

TRANSFORMING THE PAKISTANI SOCIETY THROUGH PEACE EDUCATION—PROSPECTS AND CHALLENGES

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ABSTRACT

In face of the challenges of the 21st Century, Pakistan needs to address some of the social problems that, when properly addressed, have to play a key role in the establishment of a just and stable society. Some of the outstanding social issues are: injustice in all forms, corruption, poverty, and other anti-social practices including violence and terrorism—to name a few. These social issues have alarming negative impact on the socio-cultural network of the society ranging from: personal to institutional and national levels. Such problems are rooted in the marginalization of masses which is partially because of the low, inappropriate, and rigid education system. The knowledge, skill, and attitudes compendium is the essence of any standard education system, however, the Pakistani education system focuses more on the knowledge aspect, a little bit on skill aspect, while neglecting the attitudes aspect altogether. This attitudes aspect is usually the major concern of peace education. The aim of this research paper was to pinpoint the major challenges, related attitudes inculcation, and the possible role of peace education to present practical recommendations for transforming the Pakistani society.

Key words: Peace, Violence, Transformation, Social evils, Pakistani

Society

INTRODUCTION

Boas' statement is so apt when he says, "Men and nations fall by the same powers as those by which they rise" (Boas. 1947, p.43). Despite its

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universal connotation the statement is so appropriate in the context of Pakistani nation. Since the time of its very inception this nation, especially its leadership, possessed exceptional traits of character. With the sad demise of its leader—Quaid-e-Azam, this nation unfortunately lurked into some very unwanted social traits that in due course of time damaged the very social fabric of the society. Some of the pressing social issues of Pakistani society are: injustice, violence, discrimination, nepotism, intolerance, regionalism, marginalization, misuse of authority, corruption together with other inhuman practices. In view of the importance of the matter, the researcher decided to highlight the role peace education could play in transforming the Pakistani society from terrorism and violence to that of peaceful one.

Problem statement: This research paper was focused on, ‘transforming the Pakistani society through peace education: prospects and challenges’.

Research questions

- i) What are the challenges that may thwart the realization of a peaceful society in Pakistan..?
- ii) How can peaceful attitudes be inculcated among the inhabitants of Pakistani society..?
- iii) What could be the possible contribution of peace education for the establishment of a peaceful social order..?

Methodology:

As the study was qualitative in nature hence an explanatory cum analytical methodology was adopted where various international researchers’ work in the field of peace education was explored, explained, and analyzed, and the possible contribution of the discipline of peace education were analyzed for Pakistani context. Thus the methodology, on occasions, lurked into social impact study. This social impact aspect of peace education was applied in

drawing conclusion of the study together with suggesting pertinent recommendations for solution to the social problems of Pakistani society.

The challenges ahead:

The challenges are multifarious; however, among the most pressing ones is terrorism. Among a nexuses of social terrorism and violence is the focus of this paper. Today Pakistan is at the center stage of a war theatre, where a number of local, regional, and even international actors are at loggerheads for achieving their vested interests. Unless the inhabitants of this society are endowed with knowledge, skills, and attitudes regarding peace, it would be very difficult to secure a safe future. The people of Pakistan especially the youth need to be properly groomed through peaceful conflict resolution strategies. Such youth should not be left on the mercy of war-mongering groups and outfits. This reality necessitates that practicable plans and strategies may be developed and implemented for the promotion and maintenance of peace in the society (Sahibzada, 2012). About this challenging situation faced by the Pakistani society, Rajagopalan (2009) asserts that this society is tangled in "a tripartite tug of war between the Taliban, Pakistani government, and the US war on terror". The current wave of terrorism that started after the 9/11 incident has aggravated the state of gross violations of human rights, inhuman cultural practices, irresponsible behaviors, marginalization, coupled with illiteracy and poverty.

In view of the challenges faced by the Pakistani society it become obligatory upon state authorities, politicians, state agencies, scholars, think-

tank, and educationists to ponder over the alarming situation and adopt a unified, sustained policy to curb the issues. Here the role of educational institutions cannot be overlooked as these institutions are the fundamental agents of change and transformation. The fact is that educational institutions can usher forth such leadership as well as transforms the attitudes of the general folk that is necessary for the establishment of a peace of culture in any society.

