OPINION

Peace Education: A Challenge for Educators

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ABSTRACT

Our society is at risk. Post-Covid scenario is quite disgusting. Conflicts between individuals, communities and nations are on the rise. Just and nonviolent conflict solutions are needed to ensure equilibrium in human interactions. Faith in culture of peace is essential. Favorable attitudes towards peace and human rights are to be inculcated. No doubt education can play a leading role but at present it is at crossroads. Educators have to evolve a peace education curriculum and co-curricular activities. This curriculum is to be transacted in a congenial learning environment characterized by democratic orientation, cohesiveness, acceptance, permissiveness, involvement and encouragement. Teaching strategies like jurisprudential inquiry, social inquiry, non-directive teaching, brainstorming, value analysis, awareness training, role playing, value clarification, etc. can be used to foster peace attitudes and values. Peer mediation, counselling, UNESCO's pledge for peace have a great potential in facilitating the task before educators. Networking and cooperation among the educators and non-governmental organizations can create an adequate foundation on which educators can depend. Researchers can provide a basis for making sound educational decisions. The situation is grim but the efforts of educators can lead to effective socialization of values related to peace.

Our society is at risk. Ignorance of each other's life style and mistrust between people leads to arousal of differences in understanding the views of each other. These differences gradually aggravate and conflicts emerge. Conflicts continue and peace becomes a dream. Increasing globalization and intensifying conflict have worsened the situations. Conflict among people and their communities continues to be a major global challenge along with poverty and worsening socio-economic inequity. Terrorism is being perceived as a threat to human security. Violent conflicts in the educational institutions and society are on the rise. Bullying in the campuses is causing an alarming situation. Youth have the energy to do well in various fields but they need a culture of peace to develop their potentialities. Conflicts arise due to hatred, weak governance, failure of the educational or social system, thrust on globalization and liberal outlooks, human security problems and pseudo-democratization. We need to evolve a society in which parties involved in the conflict negotiate to bring peace without the intervention of law courts, police or involvement of power group members of the community as mediators. An institutional culture in which positive presence of ethical behavior, regard for and acceptance of human rights of others, social justice and equality must pervade. Students need to understand the root causes underlying their conflicts, know human rights laws, envision alternative structures of security and learn skills for managing micro and macro conflicts without violence. Efforts for post-conflict transformation are necessary.

Culture of peace

According to UNESCO's Culture of Peace Program, peace is good for society. It is a just and non-violent solution of conflicts which generates an equilibrium in social interactions, so that all the members of society can live in harmonious relation with each other. It is founded on justice and liberty. It involves taking actions to prevent disputes from arising between parties, to prevent existing disputes from escalating into conflicts and to limit the spread of the latter when they occur. Peace-making action brings hostile parties to agreement through peaceful means. Sustained, reconciliatory and co-operative work to deal with underlying conflicts can help in building peace.

According to Nan-Zhao, "A 'culture of peace' reflects 'active, positive, participatory process where diversity is respected, difference is tolerated, dialogue is encouraged, and conflicts solved in a spirit of mutual understanding and co-operation' (UNESCO). It's a process that grows out of the beliefs and actions of people and develops differently in each country and region, depending on their traditions, cultures, religion. Therefore, a culture of peace is by necessity a long-term, multi-dimensional process, a process of transformation of values, attitudes, behaviors and ways of life in favor of peaceful living together in an increasingly interdependent world".

Need of peace education

People need interactive and inquiry-based training to act peacefully and abjure violence while resolving conflicts. Feeling of considering the entire world as a family (vasudhaivakutumbakam) is necessary. We need to extend the concept of family to school/college and community. Educational programs are seldom planned in advance but everyone feels the need for education to support peace building efforts. Students need to have dialogue on knowledge, values, skills and behaviors related to peace. They also need to develop positive attitudes towards peace and peace strategies. According to Tyler & Halafoff (2005), "If peace education is to become an accepted part of the school curriculum, it will need to be innovative and engage students in a number of ways. It is hoped that others involved in similar projects can draw upon this experience". The education for a culture of peace is founded in UNESCO's constitutional mandate to build peace "in the minds of men".

