

## **Enhancing the Dialogue and Alliance of Civilizations: Perspectives from Peace Education**

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### *Introduction*

Over the past few decades, the role of culture and intercultural themes and issues has been increasingly recognized as vital in understanding and shaping relationships among diverse communities and nations. As immigrants arrived in North America, Europe, Australia and New Zealand to begin new lives, institutions from workplaces and bureaucracies to schools and families, began to adapt to the reality of cultural diversity. In the face of resistance and barriers raised by certain segments of dominant ethno-cultural groups and the continuing existence of discrimination and racism, policies of multiculturalism and multicultural education have nonetheless gained widening acceptance. Due to the accelerating forces of economic globalization, hitherto relatively culturally homogenous societies are now also obliged to resolve issues of integration arising from the inflow of migrant workers and intercultural marriages.

Elsewhere, in places in which diverse ethnic, tribal and faith groups have lived together over many generations, the dynamics of modern political, economic and social formations and relationships have also catalyzed inter-group conflicts. In some instances, these conflicts have spawned xenophobia, ethnic cleansing violence and the horrors of genocide which all need resolution and reconciliation as witnessed tragically in, for example, Rwanda, Nigeria, Indonesia, Darfur, India and the former Yugoslavia.

Within the broad field of peace education, the specific dimension of education for intercultural or multicultural understanding, harmony and cooperation has therefore gained

substantive and widening visibility across formal and non-formal sectors (May, 1999; Sefa Dei & Calliste, 2000; Grant & Lei, 2001). Unless individuals are encouraged from an early age to respect cultural differences and to learn to live together peacefully, it is likely that seeds of discrimination will grow to bear fruits marked by racist attitudes and conduct, which can lead to extremist hatred and even violence.

Yet, as in virtually all other dimensions of peacebuilding and peace education, while progress can and has been made through good policies and effective implementation, fresh challenges will always arise in the context of changing societal and global realities. One such major challenge to intercultural understanding and education was initially sparked in the nineties by the concept of “the clash of civilizations” that the North American political scientist Samuel Huntington (1996) proposed. It did not take long, however, before the 9/11 attacks on New York and subsequent official and societal reactions and counter-reactions provided much fuel for this argument. As this paper seeks to show, there is an urgent need for intercultural educators committed to building a culture of peace to counter and transcend thinking and practice based on the worldview of a “clash of civilizations”. The acknowledgment of this need is reflected well in the growth of programs and initiatives to promote instead a “dialogue among civilizations” and its implications of intercultural and multicultural education over the past decade.

#### *From “Clash of Civilizations” to Dialogue among Civilizations*

In the 90s, the impact of culture on international relations was further highlighted by the thesis of the “clash of civilizations” formulated by Samuel Huntington in an essay related to US foreign policy and later in an elaborated book version. Sparking considerable controversy, the thesis argued that the major source for international tensions, conflicts and wars would increasingly stem from “ideological” conflicts and differences between civilizations or broadest cultural entities. More specifically, the “fault line” between “Islam” and the “West” is deemed to be especially deep and problematic. The 9/11 attacks on New York and subsequent implementation and expansion of the global “war

of terror” led by the USA and other allies in turn provided much political justification for this view and generated a rise in “Islamophobia” in much of the “Western” world (van Driel, 2004).

It did not take long, however, for this “clash of civilizations” thesis to be critiqued and challenged conceptually and politically. Scholars such as Esposito (1995) pointed out serious analytical flaws in the arguments backing this worldview, while leaders among South nations, notably former President Khatami of Iran, advocated instead for a “dialogue among civilizations”. Instead of emphasizing conflicts attributed to differences, efforts need to be made to find common or shared values and principles leading to international understanding, respect, cooperation and conflict resolution and transformation and thereby peaceful relationships.