The role of peace and unity:

Peace is the essence of life, without it societies cannot flourish and even cannot survive. All human progress is subservient to peace. Creativity as a necessary trait for human progress is subject to peaceful environment. Furthermore peace and unity goes together. Unity can be assured when there is a sense of “We feelings” among the inhabitants of a society. One cannot negate the decisive role of peaceful environment in even the GDP/GNP and stock-market matters of states of the World. In today’s globalized context economic growth is directly linked with peaceful and risk-free environment. Economic growth cannot be imagined without peace; instances of high productivity and economic growth is evident from the instances of European nations and some of the ‘Asian tigers’ as well.

Peaceful attitudes..?

Attitudes are ways of thinking of the human beings. These are the settled opinions about anything. As per the definition of Wikipedia, attitudes are, “...positive or negative views of persons, place, thing, or event...” Attitudes are judgments about anything. Eagly and Chaiken (1998) talk of three aspects of attitudes which are: effect, behavior, and cognition. Simply, attitudes are the outcomes of emotions, verbal or behavioral tendency. Attitudes are formed through observations and experiences. Jung (1921) opines about it as,

“Readiness of the psyche to act or react in a certain way”. While Atkinson and Hilgard (2007), believe about attitudes as: “favorable or unfavorable evaluations of and reactions to objects, people, situations, or other aspects of the world” (G-2). In short attitudes are belief-based evaluation of something.

Inculcation of peaceful attitudes:

The question is, how can peaceful attitudes be inculcated among the masses? The answer is not easy as attitudes encompasses such concepts of and practices about peaceful coexistence at personal, inter-personal, and at international level, awareness and respect for environment, respecting human dignity, and cultural diversity, reflective and transformative attitude in routine matters, and remaining tolerant and non-violent even in odd situations, (Nakamura, n.d). Attitudes are the prerequisites for peace. It’s a debatable issue as to whether knowledge about something enhances attitudes formation. Researchers have given the answer in both negative and affirmative. Brock-Utne (1998) cites Samhall shunskap och Samhalssyn (1976) in a UNESCO document where this phenomenon was explored among school students and found no significant relations between the enhanced level of knowledge with attitude formation. In this respect the findings of Leming (1992) is worth-mentioning who studied the impact of knowledge on the attitudes of the participants. Based on his findings Leming asserted that there can be no precise or clear relationship between the two under study aspects that is, increased knowledge and changes in attitude. This way the impact of knowledge on relative attitudes has been questioned. In sharp contrast to this, Peace researchers and peace educationists are of the view that enhanced knowledge has positive bearings on the attitude formation of the participants. In this respect the findings of Smith, (1999) and Salomon, (2004) are the often quoted instances.

Based on the above research-based discussion, it can be sum up that for inculcation of peaceful attitudes there is a need of proper planning, implementation, and evaluation processes.

Peace education as the answer:

For attitude formation the need of peace education cannot be overlooked. Peace education is a process through which peaceful attitudes are inculcated among the learners.

Peace..?

The concept of peace has been explained by Oxford Learner's Dictionary, (7th Ed.) in the following words, "A situation or a period of time in which there is no war or violence in a country or an area is peace". There are a number of explanations to the meaning of the world peace. Scholars like Thersea and Gwendolyn, (1995) are of the view that it is the behavior that promotes harmony in the peoples' way to talk, to listen to, and to interact; it discourages violence such as: hurting someone, destroying or harming one another, (cited by UNESCO, 2001).

Peace education...?

Laing (1978), defines thus, "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", (UNESCO). Similarly, Dhakal (n.d, p.6), believes that it is, "an educational response to the problem of human violence".

While Harris (n.d), thinks that peace education is concerned with bringing about awareness among the people about the dangers of violence and enabling them to develop creative peace-promoting strategies. Srinivasan (2009) is of the view that it is, "a process whereby people learn about the dangers of

violence, develop their capacities to counter violence and build sustainable peace in their communities".

