

# Integrating Education for Peace and Harmony in Teacher Education Curriculum

Pramod Kumar Pandia<sup>1</sup>

## Abstract

These days the need of integrating education for peace and harmony in teacher education is being felt badly. But how to do it practically calls for a serious and sincere effort. For this, it is vital to have access to an effective curriculum. It also requires a suitable pedagogical methodology, sufficient resource material and above all conducive atmosphere. To implement all this, the dedicated and competent teachers are a must. A very important reason for integrating education for peace and harmony in teacher education curriculum is the fact that the current model of education contributes to the tension, unrest, lopsided development and negativity among students. The present model of education attaches utmost significance to cognitive aspect at the cost of the affective domain. This leads to alienation between head and heart. Students are exposed to excessive competition that gives rise to mutual mistrust, jealousy, hatred etc. They are groomed right from the beginning to be ready for aggressive competition. The individual excellence is encouraged to be achieved at the cost of emotional and relational skills. Young students can't understand why they are in the academic institution. Their understanding is limited to mugging up the lessons. They are hardly taught how to live peacefully and harmoniously. They don't know the significance of co-existence. They don't know about their commitment to the welfare of the mankind. They hardly bother about the environment and other social and moral issues. They also don't know as to what sort of persons they hope to become at the completion of their education. They easily fall prey to violence, crimes, terrorism, corruption, dishonesty. As such the present system of education of this kind is faulty. Students are quite bewildered with the bombardment of the new technological devices, information explosion and violent news by the press and media. Integrating Education for peace and harmony in teacher education curriculum may result in proper focus on cultivation of virtues like self-control, tolerance, selfless service, practice of prayer, harmony, love for all people, helpful to the needy etc

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## Education: Peace and Harmony

The need for integrating education in peace and harmony in the present educational curricula is urgent. But how to do it is serious challenge for the education today.<sup>1</sup> The education cannot be detached from peace and harmony. The present world is facing multidimensional crisis that pose challenges to each and every aspect of life. Mr. Awais Sheikh working as a counsel for Indian prisoners and the president of the Pak-India peace Initiatives rightly highlighted the issues related to peace and harmony that require the most urgent attention of the world "Among the outstanding aspects of this crises are: over militarization, nuclear proliferation, global supply of arms, poverty, hunger, marginalization. Added to these are environmental degradation in the forms of abuse and overuse of nature, pollution, growing paucity of resources,

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<sup>1</sup>Assistant Professor, B.T.T. College, IASE Deemed University, Sardarshahar, Churu, Rajasthan, India.

**E-mail Id:** pkpandia2015@gmail.com

**Orcid Id:** <http://orcid.org/0000-0003-0288-4842>

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denial of human rights, gender bias and injustice, crises in the field of energy, mounting insecurity and violence, terrorism, war, and conflict, drug trafficking and AIDS.<sup>2</sup>

### Peace education

According to the Peace Education Working Group at the UNICEF, peace education refers to the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values to prevent conflict and violence.<sup>3</sup> According to the preamble of the UN charter peace education is directed to the full development of the human personality and to the strengthening of respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms.<sup>4</sup> The significance of peace education for peaceful co-existence is highlighted in the preamble of the UNESCO which states that since war and peace begin in the minds of men, it is in the minds of men that the defenses of peace must be constructed.<sup>5</sup> Peace education is here related with ending war, reducing violence in family, society and politics and developing visions of peace and solidarity among the people of the world. Originally aimed at eliminating the possibility of global extinction through nuclear war, peace education currently addresses the broader objective of building and sustaining a culture of peace. In this global effort, the educators are teaching the values, standards and principles articulated in fundamental UN instruments such as the UN Charter, Human rights documents, the Convention on the Elimination of All forms of Discrimination against Women and many others. Teacher educators are expected to pursue all these issues in their preaching and practices.

