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Looking for Peace in the National Curricula of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

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Abstract

What values do national curricular statements communicate related to peace, conflict, violence and nonviolence? Schools are places that teach morals and mind-sets—transmission belts—cultural establishments that can contribute to how a student learns (pedagogy) and what a student learns (curriculum). Informed by Curriculum Theory and Peace Education Theory this mixed-method study utilizes directive and summative content analysis to inspect the General Statement, Teachers Guide and *Shari'a* national curricular statements at the elementary and preparatory level (mandatory education) for the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). It examines each document for three elements found routinely in peace education (PE): recognition of violence; addressing conflict nonviolently; and, creating the conditions of positive peace. Elementary and preparatory education is compulsory in the KSA and this study found the mandatory education of the KSA has variable content that relates to the three PE elements and that the KSA mandatory curricula only minimally teaches peace.

Keywords: *peace education, content analysis, Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, curriculum, PECA Project, Curriculum Theory, Peace Education Theory*

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Looking for Peace in the National Curricula of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

Katerina Standish and Rula Talahma

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, like all nations, experiences violence that has led to interpersonal, interethnic, and international turbulence, and these instances and circumstances of violence are often grouped into terms such as gender violence, ethnic/religious violence, and/or terrorism. In June 2016 Human Rights Watch intoned that the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) continues:

[To] arbitrarily arrest, try, and convict peaceful dissidents. Dozens of human rights defenders and activists are serving long prison sentences for criticizing authorities or advocating political and rights reforms. Authorities systematically discriminate against women and religious minorities. In 2015, Saudi Arabia carried out 158 executions, 63 for non-violent drug crimes. On January 2, 2016, Saudi Arabia executed 47 men for terrorism-related offenses, including prominent Shia cleric Nimr al-Nimr, who was convicted following a deeply flawed trial. On March 2015, a Saudi-led coalition launched an airstrike campaign against Houthi forces in Yemen that included use of banned cluster munitions and apparently unlawful strikes that killed civilians (para 1).

An editorial in the independent British newspaper, *The Guardian*, declared the KSA rife with violence, observing that “many of the atrocities which ISIS performs for effect are in Saudi performed as routine” (N.A., para 3). The newspaper further remarked that “Saudi propaganda, whether in mosques and madrassas, or over the internet and the satellite channels, feeds a dangerous strain of Islam” (N. A., para 4). Statements such as these indicate a widespread acceptance and employment of various forms of violence in the KSA. This article investigates the role of national curricula—as a mandatory vehicle for the values and ideals considered critical to Saudi culture—to determine if the KSA curriculum creates a space of possibility to combat violence in society.

Peace Education is a form of praxis—an action in the world that is informed by theory (Freire, 2001). The goal of peace education is to recognize violence and prevent it (Harris and Morrison, 2013). This means that a fundamental aim of peace education theory is to ‘understand’ violence and ‘perform’ nonviolence. To do this, one first needs to entertain the notion that violence is optional—one of several possible choices or outcomes (Fry, 2007). In

the following mixed-methods study, the national curricula of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia is examined for three components routinely found in peace education programs: recognition of violence (direct, structural, or cultural); addressing conflict nonviolently; and, creating the conditions of positive peace (Standish, 2015).

Analysts can conclude that a curriculum (interpreted here via the formal curriculum statement) is simply a guideline of goals and that the purpose of education (and therefore the purpose of curricular statements) should be to facilitate learning opportunities for students. The Delors Report was created by the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) to envision the role of education in the 21st century (1996). It considers it important that the future of our world be comprised of ‘learning societies’ where the lifelong task of learning is supported by four pillars of education: “learning to live together, learning to know, learning to do, and learning to be” (Delors, 1996, pp. 20-21; Burnett, 2008). If the values education endorses indeed remain after graduation, it is vital that seeds of learning be planted in formal education—enabling thriving growth throughout both the lifecycle and society. According to the Delors Report, individuals need to “learn how to learn” (1996, p. 20). Building on this observation, this study seeks to verify if curricular content teaches individuals to ‘learn how to *learn peace*.’

Key Concepts: Positive Peace and Structural Violence

Positive peace is not merely the absence of direct violence (negative peace), it is the absence of structural and cultural violence and the presence of harmony, equality, and a vision of interconnectivity (Galtung, 1996). In this study violence is considered an intentional, harmful, and avoidable human behaviour. Three forms of violence are considered in this element: violence that is part of a worldview (cultural), violence that is a social process (structural), and violence that is an incident (direct).

There are many kinds of violence (Galtung, 1990), and causes of violence can stem from physiological, psychological, and/or cultural roots (Englander, 2007). In each society and every culture there are certain forms of violence that are permissible—and at times, obligatory (Fiske & Rai, 2015). Every experience of violence carries justifications or sanctions that are embedded in social groups and cultural facets of understanding. Because people are cultural beings, we ‘learn’ what it means to be human and what we learn can affect how we behave—how we perceive social interaction, and what we think is possible, acceptable, or necessary. Because what we learn affects *how* and *what* we consider to be violence, this study seeks to explore national curriculum in Saudi Arabia as a space that can potentially promote violence and/or peace.

School is made up of different aspects, including the individual, the social context, and educative partners that can include teachers, students, parents, and both the local and international community. Public schools in the KSA operate with one national curriculum, so it is possible to analyze how the national curriculum statements of the KSA approach concepts—such as violence and peace—and investigate to what extent the curriculum incorporates content that is conducive to building positive peace.

The PECA Project

This study is a part of the Peace Education Curricular Analysis (PECA) Project (Standish, 2015), and uses mixed methods (summative and directive content analysis) to scrutinize a given nation's curricular statement(s) for specific pro peace qualities. The PECA Project is a global, multilingual study of peace education elements at pecaproject.org.

Theoretical Framework

Modern education has been criticized as a one-sided process that 'banks' information into students—dumping *allegedly* neutral information into the minds of students (Freire, 2001). 'Banking education' viewed pupils as empty containers whose role as students was to have information deposited into their brains. This notion that information was 'neutral' was challenged by Freire (2001), who considered the choices made in selecting *which* information was deposited as a highly political act. Educational systems are powerful political institutions who set agendas when they select the content to which students are exposed. Education that duplicates the standards and beliefs of the socially dominant group can result in the justification of cultural inequalities. Such education can lead to political marginalization, social discrimination, and barriers to the opportunity to experience full humanity (Galtung, 1996; Bourdieu, 1977; Boulding, 2000; Davies, 2004).

Education systems are critical sites for the transmission of cultural beliefs (Schönpflug, 2001). As mentioned, the banking model of education selects content for students to learn, which can have possibly detrimental social outcomes (Freire, 2001). This is seen in education that espouses gendered hierarchies or ethnic superiorities as it forms a barrier to personal achievement and social solidarity (Lange, 2012). Conversely, when education systems embrace peace education theory, they begin to unlock the potential of personal and interpersonal transformation—equipping students to better manage violence in schools, society, and the self (Harber & Sakade, 2009).

What is Curriculum?