In face of the growing urge for peace among the global community, peace education, as a specialized area of investigation, has emerged among other disciplines. This is due to the contribution of this field of study, as Seitz, (2004) believes, to uplift the cause of peace around the world especially in recent two decades; peace education remained one of the leading academic response to reconciliation, conflict resolution and prevention, together with peace building.

This is pertinent to mention here that as Bar-Tal, (2002) pointed out that peace education is multi-disciplinary in nature and adopts multiple approaches ranging from: ideology, focus, contents, practices to objectives. Researchers like: Davies, (2005), and Simpson, (2004) have highlighted this multi-disciplinary nature of peace education where this discipline has been given various nomenclatures such as: global education, education for international understanding, peace building education, education for citizenship, education for liberation, life skills education, human rights education, sustainable development education, environmental education, and, critical pedagogy, etc.

The three modes of peace education for attitudes formation

Peace education, like general education, may be imparted thorough the three established modes, that is, formal, non-formal and informal. A description of these modes is presented here.

The formal mode: While talking about the implementation of a peace education curriculum at school levels, Albert and Albert (n.d) are of the view that, "formal peace education covers the knowledge, skills, and training obtained in primary, secondary and tertiary institutions such as schools, colleges, and universities". Similarly, Bodine and Crawford (1998) indicated to four approaches for promoting peace education at school level. In this connection the following approaches are worth-mentioning.

The Process Curriculum Approach: under this approach the content of peace education is taught to the learners as a separate and distinct subject

where the knowledge, skill, and attitude aspects are properly organized into the inculcation of peace-promoting behaviors. This may include a variety of activities and practices that enhance nonviolent attitudes. Such practices may include: role playing, participation in group discussions, cooperative learning approaches etc.

The Mediation Program Approach: this is also called peer mediation system. It based on the theory of 'downward Filtration theory' where a particular group member is trained in peace-building skills who in turn guides the whole group as per the assigned task and thereby transfers all the relevant peace-building skills to the group members.

The Peaceable Classroom Approach: under this approach some subject areas like: arts, history, social studies, language, science, and mathematics are selected for placement of peace related content in the same where conflict resolution skills and peaceful attitudes are promoted through the selected subject areas.

The Peaceable School Approach: in practice this approach is a mere extension of the peaceable classroom approach. It is based on the philosophy that the later when properly implemented in the educational institution may lead, in due course of time, to the former, where the ultimate result is the creation of a sound peace promoting environment at institutional level, (Bodine and Crawford, 1998).

The non-formal mode:

This is another very significant area of peace education. It may of for a short span of time but its impact is usually durable. This is much appropriate for the general masses where specific peace-promotion attitudes are to be inculcated among the masses. It is usually short term, focusing on a particular aspect of peace-building for the general public as Albert and Albert, (n.d) believe.

The informal mode:

About this mode of education Albert and Albert, (n.d) are of the view that it is very broad in nature and covers a large array of situations. Nearly all aspects of social education come under the sphere of this mode of education. Peace researchers believe of it as limit-less; may be structured or unstructured; and is usually for all and sundry. This mode has very significant bearings upon the structure of any society, hence necessary of the creation of a peaceful culture in any social setup.

From another perspective there are two main approaches to peace education. Researcher like Simpson, (2004) presents these approaches as: the integrative and the additive. The former focuses on the incorporation of peace education curriculum in the normal routine educative process. Under this approach the learners provided opportunities and are supposed to master certain reflective practices and critical thinking, for promoting peace. While the later approach focuses on imparting peace promoting attitudes among the learners through the non-formal mode of education. Supporters of the former mode are Bar-Tal, (2002); Davies, (2005); Bretherton et al. (2003). They are of the view that schools have the requisite authority, legitimacy, and the means to create a peaceful society. Contrary to this, proponents of the later approach such as Ardizzone, (2001); Burns and Apeslagh, (1996) believe that peace education programs need freedom and flexibility. So when they are addressed in a non-governmental manner, they yield better effectiveness as there are usually little restrictions from the state authorities.

