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PEACE EDUCATION AND THE ROLE OF SCHOOL – AN APPRAISAL



Abhijit Ghosh

INTRODUCTION :

Peace education is one of the latest trends in the field of education. The unprecedented violence and destruction unleashed during the two world wars (1914-18 and 1939-45) led people realize the need of peace and peace education. The United Nations in its various declarations have stressed the importance of peace education. Delor's report on education as learning to live together and learning to be certainly point to the peace education. The world at present is experiencing an alarming level of violence, mutual hatred, prejudice, conflict, doubt, misunderstanding, non-co-operation, impatience, massacre etc. Poverty, ignorance, inequality, and torture are increasing day by day. As a result people in their personal life, social life, and national life are victimized with various tension and misunderstanding. The

Abstract

The world at present is governed by a culture of violence and aggression. Human existence seems to be at stake. Peace education is the crying need of the hour. It seeks to infuse in the learners the perspectives, values, skills and attitudes required to replace the culture of violence with the culture of peace. It is a conscious effort to orient the students in peaceful ways and behaviors through the inculcation of values of co-operation, togetherness, mutual understanding, non-violence, respecting individual difference. Peace education is closely associated with the concepts of human right, gender equality, social justice, human values, disarmament etc. School plays a vital role in imparting peace education. Hence, the school should be developed as place of peace. The initiative should be incorporated in the environment, curriculum, and pedagogical approach. The approach should be holistic, cooperative, experiential and humanist. The peace educators as the agents of peace should ideally practice the values and principles they wish to preach. A whole school approach is what required for successful implementation of peace education. In this backdrop the present paper seeks to discuss the concept of peace education, its relevance and role of the school in this regard. It also highlights the strategies, approaches required and attributes of a peace educator.

Keywords : Peace Education, Peaceable Classroom, Human Rights Education, Strategies and Approaches, Whole School Approach, Conflict Resolution.

Short Profile

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threat of the nuclear weapons and various other fatal weapons has certainly made the situation worse. The only solution seems to be peace education. The most significant way of promoting a culture of peace is through peace education which needs to be accepted in all parts of the world, in all societies and countries as an essential element in creating a culture of peace. To meet effectively the challenges posed by the present complexity of our time, the young of today deserves a radically different education—"one that does not glorify war but educates for peace, nonviolence and international cooperation". They need the skills and knowledge to create and nurture peace for their individual selves as well as for the world they belong to. UNESCO has declared the 2000-2010 as International Decade

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for Promotion of Culture of Peace and Non-violence. At the same time in India the NCF 2005 and National Teacher Education Curriculum 2009 have assigned worthwhile importance to the peace education.

MEANING AND CONCEPT OF PEACE EDUCATION

The UNESCO preamble says “Since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed”. And peace education tries to build this mental set up. To reach peace we have to teach peace. It should start as a conscious effort and become global movement. Peace education is essentially transformative in nature. It cultivates the knowledge base, skills, attitudes and values that seek to transform people’s mindset, attitudes and behaviors that exacerbate violence and destruction. Peace education is the amalgamation of the concepts of education about peace and education for peace. Conceptually peace education refers to a process that helps an individual to learn the knowledge, attitude values, skills and behavior needed to harmonize his existence with his psychological, social, and natural environment. The concept of peace education has been explained variously. The following are some of the definitions of the peace education.

R.D Laing (1978) defines peace education as “an attempt to respond to problem to conflict and violence on scale ranging from the global and national to the local and personal. It is about exploring ways of creating more just and sustainable future.”

Frank Schmidt and Alice Friedman (1988) state that “Peace education is skill building. It empowers children to find creative and non - destructive way to settle conflict and to live in harmony with themselves, others and their world...Peace building is the task of every human being and the challenge of the human.”

Peace education as defined by UNICEF is “ the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavioral change that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully and to create conditions conducive to peace whether at an inter personal intergroup, national or international level”

So, peace education is both a philosophy and process which includes some skills, views and thought. It inculcates the knowledge, skills, concept

and mentality to create an environment of peace and sustainable development. Peace education is an integrated and comprehensive educational policy which teaches an individual non-violence, love, sympathy, human rights, democracy, cultural difference and various other types of values. It indirectly prevents an environment of violence and inspires healthy development. The concept is first inculcated in the family and then nurtured in the school. In the class room the aim of the peace education is to create such an environment that makes the students tolerant and respectful to others’ opinion, language, culture, religious belief rights and security. It aims to effect an all round development of the student. It creates in the student the highest level of social and human values. So, we may say that peace education develops those qualities and skills which inspire him to live peacefully and create an environment of peace and thereby catalyze the advancement of entire human civilization.

