



Education And Peace Building: A Northeastern India Perspective

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Abstract: Peace is an intrinsic part of human nature. It affects the very fabric of our being. On the other hand, education assists and facilitates the inculcation of values as well as brings forth the innate potentials of an individual. While it is imperative to assert that education shapes the ideals and principles of an individual, it does not necessarily entail the assurance of peace. Peace is a growing need in the contemporary society and ever will be so long as society exists and can be achieved only through a change of heart. The paper, thus, intends to examine the crucial role played by education in building peace. Moreover, it also explores the intricate relationship between education and peace building, analyzing the potential of education in mitigating conflicts and fostering peaceful coexistence in the society. The research is qualitative in nature and secondary sources were used to realize the objectives of the study. Purposive sampling method was used.

Keywords: *Peace, Conflicts, Education and Society*

1. Introduction

Education and peace are not new terminologies, but recurrent concepts that influence every individual living in the society. Peace, which is not the mere absence of conflict but a peaceful

coexistence, has become an ever-increasing need of the contemporary society which is often exposed to various conflicting situations at the local, national and global level. Education, on the other hand, provides individuals with knowledge and guides the individual towards a holistic development – emotionally, psychologically, morally and socially – fostering peaceful coexistence in the society.

However, the contemporary society is rapidly changing and experiencing a paradigm shift in conceiving and integrating these concepts and its significance in our day-to-day life. Education, therefore, comes into play and contributes a crucial role in creating a culture of peace and is considered as a powerful tool towards ensuring peace and harmony in the society. Moreover, education involves a transformative change of behaviors, attitudes and values that fosters mutual understanding and respect for diversity. Education, in this sense, plays a pivotal role in mitigating conflicts and ensuring the peaceful coexistence in the society. The paper deals with the basic understanding of the concepts of education and peace and related aspects, the role of education in building peace, education and conflicts. Most importantly, some of the basic approaches and strategies that can be integrated in the educational systems so as to facilitate the development of a culture of peace will be deliberated.

2. Literature Review

2.1. Education

Education is a complex concept, and it is difficult to extensively exhaust the concept as it enables individuals to develop their own philosophies of life as well as the complexity of human personality and environment makes it hard to define. It has proven to be dynamic in nature and a lifelong learning process. However, the definition given by Thompson stands out significantly here, which states, “By education, I mean the influence of the environment upon the individual to produce a permanent change in his habits of behavior, of thought and of his attitude. Environment has various aspects – physical, social and cultural. Education should facilitate the task of adaptation of the child to his environment.”

2.1.1. Concept of Education

Education is a lifelong vocation which is not only the transfer of knowledge but also involves the exchange of ideas and most importantly helping in the holistic development of the

individuals by inspiring, guiding and empowering them. In simple words, it is a transformative journey that goes beyond the mere acquisition of knowledge. It is concerned about developing critical thinking, empathy, and the ability to navigate the complexities of life.

Moreover, education fosters a critical understanding of our current situation and historical context, enabling individuals to engage deeply with the world around them. Education, basically, is an all-round harmonious development of an individual. It means enabling the person to be his/her best version as well as empowering them.

2.1.2. Purpose or Aims of Education

The purpose or aim of education can be broadly divided into two, such as, the individual aim and social aim. While the former stresses the development of the individual as the focal point; the latter posits that individuals exist for the society.

The aim of education should be oriented towards the holistic development of individuals intellectually, emotionally, morally, and socially, thereby assisting and preparing individuals to face the world and enabling them to reach their full potential. It should prepare individuals to be responsible citizens who contribute meaningfully to their communities. Additionally, education should cultivate curiosity, resilience, and adaptability while fostering values such as compassion, integrity, and respect for diversity. Ultimately, its purpose is to create individuals who can think critically, solve problems, and work towards the common good.

Moreover, in a fast-changing world characterized by diversity, education should sensitize the people about the importance of unity, tolerance, and assists in the development of personality, character and spirituality. Only then, individuals can be prepared for life and take his or her rightful place in the society, thus, paving the way for a peaceful co-existence with fellow beings.

2.2. Peace

"Peace means living in harmony. It's not just about the absence of war, but also about feeling calm inside ourselves, in our families, and in society. Peace helps people live happily together and reduces anger and hate."

