HISTÓRY AND PHILOSOPHY OF EDUCATION

Cartographies of peace: social study in the andean region, Colombia

Beatriz Lorena Caicedo Guevara*, Tany-Giselle Fernández-Guayana, Angie Lizeth Martínez Sosa and Camilo Velásquez Palacio

Corporación Universitaria Minuto de Dios, Cra. 74 #81 C-05, Engativá, Bogotá, Colômbia. *Author for correspondence. E-mail: tany.fernandezg@gmail.com

ABSTRACT. Recognizing the school as a symbolic territory of peace where diverse populations interact and as a space where resistance and demands arise in the territory is a permanent task. From there, the object of this research is to identify alternative conflict resolution mechanisms at school from the maps of peace in the Colombian Andean region. The above, under a qualitative methodology with descriptive scope and a phenomenological design. The sample was made up of 55 ninth grade (secondary) students from 4 public educational institutions located in the departments of Antioquia, Cundinamarca, Norte de Santander and Santander, Colombia. The instruments for data collection were questionnaires, interviews and focus groups. The categories that governed the study were community participation, human rights, culture of peace, and peace chair, whose information analysis was carried out using the ATLAS.ti software. Consequently, the main results show the recognition of the territory by young people and their will to change in the face of coexistence problems, proposing four mechanisms for conflict resolution: critical thinking, openness to dissent, the will to change and appropriation of resilience. The need to include the peace class in school and the intervention of competent authorities in situations that put healthy coexistence at risk is raised.

Keywords: peace education; cartography; social conflict; school; rural Community; social pedagogy.

Cartografias da paz: estudo social na região andina, Colômbia

RESUMO. Reconhecer a escola como um território simbólico de paz onde interagem diversas populações e como um espaço onde surgem resistências e demandas no território é uma tarefa permanente. A partir daí, o objetivo desta pesquisa é identificar mecanismos alternativos de resolução de conflitos na escola a partir dos mapas de paz na região andina colombiana. O exposto, sob uma metodologia qualitativa com escopo descritivo e desenho fenomenológico. A amostra foi composta por 55 alunos do nono ano (secundário) de 4 instituições de ensino públicas localizadas nos departamentos de Antioquia, Cundinamarca, Norte de Santander e Santander, Colômbia. Os instrumentos para coleta de dados foram questionários, entrevistas e grupos focais. As categorias que nortearam o estudo foram participação comunitária, direitos humanos, cultura de paz, cátedra de paz, cuja análise das informações foi realizada por meio do software ATLAS.ti. Consequentemente, os principais resultados mostram o reconhecimento do território pelos jovens e a sua vontade de mudança face aos problemas de coexistência, propondo quatro mecanismos de resolução de conflitos: pensamento crítico, abertura à dissidência, vontade de mudança e apropriação da resiliência. Levanta-se a necessidade de incluir a aula de paz na escola e a intervenção das autoridades competentes em situações que coloquem em risco a convivência saudável.

Palavras-chave: educação para a paz; cartografia; conflito social; escola; comunidade rural; pedagogia social.

Cartografías de paz: estudio social en región andina, Colombia

RESUMEN. Reconocer la escuela como territorio simbólico de paz donde interactúan poblaciones diversas y como un espacio donde se gestan resistencias y reivindicaciones en territorio, es una tarea permanente. De allí, el objetivo de la presente investigación consiste en identificar los mecanismos alternativos de solución de conflictos en la escuela desde las cartografías de paz en la región andina colombiana. Lo anterior, bajo una metodología cualitativa con alcance descriptivo y un diseño fenomenológico. La muestra fue conformada por estudiantes de grado noveno (secundaria) de 5 instituciones educativas de carácter público ubicadas en los departamentos de Antioquia, Cundinamarca, Norte de Santander y Santander, Colombia. Los instrumentos para la recolección de datos fueron cuestionarios, entrevistas y grupos focales.

Las categorías que rigieron el estudio fueron: reconocimiento topográfico, políticas de paz, pedagogía para la paz, cuyo análisis de información se realizó mediante el software ATLAS.ti. En consecuencia, los principales resultados muestran el reconocimiento del territorio por parte de los jóvenes y su voluntad de cambio frente a las problemáticas de convivencia proponiendo mecanismos para la resolución de conflictos: la justicia social, la equidad y el respeto por los derechos humanos. Se plantea la necesidad de incluir la cátedra de paz en la escuela y la intervención de autoridades competentes en situaciones que pongan en riesgo la sana convivencia.

Palavras clave: educación para la paz; cartografia; conflicto social; escuela; comunidad rural; pedagogía social.

Introduction[1]

The armed conflict in Colombia, characterized by its prolonged duration and the failed or drawn-out attempts at peace negotiations, has left an indelible mark on communities that, in addition to being marginalized and excluded from the state's attention, live immersed in diverse and persistent forms of violence. These situations jeopardize comprehensive development and threaten to perpetuate these cycles of violence, but, at the same time, invite those affected to develop new conceptions and constructs around resilience and social harmony, not only as a survival mechanism but also as pillars for building a lasting peace.

