

A study on the role of international and national agencies in inculcation of the value of peace among school students in India

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Abstract

Peace is the foremost among the essentials of life in the world. It is the single attribute that ensures progress, prosperity, comforts, happiness, creativity, fearlessness, discipline, contentment and many more pleasures of life. Hence, it is obvious that scriptures, preachers, philosophers, politicians, educationists all over the world have advocated the inculcation of the value of peace in all stages and dimensions of human life.

Federico Mayor Zaragoza, (1998) the member of the Honorary Board of the International Decade for the 'Promotion of a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World' has aptly stated that "Peace is possible for life at all stages and it is up to man to choose his destiny or to suffer from the horrors of war." The other complementary statement is documented by UNESCO (1945) that "Since wars begin in the minds of people, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed". Both these statements indicate that the value of peace is primary and the most obligatory for human progress and survival of human race on the earth.

In the backdrop of growing competition, conflicts, ambitions, fanaticism, prejudices and intolerance; an effectual strategy for inculcation of the value of Peace among school students has become a must. As a matter of satisfaction, there are numerous international, national, non-governmental and humanitarian organizations and institutions which are planning, implementing, monitoring and researching initiatives for ensuring inculcation of peace as a holistic approach embracing 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. The role of UNO, UNESCO, Amnesty International, NCERT, NCTE, Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development, Community Based Institute on Peace Education is chiefly remarkable in this context.

Keywords: peace education, conflict resolution, human values, fanaticism, prejudices

Introduction

Peace is the foremost values of life that ensures progress, prosperity, comforts, happiness, creativity, fearlessness, discipline, contentment and many more pleasures of life. Scriptures, preachers, philosophers, politicians, educationists all over the world have ever advocated the maintenance of the value of peace in all stages and dimensions of human life. Generally peace is defined as a situation of absence of conflicts and violence in society. These conflicts may occur due to uneven distribution of socio-economic as well as political power, religious and regional differences. Apart from the seeds of turmoil or disorder in the external world, there happens to be several facet of disturbance in the personality of human beings as well. Hence, the attainment of peace is not possible only by resolving legal or political norms and resolutions, but also by developing human qualities among the members of society.

Early years of a child's life are fundamental for the development of the core personality. It is therefore advisable to provide him an atmosphere of harmony and tolerance so that he could develop into a liberal and compassionate individual. It is observed that the qualities of cooperation and compassion do prevail in families but outside the family such values are generally absent. There comes need of providing a well planned and distinguished education of value of peace in schools.

The idea of providing peace education in schools is a well accepted concept worldwide. In fact, peace education is a skill building activity, which empowers children to develop 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) [2]. Establishing the need of peace education at school stage R. D. Laing (1978) [3], stated that Peace education is an attempt to respond to problems of conflict and violence on scales ranging from the personal, local, national and finally to the global. It is about exploring ways of creating more just and sustainable futures. 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.

Importance of the Peace Education

The human race is passing through a very volatile stage of history. Advancements in science and technology have provided heavenly ease and comforts to the mankind but fear, impatience and commotion have made them meaningless. Aggression in the form of road rage, domestic violence, hatred, terrorism, injustice, oppression and exploitation is

emerging in an unprecedented manner in human society. This state of violence being committed by man against man disheartens and even horrifies individuals. Much of this terror and disorder in the society has been created by the man himself.

The saddest part of the story is that this violence, fear, disorder, distrust and aggression is affecting children, the future generation the most. Children, growing and developing in this state of confusion and disorder Children naturally absorb the spirit of violence from the surroundings and become perpetrators of the same in their lives. Schooling is a community activity and depends upon society in many aspects. In such circumstances we can't expect that students as constituents of future society can stay aloof from the world around. Hence, it is high time to give a second thought to the concepts like culture, values and ethics for creating a better society through better schooling. If we want the future generations to live in a holistic and peaceful society based upon the values of mutual understanding and co-operation; we shall have to initiate them in the principles and practices of Peace education at school level. This approach of Peace Education empowers children to settle their conflicts through creative and nondestructive ways to and to live in harmony with others in their world.

Fortunately, there are several international and national, governmental and non-governmental agencies that have recognized the need and importance of peace education for children. Federico Mayor Zaragoza, the member of the honorary board of the 'International Decade for the Promotion of Culture of Peace and Non-violence for the Children of the World' believes that "Peace is possible for life at all stages and it is up to man to choose his destiny..." Resultly, 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.

