

## Teacher Education for Peaceful Classrooms: An Interpretive Analysis

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### Abstract

*The 2030 agenda for sustainable development seeks to transform the world through the promotion of peaceful societies. Peace education creates peace consciousness but this transformation in the way of thinking is a long term process. Besides, the very idea of overnight complete transformation of curriculum, system of education or culture seems disturbing. However, it is possible for teachers to integrate peace education values into their classroom practices overnight. Moreover, it is quite likely that many of the teachers who are not even familiar with the concept of peace education teach all the subjects within the peace parameters (TWB, 2011). The present study centers on the practices of primary teachers regarding peace education. The findings call for the sensitization of the teachers regarding the integration of peace themes into the text books. Moreover, the exams are rooted in rote learning and the benefits that students experience from student-centered teaching methods are thwarted. In conclusion, policy makers' awareness of this disconnection and consistent in-service training of primary teachers is crucial.*

**Keywords:** Peace education, primary teachers, competencies, curriculum implementation.

### Introduction

Pakistan is a country of heterogeneous culture. The people here belong to various ethnic, religious and racial groups. For the last decade, the significant deterioration of tolerance and peace situation in Pakistan is alarming. The 2017 Global Peace Index report indicated that Pakistan is the twelfth least peaceful country in the world and its rank is 152 out of 163 countries. It is widely acknowledged that peace education is not only needed as a 'conflict transformative' approach in conflict and post conflict societies but as a part of international education agenda to envision peaceful generations in future (Galtung, 2008). For this, not only peace research should have a place in teaching institutions but the findings should be brought to the educational institutions too. Moreover, the teachers should have an understanding of the concept of peace education and they must know how to take the pupils along when moving from state of unknown to known. In case of lack of knowledge about peace education

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content, the teacher would try to fill in time to hide his/her inability. In such circumstances, unprepared teachers generally do not give permission to ask any question and try to maintain control of the classroom which ultimately leads to boredom (UNESCO-INEE, 2005). In Pakistan, Ministry of education has designated all subjects at primary level for peace education. The courses of study of all these subjects list the intended objectives and contents of all peace related topics. As the proficiencies of teachers related to teaching and learning are regarded as one of the determining factors of change, addressing them becomes an important step in any effort to build a peaceful world (Montessori, 1949; Harris, 2013). This study explores how the primary teachers in Khyber Pakhtunkhwa province of Pakistan teach peace education content that has been integrated into the text books as a part of curriculum reform process.

Peace is an elusive concept which has different meanings in different cultures and languages. This concept takes different routes in Western and Eastern cultures. In the East, the meaning ranges from well-organized mental state to non-violence and hence, implies to control oneself. In West, however, it is more the absence of structural violence. In other words, the Western stand point is to govern the society. In general, it is defined in terms of the existence of harmony in relationships, resolving conflicts non-violently, fulfilling basic needs and ensuring the provision of human rights and justice (Harris & Morrison, 2003). The concept in West has evolved to a more holistic one over the last century. It was Wight in 1949 who improved upon the initial concept of peace as the absence of war to a perspective of balance of forces in the international system. Further, the efforts for peace research began in the late 1950s.

The bitter experience of World Wars in the last two centuries and the emergence of the concept of global community gave momentum to the notion of peace education. Under the umbrella of the term ‘peace education’, a broad range of interdisciplinary concepts like human rights, conflict resolution, and democracy fall. However, it could broadly be classified into “inner peace, social peace, and peace with nature” (UNESCO, 2005). Peace education is the knowledge which helps an individual to opt for those values which negate violence, for peaceful resolution of conflicts and to build a culture of peace. This proactive approach is founded on the concepts of positive and negative peace. Galtung described positive peace as the presence of social justice, gender equity and human rights besides the cessation of conflict (Galtung, 2008). Negative peace, on the other hand, implies the absence of direct violence whether at individual or institutional level (Harris, 2013; Galtung, 1975). The elimination of violence is the focus of peace education. It supports social and cultural change in order to move towards a sustainable future (Galtung, 1975). Students and teachers not only need to understand the concept of violence but also independently look for non-violent possibilities. For this transference of positive attitudes, a safe environment like school or workshop is desirable and such environment is the central objective of peace education. Galtung (1969) provides a unified framework of violence-direct, structural,

and cultural violence. He describes personal or direct violence as physical or verbal violence whether interpersonal, collective or military in nature. Structural or indirect violence, such as repression, marginalization, exploitation, is a form of violence which prevents people from fulfilling their basic human needs like poverty, denial of access to education and health facilities etc. By cultural violence, Galtung (1969) means such aspects of culture like sub-conscious beliefs or assumptions that justify direct or structural violence or at least feel or look acceptable. Galtung believes that peace education is needed for students of all ages. Toddlers, in kindergarten, need to understand conflict and justice and learn to listen. At elementary stage, the focus shifts to attitude, behavior and contradiction of conflict along with inspirational stories from the life of both great personalities and common people. The concrete approaches to conflict, however, are included at high school level (Galtung 1996). The diverse issues included range from school violence to safety and security at the international level; struggle for peace between developed and undeveloped countries; human rights in question; environmental safety and sustainable development. The school teachings are the reflection of the past which is passed on to the present (Galtung, 1975). In view of the above explanation, peace education endeavors to transform the nature of conflict from violent to a peaceful one besides preventing its reoccurrence.

