

Teaching of Peace Education at University level: An Analytical Study

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Abstract

The study was conducted to know the views of University students about the teaching of peace education at university level. The type of research was descriptive conducted with survey method. The objectives of the study were to 1) Explore the views of the youth studying in various Universities of Lahore about teaching of peace education. 2) Compare the views of students of public and private sector Universities 3) compare the views of regular and special education students about the teaching of peace education. The population of the study comprised of University students studying in the Universities of Lahore. A number of 250 University students were selected by applying random sampling technique. The educational qualification of the respondents were graduation and post-graduation. The structured questionnaire consisted of 15 questions was developed to collect the data. The five point Likert scale was used to illicit the students' responses. Frequency of the responses along with percentage was calculated. The independent sample t-test analysis was run to see the difference between the opinion of special and general education teachers and students of public and private sector universities. Majority of the students responded that teaching of peace education is need of time and will reduce the aggression in the youth. The study has recommended teaching of peace education as a part of regular curriculum at university level.

Keywords: Peace education, higher education, special education

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Introduction

The Peace Education Working Group at UNICEF provides a concise and comprehensive definition of peace education as the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes, and values needed to bring about behavior changes that will enable children, youth, and adults to prevent conflict and violence, both overt and structural; to resolve conflict peacefully; and to create the conditions conducive to peace, whether at an intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national, or international level (UNESCO, 2002).

Peace education is the process of acquiring the values, the knowledge and developing the attitudes, skills, and behaviors to live in harmony with oneself, with others, and with the natural environment (Valino, 2012). Ian Harris and John Synott have described peace education as a series of "teaching encounters" that draw from people, their desire for peace, nonviolent alternatives for managing conflict, and skills for critical analysis of structural arrangements that produce and legitimize injustice and inequality. A culture of peace must replace the current culture of violence if we and our common home, planet Earth, are to survive (Valino, 2012).

Pakistan is currently a prime example of a country that lacks peace; its culture is fragmented by differences of class, economics, politics, ideologies, religion, language, territory, caste, and color. The younger generation, particularly the school-going children, are influenced by this kind of turbulence. They experience this culture through their families, schooling education, and the societal channels of communication, such as the mass media, and other cultural agencies and products (Bar-Tal & Rosen, 2009). Williams (2004) states that violence affects schools at multiple levels by attacking individuals, communities, and systems, and "weakening their sense of agency" (p. 471). Murithi (2009) maintains that the type of world that we as human beings create in the future will depend on our ability to reject violent and militaristic approaches to solving problems. Peace education should therefore be a central pillar to improving human relations in the family, in schools, at the workplace, within countries and across borders (p. 223).

Arguably, in order to improve the future human relations in all walks of life, the young generation has to play a pivotal role. This is the generation which has to lead in the future and can be expected to cultivate a peaceful world environment. Hence, the kind of knowledge and experience received by this generation at their schooling age today will exert a huge influence on the visualization of a peaceful world society in the future. Dewey (1900) is of the opinion that: when the school introduces and trains each child of society into membership within such a little community, saturating him with the spirit of service, and providing him with the instruments of effective self-direction, we shall have the deepest and best guaranty of a larger society which is worthy, lovely, and harmonious. (P. 29).

As an integrated human society, we need to acknowledge our differences but to look past them and find common ground with the entire world's people. In this critical situation, it should be our paramount priority to understand how to minimize, prevent, or eliminate violence. Furthermore, if we wish to concentrate on peace, we must learn how to suspend ourselves in the present and focus on the future we ultimately wish to work on together. The current consensus among peace theorists is that peace is not a state of being to be found somewhere in the future or at any time, but a reference to processes and qualities regarding our relationships with self and others, manifesting themselves in perception, reaction, affection, and action.

Therefore, the importance of peace education at the school level is unequivocal for the cultivation of a safe and prospering future for the world. Peace education in classrooms aims at equipping students with necessary knowledge and attitudes through respectful, tolerant, participatory, and cooperative techniques and methods (Deveci, Yilmaz, Kardag, 2008). Through peace education, students are encouraged to shoulder their own responsibilities. So, peace education should be regarded as an opportunity to improve the social well-being and responsibilities of both teachers and students. It starts with an honest willingness to engage teachers and educators in the learning process, which is an essential and powerful way to transform their selves individually and collectively. It fosters real self-learning and breaks up cultural generalizations (stereotypes) that fossilize our own perspectives, beliefs, and assumptions (Morton, 2007).