This global movement for inter-civilizational dialogue has been increasingly reflected in inter-governmental circles as leaders and spokespersons for diverse nations acknowledged the dangers of leaving unquestioned a de facto self-fulfilling policy of civilizations “inevitably clashing”. Hence 2001 was declared the UN Year for the Dialogue of Civilizations. Among UN agencies, UNESCO has in particular played a leadership role in promoting intercultural and inter-civilizational dialogue (see King in this issue).

In recent years, Turkey and Spain has also mobilized a growing number of UN member states to join the “Alliance of Civilizations” initiative as an organizational framework to promote dialogue among civilizations and cultures at local, national, regional and international levels (United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, n.d.; Mirici in this special issue). The year 2010 has been designated the International Year for the Rapprochement of Cultures and much momentum and energies have been generated by a consortium of civil society organizations and international agencies for 2011-2020 to be commemorated as the International Decade for a UN Decade of Interreligious and Intercultural Dialogue, Understanding and Cooperation for Peace.

Among faiths and religions, likewise, much progress has been achieved in building interfaith dialogue movement. In contrast to blaming religions for generating violence and fuelling

wars, interfaith dialogue advocates seek to enhance deeper understanding, respect for differences, and reconciliation among faiths. These global interfaith organizations like Religions for Peace, Parliament of the World's Religions, and United Religions Initiative have regularly gathered in international, regional and local venues to share insightful experiences in how diverse faith communities are building a culture of peace in every region and continent.

As these grassroots and global efforts to promote dialogue and peaceful relations among civilizations and cultures continue to expand, it is also clear that education plays a vital role. To be effective and sustaining, intercultural and inter-civilizational dialogue needs appropriate educational theory and practice. This article seeks therefore to highlight some key educational implications in building dialogue among civilizations and cultures. The efforts catalyzed in particular by the Alliance of Civilizations will provide one helpful building block. However, I will also emphasize the need to envision education for a dialogue of civilizations and cultures through a multidimensional and holistic paradigm of education for a culture of peace (Toh & Floresca-Cawagas, 2000). In this regard, as also reflected in the other papers and annexes of this special issue of the International Journal of Curriculum and Instruction, the work of advocates in specific fields of transformative education for peace will yield constructive ideas and strategies for the urgent project of deepening dialogue among diverse civilizations and cultures.

*From Dialogue to Transformative Education  
for a Culture of Peace*

The urgent and challenging work of building a more peaceful world clearly benefits from ideas and initiatives such as the Dialogue among Civilizations and the Alliance of Civilisations. As noted above and as shown in a number of articles in this special issue, educators in many regions have been encouraged to integrate understanding and dialogue between cultures and civilizations into their curricula and institutions. Furthermore, as noted in her reflections on programs and projects under the

auspices of UNESCO, King also provides a wide range of intercultural education initiatives whose principle, values and practices are similar to or complement dialogue of civilization visioning and practices. The Declarations in this issue also exemplify the collaboration of many countries, institutions and educators in two conferences yielding helpful declarations for guiding ongoing for inter-civilizational dialogue and future activities.

Nevertheless, from a holistic peace education perspective, it is also essential to critically reflect on a number of themes and issues where promoting dialogue among civilizations and cultures as well as the efforts of the Alliance of Civilizations need to more fully consider the root causes of conflict and violence locally and globally. In addition, as explained later, it is vital to fully explore the role of active nonviolence in building peaceful relationships among cultures, civilizations and nations.

### *Broadening the theme of “Islam and the West”*

In focusing strongly on the relationship between “Islam” and the “West”, the Alliance of Civilisations initiative chose to highlight the political actions (e.g., military interventions in Afghanistan and Iraq and terrorist violence) of “Western” states and extremist groups guided by distorted news coverage of Islam. At the same time, the Alliance of Civilisations was properly critical of negative cultural responses to such religiously-motivated violence that lead to damaging stereotypes (e.g., “Islam” justifies violence”) that fuel the expanding phenomenon of Islamophobia. From a peace education perspective, the Alliance of Civilisations provides a significant demystification of views that unfairly label Islam and Muslims as inherently “supporting” terrorism. Furthermore, another analytical and pedagogical strength of the Alliance of Civilisations framework lies in its acknowledgment that there exist interpretations of some believers which promote the oppression of women, honour killings and corporal punishment that violate human rights standards. Such interpretations in turn need to be critiqued as contradictory to Islam as a faith that is oriented towards peace.