## **Methodology**

### *Population and sample*

The target population included all the 70876 primary public school teachers, including 44869 male teachers and 26007 female teachers, teaching in the 25 districts of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa (District EMIS, 2015-16). As suggested by Gay (1996), 400 primary school teachers, including 253 male and 147 female teachers, were selected using proportionate stratified random sampling technique. Moreover, the study was delimited to grade v teachers as the content analysis of grade v curriculum was done as a preliminary step to familiarize with the peace education content that has been integrated into the text books as a part of curriculum reform process.

### *Instrument of the study*

The framework of the research design constituted two stages. At the first stage, basic set of information was generated through the analysis of responses obtained through questionnaire. To ensure validity, the views of experts from UNESCO, Curriculum Wing (Abbottabad) and faculty members (Education) were sought for. The next stage was the observation of lessons in classrooms separately in a boys' primary school and in a girls' primary school. Here, I used the technique of ethnographic observation which included pre and post conversation with the teachers. The rationale behind the choice to yield an essence of ethnographic observation was to understand how all evaluations within the two educational settings make sense when enunciated together. Generally, the types of observational procedures include narrative, samples,

media technique, checklist and rating (Hartmann & Wood, 1982). My option was running notes. Considering the nature of the research, interpretive analysis was conducted at both the stages.

### *Procedure*

In previous studies, five to ten classroom lessons were observed while the classroom observation period ranged between two weeks to two months (Homan, 2014; Massey, 2006; Munby & Russell, 2004; Natthanan, 2009; Sano, 2014; Shomoossi, 2004). In this study, the classroom practices of all five subject teachers (English, Urdu, Mathematics, Social Studies and General Science) were observed in a boys' and a girls' school separately at least three times excluding Mathematics because the themes of peace education were not found infused into its curriculum. Hence, the total number of teachers observed was ten. Each week, the classroom observation was carried out over a period of about six hours. Emerson et al., (1995) recommended ethnographers to spend 3-4 hours in the field before taking field notes. If I could not spend an entire day in one school, I also made sure to spend at least 3 hours in the school.

### *Trustworthiness*

During the months of May and June, I visited the district thrice and stayed for a week each time so that everyone at the school could get accustomed to my presence around and assured to spend adequate time to conduct observations until saturation level was reached at thereby ensuring the persistent observation as mentioned by Lincoln and Guba (1985). To avoid or limit participants' reactivity like Hawthorne effect, I did not inform them about my observation day schedule. Following one of the nine generally cited validity procedures in the qualitative research mentioned by Creswell and Miller (2000), I requested teacher participants to check them. However, member checking was conducted towards the end of observations.

### *Ethical Considerations*

Initially permission to collect data from the primary schools of KP was sought for from the Planning Officer, Elementary & Secondary Education Department (KP). Consent from the participants of the study was obtained and no one was forced to participate in the study. Moreover, I chose pseudonyms and altered the irrelevant details to protect the identity of participants and the settings as suggested by Murphy and Dingwall (2001).

## **Results**

### *Familiarity with the themes of peace education*

An open ended question was asked about the familiarity with the themes of peace education integrated into the textbooks. About one-tenth of the teachers answered in affirmation. The next part of the question was about an example of the topic or lesson related to peace education. The responses included:

*Text book of Islamiyat (Islamic Education)*

- i. Afoo-o-dar-guzar aur burdbari (Patience and Forgiveness);
- ii. Muakhaat (Brotherhood-Treaty);
- iii. Rawadari (Tolerance);
- iv. Islami Akhuwat (Islamic Brotherhood).

*Text book of English*

- i. Hazrat Muhammad (SAW)- a courageous Prophet;
- ii. Advice of a sparrow (a poem);
- iii. I shall not live in vain (a poem);
- iv. Helping others (a poem).

*Text book of Urdu*

- i. Fateh Makkah (Conquest of Makkah);
- ii. Dared-dil kay wastay paida kia insaan ko (Man was Created for Compassion);
- iii. Scouting;
- iv. Festivals;
- v. Pakistani Rasm-o-rivaj (Traditions of Pakistan);
- vi. Pakistani Maseeha (Healer of Pakistan).