It is crucial to recognize that the country, in general, has been affected by the violence stemming from armed groups seeking to control maritime and territorial routes for illegal activities related to drug trafficking. This situation generates increased unemployment and school dropout rates due to fear among the inhabitants of these regions, where there is generally a minimal military presence. Furthermore, the impact of the conflict on young people is particularly profound and devastating. Prolonged exposure to violence and insecurity can hinder physical, emotional, and social development, leaving indelible scars that can persist throughout life (Sánchez Iglesias & Sánchez Jiménez, 2019). Therefore, it is necessary to understand the conceptions that have developed around peace and its integration into education, while also observing the conflict resolution alternatives that arise in these contexts.

Some studies, such as that by Islas Colin et al. (2018), highlight that a culture of peace fosters lifestyles, values, beliefs, behavioral patterns, and practices that actively contribute to its own consolidation, in close relation to institutional transformation processes aimed at well-being, equity, security, and the strengthening of collective identity. In contexts marked by prolonged internal conflict, such as Colombia, it is essential to promote an education capable of recognizing and understanding subjectivities, thus enabling pedagogical actions aimed at delegitimizing the normalization of violence. This transformation process must be rooted in educational practice and supported by state policies that enable and strengthen it (Rojas & Martín, 2015).

Thus, Fernández Guayana (2018), in a case study conducted in a university classroom, concludes that the language used by educators directly influences students' behaviors related to coexistence and peace. In contexts of school conflict, words act as mediators—positively or negatively—by condensing into linguistic structures laden with meaning. Consequently, it is the teacher's responsibility to employ appropriate discourse that promotes a culture of respect, tolerance, and appreciation of differences. In addition, Caicedo Guevara (2018) argues that education oriented from a peace perspective represents a crucial factor in boosting productivity and counteracting poverty and other forms of social exclusion.

Based on these studies, an integrated vision emerges regarding the role of education in building a culture of peace, particularly in highly conflictive contexts such as Colombia. First, it is recognized that a culture of peace is not simply the absence of violence, but is built through educational practices such as words and example, fostering values, beliefs, and behaviors oriented toward the common good, equity, and collective identity. This process demands an institutional transformation that accommodates subjectivities and acknowledges the historical effects of armed conflict on the community.

Now, there are studies that address conflict resolution mechanisms in schools. One such study, conducted in Medellín, Colombia, indicates that awareness campaigns help identify the various forms of discrimination present in educational institutions and their relationship to school violence. For this, a contextual diagnosis is essential (Calle-Álvarez et al., 2018). The arts, such as music, painting, visual arts, theater, and literature,

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[1] This study adheres to all ethical processes for data collection, analysis, and publication. Institutional letters of intent and informed consent forms from legal representatives were collected and are registered on the SIGIIP platform under project code N2023-01-044.

such as short stories and poetry, are also considered mechanisms that enable the formation of human values, reducing violent dynamics in schools (Fernández Guayana et al., 2024). This is because these mediations allow them to create, express, communicate, and represent the world around them using different languages.

From this perspective, it is recognized that mechanisms for resolving school conflicts integrate social and pedagogical strategies and artistic expressions that contribute to making visible the various forms of discrimination present in the educational environment. These are expressed in acts of physical, verbal, or psychological violence, as well as in behaviors associated with bullying. In this context, contextual diagnosis is an indispensable resource because it allows us to understand the specific characteristics of the area and adapt interventions to the real needs of the school community. It is not enough to apply standardized conflict resolution models; a situated and critical reading of the school environment is necessary.

Thus, peace is presented as an objective in all social spheres, and in turn, it is oriented toward the pursuit of sustainability, prosperity, human rights, and life. This paradigm implies a commitment to promoting inter-institutional changes that foster well-being, equality, and security. It is there, then, that the Social and community mapping emerges as a tool for understanding, preserving, protecting, and transmitting knowledge oriented toward peace, social transformation, and education.

Building new concepts of peace in the Andean region of Colombia, through alternative conflict resolution mechanisms, allows us to delve deeper into the absence of peace in the country and the lack of effective tools for conflict management. However, this study not only seeks to understand the concept of peace or recognize its symbols, but also the paradigm shifts that occur within the interactions that promote the construction of peaceful spaces, fostering strategies that empower young people and provide them with educational opportunities, spaces for cultural and sporting development, and better job prospects aligned with their abilities and interests.

While it is true that Colombia has experienced an armed conflict that causes increased school dropout rates, unemployment, and drug use among this population, the country deserves peace, and it can be achieved through education. Therefore, rural and urban education in Colombia faces significant challenges regarding the promotion of a culture of peace and coexistence in contexts of violence and social exclusion. These challenges are evident in the unequal distribution of resources, the technological gap, high levels of competitiveness, limited access to basic public services, lack of mental health care, and low motivation for learning, among others.