Besides these conceptual strengths, however, a number of limitations of the Alliance framework need to be noted. To begin with, the use of the broad categorization of the “West” in its discourse is conceptually problematic and pedagogically inadequate. In civilizational terms, the “West” is usually seen as being rooted in certain dominant cultural and philosophical foundation, notably Judeo-Christian values, and worldviews from the Roman and Greek civilizations. Yet the current cultural realities of “Western” societies can no longer justify this long-held traditional social construction. With the growth of migration and in many situations, an increasing acknowledgement of indigenous peoples and history, the “West” is now very culturally diverse or multicultural. Hence in terms of “Islam and the West” relationship, Muslims are already present and visible within contemporary Western societal formations.

It is true that this multiculturalism faces ongoing challenges, including racism, ethnic discrimination and social and economic inequalities faced by certain marginalized cultural or “racialized” groups. But not to also highlight the cultural diversity characterizing present-day Western societies is to overlook the potential bridges of understanding that already exist within this broad civilizational category. For example, as earlier cited, there are many fruitful lessons of multicultural education available in the West that other civilizations, including Islam, can find relevant and beneficial to their own efforts in building intercultural harmony within their social formation.

Another corollary limitation of the Alliance of Civilisations’ depiction of the “Islam and the West” relationship is that the “West” is somewhat stereotyped for political actions (e.g., military intervention and global war on terrorism), as though all citizens of Western nations are in favour of those policies. From a peace education perspective, it is vital to distinguish between leaders and political entities and citizens supportive of such militaristic or hegemonic policies from voices and movements within Western societies who are working visibly to transform Western states towards greater democratic accountability and a nonviolent role of their governments in the world. At the same time, such alternative perspectives also challenge the continuing

and sometimes even deepening institutional racism and other forms of cultural discrimination.

*Promoting inclusivism and pluralism*

In short, the Alliance of Civilisations discourse on “Islam and the West” does embrace helpful analyses of a number of root causes of violence and conflict in the world, including “Islam and West” tensions. But it is also necessary to broaden the discussion to relationships between Islam and multicultural societies. This then also calls for simultaneous transformation of societies, whether Islam or Judeo-Christian traditions, that are institutionally dominant toward realizing the potential of cultural and civilizational diversity globally. Thus the call for political pluralism in the Alliance of Civilisations High-Level Report (United Nations Alliance of Civilizations, 2006, 5.10) needs to be accompanied by a parallel call for cultural and faith pluralism in Muslim-majority countries.

In this regard, as the recent Asia-Pacific Consultation on the High-Level Report emphasized, the focus of the Report on “Islam and the West” needs to be broadened to include also the broad diversity of faiths, whether monotheistic or not (New Zealand Ministry of Foreign Affairs and Trade, 2007). It should be acknowledged that one of the Recommendations in the Education section in the High-Level Report (6.8) calls for the education system, including religious schools, to “provide students with an understanding and respect for the diverse religious beliefs, policies and cultures in the world”. However, it is significant that in the conceptual part of the Report, there is a lack of reflection on the theme of “exclusivism” and “inclusivism” within the theology of various faiths, including Islam and other Abrahamic faiths. As the growing movement of interfaith dialogue has shown, there is an urgent need for the education of faith communities and leaders towards greater inclusiveness and pluralism (Coward, 2000). In this special issue, Patel and Meyer focus in particular on the creative initiative of the Interfaith Youth core approach to promote religious pluralism among youth. Furthermore, interfaith

dialogue also seeks to reject exclusivist beliefs that lie at the roots of bigotry, distrust and disrespect which provides fuel for extremist attitudes and practices toward “others” identified as “false religions” (Knitter, 1995; Smoch, 2002; Religions for Peace, 2007; Toh & Cawagas, 2006; Fitzgerald & Borelli, 2006; The National Summit of Religious Leaders toward a Culture of Peace, 2005). In this regard, as advocates of interfaith dialogue point out, the complementary role played by intra-faith dialogue is indispensable. Faith communities need to look self-critically and introspectively at their own doctrines to re-interpret attitudes toward “other” faiths and to transcend extremist exclusivist views and practices.