Schools can directly be benefited 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. Stating the success of education for peace; a student from Sri Lanka shares that "I have never received such a wonderful experience and knowledge in my teaching career I have become a changed person with good attitudes. This is indeed a useful Programme which could bring about peace and harmony to our country." In fact, the foremost objective of peace education is to preserve the natural innocence of children from being sidetracked by society. The child has the real vision, a bright little flame of enlightenment that brings us a gift from the god.

Objectives and outcomes of inculcation of the value of Peace among school students

Inculcation of the value of peace aims at building a lasting foundation for identifying the oneness of all irrespective of differences of religion, caste, region, group, language or region. Keeping this aim in mind the objectives of inculcation of the value of peace among school students may be determined as under

- Equipping children with the knowledge, skills, attitudes and confidence to resolve conflicts peacefully.
- Creating a violence-free environment in schools through cumulative efforts of teachers, students, administrators, support staff and parents.
- Inspiring students to participate actively in the building of inter-ethnic harmony, democracy and a culture of peace in the school and society
- Developing a humanistic atmosphere in school between management and staff, teachers and students, teachers and teachers, students and students and students and staff.
- Facilitating socialization of students through participation in interactive, creative and co-operative learning activities.

To achieve the stated objectives as outcomes of inculcation of the value of Peace among school students a holistic approach is needed. The development and implementation of such approach needs all-round contribution and cooperation from all the stakeholders of the education system. These include individuals, school, society, state, nation and international community. As a matter of fact, there are numerous plans and programmes of peace education being devised at national and international levels. Some of these are discussed here in brief.

International Agencies supporting Peace Education

It is a well-known fact that wars, conflicts, agitations, terrorism and other forms of violence have caused more number of deaths than any other natural calamity on this earth. The last century has seen two global conflicts called world wars, succeeded by the cold war. These conditions were so frightening that the future of humanity was under dark clouds of uncertainty. Fortunately, the human race took a wise decision to evade the pervading fear and suspicion. The world body created at that juncture has been successfully playing its role of making an atmosphere of trust and peace in the world.

United Nations' Organization (UNO)

United Nations' Organization was established in 1945 to save succeeding generation from scourge of war. Unquestionably, this organization has been successful in its objectives till now. Here are some of its objectives from the preamble to the UN charter that help in building a culture of justice and peace in the world

- To reaffirm faith in the dignity and worth of the human person
- To secure 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.
- To promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom

All these goals of UNO are the objectives to achieve world peace through education. Other than these objectives the UNO has contributed much towards the development of peace education through other means also. The General Assembly of the United Nations proclaimed the first decade of the 21st century i.e. 2001-2010 as the 'International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the

World'. It defined culture of peace as "all the values, attitudes and forms of behavior that reflect respect for life, for human dignity and for all human rights, the rejection of violence in all its forms and commitment to the principles of freedom, justice, solidarity, tolerance and understanding between people".

To achieve the goal of building a culture of peace; education for peace is the foremost objective. The United Nations appealed each and every country of the world to ensure that children, from an early age, benefit from education to enable them to resolve any dispute peacefully and in a spirit of respect for human dignity and of tolerance.

United Nation Educational Social Cultural Organization (UNESCO)

Underlining the importance of education to achieve peace, equality, justice and prosperity, the United Nation Educational Social Cultural Organization (UNESCO) appointed the International Commission on Education for the Twenty-first Century in the headship of Sir Jacques Delors with 14 other members from different continents. The commission aimed at finding ways and means to overcome tensions, designing and building our common future, getting the reform strategies right and above all broadening international cooperation in the global village. The report titled *Learning: the Treasure within*, submitted to the UNESCO in 1996, came-up in the part 2, chapter 4, with the 'Four Pillars of Education'. Two out of the four, namely 'Learning to Be' and 'Learning to Live Together' are to ensure to enable the process of education to become a means of peaceful living.

In other statements the report mentions that "In confronting the many challenges that the future holds in store, humankind sees in education an indispensable asset in its attempt to attain the ideals of peace, freedom and social justice". Unquestionably, education is the very foundation of social transformation and development. Stating education a human right the report declares it as an essential tool for achieving the goals of equality, development and peace. Non-discriminatory education benefits both girls and boys and thus ultimately contributes to more equal relationships between women and men. As per the report, basic education is the first step in attempting to attenuate the enormous disparities affecting many groups – women, rural populations, the urban poor, marginalized ethnic minorities and the millions of children not attending school and working.

United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF)

Surging hand in hand with UNESCO; another important organization of United Nations viz. United Nations International Children Emergency Fund (UNICEF) has planned meticulously to milk the potential of education to ensure world peace and prosperity. The eight Millennium Development Goals approved by 189 member states and 23 international organizations in the Millennium Summit of the United Nations in 2000 are to be achieved by the year 2015. Though the orientation of these goals seems to be leaning more towards eradication of poverty and provision of health facility but education is in the epicenter of all the eight goals. Achievement of Universal Primary Education, Gender equality, Women empowerment, poverty eradication, and

development of global partnership for development is only possible through ensuring the right of education to each and every child across the globe.