When school curriculum is contemplated, it is often perceived to include *what we learn*, *how we learn*, or indeed anything related to the activity of going to school. Education can include a variety of different focus subjects, and the methods by which content is communicated can involve the use of textbooks, web based products, experiential learning, and a variety of teacher pedagogies. Curricular statements are neither the materials utilized in education (*what we learn*) nor the pedagogies used in education (*how we learn*), but rather *what is communicated as important to learn*. This study examines extant statements of curricular intentions. “Curricular statements refer to what a student is expected to learn—what is considered important—and they contain both explicit and null (hidden) forms of curriculum” (Standish, 2015, pp. 179-180). In other words, they show “*what knowledge is of most worth...*” (italics in original) (Pinar, 2012, p. xv). This research seeks to discern the values and attitudes considered important enough to be included in formalized, national curricular statements. If the values identified in this study are found in each curricular statement, they are considered worthwhile. A further perception is that if the values identified in this study are not found in each curricular statement, they are either not considered valuable or not considered at all.

Curriculum Theory

Curriculum theory refers to “a body of concepts, models and discourses concerning the relationship between school and society, the nature of schooling, and curriculum planning, development, and implementation” (Deng, 2016, pp. 76-77), wherein curriculum becomes “the outcome of a process reflecting a political and societal agreement about the what, why, and how of education for the desired society of the future” (Tedesco, Opertii, & Amadio, 2014, p. 528). Curriculum theory relates to what students ‘should’ know and how schools meet the needs of a society and respond to the ongoing and changing needs of a culture or community (Westbury, 2000). Contemporary curriculum theory goes further to examine the *meaning* of curriculum both in education settings and in the social, political, economic, and cultural world *outside* of schools (Pinar, 2004). Curriculum theory today is not interested in the development of student capabilities by so-called ‘educational technicians,’ but in understanding the connections between school content and society. By investigating the “relationships between the curriculum and the world” (Pinar, 2008, p. 6), the opportunity to critically engage with the values of education presents itself, rather than enforcing educational priorities without question.

Peace Education Theory

In 1999, the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) defined peace education:

Peace education in UNICEF refers to the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace.

(Fountain, 1999, p. 1)

The PECA Project digresses from this delineation. *Prevention* of violence is replaced in the PECA Project by the *recognition* of violence (as recognition of violence comes before its prevention); *resolving conflict peacefully* is here interpreted to mean the objective to *resolve conflict nonviolently*. Thirdly, creating the *conditions conducive to peace* is understood by the PECA Project to refer to nine conditions that contribute to *positive peace* (as distinct from *negative peace*). While conflict is a normal facet of the human world (and can be considered a form of discord), violence is here considered deliberate, *but avoidable*, harm done to self and/or others (Harris & Morrison, 2013).

Conceptual Framework

Having now explored the theoretical frames that inform this study, the following section will explain the specific structural parameters of the research conducted. A third paradigm platform (Mertens, 2010) was used that considers both qualitative and quantitative data to explore three elements common in peace education: the recognition of violence, nonviolent conflict transformation tools, and nine elements of positive peace. **Figure 1** and **Table 1** below describe the framework.



Figure 1: PECA Project Conceptual Framework (Standish & Kertyzia, 2015)

The framework for this analysis has been successfully utilized in completed investigations (Standish, 2016; Standish, 2015; Standish & Kertyzia, 2015) and utilizes the following directive coding structure:

Table 1: Three Elements of Peace Education (Standish & Kertyzia, 2015)

<p>Element one: recognizing violence</p>	<p>Violence is considered an intentional, harmful and avoidable human behaviour. Three forms of violence are considered in this element, violence that is part of a worldview (cultural), violence that is a social process (structural), and violence that is an incident (direct).</p>
<p>Element two: nonviolent conflict transformation</p>	<p>Peace Education Theory holds that conflict should be transformed nonviolently. This implies, for instance, that a conflict that is transformed using weapons cannot contribute to a nonviolent outcome, as violence was utilized to acquire the eventual outcome. In the context of this research profile, we code for nonviolent conflict transformation tools such as dialogue, mediation, negotiation, or collaboration <i>even when they are not utilized in the specific practice of transforming conflict.</i></p>
<p>Element three: positive peace</p>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Peace Zone (safe spaces, where violence is absent) 2. Peace Bond (positive relationships characterized by kindness and empathy) 3. Social Justice (fairness, equality, and/or human rights) 4. Eco Mind (harmonious living between humanity and nature) 5. Link Mind (perception of interconnectivity and/or interdependency) 6. Gender Mind¹ (awareness of gender as an important facet of understanding) 7. Resilience (ability to absorb calamity: personal, social, or environmental) 8. Wellbeing (health, wellness, and taking responsibility for self or others) 9. Prevention (knowing ways to stop violence before it starts)

Using the above framework, this article assesses the elementary and preparatory (middle-high school) Saudi National curricular statements for recognition of violence, nonviolent conflict transformation methods, and nine aspects of positive peace.

Methodology

Third paradigm research (also called pragmatism or mixed methods research) is a rejoinder to the call for research that “can be sufficiently flexible, permeable, and multilayered to reflect the reality of social research in the 21st century” (Denscombe, 2008, p. 271). There are conceptual limits to both positivist (first paradigm) and constructivist (second paradigm) research in social science. Positivist research uses the tools of investigating the natural sciences, leaving unobservable processes unexplored, whereas constructivist research is too specific, limiting generalizations, and leaving some scholars to question its worth. Third-paradigm research declares that future social science investigations can strengthen findings and results by combining these established research paradigms and painting a fuller picture. This empirical analysis utilizes two cross paradigm and complementary research methodologies: summative (quantitative) and directive (qualitative) content analysis (Krippendorff, 2004). The combination of these two investigative techniques

¹ Gender Mind does not indicate passages where non-males are considered fully human (and therefore equal to men) but the presence of a reference that indicates gender (social expectations of the sexes) signified in nouns (girls, boys, men, women) and pronouns (he, she).

permits an extensive and systematic consideration of curricular statements, contributes to research credibility and comparability, and creates an accessible methodology for use in future and further collaborative investigations (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Rosengren, 1981).

Coding Rationale

The content analysis methodology serves to unearth semantic content from text. The work requires multiple coding sessions and multiple coders to satisfy social scientific credibility. The coding rationale utilized by the research team in this study included:

Element One

- To be included in the category *Recognition of Violence* (cultural, structural or physical), it was crucial that the passage *not be simply an example* of violence (for example: slavery, infanticide, bullying), but that the passage explicitly *recognize* the content as a form of violence—a deliberate, undesirable, and avoidable act of harm.

Element Two

- In order to be included in the category *Nonviolent Conflict Transformation*, it was necessary to conclude that the method, tool, or technique utilized could be utilized to transform conflict without violence.

Element Three

- In order to be coded *Peace Zone*, the observed passage must relate to schools as safe spaces.
- In order to be coded *Peace Bond*, the content had to imply building positive relationships characterized by kindness and empathy (merely respectful, appropriate or obligatory relationships were not coded Peace Bond).
- In order to be coded *Social Justice*, the content related to the importance of equality, fairness, human rights, and/or egalitarianism.
- In order to be coded *Eco Mind*, the content had to communicate the importance of harmony (equality, equanimity) between humanity and nature—and not merely notions of sustainability, which often define eco-consciousness as a benefit only for humans.
- In order to be coded *Link Mind*, the content needed to show interconnectivity (connections or relationships can have only two poles

whereas interconnections and interrelationships are networks).