### *Educating for forgiveness and reconciliation*

A theme which the Alliance of Civilisations discourse can emphasize more is the need to educate for forgiveness and reconciliation (Gopin, 2001; Lederach, 1999; Helmick, 2001). These values and principles can be found within all faiths and cultures and civilizations in restoring relationships that have been fractured by conflicts, violence and injustices. However, as demonstrated by the global experiences of Truth Commissions, such as the post-apartheid Truth and Reconciliation Commission process in South Africa, practising and implementing forgiveness and reconciliation is never easy. Restorative justice requires the “victims” to forgive and reconcile with “offenders” who in turn sincerely accept their accountability and are prepared to engage in responsible restorative actions. In this regard, one creative and inspirational grassroots project is the school for forgiveness and reconciliation founded by Fr. Leonel Gomez (2006) in Colombia

### *Acknowledging indigenous peoples in inter-civilizational discourse*

A further limitation in the Alliance of Civilisations discourse is that indigenous peoples and their ancient wisdom and knowledge is not mentioned. Yet, worldwide, long before the era of colonies

and independence to nation states, many conflicts including very violent episodes have occurred due to colonization and the underpinning racist and ethnocentric assumptions towards indigenous peoples viewed as “inferior”, “backward” or “lacking civilization”. Today, there are significant parallel conflicts continuing in modern independent societies. Due to ongoing processes of modernization and globalization, indigenous peoples in many continents face serious threats to their cultural survival as well as violations of their human rights (Bodley, 2008). Hence in educating for the dialogue of civilizations, the problems of marginalization faced by indigenous peoples need to be integrated. Consistent too with the principles of intercultural understanding and respect, learning from the wisdom of the elders with their profound and sacred sense of interdependence with all parts of the environment will benefit all humanity and nations (Suzuki & Knudtson, 1997). With the recent ratification of the International Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and the presence of a permanent Indigenous Forum at the United Nations, there is clearly much scope for synergy between the Alliance of Civilisations initiative and programs and UN and other agencies and civil society organizations promoting indigenous survival and rights (UNESCO, 2006).

*Overcoming tensions between civilizational/cultural worldviews  
and human rights*

Turning now to the significant dimension of building a culture of peace, there is constant referral in the High–Level Report of the Alliance of Civilisations to the need to fully and consistently respect internationally agreed human rights standards and international law. Specific rights mentioned include prohibition against torture, freedom of religion, and the right and freedom of expression and association (2.3, 5.12). As earlier mentioned, the Alliance is openly critical of violations of human rights that can arise from distorted views of doctrines of various faiths, including Islam. Hence the Alliance of Civilizations movement clearly supports human rights education.

However, from a holistic perspective of education for a culture of peace, the High Level Report can be challenged for not

discussing more fully the ongoing tension between certain faith beliefs or doctrines and human rights (Runzo, Martin & Sharma, 2003; An-Na'im, Gort, Jansen & Vroom, 1995; Sharma, 1994). These tensions apply notably in the areas of women's human rights, reproductive rights, right to sexual orientation and right to conversion or leaving a faith. In implementing education for a dialogue of civilizations, it will be essential therefore for all faiths and cultures to self-critically interpret their doctrinal positions and beliefs in order to transcend those tensions, otherwise the human rights of some sectors of society will continue to be violated. In addition, as An-Na'im (1992) argues, a cross-cultural dialogue on human rights is necessary and possible.

