective we can see teaching practices that privilege authoritarianism, fear to evaluation, excessive academic work and hierarchy in the teacher-student relationship as the “appropriate way” of forming students. We may also see teachers who assume that the mental functioning of individuals is understood as internal mechanisms owned by every subject and that they are developed independently from the social context where the teacher is the “expert” who should improve the students’ minds. In all such cases, teaching practices are aimed at the development of the individual where the role of the school and the teacher relies on the transmission of knowledge and contents and the work of the students is to remember what they learned.

There are many illustrations of alternative forms of education. Despite a wide array of experimental programs and schools that employ various strategies -each departing in many ways from traditional education- teaching, learning and education overall remain within the dominant individualistic discourse of our culture. (McNamee, 2007, p. 316)

But, what values and lifestyles does the individualistic discourse promote? In this regard Gergen says:

Individualism invites us into a posture of competition. We enter a college classroom, and we are typically thrust into competition -only a handful- will emerge with top marks. We enter the workplace, and again we traditionally find ourselves in competition: only a few will rise to the top. Both education and the workplace represent individualism in action. As we understand the economic world, it is also made up of individual agents, each attempting to maximize his/her own gain and minimize losses. On a planet of limited resources this means that we are each pitted against the other in a dog- eat -dog world. Must this sense of continuous embattlement remain; must we continue to

build institutions that embody this view; and if this view is extended into global relationships, what kind of future can we anticipate? (Gergen, 2009b, p. 86)

As peace educators, and taking into account the object of study of our work, we necessarily have to ask ourselves about the values that are behind our pedagogical practices, the kind of relations we establish, and the categories and explanations we have recourse to in peace education.

Educators need to cast a critical eye on those forms of knowledge and social relations that define them through a conceptual purity and political innocence that not only cloud how they come into being but also ignore that the alleged neutrality in which they stand is already grounded in ethical-political choices. (Giroux, 2011, p. 75)

Undoubtedly, the celebration of the individualistic discourse is deeply problematic; both in terms of their epistemological and ideological commitments, and peace education hasn't been alien to this tradition. For this reason, peace education demands an epistemological shift to a Constructionist stance, where knowledge is relocated away from the individual and placed instead within the practices in which people are engaged. This is essential in peace education, particularly if we consider that peace building (main goal of peace education) refers to a joint action and collective creation of attitudes, patterns of interaction, speeches, comprehensions, proposals and processes aiming at transforming the cycles of violence. "Peace is about human relationship. And the human story does not begin with violence or conflict. It begins with being, belonging, generating, sharing, and building. The essence of society is relationship, for society is a collection of relationships" (Doe, 2010, p. 162).

On one hand, and if we assumed that the central concern for a constructionist approach is about what people do together and what this action produces, necessarily the practices derived of this conception will be different. On this aspect, Gergen (2007) recognizes that social

constructionism may lead to new practices with an alternative epistemology. Embracing of social constructionism in educational practices, according to Gergen (2001a), will allow for the social construction of knowledge. The above includes: (a) Truth may be created in community which may continue to re-create the truth according to the polyvocality and relationships present; (b) A non-hierarchical authority of knowledge that may grow from contextual learning situations, rather than a top-down model of instruction/direction; (c) Disciplines of knowledge may be crossed as learners construct their meaning from investigations and collaborative practices; (d) Multiple pedagogies of appreciation and critique may be utilized toward reflexive deliberation to forge a link between disparate groups; and (e) Knowledge does not reside only in individual minds, but also in generative relationships.

Thus, the challenge in peace education is to develop an alternative perspective to the individual approach of knowledge, allowing for the analysis of the role played by the shared knowledge into a community in the maintenance and reproduction of reality.

On the other hand, in his book *Relational Being*, Gergen (2009b) links excellence in education with excellence in relationships, between and among the students, teachers and staff, classrooms, and the world outside. Likewise, McNamee (2007) points out that, “a relational approach to education requires that we abandon the idea that knowledge or information can be conveyed from one mind to another and, instead,... knowledge as constructed in our conjoint activities with others -in what people do together” (McNamee, 2007, p. 314).

In this way, a constructionist perspective of peace education must be focused on the meaning of co-constructed actions (built with others) in specific contexts. “For the constructionist, all knowledge claims issue from particular groups, with particular values, at particular times in history. Thus, the question of what should be taught in our educational systems cannot be

answered in terms of universal knowledge” (Gergen, 2015 p. XI).

However, from a constructionist stance it is not enough to accept that knowledge is built in relations. It is necessary to see the consequences of social construction, that is, what are the benefits and advantages of the social construction of knowledge. In other words, everything that has to do with knowledge, education, pedagogy, and in particular with peace education should have a social sense of transformation that benefit people with whom we live. It must have axiological implications that involve emotions, actions, and of course, personal and social values. It is not about building intra-psychic or inter-psychic knowledge; it is necessary to build knowledge on behalf of the other and to the other for the benefit of the community. This is the challenge that the constructionist pedagogy intends to assume in peace education, going beyond the individual in order to build peace as a coordinated action. “When the self is the essential atom of society, we find invitations to isolation, distrust, narcissism, and competition; we find relationships reduced to manipulation and artifice; and we find a stunning simplification of the problems we confront” (Gergen, 2009b, p. 87).

Given the importance of the co-construction of knowledge, peace education, from a constructionist view must be understood as a process and not as an isolated and static event. Peace education is dynamic. It is a process whose concepts and results are changeable as is the object of study and intervention. Peace education necessarily happens in relationships and exchanges with others.

Considering the above, peace education from a constructionist stance is neither student centered, nor curriculum centered, but is relational. Relational process should be the center of peace education. As noted in Chapter 2 and in the Introduction, Colombia has already made some progress on the issue of peace education, however the focus has been placed more on the

individual and the contents rather than on the practice and processes. But taking on a social constructionist view of meaning making, we understand that peace is something that is built, and then we understand that it is not a problem of curriculum or specific contents but of more creative, collective and congruent pedagogical practices with local truths and realities.

The invitation, then, is to think of education more in terms of mastering the games as opposed to mastering the abstracted representations. This means a shift from education as knowledge absorption to knowledge making. It is not what you can recite that reveals a good education, but what you do.

(Gergen, 2015, p. XII)

In order to achieve the stated general objectives of peace education, school systems must go through major change. It requires setting new educational objectives, preparing new curricula, training teachers, constructing a climate in the schools that is conducive to peace education, and new pedagogical practices (Harris, 1988; Hicks, 1993; Reardon, 1988).

It is also important to point out that from a SC perspective, it is arbitrary to enclose the conceptual framework into a unique definition or to privilege a stream or a theoretical proposal of peace education on top of another. However, in my work as an educator, I assume the following stance: Peace educating is a powerful mechanism to overcome individualism and hence the instrumentalization of individuals and the social contexts in which violence is the common method of conflict resolution. Educating for peace means to seek the elimination of authoritarianism in the classrooms and understand instead that classrooms are privileged spaces for the co-construction of values, for collaborative and appreciative relations. “There should be no examinations of any kind in connection with peace education, no basis of an emerging class of peace specialist. Such devices may have place in military academies and business schools, but not in institutions promoting peace insights” (Galtung, 2008, p. 52). Peace education implies a gamble for a teaching model that allows the development of creative coordinated actions for

better ways of living together. Further, peace education is the constant inquiry and reflection about the kind of world we wish to create for the future, both locally and globally.

Finally, I would like to note that SC makes a significant contribution to the fulfillment of the main goal of peace education, which is building a nonviolent society. Because meaning is a relational achievement, the ways in which we understand the world are not trapped within individual minds but are “worked out” in the coordinated actions of people interacting together. Thus there is always applicability in the life of people and communities, facilitating socialization processes. Also, we are all teachers and students at the same time, no one owns the truth of how peace should look. Therefore, peace building is a joint task; a task that must be useful for transforming and not for maintaining, for leading social processes and not for becoming stagnant, for building networks of support, solidarity and commitment and not for remaining in selfishness, indifference and contempt. And third, I think that SC allows knowledge to appear (emerge) in order to build further knowledge, thanks to the friendly intervention of the teacher, who accompanies this process of life, allowing the student the amazement generated by the interest in learning and sharing what has been learned. “Peace education forms are in contradiction to anti-dialogical methods, resulting in the reproduction of prescribed “old” knowledge and the lack of production on “new” knowledge” (Haavelsrud, 2008, p. 64). Social constructionism considers that ideas and understandings about the world arise from social exchange and are communicated in language, and that these evolve or change in the space of conversations among people, in the domain of common dance (Boscolo and Bertrando, 1996). This perspective provides pertinent focus of study for the understanding of the social world that is created in the contexts of sociopolitical violence, since it provides comprehensive categories, such as context, identity, relationships and narratives, as referents of analysis about the effects of this type of violence in

individuals, families and communities, and points out a theoretical and methodological stance regarding the fact that peace education practices should allow people to include themselves and include others as part of the process, and interactively define values and routes of peace building that emerge in the process itself.

Thus, in agreement with Gergen (2007) the challenge of the educational act "is not, storing data, theories and rational heuristics in the minds of individuals" (p. 223). On the contrary, it is situated in the way in which students can assume and confront the diverse realities in which they are immersed, that is, that discourses and practices can be combined to create contexts in which knowledge allows generating actions for being in and with others in communities and beyond them.

In this sense, Bachelard (1981) postulates that dreaming of a vision in which relations between school and society are based on knowledge mediated by interaction, allows students to assume a position in front of what they have experienced in everyday life, specifically through learning. Bruner (1996, in Gergen, 2007) conceives it as "human, participatory, proactive, communal, collaborative learning, dedicated to construct meaning" (p.233).

Therefore, assuming a position as a social constructionist teacher, allows the implementation of disciplinary knowledge, but beyond these, emerges learning situations in which students cease to be the object, and become subjects within relationships (Gergen, 2007). Consequently, the educational act from this perspective configures a critical, cooperative and meaningful way of positioning oneself before life, having as a premise that education is a relational process that generates the recognition of others, of their voices, of their identity, shaping multiple social worlds that arise from the lived and felt reality of the students themselves.

This being so that "who teaches learns when teaching and whoever learns teaches when learning, to educate is not to transfer knowledge, content or form, it is the action by which a creative subject gives shape, style or soul" (Freire, 1997, p. 25). Teaching and learning are mutual, object and subject are mixed in relational processes where the language of each one forms a new dialogue. This foundation allows to have a frame of reference to operate from the intangible to the classroom experience, processes that generate a joint construction of knowledge placed in the relational field, shaping a way of being in which respect for the other, coexistence and the experience of peace configure us in order to be in the educational context.

CHAPTER 5: Method

5.1 Type of research

Qualitative methodology was used for this dissertation since this type of research seeks to explore, describe and understand social situations based on the knowledge of those who participate and not based on hypotheses formulated by an external researcher. Bonilla and Rodríguez (2005) states that "Qualitative research attempts to make a global approach of social situations in order to explore, describe, and understand them in an inductive way ... based on the knowledge of different people involved in them" (p.119). Likewise, qualitative research is a paradigm that casts doubt on objectivity and seeks to promote the researcher's capacity for reflection in order to carry out a constant review of the process and the conclusions that are obtained. This implies that the subjectivities of the researcher and of the participants comprise a fundamental part of the study and it is from there that knowledge is constructed and ends up being the final product of the process (Flick, 2007).

Now, the meta-narrative of this qualitative research is Social Constructionism as long as, from this stance, the construction of knowledge arises from the analysis and reflections of the researcher and the participants who jointly organize and give meaning to the information collected. In this sense, there are no absolute or universal realities but multiple perspectives of reality. Specifically, the perspective of the researcher is one of the possible views of the phenomenon studied, but not the only one. I refer to constructionism as a meta-narrative of this work in so far as McNamee & Hosking (2012) point out, that social constructionism, rather than a method, is the position from which decisions are made about any given method. This posture requires a look at our own participation in the community and the consideration that the aim of the research is not related to the quest for universal truths but to the transformative potential of

the co-constructed knowledge that emerges in the very process of the research, itself. “The constructionist claims that the utility of research is in the array of action potentials it creates in conjunction with the reflexive critique into which it invites participants” (McNamee, 2010, p. 12).

This becomes clearer if we understand that traditional research assumes that there is a world of objects and events, which are separated from the researcher. Also, the prevailing belief is that the researcher’s work is to discover the nature of that world, as *x*, and, truth can be found with the correct method. Thus, the social scientist observes and draws conclusions about other people, their reasons, problems, relationships, etc. However, in contrast to this conception, Social Constructionism promotes an anti-realist and anti-essentialist stance towards research (Burr, 2003). In this way, research must be understood as a socially constructed practice, based on the interactions and dialogues of researchers and communities within their historical, cultural and social contexts. “Truth is intimately bound up with the conditions in which the knowledge is produced and the position from which the researcher is examining the phenomenon in question” (Parker, 2005, p. 16).

Thus, the “results” of any research depend on the moment when the research is conducted. Therefore, results may not be generalizable, absolute, or replicable. However, the results might very well be *useful* to others and to other communities; they may ignite new forms of understanding even if one would not expect to replicate the results of any given research inquiry. Likewise, research is conceived not as a way to predict or to give an accurate picture of the studied phenomena, but to directly create new futures, new possibilities for social life (McNamee, 1988).

We can create what we imagine. The constructionist principle states that we collectively make

meaning of our world based on our habits, traditions, teachings, and how we view our very identity.

What we believe to be real in the world is created through our social discourse and the conversations we have with one another. (Sampson, Abu-Nimer, Liebler & Whitney, 2009, p. 58)

In this sense, I think it appropriate to mention - following Losantos, et. al., 2016) - some principles of social constructionism applied to research:

Table 1

*Research principles from Social Constructionism*⁹

PRINCIPLES	UNDERSTANDING
Anti-realism	Research as a socially constructed discipline based on the interaction of authors with their social and historical-cultural contexts. Results of investigations dependent on the moment in which they are performed so they may not include generalizations, replies or absolutisms.
Anti-essencialism	Human beings are in constant and growing movement and transformation.
Language as a builder of reality	Researchers seek to be aware and know the theoretical frameworks where investigations are born. However, these theoretical references are involved in languages which shape comprehensions of the world and thoughts about it.
Focused on interaction and social practices	The intention is not to take "x-rays" of the individuals or communities investigated but rather to analyze, among other aspects, the interaction process in which data are generated.
Research as a form of social action	Invitation to the researchers to reflect on the responsibility of writing about people. As a consequence, "the language used to present the findings is carefully built since it can influence how people under investigation are related to society and its institutions and vice versa" (Losantos, et. al., 2016, p. 31)
Focused on processes	Emphasis on processes rather than on structures: knowledge as something that is built and not owned. The dynamics, power between investigator and investigated seeks a balance: each one contributes according to his/her experience.

⁹ Table made by Irene Giovanni (2017) following the principles proposed by Losantos et al. (2016).

Curiosity in research processes	Based on Anderson and Goolishian's (1988) premise that as constructionists we adopt a "not knowing" stance, we are challenged as researchers to deviate from our own assumptions and consider alternative theories and models to make sense of data.
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Social constructionism then, as a basis for the present investigation, raises some premises that call into question various practices linked, for example, to the idea of an expert whose standardized and categorized knowledge presumes truth claims and assigns all responsibility to the "individual self" as a figure of knowledge creation, in itself. In this sense, social construction calls for a dialogical stance with regard to the observation of the "relational self" who behaves in response to others and who influences others and participates in the creation and negotiation of collective and personal meanings (Rodríguez, 2008; Agudelo & Estrada, 2012).

Based on the above, the methodological choices described in this dissertation reflect the assumptions and values of the communities where I work. Therefore, the results are not so much a reflection of nature but a creation that we take as such (Gergen, 2009a). At the same time, a constructionist stance invites us to consider the utility of the language we use and the results of using any specific language since, for a constructionist, language constitutes reality. Thus, in research, we must seek to be aware of the theoretical frameworks from which the investigation emerges. In the case of this dissertation, it is important to consider what notions of education and peacebuilding I was drawing upon and how was I promoting those notions, as well as how I was giving serious consideration to the implications of the practices derived from these notions. Another major question that arises from a Constructionist perspective is about how the research improves life in the community in which we (the researchers) are working. As we can see, these are essentially questions of value and they are central for a constructionist researcher because we understand investigation as a form of social action. Therefore, researchers are invited to reflect

on the responsibility that accompanies, in the present case, the action of building peace with others.

Derived from the above, we could say that ultimately the concern of a constructionist in research is interaction processes and social practices that generate meaningful knowledge within the communities examined, from the dynamics within the interaction of relationships. “[...] It emphasizes on processes more than structures; therefore, knowledge is understood as something that is constructed, not something one possesses. Consequently, the power dynamic between the researcher and the researched is balanced, whereby everyone brings their experience and expertise in their own fields to the research encounter” (Losantos, et. al., 2016). Convinced of the imperative of a joint construction of knowledge, I feel that it is important to call upon my political purpose and my professional and personal affiliation, committed to the transformation of the historical-social conditions that favor the reproduction of dominant relationships that must be deconstructed in the framework of possibilities of claiming and dignifying people's voices with which I set out to work. Going back to Martín-Baró (1994) in his proposal of the Psychology of liberation, he expressed that:

Assuming a new position does not mean, obviously, throwing all our knowledge away; what it means is its relativization and critical review from the perspective of the popular majorities. It is only from there that theories and models will show their validity or their deficiency, their usefulness or their uselessness, their universality or their provincialism. (p.12)

In other words, it is within the narratives of those who we approach in our research that it becomes possible to build research results, not from the imposition of frameworks and/or unmovable conceptual categories. In turn, these results -following Diazgranados and Estrada (2007) in their presentation of contributions of social constructionism to debate and practice- are dependent on the moment in which they are configured, so they may not contain generalizations

or absolutisms.

In short, it is from the emergence of my political action that I understand that my relationship with the population recovers links of cooperation and common tissue of opportunities for the future. I understand that their history does not involve only themselves, but that I am part of it in so much as I am implicated in the process of constructing meaning. "What we see and how we see it is certainly conditioned by our perspective, by the place from which we peek into history" (Baró, 1994, p.12).

Thus, being critical of my role as a teacher and researcher, I would like to express my willingness to ensure equal interaction, transparency in the exposition of investigative intentions, profound respect for the narratives that are constructed and the analysis of them, agreements that transcend the academic dimension and enter the level of political commitment.

5.2 Design

According to the general and specific objectives of this work for the development of this dissertation, I made a design for peace education programs in non-formal education contexts, guided by constructionist assumptions. Through dialogical practices in the classroom, facilitated by the teacher, the methodological design seeks that those who participate ask themselves about their life histories, how they lived the Colombian armed conflict, how they want to transform in their daily lives the cycles of violence and finally, how they want to contribute to the construction of a culture of peace.

Because of the above is a clear intention in this work to have a reflexive stance toward my pedagogical practice, as well as toward the meaningful actions that emerged within the pedagogical relationship with students that could potentially promote new horizons for peace education. In accordance with the above, the present work is a systematization of experiences of

the pedagogical processes described in chapter six and chapter seven. It is important to point out that the systematization of experiences, different from the systematization of data, is a modality of knowledge production that emerges from popular education (Jara, 2011), which is part of Latin American critical thinking (Fals, 1970).

In qualitative research, systematization is understood as a process of recovery and appropriation of a particular educational practice. This systematization, when linked systemically and historically, offers theoretical-practical components that allow individuals to understand and explain contexts, sense, logics and problem aspects that the experience presents. In addition, as stated earlier, the aim is to transform and qualify the understanding, experimentation and expression of educative proposals of a communitarian nature (Ghiso, 1998). In this sense, the main goal of a systematization of experience is to reconstruct and interpret experiences of knowledge and the point of view of the participants. As reported by Jara (2011)

Systematization is that critical interpretation of one or more experiences that, through its ordering and reconstruction, discovers or explains the logic of the process lived in them: the various factors involved, how they related to each other and why they did it that way. The Systematization of Experiences produces meaningful knowledge and learning that make it possible to take possession of the sense of the experiences, to understand them theoretically and to direct them towards the future with a transforming perspective. (p. 4)

Ruiz (2001) understands systematization of experience as a process of knowledge production based on the practice, where knowledge arising from social practices contributes to theoretical reflection. To this extent, "doing" precedes systematization and it is from systematization that knowledge is built. According to Torres (1999), systematization of experiences seeks to strengthen one's own social and educational practice as well as to contribute to the theorizing of educational practices. "In systematization processes, we focus on what happens to social

practices, acknowledge the social-historical conditions influencing events and emphasize learning the ways in which subjects speak about what happens in their practices and how this practices transforms them” (Falkembach & Torres, 2015, p. 78). In this sense systematization of the experience is a type of participatory action research since the researcher is part of a process of change which is also the process of the research.

The utility of systematization is multiple; it allows us, teachers, to critically appropriate our experiences to extract learning that contributes to improve these experiences; to contribute to a critical dialogue between actors of the educational process; and to contribute to conceptualizing and theorizing (Jara, 2011).

There are various ways of assuming systematization. Van der Hammen, Frieri, Navarrete & Zamora (2012), talk about two moments in the systematization of experiences; a first moment in which we seek to delimit the experience we want to systematize (time, place, actors, systematization tools that will be used) and a second moment in which we seek to recover, order and reflect on the experience lived in order to communicate learning. For the purpose of this inquiry, I developed a systematization through the lens of Social Construction where systematization is conceived as a recovery of the co-constructed performances with members of particular communities, and a production of contextualized knowledge. By doing this, I attempt to show how systematization research methodologies can contribute to research practices, which favor a broadly defined social constructionist re-visioning of education and how the meeting between systematization and constructionism may constitute a challenge and thus hold a future promise in peace education.

The four basic principles in systematization from a constructionist perspective are: 1) Every systematization is preceded by a practice; 2) Every individual is a subject of knowledge and that

enriches the practice; 3) The process of systematization is an interlocution process among subjects where discourses, theories and cultural constructions are negotiated; and 4) In a process of systematization knowledge is co-constructed.

The central premise of this methodological design was to generate an approach for peace education that privileges the experience of the students who were part of the research, recognizing in this process their wisdom and knowledge derived from the live experience. In this sense, the participants of the process were key voices in the construction of this work and the justification that supports the methodological choices proposed in this inquiry. “Postmodern, relational constructionist inquiries create the potential for self-reflexive critique, multiplicity of voice, and potential coordination of diverse understandings” (McNamee, 2010, p. 14).

It is important to highlight that, from this perspective, the intention of systematization is not to rate, judge, or evaluate the success or failure of the action; the focus, instead, is on the lessons learned from joint action and what this experience makes. Likewise, memory and experience recovery is considered as a result of the coordination of multiple voices of participants; it is a collective co-construction that makes sense through the experience and reconstruction of all the actors (the students, institutions and myself as a teacher/researcher). Research from this philosophical frame is not about getting to the “truth” or “fact” but opens the possibility for “collective remembering (Middleton & Edwards, 1990).

In the context of our relational constructionist perspective, what is important is some sort of critical engagement with the taken-for-granted practices and understandings, exploring how these might be otherwise. It is in these sorts of analyses that the multiple and diverse communities of participants and inquirers can collaborate to generate alternative understandings. (McNamee & Hosking, 2012, p. 79)

The exercise of systematization from a constructionist stance is a perpetual process of

reflection about the practices and meaningful experiences in order to improve our practice. The above implies that the researcher becomes a part of the investigated and intervened system and, as a consequence, I alternated between the position of the researcher and that of the teacher in the present work. Thus, in this context, while the pedagogical experience is carried out, data are collected so the research questions posed are subsequently answered.

In this sense, it is an opportunity to reconstruct the practice, learn from what is done, build new meanings, improve understandings of what has been accomplished and generate processes of transformation and co-construction of knowledge, starting from what has been learned during the experience. This set of assumptions generates an orientation towards systematization that places attention on the construction of new possibilities and horizons in peace education and consequently in peace building.

5.3 Methodological inspirations

In order to offer the reader a sufficiently broad overview on decisions and ideas that accompanied the methodological design of this dissertation, I present in this section the different sources that influenced my pedagogical work. I call them inspirations because there is not a unique way to develop a program of education for peace that applies to every case. In this sense, it is only possible to prepare prior to the pedagogical meetings and formulate some guidelines from which, as a teacher, I could set out ways of reflecting during the classes, taking into account the conceptual aspects pointed out in chapter 4 and the objectives of the research.

Now, I will make a contextualization about how some of the ideas developed by popular education and social constructionism influenced this work and what I sought to achieve by putting into action each of these ideas in the different moments of the pedagogical experiences described in chapters 6 and 7.