"Peace education" has recently gained attention all around the world (Yilmaz, 2003). As technological developments have squeezed our world into an interdependent global village where each part is in a position to influence the others in a blink of the eye, peace education studies and initiatives at the school level are increasingly relevant and necessary. In economically developed societies, school leadership is increasingly involved in the initiation of policies and structures for peace education in their schools. Comparably, in developing societies like Pakistan, peace education at the school and higher education level seems crucial under the prevailing socio-political circumstances but so far, less effort has been made at the school level.

Why to teach peace education in Pakistan? Situation of peace is threatening in Pakistan as a wave of terrorism have been spread all over the country. Terrorist activities in country particularly in tribal and Northern areas forced millions of people to leave their home and destroyed future of their children. According to the media reports, more than 4,000 people have been killed in over 250 suicide attacks, and many thousands more live in fear of the next attack.

Countless boys and girls schools have either been destroyed or threatened by militants. At least 1000 schools alone in the Northern districts of KPK including 231 ruined, while 431 partially damaged only in Swat of which 248 were girls' schools. Girls discouraged by the extremists from going to schools. The destruction of schools has forced millions of girls' students to left the schools and stay at home. In Bajaur, by mid-2008 all girls schools were either destroyed or closed. In North and South Waziristan, 180 girls community schools, established with international assistance, were forced shut (Zuberi, 2014).

Situation is quiet obvious after recent suicide bombing and also other attacks in Quetta, Lahore, Karachi and other areas of Pakistan. It is inevitable now to move towards the building of a full-fledged curriculum on peace education. The literature shows that peace education can be introduced as a separate subject, or spread across the curriculum, or be a whole -school approach.

Curriculum of peace education. The previous literature shows that some of Islamic countries have developed curriculum for teaching peace to the students represents peace education from an Islamic and perspective. It promotes a positive, comprehensive peace encompassing peaceful relations with God the Creator, with oneself, with one's fellow humans, and with the environment. The *Curriculum* teaches communal peace in accordance with the positive Islamic approach, namely the absence of war and discrimination and the necessity of justice in society. This curriculum emphasizes that peace is neither a subjugation to situations nor a passive acceptance of injustice, discrimination, and war, but rather a recognition of these problems and addressing them in a peaceful manner. The *Curriculum* also stresses the importance of process and ends, since peace is both process and results, as reflected in active involvement of students in a system of learning by doing.

Teaching peace education at university level. Keeping in view the previous discussion in order to improve the future human relations in all walks of life, the young generation has to play a pivotal role. This is the generation which has to lead in the future and can be expected to cultivate a peaceful world environment. Hence, the kind of knowledge and experience received by this generation at their adolescent age today will exert a huge influence on the visualization of a peaceful world society in the future.

Objectives of the study

The study was conducted to achieve the following objectives.

- Explore the views of the youth studying in various Universities of Lahore about teaching of peace education.

- Compare the views of students of public and private sector Universities.
- Compare the views of regular and special education students about the teaching of peace education.

Significance of Teaching Peace education

Peace education is a necessity, since conflict is the natural law of life. Conflict can have both positive and negative impacts, suggesting that conflict may function as a means to encourage initiative, creativity, and compromise, but it can also lead to violence that causes destruction. Peace education tries to arouse the students' creativity in resolving conflict without violence so that conflict can have positive impacts for life.

According to Aristotle war is easier than peace. Peace must be given a *chance*, it must be *achieved*, and that is hard work. It is particularly hard *inner* work, because war is not only *man-made*, but also *mind-made*. That's why curriculum for teaching peace education is required. Therefore, there is need to develop a curriculum for peace education by taking guidelines from the Islamic and socio-cultural values like the other Islamic countries have developed.

Procedure of the study

Descriptive type of research conducted with survey method. Population of the study consisted of students studying in the various public and private sector universities of Lahore at post-graduation level. A number of 211 students was selected using purposive sampling technique from the four universities of Lahore city. A questionnaire consisted of 15 items developed as an instrument. A likert type scale was used to illicit the responses of the students. The respondents were provided five options to respond i.e., strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly disagree. All of the respondents were studying in the regular programs of Universities. The age of the students ranged from 19- to 26 year. The educational qualification of the respondents was graduation (B.A/B.Sc), post -graduation (M.A & M.Phil.) and Ph.D. A questionnaire consisted of 15 items was developed as an instrument of the study. A Likert type scale was used to illicit the responses of the students. The respondents were provided five options to respond i.e., strongly disagree, disagree, neutral, agree, strongly disagree. Reliability of the questionnaire was .87 (Cronbach alpha).