### *Uprooting structural violence*

In analyzing violence and conflicts in the world, the Alliance of Civilisations High-Level Report does recognize one of the root causes to be the economic disparities between rich and poor among and within nations (pg.7). The Report argues that poverty can lead to despair, a sense of injustice and alienation that when combined with political grievances can foster extremism (pg.5). This calls therefore for an "aggressive" campaign for the "eradication of poverty" as advocated by the Millennium Development Goals.

However, there is hardly any analysis or explanation in the High-Level Report on the root causes of global poverty and the increasing disparities between rich and poor. The strategy to "eradicate poverty" is mentioned briefly in the Report's recommendations for action in the area of "migration", where wealthier nations are exhorted to "meet their commitments of increased investment in the developing world, as this, together with good governance and capacity building efforts in developing countries, would help improve economic conditions in those countries" (pg.20).

From a holistic peace education perspective, this approach to understanding the politics and political-economy of global poverty is inadequate. Certainly, within the dominant paradigm of economic "development" and globalization, increasing

investment in South countries is deemed essential for improving growth and prosperity, including poor sectors. However, there is a growing number of voices among analysts and especially civil society and people's organizations representing marginalized sectors (e.g., rural and urban poor, women, indigenous peoples, and children) who are questioning this dominant paradigm (Anderson, 2000; Shiva, 2000,2005; Bello,2009; Brecher, Costello & Smith, 2002). Through the enormous power of transnational corporations and international financial institutions, export-oriented growth policies, rapid extraction of natural resources, expansion of agribusiness, and national political and economic systems controlled by and disproportionately benefitting elites, this structural violence undermines the capacity of poor majorities to meet their basic needs despite toiling for the globalized economic machine.

In sum, education for the dialogue of civilizations also needs to integrate perspectives and pedagogies from the field known as development education or education for local and global justice. Promoting an "alliance of civilizations" would not successfully address the problem of rich-poor inequalities unless it engages in a critical dialogue on which paradigms of economic "development" serves the well-being of all peoples. Unless the logic of excessive profits, greed, over-consumerism and accompanying corruption is replaced by a global ethic proposed by, for example, the Parliament of World Religions (Kung & Kuschel, 1994) or "shared security" as advocated by the Religions for Peace (2006), or the "globalization from below" movement (e.g., World Social Forum) (Fisher & Ponniah, 2003), then the poverty and inequality that the Alliance of Civilisations is concerned about will not be effectively overcome. Increasingly influential also are the initiatives to replace orthodox indicators of economic "progress" (e.g., GNP and GDP) with alternative indicators such as Genuine Progress Index (GPI) and Gross National Happiness (Faris, 2009; van Willenswaard, 2008). The conceptual arguments as well as pedagogical exemplars for integrating local and global justice themes in the dialogue of civilizations are found in two articles in this special issue, namely Abdi and Shultz's case for a shared future through education for global social justice, and Garrone and Price's

exemplar of a culture of peace curriculum for Australian Catholic school youth including interfaith dialogue and experiential learning in South contexts to cultivate values of justice and solidarity.

### *Civilizations, cultures and sustainable futures*

Another theme that the High-Level Report only briefly touches on in its conceptual introduction is the “destruction of the environment” (pg. 7) which is “intensifying”. However, beyond this observation, the Report does not link the ecological crisis with ongoing or potential conflicts and even wars, nor does the need to educate for sustainable futures or sustainable development feature in the recommendations for action. There is by now a wealth of evidence of social, economic and political conflicts and violence that can be attributed to contestation over the use and misuse of resources that impact adversely on the environment and the basic needs and rights of affected peoples (Klare, 2002; Barlow & Clarke, 2002). Wars over water as well as oil or other depleting resources are grim realities to be transcended.

