Inclusion of Peace Education in Teacher Education Programs: Need of the Hour

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Abstract: Education aims at the holistic development of the individual. But what is the value for an individual if one is not at peace with oneself or to the world around? This is a very pertinent question in today’s modern shrinking world where everyone is busy in their lives and keeping themselves aloof from others. Education aims at developing the component of peace. What is the need to include this component in the curriculum when it is already there? So another question that comes to mind is: Are we really paying adequate attention to teach peace? Are the schools really looking forward in creating peaceful younger generation? Are our teachers really prepared to teach peace in isolation? Stressing the need to include the component of peace education in teacher education curriculum, we would now like to share the perspective of teachers teaching at affiliated B.Ed colleges of I.P University, Delhi in the semester IV of B.Ed curriculum as an optional paper.. Though the number of students opting for this subject is quite less but we were able to identify few colleges by talking to our colleagues in respective colleges. Hence this study focuses on the relevance of peace education in teacher training institutes.

Keywords: peace education, teacher training, teacher educators.

I. Introduction

‘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. Today mankind is at the crossroad where he has to choose with courage, determination and imagination.’ Federico Mayor

Genesis of Peace Education

Education aims at the holistic development of the individual. But what is the value for an individual if one is not at peace with oneself or to the world around? This is a very pertinent question in today’s modern shrinking world where everyone is busy in their lives and keeping themselves aloof from others. If we take a simple example like how technology has dominated our lives so much that even sitting next to our family members/friends/relatives we are slowly creating a distance specifically emotional disconnect by saying that ‘WE NEED OUR OWN SPACE’. At times, we wonder, is this space the same as to be at peace with oneself? Or does that mean the potentiality of the individual to be progressive?

As we mentioned earlier, that the world is deteriorating in terms of values when we talk about international harmony, respect for women and children, supporting the downtrodden and educating the masses so, peace is the felt need of the hour. It is something that has been raved throughout ages. It is regarded to be one of the most desired goals of mankind so that all live in a harmonious environment but is usually marked by conflicts within oneself and with the people around. Peace is something which we don’t think can be achieved by readymade solutions or by a particular group of people/country by negating others. We feel it can only be realized when one starts loving oneself, understands oneself ultimately leading to mutual brotherhood, compassion, understanding, fellow-feeling and International harmony.

So the question comes, whether it is really necessary to teach peace as such? Even education aims at developing the component of peace. What is the need to include this component in the curriculum when it is already there? So another question that comes to mind is: Are we really paying adequate attention to teach peace? Are the schools really looking forward in creating peaceful younger generation? Are our teachers really prepared to teach peace in isolation? What is needed to integrate it with the existing curriculum?

Here are some definitions from peace literature: “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, com-
passion, trust, fairness, co-operation and reverence for the human family and all life on our beautiful planet” - Fran Schmidt and Alice Friedman (1988).

Since ages humans have been in search of conflict resolution techniques to avoid violence. One of those techniques invented by humans is inclusion of ‘Peace Education’ in the teacher and learner curriculum. Therefore, as far back as about five thousand years ago, the Rig Veda has ushered in a new area of enlightenment and the concept of the Vedanta idea of ‘Brahman’ speaking of ‘oneness of mankind’. It talks about the ‘brotherhood of man’. These historical programs on peace are reviewed over ages and included into a comprehensive program of substantive, peace education content and pedagogy.

The understanding of the concept of peace has changed throughout history, and so has its role and importance in the educational system. The evolution of peace education highlights a few important points in history that defined its aims and actions. The end of World War I, brought powerful support for the need for international co-operation and understanding and supported a desire to include these ideas in educational systems. World War II left with millions of victims as an impact of atomic weapons which resulted to die hard need of inclusion of peace education in teaching and school curriculum. In 1946, UNESCO was founded as an umbrella institution of the United Nations and the promotion of peace through education is at the heart of UNESCO’s mission. The goal of UNESCO’s education programs and partnerships is the development of comprehensive systems of education that embrace the values of human rights, intercultural understanding and tolerance.

II. Relevance of peace education in Teacher education programs

From the very beginnings of the development of systematic peace education, there has been discussion about whether it should be added as a separate paper in the teacher training programs or if the principles of peace education should be applied as a spate subject. There are variety of approaches and attitudes on what peace education actually leads to, such as multicultural training, education for democracy and human rights, and education for development. A teacher is said to be the role model to the society. Therefore, the experts in the field believe that the implementation of principles of peace education should start right from the ‘classroom facilitator training’ is a better approach.

There are many important self-development needs in children that are not sufficiently addressed to in the process of schooling. One of the important felt needs is building an effective, integrated personality in the child with positive self-esteem. To develop holistic approach towards teaching profession, the teacher as an individual has to have many skills, like those related to affirmation, positive thinking, empathetic listening and communication, assertive behavior, decision-making and critical thinking, etc. These traits will only be reflected in a teacher’s personality once they are trained on these during their pre-service trainings. Initiating a peaceful culture in school should start from within the staff, by developing attitudes and behavior of appreciation, co-operation, belongingness, trust and spirit of learning. By way of developing a friendly and mutually respectful teacher-pupil relationship, a peace culture will bloom naturally.

Opportunity to practice teaching in school offers the trainees a platform where they can place the theoretical knowledge they have acquired. In the class they see the age and cultural level characteristics and differences that come alive. The teacher’s success or failure to communicate with learners, the ease with which they can arouse the motivation of their students to learn and develop confidence comes from what they (the teachers’) have learnt during their pre-service training. Their effectiveness as a facilitator or teacher is judged when one is able to create a peaceful environment in the classroom and to create this aura of peace and happiness; the pre-service teacher curriculum should have inclusion of peace education as a complete subject. This is the time when they not only experiment with their own beliefs about teaching but also learn new things from peers.

One more important point to be focused is peace education creates cross border. Teachers teaching peace education during pre-service training evolves a teacher as a grounded individual rather than only a ‘professional’. It builds a sense of commitment in teachers for nurturing a society as a whole. A teacher will deliver its best when he/she is educating without considering gender, age, caste, creed or religion of its learners. Equality towards learners is one the key components of peace education and should be taught to teachers during his/her training. This will lead to unbiased, peaceful and a happy classroom.

III. Need of the study

Stressing the need to include the component of peace education in teacher education curriculum, we would now like to share the perspective of teachers teaching at affiliated B.Ed colleges of I.P University, Delhi in the semester IV of B.Ed curriculum as an optional paper.. Though the number of students opting for this subject is quite less but we were able to identify few colleges by talking to our colleagues in respective colleges.

IV. Tools for the Study

A semi-structured questionnaire was prepared focusing on:

- How do you understand peace education?
• Why do you think it has become a part of B.Ed curriculum?
• What all strategies do you use to teach this subject?
• To what extent can you see the implementation in their own lives and in their trainee’s classroom?
• In what way has it helped you in becoming better teachers and more than those better human beings?
• What kind of activities do your trainees make use of to inculcate good virtues and peace among students?
• What alternatives do you suggest for teacher education pedagogy to successfully integrate peace education concepts?
• Findings of the study:

A lot of varied responses were recorded to the above questions. Some interesting facts that came out from the interaction were:

1. For the teachers’, peace education was not just an individual but a global issue which seem to extend to human rights, preservation of environment, justice, gender, equality, encountering challenges of life, role of international organizations in promoting peace and how is it important not just personality but societal development as well.
2. In terms of use of strategies in teaching this particular subject, they were quite hesitant to share as they themselves desired the need for orientation and workshops to build their own perspective and availability of alternative resources like films, stories, and inviting resource persons for value clarification and analysis as the need of the hour.
3. They feel quite appreciative of the fact that I.P University initiated the need to integrate peace education. In addition to it, they also feel the units incorporated in the syllabus are quite relevant, meaningful for the trainees to equip themselves with the various aspects of this subject and try to solve issues not just at individual but at global level as well.
4. They were of the view that the different components mentioned in the syllabus have indeed helped them to amicably solve issues pertaining to not just their family but their own understanding and relationship with the trainees. Trainees’ on the other hand, are finding little difficulty in resolving conflicts they face in their classrooms because they still don’t know their students well. Also, they are of the view that time - table in their schools leaves no scope for them for building rapport and interaction and most of the time lose their patience in dealing with diverse issues in the classroom.
5. Teacher educators also felt integrating peace education in the present curriculum requires more of hands-on-experience rather than only theoretically orienting the trainees. They also expressed the need to make it more relevant by linking to the trainee’s classroom experience to avoid boredom for example specially how to deal with classroom management issues.
6. Teacher educators also felt that since this component has been included lately, so the process of change will be a time taking process for instance embodying the components of peace in oneself. The desire to be patient, receptive to what others say, developing good relationship and interaction with other colleagues is still a long way to be achieved through mutual respect, tolerance and harmony.
7. There were few challenges shared by the respective teacher educators in teaching this subject which are as follows:
   a) Lack of orientation and training in teaching this component in the classrooms
   b) Need to make it more relevant to the present socio-economic and political situation
   c) Lack of family support
   d) Lack of research work in the field of peace