Peace is an essential aspect of the basic quality education. It is the process of promoting knowledge, skills, attitudes and value system needed to bring about the desirable changes that will prevent the conflict and violence both overt and structural, to resolve conflict peacefully and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an interpersonal, intrapersonal, national or international level. The 1990 World Peace Declaration on Education for All says that every person- child, youth and adult shall be able to benefit from educational opportunities designed to meet their basic learning needs, these needs comprise both essential learning tools such as literacy, oral expression, numeracy and problem solving and the basic learning content such as knowledge, skills, values and attitudes required by human beings to be able to survive, to develop their full capabilities, to live and work in dignity.

### Role of Teacher and Teacher Educator

The teacher is assigned the task of teaching students directly whereas the teacher educator has to train the future teacher to be competent to teach the students effectively. Hence, the teacher educator has to design such curriculum and training programme that can meet the requirement of the trainee teachers. In the larger context

in the changing global scenario the main aim of 'Teacher Education' will be to help people to develop themselves as responsible citizens of their immediate society and the world who shall not only live conscientiously but also strive toward building a humane mankind.<sup>6</sup> Swami Vivekananda has expressed his views about education thus, 'Education is nothing but a manifestation of the divinity already in man. Man is not just the body or even the combination of the body and the mind. He is essentially the spirit. The aim of our teaching should be to help manifest this spirit in every thought, word and action.'<sup>7</sup> In other words, education should help build up such a personality of the children that they integrate peace and harmony in their life. Imbibing the qualities of good conduct, self-confidence and high values would help students earn a significant place in society. Education without values is like a flower without fragrance. Students should realize that character building is equally important as career building. A good character in life is ultimate thing that stretches person's self-realization.<sup>8</sup>

Explaining the misconception about peace and harmony, it is rightly said that 'There is a popular misconception that they are "better caught than taught". In reality however, values are both caught and taught.'<sup>9</sup> On the part of today's generation it is not so easy to catch the values such as peace and harmony without teachers. We have to present a role model of the values to facilitate students before they can catch them. Explaining the misconception about education Mahatma Gandhi says; the real difficulty is that people have no idea of what education truly is. We assess the value of education in the same manner as we assess the value of land or of shares in the stock-exchange market. We want to provide only such education as would enable the student to earn more. We hardly give any thought to the improvement of the character of the educated.<sup>10</sup>

### Present Scenario and Causes

Peace and harmony are disturbed owing to terrorism, arms race, militarization, distrust, conflict, chauvinism, globalization, materialism, consumerism, commercialization, climatic changes, environmental degradation, violence etc. These have led to terrorism, corruption, insecurities, individualistic life styles, and misuse of science and technology, pessimisms, sense of alienation and other negative consequences. The state of growing up students in India has changed and is further changing fast. No more scientific surveys are required to tell us what our own eyes and ears are witnessing. Our education system basically promotes rat race among our children. They have to read and mug-up entire text book without any understanding of it.<sup>11</sup>

To begin with, the most important things are the family and the society. But the number of dysfunctional families

and collapse of some age long old good traditions are on the rise. Students indulge in crime, violence in educational institutes and outside. Like a double edged sword mass media has senselessly gripped our children. It assaults them with information, views and prejudice in a manner that young minds can hardly discern or judge. Students need to be educated about the significance of harmony and peace with self and others believing in the importance of co-existence. As per the population projection, India will have one of the youngest populations in the world by 2020. The kind of individual we produce in turn determines the kind of society we live in. If we produce individuals who are self-centered, aggressive, competitive and greedy, we cannot have a society that is non-violent, peaceful, cooperative and harmonious. Education is the main catalyst for individual transformation and social change and for that there has to be provisions in the form of teacher education curriculum. It is not possible to bring about basic transformation in society unless the individual is transformed. The kind of education we impart to them will have bearing on peace and harmony in the society. What is urgently needed is the re-examination of the content and process what each school is teaching to children under their charge. Although education is the responsibility of both parent and public yet institutions, due to its nature, ought to take the major responsibility. Teachers have an obligation towards providing education. It cannot be done in an ad hoc and haphazard manner but has to be a conscious and deliberate well planned enterprise with knowledge and forethought. This is possible when the integration for peace and harmony in teacher education curriculum is done.

