

The Heart and Soul of School Curriculum

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Abstract

Although peace education has been defined in many ways, the scope for its clarity is still sought by the stakeholders of education. Schools are implicitly public service oriented. They are meant to serve the society. The paper focuses on the set of values to be demonstrated in the school's day to day functioning that would bring about peace and harmony not only in school but also in society it serves.. Teaching that occurs in school is considered as a tri-polar process that includes the learners foremost, teachers next and the content – be it knowledge related, motor skill related or attitude related – the essential third part. The author looks at some characteristics that ideally should be present in **learner, the teacher and the content** for peace values to be disseminated and why it forms the heart and soul of curriculum.

Keywords

peace education, teaching learning process, learning experiences

Introduction

Many researchers and educationalists have stressed the utmost relevance of educating our school going children for peace values. And so the concept of peace education has been studied diligently over the past few decades. Although peace education has been defined in many ways, the scope for its clarity is still sought by the stakeholders of education. It ought to be the heart and soul of school curriculum. The author too has here tried to conceptualize peace education, so that the curriculum adopted by schools can be studied from this perspective of peace education.

Schools are implicitly public service oriented. They are meant to serve the society. Whereas we find schools nowadays are becoming nurseries of competition, ensnaring investors instead of people deeply involved in education, over worked teachers who are made spend as much time documenting work on minute by minute basis as on classroom teaching, the curriculum acknowledging and supporting mainly science subjects and not humanities

and more such. In this scenario, schools have become more like corporate organizations. The systems and sub-systems of corporate organizations are mimicked in schools too. It has structural system which determines mission, vision, goals and objectives that could be unique to each school set up. It has the administrative system which comprises planning, organizing, controlling, and coordinating to help in smooth transaction of school curriculum. It also has a social system that includes all the personnel involved with the school and their communication with each other.

In the context of school, unlike corporate, desired achievement or success need not depend on just a 'system' type of functioning or on a set of policy for school discipline, it requires in place a set of values demonstrated in its day to day functioning that would bring about peace and harmony in school and outside school.

The school curriculum of any state is inherently meant to develop good human beings. It is needless to say that a 'curriculum' stands for all the activities that is carried out in the school premises and outside with the intention of educating the learners. Curriculum of school level education needs to promote peace values among the students. One needs to analyze whether the curricular and co- curricular activities conducted in school stress on peace values, whether the textbook content is utilized well in transaction of peace values, whether the 'hidden curriculum' finds a place in day to day teaching in schools. This paper tries to focus on the elements necessary for peace values in the teaching learning process that occurs in the classroom.

Transaction of Peace Values in Teaching Learning Process

Teaching is considered as a tri-polar process that includes the learners foremost, teachers next and the content – be it knowledge related, motor skill related or attitude related – the essential third part. Teaching is interplay of these three. In analogous manner the success of teaching peace values or peace education depends on certain ideal characteristics present in the individuals involved and a well defined curriculum which provides scope for transaction of peace values. Developing the whole child cannot happen when education in school entirely focuses only on the pursuit of conceptual and procedural knowledge ignoring the values inherent in them. It can neither happen if some basic characteristics are absent or considered insignificant in two set of individuals involved –the teacher and the student.

The following figure represents teaching or providing learning experiences as a tri-polar process, in which the three entities are constantly interacting.

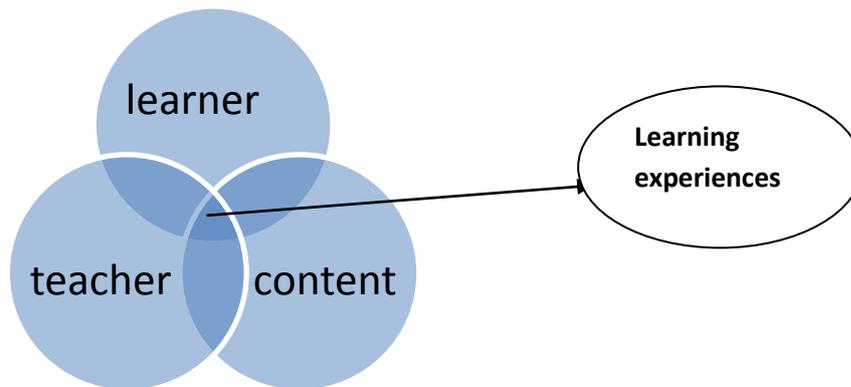


Figure 1: Learning experiences and peace values

Peace education, according to the author is an amalgamation of the qualities present in learners and teachers as well as the potency of content of the learning experiences. The content present in textbooks is as important as the various encounters between the learner and the teacher in curricular and co-curricular activities. The interchanges among the learners and teacher offers scope to identify instances that promote peace values among children. They can move from personal scale to school, community and global scale in a widening sphere of influence. ‘A teacher who is oriented to the perspective of peace can introduce such opportunities for reflecting at these scales and identifying the inter linkages between them (NCERT, 2005).

