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PEACE EDUCATION AT SCHOOL LEVEL- NEEDS AND MEANS

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Abstract:

Peace refers to freedom from war and civil disorder, resulting in tranquility of mind. And peace education is promotion of knowledge, attitude, skill and way of life to gain and keep up this mental quiet. Individuals in the present post-modern world are continually facing tension and trouble- economic, political, social and ethical. Clash of civilizations, ethnic- strife and socio-economic upheavals are out to push humanity on the verge of extinction. At this 'hard times', revival of a culture of peace is the need of the hour. Peace education at school level can go a long way in promoting order in the trouble-torn society of today. This paper is an endeavour to know the concept and nature of peace education, its importance and means of nurture.

KEYWORDS:

Peace education, education for democracy, human rights education, peace education programmes.

INTRODUCTION

There is no Way to Peace Peace is the only Way.
(Mahatma Gandhi)

“...Disputes may be inevitable, but violence is not. To prevent continued cycles of conflict, education must seek to promote peace and tolerance, not fuel hatred and suspicion.”

(The UNICEF 'Anti-War Agenda' set out in The State of the World's Children, 1996).

Mankind has been garrulous since the dawn of civilization. Human-history, for the most part, is crowded with accounts of battles and wars. Two massively destructive wars in the last century have left permanent scars on the face of humanity. It seems that little lessons have been learnt from those tragedies, as threats of war-mongers still are heard from different pockets of the globe. Now that we have entered the 21st century, the progress that has brought our world closer together, has not been successfully matched by a mutual respect and understanding of other cultures.

The instant and far-reaching results of war are particularly damaging to the lakhs of innocent masses, displacing them within their own state, depriving them of security and stability, and preventing them from achieving self-fulfillment and self-realization. Even they are forced to turn to violence in defense of their right to survive. These tragic circumstances have increased societal awareness of the need

to understand and to prevent the conditions leading to violence.

Wars and conflicts threaten peace and security of lives on this green planet. Their urgent nature calls for the need to reduce violence through education. Education covers economic, political, social, cultural, moral and ethical issues, and is vital in transforming people's attitudes towards promotion of peace.

The nature of 'peace'

The simplest and most popular notion of peace was that of absence of death and destruction as a result of war and direct violence (Thee, 1982). During the decade of 60s in the last century, however, an alternative view of peace emerged. It was held that the term 'peace' does not merely imply the absence of overt violence (sometimes referred to as 'negative peace'). It also encompasses the presence of social, economic and political justice which are essential to the notion of 'positive peace' (Hicks, 1985). Recently a holistic view of peace propagates that "peace is not simply a lack of war or non-violence; peace means the eradication of all facets of injustice" (Cheng and Kurtz, 1998).

PEACE EDUCATION DEFINED

Peace education is a broad field and can be difficult to define. Very simply, peace education is the process of acquiring the values, knowledge and developing the attitudes, skills, and behaviors to live in harmony with oneself, with others, and with the natural environment. It is "directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms". It promotes "understanding, tolerance and friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups" and furthers "the activities of the United Nations for the maintenance of peace." (Article 26, Universal Declaration of Human Rights).

Human Rights Education, Multicultural Education, Global Citizenship Education, and Conflict Resolution Education- all fall under the purview of peace education. Since the early decades of the last century, peace education programmes around the world, have represented a spectrum of focal themes, including anti-nuclearism, international understanding, environmental responsibility, communication skills, non-violence, conflict resolution techniques, democracy, human rights awareness, tolerance of diversity, coexistence and gender equality, among others. While academic discourse on the subject has increasingly recognized the need for a broader, more holistic approach to peace education, a review of field-based projects reveals that three variations of peace education are most common: conflict resolution training, democracy education, and human rights education.

Danesh (2006, 2007, 2008) holds that peace education must focus on the healthy development and maturation of human consciousness through assisting people to examine and transform their worldviews. Danesh argues that the majority of people and societies in the world hold conflict-based worldviews, which express themselves in conflicted intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, and international relationships. He subdivides conflict-based worldviews into two main categories which he correlates to phases of human development: the Survival-Based Worldview and the Identity-Based Worldview. It is through the acquisition of a more integrative, Unity-Based Worldview that human capacity to mitigate conflict, create unity in the context of diversity, and establish sustainable cultures of peace, is increased - be it in the home, at school, at work, or in the international community.

NEED OF PEACE EDUCATION

Through a humanizing process of teaching and learning, peace education facilitates human development. It strives to counteract the dehumanization of poverty, prejudice, discrimination, rape, violence, and war. Originally aimed at eliminating the possibility of global extinction through nuclear war, peace education currently addresses the broader objective of building a culture of peace. In today's global economy, peace education can promote social cohesion, respect for tradition of others and advancement towards a well knit society. It is also relevant to resist exploitation- economic, social and cultural. In the present era of increasing violence and unrest, peace education is going to make itself more and more an issue of global demand.

ROLE OF UNO IN PROMOTING PEACE EDUCATION

In 1945, the United Nations Organization was established to "save succeeding generations from

the scourge of war", "to reaffirm faith in the ...dignity and worth of the human person [and] in the equal rights of men and women", "to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained", and "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom..." (Preamble to the UN Charter).