To begin with, it is important to highlight the influence of a dialogical perspective. My dialogic work in peace education arises from the idea that knowledge; healing, reconciliation and forgiveness are constructed with the other in interaction. In this sense, dialogue, as an expression of historicity and as a promoter of the construction of relational settings, encourages the realization of common projects, invites peaceful resolution of conflicts, the construction of new narratives about the armed conflict and the construction of peace.

Dialogic learning (Flecha, 2000) stipulates that learning is an interactive process of knowledge construction that is always social, and which is mediated by dialogic discourse (Wells, 1999). The contributions of authors such as Vygotsky (1978), Mead (1934), Bruner (1996), Bakhtin (1986), Freire (1970) and Wells (1999) support the importance of interactions and dialogue for learning purposes.” (Gómez, 2015, p. 298)

Likewise, I understand dialogue as an instance of coordinated social action in which people interpret, build meanings and actions and recognize themselves as co-participants. This is an inclusive process, since it incorporates students in the situation under study who are part of the same dialogue.

Dialogical practices, as a form of building a relational space, allow a coordinated construction of meaning and lead to what Gergen (2009a) calls critical reflexivity. In this regard, Olson, Laitila, Rober, & Seikkula, (2012) note that,

Voices can be linked broadly to the whole range of previous lived experiences that have marked the person for example, the voice of loneliness or love, religious conviction, or cultural ideology etc. They become activated by a present context and can shift in primacy and intensity in the course of dialogue. (p. 423)

In the context of the Colombian armed conflict, we not only want to bring these different voices together, but we want to construct new understanding. We want to generate processes of change and deconstruct narratives loaded with polarization.

As Bakhtin (1981) says, dialogue is the condition for new. Therefore, dialogue can be considered as the essential domain of peace education and as a principle that generates ways of acting that lead us to abandon the idea of language as a means to know the world and invites us, instead, to assume language is a generator of realities. According to Gergen, Gergen & Barrett (2004) dialogue is a form of coordinated action with a relational foundation. In this sense the meaning that emerges in the dialogue is an outcome not of individual action but of the coordinated actions of the participants. Now, it is important to clarify that, when I use the term of dialogue, I am referring to a kind of conversation where the answers are never final, but provisional, where we look to open even wider perspectives and where we want to include everyone's voice. In this sense, dialogue is different from monologue since, in a monologic setting, the central guide for the activity is located within the individual and therefore there is no opening for new meanings or understandings (Lickmann, 1990; Seikkula, 1995). This kind of communication tends to be static, hierarchical, and closed, not promoting new meanings (Olson, Laitila, Rober, & Seikkula, 2012, p. 423).

In accordance with these ideas, popular education, throughout dialogical methodologies, seeks for to progressive social and political change from the interests and struggles of people. "Popular education is a methodology of teaching and learning through dialogue that directly links curriculum content to people's lived experiences, in turn inspiring political action" (Rivera, 2004, p. 133). In *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, Freire (1970) insisted that dialogical encounters help students to develop critical consciousness of social, political and economic dilemmas so that they can take action against them. He opposes "banking" methods of education that treat students as empty objects into which the teacher "deposits" knowledge (Freire, 1970). According to Freire, banking education fosters "cultures of silence" in learners, thus, in order to achieve

transformation, the issues discussed in educational activities must relate to the reality of the learners.

Regarding the above, Anderson & Goolishian (1992) point out that a person can speak *to* another (monologue) or *with* another (dialogue). In this sense, a peace education program, class or activity, may be monologic or dialogic. As peace education teachers, we want to avoid lectures, debates, boring conferences and any type of device that generates a monologic conversation where we tend to impose our singular visions to the students and where none of the participants is really listening or being recognized as legitimate interlocutors (Seikkula & Arnkil, 2006).

We also have to keep in mind that the result of a dialogue is not the prevalence of one discourse over the other, but a polyphony or coexistence between different discourses in a mutual acceptance. In peace education, this position leads the teacher to act as an interlocutor with his/her own opinion, who is not afraid of sharing his/her position openly, but who is aware of the fact that this is only a possible position and not something determined by a higher order.

Likewise, dialogical processes allow the promotion of a caring relationship, which is a fundamental aspect in peace education since, I consider care as an attitude that permits us to improve the way we resolve conflicts; an attitude that can be developed and is useful when it comes to educating for peace.

Only when, through the appreciation achieved in dialogue and common projects, it has become unthinkable to do physical harm to these living others -only then can the points of conflict be safely addressed. Through continuous dialogue, common projects, and chains of connection, we expand the circles of caring. (Noddings, 2008, p. 7)

In this context, the teacher provides proposals, openings, and invitations to the students who maintain full freedom to accept them or not. The outcome of the dialogue in peace education does

not rely only on the construction of the dialogical space, but also on the creation of new and common understandings, that at the same time foster the ongoing dialogue and the construction of new meanings.

When people have a space and process for collaborative relationships and dialogic conversations, they begin to talk with themselves, each other, and others in a new way. Through these conversations differences develop that can be expressed in an infinite variety of forms such as enhanced self-agency and freeing self-identities, different ways to understand themselves, their life events and the people in their lives as well as new options to respond to the challenges and dilemmas of the circumstances and situations in their lives. (Anderson, 2009, p. 9)

Thus, I assume dialogue as the center of my pedagogical practice. Dialogue provides the dynamics that, conducted by caring relationships, allows the encounter among teachers, students, communities and institutions.

Many educators now turn from monologue to dialogue as the chief instrument of education. This does not mean debate, where there are winners or losers, or Socratic dialogue in which the teacher has the correct answer and simply leads the class to a foregone conclusion. Rather, they emphasize: 1) expanding the domain of participation, and especially of findings ways of preventing a few opinionated students for domination, 2) reducing control over the direction of a conversation, so that students passions are on a par with those of the teacher, 3) crediting, students with respect as opposed to correcting them, and 4) replacing the goal of Truth with the possibility of multiple realities. The dialogic orientation discourages ‘canned lectures’ and lock step PowerPoint presentations and encourages teachers to risk their status as ultimate knowers. Teachers are invited to thrust themselves into the collective process, and to make whatever they bring to the table relevant to the unfolding conversation. (Gergen, 2009a, p. 131)

Another inspiration in my work, is the collaborative perspective. In this way, the reader will be able to find, in both experiences, how I incorporate in my work some of the action-orienting sensitivities proposed by Anderson (2012) in order to generate processes of change and learning in

dialogic spaces. I want to focus in three action-orientating sensitivities develop by Anderson (2012) that I consider indispensable in my work in peace education. These are: mutual inquiry, relational expertise, and abandoning the expert position. Mutual inquiry “involves an in-there-together process in which two or more people put their heads together to address the reason for the conversation” (Anderson, 2012, p.14). I believe that mutual inquiry is a way of humanizing the meetings since it requires the recognition of the other as a legitimate other. I want highlight the concept of “recognition” that has always played an essential role in practical philosophy (Honneth, 2010) and in peace education. As is known, a series of political debates and social movements had emerged in the last twenty years, which calls on a stronger consideration of the idea of recognition. Whether it is in discussions on multiculturalism, feminism or peace education, the idea that individuals or social groups have to find recognition or respect in their “difference” is a common stance in a constructionist framework. This becomes meaningful if we consider that the consequences produced by the systematic socio-political violence in Colombia have built realities, languages and social practices of invisibility and exclusion of the difference (may it be guerrillas, demobilized, displaced, etc.) and that those consequences become part of the characteristics of the social environment where our work as educators is involved. That is why the issue of recognition must be necessarily and undeniably the focus in peace education as an essential element of mutual inquiry.

Relational expertise refers to the idea of creating local knowledge together. In peace education, teacher and students each bring a particular expertise to the encounter. Students in armed conflict are experts on themselves and their lives; teachers are experts on a process and space for collaborative relationships and dialogic conversations (Anderson, 2012; McNamee 2007). Thus, the teacher listens without giving instructions on what the group of students is going to say or how

they should speak except for introducing the subject, in the form of questions that they are going to talk. In fact, the role of the teacher is defined as that of another observer within a community of observers who build their history based on the experience that results from the particular coexistence with others and their stories, languages and experiences. In this sense the teacher's ability lies in his/her ability to ask the right questions, from a position of not knowing about the other person's experience in order to understand what each one wants to say and show.

On the other hand, the not-knowing position can be identified as a way of orienting ourselves towards knowledge starting from the idea that, as educators, we must seek the local construction of knowledge created between people in the classroom exchanges. Thus, the "not knowing" stance stimulates curiosity to investigate the students' experiences and meanings. This results in a genuine interest of knowing directly the other with whom a co-building process is undertaken so that how the other person is punctuating, perceiving and building his/her, reality can be understood. This means that the teacher moves away from his/her claim of knowing, of objectivity, and of truth in order to meet the other in scenarios that they are going to build together.

Now, two additional crucial elements in dialogue processes include, listening (Olson, Laitila, Rober, & Seikkula, 2012) and making questions, essential tools for co-construction. Thus pedagogy, from this position, mobilizes co-construction around questions that are framed within a conversational, creative and dialogical act. Questions are the nodule of dialogue and they stimulate the process of peacebuilding. These, as Bateson (1998) says, are a difference that creates a difference; they give access to the problem, but principally to students' resources and, in this sense, to the new construction of learning. From this perspective, it is hoped that, through questions, a new narrative can be created. According to Anderson and Goolishian (1992), questions are the most important tool since it is through them that the path to new understanding is

created and maintained. These questions arise from the teacher's curiosity where it is possible to question the range of understanding that students have so far, constructing and deconstructing beliefs and prejudices in order to generate new insights and learning with the students. "An important inspiration for developing models for questioning from systemic-constructionist thinking and practice; the ideas of neutrality and irreverence act as an invitation to curiosity, an important element in question asking" (Hornstrup, et al, 2012, p. 61). Thus, the best way to generate new understandings is through questions born from a genuine curiosity, which relates to the stance of not knowing. Can we ask questions that are designed to help us understand a different viewpoint rather than questions that are premised on judgment and assumed understanding? Now, the questions that we make should attain transformations in two areas, on one hand, in the reflexive area about the topics covered in class and in the other hand, in the practical area oriented to the development of skills that allow students to generate changes in their closest contexts.

For this, what Nepo (2013, p. 15) indicates becomes very useful; he broadens the understanding of this concept:

Listening is a stimulating process through which we feel and understand the moment in which we find ourselves: we constantly connect our inner world with the world around us, letting them complement each other. Listening is a continuous way of relating to experience.

To the above I would only add that this is the continuous way of relating to others and for this particular case, with the students.

Now, it is not just the act of listening, it is the place from where we listen and the emotions that emerge in this process. With this clarity, in the experiences described in chapters 6 and 7, I sought to take care of the emotions that emerged from the process. According to Maturana (2001) when you recognize the emotion you are in, you can recognize what is possible from that emotion and what not. Reading these emotions is not an easy task, since in education the

necessary pauses are not often made in our conversations and interactions that will allow observing the emotion from which we are acting. That is why I give a very great weight to listening, so the pause will happen there.

By giving such an importance to the listening moment in the dialogues held in class, the action can become more complex focusing a little more in the place for listening proposed by Katz (1995), as an unusual place to generate openings and recognitions of shared aspects, non-visualized connections but not non-existent as Bateson (1979) mentioned. That is the reason why the pedagogical proposals presented have something very special, which is my responsibility as a teacher to invite students to listen from a genuine place that is built on the relationship and is relevant for the students.

Besides the collaborative perspective, another key perspective in this work was Appreciative Inquiry, which aims to highlight the capacities, strengths or skills with which a person, group or organization can mobilize change from dreaming and team working (Subirana and Cooperrider, 2013). In educational contexts specifically, "the term *appreciative* reveals a sense of respect by actively valuing what people in relation to others do to co-create a "good life" (...), it also highlights a sense of curiosity and fascination for the extraordinary and magical worlds" (McAdam & Lang, 2009, p. 21).

The ability to appreciate the resources of the other is a possibility and an attitude that can be developed by any member of an educative community. The role played by teachers is as a protagonist since they are in constant interaction with students (McNamee & Gergen, 1999). "The relational responsibility of teachers goes far beyond providing knowledge and communicating facts. Rather, we can affirm that perhaps their most crucial task is to generate joy and curiosity for curricular learning in addition to teaching how to live life with others in an

appreciative way" (McNamee & Gergen, 1999, p. 7).

In this way, Appreciative Inquiry offers us novel and interesting elements that, in some way, allow mobilizing actions that have been proposed in the present approach to education for peace. AI allows us to develop "a generative and collaborative process in which inter-related people come together to discover skills and values in these precious episodes and to dream of a future where we live these values" (McAdam & Lang, 2015, p. 20). What has been planned and dreamed gain great meaning for the community linked to this process.

In methodological terms, working from appreciative inquiry implies taking into account some essential postulates to be implemented. Among these postulates we find, detecting skills, dreaming of or working with the future, living language in an appreciative way, exchanging ideas or experiences, focusing on what we value. Specifically, an intervention in AI is developed in four moments: discovery, dream, design and destiny. Interventions take action through meetings, interviews, conversations or any other activity that includes the community engaged in the process. For purposes of this work, I focus more on the moment of dreaming in which participants are invited to build common dreams, motivating them to imagine how things could change and what kind of actions they would have to undertake as active agents of a process that aims to change. This dreaming goes together with the ability to innovate and create; probably, imagining a different future world is, at first, a somewhat complicated task. Nevertheless, *"as the ideas of the future are those that create the present,"* undertaking this task in the intervention scenario is fundamental. "Speaking of dreams gives place to the possibility of a different life so that when we talk about our dreams we become agents of our own action" (McAdam & Lang, 2015, p. 30).

Another crucial element in the implementation of this proposal of education for peace is that,

as a part of the dialogical process, I always sought to promote critical reflexivity in students. In an *Invitation to Social Construction*, Gergen (2009a) explains how critical reflexivity is the attempt to place one's convictions into question, to listen to alternative framings of reality and to try to understand and/or reflect about different outcomes of multiple standpoints. In the field of peace education this implies that, throughout the dialogical process, we generate spaces where the students are able to doubt everything that they had accepted as real, true, right or necessary and at the same time, we co-construct something innovative that expands horizons of the students. This brings us to a fundamental point of the present proposal of education for peace, which seeks to ask whether the experience of listening from a different place in the spaces of dialogue generates new ways in which students understand the armed conflict, make decisions, reach agreements and build peace. In this way, what is sought with this proposal for education for peace is that through dialogue we promote spaces where critical reflexivity can emerge, because, "Through this reflective process, participants identify the purposes and values that organize their perceptions and actions; through this learning they can transform themselves and their circumstances" (Rodríguez, 2008, p. 8).

Now, in pedagogical terms some questions arise: how to make it sustainable, how to favor the exercise of critical reflexivity when participants are in their daily lives, how to influence the moment of decision making from the experience in this process for the construction of peace. Regarding the above, I identify with what Graff-Lund and Jacobsen-Pearce (2010) say about the expansion phase where they express concern about how to make the training received sustainable and how to use the resources that could have been appropriated during the process more naturally. But what attracts me more is the strategy of talking about the future, including all those who participated in the conversation. The latter was developed by the author through interviews

and, for the case of this design, there is a specific session where the conversation about the future is a central theme and the reflections are focused to how we co-create the present envisioning the future we want.

5.4 Sources of data collection and analysis of information

The sources of information gathering to capture the pedagogical experience were: Field diaries of the participants (which they delivered weekly), class work, videos, timelines, class recordings and the corresponding transcripts and notes. The analysis of information was performed by using the methodology of systematization of experiences proposed by Torres (1999), where, a categorical analysis and organization of the experiences was made from qualitative data.

From a previous categorization resulting from the questions it seeks to solve, the systematization at first seeks to produce a descriptive account of the experience; a reconstruction of its trajectory and complexity from the different looks and knowledge of its protagonists and of the individuals who have something to say about the practice. Based on various dialogic and narrative techniques [...] we seek to provoke stories of the individuals involved in order to recognize their various readings and identify meaningful issues that articulate the experience. (Torres, 1999, p. 5)

In line with the question and objectives of the research indicated in chapter 1, the analysis of the experience was designed taking into account three categories that acts as axes of the analysis and synthesis of the systematization. These categories were: 1. Significant learnings; 2. Aspects to be improved; and 3. Best practices.

They were defined as follows:

1. Significant learnings: Refers to different orders of learning (personal, theoretical, contextual) that participants identified as meaningful about the pedagogical experience.

2. Aspects to be improved: Refers to those aspects of the pedagogical experience that can be improved in future scenarios.

3. Best practices: This refers to the information obtained from different inputs where students could give an account of the practices used that were more important for them during the process.

The predetermined subcategories of the category of *Best practices* where: 1. Creating a relational context, 2. Critical Reflexivity and, 3. Co-creating the future through the present.

They were defined as follows:

1. Creating a relational context: The interactive activities and processes between students and teacher that foster the coordination of multiple local realities or voices, and the effects of this interaction.

2. Critical Reflexivity: The activities and processes where students could generate and explore multiple descriptions and perspectives where they could place their convictions into question, listen to alternative framings and co-create new understandings.

3. Co-creating the future throughout the present: The emerging possibilities that can be created and amplified, in the development of the construction of a vision for the future that transforms the current moment.

These subcategories emerged in a dialogue with the theoretical notions addressed in chapter 4 where the main notions of social constructionism and peace education from a constructionist stance are addressed.

The subcategories of the categories *Significant learnings* and *Aspects to be improved* were emergent and corresponded to those elements highlighted by the students during the pedagogic experience. These emerging subcategories are unique to each experience and the reader can find

them in the results section of chapter 6 and chapter 7 where, in accordance with the goals of the systematization of experiences, after a detailed description of the context of the pedagogical experience, the reader will find the data analysis of the pedagogical experience from the categories previously described.

For the data analysis, the program NVivo was used. This is software that supports qualitative methods, and it is designed to organize, analyze and find insights in qualitative data. In this way, once the project was created in the program, I proceeded to import all the qualitative data (transcriptions of the classes, fieldnotes, journals, audio files, videos and pictures) to the software. Subsequently, I proceeded to create the conceptual categories (nodes) in the project in order to perform the coding of the data. In analyzing the data, I looked for the frequencies in which students came up with similar comments and observations. This first level of abstraction of information allowed me to make a word frequency count, charts of the labels that I used more often, as well as to identify emerging patterns which allowed me to identify the emergent subcategories in the data. I also cross-referenced fieldnotes, and transcriptions as a way of performing "consistency checks" (Carspecken, 1996). This process was one of the most complex activities of this work because it involved the dialogue of the conceptual and theoretical referents of this dissertation with the singularity of the experience and the data findings.

Once the categories and the subcategories for each experience were identified and codified (that is to say, the experience with the Police and the experience with the ACR), I performed a triangulation of the information obtained. This triangulation is defined by Cisterna (2005) as "the action of gathering and dialectical crossing of all information pertinent to the object of study emerged in an investigation through the corresponding instruments, and which in essence constitutes the corpus of the research results" (Cisterna, 2005, p. 68). There are different

modalities of triangulation and for the purpose of this dissertation, I made at first a triangulation by categories and subcategories for each pedagogical experience. Regarding this phase of analysis, Jara (2011) identifies a fundamental part of the systematization process: a closure phase with an interpretative character of everything that has been reconstructed. This involves retaking the categories with which the systematization was developed, identifying tensions and interrelationships, understanding the logic that the experience had, and comparing the findings with the theory. The results of these analyses of the information is presented at the end of chapter 6 (pedagogical experience with the Police) and 7 (Pedagogical experience with the ACR) after the description of the experience.

The last process carried out consisted of triangulation between the two experiences conducted with the constructionist theory. For this purpose, I analyzed both experiences presented in Chapter 6 and 7, and chose those practices that were recurrent in both cases and identified what was common to both experiences. This analytical exercise is presented in chapter 8 where the reader will find a comprehensive framework for developing peace education programs. This framework is the result of the analysis and triangulation of the experiences in conversation with the question and objectives of the research. The goal of this process was to produce an analytical and interpretative text that highlights a critical reading of the studied problem and that, at the same time, recognizes the point of view of the individuals involved, the incidences of the context, the critical interpretation of the processes, and the emerging categories. This interpretative balance is the itinerary of decisions and methodological actions presented in chapter 8 and is not a rigid design to be "applied" to any reality. It is the reflexive reconstruction of a particular research path that can serve other researchers, only to the extent that they contextualize and recreate it according to their own needs and realities. Thus, chapter 8, besides

being a framework between theory and my personal experience, synthesizes and organizes my way of operating as a teacher and researcher within a constructionist orientation.

5.5 Research development

According to the general and specific objectives of this work and the methodological inspirations of my work for the development of this dissertation, I designed a method for the systematization of experiences of education for peace in non-formal educational contexts, from a constructionist stance. This process was carried out in two different contexts, in a training center of the National Police and in the ACR. Next, I will describe the different phases of the research process:

Phase I: The first step of the research was to establish contact with the institutions where the fieldwork was carried out, followed by the identification of the institutional needs¹⁰ and the co-construction of the curricular plans of every pedagogical experience.¹¹

Phase II: Co-creation of the agenda with the students and implementation of the programs of education for peace from a constructionist stance.¹² This phase was carried out simultaneously with the registration and collection of information (notes, recordings, photos, videos, field journals).

Phase III: Once the implementation of the program was completed and according to the objectives of systematization of the pedagogical experiences, a closing dialogue was carried out for both experiences where I sought to perform with the participants an exercise of reflection on the lessons learned and the most significant moments of the pedagogical experience, as well as reflect on the things that could be improved for future opportunities. The questions that I

¹⁰ For a detailed description of this process see chapter 1.

¹¹ For a detailed description of this process see chapters 6 and 7.

¹² For a detailed description of this process see chapters 6 and 7.

employed to guide this dialogue are shown in the Appendix 11. These closing dialogues, inspired by the proposal of Jara (2011) as techniques to systematize the experience, were a fundamental part in exploring the categories indicated above and in identifying the most relevant learnings of the experience and the aspects to be improved from participants' voices.

Phase IV: Once the sessions were transcribed, and through the qualitative analysis program NVivo, I began to identify, for each experience, the previously established categories as well as the subcategories. The results of the analysis of the information collected for each experience are presented at the end of each chapter after the description of the experience.

Phase V: Implementation of a descriptive account of the experience which is embodied in chapter 6 and 7 where I made a detailed description of the experience and presented the results of the systematization.

Phase VI: Triangulation of the results obtained in the process of investigation analyzing them in the lenses of Social Constructionism and the categories and subcategories. The results of this analysis is presented in chapter.

CHAPTER 6: Peace Education Program with the training schools of the National Police of Colombia

“A teacher cannot see peace as the end of war, but as a medium and long process that disables the cultural forms of violence and builds pedagogical processes that teach us how to deal with conflict, without hiding it, recognizing that conflict can become the key to our growth and making of it the melting pot of the human soul.”

(Mejía, 1999, p. 36)

6.1 Description of the Experience

In February 2015, the *Chair for peace (Cátedra para la paz)* was initiated at the training center of the National Police, Eduardo Cuevas School. It was a process of reflection on the meaning of a stable peace and the challenges that the country will have to face once the largest and oldest guerrilla group in Colombia's history begins its demobilization and reintegration into civilian life. It was a big challenge since the peace that was negotiated in Havana may appear distant from the daily life of police. However, they know that post-conflict is a task that they must assume and therefore the topics covered in the course had to do with these demands.

Thus, in this process I will show how the curriculum was built in a collaborative way with the students and senior officers of the institution. I will also illustrate the pedagogical practices used in the development of classes. Assuming a methodology of systematization, a constant reflection of my practice and therefore an exercise of constant self-reference is required. The exercise of looking at myself, at my actions, allowed me to make permanent adjustments to my pedagogical practices in order to improve or make more useful the dialogic spaces that I built with the

students. In this sense, this research is an interactive reflection on action process (Schön, 1998).

For the purpose of making explicit some basic principles of relational and collaborative practices in peace education, it is clear that the description presented in this chapter does not embrace the totality and complexity of the experience. In this sense, it is important to say that I emphasize aspects connected with the different moments of the relational process and in the interactions that I tried to foster in the classroom. Moreover, it is important to highlight that the teaching practices described are an elaboration of a constructionist perspective in peace education, rather than a step-ordered methodology, theory, or set of techniques.

6.2 Context demands and collaborative construction of the curriculum

Within the framework of peace dialogues with the FARC, and taking into account the challenges of post conflict in 2015, the Colombian government created the Chair for Peace (Cátedra para la Paz) with the aim to

promote the process of appropriation of the knowledge and competences related with territory, culture, economic and social context and the historical memory, with the aim of reconstructing the social tissue, promoting general prosperity and ensure the effectiveness of the principles, rights and duties established in the Constitution. (Decreto 1038 de 2015)

This initiative materialized in the law 1732 of 2015, which intends to provide educative institutions with tools to build a culture of peace through the implementation of citizenship and peace building skills. The law establishes twelve subjects among which any institution, according to its consideration, can choose two: Justice and Human Rights; Sustainable use of natural resources; Protection of natural and cultural wealth of the Nation; Peaceful conflict resolution; Bullying prevention; Diversity and plurality; Political participation; Historical memory; Moral dilemmas; Social impact projects; History of national and international peace agreements; Life projects and Risk prevention. One of the difficulties that this law has presented is that policy

guidelines exist but the institutions still do not have the pedagogical and structural tools, nor the methodologies or curricula guidelines to carry out exercises of peace building in a transversal and generalized way. Every institution interprets the law as they believe and according to their capacities.