SCOPE OF PEACE EDUCATION

UNICEF looks upon peace education as “an essential component of quality basic education” which aims “to cultivate knowledge, skills and attitude needed to achieve and sustain a global culture of peace.” So peace education does not only signify an absence of conventional violence but includes in its fold education for social justice, human rights, human welfare, human values, gender equality etc.

1. Education for Social Justice: Justice forms the base of establishment of peace in the world. So one of the important aspects of peace education is to establish social justice and remove inequality and difference- the difference between the rich and the poor, man and woman, educated and uneducated etc. It also aims to free the society from the curse of exploitation, humiliation, deprivation indifference and problems like poverty, illiteracy, mal-nutrition creating an ideal society based on non-violence and justice.

2. Education for Realization of Human Right: Every human being has some rights, both as an individual and a citizen. But majority of people particularly in the poor and under-developed countries are either not aware of the rights or their rights are violated.

Peace is fundamental pre-condition for the realization of rights, while at the same time peace can never be established if rights of individual are not respected and protected. Rights education includes learning about the provisions of international documents on peace. Children are made to realize the effect of violations of right and develop empathy and solidarity with those whose rights have been denied.

3. Gender Education: Gender is an important consideration in the context of peace education. Gender discrimination and conflict is a leading cause of violence all over the world. Women's empowerment and equality in all spheres is absolutely necessary in order to achieve a sustainable peace. In fact attainment of peace on the local, national, regional and global level is possible through advancement of women who are a fundamental force for leadership, conflict resolution and promotion of lasting peace at all levels. It is through peace education that society must be made to realize the potential of women as peace-builders, violence against women can be stopped and societal consciousness of gender inequalities and discrimination against women in all spheres can be raised.

4. Education for Human Values: An erosion of moral and social values is serious problem that the present social system faces. To be a successful social being, one must possess the values of equality, justice, fraternity, co-operation, empathy. The development of democratic values is also very important. It is through the inculcation of these values among the masses that establishment of peace is possible. It is one of the objectives of peace education.

5. Democracy Education: Democracy education forms an important aspect of peace education. An ideal democratic set up helps to propagate the message of peace and harmony. Peace education focuses on democratic ideology, values rules of law freedom of speech, secularism equality etc. All these qualities are manifested in a society where peace is established.

6. Disarmament Education: Disarmament education is an important field of peace education. Its primary focus is the achievement of disarmament to develop a culture of peace and establish the foundations for comprehensive human security. In the context of disarmament education the word disarmament means any action aimed at limiting, controlling or

reducing arms. The process may also refer to complete transformation of current system of armed nations or states into a new world order of planned unarmed peace in which war is no longer an instrument of national policy.

7. Environmental Education: Environmental education is a part of peace education since peace education recognizes that peace cannot exist without environmental sustainability and respect for the earth. It is based on ecological thinking and respect for all life on the planet. Peace education supports a holistic appreciation for the value of life and interdependence of all living systems.

8. Life Skills Education: Life skills education is also included in the fold of peace education. It enables children and young people to translate knowledge, attitudes and values into action helping them to encounter the various challenges of modern complex life and enhancing their social and psychological competence. Life skills include cooperation, negotiation, communication, decision-making, problem-solving, self awareness and critical and creative thinking. The emphasis of life skills education on developing attitudes and values and translating those changes into observable behaviors is an important perspective to incorporate into peace education programs.

9. Education for Global Citizenship and Multiculturalism: Globalization and multiculturalism are recent trends. With the advancement of science and technology the world has come to be a global village. Naturally diverse cultures are coming into contact with one another. This diversity at one hand offers great learning opportunity and on the other can lead to conflict in the absence of tolerance and understanding. Narrow nationalistic education is absolutely detrimental to peace. Rather education should teach the students conservation of environment and social justice, non-violent conflict resolution and critical awareness, cultural understanding, tolerance, solidarity, and respect. Global citizenship and multiculturalism seeks to address these issues and thereby complement the concept of peace education.

Classroom or School: A Place of Peace

It is a common phenomenon that the academic progress of the students is hampered greatly by social distractions. Unless the

environment of the classroom is conducive for learning, academic transaction cannot be successful leading to the complete development of the students. The Carnegie Council on Adolescent Development holds that mutually respectful relations are imperative for intellectual development and growth (1989, cited in Goodnow, 1992). Goodnow echoes the same concern saying that belonging and acceptance are potentially important factors in learning. Again, Lantieri and Patti (1966) opine how distress and anxiety affect the ability of memory to work. Schwitzer, et al. (1999) write that one of the vital tasks related to a successful academic experience is being able to establish successful interpersonal relationships in the campus. So, we may conclude that to make the process of learning successful a peaceable learning environment is absolutely indispensable.

