

Empowering Teachers to Build Peace through Transitional Justice Education: The Case of “Justa-mente”

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Introduction

The interconnection between transitional justice and education has increased in recent years. Research in ICE has demonstrated how the judicial and nonjudicial institutions created to face large-scale mass abuses after a conflict has decided to implement education recommendations and strategies to contribute to peacebuilding. Moreover, there is a growing interest in exploring the role of teachers in peacebuilding in conflict-affected contexts. The ICE research landscape has considered teachers as critical actors who can contribute to achieving the transitional justice goals, which include reconciliation and peacebuilding. Nevertheless, there has yet to be any professional development strategy for teachers.

Background Case Study

Colombia it is a unique country case in the field of education and transitional justice since it is the first time that both the judicial and non-judicial transitional justice institutions have structured concrete peace education strategies for educator stakeholders in school communities seeking to put in dialogue values and goals of transitional justice, such as justice and truth while learning and dealing with the massive abuses committed during armed conflict.

In mid-2022, the criminal judicial body, the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (SJP), in partnership with the Civil Society Org Educapaz, structured the “Justa-mente: Aprendiendo de Justicia y Reparación” (Learning about justice and restoration) education program.

Research Questions

1. To what extent the education program influences teachers' understanding of transitional justice notions?
2. To what extent the appropriation enhances teachers' agency in school contexts.

Justa-mente:
Focused on high school teachers

From 9, 10, 11 grade from 6 prioritized departments specially affected by armed conflict

Pedagogical guide & Teacher training process
Seven modules

Four meetings of three days (8 hours each day) in 2023

Learning aims

Strengthen the appropriation of the culture of peace, transitional justice, and restorative justice in the school contexts.

Understanding different notions of justice is necessary to understand transitional justice measures with restorative approaches.

Question notions of justice and conflict

Methodology IRB 24-219, 14 feb. 2024

Secondary data analysis of evaluation material of Justa-mente

- Six (6) teachers Focus Groups in six department of Colombia
- Two (2) teacher interviews
- Pedagogical Guide Just-amente (Seven module guide)

Conceptual framework *Justice-Sensitive Education (Davies, 2017)*

Recognizes the Transitional Justice Context

- Possible transformations through education:
1. Structural Reforms (ex: Education contributed to exclusion)
 2. Curriculum changes (ex revision history curriculums)
 3. Changes in teachers' pedagogy and institutional culture (ex: Restorative practices, attitudes of dialogue and understanding)

Three (3) educational efforts to be considered in education in TJ:



Recognize and understand large scale abuses & TJ mechanisms



Importance of seeking truth for victims & society



Two-ways gaze/addressing the past to build future

Findings Deductive Approach

	Recognize and understand large scale abuses & Transitional Justice mechanisms	Importance of seeking truth for victims & society	Two-ways gaze/addressing the past to build future
	Consensus that the tool helped teachers learn from the armed conflict and the large sale abuses.	Most of the teachers relate more the victim centered focus with restorative justice rather than relate it with transitional justice	Many teachers point out that learning about the armed conflict and other notions of justice that can be applied in schools it is being a driver to impulse to make long-term changes in their school and community.
	Many teachers mentioned how their understanding and perception about the judicial body of transitional justice changed	In many situations teachers use the term Transitional Justice & Restorative Justice indistinctively	Justa-mente methodology made teachers confront and transform aspects of their identity, such as their beliefs of justice and conflict
Teachers' agency Transforming pedagogy & institutional culture	Actions	Several teachers have created spaces for dialogue in classroom with problematic situations +personally	Several teachers have created participatory approaches in class
	Attitudes	Most of the teacher see an improvement in ability to communicate with students +personally	Educators' constant challenges are managing their emotions and students' reactions
	Values	Restorative dialogue turned into a basis for dialogue in the classroom + personally	Some teachers refer how they feel more empathy for others

Discussion

Findings evidence of teachers' agency in transitional justice can help carry out transformations and implement changes in daily life school practices. Moreover, educative aspects of transitional justice can contribute to rethinking individual subjectivity and preconceptions. Despite the opportunities teachers have to influence their environment and transform the conflict in transitional justice contexts, it is crucial to be aware of the limits on their agency. One aspect that most affect teachers' capacity and security in transitional justice contexts is how to deal with and manage their own and students' emotions, biases, traumas, and reactions when approaching complex topics related to conflict, armed conflict, and transitional justice. I propose to start integrating the Justice-Sensitive Education framework with other families of peace education when structuring transitional justice education programs or policies, such as Transrational Peace Education, where both self-awareness practices and holistic transformative pedagogies are present (Breathwork, Body Movement, meditation, Qi Gong, Artistic Expression, Theater, among others)

References

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