Characteristics Essential in Learner

The author suggests the following characteristics ideally be present in **learner** for peace values to be perceptible. They are

1. Taking initiative

The psychological environment of classroom is crucial in supporting a peace oriented behavior among students. The interest and desire to learn motivates children to take initiatives in class. They can be demonstrated by children in the class in many ways.

2. Integrity

Truthfulness and sincerity in doing the tasks helps children achieve success. It is a quality which promotes satisfaction from accomplished tasks and in turn peace of mind.

3. **Responsibility**

Being conscious of one's responsibility in following the collective goal of the group is conducive to state of peace.

4. **Sense of respect**

Respect for teachers and valuing the knowledge gained creates the ground for bettering oneself and feel successful.

5. **Cooperation**

Classroom tasks require cooperation among the learners. When unable to make friends in a group the child becomes an isolate and gets frustrated and quarrelsome. Children are by nature friendly and sociable. It has to be capitalized by the teacher by giving group tasks so that they learn to live in harmony with others

6. **Flexibility**

The classroom is a dynamic place and one should have an open mind and resilience to accommodate the unprecedented or the unexpected. This is another quality if developed in learners will promotes peace.

7. **Industriousness**

Remaining active and efficient in class tasks helps child to learn better and succeed. Assigned work ought to promptly taken up and diligently completed to the satisfaction of the teachers. It is conducive to nurture of peace values.

Characteristics Essential in Teachers

The author suggests the following characteristics ideally be present in **teachers** for peace values to be perceptible. They are

1. **Resourcefulness**

Classrooms can be challenging sometimes, and unless the teacher is resourceful and innovative she will not be able to manage the teaching learning process. The incidents that occur in class as well as the textbook material can become instrumental in the hands of the teacher for conveying peace values and their importance.

2. **Fairness**

Children expect teachers to be fair and reasonable with them. When teacher treats all her students equally according to the existing rules it enhances the perception of peace.

3. **Vigilance**

Teacher has to be very observant to tackle the budding problems. Vigilance and timely action on the part of the teacher can reduce the flare up of disruptions and consequently maintain the peace in the class.

4. **Self efficacy**

Confidence and belief in completing the tasks and the fulfillment of the learning objectives improves the self efficacy of teachers in dealing with problems of classrooms. The teacher has to think about continuous improvement in the service offered by her.

5. **Future Vision**

Just as a brick layer envisions the final structure, the teacher need to focus on the end product that would be created through her guidance. If creation of humane individuals is the vision a teacher has then the classroom would be a place where they are nurtured

6. **Responsibility**

A teachers' responsibility extends beyond the classrooms. She is a care-taker in the true sense. Safeguarding the interests of her wards is foremost duty and its execution brings harmony in the class. Sincerity and hard work are outcomes of a feeling of thoughtful responsibility. It extends to working with colleagues for the purpose of achieving the school goals.

Characteristics Essential in Learning Experiences and Learning Materials

The author suggests that the **learning experiences and learning materials** need to project the following characteristics for peace values to be perceptible. They are

1. **Relevance to times**

Providing such experiences keeping with current times is required for students to tackle future problems.

2. **3Hs – head, heart and hands**

The curricular activities which have been for convenience bifurcated into curricular and co- curricular activities but essentially they are designed to develop the 3Hs – head, heart and hands

3. **Embracing the entire world**

Diversity is universal; differences in culture can be unified under the surface with compassion and understanding. Acceptance of all is the key to peace in world.

4. **Utility to self**

Experiences that benefit is always sought by people and understanding how learning experiences shape one's thought and actions bring satisfaction.

5. **Promote optimism**

Any curricular activity has to have an innate sense of optimism, as humans always aspire to create a better world.

Discussion

The idea of peace education is as wide as any topic in the field of education. Education at all levels needs to include peace perspective in curriculum. It is valid concern as mankind has ignored the perspective of peace in the education of its youngsters. That is why youth coming out of schools and colleges are unable to face challenges in the real world. They show more aggression whether it is home, workplace or community. They have less understanding about how to lead a harmonious and peaceful life. Formal education system tends to emphasize the acquisition of knowledge to the detriment of other types of learning. But it is vital now to conceive education in more encompassing fashion. The purpose of education can be served only if there is a well planned and well drawn out curriculum which would bring about an all round development in the individual – his mental, physical and emotional well being. In other words it is creation of good human beings with peace and love in their hearts and mind.

Conclusion

Creating a world where peace and harmony begins with the children. In the words of Mahatma Gandhi “if we are to teach real peace in this world and if we are to carry on a real war against war, we shall have to begin with the children.” If school curriculum gives a central place to peace we shall have a better world in the future. Educating for peace is distinctive approach in transforming education by addressing the present lacuna or shortcomings of school education. The idea of peace education is grounded in ideals of social justice, equal access and sustainability. It is the schools that adopt progressive and relevant

changes bring social transformation and so peace education ought to be the heart and soul of school curriculum.

References

NCERT. 2005. *National Curriculum Framework 2005*. National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi.