

Impressum/Imprint (nur für Deutschland/only for Germany)

Bibliografische Information der Deutschen Nationalbibliothek: Die Deutsche Nationalbibliothek verzeichnet diese Publikation in der Deutschen Nationalbibliografie; detaillierte bibliografische Daten sind im Internet über <http://dnb.d-nb.de> abrufbar.

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Coverbild: www.ingimage.com

Verlag: LAP LAMBERT Academic Publishing GmbH & Co. KG
Dudweiler Landstr. 99, 66123 Saarbrücken, Deutschland
Telefon +49 681 3720-310, Telefax +49 681 3720-3109
Email: info@lap-publishing.com

Herstellung in Deutschland:
Schaltungsdienst Lange o.H.G., Berlin
Books on Demand GmbH, Norderstedt
Reha GmbH, Saarbrücken
Amazon Distribution GmbH, Leipzig
ISBN: 978-3-8443-9925-7

Imprint (only for USA, GB)

Bibliographic information published by the Deutsche Nationalbibliothek: The Deutsche Nationalbibliothek lists this publication in the Deutsche Nationalbibliografie; detailed bibliographic data are available in the Internet at <http://dnb.d-nb.de>.

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Printed in the U.S.A.
Printed in the U.K. by (see last page)
ISBN: 978-3-8443-9925-7

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ABSTRACT

In the context of rampant individual, national, and international violence, this research explores the role and the essential elements of peace education in adult education. The methodology uses Hans Georg Gadamer's philosophical hermeneutics to understand and interpret texts and events related to the study. Preliminary literature reviews identify three elements--criticality, nonviolence, and wholism--as essential to adult peace education. Three theorists--Paulo Freire, Mohandas Karamchand Gandhi, and Thich Nhat Hanh--represent the three elements respectively. Five questions explore the three theorists' ideas: how they view reality and human potential; how they view distortions of the human condition; what methods they promote for achieving peace; and what their views imply for peace education in adult education.

The Freirean critical approach suggests that peace education enhance critical citizenship education so that citizens can be inspired and equip themselves to participate responsibly in democratic life and take collective action to change problematic political and socio-economic situations. The Gandhian nonviolent approach suggests that peace education challenge many conventional political and socio-economic concepts and practices and explore nonviolent alternatives for social change and conflict resolution. Nonviolent alternatives, rooted in solid spiritual practices, include resistance and proactive constructive programs. Hanh's wholistic approach suggests that peace education enhance diverse ways of knowing: learning through emotion, meditation/ contemplation, and the unconscious. It also suggests that peace education facilitate spiritual growth through both active social engagement and contemplative spiritual practices. The wholistic approach advocates proactive promotion of interfaith understanding through recognizing and respecting other faiths' religious claims and engaging in dialogue to understand them.

By introducing peace education in adult education graduate programs, adult educators can be prepared to include peace discussions and actions in their future practices, both in institutional or popular educational settings. Future research may develop peace education pedagogy, explore sources of funding and the possibility of influencing policies, and survey adult educators' willingness to participate in peace education and obstacles to their participation. Peace education can be a new way in which adult education can respond to the demand of current world situations.