The mission of UNESCO in the process of peace-building is underpinned in its Constitution, 'Peace must be founded, if it is not to fail, upon the intellectual and moral solidarity of mankind'. According to Nan-Zhao, "Education is a principal means of peace building; it constitutes a major foundation, a cornerstone and a core component of a culture of peace. UNESCO has been assisting Member States in promoting education for peace by a) developing education policies that place the objective of education for a culture of peace at the very heart of educational process; b) improving educational contents and methods that weave the peace-culture values, skills and knowledge into the fabric of both formal teaching and non-formal/in-formal education; c) promoting linguistic diversity and multi-lingual education and cross-cultural learning; d) building capacity through teacher training and professional development; and e) sharing innovative educational practices through strengthened partnership and networking." Educators share the responsibility to foster favorable attitudes towards peace among students by creating an urge for mutual understanding, developing the value of tolerance and enabling them to learning to live together. The seeds of harmony are to be sown and the learning environments should be congenial for the release of tensions through adoption of an appropriate conflict resolution strategy.

Based on UNESCO's ideas, the following may generate a culture of peace in the educational institutions and the classrooms-

1. Satisfaction of basic human necessities, including not only material needs, but also those which are political, social, juridical, cultural, etc.
2. Education for change, promoting values which guide people's actions in daily practice.
3. Freedom from myths, especially the myths and symbols which prevent people from taking personal responsibility for the future.
4. Recognizing that the solution of conflicts does not necessarily require physical force.
5. Demystification of threats, recognizing that others are not necessarily our enemies.
6. Feminization of culture i.e. no male-domination in social hierarchy and authority.
7. Disobedience as a virtue, not in the form of irresponsibility but a critical consciousness engaged in the resolution of conflicts.
8. Respect for cultural identity and avoiding any tendency to impose an unnecessary universal culture uniformly on all stake holders in education.
9. Accepting pluralism, diversity and tolerance.
10. Empowerment of the weaker sections of society. Ensuring their human rights by providing security. Making efforts to allow the encounter of the human being with his surroundings in equilibrium and freedom from oppression.

India takes pride in being a land of unity in diversity. It has rich traditions of making efforts to live together. Education for peace should be founded on the desire to learn how to live together in harmony. It is based on common values of human compassion, tolerance, benevolence, mutual understanding, social collectivism, and solidarity. The rich educational materials related to peaceful coexistence and living together need to be tapped for peace education. In spite of diversity in socio-political, cultural, religious, ethnic and linguistic terms, solutions can emerge through peaceful dialogues and negotiation based on mutual understanding. Tendency for this can be taught in the classroom. For this we need the following:

- Education for learning to live together to plant seeds of peace in the minds of the young to prevent conflicts and violence.
- Identifying and disseminating region/country-specific core values conducive to peace and harmony for educational purposes;
- Renovating/adapting curriculum and developing interdisciplinary approaches;
- Promoting active learning experiences and teamwork for students through practical projects;
- Involving teachers as key force in education for peace and improving teachers' competencies in teaching values related to learning to live together;
- Creating supportive school climate of tolerance and respect encouraging a democratic participatory culture;
- Strengthening education research for better informed policy-making, curriculum renewal and pedagogical approaches to education for learning to live together in peace; and
- Strengthening partnership and networking in the joint efforts. (Nan-zhao, 2004).

Curriculum for peace education:

A course on Peace Education may be designed to facilitate transformation of participants to empower them to stand for their human and civil rights and build a civil society. A common ground may be explored for activists and educators of an area. Case studies of various countries and institutions may be narrated or disseminated through u-tube channels. According to International Conference on Education (1994) following ideas are worth considering while imparting peace education-

1. Training and practice of conflict resolution and mediation in school systems, among staff and students, and extension through community involvement to the rest of society.

2. Linkage of school activities to ongoing activities in the community which promote participation by all in culture and development.

3. Incorporation into curricula of information about social movements for peace and non-violence, democracy and equitable development.

4. Extension of the sense of community not only to all peoples but also to all life on the planet, with the aim of preserving both the world's cultural diversity and its ecology for future generations.

5. Systematic review and renovation of curricula to ensure an approach to ethnic, racial and cultural differences which emphasizes their equality and unique contributions to the enrichment of the common good.

6. Systematic review and renovation of the teaching of history, to give as much emphasis to non-violent social change as to military aspects of history, with special attention given to the role of women in history.

7. Teaching of science in terms of its relation to culture and society, as a tool which can be used for war or for peace, for exploitation or for co-operative development.

