

APPROACH AND DEVELOPMENT OF PEACE EDUCATION IN SCHOOL: A KEY TO GLOBAL PEACE



Saheb Ali

principal, K C T College of Education, Gulbarga, Karnataka.

Short Profile

Saheb Ali

principal, K C T College of Education, Gulbarga- 106, Karnataka.



ABSTRACT :

“Those who want war prepare young people for war; but those, who want peace, have neglected young. Children and adolescents so that they are un- able to organize them for peace.”-

Maria Montessori.

Her vision of education provides a meaningful sound basis for peace education. She looked at education as a tool for building World Peace. To her peace is the guiding principle of man and nature.

On seeing this guide a teacher might wonder 'Is it really necessary to teach peace as such? Whole education is for peace. Isn't it already in the curriculum?' Teacher may be right in a sense. But the questions remain: Are we giving adequate attention today to teach peace? Are our schools really interested in producing a peaceful young generation? Is it enough having mere peace concepts in the curriculum?

Violence is emerging in an unprecedented manner in human society. Looking at the world today any sensible person feels disheartened and even horrified to see the kind of violent acts being committed by man against man and nature. It is sad to realize that we live in an era of unprecedented violence in the forms of terrorism, war, crimes, injustice and oppression and exploitation amidst a seemingly outward development enjoyed by a few. The majority of mankind lives in stark poverty, struggling for bare survival. There is so much disorder and confusion in the society man has built for himself. The saddest part of the story is that this state of disorder and confusion in the society is affecting the children's innocent minds. Children naturally absorb the spirit of violence in the atmosphere and will soon grow to be the next generation of perpetrators of violence. Therefore the

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need to nurture peace in the hearts of children has arisen as urgent issues to be addressed.

KEY WORDS: Approach, Development, Peace Education, School and Global Peace.

INTRODUCTION :

Fortunately, a few countries may still remain unaffected by such forces extending over the surface of the earth. But the questions remain: How long can they remain so? No country can remain aloof under the pressures of globalization. Under the present secular forces education is narrowing down into the teaching of certain subject matters necessary only for passing examinations. Whole education seems to have much lost. The joy of learning is taken away from children. They are trained to cope with the rat race of the corrupt society. Today school is no more a place of leisure or of peace as the very word 'school' means. (The word school derives from Greek 'skhole' meaning leisure)

Today teachers complain about increasing disciplinary problems in schools. One teacher says, "I am appalled to see the mindless behavior of the adolescents in school. Their mentality seems so different from us!" The public criticizes the youth whom we produce at schools as insensitive to the problems of society, selfish, narrow minded, lacking in intellectual depth and susceptible to the violent and corrupt social pressures. The excellence of a few students cannot make up for the rest. R.D. Laing (1978) puts it this way: A child born today in the U.K. stands a ten times greater chance of being admitted to a mental hospital than a university.... We are driving mad our children more effectively than we are genuinely educating them. '

Under the present predicament there is a growing realization in the world of education today that children should be educated in the art of peaceful living. As a result, more and more peace concepts, attitudes, values and behavioral skills are being integrated into school curricula in many countries. There is also renewed interest to develop peace-related disciplines such as values education, moral education, global education, etc. In the past we seemed to have assumed that the more knowledge people have, the better they are. Accordingly, we stressed cognitive learning in schools at the cost of developing children's emotional, social, moral and humanistic aspects. The consequence of such imbalanced learning is evident today in the forms of youth unrest with their antisocial attitudes and behavioral problems.