Most of the respondents mentioned poems from the English text book while none of them quoted any poem from the text book of Urdu as an example. Also, no example was quoted from the text books of Social Studies, General Science and Mathematics. The last part of the question was about the implementation of the example quoted by the teachers surveyed. About four-fifths of the respondents shared that they used lecture method and role-play. They also explained the concepts with the help of examples. The rest of the most common responses are as follows:

- i. Discussion
- ii. Brain-stormin
- iii. Use of charts.

*Observation*

This section presents the analysis of the data collected through observation at two primary schools in district Swat. The teachers of Government Girls Primary School used to sit together with the head teacher for a meeting every time before the observation sessions. I could see them looking through the text books and confirming from one another about peace related topics. Two of them used to guide the others. One of them was an experienced teacher, Ms. Nida. The young teacher, Ms. Maria, used to teach English and General Science to the students of grade v. The first lesson that she chose to teach was ‘Environmental Pollution.’ While filling in the questionnaire, she mentioned the use of role play, discussion and activities to implement the topic on peace education. She asked her students to look around, pick the wrappers on the floor

and throw them in the dustbin. I also joined the activity. Since I was standing near the bin, they passed the wrappers to me so that I could put them in the bin. After the activity, she explained the benefits of keeping the environment clean. All the students were listening quietly. While explaining, she pointed at the small chart pasted on the wall on which 'Cleanliness is half of our faith' was written. What followed next was the reading of lesson by a girl who could read well and the same was repeated by her class fellows in a loud voice in a specific tune. For the rest of the period, the role of Ms. Nida was dominant while all the girls were passively copying down the paragraph on 'Environmental Pollution' which she had written on the black board. Coming out of the class, she said to me:

*I have learnt teaching methods and techniques in B.Ed. but I cannot use them all the time. You have seen that class was so noisy because of the activity and I have to keep them quiet to cover the syllabus. Their parents are not all literate and these girls have to attend to their duties at home. Only regular tests in the school will help them memorize the notes because their performance in examination depends upon how well they have memorized the notes.*

Ms. Maria taught 'Growing more trees', 'Helping others' (a poem) and 'The faithful dog' (a poem) during the observation sessions. During the lessons, she held discussion in the class. She asked them to share their experiences and feelings when they helped someone. She also asked them questions regarding effects of deforestation, advantages of growing trees, integrity and loyalty in relationship etc. The students actively participated in the discussion. However, in the Science period, she resorted back to the traditional method of teaching. She explained the topic while students were listening passively. After that, she wrote answers of the questions given in the textbook with a chalk on the black board. Meanwhile, she instructed them, 'Take out your note books and copy down carefully. Remember...no noise.'

Similarly, the teaching of Islamiat and Social Studies was dominantly teacher centered. The teacher of Social Studies, Ms. Rehana, asked questions mainly to confirm that the students are listening carefully and understanding what she has told. She asked the students to prepare a chart exhibiting various cultural dresses of Pakistan. After the period, we sat on chairs in the corridor. While checking note books, she shared, 'We are teachers and so, we can understand to some extent what peace education means although we have heard it for the first time.' She stopped for a while and then resumed, 'you are judging us for what we've never been trained.'

The teacher of Islamiat, during one of the lessons observed, related an interesting incident that happened on her way to school. Then she asked students to work in pairs and write on a page what would they do in a similar situation. I worked in pair with a girl sitting next to me. While writing the answer, she whispered, 'This is the

best time of class.’ The classroom was noisy at that time while the teacher was reminding students time and again to keep their voices low. What followed next was a directive to open the books and there was a scene of obedient and silent students copying down the paragraphs from the text books marked as answers of the questions given in the exercise.

The Government Primary School was a big school that constituted of two blocks. Mr. Rehmat was the first one to invite me to observe his class in the first period. He was the class teacher of one of the sections of grade v and taught Social Studies. On way to class v, I could see children sitting on the floor in the corridors outside the class rooms. The classes in the corridors were separated by pieces of cloth twined around the pillars to give a rectangular shape to each class. The seating arrangement was row wise and the teacher’s table was in the front of the classroom opposite to the room door. Old furniture was dumped at the back of the classroom. The students of class v were sitting quietly waiting for their teacher. He asked the students to open their Social Studies book. The children were whispering while taking books out of their bags. Mr. Rehmat banged a stick, already lying on the teacher’s table, twice on the table and said, ‘no noise.’ Then he asked a boy to read the first paragraph of the lesson aloud. When the boy sat down after reading, the teacher explained diverse cultural values. He also described the advantages of a multi-cultural society. Meanwhile, a student talked to a boy sitting next to him. The teacher slapped on his shoulder while walking through the classroom and continued his explanation.