Interdependency conveys that our survival is linked to a matrix of other factors.

- In order to be coded *Gender Mind*, the text communicated that gender is an important facet of identity and includes stated social expectations/experiences of women/girls/boys/men.
- In order to be coded *Resilience*, a positive answer had to follow the question asked “Does this content teach a student to cope with a disaster of some kind?”
- In order to be coded *Wellbeing*, content had to reference health, wellness (physical, spiritual, emotional), and taking responsibility for the self and/or others.
- In order to be coded *Prevention* the content had to specifically communicate that violence can, and should, be avoided (this is as opposed to managing hazards or dangers which are environmental) (Standish, 2016, p. 28).

Data Collection

This analysis examines the content of three curricular statements:

- The General Education Policy Statement (KSA-General);
- The Teachers’ Guide (KSA-TG), and;
- The *Shari’a* and religious knowledge for the elementary and preparatory stages (KSA-*Shari’a*).

National Ministries of Education often house curricular statements in online repositories,² and the documents analysed in this article were downloaded in June 2015 from the following digital portals. KSA-General (1995) was downloaded from <http://faculty.mu.edu.sa/download.php?fid=101806>. KSA-TG (1997) was accessed from http://www.taifedu.gov.sa/montada/topic.asp?TOPIC_ID=9802. KSA-*Shari’a* (2006) was acquired from <http://www.bishaedu.gov.sa/vb/showthread.php?t=38206>.

² Saudi Ministry of Education, General Directorate for Education Supervision, Teachers Guide, First Edition, 1418 H. A. (1997 C. E.)

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) refers to the state established in 1932 by King Abdulaziz Al-Saud (Saudi Embassy, 2015). Modern KSA comprises most of the Arabian Peninsula and shares borders to the east of the Persian Gulf with Bahrain, Qatar, and the United Arab Emirates; to the north with Iraq, Jordan and Kuwait; and from the south with Yemen and Oman. Written history of the area dates back to the fourth millennium BCE and it is considered the location of several ancient civilizations. The desert kingdom of Saudi Arabia wields a major economic global influence as it holds twenty-five (25) percent of the global oil reserve and is the birthplace of Islam (Niblock, 2013).

The Saudi Curriculum

Education for children in KSA includes elementary school (grade 1-6 /ages 6-12 yrs), preparatory school (grade 7-9 /ages 13-15 yrs), and secondary school (grade 10-12 /ages 16-18 yrs). KSA's public education is optional for early childhood and secondary school, but it is compulsory for children from ages 6 to 15 (grades 1 to 9) (News, 2004). The curricula analysed in this empirical study include three documents: the general policy statement, the general teachers' guide, and the *Shari'a*³ statement (for the mandatory elementary and preparatory stages). The Saudi curriculum includes additional guides used for particular subjects at specific grade levels, but the core documents include the aforementioned three texts:

1. The *General Education Policy Statement* (hereafter referred to as KSA-General) is considered the key document in drawing the broad guidelines for education policy for all stages in the national education scheme. The KSA-General was first released on December 17, 1969, by the Higher Committee for Education Policy (Al-Ghamidi, 1999), modified in 1975 and updated in 1995 (Al-Harbi, 2006). This document includes nine chapters and covers 226 articles.
2. The *Teacher's Guide* (hereafter referred to as KSA-TG) is a general education document that was first released in 1997. The KSA-TG encompasses four chapters that cover the goals of the education policy in Saudi Arabia including challenges for teaching and planning and techniques.
3. The curricular statement for *Shari'a* for elementary and preparatory stages (hereafter referred to as KSA-*Shari'a*) includes seven chapters that introduce the

³ *Shari'a* (Arabic: شريعة) means law. The root '*Shar'a*' means 'to legislate.' *Sharia* refers to Islamic law as a divine legislation derived from the *Quran* (Islam's holy book) and *Hadith* (the prophet's Mohammad's sayings). *Fiqh* (Arabic: فقه), on the other hand, is the human understanding and interpretation of *Shari'a*.

general goals of teaching *Shari'a* knowledge, and the specific goals for each stage. For example, chapter two sets the goals for grades 1-3 for teaching *Quran*, monotheism, *Fiqh* (the human understanding of *Shari'a*) and acceptable behaviour.

Findings

The following section presents empirical evidence pertaining to three elements shared in peace education from each of the three investigated curricular documents.⁴ Element one encompasses recognition of violence in one of its three forms: cultural, structural, and direct. Element two is represented in techniques or tools useful in non-violent conflict transformation. Element three relates to the previously mentioned nine aspects of positive peace. Supportive quotations (listed with page number in brackets) from each curriculum under investigation will accompany the presentation of summative results to demonstrate the themes under discussion. Whenever applicable, a comprehensive graph will aid comprehension by displaying the presence or absence of peace education references from element 1-3 for each curriculum. Italicized text and bracketed page numbers are used to refer to direct quotations taken from each curriculum.

KSA-General (1995)

Element One: Recognizing Violence

KSA-General includes no references referring to violence as a deliberate, avoidable and harmful human act.

Element Two: Nonviolent Conflict Transformation

The KSA-General document contains two (N=2) references related to nonviolent conflict transformation, and both refer to using *collaboration*. The curricular statement calls for *social solidarity among members of the society in the form of collaboration, love, companionship and altruistic work for the benefit of the public interest, rather than private interest* (4), and *raising the student on principles of Islamic-dominated social life, prevailed by companionship and collaboration, appreciation of liability and taking responsibility* (10).

Element Three: Positive Peace

Five facets of positive peace are referenced in KSA-General: Wellbeing, Peace Bond, Gender Mind, Link Mind, and Peace Zone. There were no passages that communicate content related to Eco Mind, Social Justice, Resilience, or Prevention.

⁴ The KSA curricular quotations in this article were translated by Rula Talahma.