In this context, and struggling with the requirements of law, the National Police asked me to implement the Chair for peace (Cátedra para la paz) in their police training centers¹³. In order to design a successful course, coherent with a constructionist stance, this process involved the development of a pedagogical and curricular design that would meet the needs of the institution and the students. For this purpose, and taking up some of the principles of Appreciative Inquiry (AI),¹⁴ a workshop was designed in collaboration with the senior Police officers. This workshop sought to create a visualization of the hopes and dreams of the institution through appreciative language to mobilize the creative potential and to set in motion positive ripples of confidence, energy and enthusiasm. According to Cooperrider & Whitney (2001) from an Appreciative perspective, change occurs when people engage together in inquiry into their strengths, resources, best practices, success, hopes, dreams and ideals.

Thus, in the workshop, I asked the participants to imagine a vision of the future; a dream where they could make clear the role that a police officer should play. Once they had imagine the police of the future (or their ideal police institution), we spent a few minutes exploring what was going on in this future time, what the institution and the police officers look like. Then all of the participants shared their dreams so that collectively we could construct a history from the present to the imagined future where we tried to answer the question of how did we make all this

¹³ The training centers of the national police of Colombia are educational centers where people who want to become police officers are trained for a period of two years.

¹⁴ Appendix 2.

happened? More specifically, participants were asked to imagine themselves into their preferred future and, from that “future” space, articulate how they got from the present to this future. This exercise of envisioning the future together was a dialogic act that allowed them to collectively discover, through conversation, an image involving what skills, characteristics and values a police officer should have. This exercise was intended to develop a common vision of what they value, in order to co-create together - with all participants - a program that was consistent with the dreams they have as an institution.

Groups that are successful tend to be those that have a positive guiding image that is widely shared and galvanizes action. In the Appreciative Inquiry 4-D cycle, therefore, participants spend a great deal of time in creating a shared vision. Likewise, in peace building, linking images and actions is the ultimate objective for the practitioner using processes designed to replace the negative image of war and the enemy or dehumanized *Other* with a different set of images and actions. (Abu-Nimer, 2009, p. 57)

During the activity, a crucial topic for the Police emerged and it was the notion of what they termed as the *Post-Conflict Police*. That is, a policeman who, in addition to fulfilling the actual police code duties, should check the implementation of the agreements reached in Havana and be leaders in the construction of a culture of peace. “We have to prepare the new generations of policemen to accompany the reintegration of ex guerillas, but specially to lead and become conflict mediators who support the community.”¹⁵ It is important to emphasize that a dream that repeatedly arose in the workshop was of a policeman who works hand in hand with the community, which could be a great skill in conflict resolution and mediation and actively promote processes of reconciliation.

Taking this dream into account, we went on to design the profile of the post-conflict

¹⁵ Police of the workshop.

Policeman. This profile was intended to define specific abilities that could be materialized in the Chair for peace (Cátedra para la paz). The profile that emerged in the workshop was as follows: policemen who are reflective, critical and analytical about the historical, social, political and economic facts and phenomena that contribute to peace building; Policemen who manage their conflicts peacefully and make proper use of force; Policemen with dialogic and social skills who foster peaceful coexistence in community; Policemen who promote justice, equality, human rights, democracy and care and respect for others; Policemen with the critical ability to explain social reality and understand the importance of practicing positive peace in the classroom, family, community and to reinforce community values.

Having established the profile of the post-conflict Police, it was easier and more coherent to shape the course curriculum. Thus, the third step of the workshop was to create a curriculum that would allow students to develop the required skills to meet the profile of a *Post-Conflict Policeman*. For this purpose, we design a possibility map. A possibility map is “A process that involves everybody in the system in identifying and mapping the design elements that they believe have the highest potential to accomplish their dreams” (Ludema, et al, 2003 p. 176). I used a chart which had in the middle the dream of the community, taking into account our previous discussion of the profile of the post-conflict police. This identification of the dream of the institution was crucial for the success of a program, since it was from their dreams and expectations that we established all the content associated to the course. In the following step, participants brainstormed the topics that they thought could impact that dream. The point of this exercise was to examine possible topics of interest and the objectives that the program would seek to achieve. Once all the possibilities had been written, they prioritized and selected the most important ones. The topics that emerged as an answer to the collective dream included: Conflict

resolution and mediation; Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR); Police monitoring of guerrilla concentration areas in order to guarantee that no illegal act is going to take place by the guerrillas, peace treaty; reconciliation; transitional justice and land restitution.

In the same way, the importance of a differential curriculum was discussed, taking into account that policemen in the capital cities will have very different situations from those that a policeman in the ex-guerrilla concentration zones will have to face. In this process of curriculum design, the importance of starting from a positive peace conception was pointed out as an increase in social justice. This entails respect for human rights, emphasis on the development of values, respect for cultural differences, acceptance and respect for others.

All these issues that arose in the process of imagining the future allowed a reading of the needs of the context and a curriculum construction that would permit the articulation of the challenges of the Post-conflict Police to the *Chair for peace (Cátedra para la paz)*.

At the end of the workshop, I asked questions about the resources, conditions and relationships in the institution that would contribute to the success of the program and the consolidation of meaningful processes of learning for the students, once I, as a teacher, was no longer there and the research were over. The idea of this exercise was to specify what kind of actions they could perform as senior officers of the institution in order to provide sustainability through time for transformations and learning achieved in the course. This was crucial because it is important to recognize that peace education, like any other form of education, is a long-term process. It is a process that looks to transform relationships as well as structures. However, people often expect instant solutions to problems of conflict. Peace education is a continuing process and the task is to promote joint action in order for the community to benefit fully from its potential.

Once the official aims for the course were established, I made a first proposal for the program

by integrating the orders and needs of the institution with the objectives that I had as a constructionist peace educator and researcher. The main goal that I had was to develop the students' critical reflexivity (Gergen, 2009a), so that the students could become active peacebuilders in thinking and acting upon their local context and with impact on their practices as policemen. Consequently, the idea of working on the design of dialogues in *Cátedra para la Paz* (Chair for Peace) responded to the need for addressing the issues of the class in a relational, collaborative, non-hierarchical way that was coherent with the very principles of peace education and a constructionist stance.

I present below the curricular structure of the program and the sessions dedicated to address each topic. In each session, a dialogical practice was used in order to achieve critical reflexivity.

Table

2

Curricular Structure

Chair for Peace for the training center of the National Police, Eduardo Cuevas School			
<i>Goal</i>	<i>Session</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Activities</i>
Identify dreams and expectations of the top managers of the institution about the program and co-construction of the pedagogical objectives of the Chair for peace	1	Teacher and senior Police officers	Presentation of the process and exploration of hopes and dreams of the institution through Appreciative Inquiry
Construction of a relational space with the students	2	Teacher and students	Presentation of the program, inquiry of interests and expectations of the students in regard of the program.
	3	Teacher and students	Storytelling activity with the students. Appendix 1
Challenges of the Peace Treaty The agreements of the peace treatise	4	Teacher and students	Open Space technology: How do we inform ourselves and construct our truth about what is related to the peace process? 2) What is negotiation and how do we

			negotiate? 3) The actors and milestones of the Havana negotiations
DDR process	5	Teacher and students	Deconstruction of dominant narratives about people in process of reintegration
Reconciliation and Victims reparation	6	Teacher and students	Role play on reconciliation between different social actors in the country, where they had to take different positions and even opposed to their own.
Role of the police in the processes of forgiveness and reconciliation	7	Teacher and students	World café activity: The stories we tell about the role of being police
Conflict Resolution	8	Teacher and students	Elaboration of maps to identify types of conflict, description of the conflict and forms of violence in the processes
Co-creation the present throughout the future	9	Teacher and students	Activity circles for Dreaming, Dream together & Projecting. See Appendix 10
Reflexive closure of the experience	10	Teacher and students	Reflexive dialogue about the process and feedback of the experience

6.3 Scaffolding for peace building dialogues

Because constructionism would shift the emphasis from information gathering to creating possibilities and joint action (McNamee, 2007; Gergen & Gergen, 2004), dialogical practices, and what I have termed as *Scaffolding for peace building dialogues*, can be used in situations where groups of people choose or require to deepen and explore together their personal horizons, perspectives, postures or relationships. Wherever there are impersonal, rigid or polarized stories or conversation, choosing the *Scaffolding for peace building dialogues* as a pedagogical practice will facilitate addressing and discussing topics, content and knowledge in ways that provide opportunities of transformation.

Dialogue is a space of social generativists, an instance of coordinated social action in which individuals interpret and construct meanings and practices, recognizing each other as co-participants. Thanks to a perspective focused on the non-linear, multidimensional and self-eco-organizational dynamics of these spaces, participants can orient themselves towards emerging, unique and random events while being aware of possibilities, resources and strengths, and furthering transformations that could lead to potential alternative future directions. (Schnitman, 2015, p. 14)

Likewise, dialogue strengthens abilities, which are characteristic of the construction of peace culture as long as, in addition to fostering community, it also works on improving listening to others, respecting the contributions of other participants in the conversation, emotional openness and readiness to change. This is the scaffolding, as it makes reference to the sustainable and gradual process in time of the construction of new comprehensions, narratives and skills through reflexive dialogue. The aim is that in developing this process, people come to see, experiment, describe, engage and position themselves in a different way, tackling the addressed issues. This requires not only time but, as we will see next, particular ways of asking questions, listening and mobilizing thinking. Meanwhile, sustainability refers to the need to establish, in each case, a fair or appropriate correlation between the result of the process and the need to improve the ability of participants to maintain, in the future for example, more resilient relationships with the capacity of autonomy in conflict resolution and collaborative management of differences.

Now, for the design of Scaffolding for peace building dialogues, from a constructivist perspective, and in concordance with the methodological inspirations developed in chapter 5, the following principles were fundamental for generating a dialogical space:

The polyphonic component of the encounters which involves including the voices of all the students, using simple language and the need to support everybody's understandings and points of view.

Active listening and coordination of multiple voices that allows you to know the life stories that students bring, taking into account their perspectives, their ways of narrating and understanding, and their meanings. This active listening requires taking into account the following principles: circularity, which considers being constantly connected to what happens in the conversation; and curiosity, which involves keeping a genuine interest in the other and being open to the spontaneous ongoing conversation.

Time management, pausing is crucial to let the other person organize and express his/her thoughts. Ideas emerge during the speaking process and that's why it is one of the most important aspects in the architecture of the dialogic space (Seikkula and Arnkil, 2006).

Use of circular and reflective questions to clarify, expand and improve the understanding of students' stories and lead them to develop critical reflexivity. These questions should be open and shouldn't presuppose right or wrong answers.

Now, in the implementation of dialogues in peace education, it is important to address three key moments upon which we can operate with the hope of generating processes of change in students while we also change ourselves. These moments are, (1) The creation of context and (2) the dialectic of deconstruction-reconstruction. Below I will delve into each of these moments.

Creating the context

From a relational perspective, creating learning spaces, that are open to the multiplicity of voices and realities of the students present in the learning context, is one of the most important elements of a pedagogical practice. However, and as McNamee (2007) points out, a relational learning space does not develop automatically. It requires special effort to create a collaborative and relational setting.

Being relational suggests inviting participants into the very process of collaboratively constructing

how learning will take place, what learning will take place, and what standards will be used for evaluating that learning. Opening each of these conversations to all involved privileges the multiple standards for learning and teaching and determines what counts as knowledge. (McNamee, 2007, p. 325)

At the beginning of the course with the police, and in order to become acquainted with the students and build a trusting and warm atmosphere, we discussed the aims of the course and we mutually set the tone and agenda for their learning process. Within this process, I explained what dialogue is, how it differs from other conversations and why this methodology is important in peace education. We also talked about how, during the dialogues, we would have moments for joint-responsibility and discussion on some previous readings and personal experiences. In some other moments, we would have the opportunity to identify dominant discourses about the topics and challenge them, and we also would have opportunities to question our premises in a safe learning environment. To end this first stage of agreements, it was important to agree on how we might assess and report what was learned in class. On this point, we agreed to make a final self-evaluation in which students could give an account of what had been learned in the sessions and, as part of the self-evaluation, I would provide feedback to each student about their performance in the classroom.

After having pointed this out, the first activity was a collective selection of the topics that most attracted them to be addressed in class. Since many topics arose, it was necessary to vote on the five issues that would be addressed in the dialogues. The students chose the topics, keeping in mind the selection made by the senior military commanders¹⁶. The issues were: (1) How to

¹⁶ The topics suggested by the senior military commanders were: Conflict resolution and mediation; Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR); Police monitoring of guerrilla concentration areas in order to guarantee that no illegal act is going to take place by the guerrillas, peace treaty; reconciliation; transitional justice and land restitution.

repair victims, (2) The agreements of the peace treaty, (3) What should be done for a successful reintegration process, (4) How the police could help in processes of reconciliation, (5) Forgiveness and reconciliation and 6) Conflict resolution.

After the selection of topics, I asked them to share with the rest of the class the topic that most attracted them and their reason for this preference. The aim of this activity was to get to know each other better and learn what resonated concerning the issues under discussion. By allowing students to express their expectations and dreams, as well as what is interesting or not interesting for them about peace, violence, and conflict resolution, the feeling that all people contribute to the dialogue and are in equal participants was encouraged. Starting conversations with what students brought to dialogue and the understandings that they have on the topic not only allowed strengthening students' voice but also facilitated their ability to see their different perspectives regarding the theme or concept that is being treated. From the first encounter, something that was very gratifying was the openness and seriousness with which each student participated in the different activities, and their interest in giving their opinion, where they often stood out in their interventions their values and their vocation to serve the country, and their sense of duty in situations of injustice and social inequality.

However, three concerns emerged for me. The first one had to do with the fact that most of the students had been victims of the armed conflict and had chosen the military life as a means to exit from the vulnerable situation they experienced, prior to entering the Police. According to Martín-Baró (1984) when we work with communities in contexts of armed conflict, it is very important to know the involvement of the people in the war, since this fact will determine to a large extent the type of activities that we design. In this sense, it was obvious that a class on peace building would bring conflicting tensions between the responsibility that a policeman has

and what the heart says according to the experiences lived in the context of the conflict.

My other concern had to do with the form of military life and the collective identification it involves since, in the military context, there are particular dynamics and meanings, which are subject to hierarchies and power, and sometimes authoritarian relationships are privileged. This became evident in the hierarchical structure of the institution and the competitive environment in the belief that conflicts can be easily resolved by military means. An example of this military discipline (with which I was not familiar) was the military salute that they did whenever I entered the classroom, or whenever they wanted to talk. Likewise, and as part of the institutional dynamics there was always in the classrooms a commander in charge of the discipline and the good behavior of the students. The challenge for me, as a teacher, was to know how I would work with the different values and forms of practice proper of a military context and how we could coordinate our learning activities for going on together in a different way.

My third concern had to do with interactional patterns where students and the institution in general interact from the prejudices and stigmatization marked by the extremist logic that generates war, in which people have only two ways to relate and identify themselves: as friends or as enemies, as guerrilla or military, victim or victimizer. These kinds of frames of meaning lead one to interpret the actions of the other as risky, evil, harmful etc. In this sense, the language game is based on mistrust and labeling, constituting emotional scenarios that define ways of acting, thinking or speaking from frameworks such as polarization, threat and mistrust.

Given these concerns I had with the group, I found that the best way to achieve relational engagement and introduce them to different interactional patterns in the teaching-learning context was to abandon the expert position (McNamee, 2007; Anderson & Goulishian, 1992) and build a relational tissue of care and support (Noddings, 2008).

Abandoning the position of knowing (e.g. I am the “expert” teacher in peace education who comes from the capital city), was reflected in several aspects. First, in the validation of experiences and knowledge of the participants and in the recognition and legitimation of suffering of many of them facing their lived war situations. Granting legitimacy to the local and familiar practices each student brought to the dialogue was also crucial in this process. This implied defining myself less as an expert transmitter of peace education and more as an expert in maintaining a dialogical space (Anderson & Goulishan, 1992). In that sense, contents, knowledge and topics can be talk over in ways that provide opportunities for peace building.

As professionals -whether educational, therapeutic, medical, artistic, or any other kind- we expect ourselves to be experts, and those with whom we work also expect us to be experts. After all, it is our expertise that grants us the identity of ‘professionals’. I find that embracing a collaborative professional stance requires a critical examination of our expert positions. It ironically requires that we suspend any uniform or proven method of professional practice and, instead, entertain what sorts of actions might help construct us as effective professionals in the very specific relationships and contexts we find ourselves in at any given interactive moment. (McNamee, 2007, p. 315)

Abandoning the expert position also implied questioning traditional perspectives of teaching (where the teacher/student relationship is hierarchical) and offer students different forms of class organization. In this new dynamic of class to which I invited them, I was no longer the teacher full of knowledge with the students as passive observers, empty of knowledge. All of us would be in a horizontal relationship and, as a consequence, we would share the control of the class, our knowledge, the content, activities, assessments, etc. Likewise, I must highlight that I was very insistent with the director of the institution to request that the commander in charge of the discipline (who by the way had to be standup the entire session) could either participate in the activities or perform a different role than impose the discipline. Fortunately, the director of the

institution allowed me to include the commander in class activities.

This details of the class organization were forms of inviting the students to a different place to which they were accustomed. I feel that shifting the power dynamics within the classroom to promote a collaborative process allowed me to make contact with them through the recuperation of the participants' knowledge and experiences and recognize the expertise they have on the issues of the class. The position of 'not knowing' benefited the process of engaging the students, allowing myself to hear their voices regarding their concerns of the post-conflict and to understand this phenomenon as a much more complex process. In the same way, this process of questioning traditional perspectives of teaching has profound political implications in the classroom, principally in peace building, where equity and horizontality in relationships is an essential element. "Using education as a sorting device is problematic for peace educators, since the idea of peace itself is antithetical to vertical social relations and hierarchies in any form" (Galtung, 2008 p. 52).

Hand in hand with this exercise of shifting the power dynamics, the construction of a net of caring relationships that served as a support or secure base for the students in the different reflective and transformational processes that were activated in the dialogues was also necessary. This relational pattern had to be built as a responsible pedagogical practice in the classroom since, without this relationally secure base, it was difficult to give place to the transformation of meanings and beliefs, especially on issues as sensitive as reparation, forgiveness and reconciliation in the context of the Colombian armed conflict. As I pointed out above, since many of the students were victims of the armed conflict, the sharing they experienced in the dialogues was only possible within a scenario where each person was allowed to speak without any fear of being attacked or criticized and which, in turn, invited a complex view of the

different situations, thus enriching the analysis even when the opinions were divergent or contradictory. This involved the assumption that, in the interchange of knowledge during the interaction process, students' emotions, values, prejudices and expectations converged simultaneously. Therefore, the history lived by the students gave place, particularly in the dialogues, to the recognition of the other from his diversity, from the way he builds meaning for the social practices developed. This is understood from social constructionism as the coordination of multiplicity; it is a crucial activity that has to occur at all times of dialogue since it is only in this way that we can develop critical reflexivity in students.

Definitely, this collaborative effort was unusual for the students but had a very important influence in how I invited students to participate and work together in the classroom, and most important the way we would engage, such that together we could create a sense of peace building and creating new visions of the role of the police in the post-conflict. "Peace education focuses on the processes involved in the acquisition of knowledge and skills. Not only the subject matter, but also how it is taught, in what context, and how this knowledge is reproduced later" (Spruyt, et al, 2014, p. 4).

6.3 Dialectics of deconstruction-reconstruction in peace building

A vital move in the scaffold for peace building dialogues is the movement of deconstruction-reconstruction of meanings and narratives for the students. Both processes are moments of the same reality that move students from what is familiar to critical reflexivity – the attempt to place one's premises into question, by listen to alternative framings of reality and, through reflection, being able to understand different standpoints and constructions of reality (Gergen, 2009a).

This process involves three levels. The first one consists of the creation of information in the sense proposed by G. Bateson (1998): introducing differences that make a difference. The second

level is to produce enough rareness (Andersen, 1994) so students will be able to question what they ordinarily take for granted; the third level involves a deeper change which is critical reflexivity in itself. In the three levels of change that I propose, we seek to build new meanings and consequently to expand the students' possibilities for action.

At this point, it is important to note that from the perspective of dialogue, it is understood that the processes of meaning and language are fundamental to generate a movement in any of the three levels of change described above. Thus, in the scaffold for peace building dialogues, the processes of signification were focused on the elaboration of lived experiences from the present, in order to achieve the configuration of new futures.

However, since meaning making is a relational activity (McNamee, 2016; McNamee and Gergen, 1999), in order to generate the movement of deconstruction-reconstruction, it is essential to create a conversational space. It is only through the coordinated action emerging in conversational spaces that we, as teachers, can transform the perspectives that students have of themselves, their relationships, their possibilities and their future. Thus, dialogue assumes that the parties have not only the capacity to express their visions, but to be open to other forms of understanding and learning. In this conversational space, it is important to share information and to be willing to listen because dialogue remains alive when we are curious and show genuine interest in the vision and knowledge of the other, expressed through the act of asking questions and listening in an active and respectful way. It involves a teacher's sensitivity to the nuances of the different answers during the dialogue. This is the recognition that the meaning of the conversation is given not in a person's intentionality but in the effect that the conversation has in the other. It involves a connection between the teacher and his/her students.

It also involves the capacity of the teacher to take into account the answers (verbal and

nonverbal) of every student and, in the same way, to respond to the conversation that is taking place and not to his/her own interests. Thus, the elements to be developed in the conversational process are characterized because they aim at active listening from all the participants, directing the conversation from the recognition of the students' own solutions and the appreciation of opportunities.

This form of dialogue enables teacher and students to build together transformative histories. When working from a dialogical perspective, the coordination of multiplicity involves an invitation to all participants to become part of the conversation, encouraging more fruitful meetings because it lowers the non-cooperation in the conversational process. It also allows for a transformed view of passive individuals to active individuals in interaction, finding connection points on what has been said by the participants.

In order to illustrate the above, I will point out an activity that the students noted as the one that most mobilized them. For this purpose, I introduced the students to some historical facts and decisions of the Colombian armed conflict touching the demobilization of the M-19, the general principles of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) policy, the negotiations between the government and FARC and ELN. In dialogue, we engaged in an activity in which each participant had to take a stance on the process of reintegration of demobilized in Colombia and either defend or oppose it. There were claims such as, "the demobilization will never change," "the DDR in Colombia doesn't work," "the reintegration process can't be the same for paramilitaries and guerrillas." The point of this exercise was to demonstrate that, even among us, we had various ways of looking at things. Through a historical review of the demobilization of different armed groups in Colombia, the hypothetical neutrality of the reintegration process was gradually deconstructed and the students were able to see how the subject of the armed conflict

has always represented the values that have been celebrated at that time. Simultaneously, being Police, they had participated in a process whereby they have constructed a particular political discourse of demobilization.



Figure 1.

In this example, part of my job as a teacher was to encourage and accompany the changes in the meanings that the students assigned to their experiences. Thus, the exercise of re-signification sought that the students identified “dominant narratives” and made a thoughtful dialogue with themselves and with others, where interaction with the demobilized was understood as a process of mutual influence in which prejudices and questions, developed by them, on the armed conflict could be present.

Because language is central in constructionism, a key element in the success of the dialogue is the teacher’s ability to maintain a dynamic conversational space. To achieve this, the type of questions that are asked are a very important tool for building collaborative dialogues (Anderson, 2007) and to co-create new knowledge. For this reason, one of the major challenges in the

different classes with the police, and in the example that I just illustrated, was creating and thinking of questions that foster reflection in the students. Here, in the present dialogue situation, questions exploring multiple meanings of experiences of the past, and inviting them to reflectively investigate (hypothesize) possible futures was experienced as a vital part of the dialogues.