2.2.1. Meaning

Peace is more than just the absence of conflict; it is a state of harmony where individuals and communities coexist with dignity, justice, and mutual respect. It encompasses inner peace—emotional and spiritual stability—as well as societal peace, where equity, fairness, and inclusivity

prevail. True peace is dynamic and requires continuous effort in understanding, dialogue, and reconciliation. Peace is the ultimate destination for every human being. It is to live in a society not feeling fearful, insecure and conflicted. Peace is a state of co-existence which recognizes and accepts the other with mutual respect without any bias based on creed, sex, color, etc and living together in harmony.

2.2.2. Significance of Peace in the Society

A society can thrive best when there is peace and harmony. Peace is brought about by understanding, unity and cooperation. Peace can bring development in the best way possible. Peace is fundamental for the progress and well-being of any society. Without peace, development is hindered, relationships are strained, and injustice prevails. A peaceful society fosters social cohesion, economic growth, and human rights, ensuring that people can live with dignity and security. In a world marked by conflicts, divisions, and inequalities, peace remains a prerequisite for sustainable development and the overall flourishing of humanity.

Peace is very essential and important in the society – for a progressive society peace is a very important ingredient. The society will be prosperous if there is co-operation, and unity among the people. The relevance of peace is crucial in today's world scenario as it has the capability to bring the society to a state of deterioration as well as the potential to drive the society towards progress.

2.3. Education and Conflicts

While education, as a process and system, has the potential to foster peaceful coexistence among the people in the society, it can also create various disparities and injustices such as socio-economic and cultural aspects which can lead to differences and hatred. However, right education or quality education gives right perspectives, frees narrow mindedness and exclusiveness and teaches students the values of leading a good life and peaceful coexistence in the society. From high school onwards, subjects like 'moral science' and 'personality development' teaches individuals to be understanding, respectful, and inclusive of all the different religion, communities and culture and refrain from discrimination, aggression and violence. Teachers should uphold these values of teachings to promote mutual respect in the society and encourage them to foster awareness of human rights and social justice and engage in peaceful advocacy and community building rather than resorting to violence.

Education can mitigate conflicts by teaching individuals how to resolve disputes peacefully, think critically, and engage in constructive dialogue. By incorporating peace education, emotional intelligence, and mediation skills into curricula, individuals can learn to handle disagreements without resorting to violence. Education also raises awareness about systemic issues such as inequality and discrimination, encouraging proactive efforts to address injustices before they escalate into conflicts. Additionally, when educated people come together, they can contribute enormously towards conflict resolution and can create peaceful means of settling different conflicts.

2.4. Role of Education in Peace Building

Education actively engages in shaping the beliefs, values, attitudes and behaviors of individuals to bring about critical thinking skills, ability to embrace and respect diversity, thus, reducing conflicts and creating conducive environment for peace. Education enables individuals to equip themselves with knowledge and skills, provides them a job and become responsible citizens who embrace morality and integrity leading to avoidance of unnecessary conflicts. Moreover, education also provides awareness on the root causes of various conflicts. In other words, it plays a vital role in building peace, in the sense; it gives a society – educated people, development and strategies to bring peace when there is conflict of interests. It promotes peaceful coexistence and understanding, instills ethical values and teaches democratic principles and rights and responsibilities of the citizens.

Education plays a transformative role in fostering peaceful coexistence by promoting understanding, tolerance, and dialogue. It helps individuals recognize and respect differences while emphasizing shared values. By integrating lessons on conflict resolution, ethical decision-making, and social justice, education creates informed and responsible citizens who can contribute to a more harmonious world. Additionally, schools and universities should be platforms for cultivating respect, cooperation, and a sense of global solidarity. Education liberates the people from darkness and ignorance. When people are educated, they understand and realize the importance of peace and prosperity. Education broadens the minds of individuals and equips them with knowledge to be tolerant and inclusive.

