Debate as an instructional approach to Peace Building

Paper drafted by Dr. Erasme Rwanamiza, Director General of Education Planning in the Ministry of Education, in reference to talking points he developed for and delivered at the ceremony of closing IRDP's 2013 National Creative Arts Competition in Schools that was ~~be~~ held in IRDP's premises at Gisozi on 15th September 2013, where he was representing the Hon. Minister of Education.
This event was also an occasion to celebrate the International Peace Day around the topic 'Education for Peace'. The Representative of the Swedish Cooperation was also present at the event where she delivered some remarks at the opening just before the Opening Remarks that were made by the Hon. Minister of Youth and ICT.

About Debate

Debate is an exchange of opinions challenging one another.

Debate develops into debaters and audience various capacities including Listening Skills, Critical Thinking and Language Mastery.

Debate always results into knowledge as well as truth construction and acquisition by debaters and audience.

Debate also develops into debaters and audience the spirit as well as culture of tolerance and democracy. Indeed, as once stated by MP Robert Aubin of the Canadian Parliament (Parliament of Canada House of Commons Publications: 2012, web page), "in a healthy democracy, **truth** [emphasis is mine] emerges from the clash of ideas[1]. That expression says it well. We should not be afraid of ideas clashing. We must certainly stop perceiving opinions that differ from ours as personal attacks. They are not personal attacks, just different ways of seeing an issue".

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[1] « *Du choc des idées jaillit la lumière* » (Nicolas Boileau, French philosopher of the 17th Century).

The path to Peace

The path to Peace is made by a three step sequence in which the achievement of one leads to the advent of the next.

The first step of the sequence is ***Knowledge and Truth*** while the following two steps of the sequence are:

- Justice, which should not be limited to legal justice's features of being procedural, contributive[2] and retributive, but should extend up to and embrace social justice[3]'s features of being substantive, restorative, commutative and distributive[4], and;
- Reconciliation, especially in societies that have experienced Conflicts.

As to Christians, they base on the teachings of Jesus Christ in the Bible and hold Love as the bedrock of Peace or, in other terms, the initial step they claim to be the starting point the above-mentioned three step sequence leading to Peace originates from Love. Far from being specific to Christians alone, this belief/conviction is even shared with some authors such as William P. Quigley who writes as follows: "[…] It is only in the hearts and dreams of people seeking a better world that true social justice has a chance. Finally, remember that we cannot give what we do not have. If we do not love ourselves, we will be hard pressed to love others […]. Love yourself and be just to yourself and do the same with others. As you become a social

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[2] Contributive justice is justice as regards people's obligations or what people are expected and able to contribute to society in terms of dues such as duties, taxes and charges (O'Boyle, E. J.: 2004 and 2005, web page). As regarding work considered as a social due, see particularly Sayer A. (2009, pages 1-14 accessible on the web).

[3] In its very first sentence, the Preamble of ILO Constitution also has it that "lasting peace can be established only if it is based upon social justice" (Wikisource: 2010, web page last modified on 21 August).

[4] Explanations about features justice is often characterised with can be found in summary form from Changing Minds (2002-2013, web page) while, in detailed form, they can be found in Maiese, M. (2003, web page). Regarding the difference between commutative and distributive justice, it can be found from 'L'Abécédaire … Justice distributive et commutative' in *Liberté – Responsabilité* as retrieved on 24th September 2013 from http://www.libres.org/abecedaire/Glossaire-1/J/JUSTICE-DISTRIBUTIVE-ET-COMMUTATIVE-176/. As for the difference between procedural and substantive justice, the following passage is proposed: "Do they [procedures] matter and, if so, why? Without further reflection, one might be attracted to the view that, while outcomes matter in a deep way, procedures do not. What real difference does a supposedly fair procedure make, we might ask, if it results in an unjust outcome? What solace can procedural justice be to someone who has suffered a substantive wrong? Posing the questions in this manner suggests an answer: only substantive outcomes really count and only substantive rules or their application can truly be said to be just or unjust. This answer deflates the claims of procedural fairness and cautions against 'the ugly spectre of procedural rights'. The implication of this conclusion is that the very notion of procedural justice as an independent criterion of fairness is empty" (Solum, L. B.: 2004, page 184).

justice advocate, you will experience joy, inspiration and love in abundant measure" (Quigley, W. P.: 2007, page 28).

Further, the take of Christians – and again there is no doubt this take is shared with so many other people too – is that the sequence should lead to Unity as the ultimate step following up next just from Peace subsequently to the removal of humanly erected or man-made divisive barriers (United Church of God: 1995-2013).

Education (which generates **Knowledge and Truth**), Justice and Peace are also recognised to be prominent among the foundational issues of both Rwanda's EDPRS I (2008-2012) and II (2013-2018)[5], which foundational issues are considered "as strategic areas that constitute the bedrock of Rwanda's sustainable development over the long term" (The Republic of Rwanda: 2013, page 95).

Regarding Justice, it is particularly worth noting the dichotomy between legal justice and social justice.

Robin West defines 'legal justice' as "the justice that courts and lawyers and judges are committed to pursue" (West, R.: 1998, page 148). West further makes the statement that legal justice tends to identify justice with laws and, thus, "will do little but blind us to state-sponsored injustice" basing on the premise that "a law, a legal system, a legal pronouncement, a statute or a constitution, might be terribly unjust" (Idem, ibidem).