It is important to note that several authors have emphasized the transformative power of questions (Deissler, 1987; Penn, 1982; Tomm, 1985); in fact, the variety of questions is endless. For the purpose of this phase of the dialogue that is the movement from deconstruction to reconstruction of narratives I have chosen the circular and reflective questions proposed by Karl Tomm (1985; 1987; 1988) taking into account that such questions can be extremely important in challenging existing patterns of the taken-for-granted, and softening the boundary between the given and the possible. According to Tomm (1988), circular questions are characterized by a general curiosity about the possible links and connections between people, actions, perceptions, feelings and connections. Reflective questions, on the other hand, seek people to reflect on the implications of their current perceptions and actions in order to consider new options. Within reflective questions we find, a) Future-oriented Questions, b) Questions within the Observer's Perspective, c) Questions about the Unexpected Change of the Context, d) Questions Introducing Hypothesis. For the reader who is interested in the type of questions I used in this experience, they are available in Appendix 3, where the type of questions used during the dialogue process is illustrated through examples.

The third step of the scaffolding dialogue was that of confusion about the challenges of post-conflict and how we could work together to foster reconciliation and a successful reintegration process. This confusion was provoked by what we had learned, but also by an experience shared

by a person who had been demobilized and who had joined us during the class. This person told us how his process of reintegration was carried out, what his difficulties were and what facts have helped him in the process. The demobilized person who joined us during the dialogue told us that the most difficult aspects of reintegration are discrimination and rejection of society. The students were very restless and challenged about his account of the ex-combatants. Here are some of the comments of the students at the end of the class: “I’m surprised to see how the ex-guerrillas are also victims of the conflict, and how many of them had no choice but to join the armed group to survive ... as I join the police.” Another student said: “You never imagine your enemy as a human, who has problems, feelings and reasons to join to the armed group;” “I always thought that the reintegration process wasn’t possible, but after listening to the demobilized that was with us today I learned that is possible, but I also learned that stigmatization is one of the biggest obstacles for a successful reintegration.”

After this exercise, the next step was reconstruction. The idea was to explore not only how we could create the post conflict police that could counteract all kinds of dogmatism and certainty in our work, at this point, the main challenge was to explore whether an accepted reality may be meaningfully understood in another way. The idea of this activity was to invite students to doubt of some aspects related to the armed conflict that they have accepted as real, true, right or necessary. This process of deconstruction-reconstruction that leads to critical reflexivity was an invaluable resource in this experience principally for the topics where discourses were more polarized like DDR, reconciliation and forgiveness.

6.4 Analysis of the Systematization of the experience

In accordance with the objectives of the research, the systematization presented here seeks to collect and organize a series of pedagogical practices that were used during the experience that

were meaningful for the participants. In this sense, the systematization proposes a possible order to reflect on the learnings of the experience. The following analysis will be organized according to the categories developed in Chapter 5, which are: *Significant learnings*, *Best practices* and *Aspects to be improved*.

Significant learnings

From the analysis of the transcriptions of the classes made through the Nvivo program, three subcategories arise for this category: Conflict resolution, DDR, and Peace treaty.

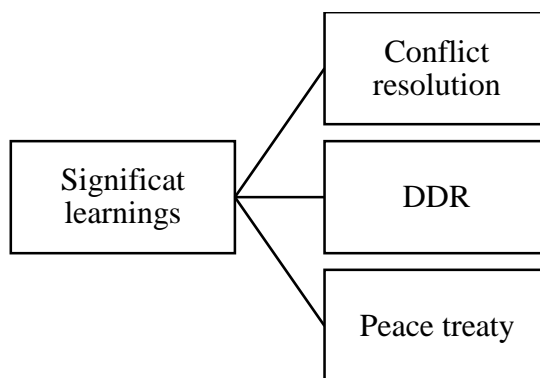


Figure 2. Codification Significant practices

Regarding the *Conflict Resolution* subcategory, students understood it as a significant learning since they could relate it to their daily activities as police officers. They also indicated that they found another way of handling and resolving conflicts instead of using brute force, as they normally do. It was also frequently mentioned by the students that to have learned to listen to both parties in conflict was very important because it avoids bias and the application of the law in an unfair way.

The DDR subcategory, understood by students as a significant learning on *Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration* processes, was of great interest for them since, in the post-conflict, they would become guarantors of the reparation processes that demobilized people will have to carry out. They point out that by understanding what the DDR is about and working on

prejudices they have about demobilized people, they will be able to provide better support in the processes of symbolic reparation.

Concerning the *Peace treaty* subcategory that was highlighted by students as a significant learning among the different agreements of the process, they repeatedly noted the importance of being acquainted with the content of the negotiations in Havana and the agreements reached with the FARC. It should be underlined that, despite being part of the armed forces of Colombia and playing an important role in the post-conflict period, the police officers participating in the course knew very little about the agreements. Therefore, an important part of the program was focused on reading these agreements, giving rise to a dialogue about the implications and challenges they would have to face in their daily work.

Here I want to note that when addressing the peace treaty, there was a feeling of dissatisfaction on the point of reparation of victims among the students. This can be explained if we take into account that many of the participants were direct victims of the armed conflict. According to this, I consider that this topic needs a special kind of work that goes beyond the learning space, giving it a more psychosocial approach, especially when addressing such sensitive topics as forgiveness and reparation. Therefore, this was one of the longest sessions; listening to their fears and disagreements about the subject was really vital.

From the subcategories cited above, I find it very important to provide lessons on the agreements in any program of education for peace in Colombia. These lessons should contemplate all the concerns that arise not only from the armed forces but also from the civilian population in order to build from the polyphony a collective understanding of the complex and transitional moment that Colombia is experiencing.

Best practices

Regarding the category of *Best practices*, it contains the following three categories: 1. Creating a relational context, 2. Critical Reflexivity, 3. Co-creating the future throughout the present. The graph below shows the codification made through the Nvivo program:

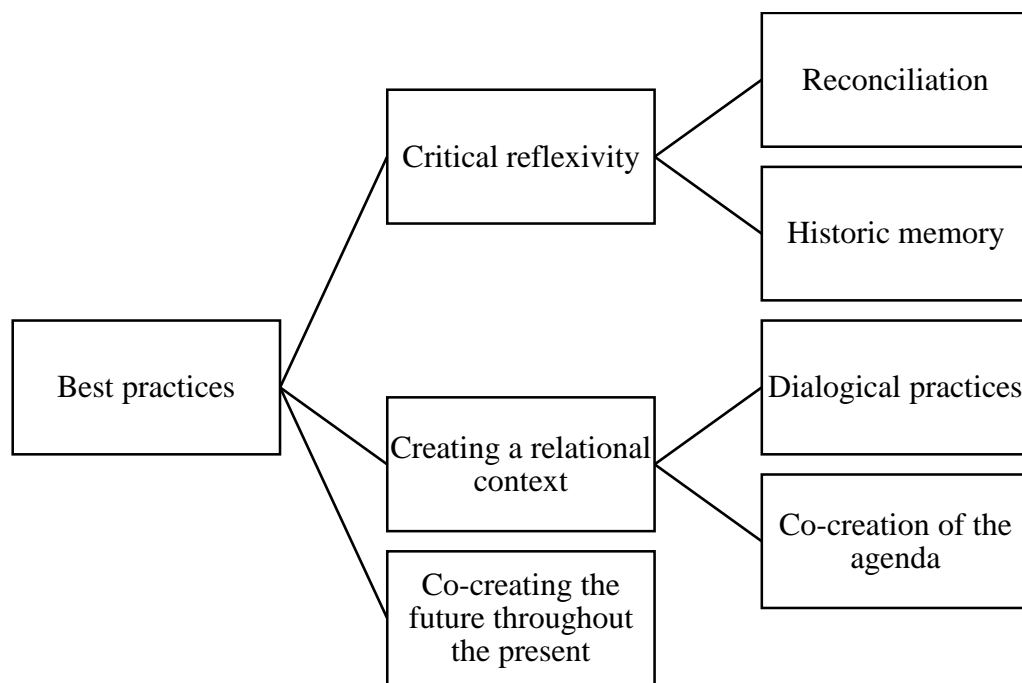


Figure 3. Codification Best practices

The category *Creating a relational context* was brought out in this experience through the importance students acknowledged in the listening activity that took place throughout the dialogical practices as a way of enhancing relationships in the classroom. Listening means the ability of recognizing the place from which we understand what we hear from others and the different movements that occur when we are there. To begin with, I was able to see how the dialogical practices allowed the students to listen to new stories from their classmates, which made a difference with what is normally discussed: "It was very important for me to know the experiences of my classmates because, despite the fact that we spent a lot of time together in the

training school, I didn't know that many of them were displaced by violence" (Course student).

Listening gained great strength in the dialogical practices that were developed in class. It was meaningful for the students and the possibility of new reflections was experienced in a very passionate way. Here, I want to point out that these dialogical spaces were one of the biggest challenges of the proposal because in proposing an unusual space of dialogue, I sought to move them from a place of certainty. It is also important to highlight how these listening spaces were key to achieving historical memory spaces; the students were able to present to others the version of their own stories, which generally refer to topics of violence or daily situations that they consider important to generate reflection on what happened.

These exercises of dialogue, as one of the students said, opens up the possibility to see such controversial topics from a much more reflective place and start wondering how to take advantage of what they have experienced in a daily space. The student highlighted that listening is really valuable because if you really listen to the other without interrupting you can reflect on his/her ideas and consider them in a more thoughtful way.

Similarly, the listening exercise allowed those who spoke first, after observing what effects listening had had on the other, to recognize aspects that had been left out in his/her story and to take care of the other person: "I realize that I did not know many things about my classmates, and now, when listening to them, I know that we share the same reasons to be here in the Police" (Student of the course).

In the last narrative, the way in which listening takes place not only at the moment we hear but also at the time we talk could also be seen. I could see that the experience of not being able to question the other enabled them to understand in depth what is happening: "At a more general level of the exercise, making a pause and taking a moment to think allows a deeper reflection on

the implications of our role in society and in peace construction" (Course student).

The above gives way to another key element for the creation of a relational context: emotions, understood as elements that allow one to be in tune with the other and to recognize oneself in those emotions. In this way, the learning space and the dialogical practices allowed them to recognize within themselves emotions such as, fear, uncertainty, anger, hope and allowed them to listen to new things and mainly to see in their peers someone to feel identified with. It also let them move to other emotions and feel how the process marked them in each moment recognizing the way they are living at the present. "Regarding emotions, at first we were angry when we remembered the difficult moments of displacement caused by the guerrilla and the idea that they were not going to pay for what they did. But it was also essential to realize the importance of reconciliation and understanding that an important part of the agreements is the reparation of victims, which had not been clear for me" (Student of the course). Both, recognition of emotions and active listening in dialogical practices were important elements in this experience that granted not only the creation of a relational context but also elements that favored processes of *Critical reflexivity*.

Now, for the category of *Critical reflexivity* there were two issues in which this process was really evident and they came about when we addressed the topics of reconciliation and historical memory. For both topics, it was important for students to understand that for achieving reconciliation and memory processes it was necessary, firstly, to recognize the multiple perspectives of the conflict and to create spaces for the coordination of multiple local realities or voices, without imposing the one on the other. Regarding the topic of reconciliation, which was one of the most controversial issues of the course, students indicated that it was very important for them to reflect on other possible actors for reconciliation, on how they believe that the

community perceives them, and how they imagine that the demobilized perceive the police. One of the students described the process as the gradual widening of frames. He said that in the class you look at a problem in a dialogue again and again, gradually shifting and changing the frame or lens until they are in line with the problem. This expresses the gradual shifts in attitudes that make reaching a new comprehension possible.

Although they were concerned when considering situations in which meeting spaces for reconciliation, memory and forgiveness were not possible, some mentioned the need for listening, respecting others, and changing the paradigm to negotiate the common good, and they also mentioned the possibility of dialogue even with the most opposed actors.

Likewise, another fundamental element of the Chair was that the students were able to see how peace-building starts from the local and from our closest contexts, where reconciliation processes and historical memory are consolidated: "This topic is of particular interest, because in our daily life we must be mediating agents for the people we support, in the neighborhood in which we work, in our homes and in every moment" (Student of the course).

"Peace is not something that we sign. It isn't about dialogues that were signed in Havana. It goes beyond it. It is about our daily actions. This is the main element I have learned in the chair for peace; how in our daily actions, in our relationships, in every small action we build peace. We have the option of violence, which is what we are used to in Colombia, or the option of peaceful coexistence" (Student of the course).

Critical Reflexivity was also evidenced in the reflection on the learning process. It is clear that when critical reflexivity is the goal of the pedagogical agenda, we necessarily have to design new forms of evaluating, giving feedback and systematizing the experience. In terms of the co-evaluation made by the students at the end of the course, we had a dialogue on the changes in the

meanings of their contexts (individual, familiar, social, cultural and political) and according to what these new understandings would affect the way in which they continue to become police officers. This exercise of self-assessment sought to systematize the experience and to reflect on the learning process. In contexts of evaluating and systematization of educational projects, Jara (2012) claims that the process involves conducting an exercise of abstraction, starting from the practice, with an emphasis on the results achieved at that moment and those that haven't been achieved. Jara complements this by saying that the evaluation has as object of knowledge the immediate practice of the people who implement and/or are impacted by a given project.

In accordance with the above, this exercise of self-assessment of the course took us to a level of "equity in participation" dealing with the construction of knowledge and how it makes sense in specific and relational contexts. This means challenging existing realities (and the idea of truth as unique and absolute); realizing new realities; and the potential of continuous dialogue. These are the three major transformative outcomes involving the scaffolding peace building dialogues in peace education.

With regard to the subcategory of *co-creating the present throughout the future*, dialogical spaces appear to be very important as ways to reflect and decide how they can become part of this great moment that the country is living. The students also point out that the activity of the circles for Dreaming, dream together & Projecting¹⁷ was meaningful since they sought to inquire about the particular form in which every student was going to contribute to reconciliation and forgiveness, understood as crucial elements in the construction of peace. The opportunity of dreaming that the sessions offered them, suggests that from their dreams it is possible to re-build a different future that is configured through daily interaction. On the latter, Cooperrider and

¹⁷ See Appendix 10

Whitney (2003), describe that human systems grow in the direction of what is persistently asked. In this sense, the simplest but most important action that a group of students can take is to reflect on the necessary actions to achieve the dream of a peaceful country. Thus, the task of inquiring about possible futures allowed us to approach the possibility of materializing concrete actions in the present and alternative ways of contributing to the construction of a culture of peace.

Aspects to be improved

The analysis showed aspects that participants considered important to be improved in future experiences. The most highlighted was the fatigue of the participants after long hours of work and/or study at school, especially in the evening sessions. They also pointed out that some groups were too big and as a consequence, participation was not easy for all the students. They highlighted the importance of including the entire institution in the training with the purpose of strengthening more officers of the institution in their conceptual and practical levels. In this context, the suggestion is to continue with the exercises of multiplication and transference of what has been learned in the chair, as well as to generate alternatives so that people who could not enter the course can support conflict resolution and mediation activities. In addition to this, the students proposed to strengthen the processes of systematization of the activities carried out once the course is finished, so that participants can collectively generate reflexive processes on the implementation of the acquired knowledge. They also point out the importance of strengthening and promoting more processes of education for peace. Participants suggested the development of continuous training courses that include a wide range of topics.

CHAPTER 7: Peace Education Program with the Colombian Agency for Reintegration

The signature of a Peace Agreement in Colombia poses great challenges for the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) policies. One challenge concerns the role of the education sector in the reintegration of the demobilized, where peace education plays an essential role in introducing people, who are laying down their weapons, to civilian life. “DDR activities are crucial components of both the initial stabilization of war-torn societies as well as their long-term development. DDR must be integrated into the entire peace process from the peace negotiations through peacekeeping and follow-on peace building activities” (United Nations, 2012).

The United Nations (UN) has defined each of the stages of a DDR process as follows: **Disarmament** which aims to collect the weapons and ammunition used in combat that are handed over to the authority in charge of its documentation, storage, redistribution, destruction and/or reuse. This phase frequently requires military observers provided by the international community. **Demobilization** involves the dissolution or reduction of the number of combatants belonging to an armed unit. This stage, in turn, contains the following aspects: 1. Planning, 2. Concentration of combatants in contemporary camps, 3. Registration in databases, 4. Handing over of weapons, 5. Orientation before mobilization, and 6. Absolute licensing of ex-combatants. **Reinsertion** is a moment prior to reintegration where the State offers assistance to ex-combatants, however, this assistance is temporary and it may include benefits for security, food, clothing, medical services, education, employment and tools. Finally, **reintegration** is the process by which ex-combatants acquire the status of civilians and obtain sustainable employment and regular income. Essentially, it seeks to integrate them again, socially and economically, into the community. Generally, the stages of reinsertion and reintegration are

planned so the people separated from the armed groups obtain assistance from the State. In the Colombian case, the reintegration process is carried out by the Colombian Agency for Reintegration¹⁸ (ACR).

Demobilizations in Colombia are increasing, showing that, as time goes by, more people decide to leave the armed group, lay down their weapons and join civilian life. According to ciphers provided by the Ministry of Defense during the period 2006 – June 2014, 18.878 people demobilized themselves individually. It is highlighted that the largest number of demobilized people took place between 2007 and 2008, representing 35% of the total of the study period. However, this number has been steadily decreasing to 1.350 cases in 2012. 88% of the demobilized corresponded to adults and 12% corresponded to children who were disengaged from the conflict; 78% were men and 22% women. By armed group, 80% came from the FARC in 2014, 15% from the ELN and 5% from other groups. It is estimated that the number of combatants of the Revolutionary Armed Forces of Colombia (FARC) were 6.700 in 2014 (Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración, 2015), who, for the most part, would become part of the reintegration process once the peace agreement was approved. The number of demobilized would increase if the ELN decided to sign a peace agreement with the National Government.

In this context, this chapter summarizes the results of the field work carried out in the second semester of 2016 with the ACR which sought to strengthen the reintegration processes in Colombia through training and qualification of the professionals who work in the ACR in peace education so they have the tools and knowledge that will enable them to address different forms of violence and reduce the risk of recidivism of former combatants into illegality. Demobilized

¹⁸ The Colombian Agency for Reintegration (ACR) is the entity responsible of the DDR policies and the reintegrating into civilian life of the people or armed groups that voluntarily demobilize, either individually or collectively. For more information: <http://www.reintegracion.gov.co/es>.

people who were interested in receiving this training as part of the reintegration process also attended the training.

The chapter is divided into four sections. The first one is a general framework about the reintegration process in Colombia, as well as a synthesis of the institutional demand and requirement for the development of the program. The second one relates to the construction of a relational setting and the co-construction of the agenda with the training participants. In the third part I present how we can use dialogical practices for the training of peace building skills. Finally, in the fourth section I present the analysis conducted from the systematization of the experience.

7.1 Context of the Reintegration process in Colombia

For cases as the Colombian one, with contexts and dynamics of armed conflict, the Policy Committee of the UN General Secretariat (2012) argues that peace building involves a range of measures aimed at the reduction of the risk of lapsing or relapsing into armed conflicts and situations of violence. The objective of these measures is to strengthen, at all levels, the national capacities for conflict management and to build the bases of a sustainable peace, supported in the promotion of different dimensions of human and social development (UN, 2012). Undoubtedly, the Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration policy (DDR) and the approach of reintegration in Colombia embody such measures for peace building; however, to achieve the consolidation of interactions that can realize the visions of peace from relationships where violence is not the privileged way of interaction, the role of peace education becomes essential.

However, even though in Colombia the concern about peace education has had a motivating boom in recent years, the experiences in this field suffer from a lack of research about the processes that are part of Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR). Unfortunately, there is not enough reflection about programs, strategies and teaching practices

that, in addition to supporting the reintegration process, also commit to the construction of memory and the decline of the different forms of violence.

It is important to highlight that with reintegration as an essential part of the DDR processes, the ACR seek to encourage the sustainable return of the demobilized to legality and the capacities of the receiving communities to integrate this population and to contribute with guarantees of non-repetition and promote scenarios of reconciliation (Gleichmann et al., 2004; Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración, 2014). This allows the understanding of the processes of reintegration as a means for the construction of peace. Indeed, it is expected that people who are part of the process of reintegration, once their situation of vulnerability overcame, show:

A greater commitment with the environments where they get reintegrated and an attitude of autonomous and active citizens in the construction of peace and development of the country. This also means that at the conclusion of the reintegration process they will have a greater responsibility and freedom to exercise their rights and duties. (Agencia Colombiana para la reintegración, 2014, p. 18)

At present, once ex-combatants give away their weapons and demobilize, they will start a process called the Reintegration Route and a work plan will be built between the ACR and the person who is in a reintegration process, seeking the consolidation of a life project within a framework of legality. In this framework, the reintegration route is understood as, “the path that each person in the process, conducted by the ACR, must follow to get totally reintegrated into the social, economic and political life” (Agencia Colombiana para la Reintegración, 2014). Now, the Reintegration Route is operationalized through eight dimensions which favor the integral accompaniment of the individual by means of the strengthening and acquisition of skills and assets that lead to overcoming vulnerability generated by participation in organized armed

groups outside the law, as well as to transit to the autonomous exercise of citizenship (ACR). Thus, the reintegration process becomes a model of holistic understanding of the person in the process of reintegration from the following eight (8) dimensions: personal dimension, productive dimension, family dimension, health dimension, educational dimension, citizenship dimension, security dimension and habitability dimension.

To achieve the objectives proposed, the ACR has different professionals who are known as reintegration professionals. These professionals have the task of accompanying the people who are in the process of reintegration in their transition from ex-combatant status to citizen status, through the development of competences and abilities necessary for a successful reintegration. However, this accompaniment is not a simple task, since it is often difficult to achieve if there is not enough preparation and a conscious, consistent and coherent effort to create learning environments and positive experiences that favor quality interactions and relationships among the demobilized and the professionals of the ACR. On the other hand, the reintegration professionals note that one of the greatest difficulties they face in their daily work is how the demobilized people deal with conflicts and the kind of violent interactions they privilege.

On this point, several authors have deepened the complexity of work with demobilized people since some of the violent interactional patterns, as a result of war, continue emerging in the process of reintegration (Estrada, Ibarra and Sarmiento, 2007; Quevedo-Hidalgo, 2008; Theidon, 2009; Granados-García, 2014). Salgado and Rodríguez (2016) point out how the patterns of interaction used in daily life by people in a reintegration process show that it is difficult to socialize and build trustful relationships with others. On their side, Ruiz and Hernández (2008) argue that the dynamics of an illegal armed group involves deep ruptures in the areas of people's socialization and establish new scenarios for the socialization of individuals. These authors claim

that the actions for subduing, subjugating and colonizing the subjectivity of those linked to the paramilitary group seek to establish the logic of verticality in the way of being in the world. Thus, duty and obedience are moral imperatives for action, feeling and thinking, together with permanent fear and uncertainty for one's own survival (Granados-García, 2014, p. 45). In this way, one of the codes that is altered in the majority of people in the process of reintegration is the language of force that must lose validity in civil life and give way to dialogue, reflection and argumentation as forms of communication and interaction. This is the step from being a fighter to becoming a peace building citizen.

On this aspect Granados-García (2014) states that,

subjectivities are not necessarily demobilized by the fact of demobilizing the combatant. This allows a distinction between the formal demobilization of the armed group and the disassociation as a process in which subjectivity is demobilized; breakdowns and emergencies of logics and dynamics which are different from those prevailing in the life within the armed group, are generated. (p. 48)

In addition, people often living in constant situations of violence lose any hope of the future and, even worse, lose confidence in their capacities as individuals or groups for contributing to peace building. This situation is understandable if we take into account that people in a process of reintegration have to assume the social burden of having belonged to an illegal armed group and the exclusion that derives from this fact.

Aware of these challenges and of the complexity of the work to which the ACR professionals are confronted, the institutional request to carry out a program of peace education focused on conflict resolution and mediation that would fit the needs of the reintegration professionals emerged. The institution also requested that the demobilized who had completed their reintegration process could also participate in the training. Although I knew it was a challenge to have this variety of participants, I found this mix a very interesting and heterogeneous group of

students. This is how a total of 27 people became inscribed, three of them were demobilized from self-defense groups, 28 were professionals on reintegration¹⁹, one was demobilized from the ELN and four were senior officials of the ACR²⁰. All of them came from different disciplines, education levels and regions of the country. This training was held in three-hour sessions once a week. The entire course was a 40 hours training. The last session of the course was dedicated to the systematization of the experience.

7.2 Construction of a relational setting

According to the needs and expectations of the institution, the program was designed to work on conflict resolution and mediation as a strategy to reduce violence and promote a culture of peace. Likewise, the institution sought professionals to have practical tools that would allow them to do better their work with the demobilized and the recipients communities of former combatants.

After a long process of revision and negotiation with the ACR directors, the content selected for the course was: Peace Agreements; Culture of peace and nonviolence; Citizenship and Coexistence; Construction of identity in contexts of violence; Peace competences; Conflict resolution; Mediation. Likewise, we include a module that we named *Competences for peace* that refers to the skills that a professional that works in DDR needs for fostering peace building and reconciliation. This module contained the following topics: Context analysis, Self-reference and Critical Reflexivity, Emotional content, Empathy nonviolent communication and Processes of dialogue.