William Kreidler first coined the concept of a peaceable classroom. He noticed that classroom conflict is caused by various factors i.e. miscommunication, exclusion, the lack of mutual care and respect for each other (Lantieri and Patti, 1996). A peaceable classroom is one that eliminates everything that spoils a successful classroom transaction. A peaceable classroom is characterized by affirmation, cooperation, communication, appreciation for diversity, appropriate expression of feelings and peaceful conflict resolution. By creating a peaceable classroom we can encourage the students to respect and appreciate one another irrespective of difference. The following are the ways to develop a peaceable classroom.

Developing the Teachers as Peace Educators

The teacher should himself take a conscious initiative to make the classroom peaceable. His appearance, manners and dealings should be such as to create and spread peaceful and optimistic vibes. He should evidently attempt to become a peaceful teacher trying to avoid being angry or irritated and maintain his calm composure. As teacher, he should never use harsh and insulting words but always speak nice and gentle words. He should greet the students with smile and hold a brief discussion on peace issues of the day. He must use every opportunity to say something positive to the students and recognize with interest everything they say.

Developing an Atmosphere of Cooperation more than Competition

Competition' seems to be the catchword of modern civilization. The trend starts right from the school. This is vitiating the peaceful atmosphere of the school as well as the society. Ugly competitions breed divisions that may set conflicts in motion. Cooperative activities on the other hand promote positive interdependence where students learn the skills of communication and collaboration to reach a desired goal.

Encouraging Respect for and Acceptance of Differences

Student-diversity is a common and inevitable phenomenon of the classroom. And much of the class conflict and disturbance result from this. Students feel segregated and humiliated. Peaceable classroom on the other hand helps the students to inculcate a sense of belongingness and acceptance. The senior students should be made to understand that marginalization and ridiculing on the basis of appearance, complexion, weight, even mental ability, sexual orientation and monetary consideration should not be made. These differences do not give anyone the right to tease or hurt others. Individual differences should not be exploited to harm others but should be respected.

Developing Communication Skills

Much of the classroom confusion and conflict breed from miscommunication, misinterpretation, and misunderstanding. Students fail to communicate what they really want to convey. To avoid this, students should be taught how to clarify and paraphrase. They should be attentive to what others speak and then clarify if there is any confusion. One should think before speaking to avoid negative words. Students should be trained to use positive statements instead of negative statement.

Developing Codes of Conduct

Students' discipline is very important to maintain peaceable atmosphere in the class room. The class should be declared a zone of peace with a well defined code of conduct. It helps to improve the discipline in the class and ensure a culture favorable to the children's moral growth. The code must be

prepared with the help and participation of the students. The code of conduct should be displayed in the classroom. The conduct of the students should be reviewed once a week.

Developing Policy for School Discipline

Every school should prepare a policy of their own that reflects the standard conduct for the students in the school. The ideal standards recommended in the document helps to negotiate various conflicting situation in the school. The preparation of such a treatise goes through extensive research conducted by a team of teachers, appointed by the principal. This policy guides the students, teachers, and parents alike on how to act in different situations arising in the school. This policy then becomes the charter as per which the school runs. The guide should be positive and user-friendly, at the same time, should have visionary zeal.

Practice for Developing Self-Esteem

It is very important that the students develop a sense of self-esteem for creating a peaceful atmosphere in the classroom. Damaged self esteem often turns the student's loafers and absentees from the school. So the school must organize conscious programs to inculcate self-esteem among the students. The potential and talent of the students in different fields has to be identified and rewarded. This would create in them a sense of confidence and belongingness.

Giving Moral Instruction of the Day

Moral development and peace-building go hand in hand. So to make the school a place of peace students must be given moral lessons. It can be done in the morning assembly through a short speech, reading from literature, quoting from great peace-makers on specific aspects of character building. Again a motto for the day can be displayed on the wall for the students to understand and follow. This little moral or spiritual thought everyday would certainly inspire the students.

School / Classroom Wallpaper

Wallpaper is of utmost importance in a school for creating an atmosphere of peace. It can act as a useful means of communication. Through it many important news and information may be served to the

students. It also gives them a chance to display their creative talent by contributing article, short stories, essays etc to it. It can be brought out on various themes subjects and occasions.