### **Peace and Harmony and Contemporary Realities**

When there is peace and harmony in India as a nation, it can go forward. The law and order situation in the country is not sometimes very pleasant. Many political parties and organizations spread communalism or other kinds of poisons which pollute our society. Militancy is posing a lot of problems. Some states such as Jammu and Kashmir infected with trans-border terrorism and states infected with Maoism such as Chhattisgarh, Andhra Pradesh, Orissa, West Bengal, Karnataka etc are posing a threat to peace and harmony of India. Such trends are a threat to political stability and progress of the country. When there is an atmosphere of distrust, fear, suspicion, the country cannot progress. Sometimes there are internal problems due to scarcity of essential commodities. Sometimes the prices of essential commodities are sky high. Although there has been a Green Revolution in the country yet a part of population don't get sufficient food to eat. Sometimes peace becomes a casualty in the hands of politicians. Opposition parties create an atmosphere of mistrust and conflict. The issues related to unemployment, poverty, discrimination also disturb peace and harmony of the country.

### **Need of Peace and Harmony Integrated with Teacher Education Curriculum**

The whole enterprise of education is ostensibly dependent upon the development of values such as peace, harmony, values and positive qualities. Devoid of the potential to nurture values like peace and harmony, education does not have any meaning for the country. No one can possibly neglect the importance of education for peace and harmony. The formative years of youth in institutions are crucial. Whatever is learnt and imbibed determines how students will live out their lives in future. Teacher education curriculum helps to provide a road map to teacher educators to guide trainee teachers and youths along a route to live a life based on principles which are significant both as an individual as well as collective entity.

Peace and harmony Based-Education is highly needed in our modern society because our lives have become more miserable. There is a great question mark looming against the very survival of mankind. At present the quantity of education has considerably increased, but the quality has decreased. Why? The number of educated people has reached at a high level, but murder, hatred and selfishness have spread out like wildfire everywhere. Why? Many institutions are opened, but only few civilized people are produced. Why? Degrees are available for all, but the dignity has gone down. Why? Trained people are produced from many institutions, but sincere people are very few. Why? Many books are written; much research is done; many professional achievements are attained, but humanity is threatened. Why? Therefore, we need peace and harmony Based-Education. People want to have quick acquisition of position and wealth by whatever means, fair or foul; good/bad has been the soul motive of the products of such a defective system of education. The so called educated resort to socially destructive and personally devastating ways of coping their stress as evident by increased rate of crime, alcoholism, drug addiction, suicides, accidents, incidents of self-harm, running away from home, depression, low self-esteem etc. Ultimately what this means is the fact that there is a general decline in the quality of life and absence of morality creativity. The way organized crimes such as financial frauds and terrorist acts are committed by some of the best minds endowed with the best of educational and technical attainments speak volume of the need of the teacher education curriculum.

Plato wrote in his book Republic that the trait of an educated person is the willingness to use one's knowledge and skills to solve the problems of society. Education must imbue children with a proactive social conscience. The current resurgence of interest in education as a powerful means to inculcate peace and harmony among students is also due to the fast disappearance of peace and harmony in our country. Despite considerable progress made, our society

is shaken by conflicts, terrorism, corruption and violence. Value education has a capacity to transform a diseased mind into a very young, fresh, innocent, healthy, natural and attentive mind. The transformed mind is capable of higher sensitivity and a heightened level of perception. This leads to fulfillment of the evolutionary role in man and in life.<sup>12</sup> Key values such as peace and harmony at school stage must be anchored in the framework of student's holistic development as a human being and as a responsible member/citizen of the society. Peace and harmony must be rooted in the contemporary contexts, various social issues and concerns like environmental conservation, inter-faith harmony, gender equality, mutual appreciation for multiple identities in the era of globalization, inclusivity, increasing influence of science and technology, mass media and so on. Academic institutions are the microcosm of the world.