I present below the structure of the program and the sessions dedicated to address each topic.

¹⁹ Professionals that work directly with demobilized.

²⁰ These senior officials of the ACR has more administrative charges in the institution and therefore never had direct contact with demobilized.

Table

3

Curricular structure with ACR

CURRICULAR STRUCTURE	<u>WEEKS</u>																		
	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19
	x	x	x																
The challenges of Post-Conflict and the reintegration.																			
Definitions of peace and Violence.				x	x	x	x												
Peace treaty in Colombia, Culture of Peace and Nonviolence.																			
<i>Competences for peace.</i> This contains: Context analysis, Self-reference and Critical Reflexivity, Emotional content, Empathy nonviolent communication and Processes of dialogue							x	x	x	x									
From conflict resolution to <i>Transformation of conflict</i>									x	x	x	x							
Training on Mediation Models												x	x	x					
Training of the professionals on design of work activities with individuals on reintegration process from an Appreciative perspective.															x	x	x	x	x

It was agreed with the ACR directors that, taking into account the interests and particularities of the group, that some variations to the program could be initiated throughout the training. I also agreed that I would have the freedom to develop depth and emphasize the content that was most meaningful for students. In turn, the institution asked me for a weekly report of the progress of the session and of the participants, which included: punctuality, quality of the work and participation. Once all these agreements were established the training program began.

The first two sessions of the training program were dedicated to meeting the participants and their expectations. I named the first activity of the course, “The tree of expectations,” which, in addition to understanding the interests of the participants, had the purpose of creating a space of confidence and security to start the course. The questions asked to the participants during the

activity were: 1) what do I expect from this training? 2) Why would this training be important for my daily work in the processes of reintegration? 3) What skills would I like to develop and what topics would I like to deepen? And 4) how could I contribute to the learning space?

Each participant received four cards, one to answer each question. Then we collectively performed the construction of the tree by grouping similarities in the responses of the participants. This activity, besides allowing us to meet each other, let me know the academic and personal interests of the participants and their professional background.

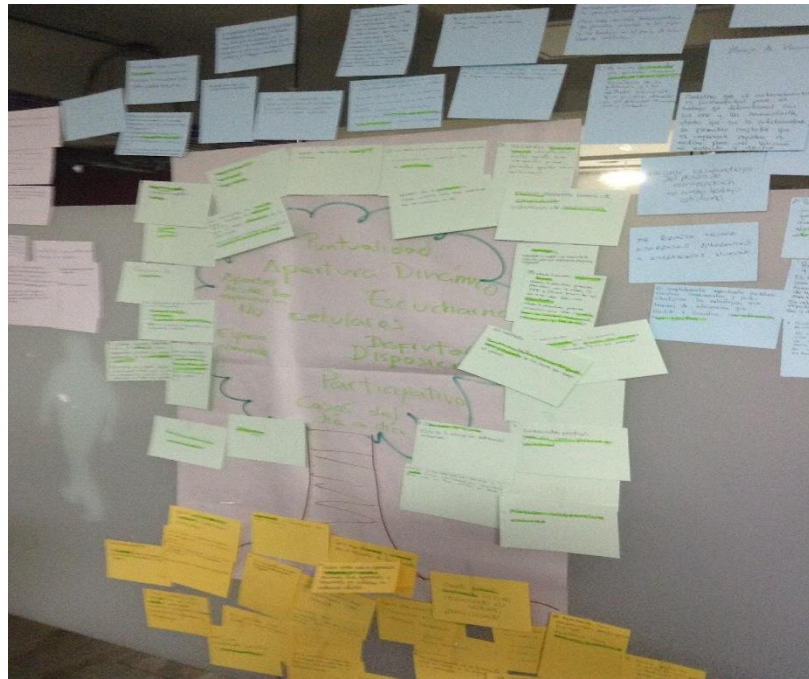


Figure 4.

This is a powerful exercise when we want to start a program or a course since it allows the teacher to meet the people and make the necessary adjustments to the program. In the case with the ACR this activity helped me to re-frame the program and it also helped me to know on which topics I should place more emphasis according on the participants' requests. Interestingly, all participants agreed with the expectation of a practical program that would assist them in

putting into action the learned topics. They also asked that we work from the cases or situations of their everyday life where they felt difficulties or need support. This idea motivated me a lot since this was an invitation to work from what they brought to the training more than from what I, as an “expert,” could teach them about the specific content. In this sense, theory about conflict resolution and mediation became an excuse to reflect about their everyday practices, their knowledge, their resources and their skills.

From the program content, the one that most attracted their attention and which we worked in-depth during the course was *Competences for peace*. According to the request of the students for a more practical training, the content of this module was approached from cases or concerns that the students brought to the class.

Another aspect that we addressed in the first meeting was the importance of keeping a record of the experience. I told participants that keeping track of lived experience had value for me as an educator and researcher since this would allow me to make adjustments to my pedagogical practice and also would let me know what learnings they had consolidated throughout the process and what aspects it would be important to deepen. Also as part of the ethical exercise of any research, I told them that this exercise of systematizing what happened in the classroom would be part of my PhD dissertation. The participants were enthusiastic about being part of the process and found the exercise of keeping a field diary valuable.

For this purpose, I proposed they keep a diary²¹ in which they register the following questions: What is my position on the topic? What activity or concept opens a new perspective on my understandings? How can I bring these notions and learned skills to work with people in the process of reintegration? How will this session transform my work as a re-integrator and my

²¹ Appendix 4.

daily life as a person? In every session, the participants answered these questions in their diaries and I collected them once a week so I could read their comments and give feedback. The answers were made public only if the student wanted it. In the same way, the students had the opportunity of sharing or not sharing their reflections on the different scenarios of the class. The exercise of the diaries implied a methodology that allowed connecting the experiential, emotional, practical, contextual and theoretical levels inherent to the training approach to their daily lives. The diaries also constituted a useful mediation to be able to assume critical reflexivity, in so far as they give an account of generative, self-referential processes that involve the conceptual and paradigmatic transformations of the training participants.

The field diaries had three major goals: the first one was to generate an assessment that would allow me to give feedback on the students' process. The second was to develop a learning activity that would enable the development of critical reflexivity in the students. The third goal was to have material that would help me systematize the experience at a later moment. Now, as pointed out in chapter 4, when giving feedback to a student, we want to foster critical reflexivity. In this sense, each time I read and wrote comments in their diaries, I asked questions that led participants to a deeper reflection on the learning achieved and how this learning could be applied in their daily life. Let's remember that feedback is a very important pedagogical practice in peace education in so far as, besides allowing the teacher to have an idea of the meanings that participants have been weaving, this process encourages the active participation of the students in their learning process.

After framing the course in the first session, I wanted to know what they imagined about conflict resolution and what their expertise on this subject was²² in the following session. The

²² Appendix 6

purpose of this activity was to grant legitimacy to their voices and their knowledge and validate their expertise. With this aim, they participated in a writing exercise in which they recorded their conflict resolution and mediation experience, their strengths on this issue, the difficulties they have had and the fears that accompanied them in the moment of working with demobilized people (in the case of professionals in reintegration), or the fear they had when working with receptive communities.²³ Later, all participants shared their writing in which they not only told their experience but we started connecting with each other. To illustrate the foregoing, I will quote one of the students of the course when I perform this activity: “As such theoretical knowledge in conflict resolution... I do not have; however, our daily work is that. Especially in the work with the communities that receive the demobilized, because there are many difficulties and conflicts that arise in this process and that one has to solve. So I think that in this job one has to be very creative and fast, because the problems must be solved.” (Juan Manuel professional of the ACR). What I think is very interesting of this activity and of this quote is how you began to identify the students' resources as well as the different narratives that each student had about the reintegration process, the armed conflict and the job that they performed.

During this activity, I was curious about those demobilized. I knew there was little research on peace education with the demobilized and even fewer studies on professionals who work with them. Some of my initial questions were: How is learning organized in the reintegration context? What issues are important for the participants to discuss? Is the talk dominated by the war context or do the participants talk about events outside these experiences? How can this training provide ways for the participants to mobilize their resources and not be overwhelmed by the

²³ Receiving communities refer to the communities to which demobilized people arrive once they have handed over their weapons. This has been one of the major challenges of the government since most of the times distrustful neighbors of this situation carry out protests and attacks against the demobilized people.

contents?

In regard to these questions I can say that one of the most interesting lessons for me as a teacher was the exercise of being able to share in the conversation with the students these concerns that I had as a teacher. In doing so, you could see how the students felt they were being taken into account and that I had a genuine interest that the pedagogical space fulfilled the expectations and needs of them.

7.3 Step by Step dialogical practices for skills training in peace building

After having used the time required for the creation of a relational setting, the second phase of the framework is centered on the development of a dialogic methodology. Since the interest of this training was primarily to develop practical skills for conflict resolution and mediation, the structure of the training was under the form of dialogical-practical activities, which sought to address theoretical content in parallel with cases from their daily work.

To address the topics of the program²⁴, several activities were carried out such as the world café²⁵, the mapping the conflicts,²⁶ the open space technology²⁷ and the fishbowl process²⁸. These activities aimed to co-constructed knowledge through dialogue and collaborative work.

Coherent with the philosophical stance of this dissertation and of my work as a peace educator, the epistemological assumptions that underlie the training in conflict resolution and mediation were taken from a constructionist stance.

²⁴ Peace Agreements; Culture of peace and nonviolence; Citizenship and Coexistence; Construction of identity in contexts of violence; Peace competences; Conflict resolution; Mediation.

²⁵ Appendix 5

²⁶ Appendix 6

²⁷ Appendix 7

²⁸ Appendix 9

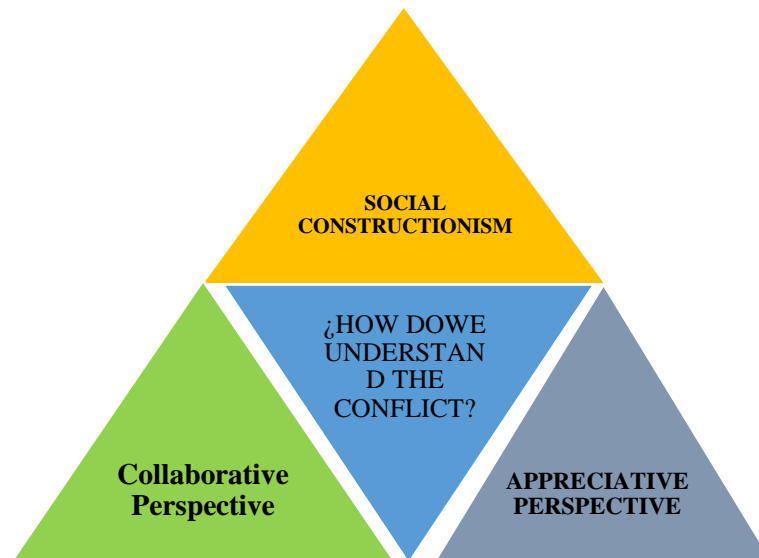


Figure 5. Epistemological Assumptions of the training

Table 4
Components of critical reflexivity

Appreciative perspective	Recognize resources and values in the other
	Identify what works in the system
Collaborative Perspective	Search for hopes and dreams
	Recognize that the other "is the expert" of his own life
	Validate the suffering of the other
	Search for new meanings
Critical Reflexivity (transversal to the process of transformation of conflicts)	

In this way, in the different sessions of the training, an emphasis was placed on the following orienting principles of Social Construction proposed by Gergen (20017; 2015):

- We understand and value the world and ourselves in ways that arise from our personal history and culture.
- We act largely in terms of what we interpret to be real, good and rational. Without meaning there would be little worth doing.

- What we take to be real and rational is given birth in relationships. Without relationship there would be little meaning.

- We are not possessed or determined by the past. We may abandon or dissolve dysfunctional ways of life, and together create alternatives. To sustain what is valuable, or to create new futures, requires participation in relationships. If we damage or destroy relations, we lose the capacity to sustain a way of life, and to create new futures.

- New forms of relating and new possibilities may all emerge.
- Through creative care for relationships, the destructive potentials of conflict may be reduced, or transformed.

Following these assumptions, language is viewed as something that is more than words or texts. Language refers to all embodied activities. Thus, throughout the training, participants were reminded about those actions (more than words or texts). This understanding of language for peace building focused our attention on social interaction.

Throughout the training, the dialogical practices were the navigation map that gave sense to the different tools, theories and activities developed in the training. It is important not to confuse the concept of activity or tools with that of dialogical practices which are the core assumptions of the classes and the actions that were developed; that is to say, the dialogical practices answer the question "how" and the path for achieving a relational learning context. On the other hand, the activities and instruments are those inputs used to materialize the dialogical space.

The figure below illustrates how I operated in each class.

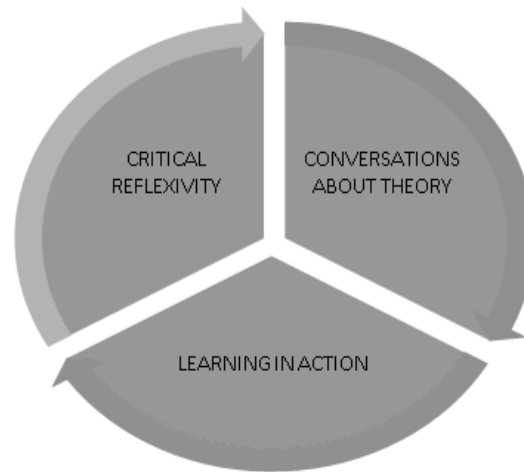


Figure 6. Process of Co-Construction of knowledge

The three components (Conversations about theory, Learning in action and Critical Reflexivity) were present in all the classes. This way, in the classes where a theory, technique or mediation model was taught, the class organization was defined by a pattern of dialogic nature where conversations about theoretical themes were carried out and the way in which these themes could be related to practice. Therefore, in all of the classes, practical learning had a very important role for students, where the focus was on strengthening the resources that the participants had in conflict resolution and mediation. All classes sought to introduce differences concerning their notions of conflict resolution and mediation, and to produce enough rareness (Andersen, 1994) so participants could question what they ordinarily take for granted in their daily work.

Similarly, after the practical work, it was essential to reflect on their own way of mediating or resolving conflict, as well as discerning fundamental assumptions or values that give rise to theories and techniques and question the implementation of their own reference and action systems. For this purpose, in addition to the conversations we had in class after performing the practical activities, diaries were very useful as a tool for the development of critical reflexivity.

They allowed students to recognize their personal style in conflict resolution and mediation by associating their work to their own social contexts.

In order to illustrate the above, I will point out a role-play activity where two people offered to represent a conflict drawn from a real case. After the role-play, the rest of the participants engaged in an exercise of understanding the different interpretations of the parties' conflict as well as the meanings and narratives that each participant had. The idea of this activity was to see that they were able to reinterpret each universe of meanings and narratives and that the parties involved in the conflict could observe it from a different angle. The exercise also provided the opportunity for participants to observe how communication patterns constitute the conflict as well as the kind of relationships that take part in it.

It was very interesting to observe how they laughed at the representations, how they played the roles in a satirical way and how, at times, they felt uncomfortable in their characters. At the same time, they took the exercise seriously trying to imagine possible scenarios that would represent new perspectives on the conflict. Although they considered it a difficult activity, they found it very enriching.

I present below the conclusions drawn by the students in the last session of the program in the closing dialogue:

- They conceive the issues addressed in class as key factors and make various attempts to incorporate their learnings into their daily practice.
- Important reflections arise about their daily tasks achieving new understandings about the practices they carry out.
- Participants are motivated to incorporate what they have learned.

- They demonstrate collaborative group work during the sessions. This is reflected in a better teamwork and an effort of more inter and transdisciplinary understanding.
- Professionals have managed to redefine and make more complex their comprehension of conflict resolution.
- They consider that the training has been fundamental in interrupting everyday life and in making them more aware of their way of working.
- They recognize that the work on territory is very scarce, so training should be taken into account to check how this can be carried out on territory.
- The course allowed them to build, with their resources, new ways of addressing peacebuilding, having access to new tools, techniques and perspectives with which they feel identified.
- *The program of education for peace is a process of language empowerment.* The participants see the implementation of what they have learned in each meeting with people in the process of reintegration, with their families and communities, as a strength and highlight the positive generation of changes in language and the way of building conversational spaces as a transforming and reflective process.

Results of the ACR Systematization

In line with the research objectives, the systematization presented here seeks to collect and order a series of pedagogical practices that were used during the training and that were meaningful for the participants. In this direction, the systematization proposes a possible order to reflect on the learnings from the experience.

For this purpose, three sources were crucial; the first one was the field diaries developed by the participants during the course. The second was the transcriptions of the sessions. The third

one was the course's closing dialogue in which I sought to carry out an exercise of reflection with the participants about the lessons learned and the most significant experiences of the training.²⁹

From these three sets of materials, and taking into account the requirements of systematization, the following analysis will be organized according to the categories developed in Chapter 5; these are: *Significant learnings*, *Best practices* and *Aspects to be improved*.

The following graph represents the coding in the analysis of the data. As it can be seen, the most codified category was that of *Best practices*, followed by the category of *Significant learnings*.

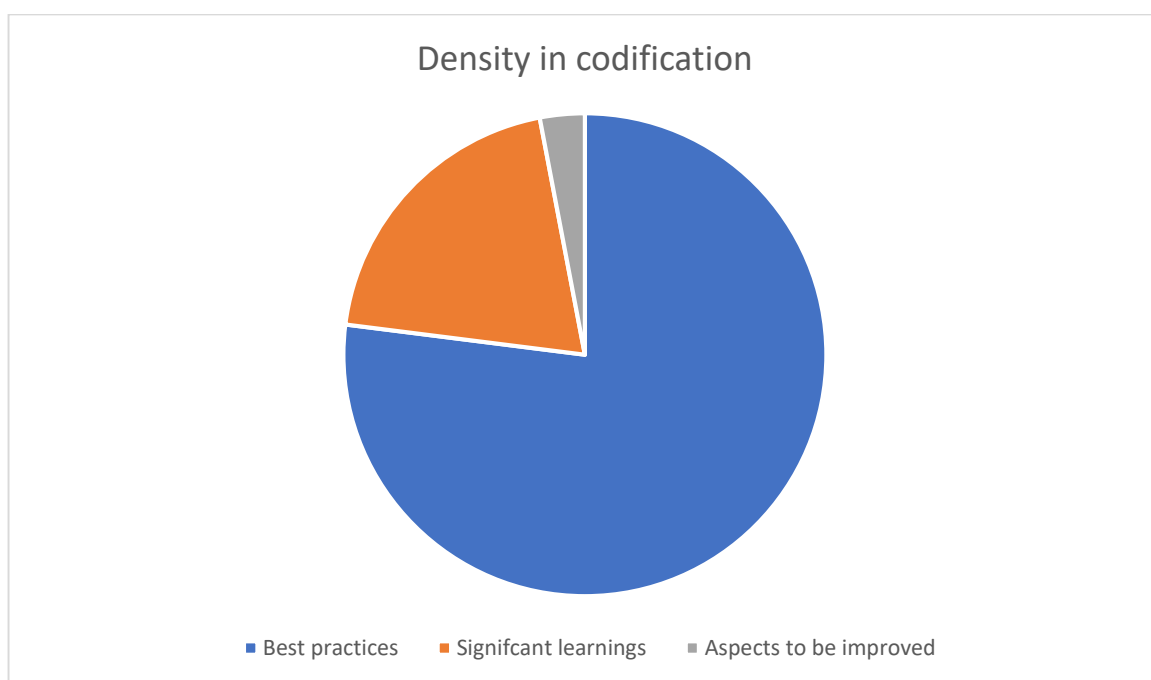


Figure 7. Density of codification in Nvivo

The density in codification shows that the most referred category from the systematization is *Best practices*, which can be seen as an obvious result because this is a systematization of experiences. But the relevant finding here is that *Best practices*, in other words the experience

²⁹ See Appendix 11

itself, is the central core for Significant learnings.

Significant learnings

Regarding the category of *Significant learnings*, which refers to the learning that students reported as the most relevant within the process, three emergent subcategories arise in the analysis made with *Nvivo*, illustrated in the following graph:

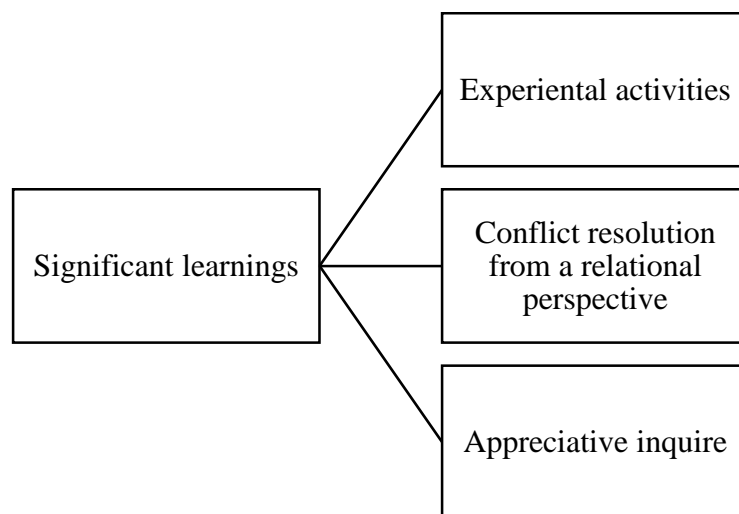


Figure 8. Significant learnings

About the subcategory of *Experiential Activities*, the first thing that becomes evident through the analysis is the importance that participants give to the experiential activities, role-plays and different modalities of dialogue based on the cases that they have in their daily lives. These were the most important activities. When asked why these kinds of activities were so important, several participants said that these type of activities let them learn from their peers and put into practice the theoretical notions that they learned. In the same way, the Experiential Activities gave professionals the possibility to talk with other students about their worries or concerns regarding their daily work. Also, a fundamental element for the students was the fact that the experiential activities allowed them to have evidence about the way in which peace building starts from the local and nearest contexts: "These activities were of particular interest because, in our

daily life, we have to be mediator agents for each life story with our PPR (person in process of reintegration), and in our workplaces, at home and at every moment that we are relating to others" (Natalia Arias training participant and ACR reintegration professional).

Regarding the subcategory of *Conflict Resolution*, all of the students agreed that some of the most important learnings of the course were those developed in the module of *Competences for peace*, specifically regarding conflict resolution from a relational perspective and the reflective capacity that the training fostered in the professionals each time they face a conflict. Here I quote two participants in the training, who, when asked in the field diary, "How do I think this session could transform my work as a re-integrator and my daily life as a person?" they pointed out:

As a re-integrator, I acquire concepts and notions for further reflection on conflicts, their positive and negative implications, critical and analytical skills regarding conflicts and a collaborative approach (the latter based on the concept in which not all conflict is equal to violence). On the personal side, it definitely helps me to be more reflective and tolerant with the PRPs and my colleagues in the territorial group. (Natalia Arias training participant and ACR reintegration professional)

Throughout the sessions I have been able to clarify notions regarding situations of conflict attention and mediation as well as to clarify tools to be applied with the participants in the process of reintegration. Similarly, I feel that I have changed the way I look at myself and to better deal with situations at work, at family and social contexts. (Juan Manuel Arévalo, training participant and ACR re-integrator professional)

Among the most valued aspects regarding the issue of conflict resolution from a relational perspective, there is the fact that many times the conflict emerges from different interpretations of a given situation and every interpretation contains the meanings and narratives of each participant; in this sense, being able of reinterpreting the multiple possibilities of meanings and

narratives will make it possible for the conflict to be perceived from a different perspective. So, language becomes a support for the meaningful contents that constitute the conflict as well as for the type of relationships involved in it.

Another crucial element highlighted by participants was the reflection on how conflicts lead us to position ourselves between two opposites, thinking about parties and supporting the opposition. However, only to the extent that we are able to imagine different positions as simple differences, both with the right to exist in a whole, is it possible to build a culture of peace.

Besides that, and regarding to the subcategory of *Appreciative Inquiry*, they also indicated that this approach was something new that captivated them. Here I quote another student's answer to the question, "what activity or what concept builds in me an enlargement of my vision?" She answered, "The concept that contributed to my vision in this session was the one of the appreciative approach since it broadens the approach of conflict resolution" (Carol Andrea Gómez, training participant and reintegration professional of the la ACR).

In this sense, we can see a shift from the use of language of deficit (Gergen, 1997) to an appreciative language that generated modifications in the student's countless actions in their daily life. Specifically, they pointed out how they began to see the people they work with, not from the point of view of deficiency, but giving value to the resources they have. Likewise, this had an effect on them; the expressions used to refer to the demobilized were framed within recognition and possibility.