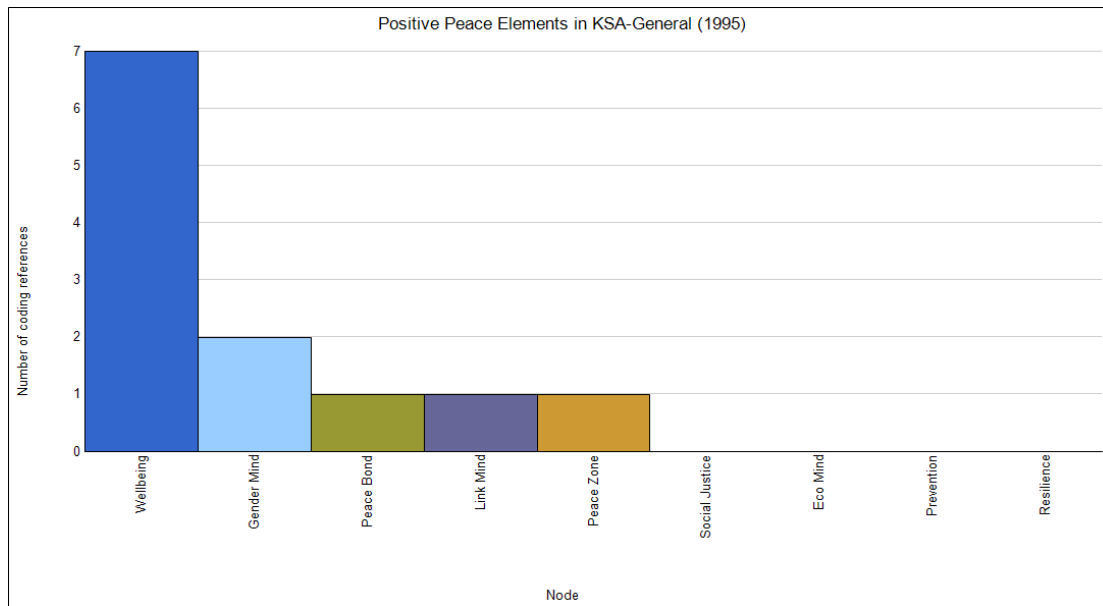


Figure 2 Positive Peace Elements in KSA-General (1995)

Wellbeing was the most frequently indicated aspect of Positive Peace (N=7), with seven references to health or healthy development: *mental* (6, 7), *physical* and *psychological* (8), *spiritual, emotional and social development* (7); and to *taking responsibility* (10). KSA-General calls for *making health care available for students, whether therapeutic or preventive* (10), and for *accustoming the students to sound health habits and disseminating health awareness* (7).

The sole passage concerning Peace Bond (N=1) calls for *love, companionship, and altruistic work among members of the society* (4).

Two references in KSA-General to Gender Mind (N=2) emphasize a *girl's right to education in accordance to her nature, and to prepare her for her mission in life, while maintaining decency and dignity, and in light of the Islamic Law [Shari'a] as women are the sisters of men* (4), and stating that *the competent authorities responsible for combating illiteracy among women...shall achieve the specific goals related to women's education in accordance with the provisions of Islam* (19).

Link Mind (N=1) is expressed in the curriculum, indicating *the holistic Islamic concept of the universe, humanity and life, and that the whole existence is subject to the order of Almighty God, so every creature can perform their duties without defect or disorder* (3). Finally, Peace Zone (N=1) has one reference related to protecting children from dangers while properly confronting childhood challenges (9).

KSA-TG (1997)

Element One: Recognizing Violence

KSA-TG does not include any references related to the recognition of violence as a deliberate, avoidable, and harmful human act.

Element Two: Nonviolent Conflict Transformation

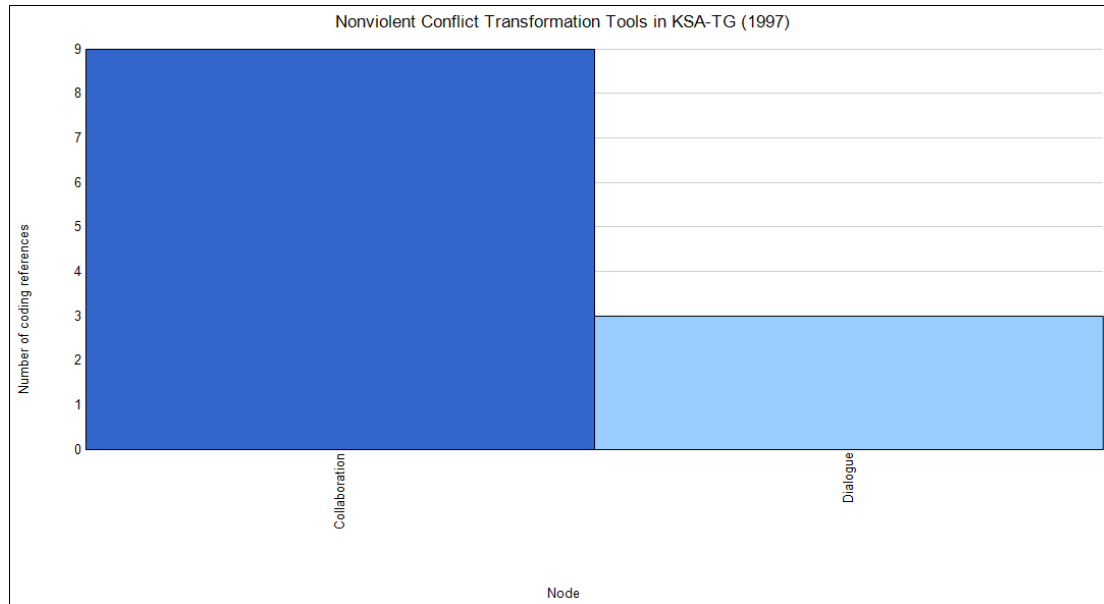


Figure 3 Nonviolent Conflict Transformation Tools in KSA-TG (1997)

The call for working with others (collaboration N=9) is repeatedly seen in KSA-TG, as nine passages encourage participation and joint work during the learning process. The document communicates the concept of collaboration on different levels: *in providing the educational environment that helps the students to collaborate...in an atmosphere full of justice and devotion in performing their tasks* (3); and *in gaining [the students] positive attitudes that guarantee mutual understanding and collaboration among countries* (11). The

document calls for *consolidating the possibilities of agreement, collaboration and integration among students, and for using teamwork and coordinated effort, while weakening points of disagreement and eliminating causes of disagreement* (14). Other references emphasize that *collaborative work gains the group sound habits related to collaborative work* (61), *degrees of collaboration can be used to assess the students' performance* (62), *collaboration provides the opportunity for sound contact and social interaction* (32), *is helpful in achieving specific goals...and results in a concerted effort for excellence* (63), and *helpful in creating a generation that works with the spirit of love, loyalty, fidelity and ability to productively work in a team* (63). Finally, the document refers to *team problem solving* as it emphasizes the importance of each member's contribution in different activities and overcoming obstacles that the team faces (61).

KSA-TG also refers three times to the nonviolent conflict transformation tool Dialogue (N=3). The document implicitly refers to the manners of discussion that allow each member to freely express opinions (61), maintaining reason and avoiding overreaction or deriding the others (62), avoiding contemptuous criticism *while training them on objective criticism, and helping them understand the importance of differing in opinion as a healthy phenomenon* (62).