Therefore, it is necessary to explore pedagogical strategies and practices that contribute to building healthy, safe, inclusive, and motivating school environments, especially in rural areas. If acts of violence occur in educational institutions, many young people are likely to experience intolerance, drug addiction, delinquency, extortion, and contract killings. Given these considerations, this study aims to answer the question: ¿How can conflict resolution models be designed that address holistic development and alternative dispute resolution mechanisms in the Colombian Andean region?

Framework

Undoubtedly, speaking of peace in a territory plagued by violence of all kinds implies starting with the etymology and definition of the word. In this sense, the term comes from the Latin *pax*, *pacis*, referring to a period of stability between nations as a result of a pact. The Royal Spanish Academy (RAE) defines it as: "[...] a situation in which there is no armed struggle in a country or between countries; a harmonious relationship between people, without confrontations or conflicts; an agreement reached between nations that ends a war" (Dictionary of the Spanish Language, 2023). Based on the above, semantically the word peace has countless entries related to religious, political, and other topics; however, for this research, those definitions that allow for its construction from the perspective of its objective were considered.

However, the concept of 'peace' varies depending on the historical moment and the geographical space in which we find ourselves (Harto de Vera, 2016), since its meanings are the result of the knowledge, experiences, and lived realities of communities, and these conceptions are determined by the capacity for listening and the interest in learning from the culture itself. Hence the importance of "[...] understanding peace to create a culture of peace" (Hernández Arteaga et al., 2020). In this line of thought, the concept of peace can be approached from three perspectives: negative, positive, neutral, and imperfect peace.

The first refers to the absence of direct violence, that is, the resolution of conflicts through the elimination of physical violence, oppression, or repression—a peace that can be achieved through the imposition of power.

The second promotes the creation of just and equitable social, political, and economic relations. In other words, negative peace focuses on eliminating violence, while positive peace seeks to build it within society and justice (Hernández, 2019; Jiménez Bautista, 2020). Neutral peace, for its part, seeks to address the cultural and symbolic violence that justifies direct and structural violence. It is a gradual process based on the commitment of its participants, who, through dialogue and the principles of honesty, equality, freedom, justice, and responsibility, establish norms and rules (Hernández Arteaga et al., 2020). Finally, imperfect peace focuses on preventing direct violence—violent behaviors and acts—and on reducing levels of structural violence—the denial of needs. Furthermore, it breaks with the ideas that peace is perfect, utopian, unrealizable, distant, or unattainable, and instead conceives of it as something concrete, built upon peaceful practices and an agenda for transforming reality (Hernández, 2019; Harto de Vera, 2016).

Delving into the Colombian context, it can be said that the country's history has been marked by elements of a negative peace, that is, by ephemeral moments of absence of armed conflict or open violence, without transformation of social and political structures. Therefore, although it may seem like an improvement, it has actually been fragile and unsustainable in the long term, since the underlying causes of the conflict are not addressed. It also includes a positive peace, represented by the existence of dialogue and negotiation processes among different social and political actors, the promotion of values of tolerance and peaceful coexistence, the recognition and protection of human rights, and the implementation of public policies aimed at social inclusion and justice.

Taking as a reference point the Special Jurisdiction for Peace (JEP) (2016), peace is the consolidation of a state in which human rights are respected and protected, social justice is promoted, peaceful coexistence is fostered, and the non-repetition of violent acts is guaranteed. Therefore, it is not simply the absence of armed conflict, but a continuous process of building a just, egalitarian, and democratic society. This is a complex objective and requires long-term work, with the participation of victims, civil society, the state, and armed groups. Along these lines, the JEP proposes various agreements for lasting peace in the country: the search for truth and justice; comprehensive reparations for victims; participation of society; and the transformation of public policies in areas such as land, justice, the economy, and security. On the other hand, the school, as a vital space for developing life skills, must foster healthy and conciliatory environments that, in turn, strengthen the emotional intelligence of those who make up the educational community, shaping their behavior. Values education within the family is essential to transform the reality of conflict experienced from each individual's perspective. Furthermore, establishing a culture of peace also requires the active participation of teachers, working in harmony with families, to assimilate a culture of peace as an essential part of their life project. But how can a culture of peace be built in this way? It seems that the key lies with the individual and the teacher/school, but what about social structures?

However, some recent policies that attempt to contribute to building new concepts of peace in Colombian educational communities, by strengthening strategies for conflict resolution, resilience, integral development, and sustainability through regional mapping, include the following instruments: The Political Constitution of Colombia (Public Function, 1991), which establishes the State's obligation to guarantee peaceful coexistence and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, recognizes the right to peace as a fundamental right, and establishes citizen participation as a means for building peace. Law No. 1922 (2018), which establishes measures for the restoration of violated rights and reparation of damages, must pay special attention to situations of vulnerability prior to, during, or after the violations and crimes perpetrated that are related to the conduct. Decree No. 191 (2017), which regulates aspects related to peace for the definitive termination of the armed conflict. Law No. 1620 (2013) stands out as the central legislation regulating school coexistence in Colombia to prevent and mitigate violence in schools.