### **Outlook of Practicing Teachers towards Curriculum**

Teachers cannot afford to take as burden or as an add-on programme/activity of peace and harmony education. They cannot take it as yet another task by schools already busy with the hard work of improving retention and academic achievement of students. Education for peace and harmony should be considered as a central core in the entire life of the students. Some aspect of human values can be dealt within the prescribed periods of the time table, but most of the vital aspects have to be kept in view and dealt within the whole school and home life as occasions arise. Some of the aspects can be taken in the larger functions of the whole school like daily school prayer, social service camps, sports meet, festival days, special days in memory of great people, National Days, etc. All teachers are teachers of human values at all times of school like, practicing what they teach or preach. Internalization of value in thought, word and deed, is the goal and not mere knowledge of it.<sup>13</sup>

### **Pedagogy of Peace and Harmony based Education for Trainees**

The pedagogy of education for peace and harmony for pupil teachers requires a shift from the conventional pedagogy. Attitudes, values and skills cannot be developed by forcing trainees to memorize words, and also not by impositions. Concrete experiences and opportunities to think about, to reflect, critically evaluate, appreciate one's own values and those of others, can help internalization of values like peace and harmony. Some general pedagogical strategies such as community awareness, rallies, street dramas, silent sitting, role plays, group activities and projects, group discussion, value clarification, diary writing, reflective practice etc. are worth trying. The stage specific focus and significance of using stage appropriate strategies from primary to secondary/senior secondary levels has to be stressed. It highlights as to how school leadership has impact on the effectiveness of inculcating peace and

harmony. What a school needs is not just leaders in the conventional sense but people who are willing to take the responsibility to create an environment and allow others to feel empowered. The true leadership requires the act of facilitation, creating positive environment and relationships in schools. Those who are in power at different levels must make a difference.

Education programme has a positive impact on the development of pre-service teachers understanding of quality teaching skills and knowledge. The teaching and practice of a peace and harmony based pedagogy positively impact on pre-service teachers with increase of knowledge, skills and confidence demonstrated on the quality teaching dimensions of intellectual quality, a supportive classroom environment, recognition of difference, connectedness and values. Some findings were reinforced through the comparison of pre-service teachers who had participated in the explicit peace and harmony based pedagogical approach, with a sample of pre-service teachers who had not engaged in this same peace and harmony based pedagogical approach. A solid peace and harmony based pedagogy and practice can enhance pre-service teachers' performance. The use of a values-based pedagogy in pre-service teacher education to enhance quality teaching knowledge and skills has contributed theoretically to the field of educational research, as well having practical implications for teacher education institutions and teacher education.<sup>14</sup> The whole realm of activities and programmes traditionally known as co-curricular activities related to peace and harmony conducted in school can have tremendous impact on the learning of values by students.

### **Educational Commissions on Peace and Harmony Based Education**

Concerns for peace and harmony based education are reflected in our key policy documents from time to time. After independence the National Commission of Secondary Education (1952-53) was a significant landmark in emphasizing character building as the defining goal of education. The supreme end of the educative process should be the training of the character and personality of students. They should be able to realize their full potentialities and contribute to the well-being of the community.<sup>15</sup> The Report of the University Education Commission (1962) noted; If we exclude spiritual training in our institutions, we would be untrue to our whole historical development.<sup>16</sup> The Report went on to make a case, not for religious or moral education, but for evolving 'a national faith, a national way of life based on the Indian outlook on religion, free from dogmas, rituals and assertions.'<sup>17</sup> The Education Commission of 1964-66 put the spotlight on education and national development, from which perspective it identified the 'absence of provision for education in social, moral and spiritual values as a serious defect in the curriculum. The



Commission recommended that these values be taught with the help, wherever possible, of the ethical teachings of great religions.<sup>18</sup> Agreeing with the Sri Prakash Committee Report, it recommended direct moral instruction for which one or two periods a week should be set aside in the school time-table.<sup>19</sup>