Element Three: Positive Peace

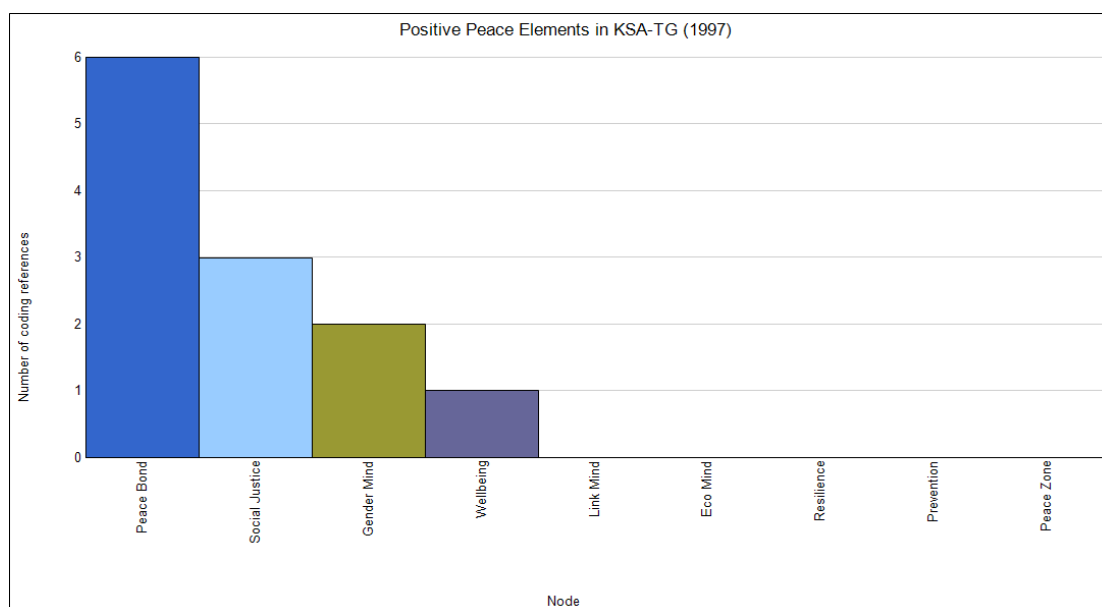


Figure 4 Positive Peace Elements in KSA-TG (1997)

Four aspects of Positive Peace are present in KSA-TG: Peace Bond (N=6), Social Justice (N=3), Gender Mind (N=2), and Wellbeing (N=1). Peace Bonds are encouraged in

KSA-TG implicitly through calling for an *educational environment that helps the students to cooperate, and provides love, companionship, and altruism* (3), calling *the relationship between the teacher and students a picture of a parent and his children*, and to *be merciful and kind to students* (14), and to *strengthen the bonds of love between him and the students' groups in particular, and the general public* (15), and *providing the opportunities for positive contact and social interaction* (32). Additional references to Peace Bond ask the teacher to *be a model of justice, wisdom, equality, piety, and kindness*, and to *show kindness and empathy towards students* (56).

Statements coded for Gender Mind distinguished between the leisure activities of boys and girls, that: *males are inclined towards adventures and discovering games, while females are more inclined towards doing chores and different handcrafts and aesthetic activities* (28), or that *males often tend to follow mechanical, sport and numerical topics* (31). KSA-TG calls for *equality* among students (56, 63), and advocates for a work atmosphere marked with *justice and devotion* (3) and refers to the students' expectations of their teacher as being just, wise and kind (56). Wellbeing is present in a passage calling for teachers to equip students with good habits while *believing in the integration of physical, mental, emotional, and knowledge construction of humans through the education process* (15).

Resilience, Prevention, Link Mind, EcoMind, and Peace Zone aspects are absent from the KSA-TG. The KSA-TG does contain several references to connections and relationships (the member's belonging to the group/society/community) in a way that—although not a recognition of interconnectivity or interdependency—concern linkages. Examples include the concern for the interest of the individual and the community through provision of sufficient and useful education (so that an individual can benefit himself and his community) (4), or *emphasizing the individual's membership in the group and belonging to it...in a way emphasizing the importance of affirmative action for the interest of the group* (10).

KSA-Shari'a (2006)

Element One: Recognizing Violence

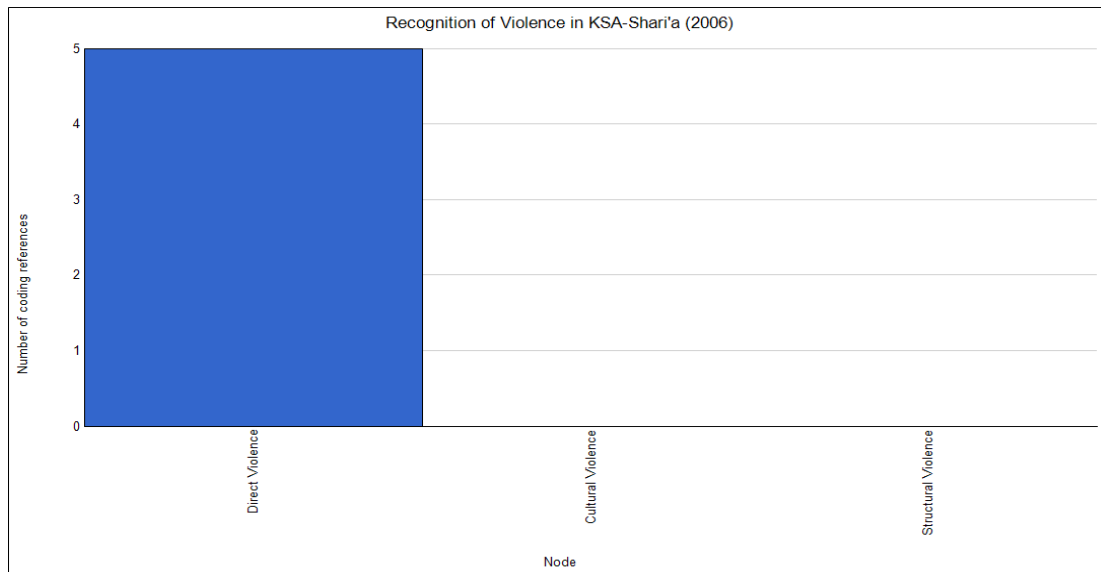


Figure 5 Recognition of Violence in KSA-Shari'a (2006)

KSA-Shari'a includes five references to direct violence (N=5) as harmful and deliberate human acts that should be avoided, but no references to structural or cultural forms of violence. *The curriculum calls the students to understand that being aggressive to others is not a desirable form of power (138) and motivates the student to be generous and avoid causing harm to his neighbour (42). The curriculum encourages students to understand the meaning of injustice (a voluntary wrongful act against the person or property) and its adverse effects on the individual and society (138), avoid causing harm to other Muslims verbally or physically (136); and avoid causing harm to the others and to animals (138).*