Mr. Nazeer, a teacher of General Science, kept on looking at the table of contents given in the text book of General Science for some time and told me that there is no possibility of the inclusion of any topic related to peace education in General Science. Likewise, the Urdu teacher, Mr. Abdul Qudoos, also believed that there are only two lessons related to peace education entitling ‘Fateh Makkah’ (The Conqueror of Makkah) and ‘Scouting’. Primarily traditional or teacher-centered approach to classroom learning was observed during the Urdu and Islamiyat lessons whereby the students were receptive and passive most of the time. Text books seemed the major resource for instruction. Master Dawood, a student, mentioned, ‘We need text books while teacher is teaching in the class to read the lesson and to understand what is written in it.’

Mr. Abdul Rehman was the Islamiyat teacher. He said, ‘I always quote examples from the Islamic history and advice the students not to fight; be helpful and caring while I am teaching the topics such as “Forgiveness”, “Brotherhood” and “Constitution of Madina”. I never knew that this is peace education.’ To this, the school head further added:

*We guide our students about good behavior in the morning assembly. A dutiful teacher always does so. However, I think that training of teachers regarding peace education would help improve the situation.*

Mr. Abdullah was the English teacher. While teaching 'I shall not live in vain', his class was actively engaged in the questioning session. The students were also asking him questions and he was answering them with a smile on his face. He did not seem bothered about voices in the class. The class room was noisy again when he was checking note- books and some of the children, carrying their note- books for checking, gathered around him and continued asking different questions. He did not stop anyone, did not shout at any one to remain quiet, and pat on the shoulders while returning notebooks to those who had done well. He seemed completely absorbed in that environment until the bell rang.

#### *Suggestions, if Any*

On way to the office of school head, I asked him if he had attended any training to teach peace related topics. He answered:

*No. In fact, I have heard about it for the first time. You will go to other districts too and you could confirm it. I don't think that primary teachers have ever been trained in this area.*

In the office, he asked me various questions about my research tool. Then, he said,

*You should study about our history, values and traditions. People learn hunting by aiming at birds. Your journey ahead would help you learn about tribes where people aim at a human being and then proudly share the distance from which they shot him dead. Then ask about the number of secondary and higher secondary schools for the overall population there. They know that their authority will be challenged and common man will be aware of his rights, if he gets educated. Sister, observe and write about it.*

I thanked him for sharing this information and told him that my research is limited to the thesis that where there is education, there should be peace education. 'Uhhh...and my point is that where there is no education, it's a futile effort to look for peace', he made his point convincingly at last. The bell rang and the break was over. I stood up, ready to observe another lesson.

#### **Discussion and Conclusions**

There is no substitute for exhaustive preparation to develop skills and attitudes of peace in pupils. The findings of the study, on the contrary, indicated that the teachers had no prior formal exposure regarding peace themes integrated in to the text books.

Further, the awareness of teachers surveyed was limited to the peace related topics in the text books of English, Urdu and Islamiat only. In such a situation, the expectation to teach peace values as intended for are not likely to be met. Hence, efforts should be made to familiarize them in this regard.

According to UNESCO-INEE (2005, p.3), the relevant peace pedagogy includes ‘group work; brainstorm and categorization; stories; role-plays; songs and poetry and discussions.’ The teacher questionnaire responses showed that teachers mostly used questioning and lecture method as peace pedagogy. Teachers also used discussion and questions as a teaching-learning strategy but to a limited extent. However, the field notes point to dissonance between teachers’ report and peace teaching practices to some extent. Lecture method and clarifying questioning was mostly used to teach peace themes integrated into the curriculum.

This paper aims to illustrate that, besides persistent efforts to include peace themes in the curriculum in compliance with the article 4 of the UN Resolution 53/243 A; the success of education for peace building largely depends upon the expertise of teachers to teach peace. The author seeks to highlight the professional development inadequacies that arise when teaching peace. Interpretive analysis of field notes and teachers’ report shows that the exposure of primary teachers of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa to peace education content and relevant methodology is not enough. They cannot deconstruct the peace integrated curriculum and students do not receive the message of peace as intended in the planned curriculum. It has to be acknowledged that explicitly designed training programmes on peace education focus the inclusion of the concepts of peace and peace education, relevant teaching-learning strategies, co-curricular activities and use of available instructional materials to help teachers implement peace themes effectively as envisioned in the planned curriculum.

Teaching peace themes effectively, indubitably, is a challenging task. However, one element which teachers can definitely and successfully control is the quality of instruction. Being peace educators, they owe it to school children to make the most of it.

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