Displaying Peace Mottos

To train the students to peaceful ways and inculcate in them a respect and understanding of peace it is of great importance that the school develops a peace motto. But mere having a peace motto is not enough; children should be very much acclimatized to it. Hence, the mottos should be displayed in the classroom, school buildings, corridors, laboratories and garden. With these peace mottos in front of their eyes the students would develop an understanding and realize their importance and remember them throughout their lives.

Observing Peace Day/Week

Another important way to generate awareness of peace among the students is to celebrate peace days and peace weeks. Important occasions of current significance such as social justice, non-violence, and human rights have to be selected and commensurate program for the day or the week has to be chalked out. Discussion, debates, seminars, conference, lectures and exhibitions can be organized on the selected theme. This should certainly incorporate community participation. These activities inspire the students to realize the significance of various avenues of peace.

Appointing Class Mediators

A peace maker may be appointed from among the students to resolve class conflicts. He will mediate to negotiate peace in the class when necessary. This not only creates the awareness that the students have to solve their own conflicts but trains them to develop the skills required for conflict resolution. The peace maker should be selected through common consensus of the whole class and replaced regularly to give more students the opportunity of practicing conflict resolution. The peace maker should be open, approachable and accessible so that the students can share their problems with them. So they can act as peer counselors as well.

Appointing Peace Committee

To maintain peaceable atmosphere in the school a committee from among the students may be formed. It will comprise of the peace makers and some of the responsible senior students. The entire responsibility of peace work in the school should be upon them. They will plan, organize and run peace programs and activities in the school. This will not only improve the atmosphere of peace in the school but also train them to spread peace in community and society.

School Link Program

School not only imparts knowledge but also offers socializing experience. Hence school linking programs i.e. educational, cultural, and environmental and community development activities should be organized at various levels to develop cooperation and coordination among the students and inculcate friendship and togetherness. Organization of these activities may be at school level, class level, or interest group level.

Peace Education and Teaching-learning Strategies and Approaches

In the discussion above we have clearly understood what peace education is, its nature and relevance. At the same time it is equally important to learn the appropriate teaching learning strategies and approaches to impart peace education among the students making them competent for peaceful existence.

Approaches to Peace Education

The strategies and approaches required for peace education should be holistic, participatory, cooperative, experiential and humanist.

- Holistic Approach promotes cognitive, affective, and behavioral goals of learning. The focus of learning is the transmission of concepts.
- Participatory Approach inspires in the learners a spirit of inquiry, sharing and collaboration. Through conversation with the teachers and fellow students the learners learn the practice of articulating and listening to diverse points of view which broaden their perspectives. Participatory education also suggests a departure from the traditional indoctrination style.

- Cooperative Approach allows the students to work together and learn. It not only inspires motivation to learn and bonding among the students but challenges the feelings of isolation and individualism. In a cooperative classroom the students learn to rely on each other, and the success of learning activities depends upon the contributions of each one (Harris and Morrison).

- The Experiential Approach allows the students to learn through their own experience from different classroom activities. Didactic means such as lectures are kept minimum. This method inspires the skill of developing new paradigms, new ways of thinking and new processes to challenge the existing system.

- Humanistic Approach stresses the social, personal and affective development of the learners. The individual differences are accepted and respected. Hence it helps to build a sense of self-esteem. Learners inculcate the values of love and compassion and fellow feeling which facilitate a peaceful environment.

STRATEGIES FOR PEACE EDUCATION

Imparting peace education requires some well thought of and effective strategies. They should be carefully devised and planned. While chalking them out, the approaches discussed above must be considered. The following strategies can be used to impart peace education.

1. Group discussion
2. Pair share
3. Imagination drilling
4. Perspective taking
5. Role playing
6. Simulation Games
7. Problem solving
8. Reading or writing quotations
9. Use of films and photographs
10. Storytelling
11. Sentence completion
12. Journal Writing
13. Interview and research
14. Expert Resources
15. Exposure Trips
16. Promoting dialogues
17. Use if globe and maps
18. Brain storming
19. Collage making

20. Reciprocal teaching

These approaches and strategies are important tools toward the development of the students' intellect, attitudes and spirit that they may be inspired to work for peace. (Loreto Navarro- Castro and Jasmin Nario-Galace)

Qualities of a Peace Teacher

Teachers play a very important role in effecting significant changes in the lives of the children and youth. Students are more influenced by the attitudes, values and actions of the teachers within and outside the classroom than the curriculum and text books. Hence, the phrase "the medium is the message" gains significance. This is all the more true for peace education. Children learn peaceful behavior more from the way a teacher communicates, reacts to challenges and his perspective of an issue than what he formally teaches.