Element Two: Nonviolent Conflict Transformation

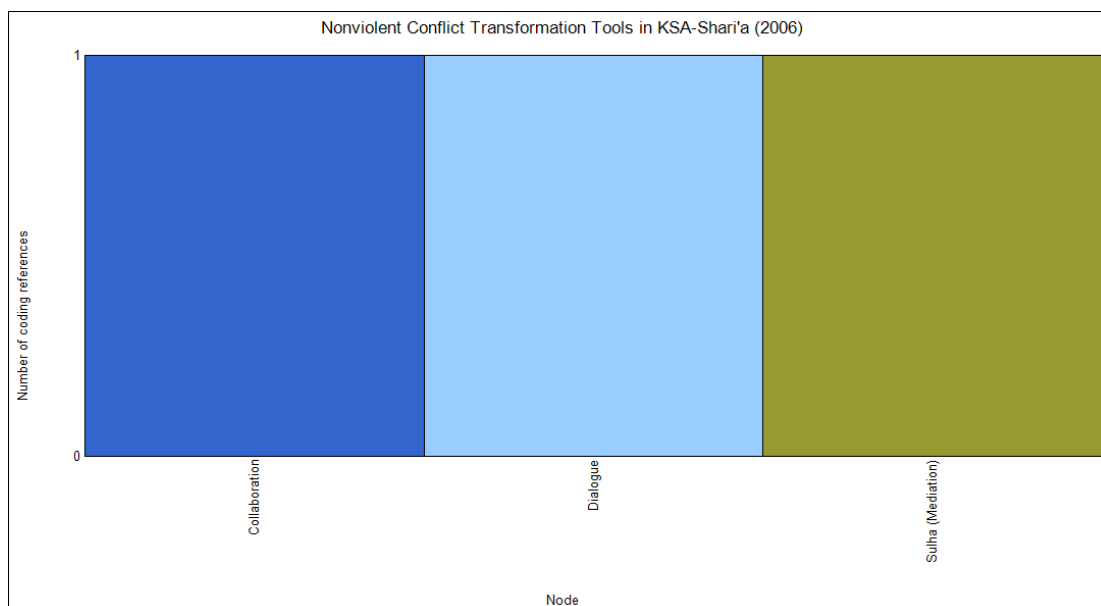


Figure 6 Nonviolent Conflict Transformation Tools in KSA Shari'a (2006)

Three tools for nonviolent conflict transformation are located in KSA-*Shari'a*. Dialogue (N=1) and Collaboration (N=1) are found in KSA-*Shari'a*, as the curriculum calls for *maintaining manners of speaking and listening (73)* and *promoting social skills and collaborative learning during the lessons (157)*, respectively. In addition, a single reference to the *Islah* (N=1) is found: '*Sulha*,' meaning, reconciliation through mediation is a nonviolent tool of peace making and reformation of relationships among individuals and groups. The reference explains that *the student should be able to explain the meaning of reconciliation (Islah), its importance and benefits. The student should be able to deploy it to reform the relationships among his peers, can explain the meaning of giving advice and its importance in preserving the society, and to understand the meaning of giving advice to the ruler (140)*.

Element Three: Positive Peace

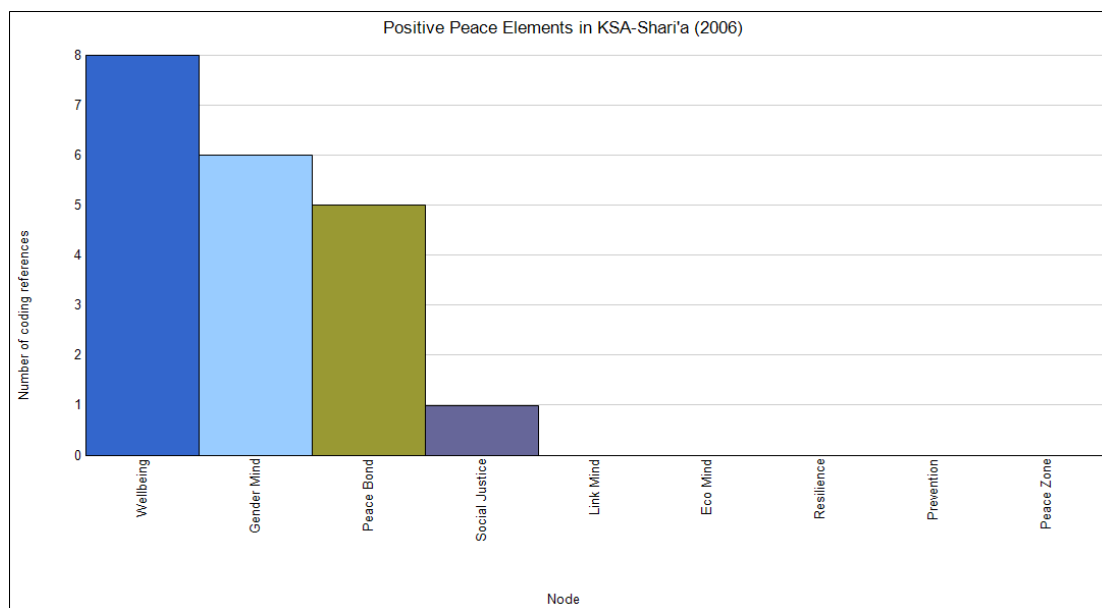


Figure 7 Positive Peace Elements in KSA-Shari'a (2006)

Limited aspects of Positive Peace are present in KSA-Shari'a. Eight references regard Wellbeing (N=8) in terms of personal health and personal responsibility. It asks the student to *realise the care of Islam of the human body, and to detest harmful intoxicants and narcotics* (133), to *realize the care Islam has given for the wellbeing of bodies and minds* (146), and to *realize the importance of having a healthy and fit body and avoid using narcotic and intoxicants while understanding their effects on the individual and the community* (142). KSA-Shari'a encourages students to *take care of their health and cleanness* (17), [their] *cleanness and pureness* (as a precondition to perform prayers) (37), and not only *taking care of himself, servicing himself and organizing his belongings, but also serving his family* (72), *feeding those in need, and understanding the status of one's neighbour and Islam's care of him* (136).

Passages coded for Gender Mind (N=6) have two messages. First, to motivate male students to show masculinity and avoid imitating females by asking them *to wear clean clothes, without exaggeration [understood as a call to modesty], and being cautious of imitating women* (46), *avoid imitating the opposite sex* (154), and *to show masculine qualities, not imitate women, and admire those bearing the quality of masculinity* (141). Second, it emphasizes the status of women and Islam's care of them through passages encouraging students *to realize the care of Islam of women and etiquette of dealing with them* (133); *to understand the status of women in Islam, [and] explain the care given to women and*

their role in the society (142), [and to] *perfect his social interaction with his mother and sisters, and [to deal] with women in general in the best way possible* (142).

Coding for Peace Bond (N=5) yielded five passages that call for *loving and belonging to the Islamic Ummah [Nation], strengthening the ties of love, mercifulness, and human understanding for one another* (15); *recognizing the effects of compassion among Muslims and realizing God's mercy for those who are compassionate* (76). References also call for *understanding the meaning of tolerance and reasoning the effects of tolerance and kindness* (76); *explaining the meaning of tolerance and patience, and their benefits, while understanding the importance of compassion and how to show it* (138); and finally, to *maintain using... kind words* (46).

Though not coded as Peace Bond, other references refer to religious or kinship bonds. Examples include advocating for *raising the student to give alms and spend in many ways of benevolence* (17), *maintaining the ties of kinship* (132), and *realizing the value of Birr [perfection in social interaction] to parents and understanding the value of maintaining ties of kinship* (136). Taking responsibility (141), integrating personal responsibility in the learning processes (157), understanding forgiveness (136), and honesty and trustworthiness in selling and buying (139), although prosocial, were not coded as references to Peace Bond.