While constructing a curriculum for peace education, educators face a challenge to select and organize contents. The content may be taken from the incidents of interpersonal domestic or institutional conflicts, civic or community tensions, judicial interventions in civic matters, movements against social evils, stories or poetry based on racial or other types of discriminations, differences in opinions expressed on political and management issues, gender issues, conflicts between fundamental duties and human or children's rights, factors leading to constitutional amendments in a nation or rules governing the functioning of administrative officers and political leaders. It is also possible to teach these contents by drawing students' attention to various conflicts while teaching political science, history, environmental science, geography, literature, genetics, economics, commerce, sociology, law and education etc. Cocurricular activities based on conflicts may also be developed. While framing the curriculum the following may be included in a course for peace education:

Developing sensitivity to peace

UNESCO's Pledge for Peace may be taken by teachers and students of educational institutions. It should not be imposed. The relevance of the culture of peace for the students and teachers needs to be discussed in and outside the classrooms. Both teachers and students can pledge that in their daily life they shall-

1. Respect all life i.e. Respect the life and dignity of each human being without discrimination or prejudice.
2. Reject violence i.e. Practice active non-violence, rejecting violence in all its forms: physical, sexual, psychological, economic and social, in particular towards the most deprived and vulnerable such as children and adolescents.
3. Share with others i.e. Share my time and material resources in a spirit of generosity to put an end to exclusion, injustice and political and economic oppression.
4. Listen to understand i.e. Defend freedom of expression and cultural diversity, giving preference always to dialogue and listening without engaging in fanaticism, defamation and the rejection of others.
5. Preserve the planet i.e. Promote consumer behavior that is responsible and development practices that respect all forms of life and preserve the balance of nature on the planet.
6. Rediscover solidarity i.e. Contribute to the development of my community, with the full participation of women and respect for democratic principles, in order to create together new forms of solidarity.

Teaching strategies for teaching peace education

Joyful learning or heavy dependence on expository teaching may not give dividends. Experiential learning or observation of incidents as exhibited in videos, short films, u-tubes or dramatization of historical events may be beneficial or making students sensitive to the need of peace and engagement in critical thinking to arrive at conflict resolutions acceptable to parties in disagreement. Educators will face the challenge of selecting, adapting or designing appropriate teaching strategy in view of the abilities of their students. Several new teaching strategies can help teachers to develop students' abilities to explore social issues and try to resolve them. 'Jurisprudential' teaching strategy can help children develop their value clarifying competencies, value conflict resolution abilities and social consciousness (Misra, 1993), social values and socio-metric status in terms of social dialogue and social action (Pandey, 1991), and secular-mindedness, social behaviors and social cognition (Singh, 2004). Passi, Sansanwal and Singh (1988) found that 'jurisprudential inquiry model' can bring about positive changes in student teachers' ability to analyze controversial issues, think from others' point of view, listen to others carefully, argue logically and not losing temper while arguing. According to Joyce and Weil (1985) this teaching strategy "is

based on a conception of society in which people differ in their views and priorities and in which social values legitimately conflict with one another". It consists of the following phases-(1) Orientation to the case, (2) Identifying the issues, (3) Taking a position, (4) Exploring the stances, (5) Refining and qualifying the position and (6) Testing factual assumptions behind a qualified position. Four patterns of argumentation are used- "establish the point at which value is violated, prove the desirable or undesirable consequences of a position, clarify the value conflict with analogies and assert priority of one value over another and demonstrate lack of gross violation of second value (Joyce & Weil, 1985). 'Social Inquiry Training model' of teaching can help students think about how to enquire about social issues, build and test theories related to social action in different contexts. Value discussion model of teaching can help students in value clarification. 'Brainstorming' teaching strategy can be used for developing students' ability to think about the consequences of various solutions of social problems, identify various qualifiers for them and guess causes for success and failure in the implementation of various social reforms or solutions. 'Cognitive growth' teaching strategy which is based on the theories of Piaget and Kohlberg, can be used for fostering students' moral reasoning about various policy issues related to natural and social environment and social sensitivities. This teaching strategy includes two main phases- (I) Confrontation with stage relevant tasks in which teachers present socially puzzling situations well matched to learners' developmental stage and (II) Inquiry in which teachers elicit students' responses, ask for justifications, offer counter suggestions and probe students' responses. 'Nondirective teaching model' emphasizes building the capacity for personal development in terms of self-awareness, understanding, autonomy and self-concept. In this teaching strategy teachers encourage free expression of feelings and ask students to define problem, and accept and clarify the feelings of students. Students discuss problems, develop insights and the teacher clarifies possible positive actions and supports students. 'Awareness training strategy' can help students learn how to assert their views without creating noisy scenes or resorting to indecent social manners and violence. This teaching strategy includes the following sequence of teaching activities-presentation of the task, completion of the task, analysis of the task, discussion of procedure for task completion, and promotion of sense of responsibility and openness. 'Role playing' strategy' can help students develop their self confidence in exhibiting various socially and emotionally competent behaviors. It also develops their social sensitivities and favorable attitude for human