Peace educators try to inculcate skills and attitudes, qualities and attributes in the young minds in the peaceable classroom. Hence they themselves should ideally practice them to become trustworthy to the children. A saying goes, "What I teach is what I know and what I educate is what I am." So, before effecting a positive change in the learners the teachers themselves have to undergo personal transformation doing away with prejudices and biases. In this regard Lantieri and Patti (1996) states that as teachers we have to transform ourselves before we can expect to see changes in the learners. Teachers must be oriented to be credible agents of the peace message and models of peaceful behaviors. Mahatma Gandhi has rightly stated, 'Be the change that you wish to see in the world'

So the teachers must develop in themselves special qualities, skills and attitudes as peace educators. To successfully and effectively impart peace education the teachers should have the following attributes as discussed by Navarro-Castro and Nario-Galace. (2008):

- The teacher of peace should be a responsible global citizen. He should be optimistic of bringing an affirmative change in the outlook of the students regarding peace. He should believe in the potential of education to bring in constructive changes. .
- The teacher must have high motivation towards

service and involvement in the community he teaches. He should also be responsible and committed to society.

- The teacher should be constant learner, seeking knowledge and understanding throughout life to improve his learning abilities.
- The teacher should be "both a transmitter and transformer of cultures." Besides transmitting his own culture, he has to be critical and reflective to be an agent of change and understanding of other cultures.
- The teacher should be aware against gender biases and prejudices in self and the students. She must give equal treatment to the students of both sexes to generate gender sensitivity and gender responsibility toward others. This helps the students to form a positive identification of themselves.
- The teacher of peace should have the skills of communication and conflict resolution. These are essential skills for building community and peace-making.
- The teacher should encourage cooperative learning tasks and discourage negative competition among the students to facilitate cooperative learning.
- The teacher of peace should have the skill of constructive criticism. But he should not harm, wound, and injure others' feelings and emotions.
- The teacher of peace should develop mutually enhancing relationship to nurture peace and a sense of community.
- The teacher of peace has to intentionally develop the capacity to care by knowing the learners in their charge as individuals. Thus he can respond to the differences in students' learning styles and personality. Caring and supportive behavior from teachers lets the students know they are valued.
- The teacher should have the skill of reflective learning to apply what he learns from teaching to enrich his own understanding of the students and the learning processes.
- The teacher of peace should inspire understanding of alternative possibilities for the future and for a culture of peace. He helps students to plan and act to achieve such a culture.
- The teacher of peace should present questions addressing various issues to elicit responses from the students. He should be able to create an atmosphere inspiring students to inquire.

- The teacher of peace should be compassionate, kind, concerned and passionate for peace.
- The teacher should be more of facilitator rather than claiming authority.
- The teacher should be comfortable enough to discuss personal stories in the class to connect to learning.
- The teacher should be joyful, optimistic and of course possess sense of humor.
- The teacher should help students to become good human beings, motivated to fulfill their true potential not only for their own benefit but also for the betterment of the society as a whole.

The Comprehensive Approach

For the inculcation of values and perspective of peace among the students a comprehensive approach is required. The approach not only takes into account all the learning areas, all the members of the school community and the wider community but also other aspects of school life like pedagogical, social, administrative etc. A school is a place where various activities on different levels go on simultaneously culminating into the all round development of the learners. Peace initiatives at various levels converge together and successfully train the students in peaceful ways. The whole school approach will facilitate and reinforce the learning of the skills, attitudes, and attributes of a peaceful person. The existing social, political and economic background prevailing in the school may hinder the implementation of the comprehensive peace approach but the school should be ready to face such challenges and initiate a transformation.

CONCLUSION

The era we live in is of confusion and mistrust, violence and aggression, injustice and oppression, war and terrorism. Given this threatening condition, peace education becomes an indispensable component of quality basic education which promotes peace and justice. And the initiative must begin from the school itself which plays a very significant role in the inculcation of the values, skills, attitudes that will enable the young people to prevent violence, resolve conflict peacefully. Mahatma Gandhi once stated, "If we are to reach real peace in this world we shall have to begin with the children." Young minds through holistic approach undertaken by

the school involving the curriculum, pedagogy, environment building certainly helps the students to realize the importance of peace and undergo a sort of orientation to become agents of peace who would work towards the establishment of a peaceful society. It is by educating the future generation into the competencies, perspectives, attitudes and behavioral pattern we can establish ever-lasting peace.

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