



Demystifying the Dichotomy of Peace and Education towards Preventing Conflict for Global Peace

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Abstract

Knowledge is freedom that is essentially embedded in education in all its forms; basic to the highest echelons of academics in all the nuances. The advancement of communication technology has decisively bridged the socio-cultural gaps and diminished the geo-physical distance paradoxically, the colossal amount of available information has been conducive in creating more fissures generating the nomenclature of 'us' and 'them'. The leaders, policy decision makers and executing authorities have apparently narrowed down the goal factors for their respective needs to establish 'power' disregarding the agenda of peaceful coexistence. Negotiations fail and debates flair up increasing the number of unresolved issues impacting people's lives in terms of their basic human rights. The global effort of developing the concept of 'Peace Education' whereby progressive educators worldwide are teaching the values, standards and principles articulated in fundamental UN instruments is introduced. This paper shall attempt to examine whether there is; a) any imperative for separating 'peace' from 'education' per se; b) any need for reinventing the wheel through patchwork and vertical reforms towards categorizing 'peace education' and c) scope of standardizing the essential elements of peace and harmony within the education systems from primary to higher academics. Education has evolved into a mass production unit that manufactures technically high quality – engineers, doctors, executives, workers – who are unable to bring about erudite change. The study analyzes the definition and significance of education as propounded by Islam focused on understanding the self in conjunction to humanity as creation of Allah and the concept of nature and nurture that is preeminent in shaping an individual, is universal in approach and transcends time and territorial divides. The paper concludes by elucidating the inherent perception of peace in the proposed education standard and the role of higher education systems to augment the values of humanity and diversity within universality as proclaimed by Allah for moving from conflict resolution towards prevention through true education.

Keywords: Peace, Education, Reform, Conflict, Prevention, Standardization

Introduction:

Knowledge is freedom and freedom is peace. Freedom here refers to breaking out from the barriers of the state of ignorance. The basic premise of 'Peace' in this context needs to be analysed in its essential characteristic of being a natural condition predisposed to harmony. The current global connotation of peace has expansively correlated it with conflict and the pedagogy narrowed it down into resolving violence in any form. Consequently, new terminologies have evolved such as 'negative' and 'positive' peace. These new definitions have created confusion in understanding 'peace' and bifurcated the simple status of being that balances with the natural order of creation. Thus peace is stereotyped as opposed to conflict and its global presence is felt in relation to disparity, incompatibility, opposition, disagreement, intolerance and war. It obviously reflects on the result of wrong values in our relationship to people, to property and to ideas.

However, a comprehensive interpretation of peace is that it is a process that is inherently dynamic because it is linked with life from individual unit to collective formation. It is like a wheel in motion whereby the single unit and the complex multiple entities follow each other in perpetual motion that can be described as intrapersonal, interpersonal, intergroup, national, international and global. The elements that is the foundation of peace within an individual and a community is knowledge, attitude,

behavior and practice. Various external factors play a significant role in sustaining and augmenting this foundation. Therefore, within the generic parameters of peace as an intrinsic process of life its manifestation is unique for each situation and community.

As such education in all forms is the central aspect in establishing and practicing peace as it consciously imparts true and correct knowledge that influences attitude demonstrated by behavior and internalized through practice. The external factors that are the determinants for a perpetual state of peace is determined by the essential quality of basic education. And primarily that is defined as conscientious efforts for diminishing any unfairness and is the source of proper education. It is essentially embedded in education in all its forms; basic to the highest echelons of academics in all the nuances of non-formal, formal, institutional and professional systems.

The 1990 World Declaration on Education for All (the Jomtien Declaration) 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 capacities, to live and work in dignity, to participate fully in development, to improve the quality of their lives, to make informed decisions, and to continue learning....."

The elucidation sufficiently deliberates on correlation of peace and education as it articulates the process for establishing social justice that overrides any form of discrimination, marginalization and stigma. It creates the space for humanity regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, culture, tradition and socio-economic condition. There are no gender and color fences that divide the need for education to nurture peace. It is imperatively the concept of empowerment that is generated by consciously submitting to pure knowledge that provides the strength to accept diversity within the universality of humanity.

