

# Need for Peace Education in Schools



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## Abstract

Peace is simply having a feeling of security, calm and restfulness. Educating younger generation about the importance and necessity of peace education is essential. Peace education is an essential component of quality basic education. This paper aims to understand peace education as the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behavioural changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level. This paper attempts to conceptually understand the concept of peace education, aims and approaches of peace education with a special reference to school set up i.e. within and outside school. Strategies to practice peace education in school is also being suggested.

**Keywords:** Peace Education, Life Skills, Conflict Resolution.

## Introduction

The Preamble of the Constitution of United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organisation (UNESCO) declared that "since wars begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defences of peace must be constructed. In Indian educational scenario peace education was given a prominent place. There is a mention of need for peace and its relevance in scholarly writing of religious scriptures, poets, writers, political activist, social activist since ages.

Rabindranath Tagore rightly said:

"Where the mind is without fear and the head is held high,  
In to that kingdom of freedom my father  
Let my country awake".

As a messenger of peace, Mahatma Gandhi identified that "The world will live in peace, only when the individuals composing it make their minds to do so.

Dalai Lama writes, "In the course of my efforts to promote compassion, tolerance, patience and peace through them, I have stressed the importance of these qualities being taught to young people right from the beginning so that it can be a part of their lives later,

At present, society has witnessed certain serious forms of violence such as ecocide, genocide, ethnic conflict, terror attack, racism, sexual abuse, domestic violence etc. These forms of violence in its own way serve as a threat to peaceful human life.

It is reported that every minute two people are killed in conflicts around the world (BBC, 2014). Information of this kind is something to ponder upon and ask ourselves the question "Is peace of mind possible at all in our rushed life?".

The answer lies within ourselves. It is up to us. We must come to grips with ourselves and we should emphasise on promoting peace education in educational institutions which is not being implemented widely in India. No serious and purposeful efforts are made to cultivate the basic elements of peace education in academic institutions to empower human behaviour for the establishment of peace in everyday life. There is a need to design systematically life skills education program to address these basic issues of promoting peace in our society to encourage human co-existence.

When there is no peace among the persons, then peace in society is threatened. Sometimes this leads to chain of violence. Lack of peace destroys the identity of a country our mental and creative energies are diverted from useful activities to destructive one.

Schools are our main social avenue of learning. While the primary focus of teaching in schools is predominantly on academic skills, many feel that life skills are equally important. Its high time to 'pull up our socks and say that "Yes, we do admit that the world is in turmoil. It is wounded in

many ways. It requires the healing touch".

Education about Conflict Resolution, Peace Studies, peace Education is definitely the need of the hour. It seems only logical that our nation invest more heavily in prioritizing basic social and emotional learning, conflict resolution education, and peace building skills woven into our core school curriculum to help turn the tide. Although effective programs are already happening in pockets all over our nation, they need to be more systemically embedded and put into practice. Our policies at the local, state and federal levels have the potential to better reflect and empower these options.

#### **Aim of the study**

1. To understand the concept of peace education
2. To emphasize the importance of peace education in schools
3. To understand peace education as the process of promoting knowledge, skills, attitudes and values among children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence

#### **Defining Peace Education**

From literature reviewed the authors have found that the definition of peace education is very loosely defined. People use it interchangeably with similar words like conflict resolution, peace building, moral education, value education, life skills education etc. Reardon (2000) notes that there has almost been a reluctance to define peace education too precisely; one reason being the multi-disciplinary nature of the field. Nevertheless, the various approaches have something in common: "the hope of strengthening human rights and reducing violence in the global society" (Reardon 2000: 4).

The most comprehensive definition was provided by United Nations International Children's Emergency Fund (UNICEF) as "the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour changes that will enable children, youth and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national or international level.

Other definitions explaining the various approaches of peace education

#### **Knowledge-Based Subject That Can Be Directly Taught In The School Curriculum**

The US-based Consortium on Peace Research, Education and Development (COPRED) defined peace as a "multi-disciplinary academic and moral quest for solutions to the problems of war and injustice with the consequential development of institutions and movements that will contribute to a peace that is based on justice and reconciliation." (COPRED, 1986)

#### **Set of Skills and Attitudes That Can be Explicitly Taught or More Subtly Infused in a Variety of Educational Contexts**

Cremin (1993) defined peace education as "a global term applying to all educational endeavours and activities which take as their focus the promotion of a knowledge of peace and of peace-building and

which promote, in the learner, attitudes of tolerance and empathy as well as skills in cooperation, conflict avoidance and conflict resolution so that learners will have the capacity and motivation, individually and collectively, to live in peace with others."

#### **Combining Knowledge, Skills and Attitudes**

This is the dominant approach in the field at this time. Reardon (1988) sees peace education as a process that prepares young people for global responsibility; enables them to understand the nature and implications of global interdependence; and helps them to accept responsibility to work for a just, peaceful and viable global community.

These three approaches, taken together, integrate the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes with an orientation towards active participation. Many of these themes appear in UNICEF 'peace education' programmes. The peace education programmes designed to train young minds also need to incorporate these three elements .

Peace education must address the prevention and resolution of all forms of conflict and violence, whether overt or structural, from the interpersonal level to the societal and global level. Peace is essential for children's survival, development, protection, and participation in society.

In India, there exist several programmes on peace education. Srinivasan, A (2005) conducted a survey to examine the status of civil society peace education programmes in South Asia. The result of the survey revealed that there are peace education programmes in the region: many in number and diverse in character. The numbers inevitably vary from one country to another, with relatively more programmes in India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka, virtually none in Bhutan and the Maldives, and a paucity of information on any possible programmes in Bangladesh and Nepal. In terms of India it was found that there are proliferation of programmes by civil society for young people in India, with vastly differing priorities. However, not all of these are explicitly peace education programmes.

Efforts of National Council of Education Research and Training (NCERT) was recognised in terms of teacher training and curriculum development. Additionally, the NCERT has plans to work with other South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC) countries to introduce peace education throughout the region. This clearly indicates the lack of implementation of peace education programmes in schools all over the country which is not a good indicator of promoting peace education.

Definitely, there is an urgent need of introducing peace education in schools to shape the young minds in inculcating values of cooperation, non-violence, justice, morality, faith, humanity, empathy etc. This will help in promoting peace consciousness among young minds.

#### **Peace Education in Schools**

We all face Conflict and violence in almost every stage and area of our lives .In fact, conflict that is not dealt with effectively can be one of the biggest detriments to success both in school as well as in life. There occur various situations in schools among

students, teachers that involve conflict and violence. For e.g. While in school, as many as 1 in 3 students report being bullied. This affects the learning and the social atmosphere and bullied victims are between 2 to 9 times more likely to consider suicide. There are also instances where students are found to be involved in arguments and conflicts with teachers. These instances are increasing gradually which is creating tremendous burden on school administrations and on schools effective functioning. Therefore, training students in peace education is essential and very much required for the children who are the future of the nation. Therefore, school is the best place to impart training to the young minds about non-violence and cooperation. Educators and school administration can emphasize on providing training in communication skill, empathy, peer education, cooperation, conflict resolution through life skills training. While the primary focus of teaching in schools is predominantly on academic skills, many feel that life skills are equally important. Its time to put peace education in practice.

#### **Peace Education in Practice**

If we intend to create a peaceful society we must renew our educational society, which has no scope for inculcating the human values. Our examination system needs to be re examined which in fact fosters cutthroat competition; rather it should test right type of the potential of the individual. Our environment, school, playground, home and our media focus more on violence rather than peace. Educating for peace is concerned to help students develop a rich vision of peace which should form part of his personal life. We have to change our outlook towards society.

The various purpose of practicing peace education in schools should aim at:

1. Functioning as 'zones of peace', where children are safe from conflict in the community
2. Uphold children's basic rights as enumerated in the Convention on the Rights of the Child (CRC)
3. Develop a climate, within the school or other learning environment, that models peaceful and rights-respectful behaviour in the relationships between all members of the school community: teachers, administrators, other staff, parents, and children
4. Principles of equality and non-discrimination needs to be demonstrated in administrative policies and practices.
5. Draw on the knowledge of peace-building that already exists in the community, including means of dealing with conflict that are effective, non-violent, and rooted in the local culture.
6. Conflicts—whether between children, or between children and adults should be handled in a non-violent manner involving respects, rights and dignity of all.
7. Integrate an understanding of peace, human rights, social justice and global issues throughout the curriculum whenever possible
8. A forum for the explicit discussion of values of peace and social justice needs to be provided.
9. Teaching and learning methods that promote

participation, cooperation, problem-solving and respect for differences needs to be used

10. Children needs to be given opportunity to put peace-making into practice, both in the educational setting and in the wider community;
11. Provide opportunities for continuous reflection and professional development of all educators in relation to issues of peace, justice and rights.

In order to put these objectives of introducing peace education in practice, educational institutions need to adopt various strategies as follows:

#### **Improving School Environment**

The pre-dominant need of school is to have a peace culture ; i.e. the skills of peace and conflict resolution should be learned actively and modelled by the school environment in which they are taught (Baldo and Furniss, 1998). This helps in improving the school environment so that it becomes a microcosm of the more peaceful and just society that is the objective of peace education. Consistency between the messages of the curriculum and the school setting, between the overt and the 'hidden' curriculum is essential. To ensure it, the school has to introduce a living system of peace values, norms and practices into the daily life of the school.

#### **Capacity Building Programme for Teachers**

These programme should be provided to the teachers in the school before including peace education in the curriculum. The main aim of this capacity building program is to build the capacity of teachers in the knowledge of peace education, skills of cultivating peace mind-set in the students, and pedagogy of peace education, and more importantly developing positive attitudes towards peace concepts and peace education.

#### **Pre-Service Teacher Education**

Demonstrating the process of peace education to the teachers is very essential to promote capacity building. Hence, one of the important strategies should be to introduce peace education in the pre-service education of the teachers. Peace education needs to be integrated in different subjects in teacher education programme, like psychology of education, teachers in the emerging Indian society, workshop in teaching, evaluation and measurement, etc. Peace education will have to be also introduced into the existing programmes of in- service education of teachers conducted by the Institutes of Advanced Studies in Education (IASE), Colleges of Teacher Education (CTE) and District Institutes of Education and Training (DIET).

#### **Curriculum Development**

Peace education need not be taught as an independent subject. It can be integrated in the regular school subject. For e.g. Social studies, science, language, art, music, computers, vocational subjects, Psychology etc. Similarly, various extramural activities can form part of a well-designed experiential curriculum; for e.g. morning assembly, games, debates, community campaigns, club activities etc. Thus, Curriculum development in peace education has to follow an unconventional path promoting interdisciplinary approach. The process of curriculum development must involve every one –

teachers, parents and students, in one way or the other.

#### **Encouraging Experiential Based Learning**

Peace education should be imparted to students using experiential based learning methods. Peace education being essentially an applied subject, passive pedagogy would not serve the purpose. In the new pedagogy, both teachers and learners are active; indeed it is a joint venture. Cooperative learning needs to be encouraged. Teachers should use group activities, dramas, role plays, movie screening, lectures, inputs through audio and video programmes, interactive CD, self-learning etc.

#### **Conclusion**

Finding stability and peace is certainly the greatest collective challenge that mankind has ever faced. Conflict is unavoidable, but violence is not. In many cases, the energy stemming from conflict can be directed towards achieving positive change. People need to be taught of alternatives in resolving conflict, that violence is not a necessary means to achieve their goals. Peace education is a means of achieving this end. Peace education raises awareness of the roots and causes of conflict, and it provides people with the necessary skills and knowledge how to respond to conflict. The authors of the paper feel that there is a gap in the practice of peace education programmes in school which needs to be addressed at the earliest. Effort needs to be put in order to make peace education an inclusive part of mainstream curriculum in both government aided and private medium schools. Education for peace should

be made into people's movement. Maria Montessori rightly mentions "Establishing lasting peace is the work of education; all politics can do is keep out of war".

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