Consequently, education policies for peacebuilding must foster learning by incorporating art as a process that involves developing communicative skills to convey, with a broader perspective, the scope of critical thinking in relation to conflict prevention and resolution. Social transformation through peace is a starting point for recognizing one's own history, which to this day has been framed by practices of territorial control, appropriation and exploitation of resources, loss of identity, a monoculture of knowledge, and subjugation inherent in the colonial process, which attributes a false hope to reality. Family, school, and state can then guarantee the right to memory, truth, and reparation as actions that go beyond forgiveness and toward achieving sustainable peace through creativity, sensitivity, and art, so as not to succumb to oblivion, prevent repetition, and destroy archetypes of corruption and power.

In this sense, community participation, human rights, a culture of peace, and peace education exert a transformative influence on school dynamics by strengthening the sense of co-responsibility among students, teachers, families, and other educational stakeholders. These categories promote spaces for dialogue, mutual respect, and peaceful conflict resolution, which improves the institutional climate and fosters harmonious coexistence. Pedagogical practices through active methodologies such as community-based project learning, collaborative work, dialogue circles, and school mediation experiences allow students to reflect on their environment, assume ethical commitments, and exercise their rights responsibly. However, pedagogical barriers such as rigid curricula, excessive administrative workload, a lack of training in inclusive pedagogical approaches, and insufficient institutional support hinder the achievement of educational goals. Cultural tensions also persist, including resistance to dialogue, authoritarianism entrenched in some school environments, and prejudices that limit openness to diversity and the peaceful resolution of conflicts. These conditions impede the development of educational practices that strengthen participation, respect for rights, and the construction of a more just and equitable society. Overcoming these barriers requires not only political will but also ethical commitment and ongoing professional development to transform school culture from its very foundations.

Methodology

Given the nature of the problem and the objectives, this research exercise adopts a qualitative approach. In this sense, the ideal of the qualitative approach is considered to be the understanding of complex social and cultural phenomena; in this case, abstract concepts such as peace, resilience, integral development, and sustainability in educational communities. The scope is hermeneutic-interpretive, since it focuses on the analysis and understanding of underlying meanings, that is, how communities interpret and make sense of their experiences and practices within their sociohistorical context. Its design is phenomenological because its main purpose is to explore, describe, and understand people's experiences with respect to a phenomenon and to discover the common elements of these experiences.

The population chosen for the study comprises 1,800 children and adolescents actively participating in different educational institutions in the Andean region of Colombia (Antioquia, Cundinamarca, Norte de Santander, and Santander). This includes elementary and secondary school students, located in rural and urban areas, ranging in age from 6 to 18 years. Using a non-probabilistic convenience sampling technique, ninth-grade students were selected, comprising 160 students from 5 educational institutions in the Andean region: 2 in Necoclí, Antioquia; 1 in Bogotá, Cundinamarca; 1 in Bucaramanga, Santander; and 1 in Tibú, Norte de Santander. The final sample size is obtained by dividing the Macro Population by the Study Population and multiplying by the number of selected institutions, using the following formula:

(PM/PE=SampleInstitution)
Macro Population (Available Institutions): 1,800 students.
Study Population (Selected Institutions): 160 students.
(1,800/160) * 5 = 56.25 Students

It should be clarified that the formula presented is based on internal criteria for organizing data collection and is not intended to calculate a statistically representative sample. Thus, the present study included a total of 4 departments, 4 municipalities, 5 educational institutions, 1 grade level of middle basic education (ninth grade), and 55 students distributed as follows: Necrolí 22, Bogotá 11, Tibú 11, and Bucaramanga 11. The data collection instruments used were, as primary sources, questionnaires, semi-structured interviews, and focus groups; and as secondary sources, document review. To ensure the reliability and validity of the instruments, a validation process was undertaken through expert judgment and pilot testing, which indicated their relevance to the proposed contexts and the appropriate formulation of the questions. However, specific improvements were suggested for some items.

The ethical criteria that enabled the application of these instruments are detailed in the Research Technical Data Sheet, code N02023-01-037, which is available in the SIGIIP repository of the Science and Social Innovation Park (PICS) of the Minuto de Dios University Corporation - UNIMINUTO. Section 11, ETHICAL AND BIOETHICAL CONSIDERATIONS OF THE RESEARCH AND SCIENTIFIC INTEGRITY, explains the ethical principles and management of the collected information. It states that the project is not funded through internal or external grants; therefore, it corresponds to the research work carried out by students of

the Master's Program in Virtual Education. Data collection was based on letters of intent sent to the participating educational institutions, as well as informed consent forms signed by the legal representatives of the minors involved. These documents allow participants to be adequately informed about the project and its objectives, and guarantee the preservation of their anonymity both in the analysis of the information and in the eventual dissemination of the results.