The National Policy on Education (1986) expressed concern over the erosion of essential values and an increasing cynicism in society. It advocated turning education into a forceful tool for the cultivation of social and moral values. Education should foster universal and eternal values, oriented towards the unity and integration of our people.<sup>20</sup> The Programme of Action of 1992 tried to integrate the various components of value education into the curriculum at all stages of school education, including the secondary stage. The Government of India's report on Value Based Education (Chavan's Committee Report, 1999) submitted in both houses of Parliament, provided impetus to resume work on value orientation of education. The National Curriculum Framework for School Education (2000), echoing the National Policy on Education (1986), lamented the erosion of the essential, social, moral and spiritual values and an increase in cynicism at all levels.<sup>21</sup>

Against this backdrop, the framework advanced a plea to integrate value education into the curriculum asserting that 'Schools can and must strive to resolve and sustain the universal and eternal values oriented towards the unity and integration of the people enabling them to realize the treasure within. It further stated that the 'the entire educational process has to be such that the boys and girls of this country are able to see good, love good and do good and grow into mutually tolerant citizens. The National Curriculum Framework, 2005 echoed the vision of education where values are inherent in every aspect of schooling. The framework articulates the need to reaffirm our commitment to the concept of equality amidst diversity, mutual interdependence of humans to promote values that foster peace, humaneness and tolerance in a multi cultural society. Enabling children to experience dignity, confidence to learn, development of self-esteem and ethics, need to cultivate children's creativity, making children sensitive to the environment and the need for fostering democracy as a way of life rather than only as a system of governance as well as the values enshrined in the Constitution assume significance in the framework. It further opines that independence of thought and action, capacity of value based decision making, sensitivity to others well being and feelings should form the basis of rationale commitment to values. The NCF, 2005 particularly emphasizes Education for Peace as one of the national and global concerns. As the position article on Education for Peace prepared by the National Focus Group as part of NCF, 2005 puts it, 'Peace is contextually appropriate and pedagogical gainful point of coherence of values.<sup>22</sup> Peace

concretizes the purpose of values and motivates their internalization. Education for Peace has been considered as a strategy to make value education operative. It aims at equipping students with the values and attitudes required for living in harmony with oneself and others as responsible citizens. The shift of focus, over the decades, from religious and moral education to education for peace, via value education, parallels the shifting sense and sensitivities in the larger context of education. The acceptance of education for peace as a necessary ingredient of holistic education in the western context was driven by deepening anxieties about the rise and spread of violence. A similar pattern is obtained in our context as well. It is in such perspective; value education is subsumed in Education for Peace. If the philosophy and principles as articulated in NCF, 2005 and the position article on Education for Peace are put into practice, value oriented education will indeed occupy the centre stage.

## Conclusion

Values such as peace and harmony have long been recognized as a key element of education for the development of mankind. Peace and harmony are considered as vital inputs for the holistic growth of human beings as well as society. At present there is a crisis of peace and harmony due to the internal restlessness as well as due to some political, social, economic, cultural, geographical factors. Teachers are the true builders of a nation and they can build the nation strong only by preparing good students who are to be the next decision makers of the nation. As such it becomes highly imperative that peace and harmony have to be integrated in the teacher education curriculum. The idea is that when there is a system put in place to prepare such students, teacher educators as well as teachers find it convenient to prepare such students who are the apostle of peace and harmony. Education for peace and harmony is very important in a country like India where there are a lot of complexities of every sort. The challenge of teaching value education can be met if we integrate it successfully. The pedagogy should involve students as active learners who are able to resolve the problems of the country constructively. The curriculum and pedagogy should help learners understand the world in which they live and realize the importance of peace and harmony as individuals, groups and nations. The teacher educators have to design and transact the curriculum in such a manner that the future teachers don't take peace and harmony as a burden. Instead they take it as a sacred duty to realize the ultimate aim of education to strengthen the social fabric of the world.

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