Another school of thought is of the view that an integration of both the approaches would suffice the issue. For a more balance system Simpson, (2004) supports the combination of the two approaches. The same is the stance of Bush and Saltarelli (2000) who assert that one shouldn't rely on just one mode as both are complementary to each other, hence a joint approach be adopted.

For a comprehensive peace education program Fountain (1999) in a publication 'Education in UNICEF' presents some steps and related strategies to be adopted within the educational institutions as well as out of the

educational institutions. At internal level the following aspects are to be addressed: curriculum development strategies, creating better school environment, coupled with pre-service and in-service training sessions for the teachers. Among out-of-the-school activities the following components may be addressed: peace campaigns, training of community leaders, arranging workshops and seminars for parents, establishing peace camps, peace-promoting media programs, publishing peace content through journals and magazines, arranging youth clubs, debate competitions, exhibitions, etc. the strong sides of this approach is that it covers a variety of situations that is instrumental to the realization of a peace-loving society.

Essentials of peace education:

Reardon and Cabezudo, (2002) are of the view that researchers have indicated to a number of essential elements that may be treated as pre-requisites for peace programs. For the sake of precision a glimpse of the same is presented here.

Situational analysis:

the first step is situational analysis in which the ground realities are ascertained before launching any peace education program. At the same time a workable plan for monitoring, assessment, and evaluation may also be determined in advance as the WHO, (1998) suggested.

Teacher training:

regarding this aspect Metis, (1990) suggests that the concerned teachers may be given proper orientation and training about the intended peace program so as to enable them to carry out the proposed program more effectively.

Interactive methodology:

In this respect Stevahn, et al. (1996) opine that an exclusively interactive methodology may be adopted where the learners be encouraged to actively participate and duly contribute to the intended program.

Problem-solving skills: As per the assertion of Tolan and Gurrta, (1994) the learners must be made well-versed in problem solving skills. These skills may be related to real life situations.

Conflict Resolution Skills:

Similarly, skills pertaining to conflict resolution should also be inculcated among the learners so that they may practice the same out the school situations as Metis, (1990) proposed. This should be coupled with the training of the rest of stakeholders such as parents and community leaders on the selected skills.

Gender and cultural sensitivity:

this is another significant aspect of any peace program highlighted by Blakeway, (1997) to have respect for gender and cultural diversity as well as a propriety for the specific age group.

Analysis of conflicts:

Institute for conflict analysis and resolution, (1994) suggested that the learners may be offered opportunities to carry out critical analyses of conflicts ranging from interpersonal to community, and society levels.

Peace-building activities:

This aspect is highlighted by Tolan and Guerra, (1994) who believe that the learners must have exposures to gain an insight into constructive peace-building measures and practices within the confinements of the institution as well as out of the institution in a social setup.

Community support:

For any peace program to succeed community participation is of integral importance hence, the WHO (1998) emphasized the participatory role of the stakeholders such as: political leadership, community representatives at local level, educators, teachers, public health professionals, religious scholars and business professionals.

From the above research-based facts it can be inferred that peace education is a powerful tool for societal and national integration. Pakistan in the current state of affairs is in dire need of this societal integration.

The bricks of national integration:

It is evident from the study of human civilizations that those societies survived that remained the fittest in their respective periods. Societies stand and survive on certain cherished norms and values. Such values are usually promoted and inculcated by the state among the young generation. In this respect some values are: peaceful co-existence individual, group and community levels; respecting human life and property; respecting human rights; exercising democratic attitudes, exhibiting responsible attitudes and being disciplined; maintaining social justice and discarding marginalization; establishing economic fraternity; ensuring high literacy rate; and developing a sense of “We” feelings among the people. In this respect education is means to achieve the mentioned values in any society. This process of education and transformation can be through formal and informal modes of education. Under the formal type societal transformation is brought about by providing proper

leadership to society. Therefore, educational institutions serve as arenas where the attitudes of the learners are shaped for national unity and brotherhood. This aspect was highlighted by Sir Syed Ahmed Khan, in the following words, “the first pre-requisite for the progress of a nation is the brotherhood and unity amongst sections of society” (Hali, n.d).