The advancement of communication technology has decisively bridged the socio-cultural gaps and diminished the geo-physical distance bringing information about people, cultures, traditions, religions, environment and related issues at our fingertips. However, the access to this vast body of knowledge has also created a proportionate expanse of manipulated information as a means of generating discourse. And we thus witness the strength of contrived words that has been conducive in creating fissures generating the nomenclature of 'us' and 'them'. This is the paradox of the equal strength of correct education and learning and engineered and schemed information.

Situation Assessment:

The concept of global village lies stranded within the boundaries of marketing acquisitive, self-aggrandizing and seceding agenda for expanding the ideologies of sovereign protectionism polarizing the world into developed, developing and low-income countries, ethnic and religious segments and people of various traditions. This is the result of failing to acknowledge and pursue the ideology that education and peace are two sides of a coin. As friction and discords grip the world and alienates people and proceeds to destroy not only peace but the essential sustenance of life in any form the erudite minds of the world have now launched education reforms. These innovations recognize the need for developing the understanding of what is termed as 'negative peace'. And the new regimen is known as 'Peace Education'.

International communities specifically the UN bodies have reflected on the status of 'peace' and 'pockets of conflicts' in the world in conjunction to the charter that reaffirms faith in the "dignity and worth of the human person [and] in the equal rights of men and women"; "to establish conditions under which justice and respect for the obligations arising from treaties and other sources of international law can be maintained", and "to promote social progress and better standards of life in larger freedom...".

The result is the global effort of developing the concept of 'Peace Education' whereby progressive educators worldwide are teaching the values, standards and principles articulated in fundamental UN instruments; Therefore, the Hague Appeal for Campaign for Peace Education reiterates;

"A culture of peace will be achieved when citizens of the world understand global problems, have the skills to resolve conflicts and struggle for justice non-violently, live by international standards of human rights and equity, appreciate cultural diversity, and respect the Earth and each other. Such learning can only be achieved with systematic education for peace."

Issue:

However, notwithstanding the Hague agenda the world leaders, policy decision makers and executing authorities have apparently narrowed down the goal factors for their respective needs to establish 'power' disregarding the agenda of peaceful coexistence. Negotiations fail and debates flair up increasing the number of unresolved issues impacting people's lives in terms of their basic human rights. Consequently, perpetual deprivation and marginalization has become a norm rather than isolated cases creating severe reactions at the individual stage; that is manifested at the societal and community level through disruptive attitude and volatile actions, breaking down any semblance of peace and harmony. The question then arises can a separate model of Peace Education really have an impact to improve the differentials? And how is it really different from the basic education that motivates and expounds on learned, informed and impartial decision making?

Methodology:

The period 2001-2010 is the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Non-Violence for the Children of the World and at the culminating point of this global movement to install peace, this paper shall attempt to examine whether there is;

- a) any imperative for separating 'peace' from 'education' per se;
- b) any need for reinventing the wheel through patchwork and vertical reforms towards categorizing 'peace education'
- c) scope of standardizing the essential elements of peace and harmony within the education systems from primary to higher academics.

The paper is based on empirical inquiry and literature review of education reforms for peace versus the traditional paradigm that engages the self – as composition of thought and feelings to strife for true knowledge based education.

The paper now examines the first query-

- a) *"Any imperative for separating 'peace' from 'education' per se".*

Eisler (2000) explains that students are "educated" by three different elements; the content, or the material that is included; the process or the methods used to transmit information; and through the ways that schooling is structured. It emphasizes on the form rather than the content. The content is generic and implicit in any discipline of education. This process of learning starts from infancy within the family and gradually expands through formal educational systems at various stages. Nature and nurture simultaneously influence in imparting the value, moral and identity of peace and its processes within the individual. But the form of imparting that content is what establishes the nomenclature of peace and its popular conceptualization. For example; UNICEF defines 'Structural violence' as a term that is used to refer to injustices such as poverty, discrimination and unequal access to opportunities causing most of the conflict and violence. This is identified as the most basic obstacle to peace as it defines the absence of fundamental human rights. The understanding of human rights and respect for it is the essential paradigm of education and learning however, the form in which this knowledge is