Educational Approach:

Teachers' guide introduces an educational approach, by the name of Peace Education, which can undo certain basic negative effects discussed above. It attempts to do so by way of bringing in core human values essential for peaceful and health living. It provides a wide range of interesting active methods of teaching and learning to deliver the curriculum effectively alongside with a focus on core human values. This approach has been tried out by educationists and teachers in different countries and found effective. For instance, a student in such a school in Sri Lanka writes: 'This programme strongly influenced my mind. I was enlightened on how to lead a contented life, to live a conflict-free life in school, to build up mutual co-operation and make our future happy and successful and most of all, to live as a peaceful citizen ' (National Institute of Education (2000) Bulletin on Education for Conflict Resolution Programme)

A teacher who had received short course training on peace education said at the end, 'I have never received such a wonderful experience and knowledge in my teaching career I have become a

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changed person with good attitudes. This is indeed a useful programme which could bring about peace and harmony to our country. ' (Ibid)

Robin Montz, another teacher, who tried out such an approach in America Writes: 'School started, and I began to weave into our curriculum some of the effective exercises I had experienced or read about. And I saw some "miraculous" things begin to take place. I saw students form meaningful relationships in the classroom. I saw students who had been bored and in trouble much of the time begins to learn. I saw myself and my own role as teacher begin to change and to take on new meanings. And I saw genuine relation- ships begin to develop between myself and my students, not so much as teacher and pupil, but as people, human beings meeting each other and leaning from each other '. (George Isaac Brown (1972) Human Teaching and Human Learning, The Gestalt Journal, Highland NY, page168)

Development of Peace Education:

In tracing the recent development of peace education, we begin to see that in the past it had been an integral part of education at all times and in all cultures, every culture regards peace as a noble ideal to attain. However with the advent of Western secularism at the beginning of the 20th century through the guise of a positivist scientific outlook to education, moral and human values including peace were slowly discouraged away from school curricula. Under the ideal of value-free positivist and reductionist knowledge the whole education was viewed narrowly as teaching facts of various subjects.

However, in spite of such materialistic views, the thinking of such humanists like Rousseau, Henry Thoreau, Tolstoy and Maria Montessori kept the sense of education alive. With the witness of the horrors of the First and Second World Wars there was-a reawakening to the need of developing the humanistic side of education at least among a few educationists. In this context Maria Montessori's loud and tireless reiteration on the need for educating for peace should be mentioned here with respect and appreciation.

Her vision of education provides a meaningful sound basis for peace education. She looked at education as a tool for building World Peace. To her peace is the guiding principle of man and nature. Any attempt to deviate from the principle will only bring about destruction. However it has never been investigated seriously so far. Peace should be studied as a science identifying its direct and indirect complex factors. She also observed that man had neglected to realize his inner sources of energies. Mastery over the external world alone is inadequate in bringing about a peaceful world. Peace is not only cessation of war. There are many positive qualities in peace. She said that violence destroys the moral perception inherited in man. She described her time as an era of insidious madness, which demanded man to return to reason immediately. Like Rousseau, she believed that man is intrinsically pure by nature. The child's natural innocence has to be preserved from being sidetracked or spoilt by society. To her the child is the promise of mankind. The child has real vision, a bright little flame of enlightenment that brings us a gift. Constructive education for peace must aim to reform humanity so as to permit the inner development of human personality and develop a more conscious vision of the mission of mankind and the present conditions of social life. What we need today is an education that is capable of saving mankind from the present predicament. Such an education involves the spiritual development of man and the enhancement of his value as an individual and prepares the young people to understand the time in which they live. At school we must construct an environment in which children can be actively engaged in learning.

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Definition of Peace Education:

Peace education is more effective and meaningful when it is adopted according to the social and cultural context and the needs of a country. It should be enriched by its cultural and spiritual values together with the universal human values. It should also be globally relevant. Peace education could be defined in many ways. There is no universally accepted definition as such. Here are some good definitions from peace literature.