Best practices

The category of *Best practices* has three subcategories which are: 1. Creating a relational context; 2. Critical Reflexivity; 3. Co-creating the future through the present. I describe how these subcategories were reflected in this pedagogical experience, as follow

In connection with the subcategory of *Creating a relational context*, the students pointed out that what most impacted them, and at the same time what they most enjoyed of the training, was my closeness and horizontality in the way I interacted with them and the way I invited them to participate. I interpret this as my effort in shifting from hierarchical to heterarchical relations, where they experienced symmetrical relationships in the group as something that facilitated a safe and collaborative environment for learning.

Another element that emerged strongly in the analysis of the journals was the form of assuming a posture in which the polyphony of voices in the classroom became meaningful, encouraging the students to recognize and validate the ways of being and thinking that are configured in a context. Assuming that people in the process of reintegration have a lot to say and deserve to be heard in a calm, genuine and sincere manner, provided the students with opportunities for understanding, and sometimes recognizing that we do not all think in the same way but that there is middle ground where all participants are taken into account "Realizing and assuming that we, as humans, are configured as diverse beings means that, despite my beliefs, values, prejudices and experiences, I expand my horizons to let other forms of action make the encounters possible beyond what I am and especially, to recognize people I work with in a different way" (Luisa Castro, training participant and ACR professional).

According to the students, the practice of polyphony allowed them to work with people as diverse as those participating in the group. In this regard is important to mention that senior officials of the ACR indicated that the training experience allowed them to recognize peace building as a means to include voices that have been continuously excluded and removed from the processing of history, especially in the case of the demobilized that are seen as victimizers and therefore are not seen as interlocutors on issues as important as historical memory, conflict

resolution and reconciliation and DDR.

In the same way, the demobilized who were part of the training indicated that the horizontality that was built during the course allowed them not to feel stigmatized or judged, not only because they were demobilized but for “not having” the academic knowledge that the rest of the professionals had. This was an aspect that emerged in the closing dialogue of the training where they revealed that even though they were not sure of participating in the training (since they would be together with professionals and high officers of the ACR), the training environment allowed them to work in a collaborative way with different people, giving opportunities to all of the voices and to multiple interpretations and meanings. Likewise, it was possible to deconstruct the idea that academic knowledge is the only form of knowledge that counts as “real knowledge” and how everybody is in the position to talk, discuss and learn, no matter what persona, academic and professional background they have.

At this point, I would like to denote that, when this issue emerged during the closing dialogue, I asked the participants if they could identify something in particular that I could have done to facilitate the relational horizontality noticed by them. They answered they always felt that the treatment was egalitarian, that I allowed all of them to participate, that I asked many questions and made few affirmations and that I always demonstrated an interest about everything they shared in the training. In this regard, I want to mention that, although the students acknowledge this interactional pattern as a valuable practice, paradoxically for me it was one of the most difficult things to do considering I felt that the participants were constantly seeking my approval, and demanding my “expert” answers for all of their questions.

Another important aspect to create a relational context was the use of dialogical practices in the classroom. The emphasis on dialogue as a tool for addressing different kinds of conflicts was

something that all the students agreed to highlight as one of the most important learnings and the one that they will seek to replicate it both in their personal life and at work. Here I quote a student's reflection, written in her diary in response to the question, "what is my posture on the worked issue?" She answered, "The appreciative dialogues are an innovative method with the parties in conflict that allows the construction of an empathetic space that generates fluidity and confidence in the stories of the parties. This also allows that in this construction of dialogue, the parties give themselves the permission of reviewing the conflict in different ways and thus, it enables them to reach points of resolution" (Catalina Tovar, training participant and reintegration professional of the ACR).

With regard to the dialogical practices, participants noted that one of the activities they liked the most the open space technology³⁰ because this allowed them to play an active role in the different dialogues in which they participated and contributed from their knowledge and experience.

Critical Reflexivity

An essential part of the learning process was the importance of reflection on one's own practice as the guiding principle of any process of mediation. In this way, we can highlight how *Critical reflexivity*, understood as the importance of being attentive to possible alternatives to our own taken-for-granted ways of understanding, talking, feeling and giving meaning, that arise in the encounter with the other, was a skill that could be developed in the training. Specifically, students mentioned that the most important pedagogical practice, among others, was the continuous self-reference exercises³¹ that invited them to examine the values and beliefs they have and how these values and beliefs affect or influence the way they interact and solve

³⁰ See Appendix 7

³¹ See Appendix 8

conflicts. "As reintegrating professionals, we have the great responsibility to provide the appropriate guidelines and to be aware of the standpoint for making judgments of value in our daily work, this is what I have most valued of this program and what we have been able to reflect on" (Douglas Boutrago, training participant and reintegration professional of the ACR).

In this way we can see how self-reference implied taking on the posture of recognizing one's own narratives, beliefs, values, prejudices, ideas, emotions and actions that build students' reality, inviting them to take responsibility for the effects of such constructions and their incidence in everyday interactions. Regarding this, it is important to note that several of the reflections made by the demobilized people participating in the training had to do with the importance of critical reflexivity as a way of performing exercises of reconciliation. These acts of reconciliation have a direct relationship with the possibility of giving different meanings to what has been lived, to find themselves in new possibilities of social bond, to re-signify the damage received or exercised, and above all to be able to recognize the multiple truths about the armed conflict.

Generally, you find yourself amid a set of flaws before entering the armed group or rather, a set of reasons that make you enter there, from escaping violence, lack of education or many times because of forced recruitment... As a consequence one made the decision to be part of an armed group in order to mitigate those problems a little and make significant changes in life, but then, with demobilization a new change is generated and it is really there when you require all the support and the broad look a professional Re-integrator must have to best accompany the individual that is facing a new society, without any judgment because, as we have seen here in the classes, nobody has the ultimate truth... and if we avoid judging and we seek peace, then we will be able to consider reconciliation. (Demobilized attending the training)

The foregoing allows us to address the political dimension of the social construction of meaning. In this respect, it can be said that to the extent that the world is given meaning through language, it is in dialogical practices where new meanings and narratives of what has been lived

can be co-constructed.

Now, an element that made the emergence of Critical Reflexivity possible was the ongoing reflection on the learning process; students pointed out that taking breaks continuously, reflecting on the topics addressed and the comprehension they were acquiring represented essential elements. Another thing they revealed about the category of best practices was the invitation to be innovative. The training allowed them to acquire new skills and also strengthen the personal skills that each one already had. They also indicated that the methodology of the training was very useful for them since it allowed them to reflexively question themselves. It also gave place to different learnings and to learning to learn in the polyphony of dialogue.

In the same way, another important element that emerged in the analysis of this category was that critical reflexivity cannot be an individual exercise but it has to be framed in relationships that provide a context of possibility, which, in the same way, advised the re-integration professionals about the importance of taking into account elements that bring them closer to a reflective position at work.

Furthermore, some students pointed out listening carefully as a key element of dialogical spaces, that allows new information which cannot emerge easily in daily life due to the rhythm of labor. Another student said that listening carefully was very interesting because everyone in the ACR plays a different role and has different perspectives. The opportunity of talking about things that they have never thought about, for example, when they were asked about the most meaningful moment for everyone in the agency, made them go back in their memories and they indicated that it was really good for them.

7.4 Co-creating the present throughout the future

An element that was highlighted by the students in this category was the way in which the

transformation of cycles of violence begins in everyday interaction and to this extent the notion or concept of peace building ceases to be an abstract concept and becomes, instead, a possibility of transformation from the local context and from our closest networks.

On the other hand, the students mentioned that, within the issues addressed in class, they were also impacted by the sessions dedicated to alternative resolution of conflicts and the idea of co-creating new discourses of coexistence and social cohesion based on collaboration, appreciation and in the acceptance of the difference of the other. In this way, several students pointed out the fact that conflict resolution implies understanding the different meanings and comprehensions about what is real and good that permeate a conflict as a valuable learning. Therefore, generally, people who belong to a certain tradition tend to see those who are part of another tradition to be wrong, inferior or undesirable.

In our case, to the eyes of the great majority of Colombians, we have been seen as the incarnation of evil... but "prof," you can realize that when one was in the armed group it was the same speech against the State. Then it all depends on the side in which one is. (Demobilized attending training)

In accordance with the above, they also emphasized as a meaningful learning that, to be able to transform conflicts, the essential question is how to approach divergent positions of domains of meaning. To this extent, and because of the great importance of language for building the reality of each conflict, special attention must be paid to dialogue as a way of talking that frames relationships which lead us to peace building possible. Finally, I would like to point out that the students indicated that the training process was a historical memory and peace building exercise for them, since they consider that the experience gained, the narrated and the re-signified, the developed models and the interventions they constructed were a clear exercise to counteract the effects of war and to contribute to the construction of ways of life far from violence.

7.5 Aspects to be improved

Regarding this category, during the closing dialogue of the experience, the need to build local and institutional support networks, for the re-integrator professional and for the ACR with the objective of expanding the coverage of the program to larger regions of the country was brought up. Another aspect that participants considered could be improved is to have more sessions so they could go deeper into complex issues such as mediation. Finally, the last recommendation was not to implement training at the headquarters where they work at, as this often means that labor issues do not allow them to concentrate on the activities that take place in the training.

CHAPTER 8: Framework to develop a constructionist peace education program

After the journey through the two pedagogical experiences described in chapter 6 and 7, I will present in this chapter a comprehensive framework for developing peace education programs in contexts of non-formal education. This framework is the result of the systematization of experiences lived and their analysis; this is the basis for generating new knowledge which is the objective of the research. Keeping this in mind, in this chapter I approach the theoretical construction that emerges from the analysis and triangulation of the experiences described in the previous chapters in conversation with the research question and its objectives.

The principles formulated here, that have a constructionist orientation and are influenced by ideas of collaborative (Anderson, 1997) and relational (McNamee, 2007) practices, as well as appreciative inquiry (Cooperrider & Whitney, 2005), have as a fundamental premise the development of pedagogical practices not *for* a community but *together with* the community, which means to assume that people are active participants, that are able to mobilize and transform their realities. In this sense, the principles presented below should not be used without understanding the context, including the historical and cultural interpretation of educational settings, and of the armed conflict and keeping in mind that communities are not homogeneous. This will help define the coherence of practices and methodologies used, facing the reality and the needs of the specific population.

Likewise, the principles outlined here are based on the assumption that human beings are linguistic beings who live through language. In this regard, the forms in which we construct meaning and the way in which we act are based on the history and current practices of the community to which we belong. Therefore, the accounts of ourselves and of the others are based on historical discourses from where we construct our understandings of reality.

From this perspective, each daily encounter of teachers and students becomes a place where it is not only about transmitting and evaluating content, but it also becomes a privileged space to build trusting relationships where the whole community, participating in the different meetings, feel heard, valued and recognized in order to create spaces for reflection, allowing everyone to build new meanings, both for the teaching exercise and for new forms of social, cultural and family interactions of the students. A classroom, co-creating knowledge with students, is an invaluable space for peace building, healing and reconciliation.

Therefore, the principles proposed here are not techniques, methods, or a methodology. It is about a way of being and relating in the pedagogical context. It is then expected that these principles support teachers in creating meaningful learning environments through dialogue, collaboration and reflection, which means opening possibilities to people. That's why I do not talk here about a single model or a form of teaching, but about envisioning different paths, forms of action and unfolding processes. It means that this is not a rigid proposal for action, but flexible to relevant changes according to requirements of the context where, ultimately, each community will engage in a process based on its own historical, political and social environment.

Here I present six principles of a constructionist stance in peace education that emerge from the pedagogical experiences described in chapters 6 and 7. I shall list them all together and then expand on each one in turn:

1. Creating a relational context
2. Co-creating the agenda
3. Dialogical practices in the classroom
4. Critical Reflexivity
5. Ongoing reflection on the learning process

6. Co-creating the present throughout the future

1. Creation of a relational context

According to Galtung (2008), designing peace education programs follows the subsequent phases: 1. Analysis 2. Goal-formulation 3. Critique 4. Proposal-making 5. Action. However, if we assume that knowledge and language are a social, cultural, historical, and communal process, by definition all the phases proposed by Galtung must be contextualized. In this sense the approach and content of peace education significantly depend on the context of the work, the time in which it is taking place, the space in which it is conducted, and the people with whom it is carried out. Taking this into account, and following the phases proposed by Galtung, one of the first exercises of these experiences was to make a holistic view and analysis of the space and the people with whom I worked.

For this purpose, and from the pedagogical experiences with the Police and the ACR, it was very useful to consider three coordinates proposed by Martín-Baró (1984) to understand the effects of the armed conflict. These coordinates allow us to have better knowledge of the context and the people we are working with and the degree to which they are affected by war. The coordinates are:

- *Social class*, considering that the different sectors of society are not affected in the same manner by war, those who are in the frontline belong mostly to humble sectors and the poorest segments assume more closely the impact of war and its crisis. In any case, it is a fact that war affects us all and challenges our situation in society and our model of life.
- The second coordinate is *the involvement of groups and people in the war*, since according to the level of closeness to the conflict, people are affected in a greater or lesser degree. Additionally, not all people within a society experience the same vulnerability, danger, helplessness and terror.

- The third coordinate is *temporality*; it shows the difference between immediate effects and those that appear in the long term.

Other referents of analysis that enable us to have a differential look of the impact of the armed conflict in different communities we work with include aspects such as: gender, life cycle, type, intensity and duration of the violent event, type of suffered losses, lack or presence of social support and institutional response and cultural and ethnic context. In the specific case of the experiences with the Police and the ACR, it was of great importance for the analysis and reading of both contexts to understand the institutional expectations and needs. Therefore, one of the main teachings of these experiences and at the same time one of the greatest challenges was the importance of collaborative work with the institutions to which the students belonged to and include their voices in the proposal.

These coordinates facilitated me to have a map of the context and gave me some ideas of the needs of the community, but as Bateson (1998) points out, the map is not the territory, however, the map helps guide the action and provides markers of context. Once we have made a first analysis of the context, we have to be aware that, as peace educators or researchers, we construct an understanding of the problems and needs of the community and that we would like our work to engage with those problems and needs. This first approach (be it a job with teachers, public institutions, or with students) arises from our ideological influences, our personal and cultural history, our political beliefs, prejudgments, the coordinates recently identified and in some cases the institutional constraints on what topics should be addressed and which shouldn't. While the reading of what we think is needed for the system, this is, it is necessary and important, we have to be careful not to impose our own meaning and assumptions as an attempt for granting "objectivity" to our analysis since this, besides not favoring a collaborative atmosphere, we, most

likely will lead to a decontextualized program. Likewise, we have to be cautious not to pathologize people through labels and diagnostics of the difficulties they express since this takes place frequently in contexts of socio-political violence.

We should be cautious of the limitations and risks in assuming that dominant discourses, meta-narratives, and universal truths can be or should be generalized and applied across peoples, cultures, situations, or problems. Such assumptions (e.g., theoretical scripts, standards of behavior) can inadvertently and convincingly lead us to look for similarities between individuals that create ‘artificial’ categories, types, and classes (e.g., people, problems, or solutions). They inhibit our openness to the uniqueness and novelty of each person or group of people and their situation(s), and risk assuming that a perceived likeness is real or valid, depersonalizing the other, missing their specialness, and limiting our and their possibilities. (Anderson, 2012, p. 10)

Therefore, and based on this work, I consider that any educator for peace has to spend a good deal of time thinking about the thinking (Batson, 1998), and actively engaging in the reflexive exercise of looking at oneself in order to make thoughtful contributions with and for the other and thus building knowledge that is in the service of the transformation of violence through education. On this process Von Foerster (2000) introduces the areas of responsibility and ethics when he argues that it is not only a matter of recognizing one’s own reality as unique, but of including the other (with his/her world) as well as including ourselves in its construction. Simon (2014) points out that reflexivity must be considered as an ethical response in our work. “Through a social constructionist- systemic- collaborative -dialogical lens, reflexivity is an ethical processing in and of research or practice activities” (Simon, 2014, p.20). Meanwhile Parker (2005) points out that reflexivity is not just an ethical process but also a political one considering we also need to put ourselves in relation to those we are studying and hence we need to take responsibility for what we are doing.

Because of the above and being part of the ethical and political process that reflexivity

demands, we should constantly be monitoring our practice (Burkitt, 1991), questioning the assumptions of what we take-for-granted and being aware of the non-neutrality of our comprehensions and interventions while they respond to our epistemological and methodological frameworks. Accordingly, there were three questions that I asked myself when I was designing the programs described in chapter 6 and 7:1. What do I do? 2. What effects do I generate with what I do? 3. With what effects do I experiment? Although these questions are just an example of the many questions that call us to observe our considerations, I think they give us an idea of the reflections we, as educators, have to make when we are with our students as they invite us to a reflexive space that transforms our practice.

Besides the reflexivity process, a constructionist perspective of peace education demands that the reading of the context is built and rebuilt in the interaction with the people of the community. Then, from a relational stance, the reflexive process of mapping out what we will focus on must be co-ordinate with the voice of the community. So the big question is, how do we manage the relationship of the polyvocality of our inner dialogue with the polyvocality of the community?

I think that this question is the heart of the design and of the creation of any peace education program. From the work done with the Police and the ARN, I found that a good way for achieving this coordination is by abandoning the expert position (McNamee, 2007; Anderson & Goulishian, 1992) and being transparent with the community about our intentions, observations, interests and reasons that commit us to peace building. In my personal case, I find it important to talk to people about how the main goal of peace education is the creation of an educational environment that is based on respect for human dignity and human rights, and that it promotes critical thinking and values, skills and attitudes such as empathy, participation, nonviolence and peace.

Transparency may not be very common in the traditional research or in peace education, but to open a crystal-clear window onto our focus implies recognizing teachers as part of the system and, therefore, as participants in the construction of realities. On the other hand, abandoning the position of the expert puts us in a horizontal, democratic and collaborative relationship from the beginning.

In a traditional research context, there is little expectation of the researcher “outing” themselves as having an investment in the subject under investigation. In qualitative inquiry, there is an ethics-led expectation that the researcher will express their interest not to counter any idea of bias but to illuminate the inevitability of prejudice and minimize any power imbalance. (Simon, 2014, p. 20)

In this respect, in addition to spending a considerable amount of time in both experiences explaining the students the main goal of peace education, as part of this process of transparency and reflexivity, I also shared with them a particular concern that, as an educator, I have had with polarization in different sectors of the country and its impact (demonstrated from the moment of the configuration of the guerilla to the present day) in the ways we relate to each other. I think that focusing the conversation on this topic from which I seek to guide my class as well as the inquiry regarding the aspects that resonated with them when I shared my interests and pedagogical objectives, helped us to build more horizontal and authentic relational dynamics.

It is important to highlight that being transparent and taking up a position of not-knowing doesn't mean to avoid the way one is identified as a peace educator nor does it mean to avoid the expectations of the institution within which we work at (that most of the time sends out clear messages, that say that we are ‘experts’ or what themes we should address). Instead, being transparent and assuming a not-knowing stand point is an ethical principle, which allows us to lay the foundation for building relationships where vertical relations are not necessary.

Now, in addition to making our expectations and ideas of a useful work experience explicit, it

was essential to ask people how they wanted to engage in the project. In this sense I was particularly interested in knowing the people, getting more fully acquainted with the expectations they had and in being aware of their concerns and interests, if any, about the topic. In both experiences I asked the participants how could we make the space useful, and what were their specific needs. These questions helped us to explore the experiences and the distinctions that participants made about what is meaningful for them in peace building, how they have experienced the armed conflict and what would they like to transform, get more acquainted with and reflect on or what they would not like to address or do not feel ready to do so.

In the experience with the Police, when asking this question, almost immediately and spontaneously, different ideas on issues related to historical memory, DDR and reconciliation emerged. On the other hand, in the experience with the ACR, the interest was centered on working on topics about conflict resolution and reparation. These concerns, that may be more common in populations affected by socio-political violence, demand from us quality, warmth and respect in dealing with people. In the research it was also evident that, in order to turn the pedagogical process into a space of reparation and peace building, every moment of contact with the students needed to be held in contexts of empathy and recognition where I strived to show them the importance they held.

By being careful about how we relate, interested in people's stories, and by establishing horizontal relationships we can, from the beginning, generate a relational space where we humanized the meetings and we built ties among ourselves.

Practices for (re)humanizing and developing empathy for the Other are central to peace building.

This process entails not only recognition of the humanness of each individual, but also of the innate equality of all people and the potential contribution that different individuals and groups can make enriching the human experience. (Abu-Nimer, 2010, p. 19)

We must be very careful with the way in which we give voice to all participants and let them know that their voices are worth hearing. It is important to see that for the students of both experiences to feel heard was of vital importance and to this effect we can say that the exercise of inquire into student's life stories, expectations and interests is very useful for the creation of a relational humanized context. For this purpose In both experiences I found that storytelling³² is a practice that allows recognition, nourishing care and connection among the parties and it is a primary pedagogical practice for humanizing the Other (Duryea and Potts, 1993). Now, sharing stories about their own experience in the armed conflict and peace building will not only grant connecting, but also to recognize each other and the resources in their life experience. In Appendix 1 I illustrate some of the questions that I used in this research.

From an Appreciative Perspective I also emphasized in the resources of the participants and try to shift our conversations from problems because such conversations hide possible solutions that students, teachers and staff of the institution have used in their life experience. It is worth understanding that what is meant by resources corresponds to the various strengths and capacities that people have and their contexts to face situations (Cooperrider & Whitney 2005). Another element from Appreciative Inquiry, which was very valuable for the creation of a relational context, was envisioning the future for which the community longs. "The process of the AI thus far has been about building trust, relationships and honest storytelling, things which according to Taylor (2009) are essential factors in developing critical reflection" (Duncan, 2015, p. 60) For this purpose, the Appreciative Inquiry Summits Methodology³³ (2003), was a very useful tool since it gave me a clear idea of the importance of hopes and dreams of the community regarding peace building. Depending on the type of students or people with whom the work is done, the

³² Appendix 1

³³ See Appendix 2

activity that is engaged to getting deeper into dreams can vary. When working with ACR professionals I invited them to draw images they have for a desired future without violence. Instead, with the police students I used exercises of visualization together with the miracle question³⁴ (De Shazer, 1988) with the aim of inviting people to visualize, in a clear way, through imagination, what possible future they would like to achieve with the program and the type of police officers that they dream of becoming.

This creation of a relational context can take two or more sessions. As shown in chapter 6 and 7 I usually dedicated a whole session to know the people and for storytelling and another one for working on the dreams and expectations they have regarding the program. In this way, as an essential part of reading the context and the construction of a relational context, we should focus on exploring the particular experience and vision that participants have regarding the topic or program of the peace education we want to build, and inquire about their skills, values, traditions and wisdom and what they would like to accomplish through the program. Thus our interest is in approaching the dreams, desires and requests of people and not in theoretical or methodological approaches in peace building that are often unaware of the experiences of people and the manner in which they have lived the armed conflict.

People want to participate, contribute, and share ownership. They demand respectful listening, responsiveness to their expressed needs, and to make the decisions regarding their lives. They refuse to be dismissed as numbers and categories, or to have their humanity violently dishonored and freedom suppressed. (Anderson, 2012, p. 9)

2. Co-creating the agenda: A collaborative construction of curriculum

Throughout history, peace education has evolved in such a way that to talk about content and

³⁴ The miracle question (traditionally used in therapy) asks people to imagine that their life has already dramatically changed for the better. Later the person is asked about the changes that occurred and how he/she could know that a miracle happened.

curricular design related to peace has become more relevant. “So what content is to be learned in peace education? No absolute answer is to be found in the literature about peace education or anywhere else on this topic” (Haavelsrud, 2008, p. 1133). While the process is more important than the content, content still does not cease to be important. As Wang & Zhao, (2011) point out, curriculum standards should be adapted so that the vast majority of students can achieve the basic learning goals and focus on fostering students’ desires and abilities.

Having this in mind in both experiences I intend to choose very carefully the themes that the students consider that should be included. Although the content was different in both experiences, a clear intentionality, some starting assumptions and thematic content and methodologies that integrate everything were common. Intentionality was very important since it ensured that we were heading somewhere. However, from a constructionist stance, intentionality was co-constructed. Of course, some important decisions were made in the construction of the program. Nonetheless, the core of the content emerged within the particular relational community. In the experiences described in previous chapters, this process included not only the students but also the institutions to which the students belonged. In this way, in both experiences, a session was dedicated to work with the high-ranking officials of these institutions to include their voices in the construction of the curriculum.

So, how do we co-construct the goals for the program and the content? If the challenge is to give space to these multiple voices and to open multiple possibilities for action, one of the ways in which I did this was by asking the students to provide their own ideas for an effective peace education program and where the focus should be³⁵. The idea was that the students could design the curriculum they wanted so they could take responsibility for their own learning process.