Social Justice (N=1) is communicated through a single passage that encourages *the integration of contemporary issues (environment, safety and security, volunteer work, personal responsibility, human rights) in learning processes* (157). Although additional indications of *justice* are found in KSA-Shari'a—for example, *being able to explain the meaning of justice and its value and benefits, loving justice, and adhering to the truth during anger or contentment* (138); *realizing that Islam is the religion of common sense, moderation, inclusiveness, and justice* (145)—these passages do not relate to the qualities of fairness, equality or human rights and were therefore not coded under the Social Justice rubric.

Several facets of Positive Peace were absent from KSA-Shari'a, including Resilience, Prevention, Peace Zone, Link Mind, and Eco Mind. Although the document calls for several constructive forms of connectivity, none indicated interconnectivity (Link Mind). Similarly, several passages that advocate for understanding and conserving the environment are not coded under Eco Mind, as they do not fundamentally view the relationship between humanity and nature as equally important. Examples include *recognizing God's blessings on the student and his environment, thanking him for that, through protecting the environment and utilizing it well* (15); *preserving the trees and being kind to animals and birds* (43); *avoiding*

wasting water and electricity (43); realizing the importance of being economical in using water (74); and becoming used to environmental conservation and protecting public and private properties (97).

Discussion

Element One: Recognizing Violence.

Textual recognition of violence in any of its forms, direct, structural, and cultural, was completely absent from both KSA-General and KSA-TG. However, as the curricular document for *Shari'a* is both more detailed and more recent (2006), five passages did recognize direct violence. Of these examples the majority refer to causing harm to self or neighbour, causing harm to the individual or society, and causing harm to other creatures, like animals and birds. Although KSA-*Shari'a* has partial recognition of violence in the form of direct harm (of the human body or other creatures), it does not recognize other forms of violence in society that emerge from worldviews (cultural) or inhibit an individual or group's ability to experience full humanity (structural). The total lack of content in KSA-General and KSA-TG that recognizes cultural and structural forms of violence and the limited content found in KSA-*Shari'a* may signal that many forms of violence are not sanctioned in the KSA, or that some forms of violence may be entirely acceptable. As awareness or recognition of violence is a precursor to the prevention of violence, there are opportunities for future National Curricula of the KSA to first define and recognize violence (as distinct from hazards or conflict) and second, to characterize such acts and circumstances as intolerable, unacceptable, avoidable, and unnecessary.

Element Two: Nonviolent Conflict Transformation

The three curricular statements examined in this empirical analysis do not explicitly define any of the three tools found to relate to nonviolent transformation of conflict. Despite the fact that these tools were located in the curricula: collaboration (in the three documents), dialogue (in KSA-TG and KSA-*Shari'a*), and reconciliation [*Islah-Sulha*] (in KSA-*Shari'a*), there is room for more precise definitions of nonviolent conflict transformation tools. There is also room for a more comprehensive consideration of the difference between violent and nonviolent ways of transforming conflict, as well as the delivery of content that supports the exploration, adoption and preference for nonviolent methods.

Of the three forms found in this analysis, the tool *collaboration* is advocated in an atmosphere of love, companionship, and altruism under the principles of Islamic-dominated life. Though left undefined, the technique of collaboration is depicted as a resolute effort leading to excellence and productive teamwork. The curriculum encourages team problem

solving through focusing on the importance of each member's contribution toward overcoming obstacles as a group. It would be possible in the future to add the construct of partner versus dominating education (Eisler, 2000) to assist learners to differentiate between constructively working with others and destructively controlling others, as described below:

Education that uses a partnership model embraces learning platforms that engage with multiple learning capabilities, teaches through caring, and uses conflict to find creative and respectful ways of addressing discord. Education that uses a dominator model reproduces social and cultural inequalities, is hierarchal, competitive, disciplinary, and contributes to marginalization, dehumanization, and violence (Standish, 2015, p. 179; Eisler, 2000).

Dialogue is referenced implicitly in the KSA curricula through organizing the discussion process, speaking and listening, respecting the others' opinions during conversation, and accepting differing opinions as healthy. As *dialogue* is recognized as a method whereby communication facilitates understanding and consensus (Shor and Friere, 1987), future iterations of the KSA curricula could clearly expand upon the opportunity for purposive conversation and clearly define the art and practice of constructive verbal communication.

The last emerging technique regarding the nonviolent transformation of conflict refers to reconciliation (*Islah*)—a call to reform relationships amongst adversaries (Standish, 2013). This indigenous method of reconciliation—*Sulha*—pre-dates Islam, has roots in Arab tribal traditions, and is well represented in Islam [see for example, *Quran* 4:128, and 49:10]. Finding this nonviolent conflict transformation tool is explicable, considering the cultural roots of the Kingdom and since sections of the KSA-*Shari'a* teach Islamic *Shari'a* (the divine law as revealed in the *Quran* and *Hadith*) and *Fiqh* (the human understanding of *Shari'a*). As mediation is a deeply rooted Arab and Islamic cultural practice, the presence of passages that utilize this nonviolent conflict transformation technique shows the value of the practice in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia.

Element Three: Positive Peace

Facets of Positive Peace are not comprehensively present in the three curricular documents examined in this study. Only the qualities of Wellbeing, Peace Bond, and Gender Mind are found in all three curricular documents. Social Justice is referenced in both KSA-TG and KSA-*Shari'a*, while Eco Mind, Link Mind and Peace Zone are only found in KSA-General. Aspects of Resilience and Prevention are missing across the entire reviewed

curricula. There are several notable observations from this analysis that relate to how facets of positive peace are present or absent in these texts that invite further elaboration.

First, the category of Wellbeing is well presented as the curricula call for maintaining health, healthy development in different forms, and special focus on cleanliness. As good education is concerned with the cognitive, emotional, affective and physical development of children and youth, wellbeing is a consistent value in education. Despite the concentration on individual wellbeing in the curricula under review, the Wellbeing quality is expressed in light of the curricula's clear attention to supplement the wellbeing of members of the greater Saudi community. Calls for establishing a strong individual through the strength of faith, manners, and body echo sentiments that perceive of personal wellbeing as a requirement for societal wellbeing.

Second, although Peace Bond is implicitly present through references to love, kindness, compassion, companionship, and altruism, entire units in KSA-*Shari'a* merely concentrate on *love of God*—fearing him—and how love of his creatures and other human beings is derived from and regulated through this love/fear (124). In addition to the love of God, students are encouraged to love the Prophet and his companions (11, 15). Islam is a monotheistic religion, which focuses on establishing and perfecting the connection between humans and God and bestowing the virtues of that connection over other members of the society, including other living creatures. This might explain how the emphasis in the curricula is given to these *other* forms of relationships rather than human-to-human relationships (Peace Bond codes human relationships, not more-than-human relationships including relationships with nature and spirit).

Although there are some references to kindness and empathy in the Saudi curricula, the importance of respectful relationships was more prevalent. KSA-*Shari'a* repeatedly calls for *respecting* and *obeying* parents, *respecting* teachers (40) and *respecting* family (97). Other forms of proscribed social interaction include greeting others with *peace* (69) and *avoiding causing harm* to non-Muslims (though the passage does not identify what is meant by harm) (79). The curricula invite *perfection* of social interaction [*Ihsan*], especially with parents. As this kind of social interaction is based on religious grounds, it was not coded as Peace Bond. In the KSA these kinds of bonds are part of the individual's duties—they are neither voluntary nor arbitrary.

Elements of intimidation in the national curricula can be traced to references that characterize the nation as concerned with *the promotion of virtue and prevention of vice* as a trait of the Islamic Nation [*Ummah*]. This concern has been institutionalized in the KSA;

there are active committees that police, monitor, and have the authority to question the actions of ordinary individuals and groups in public spheres, making this statement an *example* of violence in Saudi society, one that is communicated clearly in the National Curricula. This example of authoritarian culture is mirrored in ‘dominatory education’ statements (Eisler, 2001) that act to normalize violence in society. The cultural space occupied by peace education condemns violence in all forms and building a culture of peace is crippled by notions of acceptable and obligatory violence in society. If the values of virtuousness in the KSA condone violence, they sit in stark opposition to the values espoused in peace education.

The introductory passage in KSA-General states that *the goal of education is to accustom individual behaviour according to God’s divine law (Shari’a) and to meet societal needs* (3). Absence of the Positive Peace facet of Resilience can be explained in light of the important ideological principle of *predestination*; predestination is one of Islam’s six articles of faith, and humans act based on a divine destiny (divine destiny is likened to fate and does not entertain actions or mindsets which *defer* calamity or *prevent* the same). While *predestination* is understood and operationalized differently across Islamic schools of thought, part of believing in destiny is *entrusting God while making full use of all available means* (physical, intellectual, reasoning, seeking advice). The KSA curriculum does not emphasize making full use of available means or suggest contingency plans that can implicitly lead to the acquisition of resilience. In the same manner, as all experiences of living are considered God’s will, there is no curricular content that communicates the opportunity to prevent violence before it starts, as according to the KSA National Curricula violence—any violence—is God’s will. The most significant implication of this consideration is that building a culture of peace in the KSA faces a significant cultural obstacle—if violence is not *optional* and/or *undesirable* then transforming violence (using nonviolence) is not a primary objective in the KSA. Creating a culture of peace through peace education, as envisioned by UNICEF, requires recognizing and preventing violence. The tenet that all violence is acceptable to God (God’s will) means that peace educators hoping to contribute to positive peace in the KSA face difficulties that may necessitate a fundamental challenge to the Islamic tenet of predestination.

Recommendations

Recommendations in this section contribute to tailoring more peace-oriented KSA curricular documents in the future. In general, the analysed curriculum lacked definitions for vital terms related to peace, conflict, violence, and nonviolence. Additional terms left un-

explored include: inequality and equality, justice and social justice, nature and the environment, human rights, personal responsibility and safety. Future iterations of these documents may benefit from including the following.

Element One Recommendations

- Clearly define the terms conflict, violence and nonviolence.
- Use language that describes violence and violent events as damaging, undesirable and avoidable.
- Include structural and cultural forms of violence within avoidable acts of harm.
- Recognize direct, structural and cultural forms of violence as acts that cause unacceptable harm.

Element Two Recommendations

Acting nonviolently means understanding that conflict is normal but choosing to transform conflict—when it arises—without using violence.

- State that conflict is a normal part of human experience but that *violent* conflict is not inevitable.
- Demonstrate that there are both violent and nonviolent ways to transform conflict.
- Clearly define nonviolent conflict transformation tools used in curricula and add additional tools wherever possible.

Element Three Recommendations

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia can contribute to future positive peace by adding content to the National Curricula that:

- Affirms the importance of school as a safe space where violence is unacceptable.
- Asserts that prevention is a quality of *advance* action that anticipates and sublimates instances of harm and is therefore desirable.
- Declares that resilience is a desirable quality that strengthens a person's ability to absorb difficulty and endure hardship.
- Upholds the concept that we live in an interconnected world where actions do not occur in isolation.
- Maintains the position that the environment is of equal importance to the human world.

- Proclaims that all individuals (regardless of gender, age or ethnicity) deserve to be considered ‘full’ human beings with rights that apply to each equally.

Conclusions

This mixed methods content analysis finds that neither KSA-General nor KSA-TG recognize violence in any form and that KSA-*Sharia*’a only does so in five instances that relate to direct forms of violence. None of the appraised documents recognize structural or cultural forms of violence (including discrimination and justifications for unfairness such as prejudice and bigotry). The analysis of nonviolent conflict transformation tools in KSA-General, KSA-TG and KSA-*Shari*’a is limited in scope to include only collaboration, dialogue, and *Sulha* (reconciliation), and in each instance, the technique for transforming conflict nonviolently is left largely undefined.

This investigation of the elementary and preparatory curricular statements of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia considers that it is possible to assess *non-peace education* curricula for peace education qualities. It recognizes that the values held in peace education (like the values of democracy, human rights, or multiculturalism) are largely Western cultural constructs that are non-indigenous to the KSA. We reiterate that this study, as a whole, is seeking to measure the content of national curricular statements regarding three peace education elements. The goal of this work is to create social scientific meaning from previously unexplored data that will assist scholars to create an appreciation of how peace education values are utilized globally. As Freire (2001) told us, “no information is neutral,” and this applies to peace education values as much as any values. This study recognizes that in looking for peace education values in curricula, what we are measuring is not how comprehensively the cultural ideals of Western education are incorporated into international curricula (in this case, the KSA), but the prevalence of such data in cultural documents overtime. The aim of this study is not to point out simply ‘if’ or ‘where’ content is manifest but to notice the trend toward or away from this material in subsequent documents. This is an ambition that cannot be realized until a baseline of the study is established.

In such stated pursuit, this article is a singular contribution to the modest aim of locating signifiers in the surveyed text that indicate the presence of peace education values. From this (admittedly) limited social scientific standpoint, no assumptions can be made regarding sentiments in KSA communities that support or oppose such values. While documents are human creations, humans cannot and should not be assessed as such.

The curricula assessed in this article consider the mandatory education of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia as a cultural transmission belt that only minimally teaches peace. Opportunities exist to begin the process of both expanding upon the existing conceptualization of violence as physical harm, to include institutional and cultural forms of violence. There are limited tools or techniques employed in these documents that can work to transform conflict nonviolently and those that are present are neither fully defined nor characterized as nonviolent. Finally, despite some content that refers to health and responsibility (Wellbeing), and love (Peace Bond), there are opportunities to strengthen the other facets identified as contributors to positive peace in future iterations of the National Curriculum of the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia, with particular emphasis on Eco Mind, Link Mind, Social Justice, Resilience, and Prevention.

This research constitutes the first inquiry into the presence of peace education content in mandatory curricular statements from an Arab country in the Middle East. As such it presents a small and valuable aperture with which to appreciate the presence (or absence) of peace education values in curricular statements in the region. This study joins previous research in the commonwealth (New Zealand, Australia, England-Wales, Scotland) the Americas (Mexico), and three post-conflict nations (Northern Ireland, Sri Lanka, Israel) that supports mainstreaming peace education values in mandatory curricular statements.

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