Hence education for a dialogue of civilizations will need to synergize with education for sustainable futures that communities and agencies like UNESCO (n.d.) have been promoting under the auspices of the UN Decade of Education for Sustainable Development. At the Auckland Asia-Pacific response to the High-Level Report, I argued for the Alliance of Civilisations to enhance its attention to dialogue and cooperation among cultures and civilizations for environmental sustainability. In this regard, it is also relevant to note that in the interfaith dialogue movement, there is increasing awareness of the positive role that all faiths can play in building a greener world. “Green theology” perspectives across all faith communities have lent momentum to the growing field of interfaith dialogue and action in such critical areas as climate change and other aspects of the ecological crisis, including the vital underpinning principle of living more simply in order to care for the earth (Gardner, 2006; Edwards, 2006; Alliance of Religions & Conservation, n.d.; Toh

& Cawagas, 2009). Likewise, indigenous peoples have contributed much spiritual and practical wisdom for more sustainable people-nature relationships. Pigem's workshop report in this special issue provides many similar insights on how faith-based organizations are promoting education for sustainability. Last but not least, the Alliance of Civilisations can also undoubtedly benefit from dialogue and collaboration with sustainability movements such as the Earth Charter (n.d.)

### *Disarming and demilitarizing civilizations and cultures*

Within a holistic framework of peace education, the field of disarmament education and education for nonviolence has been a central theme. In this regard, the clear commitment of the High-Level Report for nonviolent and peaceful resolution of conflicts deserves to be praised. For example, resistance groups opposing foreign occupation "should be encouraged to pursue their goals through nonviolent participation in political processes and democratic representation" (pg. 16). Leaders and governments are also questioned for using "counter-measures" against terrorism by "attacking" their adherents, since such tactics will likely only "inflame" more extremist sentiments.

Specifically on Islam, the High-Level Report also appropriately demystifies the stereotyping of "jihad" as primarily armed violence in self-defense of one's community. Rather the greatest jihad is the inner struggle of each Muslim of "good" over "evil" (pg.15). Moreover, all religions or faiths do not condone or approve the killing of the innocents (pg.10). Hence, although recognizing the unresolved Israel/Palestine conflict as a major root cause for fuelling resentment among many Muslims globally and for extremists to "justify" their acts of terrorist violence, the Report advocates for a multilateral and nonviolent peace process to resolve the conflict.

While this perspective of the High-Level Report is helpful in moving toward disarmament and demilitarization in the world, a peace education framework sees the need for the dialogue among civilizations and Alliance of Civilisations initiative to be more assertive and holistic in promoting education for nonviolence. If

the doctrine of “just war” found in a number of faith theologies, or of jihad as a self-defense remain pivotal in a believer’s worldview, it can always be exploited by extremists and opportunists to recruit followers for violent action or reaction, hence aggravating cycles of violence and counter-violence, whether conducted by on-state groups or by states (Kimball, 2003).

Education for a culture of peace on the other hand emphasizes the values, principles and strategies underpinning active nonviolent action (Smith-Christopher, 1998). In this regard, there is an ongoing movement among faiths and cultures to address the doctrinal relevance and validity of “just war” thinking and action. This is happening among Muslim peace advocates (e.g., Satha Anand) who draw on Islamic theology to argue for nonviolent conflict resolution approaches (Paige, Satha-Anand, C and Gilliatt, 1993), among Christian peacebuilders who emphasize the role-model of Christ as a nonviolent peacemaker (e.g., Dear, 2004), and engaged Buddhists like Thich Nhat Hanh (2005) and Sulak Sivaraksa (2005) who emphasized in Buddha’s words that anger, hatred and violence shall not cease with more anger, hatred and violence.

Education for the dialogue of civilizations hence draws on the spirituality of nonviolence that can be found within all faiths and civilizations, a theme that was mobilized in UNESCO’s (2005) declaration on the role of religions in the promotion of a culture of peace. This also requires not only a strong vision but crucially systematic training in the skills of nonviolent action. Hence churches, mosques, temples, synagogues, seminaries, monasteries, madrasas and other places of worship and faith-based educational institutions face the challenge of transforming themselves as learning spaces for nonviolent action. Langole’s article in this special issue reminds us of the positive lessons as well as challenges in overcoming intercultural and inter-ethnic conflicts in one African context, Uganda, while Niroula’s case study of Nepal highlights the need to promote social, cultural and educational inclusion of the marginalized Dalit people.