³⁵ See chapter 6 and 7

There are many ways to create a collaborative curriculum and this varies depending on the preferences and the creativity of the peace educator. As shown in chapter 6 and 7, to begin the design of the curriculum, after discussing with the leaders of each institution their expectations and needs, I spent some time sharing with the students the idea of the program, the agreements that I had reached with the high officials of the institution, the importance and the goals of peace education and introduce the concepts of collaborative work and its relation with a culture of peace. Later, I found it important to set some rules such as: full empowerment of all participants, respect for others' ideas, active listening, remaining open to dissent as part of the process, giving more time to the process if needed before the final curriculum is ready, among others. What I found was that the greater number of voices I invited to this moment, the more complex and rich was my understanding of the particular needs of the context, the construction and the curriculum design.

After introducing these ideas, a good strategy to create the curriculum is by designing a possibility map³⁶ with the aim of identifying possible topics of interest and the objectives that would be sought to achieve in the program. This kind of activity also allows the community to identify and prioritize their own problems, needs and interests and we can observe how different communities have different priorities, depending on their circumstances. Once all the possibilities have been written, it is necessary to prioritize and select the most important ones. In the experience with the Police and the ACR it was essential for them to approach conflict resolution in a play-oriented way, dynamic and less theoretical, where they could put into practice what they had learned through cases or problems of their work contexts. In this sense, I think that a common and important element in both experiences that should be taken into account when designing programs of education for peace with adult population is to establish constant connections between the

³⁶ For a full description of this activity see chapter 6 where I describe how this activity was carried out.

students' work reality and the topics seen in class.

It may happen that some peace educators skip or avoid the communal process of building the curriculum because they do not want to deal with discrepancies that may occur or with the difficulty that derives from coordinating multiple voices. Frequently we are afraid to open up and allow divergence to arise because we feel uncomfortable and even fearful because too many ideas and perspectives can generate disorder. Nevertheless, we have to be aware that discrepancy may occur and it's part of the process, but we don't have to be afraid of it, and we surely cannot think that a collaborative perspective will not bring this out. In fact, we have to think that the greater divergence and freedom for the expression of ideas early in the process, the greater the possibility of obtaining innovative results. Even though this was not an easy task I feel that what helped me in this effort was the idea that we were looking for the coordination of the multiplicity and not necessarily for an agreement. Students don't think alike or do not have the same needs, expectations or opinions and we have to develop the ability to create room for the multiple perspectives and to assume the differences between people not as problem, but as stimulants to boost research. I also think that this is one of the mayor skills we want to develop in peace education in contexts of non-formal education since it is very likely that we may have a diversity of students.

So the expertise of the peace educator in this part of the process is to coordinate as many voices as possible (they can be the students', families', teachers', administrative staff of the institutions and directors' voices) and to promote a collaborative atmosphere of negotiation, discussion and reflection on the possible paths that the program can take. This type of activity builds confidence, shared understandings, and the spirit of community. Each idea is fully heard by the group members and the teacher frames each comment as a new idea or topic of the curriculum. At the

same time something that I also did was helping the group to notice where they were shifting and progressing as they were engaging complexity and multiplicity. While doing this, I was performing a pedagogical practice where I was teaching the students the importance of co-creating shared understanding.

Students not only learn from what we say but also, and often more so, from how we say it and from what we do. This means that our ways of doing in education do not just need to be effective (and sometimes that is not even a relevant criterion at all). We always also need to judge whether they are educationally appropriate -which requires that we reflect on what our students might learn or pick up from the ways in which we do things and the ways in which we organize and arrange education. (Biesta, 2015 p. 2)

Likewise, the expertise of the peace educator resides in coordinating the continuous improvisation and flexibility that peace education demands (Barrett, 2012).

3. Dialogical practices in the classroom

Truth is not born nor is it to be found inside the head of an individual person, it is born between people collectively searching for truth, in the process of their dialogical interaction.

(Bakhtin, 1984, p. 10)

A framework that has been very helpful in my work as a peace educator is the PELP Coherence Framework (1997) developed at Harvard University. This Framework aims to help leaders identify the key elements that support a district-wide educational strategy (Childress, Elmore, Grossman & King, 2004). As you can see in the figure below, what is interesting in the PELP framework is that, rather than prescribing a particular strategy, it shows the multiple systems including different organizational elements such as: culture, structures and systems, resources, and stakeholders

involved in education that are highlighted.



Figure 9. The PELP Coherence Framework

This model helps identifying interdependencies among the different elements and forces in the environment that have an impact on the implementation of any peace education program both at the macro and micro level. As you can see in the figure, the *Instructional core*, is at the center of the framework (Childress, et al., 2004), which represents the critical work of teaching and learning that goes on in classrooms. The instructional core includes three interdependent components: teachers' knowledge and skill, students' engagement in their own learning, and academically challenging content. Elmore, (2008) indicates that the interaction of these components is crucial for the consolidation of learning. Even though my interest is not to explore the proposals of these authors in greater depth, I do highlight them because I find this systemic understanding of the Instructional Core, where learning takes place (i.e., where knowledge is co- constructed), meaningful and useful.

However, when we understand knowledge as emerging within communities (and not from the teacher), the question that must underlie the instructional core is how to invite people to transformative conversations about what counts as peace building. In this sense the instructional

core proposed in the PELP model does not consider the importance of a relational perspective in the learning process. To address this gap in the PELP model, McNamee (2007) sets us in a different place than the one proposed by these authors and takes us to a relational learning space as the key element of any instructional core in peace education.

That said, although there is not a unique way in which one can develop a relational learning space, McNamee (2007) suggests four resources to invite students into collaborative educational conversations: 1. Avoid abstract principles 2. Privilege narrative forms 3. Foster community 4. Blur the boundaries between the classroom and everyday life. One can begin to shape the instructional core from these four resources and, with it, the pedagogical practices used in the classroom.

In the pedagogical experiences described in chapter 6 and 7, I found that the different dialogical spaces in the classroom were a very powerful way to achieve the resources proposed by McNamee (2007) and to co-ordinate the triad teacher-student-content in a meaningful and compelling way for the students. I called this exercise *Scaffold for peace building dialogues*. This kind of dialogical process (which is composed of a variety of class activities) is a particular kind of pedagogical practice where the relational engagement is the core and axis for construction of knowledge.

A relational approach to education requires that we abandon the idea that knowledge or information can be conveyed from one mind to another and, instead, ... knowledge [is viewed] as constructed in our conjoint activities with others in what people do together. (McNamee, 2007, p. 314)

In addition to fostering learning that go beyond the acquisition of specific and isolated content, this process addressed topics in a transversal manner and generated meaningful learning through collaborative action.

Another axiological aspect of this type of dialogical practice is the concern about preparing students to be agents of social change through the deconstruction of polarized discourses. The idea

of this type of process is that the reflections of the students are used to improve their understanding and actions regarding the topics addressed. Thus through dialogue they generate new learnings. Based on the work achieved both with the Police and the ACR, we can observe that the dialogical practices used in the classroom allowed building a relational space, necessary for later achieving what Gergen (2009a) calls “critical reflexivity”.

That said, in what manner were the themes, concepts and voices organized in this dialogical process? In both experiences one can find different processes of dialogue and different methodologies with different goals, where, depending on the purpose, different forms and levels of participation were needed. However, regardless of the type of activity designed, it was necessary to be attentive to the process, since the idea of *scaffold for peace building dialogues* refers to step-by-step and session-to-session co-creation of new meanings and possibilities for action, from the students' expertise.

In what way? After analyzing both experiences we can observe its importance when a theme or a comment arose in the conversation or in the different activities, because it helped to weave links with their professional practices, experiences, emotions, feelings and new or already existing descriptions. In some moments I started this, and in other moments one of the students did. In this interchange, ideas, beliefs, or prejudices started to be explored by all participants. I also saw that if there was a social coordination, it gave place to develop new understandings that become more complex each time. The creation of something original and new from something already elaborated, integrated, created or learned constituted the basis of the construction of a new reality. For this purpose there were plenty of activities and methodologies used in both experiences, such as the world café³⁷ (Holman et al, 2007), the open space technology³⁸ (Owen, 2008) and the

³⁷ See Appendix 5

fishbowl process³⁹. With these methodologies through collaborative dialogue I tried that students could achieve to bring into play their knowledge in favor of a collective construction, not to agree with others but rather to learn how to be together and listen to the differences in a fun and dynamic way. Likewise, this kind of activities were very useful to address issues such as, reconciliation and reparation in a careful manner.

In this sense, for this to be possible, and as I mentioned in chapter 5, in the section about methodological inspirations that guided this work, some action-orienting sensitivities (Anderson, 2012) were taken into account in order to generate processes of change and processes of learning in dialogic spaces. I wanted to focus on two action-orientating sensitivities (Anderson 2012), which where the most evident in both experiences, abandoning the expert position and the relational expertise. Regarding the abandonment of the position of expert, it was clear that through my deliberate efforts as a teacher, that I intended to eliminate a hierarchical, authoritarian and asymmetric relationships with the students, in the way we talked, in the possibility of sharing control of the class and in the way knowledge and experiences of the students were validated. To achieve this, it was vital, in both cases, to be curious about people's stories, and to show a genuine interest in knowing the students (Anderson, 2009). It was also of vital importance what Derrida (1972) calls *decentering*, which refers to a centrifugal movement in relationships. It is about giving up the prominence that is usually granted to the teacher and inviting students to take the center of the stage. In this sense, it was very interesting to see how, in practical terms, to abandon the position of "expert" was reflected in the fact that my knowledge as a teacher became just one more among the collective knowledge.

Here I want to emphasize that abandoning the expert position does not mean that the teacher is

³⁸ See Appendix 7

³⁹ See Appendix 9

not an expert in something, he/she has no doubts about. The teacher is an expert in being able to generate conversational meetings where the word and the listening act are circulating. Teachers must be experts in establishing an open and visible pedagogical relationship, letting the other know and check where what is said or asked comes from and thus to be able to share their internal thoughts. In this sense, the teacher must have a *relational expertise*. Regarding this, there were two key elements that students in both experiences recognized as best practices and I linked them with this relational expertise. These elements refer to the fact of having deep and respectful listening processes and the emotional connection that emerged in the dialogical process. With respect to listening, it could be observed in both experiences that this took place not only at the moment when students were listening to each other but also when they were talking from a more reflective place. The meetings with the students were extended in order to break the exclusivity of one voice (the teacher's voice), thus privileging the voices of the students.

Regarding emotions, it could be observed that the emotion not only connected them to each other but it was also possible for them to recognize me through the questions I asked; the transformation was mutual and inherent to the linguistic exchange. In both dialogical processes the students remarked that they influenced and felt influenced by other students as a dynamic and transforming process of their daily life. In this sense we can say that these elements configure the relational expertise that a teacher should have.

Thus, a dialogic perspective in peace education is based on the richness and complexity of dialogue and on the links between dialogues so that it makes it possible to build alternatives that allow participants to recognize, recover and implement new potentialities where every communicational unit that makes part of a dialogue requires, and is built in, a relational space. Because of the above, a relational perspective in peace education sees students as proactive

participants and investigators of the very situation they want to transform, precisely as proactive agents who use their own actions and reflections to improve their understanding of the situation, of themselves, of the relationships and the coordination between participants as it takes place.

4. Critical Reflexivity

When analyzing the experiences described in chapters 6 and 7, one can observe in students' narrations that the dynamics generated in these pedagogical spaces contributed to generate new understandings of the armed conflict and the construction of peace and helped transform the relations of the students and their work contexts. It is also evident in both experiences that the concept of critical reflexivity achieved in the dialogical processes reaches people's life in a much simpler way than what could be described in the theory. I say this because, through the analysis of both experiences, I saw that the more colloquial and closer to everyday's language and activities of their reality, the more possibilities opened up to generate processes of critical reflexivity.

In this sense, I could say that in the dialogical work with adult population it is of vital importance to take care of the language used in the dialogical process so that it makes sense to the participants.

I also observed a transformation in the use of language. At first, speeches seemed more monological and closed, but over time they became polyphonic and opened to learning from their own experiences and from others (Seikkula & Arnkil, 2006). So, at the end of both experiences I saw the students making different descriptions of their work experiences, the peace treaty, the DDR and the conflict resolution. They learned to listen without judging, without interrupting, to change their quick and defensive answers for a more reflective posture about what they hear and also learned to share their internal dialogues in a more respectful and inclusive manner. In this process students developed an internal dialogue that intertwines the account of their own

experience on the topic that gathers them together with the influence of particular experiences of other people. Each one, in turns, changed the way s/he describes his/her own experience and new alternatives and realities emerged inside the conversational space, where the ongoing reflection, and the process of joint and individual construction of reality took place in each participant (McNamee & Gergen, 1996).

At this point it is important to remember the levels of learning proposed by Bateson (1973). Bateson describes learning 1 as the learning of a simple action within a given context. On the other hand, learning 2, instead of learning how to act in a specific situation, it is the process whereby one learns to act in certain ways in specific situations, rather than just acting in one way in a certain situation. In this sense, learning 2 is essentially learning about the context in which the specific activity takes place. In contrast, learning 3 involves learning to choose between sets of alternatives. The choice of alternatives is no longer at the level of the individual situation (as it was at level 2), or at the level of the individual action (level 1). In this sense, it is a corrective change in the system of the set of alternatives. More specifically, it refers to embody the transition of the epistemological changes and therefore it is oriented to the understanding and prospective action of human interaction (Keeney, 1987).

According to Bateson (1973), learning 3 is a difficult process, and “something of the sort does, from time to time, occur in psychotherapy, religious conversion, and in other sequences where there is a profound reorganization of character” (Bateson, 1973, p. 273). However, this profound reorganization is what we want to foster in peace education through critical reflexivity. From this perspective, we started from the idea that knowledge or learning 3, in Bateson’s terms, is possible thanks to critical reflexivity because we assume ourselves in the very act of co-creating knowledge.

Since the idea of critical reflexivity involves the idea of moving the students from the familiar to the novel, this process involves crisis, deconstructing and restructuring preconceived ideas and introducing new and restructuring ideas. In this sense, teachers should structure dialogues in ways that help students interact with new information and, in turn, it requires them to observe themselves. This observation allows students to place their truths in perspective and be aware that they do not always have truth. An example of a classroom activities that will help teachers to achieve critical reflexivity is the fishbowl methodology⁴⁰ (Opitz, & Bowman, 2008), the open space technology⁴¹, and self-references activities⁴². As showed in chapter 6 and 7 this type of activities engages the students in discussions, reflections and interactions that can foster critical reflexivity.

However, success in exercising this attitude will depend on how to establish dialogue with interlocutors, which at the same time depends on the way questions are asked. In other words, the best way to put truths into perspective and to foster critical reflexivity is to know how to ask questions so that they provoke reflection, both in the person who asks the question and who listens to it.

Thus, a learning criterion in peace education is the level of new understandings achieved by the participants around the issues addressed. In terms of results and as an effect of the implementation of this principle of critical reflexivity, the sense of the relational space that generates co-responsibility in the construction of knowledge is the final goal.

Any educational form should be evaluated in terms of its structure and the following questions should be asked: Does it permit feedback? Does it bring people together in joint endeavor rather than keeping them apart? Does it permit general participation, and is the total form of education capable of self-generated

⁴⁰ See Appendix 5

⁴¹ See Appendix 6

⁴² See Appendix 8

change? (Galtung, 2008, p. 965)

5. Ongoing reflection on the learning process

Undoubtedly the reflection about new learnings and comprehensions gained through the experience is a nodal point that shapes the practices of both teaching and learning. After all, from a constructionist stance, the reflection of the evaluation of the process is not about accomplishing goals of what is right or wrong, but it is about what we have co-created and how that co-creation expands new horizons in the students' lives, I prefer to talk in terms of *reflection on the learning process* rather than evaluation. This process refers to a ***permanent*** monitoring of agreements, feelings, consensus, ideas and new understandings that have the aim of making the necessary adjustments or modifications in favor of a relational setting and the learning process. I highlighted the idea of permanent monitoring since the reflection of the learning process has to be done from the first to the last encounter with students. This process has two major aspects: on one hand, a major aspect is the feedback that teachers give to their students and on the other, the reflection of new insights that students have accomplished within the course, class or program. Both processes are interdependent and configure the complex task of understanding the learning process that took place.

Regarding feedback, it is important to note that this issue is a widely discussed topic in education (Duncan, 2007; Taras, 2003). Spiller (2009) points out,

It is widely recognized that feedback is an important part of the learning cycle, but both students and teachers frequently express disappointment and frustration in relation to the conduct of the feedback process. Students may complain that feedback on assessment is unhelpful or unclear, and sometimes even demoralizing. Additionally, students sometimes report that they are not given guidance as to how to use feedback to improve subsequent performance. (p. 2)

From a constructionist perspective, feedback is carried out between students and the teacher

with the intention of mutually recognize the achievements of the program's objectives. The referent of the conversation is the social experience in the academic scenario and it purports to evaluate the understanding of different issues in the process of co-creation. So what we like about feedback is: 1. explore the manner in which students have engaged actively with goals, topics, and activities before, during and after the course; 2. encourage the reflection about to what extent the tasks and reflections encourage different ways of relating; 3. provide opportunities to act on feedback; 4. encourage interaction and dialogue around learning and around assessment tasks of the course; 5. facilitate the development of critical reflexivity in learning; and 6. involve students in decision-making about assessments, activities and practice.

If we seek to weave pedagogical experiences through relational spaces that involve building connections among participants, involve understanding needs and learning preferences, and if we seek to foster critical reflexivity as part of the reflection on the learning process, it is also necessary to explore new insights of students. To this end, I suggest the practices of self-monitoring. Self-monitoring is the reflection conducted by students looking at themselves in order to identify their process regarding domains, abilities and understandings developed. The referent is the student's experience and the creation of new possibilities of interaction in their context and with their community. So, when incorporating the component of self-monitoring in the perspective of the process we propose here, the intention is to encourage the will to engage in self-reflection, innovation and continuous improvement of one's own actions.

In the experiences described in this dissertation, some activities that promote self-monitoring were the field diaries⁴³ and the activities of self-reference⁴⁴. Through these activities I was able to see how the students apprehended class activities, how their beliefs were mobilized, and new skills

⁴³ See Appendix 4

⁴⁴ See Appendix 8

developed.

In this way, the processes that are generated between the teacher and the students in terms of reflection on the learning process should have as a fundamental principle a joint and collaborative co-construction. With this principle, it is assumed that reflection on the process does not have a beginning or an end but is always in the process. It is dynamic and is always looking for new practices and understandings that promote minimum and maximum changes, as well as micro and macro social changes developed jointly and in a collaborative way.

Likewise, and in concordance with the type of evaluation proposed, it is necessary to get more fully acquainted with the conception of the peace educator as a reflective agent. From this standpoint, the educator should recognize the relativity of his/her versions and introduce them in a dialogue with the students as an ingredient of the shared versions that will serve as a basis for seeking alternatives that strengthen the teaching-learning process.

Therefore, the teacher should be a *reflective evaluator*; that is, a professional with the capacity of looking at him/herself and his/her actions and letting this process produce a change in him/her to improve or make the processes more useful. It is then an interactive behavior of the professional regarding the processes in which s/he participates (Schön, 1998).

An evaluator who is critically aware of the social construction of evaluation cannot buy into any hinterland as a starting point for evaluation in a non-reflective way. There must be a way to analyze and reflect upon which constructions are taken for granted and which are not. (Dahler-Larsen, 2015, p. 327)

This kind of reflection comes up with a kind of knowledge that does not arise from pure theory, but that is about a skill for reflecting from practice to practice. This process broadens and deepens understanding while strengthening the capacity for action and facilitates the necessary adjustments for better pedagogical practices.

6. Co-creating the future through the present

One of the first implications of this perspective is that it allows to focus on the future and the emerging possibilities (that do not exist yet or only exist in an incipient way) that can be created and enhanced in the development of the construction of a vision for the future that transforms the current moment.

The future cannot be predicted, but preferred futures can and should be envisioned, invented, implemented, continuously evaluated, revised, and re-envisioned. Thus, another major task of futures studies is to facilitate individuals and groups in formulating, implementing and re-envisioning their preferred futures. (Hicks, 2002, p. 57)

As explained in chapter 4, in the exercise of appreciative inquiry, there is a reference to dreams. Speaking about dreams takes us to a different language game (Wittgenstein, 1953) and shows us a different path and a new way of relating.

Thus the contextual co-creation of the future, in the specificity of each process and community, opens up to a field of transformations in time that synthesize, in a novel way, circumstances, interactions, and that results within the framework of the objectives of the process of peace education.

Summary

After having explained the theoretical and methodological inspiration ideas developed in the systematization of experiences described in chapters 6 and 7 below, I present the framework used in this research, which emerges from the research categories and shows what I did in the peace education programs.

This framework consists of three phases: The first involves the construction of a relational context and the co-creation of the agenda. The second phase focuses in the development of a dialogical space in the form of seminar-workshops, which seeks to build a collaborative process

with students, to address theoretical contents that operate in parallel with practical activities. This methodology adopts a modality of practical and reflective work that encourages activities, which promote collaborative work. The activities of the third phase are planned to reflect on the learning achieved during the process.

Table

5

Framework for developing peace education programs

<i>Framework for developing peace education programs in contexts of non-formal education</i>		
Phase	Goal	Activities
Phase 1	Creation of a relational context Co-creation of the agenda On-going reflection of the learning process	It includes the steps to create a relational space for learning. The objective of this phase is to build a collaborative environment with the participants in which the commitment to the process is highlighted as a fundamental aspect; at the same time it seeks to share basic knowledge in regard to the program so that it, the transforming intentionality of the process is more broadly understood. In order to be able to summon the students to participate in a joint work process and in an active and committed way the following activities can be used: Storytelling, Appreciative Summits Possibility maps, Envisioning desire activities.
Phase 2	Scaffolding for peace building dialogs that foster critical reflexivity On-going reflection of the learning process	The dialogical space can be worked out through different resources and teaching strategies as: Open space technology, Fishbowl activities, world café, Deconstruction of dominant narratives, role play on reconciliation.
Phase 3	Co-creation of the present throughout the future On-going reflection of the learning process	The purpose of this last phase is to carry out a reflexive evaluation of the experience, in terms of changes, movements, of new individual and group comprehensions and ideas. As part of this phase the following process is very important: Self-Monitoring Feedback (from the teacher to the students, students to the teacher and among students)

CONCLUSIONS

When I began this dissertation, the Colombian government was in full negotiations with the FARC in Havana, Cuba. The signing of the peace treaty was almost a reality and to some extent the idea of signing the agreement was an engine for the design and implementation of many of the ideas embodied in this work. Likewise, part of the elaboration of the fieldwork coincided with a Colombian historic moment; most Colombians voted "no" to the referendum for peace. This situation generated a strong emotional and political polarization and radicalization in the population, which revealed the difficulty that we have, as Colombians, to consider the opinions of others, to be respectful of different arguments (the one with a different opinion that certainly puts our certainties into crisis) and to share different versions of the possible solutions of the armed conflict.

As shown in chapter 2, an important part of this polarization, which makes us unable to live in and from difference, certainly arises from fear and mistrust (resulting from a long, continued and naturalized conflict), which are at the base of many beliefs, discourses, political decisions, war actions and all kind of violence that we are currently living. However, in order to take on the challenges of post-conflict and achieve the construction of a culture of peace, it is essential to learn to dialogue and co-exist with the multiplicity of meanings and interpretations of the conflict.

To that extent, one of the greatest learnings and challenges of this work (both mine as a researcher and of my students) was the incorporation of the notion of multiple perspectives (Gergen, 2009b) in the pedagogic space. This idea encouraged us to think that there isn't a uniform world but a multiform one in which multiple meanings converge and demand the recognition of what is best or most appropriate to transform the reality of the country.

Thus, it is precisely these other forms and perspectives of understanding the reality of the country that must challenge us, as educators, to maintain a dialogical position. Therefore, the most important focus of this work was centered on how to generate pedagogical spaces that allowed us to listen to each other, negotiate meanings, reflect and discuss without imposing a reality as absolute.

Another lesson learned along this dissertation is to understand context reading as one of the skills of peace educators. This ability of context reading lies in connecting with the group, with the students and the actions taken, perceiving how these actions are received and what effects the intervention have on them. In this regard it is also important to highlight that some modifications of the decisions on the designed plan result from the context readings at the moment of the intervention. It is possible that in the teacher's opinion, he/she considers necessary to make adjustments to respond to events that could not be anticipated, for instance, emotions that suddenly arise, willingness and openness of the group, understanding of the work or limitations to do it and also external factors in the context or situations that affect the sessions.