Regarding data analysis, the ATLAS.ti tool was used to record the information, analyze the results, and conclude with a descriptive analysis. This facilitated obtaining the findings through the definition of categories and subcategories, the creation of code networks, and their interrelationships. The following categories of analysis were established: 1) Topographic reconnaissance, 2) Peace policies, and 3) Pedagogy for peace. All of the above was carried out through the following phases: Stage 1 - Problem identification, relevance, and theoretical-conceptual foundation; Stage 2 - Methodological design, instrument development, and validation; Stage 3 - Fieldwork: sample selection, obtaining informed consent, and instrument application; Stage 4 – Selection of ATLAS.ti software and digitization of collected data. Stage 5 - Information analysis; Stage 6 - Preparation of final research report.

Results

A continuación de describen los resultados obtenidos en el estudio bajo las categorías de Reconocimiento topográfico, Políticas de paz y Pedagogía para la paz. En la primera categoría se explora la cartografía del territorio y cultural de los participantes. En la segunda categoría se profundiza sobre la participación comunitaria y los derechos humanos. En la tercera categoría se hace un análisis frente a la formación docente, el diseño curricular, los modelos y estrategias didácticas, así como de la cultura de la paz como mecanismos para la resolución de conflictos. Para ello, se presentan los datos interpretados junto con citas textuales de los participantes y gráficas arrojadas por el software de análsisi cualitativo ATLAS.ti. Las narrativas de los estudiantes se codidifican de la siguiente manera: A inicio E – Entrevista o GF- Grupo Focal, seguido de M, T, CYC, A, C que son las iniciales de los planteles educativos, se cierra con un número que corresponde a uno de los estudiantes participantes o el número de respuesta obtenida. Ejemplo:

E1-C5 Indica la entrevista semiestructurada uno (1) de la Institución Educativa Rural C de Bucaramanga, Santander y el estudiante cinco (5) a quien se entrevistó.

GF-T4 Indica el grupo focal realizado en la Institución Educativa Rural T de Necrolí, Antioquia y la respuesta número cuatro (4).

Topographical Reconnaissance

The results related to territory, culture, and social cartography are analyzed, which allowed for an understanding of how students and their educational communities perceive and relate to their environment. In general, they show the importance of physical spaces and the community's perception of its environment. For example, in the rural educational institution of Necoclí, Antioquia, the most important things are places that provide tranquility, such as "The park, the sports center, the beach, and our institution" (GF-T4), highlighting the need for harmony in a context where conflict is still present; While the other institution in the same municipality recognizes the river's natural wealth, coal mines, and biodiversity, this contrasts with the infrastructure needs and the presence of illegal groups that limit social development.

On the other hand, cultural diversity is recognized as a relevant factor in the dynamics of the communities. At the educational institution in Bucaramanga, students perceive their context as a positive environment that fosters open-mindedness and empathy (E1C5, E2C3). This interaction process is enriched by the presence of Indigenous groups, who bring a different perspective to conflict resolution because they prioritize dialogue and the mediation of the cacique (chief) (GF-T1 in one of the rural educational institutions of Necoclí, Antioquia). Coexistence is also observed in the school of Tibú, Norte de Santander, where the Barí community, with its own traditions and ways of addressing problems, enriches the social fabric.

However, the above is no different in the urban context. In the educational institution of Bogotá, Cundinamarca, cultural diversity is experienced daily, enriching social life through gastronomy, music, and festivities (GF-CYC12). Furthermore, with the arrival of migrants, especially Venezuelans, this diversity has intensified, creating a multiculturalism that, despite differences, seeks peaceful coexistence (Figure 1).
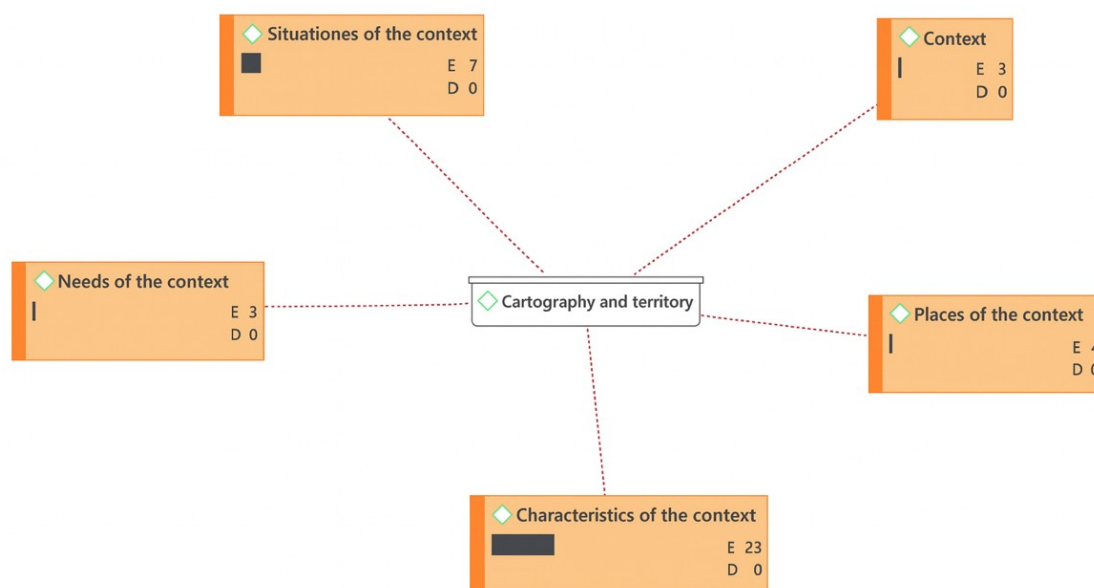
Figure 1. Cartography and Territory.
Source: ATLAS.ti Data Analysis (2024).

Políticas de paz

This category includes the findings regarding community participation in conflict resolution mechanisms. Participants from the rural educational institution in Tibú, Norte de Santander, highlighted the need for greater inclusion in decision-making, suggesting "[...] meetings where the entire community, not just the leaders, can express their opinions" (GF-A50, GF-A51). They also emphasized the importance of addressing not only negative peace but also positive peace, including aspects such as social justice and the fight against hunger (GF-A66).

This demonstrates the need to involve communities in peacebuilding processes, policies, and related projects, which will strengthen the recognition and respect for human rights as a fundamental pillar for peaceful coexistence. In this regard, conflict resolution strategies emerged as a crucial issue in all educational institutions, employing common intervention methods that include mediation between conflicting students by coordinators, parents, and counselors, emphasizing dialogue and the search for peaceful solutions. For example, in one of the rural educational institutions in Necoclí, Antioquia, students are taken to the coordinator's office, their parents are contacted, and students are even suspended, seeking to resolve conflicts through dialogue and counseling (E3-T24, E3-T25).

Despite the importance given to these strategies, a perception of government negligence is also evident in some areas. In Tibú, Norte de Santander, a student from the rural educational institution stated that "[...] none of that reaches here... I already know how we get used to living with it. Nothing is progressing" (E6-A6), indicating a lack of effective action by the authorities to address the community's problems. This perception highlights the importance of peace strategies not only being implemented at the local level, but also having the support and participation of government institutions (Figure 2).

Overall, the findings suggest that, while strategies for conflict resolution and the promotion of peaceful coexistence are being implemented in educational institutions, there is a desire for greater community participation and an effective response from government authorities. This indicates that building lasting peace requires a comprehensive approach that involves all social actors and addresses both the causes and consequences of violence.

Figure 2. Community Participation.
Source: ATLAS.ti Data Analysis (2024).

Pedagogy for Peace

The results, broadly speaking, highlight the importance of incorporating peace education into curricula, as well as implementing methodologies and strategies as mechanisms for the peaceful resolution of conflicts. This will foster and promote a culture of peace, a central theme that emerges from the interviews and focus groups conducted in educational institutions. In this regard, students define peace as respect for differences and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, emphasizing the importance of peace studies and addressing related topics such as "[...] conflict resolution, understanding, and how we can turn to other people to help us solve these problems" (E7-T4). Along these lines, students at the educational institution in Bucaramanga, Santander, also highlight respect and dialogue as pillars of a culture of peace, mentioning activities such as marches, games, and artistic expressions to promote it: "At school, we are resolving issues in a positive way. We have held marches, sometimes we play games or draw what peace means to us, and we talk with our classmates about it" (E3-C6).

Additionally, at one of the rural educational institutions in Necrolí, Antioquia, despite difficulties related to the armed conflict, such as the presence of illegal armed groups and the recruitment of young people, a culture of peace is associated with education in problem-solving, understanding the consequences of violence, and civic participation. For them, the goal is to create an environment that fosters values such as respect, tolerance, justice, and equality: "It is important that they give us talks about dialogue and civic participation, making us part of the solution to our community's problems" (GF-M15). This perception is similar to that of students at the rural educational institution in Tibú, Santander, where a culture of peace is synonymous with education, talks, scholarships, and artistic and sporting activities. These activities take place in locations they consider "havens of peace" within the community, such as the school, the church, the community action board, and the sports field—spaces that provide them with security and tranquility (Figure 3).

Finally, at the educational institution in Bogotá, Cundinamarca, the ideal of peace translates into concrete actions such as the creation of programs to prevent violence. The students believe this leads to mutual respect, support, valuing differences, and working together—mechanisms they consider essential for conflict resolution. A concrete example is "[...] youth for Peace, a group of young people who conduct workshops and activities to prevent violence and promote the peaceful resolution of conflicts; Neighbor Watch, a program that seeks to improve security in neighborhoods through collaboration among neighbors; Dialogues for Coexistence, a space where people from different cultures can talk and share their experiences" (GF-CYC18).
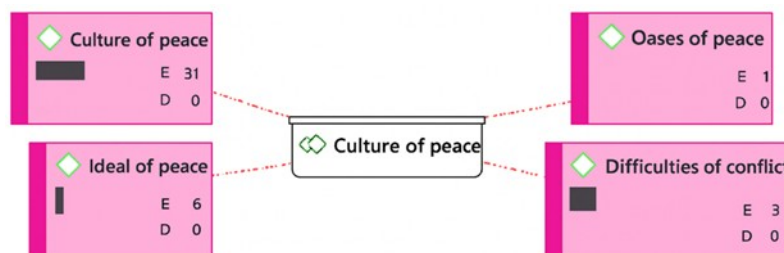

Figure 3. Culture of Peace.
Source: ATLAS.ti Data Analysis (2024).

Discussion

It is important to note that forms of violence exist in educational institutions in the Colombian Andean region, including bullying and arguments between classmates that sometimes escalate into fights among students. While school environments are diverse, these situations occur sporadically, and in each context, there is a clear understanding of the mechanisms for addressing and resolving them, such as dialogue among community members, mutual respect, support, valuing differences, and working together. It is important to highlight that, despite the differences between schools, there is a commonality regarding the impact of the armed conflict, especially in rural areas where it has directly affected communities. Although the conflict has not directly impacted urban areas, the ways in which the problems of war, violence, and inequality are addressed are essentially the same for both sectors.

In both rural and urban contexts, situations of structural violence, inequality, and exclusion persist, hindering the achievement of a truly positive peace. Therefore, this is where the notion of imperfect peace becomes relevant, as it recognizes the coexistence of elements of peace and violence within the same context,

highlighting the need to prevent direct violence and reduce structural violence (Harto de Vera, 2016; Hernández, 2019). In this sense, the results show that, despite the differences between contexts, there is a need to implement alternative conflict resolution strategies and mechanisms that foster the construction of the much-desired lasting peace.

For their part, educational institutions agree on following a protocol as a mechanism for addressing breaches of coexistence. This includes taking students to the coordinator's office, where, depending on the severity of the infraction, the parents are called in to sign agreements. Sometimes, offenders are taken to counseling sessions, and the necessary corrective measures are imposed, which can even include student suspension. This aims to prevent recidivism and avoid permanent expulsion from the educational institution. The above demonstrates that problems within schools are still being addressed in the traditional way, relying on punishment as the corrective measure. In other words, monitoring and punishing are used to prevent rule violations.

In contrast, Law No. 1620 (2013) aims to prevent and mitigate violence in schools through the phases of promotion, prevention, intervention, and follow-up, which seek to foster peaceful coexistence from the first manifestation of violence. Protocols are established so that educational institutions can prevent bullying and ensure timely intervention when such situations occur (Fernández Guayana et al., 2024). Peace education requires teacher training, as it is not only the responsibility of social science professionals but also cross-cuts across all fields to discuss and establish mechanisms for coexistence, peace, conflict resolution, and the eradication of violence (Finck & Salles Filho, 2012).

On the other hand, it was observed that some participants have suffered the consequences of the conflict in the country. This has manifested in situations such as abandoning their regions of origin and moving to places where they mix with people from other areas. In this sense, educational institutions exhibit a significant level of cultural diversity. However, although communities have found ways to adapt to these situations through dialogue, more mechanisms are needed to overcome the difficulties of the conflict. However, in rural areas in particular, problems of violence persist, but it was evident that schools and families can be considered safe and peaceful environments. Although not exempt from conflict, these spaces demonstrate resilient capacities that allow students to confront and overcome adversity. Both schools and families act as environments of protection and emotional support, where students develop tools to reconstruct their experiences and strengthen coexistence processes from a transformative perspective.

In this regard, a Colombian study indicates that some educational mechanisms for peace should be integrated into the daily lives of students, where children and young people are exposed to the world to the point of becoming engaged in the public sphere (Fernández Guayana, 2021, p. 39). This means that education must begin with fostering positive relationships within the home and subsequently at school. This approach fosters a shift in power dynamics because students are the ones who decide how to learn and interact in social settings (Tamayo Alzate, 2015). Similarly, Pantevis-Suarez and Pérez Trujillo (2022) state that, in a peace education facilitated by teachers, processes of social and communicative interaction are achieved in which students "[...] can assertively manage conflicts by reworking and reinterpreting their everyday experiences through dialogue, empathy, otherness, and solidarity as bridges to consensus and agreement" (Pantevis-Suarez & Pérez Trujillo, 2022, p. 616).

On the other hand, the findings demonstrate a clear rejection of violence, particularly in contexts affected by armed conflict, which has become part of daily life. This reality has motivated communities to continuously seek ways to prevent new expressions of violence and advance the construction of a culture of peace. While the total eradication of conflict is not achievable, there are pedagogical mechanisms that can promote coexistence, even though the existence of human groups always brings with it difficulties (Solórzano & Pérez, 2021). Thus, it is highlighted that through the agency of communities, the vindication of rights can be achieved because it is the victims of the conflict themselves who construct mechanisms for listening and participation (Lopes et al., 2018).

