

Chapter 12

Promoting Peace through Democratizing Schools on Gandhian Vision

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ABSTRACT

The more one realizes about himself, the more he appreciates about the other. The need of having a harmonious mind and life with the nature through an education powered by peace and non-violence is stressed in this chapter. An attempt is made to advocate ways to prepare children in accomplishing peace through instructional principles implied by Gandhian philosophy. Classroom practices proposed herein embrace peace education strategies to develop tolerance in children for the survival in the global society. It also deals with the classroom practices that can be designed to find the “self” in a child to make him self-sufficient, natural and complete. A student-centered approach, which comprises strategies like collaborative learning, cooperative learning, discussion forums, and problem solving strategies not only strengthens the human relationships but also creates a sense of unity in diversity.

INTRODUCTION

Education by its definition is the process that makes an individual by developing knowledge, skill, attitude and values. Peace is defined as the freedom from disturbance, a state of tranquility, or one’s introspective sense or concept of being him/herself. It is the state of mind, society, culture and living; the balance between desire and reality. Therefore, peace education is supposed to address the prevention and resolution of all sorts of conflicts and violence from an individual level to societal and global level. In the present era, peace education is an essential component of basic education. Everyone has to learn micro as well as macro levels strategies needed to reduce the adverse effects of all sorts of violence- from wars to the destruction of environment. Peace education emphasizes peaceful values upon which a society is being

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shaped and developed. It attempts to nourish the instincts of individuals to have a meaningful and life enhancing existence (Harris, 1993). This chapter discusses a few strategies emanating from perspectives of Gandhian thoughts on education that are specific as well as critical to incorporate peace education within school curriculum.

BACKGROUND

In order to obtain a concrete understanding on the various aspects of peace education, authors attempt to provide the current outlook on the topic. Since, around the globe, peace education has been observed with diverse viewpoints and objectives, it is worth to know the different dimensions, goal settings, and strategies for its implementation. In the following sub sections, the authors provide a variety of definitions on peace education, and the major goals and strategies discussed by prominent organizations and personalities in order to promote peace among children through educational activities.

Peace education is of appropriate importance in all societies and has been perceived with due respect globally. According to UNICEF, peace education is the process of promoting knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to bring out the required behavior modification in an individual in order to create conditions beneficial to peace in a level that ranges from intrapersonal to international (Fountain, 1999). Staehr (1974) defined peace education as the initiation of learning processes aiming at the actualization and rational resolution of conflicts regarding man as a subject of action. According to the Japanese educator Mushakoji, peace education is concerned with peaceless situations (1974). From another point of view, peace education is the learning intended to prepare the learners to contribute toward the achievement of peace (Reardon, 1988). The ultimate global agenda of peace education for children in the 21st century is to ensure that the resources of communities must be utilized for promoting and nurturing tolerance, and to challenge the culture of violence that intimidates families and communities.

Peace education strives that a sense of tolerance must be developed within the individual. For that purpose, a child must be educated in such a way that he/she receives enhancement of self-awareness and spiritual awareness (Harris, 2003). The rationale for peace education is to make a child responsible to lead life in a free society with the consciousness of peace and tolerance (Convention on the Rights of the Child, 1989). Children should be able to recognize their rights on gender sensitivity, diversity, and essential life skills to have balanced relationships to one another in the society (Fountain, 1999). Therefore, the instructional strategies developed must promote participation, cooperation and respect for differences among children with an emphasis on problem-solving skills.

According to Reardon, peace education is an integrated holistic education with a focus on the human context of relationships, consciousness in ecological systems in an environment of organic and developmental learning (Reardon, 1988). Peace education highlights the development of attitudes and values, and translates them into observable behaviors. Effective peace education is a long-term process as one can have a behavioral change over an adequate period. Behavior is nested within the context of one's family, peer group, community and the larger society. In a school climate, peace education must develop behavior to be peaceful and respectful in making relationships among individuals. The abiding goal of peace education is to build a commitment to nonviolence in the minds of children. Peace education thus is to render proper curricular activities such that children are empowered in bringing up constructive changes globally through logical means.

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