On the unjustness of legal justice, John Hospers corroborates Robin West's above statement when he writes: "Sometimes a law itself is unjust […]. But more often it is the *administration* [sic] of the law that is unjust" (Hospers, J.: 1985, page 2).

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[5] "Foundational issues reflect long-term ongoing priorities where, in many cases, significant progress has already been made during EDPRS 1. Health and education, public finance management (PFM) and justice, peace and stability are prominent amongst the latter" (The Republic of Rwanda: Op. cit., page 95).

In the final analysis, William P. Quigley gives the following advice: "We must never confuse law and justice. What is legal is often not just. And what is just is often not at all legal" (Quigley, W. P.: Op. cit., page 9).

For a detailed distinction between legal and social justice, one might be interested by Sadurski, Wojciech:

- `Social Justice and Legal Justice'. *Law and Philosophy*, 1984; Vol. 3, No. 3, Pages. 329-354; and,
- *Giving Desert Its Due: Social Justice and Legal Theory*. Dordrecht, Holland: Kluwer Academic Publishers, 1985; Pages 48-56 (Retrieved on 23rd September 2013 from http://books.google.rw/books?id=qPbncXp_WpUC&pg=PA49&lpg=PA49&dq=Wojciech+Sadurski+social+justice+and+legal+justice&source=bl&ots=n-s7uPtdZI&sig=2Bi6Znx5YeY-1yi30t6EX3CNMPo&hl=fr&sa=X&ei=rRFAUoT-EMbNtAaBnYA4&ved=0CDsQ6AEwAg#v=onepage&q=Wojciech%20Sadurski%20social%20justice%20and%20legal%20justice&f=false).

Position of the Ministry of Education with regard to Debate

Given the manifold role debate plays in the education process in general (e.g. promotion of Listening Skills, Critical Thinking and Language Mastery) and especially in the process of Peace Building through the resulting construction and acquisition of knowledge and truth, the Ministry of Education cannot but commend IRDP's initiative of having put up the School of Debate Programme since 2006 and the subsequent activities including the organization of National Creative Arts Competitions in Schools whereby young people do participate into debating.

Debate's requirement for it to fulfil its educational mission

However, it should be noted that such educational debates are not easy to organise as they necessarily need **facilitators to help with what is called 'instructional scaffolding'**.

" 'Instructional scaffolding' is a learning process designed to promote a deeper level of learning. Scaffolding is the support given during the learning process which is tailored to the needs of the student with the intention of helping the student achieve his/her learning goals (Sawyer, R. Keith: *The Cambridge Handbook of the Learning Sciences*. New York: Cambridge University Press, 2006). […] It is best to think of the use of instructional scaffolding in an effective learning environment as one would think of the importance of scaffolding in the support of the construction of a new building. Instructional scaffolding is most effective when it contributes to the learning environment. In an effective learning environment, scaffolding is gradually added, then modified, and finally removed according to the needs of the learner. Eventually, instructional scaffolding will fade away. This learning process should never be in place permanently. Eventually, the goal should be for the student to no longer need the instructional scaffolding. […]". With younger children, "[…] a scaffold is a temporary framework that is put up for support and access to meaning and taken away as needed when the child secures control of success with a task […]" (Wikipedia: No Year, [web page](#)).

Instructional scaffolding is very much needed to guide the process of debating and lead it up to **the very important stage of deliberation to draw relevant conclusions** basing on substantiated accuracy of facts and logic of arguments. **The required instructional debate facilitators are therefore not just anybody**; they need to be unbiased and pedagogically well trained adults who understand that sustainable peace is paramount and deserves their contribution and support to learners to be devoid of any partisan leaning. It is such facilitators' support that is expected to be provided in what is termed above as 'instructional scaffolding' as far as educational debate is concerned.

Other instructional approaches to Peace Building worth emphasising

Other instructional approaches to Peace Building worth emphasising for they allow for *knowledge as well as truth construction and acquisition* include *the telling of stories pertaining to different life accounts, testimonies or experiences through various modes of expression (oral, written, drama)*.

In order to fulfil their educational mission, such stories told need to be *followed by analyses and discussions whereby learners exchange different opinions on those stories related.*

From the verbal exchange of storytelling and the ensuing analysis and discussion, some *knowledge and truth* also end up being constructed and acquired by the protagonists involved.

However, as for debate, storytelling and the ensuing analysis and discussion also need the assistance of a facilitator who should provide appropriate 'instructional scaffolding' so as to enable those approaches to fulfil their educational mission up to *the very important stage of wrapping up by drawing lessons learned / to take away*.

Expectation of the Ministry of Education

In conclusion, the Ministry of Education cannot but *challenge other Stakeholders who have got what it takes and are committed to Peace Building in Rwandan society through the process of education to do both or either of the following two things:*
- *Emulate IRDP by engaging young people into debate and the complementary yet not sufficiently explored and exploited approaches of storytelling and discussion, and/or;*
- *Organise teacher training services specifically aimed at shaping facilitators who are able to provide 'instructional scaffolding' appropriate to any of the above-mentioned learning approaches used.*

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[6] This reference is cited according to citation guidelines provided by the author at the end of the article.

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