rights and fundamental duties. This teaching strategy begins with teachers' introduction or identification of the problem, making the problem explicit, interpreting the problem story, exploring the issues and explaining the procedure of role playing. Student participants are selected and teacher analyses the roles and assigns them to different students. Teacher sets the stage, prepares the observers, and then asks them to enact their roles. Role is discussed, reviewed, and plan for the next enactment is suggested or evolved. Re-enactment is done, roles are observed, discussed, reviewed and alternatives are suggested again. The experiences are shared and generalizations are made.

Peer mediation during conflict resolution may also pay dividends. Human rights are basic to conflict. When one group is treated as inferior, the groups cannot integrate due to difference in cultural factors dividing them. Violence, tensions and hidden ideation of cultural superiority generate a rift among the students belonging to different communities. They cease to have respect for the cultural traditions of others. It is necessary that students are taught how to achieve reconciliation, tolerance, mutual trust, and give up the habits of protection and vindication. While using this strategy, students are taught alternative ways to resolve their disputes and conflicts. Openness in communication, co-operation in achievement of learning objectives and affirmation of differing view-points guide social-interaction. Students are made responsible for solving their own problems. Solutions are never imposed by teachers. Learning through the experience of mediation by using dialogues enables the students to adapt their conflict resolution strategies in future.

Counselling also can be helpful in maintaining peace and avoidance of conflicts. Students will face many problems when their teachers use various teaching strategies to enable them to learn how to solve social issues. Then 'cognitive therapy', 'play therapy' and 'psychodrama' techniques can be used by counsellors to help students take decisions about their personal-social problems

(1) Concept of positive and negative peace, (2) peace activism, (3) Peace Studies, (4) Nonviolence, (5) Understanding Conflict, Bullying and Violence, (6) Conflict Management Strategies, (7) Civil Society, (8) Human Rights and Children's Rights, (9) Peace Building Exercises: Learning from Experiences, (10) Communication and social-emotional intelligence, (10) Environment Protection and Sustainable Development, (11) Cultural Identities, (12) Research on peace and peace education.

Designing a suitable learning environment

The challenge of developing a congenial classroom learning environment can be met by educators by ensuring the following-

- Prevalence of no suspicion and mistrust between the students of different cultures and regions.
- Democratic orientation in the classrooms as exhibited by observance of the principles of the dignity, justice, equality and mutual respect of men.
- Ensuring that ignorance, prejudice and inequality have no place in decisions.
- Positive attitudes towards justice, fraternity, non-violence, freedom and peace.
- Encouraging mutual assistance and sensitivity to issues of concern for others.
- Respect for the individuality of all class fellows, and their culture, values and ways of life.
- Promotion of increasing interdependence among students.
- Cohesiveness and cooperation.
- Readiness to help others in solving their problems.

Conclusion

Conflicts among individuals, community members and nations are on the rise. They need to be resolved in such a way that values are not compromised, human dignity is maintained, rights of fellow human beings are not trampled upon by individuals, pseudo-democratization is not used, and non-violent means are used. Educators face the challenges of becoming sensitive to their role as peace loving persons, enable students to understand the need and relevance of peace in life, devise a suitable curriculum for peace or teach their subjects in such a way that implications for peace are explained. Understanding of the causes of conflict, opportunities for reconciliation of conflicts in and outside the classrooms, use of appropriate teaching strategies or their adaptation to suit local and global demands, and efforts to exhibit their accountability to sustainable peace in the society are essential. Taking of a pledge of peace based on UNESCO's vision can sensitize educators and students to the need of peace in and around them. Teaching strategies like jurisprudential inquiry, awareness training, role playing, social inquiry training, brainstorming, cognitive growth, nondirective teaching, experiential learning, etc. may help teachers to explore social, economic, civic, educational, cultural, gender, inequalities, etc. issues. Peer mediation and counseling will help educators and students to think of and accept peaceful solutions to conflicts. A classroom

climate characterized by democratic orientation, cohesiveness, cooperation, mutual respect and trust, scientific temper, humane and helpful attitudes, and nurturance, will be essential.

Competing Interest Statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the author(s).

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