2.5. Educational Approaches and Strategies for Peace Building

The contemporary society is witnessing an increase in the number of conflicts and restoration or building peace has become the need of the hour. A shift towards education for peace needs to be adopted and integrated in educational institutions to foster peace and harmony in the society. Some of the strategies and approaches that can be integrated in the educational settings to foster a development of peaceful environment are as follows:

- i.** Peace Education: Integrating subjects focused on human rights, conflict resolution, and ethics into the curriculum should be encouraged. Moreover, subjects on Peace and Non-Violence can be introduced in the curricula.
- ii.** Dialogue and Cultural Exchange: Encouraging interactions among diverse groups to foster understanding and empathy. Further, advocacy for peaceful coexistence amongst the mates within the campus can also foster a culture of respect and acceptance of differences.
- iii.** Nonviolent Communication Training: Teaching students and educators constructive ways to express and resolve differences.
- iv.** Critical Thinking and Media Literacy: Equipping students with the ability to analyze information objectively and resist divisive narratives.
- v.** Experiential Learning: Engaging students in community service, restorative justice practices, and collaborative problem-solving activities such as Peace Clubs, Peer mediation and People's Forum for Peace (PFP).
- vi.** Seminars and workshops on peace and harmony and conflict management should be designed so that students can be educated and molded from the very beginning.
- vii.** Counseling of the disturbed students.
- viii.** Value education and other allied topics related to peace in the curriculum can create a huge impact.
- ix.** Educational programs should help greater inclusiveness. Minorities should be given more space and opportunities in educational activities.

3. Research Methodology

The study conducted was qualitative in nature involving open-ended questions, thus, providing the participants the autonomy of sharing their views and perspectives comprehensively. Moreover, the research study used purposive sampling in selecting the participants. The

respondents selected consisted of peace advocates and practitioners in institutions and organizations as well as educators and assistant professors in educational institution, from Manipur and Nagaland.

The data was analyzed using descriptive and narrative method. In other words, the responses were used to describe the research subject and to gain a deeper understanding on the perspective and insights provided by the respondents on the subject matter. Further, the study also utilized secondary data to better understand as well as to assist in the realization of the object of the study.

4. A Critical Analysis

The study reveals that education is not only concerned about the transfer of knowledge, but the holistic development of individuals whereby individuals are empowered to achieve their full potential and contribute responsibly to the society. Peace, on the other hand, is not just the mere absence of conflict; but, associated closely with mutual coexistence and respect. Peace is an essential condition towards bringing about sustainable progress in the society which is often plagued by conflicting situations of varying degrees. Another finding from the research is the pivotal role played by education in mitigating conflicts and building peace in the society. Education has the potential to mould individuals of right perspectives, expand their horizons, think critically and engage in constructive dialogue paving the way for peaceful conflict resolution. Moreover, education actively engages in shaping beliefs, values, attitudes and behavior of individuals which lays the basic foundation for embracing diversity and creating a conducive environment for building peace. Additionally, the role of education in peace building is crucial, in that, it creates awareness on the root causes of conflicts, foster understanding, tolerance and dialogue. In this way, education can create informed and responsible individuals who consciously advocate for a harmonious society.

A peaceful society can be fostered if right education is achieved by forming individuals with right principles and values. A shift towards education for peace needs to be integrated with the aim of inculcating the value of coexistence and respect for diversity. The paper brings to light some basic strategies and approaches which can significantly assists in fostering a culture of peace among individuals in an educational setting, such as, peace education, dialogue and cultural

exchange, critical thinking and media literacy, seminars and workshops on peace and conflict management, experiential learning and so on. In the contemporary society where conflicts are more prevalent, the integration of these strategies or approaches, though not definite, can assist the development of peaceful coexistence and mitigation of unnecessary conflicts.

5. Conclusion

Education and peace building are closely interconnected and interdependent upon each other. The role of education in fostering peace is pivotal as it involves the formation of individuals of right principles and informed individuals who can contribute consciously for the society. Education also guides and molds individuals to respect and accept diversity in the society, thus, facilitating and paving the way for peaceful coexistence. In a fast-changing world often met with conflicting situations of various natures, the need for peace or building peace in the society has been an ever-growing demand than before. Hence, education should advocate for inclusiveness, be equitable and accessible to all as the failure to incorporate can lead to inordinate conflicts. Education should serve as a tool not only for acquiring knowledge but for cultivating wisdom, compassion, and a sense of shared humanity.

On the other hand, if education does not fulfill its basic aim and purposes of bringing out responsible and conscious individuals and foster the behavioral change; then, it can create self-centered and ignorant individuals who do not respect and accept diversity. Resultantly, the value of peace will be undermined, and conflicts tend to be more frequent. The primary role of education, therefore, is to enable individuals to think critically and inculcate values and principles that appreciate peace and harmony and coexistence in the society as the future of peace depends on the values that are instilled in today's learners.

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