projected makes all the difference. Pedagogical approaches impact the format of knowledge, attitude, and behavior and practice as the standard of demonstrating the explicit comprehension of peace. A good instance is the gender factor in all its nuances. While the theoretical content reiterates in classrooms that 'men and women' have equal basic rights but in practice the environment changes as women have lesser access to education, employment opportunities and self-actualization.

In the global economy and within the industrial and services sector, the gender gap in wages range between 53% and 97% with an average of 78%. It is because this discrimination is not intrinsically applied in the form of teaching and learning at the higher education level in all disciplines. The result is gross exploitation of women workforce in the global manufacture and export market as cheap labors. The practice increases income disparity resulting in limited access to food, education and health services affecting more than 50% of population that includes children and breaks down the inherent peace emanating from respect to human rights and equality. But if the form of imparting education is knowledge based that transcends stereotyping, didactic modalities and encourages partnership then the idea that women do not have the same basic rights cannot emerge in policies, market economies and global approaches. And definitely there is no need for defining peace in terms of conflict but rather as a state of being. Therefore, we can conclude that correct education standards globally should impart principles of tolerance and acceptance that augments peace. Hence, peace and education are basically inseparable in content and form.

The second query reflects on-

- b) *"Any need for reinventing the wheel through patchwork and vertical reforms towards categorizing peace education"*.

According to Harris and Morrison the term peace "implies human beings working together to resolve conflicts, respect standards of justice, satisfy basic needs, and honor human rights". In conjunction to this definition and the perpetual state of discords all over the world the new and separate standard known as peace education was developed by UNICEF and UNESCO.

The notion of a "culture of peace" was first elaborated for UNESCO at the International Congress on Peace in the Minds of Men, held at Yamoussoukro, Cote d'Ivoire, in 1989. The Yamoussoukro Declaration called on UNESCO to 'construct a new vision of peace by developing a peace culture based on the universal values of respect for life, liberty, justice, solidarity, tolerance, human rights and equality between women and men' and to promote education and research for a this vision (*UNESCO and a Culture of Peace*, UNESCO Publishing, 1995). This declaration was supported and reiterated by The Hague Declaration and definition of world citizens who would struggle for peace.

Values and attitudes underline the standards for peace education. And the curriculum addresses those through the following verifications:

- Respect for others regardless of race, gender, age, nationality, class, sexuality, appearance, political or religious belief, physical or mental ability
- Empathy – a willingness to understand the views of others from their standpoint
- A belief that individuals and groups of people can make for positive change
- Appreciation of and respect for diversity
- Self esteem – accepting the intrinsic value of oneself
- Commitment to social justice, equity and nonviolence
- Concern for the environment and understanding of our place in the eco-system
- Commitment to equality

The above standards are reinvention of the basic elements of true education. The difference is in its application with regards to the concept and role of peace as an essential process of resolving conflict. As mentioned in the assessment of the first query accepting the state of being and harmonizing

oneself with it as part of the created system through knowledge establishes empathy, compassion and solidarity that is essentially the basic state of peace. And the process prevents disruptive differences. It cultivates the thinking and action thereof, towards egalitarian social environment and protection of the law of nature for greater benefit. For example the building structural design engineer receives technical education that emphasizes concern for safety of people living or working in the building. However, if this technical education is also concerned with people who labour in its construction there would be connectivity with their well being in terms of physical duress and work environment. An absence of that breaches the peace because it generates perpetual fatigue, loss of interest and lack of participation and creates a strong sense of dissatisfaction. At the end this picture reflects the theory of peace but not its practice through conscious behavioural demonstration of respecting basic rights and dignity of all. As such there is really no scope for vertical education reforms as patchwork processes of generating peace.