A Peace education is an attempt to respond to problems of conflict and violence on scales ranging from the global and national to the local and personal. It is about exploring ways of creating more just and sustainable futures - R. D. Laing (1978)

Peace education is holistic. It embraces the physical, emotional, intellectual, and social growth of children within a framework deeply rooted in traditional human values. It is based on philosophy that teaches love, compassion, trust, fairness, co-operation and reverence for the human family and all life on our beautiful planet - Fran Schmidt and Alice Friedman (1988)

Peace education is skill building. It empowers children to joined creative and nondestructive ways 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 family -Fran Schmidt and Alice Friedman (1988)

The basic concepts embedded in the above definitions are that peace education is a remedial measure to protect children from falling into the ways of violence in society. It aims at the total development of the child. It tries to inculcate higher human and social values in the mind of the child. In essence it attempts to develop a set of behavioral skills necessary for peaceful living and peace-building from which the whole of humanity will benefit.

In fact, two out of the four pillars of education suggested by the Dolor report, namely learning to live together and learning to be, are related to peaceful living. Naming such efforts as peace education is not always necessary. What matters is integrating peaceful attitudes, values, and skills into the teaching and learning process in school and makes it a part of the total curriculum. Certain countries and institutes have it in the form of subjects such as Values Education, (Malaysia and Philippines), Citizenship Education (U.S.A.). Education for Mutual Understanding (Ireland) and Developmental Education (UNICEF). Apart from such subject names it can be integrated into the formal curriculum and co-curriculum of schools. Through applying peace education and creating a peace culture, it has been observed that schools can have the following benefits (as reported by teachers and principals who have used the peace approach in their schools in Sri Lanka. Source: Education for Conflict Resolution Project. National Institute of Education. Sri Lanka)

Schools can:

Develop a more humanistic management approach.

1. Improve human relations between, teacher-student, teacher-teacher, student-student, etc.
2. Help develop good attitudes in students and teachers as well, e.g. co-operation, mutual respect.
3. Help healthy emotional development in students.
4. Facilitate socialization through participation in interactive and co- operative learning activities
5. Improve students' discipline and moral behavior.
6. Develop creativity both in students and teachers.
7. Improve standard of quality of teaching and learning.

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It is interesting to mention here an evaluation done on affective learning techniques by Robin Motz the teacher mentioned above as reported in the same book (p. 168)

- a. Better learning of cognitive material.
- b. Heightened motivation and response to learning situations.
- c. Greater appreciation of self, nature, others, feelings, etc.
- d. Greater pupil responsibility

A greatly reduced or diminished desire for drug use by some students and for "mind blowing" by others: (to quote his words: A significant number of students in the class had been experimenting with drugs or other methods of escaping from their problems. Many used drugs in the attempt to find a more meaningful reality to which they could relate. The use of affective techniques in connection with conventional curriculum showed them another and a better way to achieve normalcy with the same result. Many of them discontinued the use of drugs. Other students, ready to drop out of society, were able to find knowledge and experience that was relevant to them. In general the use of affective techniques has resulted in behavioral change on the part of students that has made them better students, better able to relate to other human beings and has shown other teachers that motivation, interest, awareness, learning and so on, can be increased to students are 'tuned in,

CONCLUSION:

This paper describes the conditions that make peace education obligatory in our schools. Though it seems to be a recent development, it has been evolving even before the 20th century. No education system is complete without some form of component similar to peace education. It may take such forms as moral, value or citizenship, democratic or global education. The differentiating feature of peace education is the focus it has on the problem of human violence. In short, peace education can be defined as an educational response to the problem of human violence. It has the following basic features: It aims at protecting children's minds from being imbued by violence in the society. It prepares them for building a peaceful world by empowering them with necessary knowledge, attitudes, and skills. It humanizes the child, teaching and learning, and school.

Schools can directly benefit by adopting peace education. There is ample evidence to show that it improves the quality of teaching and learning, discipline, and helps emotional development in children.

1. Identify and discuss the positive and negative impacts that globalization has on your society. What measures need to be taken to curtail them? What changes should be brought into education to face the present challenges?
2. What positive and negative comments do you hear from teachers and parents about the present adolescents? Discuss.
3. 'The child is the promise of mankind.' How do you understand Maria Montessori's statement?

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