This is pertinent to mention here that such norms and values are possible only when there exists a peaceful society which may serve as a driving force for transformation, growth, and development. However, the state of Pakistani society is far from being good. Certain very pressing challenges are to be addressed on emergency basis before it goes too late. Some of the outstanding challenges are mentioned below for which a radical societal transformation is the need of the time.

Peace education as a transformative agent:

Peace education is primarily a transformative process. It transforms the human line of thinking thereby paving way for a just social order and economic growth. Turay and English, (2008) believe that the current economic and social order is replete with violence—both physical and structural. Therefore, the need of a culture of peace is mandatory for human prosperity and happiness. This in turn requires a paradigm shift in the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and worldview, of the people that may ensure the establishment of a culture of peace. In this respect peace education embarks upon the basic task of this societal transformation.

The seriousness of the matter is so highlighted by Montessori (1930) when she says, "Those who want war prepare young people for war; but those who want peace, have neglected young children and adolescents so that they are unable to organize them for peace" (<https://www.ipl.org/essay/Peace-Education-In-Maria-Montessoris-Vision>).

In view of the importance and urgency of the matter, all stakeholders and especially decision-makers associated with education system

in Pakistan should resort to initiate short term as well as long term policies and practical measures to steer the Pakistani nation out of the present quagmire. One of such practicable measures would be peace education indeed. This may entail the proper training and grooming of the teachers and the taught in educational institutions so as to equip them with the knowledge, skills, and attitudes to form a transformed vision of the World. This transformed vision may include: universal brotherhood; international understanding; collectivism based on the cherished value of 'live-and-let-live'; rule of law, justice, fair play, and peaceful co-existence with others. This may not be easy however the need is that people should be relieved of their peculiar stereotyped attitudes and narrow prejudices. About this transformative endeavor, Reardon (1988) believes, "If we are to educate for peace, both teachers and students need to have some notion of the transformed world we are educating for" (p.25). For the attainment of such cherished value of peaceful culture it is mandatory to have peace-promoting education system in the country where at first the teachers and then the taught be endowed with the transformed vision of the world. Secondly, peaceful attitudes may be promoted among the masses through various campaigns involving mass media, local leadership, parents, and other stakeholders.

Discussion: This study was about the possible patterns of transformation of the Pakistani society where the nature and structure of peace education was highlighted as an answer to the resolution of the issue. In the first place the challenges were highlighted; out of which violence and terrorism was focused on. Then a mechanism of addressing these challenges especially the issue of violence was discussed. And finally the transformative role of peace education was discussed. It was found that there is a positive relationship between peace related trainings and the related peaceful attitudes as exhibited by Smith, (1999) and Salomon, (2004).

Conclusion:

As highlighted from a number of research-based findings it can be concluded that the challenges with which the Pakistani society is confronted can be addressed by utilizing the transformative role of peace education in both academic and non-academic settings. Peaceful attitudes are to be developed among the inhabitants where both formal and informal modes of education are to be applied. In this respect the role print and electronic media, awareness campaigns such as: seminars, workshops, debates etc. together with a systematic inclusion of peace education in the academic circles need to be focused. The inculcation of peaceful attitudes among all circles of society is the only answer to eradicate the menace of violence and terrorism from the Pakistani society. A high level of awareness usually leads to a high level of attitudes as explored by researchers that awareness about peace is positively correlated with attitude formation.

Recommendations

- i. In view of the peculiar circumstances the government may take necessary steps to make peace related content as an integral part of the teaching-learning process in academia.
- ii. Awareness campaigns regarding peace, in formal and informal mode, may be launched in the country through print and electronic media, seminars, speeches and debates, and peace conferences.
- iii. It may be a better move to launch an 'action plan' in academia for the year 2035 based on the philosophy of peace.
- iv. Establishing a university in the country that may primarily focus on peace, conflict resolution, violence and related concepts.
- v. The positive contribution of some of the NGOs may be utilized in this respect.

- vi. For bringing about a radical shift from the present violence-stricken societal structure to that of a peace-loving society there is a dire need of supporting and facilitating peace researchers in the country, hence the same be facilitated to contribute to this huge task of transformation.

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