The third and final query assesses the-

- c) *"Scope of standardizing the essential elements of peace and harmony within the education systems from primary to higher academics".*

Peace education at the higher studies can only be implemented through a process that is contextual from the formative stage, is assimilative and uniform in its approach. The above mentioned verifications are foundation for true education based on knowledge that liberates the mind from the shackles of confusing ideas and ideologies that is self centric. In the context of global peace it is imperative that the framework of peace education is standardized in all forms of imparting learning and its practical demonstration. It is rather striking to note that post-secondary education standard generally does not integrate peace related content or the essential factors for its demonstration at work. According to R. Eisler "including certain kinds of information in the curriculum-and not including other kinds of information-effectively teaches children what is, and what is not, valuable". This issue continues in higher education when the child is an adult and has more exposure. The problem exacerbates as most educators have not received substantive training on peace-related instructions themselves and therefore, are unable to impart objective analysis of the state of peace through unbiased knowledge. Teacher education programs stress, in large part, the academic and technical skills perceived as necessary to teach, generally to the exclusion of relevant material on peace and peacemaking. The standardization process should be built within the curriculum structure as an integral component relating with the advance in the learning status. Teaching about peace requires exposures of future higher educators to content, methods and structure that emphasizes participation by students and encourages their engagement. In conclusion it is clear that peace in education is a continuous process of learning and needs to be incorporated in all aspects of education, teaching and training that is the human denominator of peace and education.

Lessons Learnt:

The above examination articulates that the education paradigm of the 21st century has evolved into a mass production unit that manufactures technically high quality – engineers, doctors, executives, workers – delivering tasks and solving functional problems but not operational weaknesses. Hence they are unable to innovate towards sustainable peace processes through the paradigm of erudite 'change'. The change here reflects in acquiring correct and unprejudiced knowledge, its application to self and the environment, transforming the theory of universal rights into practice through conscientious efforts and establishing standards in policy, practice and law. The functional and operational aspects of learning are to be deliberated and monitored in the various global socio-economic and cultural contexts.

Proposed Solution:

This study is based on the premise that true research oriented education liberates the mind from prejudicial thinking that stereotypes the notion of 'patriotism, nationalism, sovereignty and ideological boundaries', by disciplining it to consciously make intelligent decisions based on the value of respect, dignity and attention to the well being of one and all. It has analysed three main denominators and established that peace is the state of correct knowledge. That in real terms mean that we have to discover the beneficent ways of creating a new environment; for environment can make the child a brute, an unfeeling specialist, or help him to become a sensitive, intelligent human being. The concept of nature and nurture is preeminent in shaping general education standards that is universal in its approach and transcends time and territorial divides. To create global citizens we have to create a world government that is conceptualized on harmony and acceptance.

And in defining the significance of education for understanding peace the paper focuses on the teachings of Islam. It is concerned with understanding peace in conjunction to humanity as creation of Allah and the emphasis of nature and nurture that is shapes an individual, is universal in approach and transcends time and territorial divides. The study relates to the first ayah revealed in the Holy Quran 'Read in the name of thy Sustainer, who has created man out of a germ cell; Read – for thy Sustainer is the most Bountiful One who has taught (man) the use of the pen – taught man what he did not know' 96:1 – that is substantiated by '...And it is we who have made you into nations and tribes, that ye may recognize each other' 49:13. This is the first step of 'Iqra' as promoted by Islam - knowledge about the self in relation to everything external and the conscience or the Divine will within. The paper reflects on harmonizing the inner self with the external pre-existence through first self-knowledge. It prevents any form of assumption and strengthens the capacity to think and analyse with understanding and develops the standard for reflection, contemplation and action towards respecting human rights and social justice.

The paper concludes by elucidating the inherent perception of peace in the proposed education standard and the role of higher education systems to augment the values of humanity and diversity within universality as proclaimed by Allah for moving from conflict resolution towards prevention through true education.

In the most basic form of true knowledge there is no dichotomy between peace and education.

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