Findings of the Study**Table 1***Frequency of the respondents on statements*

Statements	Strongly Agree		Agree		Neutral		Disagree		Strongly Disagree	
	Fre.	%	Fre.	%	Fre.	%	Fre.	%	Fre.	%
The subject of peace education need to be part of core curriculum.	78	37.0%	104	49.3%	16	7.6%	2	0.9%	11	5.2%
It is need of the time to educate students about the peace education.	100	47.4%	88	41.7%	12	5.7%	7	3.3%	4	1.9%
Teaching peace education will harmonize the intra-societal relationships.	50	23.7%	112	53.1%	32	15.2%	12	5.7%	5	2.4%
Teaching peace education will reduce the aggression among students at University level.	73	34.6%	88	41.7%	27	12.8%	18	8.5%	5	2.4%
Teaching peace education will enhance tolerance	75	35.5%	94	44.5%	29	13.7%	7	3.3%	6	2.8%

among the students at University level.										
Teaching peace education will stabilize mutual respect and cooperation among students at University level.	58	27.5%	116	55.0%	24	11.4%	10	4.7%	3	1.4%
Teaching peace education will be helpful in creating non-violent culture at University level.	54	25.6%	103	48.8%	30	14.2%	11	5.2%	13	6.2%
Teaching peace education will improve the overall observation of human rights.	48	22.7%	102	48.3%	46	21.8%	10	4.7%	5	2.4%
Teaching peace education at University level will reduce the current wave of warfare in country.	40	19.0%	90	42.7%	41	19.4%	22	10.4%	18	8.5%
Teaching peace	41	19.4%	94	44.5%	48	22.7%	17	8.1%	11	5.2%

education at University level will reduce the sectarianism in country.										
Teaching peace education at University level will promote the concept of human dignity among the youth.	61	28.9%	101	47.9%	30	14.2%	15	7.1%	4	1.9%
Teaching peace education at university level will stabilize the democratic culture in Pakistan.	37	17.5%	106	50.2%	34	16.1%	21	10.0%	13	6.2%
Teaching peace education at University level will create the environment of security and peace.	58	27.5%	98	46.4%	33	15.6%	18	8.5%	4	1.9%
Teaching peace education at university level will improve the image of Pakistan at	74	35.1%	99	46.9%	26	12.3%	2	9%	10	4.7%

global level										
Teaching	76	36.0%	84	39.8%	36	17.1%	10	4.7%	5	2.4%
peace										
education at										
university										
level will										
serve as a										
guarantor of										
sustainable										
future for										
upcoming										
generations.										

Over all students were agreed with that there is a need of time to introduce the peace education as a separate subject of curriculum at University level. It has been observed during survey that most of the students were in favor that teaching peace education will reduce aggression among the youth and will enhance co-operative behavior among youth. The study further revealed that in view of University students teaching peace education will create soft image of Pakistan at global level.

The independent sample t-test shows a significant difference in the views of persons with and without disabilities regarding teaching peace education at University level (sig=.01, value=3.45). On the basis of independent sample t-test a significant difference of opinion was found between the views of public and private sector University students (sig=.000, chisquare value=3.98). The students studying in public sector Universities were more in favor of teaching peace education at University level as compared to students of private sector Universities.

Conclusion

Pakistan is currently a prime example of a country that lacks peace; its culture is fragmented by differences of class, economics, politics, ideologies, religion, language, territory, caste, and color. The younger generation, particularly the school-going children, are influenced by this kind of turbulence. They experience this culture through their families, schooling education, and the societal channels of communication, such as the mass media, and other cultural agencies and products (Bar-Tal & Rosen, 2009). According to Murithi (2009) the type of world that we as human beings create in the future will depend on our ability to reject violent and militaristic approaches to solve problems. Therefore peace education may be a central pillar to improve human relations in the family, in schools, at the workplace, within countries and across borders (p. 223).

Recommendations of the study

On the basis of findings of the study it can be stated that in the contemporary era of mistrust, fear, anxiety, suspicion, hostility and violence, it is dire need of the time to introduce and teach peace education not only at University level but also at college and school level.

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