In addition to the above role of school was also emphasized in internalizing human values over a period of time by playing an active role issues pertaining to violence and also holding workshops for teachers and students to manage individual and societal conflicts.

V. Interpretation of the study

The above points were the major findings that came out from the informal interaction that we had with the faculty of few colleges. Based on their response, we feel there is a dire need to include this component in the curriculum of teacher education programs across states in India. It is also needed to integrate peace education in the curriculum of schools, colleges so as to provide exposure to students about National and global issues and reflecting on solutions for peaceful and harmonious environment.

Suggested implications for integrating peace education into the teaching-learning process:
The teacher educators should use different pedagogical techniques to integrate peace education concepts in day to day classroom teaching

   • A teacher educator should encourage its learners to reflect to their thoughts and feelings and thus enriching their own values. This technique is known as values clarification. Students should be asked to
make a list of issues that concern them giving the most sensitive issue the priority and revealing their level of commitment to resolve these issues.

- Once they start following the values clarification technique, the next level is values analysis which involves viewpoints of peers. Values analysis will be helping student & teachers examine other people's values as well as their own. Role play, focus group discussion, case studies are few strategies teachers should use in a classroom to make students empathize with other’s situations and understand their views.

- A teacher should be able to create a democratic environment in the classroom where the learners can express their ideas without fear of them being judged. A teacher educator has to be reflective to support pupil teachers in using student friendly and student centered methods in the classroom. A broad and contemplative mindset of student trainees is one of the major contributing factors for the development of peace concepts in their students when they enter in this profession.

- Learning by grouping has always been efficient and helpful technique to enhance values like motivation, confidence, interest to study and cooperation. Colleges of teacher education creates tutorial group wherein each group holds special meets and conduct morning assemblies to teach the students moral values and discuss about their spiritual beliefs.

Peace education concepts can be best taught through action and activity based learning. It is important for the teachers to provide opportunities to for learners to act on their values. It is derived from a perspective that peace education is based on valuing. It is a process of implementation as well as development. Students will be able to judge situations and values for peace and internalization when exposed to a variety of experiences and activities. This may include reading, listening, discussions, narration, direct presentation of ideas by the teacher and other strategies.

Teacher education curriculum provides ample opportunities like working on projects, action research, planning lessons, preparing teaching aids and organizing teaching learning experiences to use these tools to foster peace culture.

- Problem based learning helps in practical application of peace concepts. Teacher education curriculum includes tools where student trainees are able to think beyond textbooks and design materials that emphasizes on decision making and problem solving skills. This type of learning method leads to practical application of peace concepts. The teacher can take up sample problems which can be real or simulated and can ask students to solve them. For a more practical application, students can be encouraged to take active part in social issues for resolving them.

V. Conclusion

Peace education here refers to the end of violence spread across the world. Peace is not a 21st century concept. People have been studying and trying to maintain peace ever since there were wars, loss, and the realization that we take peaceful times are not forever. Peace education, as in peace taught in schools and ashrams has been taught mostly over the past three decades.

Teachers are considered to be the role model for the society. It is very important that peace education is included in teacher education institutes as that will be the foundation of spreading peace in masses. These teachers who will understand the meaning of peace in depth will then further create students a culture of peace in schools and among students. Peace education included in teacher curriculum embraces a sense of citizenship and responsibility amongst emerging teachers.

Teacher education programs should be re-oriented to ensure the professionalization of every teacher and teacher educator as a peace educator.

Teacher pedagogy should also be focused as the techniques used to impart peace education should be student friendly and should address the need of the hour.

References


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