I can also say that both experiences were filled with comforting moments from a professional and personal point of view. The sessions, their planning, execution and analysis generated a continuous implementation of theories and concepts that support the importance of education for peace and are enriched in the relationships built with each of the students. The development of this proposal opened the doors to the expression of emotions, thoughts and actions that allow transforming the relational daily life of the participants and making it possible to influence a broader social change based on constructions made in the classroom. Feeling the experience lived with the students enabled me to think that the actions we carry out in our daily life can impact us in multiple ways, both individually and collectively. It also allowed me to configure

with the students a series of reflections on my role as a teacher, according to Maturana (1997), "in cooperation, in tenderness, in solidarity and in respect for difference" (p. 46).

More precisely, giving myself to something unknown such as listening, taking others into account, feeling their feelings and enjoying to share time together made me recognize the importance of the expressions of recognition in our daily interaction. Therefore, living this experience from the essence of the "relational self" (Gergen, 2009b) allowed me to watch myself as part of the group and not separated from it, to consider myself in connection with the others, to understand their difficult situations, their concerns, interests and needs. In this sense I can say that peace education in contexts of non-formal education is best done when it is participatory, proactive, communal, collaborative and dedicated to construct meaning.

From the experience of this work, I also understood that to conceive peace education in a constructionist key, implies the reflection of the ways in which a multiplicity of traditions, conceptions of violence, armed conflict, and peace, coexist in the classroom. In this sense, the existence of diverse social groups, ages, political backgrounds, professions, involves at the same time a diversity of moral conceptions, of ways of being located in the world, of solving questions. In turn, this posture requires from us to be open to dialogue and conversation with the other.

This responsivity of dialogue situates us, as practitioners, within a relational ethic where attentiveness to the process of relating is centered, rather than adherence to some abstract, decontextualized set of principles. Dialogue, as an ethic of relationally sensitive practice, respects the diversity of locally situated beliefs and values. Thus, dialogue allows practitioners to let go of imposing judgment, assessment and evaluation of others' actions and opens the door for attentiveness to the coordination of diverse social orders. (McNamee, 2013, p. 188)

To this extent today I comprehend that peace, as a social construction, is a daily process that

is contextually anchored and relationally performed. Today, more than ever, I know that as educators, we must assume a performative, open, dialogical and collaborative attitude. We have to listen more and talk more because only in this way we will be able to perform coordinated action. Only through coordinated action we will be able to create learning environments where there is room for all kinds of beliefs, concepts, values, attitudes and convictions that, when being rebuilt from the concepts of peace and recognition of the other, will permit the generation of a space for reconciliation and for new worlds of meaning where violence is not the privileged form of interaction.

Thus peace education, as a form of coordinating actions, should invite us to achieve conversations in which we experience an openness that allows us to recognize ourselves without fear, with empathy and deep listening. As Gergen (2003) points out, we are not determined by the past, and we may abandon violent and harmful ways of life and together create new alternatives through coordinated action.

Transcending violence is forged by the capacity to generate, mobilize, and build moral imagination [...] Stated simply, the moral imagination requires the capacity to imagine ourselves in a web of relationships that includes our enemies; the ability to sustain a paradoxical curiosity that embraces complexity without reliance on dualistic polarity; the fundamental belief in and pursuit of the creative act; and the acceptance of the inherent risk of stepping into the mystery of the unknown that lies beyond the far too familiar landscape of violence. (Lederach, 2008, p. 5)

In this comprehensive framework, the pedagogical (sphere, space,...) is irreverent to the traditional notion of education that focuses on individuals and encourages actions that further integrate the relational perspective with a contextualized comprehension. From this perspective peace education is directed in three senses: First, in giving priority to the relation, since relationships come before knowledge, contents and information. Only from the relational space it

is possible to enhance the resources of students so as to expand the narrative borders of the conflict description, not only from the deficit but also from the always-possible alternatives of consolidating new learning. Secondly in the sense of changing the one-way communication in education where the voice of the teacher is privileged and the student's voice is undermined. To do so, allowing students to participate in decisions that are made inside the classroom is crucial. That is to say that peace education must demystify the forms of representation that have favored the hierarchy and the monologue in order to recognize their actors as "polivocal subjects", constructors of peace in different contexts (Gergen, 2007).

Third, in the sense of changing the inclination of *Knowing*, so common in the history of education, and open the way to the notion of *co-constructing* alternative spaces of formal and non-formal education with population of different ages, races, believes, and cultures.

Likewise, and from the work done in this Dissertation I can conclude that the four major transformative outcomes in the pedagogical experiences were: The primacy of relationships; Challenge existing realities; Co-constructing new realities and the continuous dialogue.

Finally, I can conclude that the process of designing the scaffolding for peace building dialogues proposes clear challenges in peace education. On one side, we have to face the complexity that comes from the uncertainties we are confronted with, coming from students' behavior and the diversity of stories and narratives that come into play in the dialogic space; the uncertainty that comes from the indetermination of the temporal or spatial extent of the actions undertaken as well as the indetermination or ignorance of the future (Pruitt & Thomas, 2006). In this sense when working in peace education unpredictability becomes a methodological criterion (Andolfi, 2003) and this is why it is necessary to be ready for improvisation, which does not imply a less serious and less rigorous exercise considering, "in effect, to improvise does not

consist on applying what is foreseen or foreseeable. It consists in generating novel responses to unforeseen events." (Montero, 2006, p. 36). In this regard to generate pedagogical innovations we must be curious and connected to what is happening in the classroom as much as being very sensitive to the feedback of the students.

Challenges in peace education

In the elaboration of this work I found different aspects that more than difficulties I consider them as challenges for the people who work in this field. The first one refers to the dialogue that as educators we must embrace with different institutions (whether public, private or governmental), which leads us to ask ourselves, what demands are present in the institutional discourses? and, how do we understand the needs and interests of participants and institutions to which they belong? Then, the demand depends on who expresses or identifies a need or a difficulty and in this sense, there are so varied demands as stories that explain the current situation of the country. Therefore, it is a priority to reflect on the interests and places from which we evaluate as researchers/educators and the institutions regarding peace education projects. It is also essential to situate ourselves from a collaborative posture that allows us to understand and negotiate institutional concerns, students' needs and our interests and observations as educators/ researchers.

The second challenge refers to the limits of the educational or pedagogical space and the psychosocial one. In doing this work one of the difficulties with which I found myself was how in contexts of sociopolitical violence there are some topics and moments that touch delicate experiences of people. This lead us the following questions: What is the role of the teacher in peace education: people expect to be heard and valued and that they can "vent"; but, is it enough? what objectives should be addressed by a teacher working from a constructionist

perspective: to carry out therapeutic activities or to discern the political role that he/she has?

We have observed that, in adversity, we are motivated to help and listen. People are grateful, they express that they feel better. However, what are the limits? We still need to make evident, in the practice, such complexity in peace education and the emotional areas that are addressed and that many times become difficult to manage, where the teacher must have the ability to emotionally content the students.

The third challenge refers to the micro political aspects of peace education. In connection with the previous reflection, becomes relevant for teachers to be aware of the political role of the activities, dialogues and reflections that we develop in the classroom. Packman (2011) says that the micro political aspects are those that have to do with defining realities in a different way in the field in which actors, families and networks with which we work are operating. Therefore, this micro political aspect is an attempt to legitimize the idea that from peace education, the challenge of promoting changes in the realities of people must be assumed. In this sense, actions are micro political if politics is understood as the updating of power, while it is an opportunity to define new realities and to promote critical reflexivity. Thus, this dissertation allows me to propose my own conception about the meaning of peace education in the context of non-formal education. It is built from actions that alter dominant micropolitical practices, that is to say, moving from imposition to receptive listening, from master classes to contact with people and learning by doing, from keeping for ourselves what we think to sharing with others and building a way of being in the social aspect, from living in destructive criticism to recognizing what others have to give. All of this leads to the emergence of alternative actions tending to generate a culture of peace.

This understanding of peace education should invite teachers to reflect critically on how the

contextual forces that are present -gender relationships, poverty situations, confrontation between political actors, socio-political violence and the belief system of the participants- shape the choices they make along the development of the program/course/class. That is to say that, peace education must be seen as an unfolding journey and not as a detailed, planned event. Learning from a constructionist stance is unpredictable, uncontrollable, and unable to be planned. This process demands flexibility since giving methodological operability to the different needs of the communities will always be a challenge.

In this sense these conclusions, rather than a point of arrival, are a new starting point for future works on peace education, where the gift of peace education from a constructionist perspective is to engage in dialogue, self-reflection, and critical reflexivity. Learning critical reflexivity in contexts of peace education both empowers students and gives them tools to engage in the continuous discussion on the unarguably complex phenomena of creating something new.

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APPENDIXES

APPENDIX 1: STORYTELLING

Storytelling is very useful in peace education to:

Connect emotionally with our students.

Have better understanding of the life stories that students bring.

Entertain and awaken interest.

Activate our students' imagination and awaken their most emotional side.

Generate memory.

Identify students' strengths and resources.

What elements cannot be overlooked when we perform activities of storytelling?

The human side

Storytelling humanizes meetings.

Students' experiences.

Initial assumptions for the exercise induction:

Processes of significance involve identification of *marking experiences* that may be associated with war experiences, victimization, duels, acts of violence or barbarity inflicted to one's own life trajectory.

It is important to emphasize the language capacity to name and build realities and make sense of the experiences of the past, the present and the projection of life itself. So, it is crucial to take into account not only the experiences but, principally, the meaning that people give to these experiences.

Teachers can *actively accompany* the changes in the meanings that students attribute to their experiences in war, traumatic events in the past, gender roles, conflict resolution and so on.

This elaboration must be linked to the possibility of students of being heard, generating relational constructions and finding their own resources.

This work can be achieved through warm relationships in daily life, increasing the capacity for reflective thinking, encouraging narrative exercises in collective or group activities, generating experiences of meaning transformation in peace building on the basis of reconciliation. In the case of armed conflict and socio-political violence, I ask the following questions so that students can start telling their story:

How have they lived the impact of the armed conflict from a personal, familiar and communitarian point of view?

What are their ideas regarding the Colombian armed conflict?

What are their fears?

What tools or resources have been useful for them to deal with the effects of the armed conflict?

APPENDIX 2: WORKSHOP: THE POLICE WE WANT TO BE

INSTRUCTION: Since visions can guide and empower action, we will spend the next hour exploring the Police (as individual and as institution) that you dream.

Please take note of your reflections, and be prepare to share it with all of us!

List your hopes and dreams

What was going on in the future

Construct the history of form the future
to the present -please write how did all
this happened-

Select action strategies for the present

Can you think in particular topics or
contents that may foster the strategies
selected

APPENDIX 3: PEACE BUILDING DIALOGUES, QUESTIONS FOR THE DIALECTICS OF DECONSTRUCTION-RECONSTRUCTION

Peace building dialogues

Questions for the dialectics of deconstruction-reconstruction

In the implementation of Scaffolding for peace building dialogues in peace education, the questions are considered as vehicles of the transformation process of dominant narratives.

Now, each question asked by a teacher in the processes of dialogue may have different intentions and objectives. Many questions aim to guide the teacher about the students' understandings and their experience; some others are posed primarily to bring a change.

The difference between the types of questions lies mainly in the different effects they achieve. For the purpose of the deconstruction and reconstruction of dominant discourses in peace education the following types of questions can be used:

Types of questions:

Circular questions: They are characterized by a general curiosity about possible links and contacts between people, actions, perceptions, feelings and connections.

Reflective questions: Their goal here is to generate new understandings. Within this type of questions we find: Future-oriented questions; Questions that turn interrogator into observer; Questions with an implicit suggestion; Normative comparison questions; Question that clarify distinctions.

Below I present the questions used with the students of the police questions are considered as vehicles of the transformation process of dominant narratives. Now, each question asked by a teacher in the processes of dialogue may have different intentions and objectives. Many questions aim to guide the teacher about the students' understandings the Scaffolding for peace building dialogues

Questions that highlight possible consequences:

What do you think will happen if once signed the agreement we keep on being so resistant to live together with the demobilized? What do you think will happen in the short, medium and long term?

Questions that explore catastrophic expectations:

What do you fear most about Police hiring former guerillas? What is the worst thing you consider could happen?

Questions that explore hypothetical possibilities:

Suppose you have to accompany the demobilized to carry out the tasks they have to do to repair the communities. How do you imagine you will do this activity? Which of the elements seen in class would be useful to handle the situation?

Questions that generate hope or optimism:

When you are working from a collaborative position with the community, who will be the first one to notice it? How will the gratitude of the community be manifested? What will be improved in the police-community relationships?

Circular questions:

How do you think the demobilized will feel once they surrender their weapons? If we had a demobilized person here, what questions would you ask him/her?

In the construction of a relational space:

How will each one of you contribute to make of this a space of trust and respect?
 What do your other classmates have to do?
 How do you feel about what you have been telling me?
 Do your family, partner, acquaintances, friends know how you feel?
 What do your family, co-workers, acquaintances and friends think about what you are telling me?

In the dialectic of construction-deconstruction:

If you could give an order to the verification of the agreements, according to priority and importance, what would be the aspects in which it is required to make a decision or be solved immediately? Which of these aspects would be in the medium term and which in the long term?

What can you do yourself to solve the situation related to this concern?

- From what you have accomplished before, what do you consider can help or serve you now?
- Who do you need in order to progress in the solution of the situation?
- How do these people accompany and help you to solve this situation?
- If some of the people you mentioned could not accompany you, what else could you do? Who else could you go to?
- Now that you are aware of the people that could help you or of the ways in which you could solve the situation, how do you feel?

For fostering critical reflexivity:

- How do my partners perceive some of the personal postures that I assume regarding demobilized people? From what ideas of being a policeman do we relate to communities? What do the voices of the consultants tell us? How do we assume the context demands regarding the role of policemen?

APPENDIX 4: FIELD DIARY

**FIELD DIARY ON ACR TRAINING ABOUT CONFLICT RESOLUTION
AND MEDIATION**

STUDENT REGISTRATION #	SESSION #	DATE:
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What is my posture on the subject worked?

What activity or what concept builds in me a wider view?

**How can i bring these notions and skills to my work with people who are in a
reintegration process?**

**In what way does this session could transform my work as a reintegrator
and my everyday life as a person?**

APPENDIX 5: A PEACE BUILDING WORLD CAFÉ

WORLD CAFÉ ON CONFLICT, VIOLENCE AND PEACE

Objective: Taking into account the key concepts addressed in class and in previous readings, we will now engage in a *World Café*. This is a method that will allow us to talk about educative themes in a relaxed environment. The conversations that emerge come together and are built on the previous ones as people move into groups. Thus, World Cafe favors the discovery of new perspectives that may lead us to new questions or issues that are important in peace building. The goal is to create knowledge and "think together" to move to action.

Mainly, we create the world through a state of connection among all people and conversation is a fundamental tool to make sense of our world, to discover what we value and to imagine our future. With this dynamic, a live communication network will be created, which will work through collaborative dialogue where different points of view will be presented in a dialogical and flexible space.

Highlight understandings, beliefs and attitudes of the participants on the topics to be discussed in the session.

Time: 60 minutes.

Description: According to the size of the group, subgroups of maximum 5 people are organized by asking them to enumerate themselves from 1 to 5 and then people with the same number get together to form the groups. They are asked to appoint a rapporteur for each group who will collect the answers and comments during the development of the activity.

The design of this activity is scheduled for four rounds of conversation among four or five people around a table, while there is an interconnection with the other tables as people vary their partners in each round. In this way, as people move from table to table, their conversations are

linked and co-constructed.

There will be a moderator at each of the tables who will invigorate the table. The moderator is the only one who does not change tables during the whole dynamic. The rest of the people will pass through the different tables.

On each table there will be a question to be discussed for ten minutes. Once 15 minutes have passed everyone will have to change tables.

The question at table 1: On a personal level, what does conflict and violence mean to you?

The question at table 2: In the context of processes, scenarios and (daily) reintegration dynamics, what can we understand about conflict and violence?

The question at table 3 was: On a personal level, what does peace and peace building mean to you?

The question at table 4: From your personal experience, in the reintegration context, what actions of peace building can be made?

Third part: Socialization

The moderators will make a collective sharing at the end. They will present sequentially, for three minutes each, the most relevant aspects that they have gathered on a sheet of conclusions. The aim is for all participants to know the arguments that appear in each of the tables in order to answer to each of the issues raised.

The rapporteur of each group is asked to briefly explain (in two minutes) the results of each part of the activity by making a recounting of: words associated to the notions and their connotation, answers to questions and metaphors or slogans built by the group for each notion. She is also asked to give an account of the level of agreement and/or disagreement inside the group.

APPENDIX 6: MAPS OF CONFLICT

Objective: Elaborate maps to identify types of conflict and forms of violence in the processes, scenarios and daily dynamics of reintegration.

Time: 30 minutes.

Introduction: Let's remember that the work of the mediator will depend on the particularities of how we conceptualize the conflict. Mapping the conflict that we can face in our daily life is very useful when we want to understand the multiple realities that configure the conflict, to identify their structural elements, to understand their dynamics, to enhance their resources and capacities for their peaceful management as well as to favor the development of cooperative actions and creative solutions.

Before taking actions to manage and seek to transform a conflict, draft a map collectively with others who are in conflict and especially in meetings devoted to seek prevention and transformation of conflicts.

Description: According to the size of the group, subgroups of maximum 5 people are organized by asking them to enumerate themselves from 1 to 5 and then people with the same number get together to form the groups. They are asked to appoint a rapporteur for each group who will collect the answers and comments during the development of the activity. Next, the phases for elaborating the conflict maps are presented.

MAP OF THE CONFLICT		
PHASES OF ELABORATION	CONSIDERATIONS	FINDINGS
<i>Phase 1: Selection of the conflict.</i>	It is about identifying what conflictive issue is going to be mapped. Talk about the most common conflicts that appear in the daily work of reintegration and choose one to be mapped. Make a general description of the conflictual situation without going deeper into its causes. <i>*What is the conflictual situation?</i>	

<i>*Why is this conflict significant?</i>	
<i>Phase 2: Magnitude of the conflict.</i>	<p>Mention the individuals, groups or institutions involved in the problematic situation. Identify whether it is an (intrapersonal, interpersonal, intragroup, intergroup) conflict.</p> <p><i>*Who are involved in the conflictual situation?</i></p> <p><i>*What is the magnitude of the conflict?</i></p>
<i>Phase 3: Situation of incompatibility.</i>	<p>Reflect on what the parties want. As much as possible, talk to the parties involved.</p> <p><i>*What are the interests, needs, goals or values about which the parties are disputing?</i></p>
<i>Phase 4: Perceptions of the conflict.</i>	<p>Inquire about the perception that each of the parties has of the conflictual situation and the reasons for such perception. As much as possible, talk to the parties involved.</p> <p><i>*What is the perception of the parties about the conflictual situation?</i></p>
<i>Phase 5: Context of the conflict.</i>	<p>Identify elements of the context that may be significant to the problematic situation.</p> <p><i>*¿What is the context in which the conflictual situation develops?</i></p>
<i>Phase 6: Communication guidelines</i>	<p>Identify the forms in which the parties in conflict communicate with each other.</p> <p><i>*What are the communication patterns between the parties in conflict?</i></p>
<i>Phase 7: Emotions of the conflict.</i>	<p>Identify the types of emotions that characterize the parties in conflict.</p> <p><i>*What emotions predominate in the interaction between the parties in conflict?</i></p>
<i>Phase 8: Dynamics of the conflict.</i>	<p>Identify the stage of the conflict: latent, emergent, escalating, stagnating or de-escalating.</p> <p><i>*At what stage is the conflict dynamic?</i></p>
<i>Phase 9: Forms of conflict management</i>	<p>Identify the means or strategies used by the parties to manage conflict. Identify whether the conflict presents forms of violence.</p> <p><i>*How do parties manage the conflict situation?</i></p> <p><i>*Does the conflict have forms of violence? Identify them.</i></p>
<i>Phase 10: Functionality of the conflict.</i>	<p>Reflect on the possible functionality or utility of the conflict for the parties involved and for the system that articulates them.</p> <p><i>*What functionality can the conflict</i></p>

	<i>have?</i>
<i>Phase 11: Resources for conflict transformation.</i>	Identify the resources available to the parties for a possible peaceful transformation of the conflict. <i>*What resources do the parties have in order to positively transform the conflict?</i>
<i>Phase 12: Positive reading of the conflict.</i>	Reflect on what this conflict could contribute to. <i>*What could this conflict contribute to?</i>

APPENDIX 7: OPEN SPACE TECHNOLOGY

Objective: The open space technology is a dialogical methodology that helps to identify critical issues, voice to their passions and concerns, learn from each other, and, when appropriate, take collective responsibility for finding solutions

To organize an OST process is necessary to have a defined goal however all the participants contribute in managing autonomously the work plan by the theme proposals and the selected insights.

INSTRUCTIONS: Choose with the students different topics regarding the challenges of mediation in the context of reintegration. Then ask for 5 students to volunteer to coordinate the dialogue on the topic they feel more passionate about. The rest of the students are free to move at any time to any of the 5 discussions they care about. Caring creates common ground, and helps to remind participants of higher purpose.

Principles for the dialogical open space technology:

The Law of Two Feet: Means you take responsibility for what you care about -standing up for that and using your own two feet to move to whatever place you can best contribute and/or learn.

Whoever comes is the right people: Whoever is attracted to the same conversation are the people who can contribute most to that conversation, because they care. So they are exactly the ones who are capable of initiating action.

Whatever happens is the only thing that could've: We are all limited by our own pasts and expectations. This principle acknowledges we'll all do our best to focus on the present time and place and not get bogged down in what could've or should've happened.

When it starts is the right time: The creative spirit has its own time, and our task is to make our best contribution and enter the flow of creativity when it starts.

When it's over, it's over: Creativity has its own rhythm. So do dialogical process. Pay attention to creativity, not the clock. When you think it is over, ask: *Is it over?* And if it is, go on to the next thing you have passion for. If it's not, make plans for continuing the conversation.

APPENDIX 8: SELF REFERENCE

- It is understood as the possibility to turn the focus of attention to ourselves in each meeting

- Recognize that the interaction with others produces feelings, thoughts and reflections
- Acknowledging that the relationship with another affects us which allows us to recognize both my experiences, feelings and experiences and those of the other with the same validity and importance.

Guide questions:

What have you learned from you in this class?

1. How are you feeling after the class activities?
2. What have you learned that was of most interest for you?
3. What is it that you appreciate most about your own kind of work?
4. What do you want to work on further after this reflection?
5. If you had to name your own “rough sides” as mediator what would you say?
6. Do you have any questions or suggestions for the rest of your classmates or for me?

APPENDIX 9: FISHBOWL PROCESS

Objective: The fishbowl process involves small groups of people (4-7) seated in circle, having a conversation in full view of a larger group of listeners. Later the people who were sitting in the outer circle go to the center and those who were in the center go to the big circle as listeners of their conversation. Fishbowl processes provide a creative way to reflect on polemical issues and invites the participants to a deep listen.

As a teacher, how do I implement a fishbowl process? Is important to analyze the appropriateness of this methodology to the objectives of the class and the topic that are going to be addressed. Make sure that the physical space permits a fishbowl setup: A few chairs in an inner circle and concentric rings of chairs and/or round tables around the inner circle. Blackboard or paper on walls for written or graphic recording of key ideas is sometimes helpful.

Intructions: To begin, invite the students to sit up front, explain to the group how the process will work, and open with the following questions, inviting the students in the fishbowl to dialogo.

1. In what way have you been as mediators in your daily life and the context of DDR?
2. Share a successful case of mediation in your work, and tell us why you were successful
3. What things did you do so it could be successful?
4. From what we have talked, what are the skills that a meter should have in the context of reintegration?

Once the grupo of the circle discussed these questions they change positions with their classmates. At the end of the session, some time was dedicated to reflect on their thoughts while listening to the dialogue and when being on the dialogue. In this last moment of the dialogical process is very importan to seek for new undersandings, fellingns and comprehensions in the

students.

APPENDIX 10: ACTIVITY CIRCLES FOR DREAMING, DREAM TOGETHER & PROJECTING

In concentric circles of 6 persons where every three minutes they rotated of group they discussed the following guiding questions:

Dreaming: building dreams individually:

What is my role as a policeman in the post-conflict?

How would I like my role in the institution to be?

What should I do to achieve this change?

Dream together: building a common dream as a group. What kinds of stories would we like others to tell us about us as cops?

What would those stories be like? What could we do as a group to achieve this dream?

Projecting: Projection of goals and dreams in common. What things from the pedagogical experience could we take to other scenarios?

APPENDIX 11: CLOSING DIALOGUE SCRIPT

From what you have learned in the course what key ideas will you multiply?

What were the ideas, notions or activities that most caught your attention and will be more useful for your work?

What personal experiences were mobilized with the exercises done and what is their use?

What tools do you take with you from this course?

What did I do as a teacher that you consider useful or not useful within the process?

What recommendations can you give me for future pedagogical experiences?