The goal 2 of the MDGs aims at universal enrollment and completion of primary education by 2015. India after China is one of the prominent countries who have got much success in Universalization of primary education under the UNICEF mechanism. This organization is directly supporting scores of projects of education for ensuring all children, specially the marginalized children to have access to quality education and complete their schooling. UNICEF is also working to reduce gender and other disparities to increase access and completion of quality basic education. All these initiatives are helpful in achieving equality, justice and thereby ensuring a happy and peaceful living to millions across the globe.

Indian Agencies as promoters of Peace Education

While the international organization such as UNO, UNESCO and UNICEF are playing their role to establish education as a means of achieving world peace and prosperity; several Indian initiatives also translating the same at a smaller scale in the country. These include departments of central and state governments, independent institutions and non-governmental agencies. To evade excessive expansion of the write-up it would be appropriate to discuss in short the initiatives of few central institutions promoting the value of peace through education.

National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT)

National Council for Educational Research and Training (NCERT) is the central agency for educational research and training for school education. As per the suggestions of National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005, it has initiated actions for the training of teachers and teacher educators, development of reading material, trying out strategies for infusion of peace related concerns in the school system.

With an objective of peace building through the educational system, the National Curriculum Framework (NCF), 2005 by NCERT asserts that education must be able to promote values that foster peace, humanness and tolerance in a multicultural society. The aims of education enunciated in the NCF 2005 include developing commitment to democracy and the constitutional values of equality, justice, freedom, secularism, and concern for well-being of others. The practice of education in schools needs review to remove systemic violence by way of overloaded curricula, inflexible routines and expectations incongruent with the ability patterns of students. The modeling of violent behaviour in and out of the classroom needs to be checked. Education for peace aims at proactively nurturing such attitudes values and attributes, which would enable students to eschew violence in their lives.

National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE)

National Council for Teacher Education (NCTE) is the foremost body to manage and regulate the secondary teacher education programmes in India. It is playing an appreciable role in promoting peace education through its policies, curriculum and syllabi. Pressing the need of inculcation of peace education, the NCTE accepts that no education system is complete without some form of component similar to peace education. It may take such forms as moral education, value

or citizenship education, democratic or global education. Focusing on the problem of human violence, 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. To implement this philosophy into practice; NCTE suggests the following directions for schools.

- To develop a more humanistic management approach
- To improve human relations between, teacher-student, teacher-teacher, student-student etc
- To help develop good attitudes in students and teachers as well, e.g. co-operation, mutual respect
- To help healthy emotional development in students
- To facilitate socialization through participation in interactive and co- operative learning activities
- To improve students' discipline and moral behavior
- To develop creativity both in students and teachers
- To improve standard of quality of teaching and learning

Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIEPSD)

Mahatma Gandhi Institute of Education for Peace and Sustainable Development (MGIESDP) is a joint venture institution of UNESCO and the Government of India. Established in November 2012, the institute aims at developing and promoting new approaches to education, empowering learners to transform their lives and build a more peaceful and sustainable world. The establishment of this institution is based upon the fundamental conviction that education can help provide the answers to some of the greatest challenges of the 21st century, from poverty, conflict and deepening inequality to threats related to climate change and environmental degradation. It accepts education as a tool to bring up shared values to life and to gaining the skills required in the new millennium: how to coexist peacefully, live sustainably, work collaboratively, think critically and develop creative solutions.

To achieve the goal of transforming education system in India with UNESCO's vision and experience; the MGIESDP's objective is to enhance research, capacity-development, support education reforms and innovation in education for peace and sustainable development. To set a model of using education as a means for peace and sustainable development, the MGIESDP's will provide technical advice, build networks and partnerships and collect information on good practice in education for showcasing what works and why, and providing guidance on how successful programmes can be scaled up or replicated in other countries.

Conclusion

To wrap up the topic, it may be reaffirmed that education is the foremost tool for achieving and sustaining the world peace and thereby ensuring justice, equality, freedom and prosperity to each individual of the world. Education for peace is a call for the participation of every human being in battering the life of human race on the globe. Education for peace enhances the capability of people to deal with mutual conflict creatively and nonviolently. At the end it would be valuable to quote Irina Bokova, the Director-General of UNESCO that Education is what gives individuals the knowledge, aspiration and values to live in dignity and act for

the common good. This is why it is the most basic foundation for building lasting peace and sustainable development.

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