*Demystifying media and critical media literacy*

Another important theme for consideration in enhancing education for a dialogue among civilizations is the role of the media. As Ibrahim's article in this special issue indicate, media can play a negative role in promoting a culture of war rather than a culture of peace. In a UNESCO forum in Barcelona, I gave numerous exemplars whereby media has perpetuated stereotypes and representations of "others" that marginalize minorities and entire cultures (Toh, 2004a). Likewise, the High-Level Report of the Alliance of Civilisations also comments critically on the contribution that contemporary media in all its forms has made in promoting stereotypes and misrepresentations (pg. 30-31). It gives helpful recommendations for action on shaping media to present well-balanced portrayal of foreign cultures, objective reporting transcending stereotypes and misrepresentation, more accurate descriptions of culture, especially Muslims, in films and positive applications of the internet and digital media.

From a peace education perspective, these are all very relevant and essential implications for the role of education in promoting a dialogue among civilizations. However, there is a further need to critically understand the media as an institution well integrated into power structures at national and global levels. This helps to explain the biases and also the paradigms that give a selective presentation of world and national affairs, including conflicts and violence (Herman & Chomsky, 1998). Apart from bolstering the power and control of leaders and governments, dominant media can also mask the geo-strategic interests of powerful states or coalitions in terms of rationales that fuel fear, distrust and suspicion or even hatred and enmity. In capitalist societies, such media is often also dependent on the economic support of the corporate sector (e.g., advertising, shareholders) and consequently less willing to encourage critical journalism that exposes structural violence and unethical conduct.

Education for a dialogue of civilizations hence need to promote critical media literacy so that learners, viewers and readers can critically analyze information presented as "facts" and "truths" and uncover underpinning political and economic

interests shaping such representations (Van Dijk, 1995; Kellner & Share, 2007; Toh, 2004a). In this special issue, Kester has also shown how participatory pedagogical strategies are helpful for critical media literacy.

At the same, time, peace educators are now able to refer learners to a range of alternative media that are willing to take risks in presenting realities with greater independence and structural analysis and give voice to the marginalized or oppressed but without indoctrination.

### *Cultivating the spirituality of inner peace*

Finally, in this review of the theory and practice of promoting a dialogue among civilization, it is essential to raise the critical role that peace education plays in the cultivation of inner peace (Thich Nhat Hanh, 2005; Toh, 2004b). Unless all cultures and faiths are willing to conscientiously develop the spirituality of peace within their members, all the implications for social or outer peace that a dialogue among civilizations in synergy with education for a culture of peace will be difficult to implement. Through faith and culture-based strategies including meditation, contemplation, prayers and other parallel practices drawn from the wisdom of innumerable cultures and civilizations, all learners from young to old will be facilitated in forming and sincerely practising the values of compassion, love, respect, justice, integrity, active nonviolence and reconciliation vital to the building of a peaceful world.

### *Conclusion*

In sum, this essay has sought to acknowledge the positive contributions that the concept of dialogue among civilizations and its related movements, such as the Alliance of Civilisations, can make in promoting peaceful relations among peoples and nations of diverse cultures and civilizations. However, it has also endeavoured to show, through a detailed multidimensional analysis and practical exemplars, how inter-civilizational dialogue can be enhanced through synergistic collaboration with

the theory and practice of peace education. It is true that the High-Level Report of the Alliance of Civilisations does briefly recommend for action what it calls ``civic and peace education`` (pg. 25). Regrettably, apart from the overriding emphasis on intercultural understanding and education, the Report is lacking in giving a holistic appreciation of civic and peace education. It is hoped that proponents of projects and programs under the auspices of the dialogue among civilizations and Alliance of Civilisations will be open to integrating insights and lessons from education for a culture of peace. In this way, the dialogue of civilizations can realize more fully its potential of building a world in which diverse cultures and civilizations can live for and with nonviolence, justice, human rights, sustainability and an authentic spirituality of inner peace.

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