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. Peace education is an integral part of the UNICEF vision of quality basic education. The 1990 World Declaration on Education for All clearly states that, basic learning needs comprise not only essential tools such as literacy and numeracy, but also the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values required to live and work in dignity and to participate in development. It further states that the satisfaction of those needs implies a responsibility to promote social justice, acceptance of differences, and peace (Inter-Agency Commission, WCEFA, 1990). The Future Global Agenda for Children - Imperatives for the Twenty-First Century' (UNICEF 1999, E/ICEF/1999/10) makes a commitment to "... ensure that education and learning processes help to form both human capital for economic growth and social capital for tolerance, respect for others and the right of each individual to participate with equality within family, community and economic life; ... and to challenge the culture of violence that threatens to destroy family and community life in so many countries."

Much of the work of UNESCO is centred on the promotion of education for peace, human rights, and democracy. The notion of a "culture of peace" was first elaborated for UNESCO at the International Congress on Peace in the Minds of Men, held at Yamoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire, in 1989. The Yamoussoukro Declaration called on UNESCO to 'construct a new vision of peace by developing a peace culture based on the universal values of respect for life, liberty, justice, solidarity, tolerance, human rights and equality between women and men'(UNESCO and a Culture of Peace, UNESCO Publishing, 1995).

In active-collaboration with the United Nations and its specialized agencies, different non-governmental organizations (NGOs) around the world, educational institutions, and citizen networks have advanced education for peace by linking ideals with extensive research and practice. The Hague Agenda for Peace and Justice for the 21st Century (UN Document: Ref A/54/98), is a significant example of such work. One of the first principles of this document is the necessity of instituting systematic education for peace. According to the Agenda, their Global Campaign for Peace Education aims to "support the United Nations Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World and to introduce peace and human rights education into all educational institutions, including medical and law schools.

CONTINUUM OF PEACE EDUCATION

- As conflict resolution training: Peace education programmes centered on conflict resolution typically focus on the social-behavioural symptoms of conflict, and training individuals to resolve inter-personal disputes through techniques of negotiation and mediation. Learning to manage anger, "fight fair" and improve communication through skills such as listening, turn-taking, identifying needs, and separating facts from emotions, constitute the main elements of these programs. Participants are also encouraged to take responsibility for their actions and to brainstorm together on compromises.

- As democracy education: Peace education programmes centered on democracy education highlights the political processes associated with conflict, and postulate that with an increase in democratic participation, the likelihood of societies resolving conflict through violence and war decreases.

- As human rights education: Peace education programmes centered on raising awareness of human rights focus at the level of policies that humanity ought to adopt in order to move closer to a peaceful global community. The aim is to engender a commitment among participants to a vision of structural peace in which all individual members of the human race can exercise their personal freedoms and be legally protected from violence, oppression and indignity.

PRINCIPLES OF PEACE EDUCATION

Creation of a learning environment where both teacher and students teach and learn from one another through equitable dialogue.

Combining academic study with practical application towards societal transformation.

Analyzing issues in a holistic way that accounts for the past, present, and future, and includes the personal, local and global levels.

Promoting values such as compassion, equality, interdependence, diversity, sustainability and nonviolence.

Means to promote peace education at schools

According to the Greenwood Dictionary of Education (2003), peace education has three stages: Identification of the problem of violence; instruction about alternatives to violence and a commitment to take action to address some of the problems identified at the first stage. Establishing a strategy to promote peace through education can be accomplished through the incorporation of the universal values of peace, non-violence, tolerance and respect for human rights into all education curricula and methods. Schools must work towards educating students in the benefits of literacy and numeracy, teaching skills and knowledge needed to fulfill self-development, in addition to teaching participation in society and how to collectively improve quality of life. Governments can take active participation in UNESCO's Associated Schools Project in primary, as well as secondary, levels of education.

In order to inject the ideal of peace into the future citizens of a nation, the following steps may be taken at school level education programme:

- Schools should be declared as 'zones of peace', where children are safe from violence.
- Teachers should uphold and respect children's humanity and basic rights.
- Schools should have an environment that models peaceful and respectful behaviour among all members of the learning community.
- Teachers should demonstrate the principles of equality and non-discrimination towards learners in policies and practices.
- They should draw on the knowledge of peace-building that exists in the community, including means of dealing with conflict that are effective, non-violent, and rooted in the local culture.
- Handle conflicts in ways that respect the rights and dignity of all involved.
- Integrate an understanding of peace, human rights, social justice and global issues throughout the curriculum whenever possible.
- Provide a forum for the explicit discussion of values of peace and social justice.
- Use teaching and learning methods that stress participation, problem-solving and respect for differences.
- Enable children to put peace-making into practice in the educational setting as well as in the wider community
- Generate opportunities for continuous self-reflection and professional development in relation to issues of peace, justice and rights.
- Offering more practice on students' communicative skills.
- Allotting students peer and group activities and using discussion, problem-solving and dialogical methods while teaching.
- Arranging simulation games, documentary films etc. for students on the theme of war and violence to make them conscious about the horror of human greed and intolerance.
- Reading and writing peace-quotation at prayer-time and on the classroom walls.
- Analysis of peace-based poems, stories and songs in the classroom.
- Excursion to historical places and use of globe and maps of countries to make students' mental set-up ready to accept global issues.

CONCLUSION

Promotion of peace is a long and consistent process. It is not possible to make our learners peace-loving overnight. Through the generations to come that will benefit from the fruits of our efforts towards creating a world of peace, it can still be a rewarding effort to our being. "A culture of peace will be achieved when citizens of the world understand global problems, have the skills to resolve conflicts and struggle for justice non-violently, live by international standards of human rights and equity, appreciate cultural diversity, and respect the Earth and each other. Such learning can only be achieved with systematic education for peace." (Hague Appeal for Peace Global Campaign for Peace Education).

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