Therefore, students indicate that mechanisms for conflict resolution can include mediated dialogue, school mediation, and the implementation of agreed-upon rules. Mediated dialogue allows the parties involved to express their points of view in a safe and structured space, promoting active listening and mutual respect (Fernández Guayana, 2018). School mediation, conducted by trained teachers or students, facilitates peer agreements from a neutral perspective (Urbano Mejia et al., 2021). Finally, establishing collectively constructed rules for coexistence reinforces a sense of belonging and responsibility (Catzoli-Robles, 2016).

To implement these mechanisms, students recognize that it is essential to train teaching staff, incorporate these processes into the curriculum, create permanent spaces for reflection, and foster an institutional culture of peace based on respect, empathy, and recognition of cultural diversity.

All of the above implies the consolidation of positive conditions for building a culture of peace, including social justice, equity, and unrestricted respect for human rights. According to the study participants, these principles translate into concrete practices or mechanisms applied within the classroom and school. In these spaces, it is essential to promote relationships based on recognizing others, inclusion, and the peaceful resolution of conflicts, which contributes to strengthening the social fabric and the exercise of rights with dignity. In this sense, the school not only teaches content, but also promotes human values and citizenship, thus becoming a setting for building peace.

Conclusion

It is important to note that the Colombian Andean region exhibits a high degree of cultural diversity due to the human migrations that occur in the region in search of opportunities to prosper. Consequently, educational institutions bring together students from different regions of the country, resulting in an ethnic and cultural melting pot that enriches the contexts but also contributes to the generation of conflicts. Faced with this reality, school authorities seek solutions through traditional mechanisms such as disciplinary and coexistence processes carried out by the coordinator, calls to parents, and guidance counseling.

These approaches to building a culture of peace may only be temporary because the conflicts fueled by Colombia's historical war extend beyond the boundaries of the school environment. Therefore, new strategies contribute more effectively to healthy coexistence within communities. This does not mean the absence of conflict, but rather the pursuit of peaceful solutions. In this context, the school environment becomes a driving force for dialogue as a civilized alternative to complement and value difference.

A significant difference was observed between institutions in rural and urban areas. While displaced people live in cities, those in rural Colombia remain subject to a conflict that permeates their daily lives. In rural areas ravaged by violence, concepts such as dialogue, social justice, and reparations are addressed. Within schools, the relationships that develop there give rise to alternative conflict management mechanisms, such as community participation, changes in pedagogical practices, emotional management, and resilience training. All of these are considered elements for transforming social dynamics.

Finally, regarding the limitations of the research, it should be noted that some students found it difficult to complete the survey due to a lack of internet connectivity, and in some areas, due to power outages. However, it was possible to collect the necessary information for the project. Future researchers are encouraged to diversify their sample by including teachers, family members, and school administrators, which would broaden the understanding and experience of peace. This approach achieves robust data triangulation while avoiding the high level of redundancy that results from applying the instruments exclusively to students.

Data availability

All files related to this research are available on the SIGIIP platform of the Science and Social Innovation Park of the Minuto de Dios University Corporation (UNIMINUTO), Colombia, under project code N02023-01-037. References

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INFORMACIÓN SOBRE LOS AUTORES

Beatriz Lorena Caicedo Guevara: Professor in the Master's Program in Education at the Minuto de Dios University Corporation – UNIMINUTO. Postdoctoral Fellow in Education at San Buenaventura University. PhD in Educational Management and Policy from the University of Baja California. Member of the Pedagogy and Human Development Research Group.
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4457-4298
E-mail: beatriz.caicedo@uniminuto.edu

Tany-Giselle Fernández-Guayana: Research Coordinator for the Master's Program in Education at the Minuto de Dios University Corporation – UNIMINUTO. Master's in Education and Human Development from the University of Manizales, Colombia. Member of the Uniminuto Virtual and Distance Learning Research Group (GIUVD)
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-4726-5028
E-mail: tany.fernandez.g@uniminuto.edu.co tany.fernandezg@gmail.com

Angie Lizeth Martínez Sosa: Secondary School Teacher in Bogotá, Colombia. Master's in Education from the Minuto de Dios University Corporation – UNIMINUTO. Member of the Education for Peace, Inclusion, Diversity, and Territory study group.
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0007-7657-136X
E-mail: angie.martinez-so@uniminuto.edu.co

Camilo Velásquez Palacio: Secondary School Teacher in Medellín, Colombia. Master's in Education from the Minuto de Dios University Corporation – UNIMINUTO. Member of the study group Education for Peace, Inclusion, Diversity, and Territory.
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0009-0009-9208-6764
E-mail: camilo.velasquez-p@uniminuto.edu.co

Note:
Beatriz Lorena Caicedo Guevara: Conceptualization, formal analysis, research, methodology, supervision. **Tany-Giselle Fernández-Guayana**: Validation, formal analysis, review, and final correction. **Angie Lizeth Martínez Sosa**: Formal analysis, research, methodology, original draft. **Camilo Velásquez Palacio**: Formal analysis, research, methodology, original draft.

Responsible associate editor:
Terezinha Oliveira (UEM)
ORCID: https://orcid.org/0000-0002-9841-7378
E-mail: teleoliv@gmail.com

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