

The Role of History Teacher in Promoting Peace

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Abstract

The paper outlines a construction for promoting peace in society through the discipline of history. Peace education subsumes more than content. It also includes the ability to build a peaceful and fear-free environment using appropriate teaching methods and strategies. The most befitting strategy is building a child-centered classroom where every child is free to share & express their opinions and views. The role of a teacher is to not just facilitate but also let students speak their mind out, thus promoting divergent thinking. History teachers play a crucial role in spreading the message for building a peaceful youth and a peaceful nation. They can establish such values and skills in students that will not only enable them to live peacefully but also live their life fully while embracing everyone and everything around them. Some of the peace building activities that can be incorporated by a history teacher in a classroom are group work, debate, colloquies, fishbowl activity, case study, value classification etc.

Key words: History Teacher, Promoting Peace.

Introduction:

The mean of education is not just to teach knowledge but also to provide the needful life skills such as problem solving, building interpersonal relationships, empathizing and decision-making among others. A good society is formed only when the people forming it have good values. It is given that for any society to function effectively; peaceful co-existence is an unavoidable factor. A peaceful attitude must be developed in a person at the early phase of life itself. This is where schools and classrooms gain importance for it is through education and educators that peace can be best proliferated. Maria Montessori made an attempt to talk of the relevance of using education as a tool to spread peace. Montessori described the 1930s--the phase between the First World War and the Second World War--as the years of *War Madness* and spoke in favour of education and peace. For her, education was an instrument to bring about world peace. Montessori's insight is important for the present age too. A teacher can and must make a positive change in the lives of students by inculcating in them an attitude of peace.

Policy prospective:

UNESCO declared the years 2000-2010 as an international decade for encouraging the culture of peace & non-violence but as we know that different Indian education committee/ commissions and reports have been suggesting for education for peace in numerous forms, but the advices are not being functional even today. As

Mudaliar Committee (1952-53) expressed that “the supreme end of the educative process should be the training of the character and personality of students in such a way that they will be able to realize their full potentials and contribute to the well-being of the community”. **The Kothari Education Commission (1964-66)** highlighted the ‘Education and National Development Commission believed that the “absence of provisions for education in social, moral and spiritual values is a serious defect in the curriculum”. **The N.P.E. (1986)** advocated turning education into “an influential tool for the promotion of social and moral values”. **The P.O.A (1992)** tried to combine various mechanisms of value education into the school curriculum at different levels. **N.C.F. (2005)** reflected on ‘education in true sense should endorse learners to illuminate their values; to facilitate them to be aware and take purposeful decisions, recognizing the cost of their activities, to decide the way of peace before violence’.

The power and potential of individual teachers to be agents of change cannot be underestimated. A child learns peaceful behaviour not just from what he or she is taught by the teachers but also from the way in which a teacher expresses herself; her words, actions and responses to challenges are well observed by the students. A teacher who practises violence cannot teach peace as what he/she does is not what he/she speaks. Such contradictions unsettle students and they end up taking in what they see rather than what they hear. Therefore, the role of any teacher is significant in peace building among students. This peace building process can be adopted in a history class also.

Peace construction Environment:

It is not an easy task to teach attitudes and values. For students, educators work as examples. Consequently, they play a role in propagating violence consciously or unconsciously in class if they are not oriented towards peace. A good teacher is the best role model for promoting peace values among students such as providing the art of listening, the humbleness to acknowledge and accurate mistakes, assuming accountability for one’s activities, sharing worries and helping each other to resolve problems surpassing variances yet if they do not promote peace. Teachers should help in promoting and generating thoughtful atmosphere in the classroom. They should pay attention to what students have to say? In addition, a curriculum should be built that is consequential to the children in becoming successful human beings. Students will become skilled in peace values only if these are exhibited by their teachers and seniors. If there is any difference between what mature people do and what they say, students will attempt to be like what is done? Teachers need to be alert of the consequence of their activities of students.

History subject will have to be taught in a child-centered way in order to develop the peace attitudes in students. It is useless to utilize the approaches which are teacher-centered and subject-centered. Employing teacher-centric and subject-centric approaches would render the learning process ineffective, therefore, the subject of history should be taught in a child-centric approach in order to develop the attitudes of conflict resolution & peace building among students. A History teacher plays the role of as a facilitator in a child’s learning. Since children can and they do construct knowledge from their immediate environment, the agents of learning are children themselves.

A history teacher’s role therefore, is to facilitate this learning process. He/she must understand each child’s need and accordingly facilitate their learning, especially in the inculcation of values of peace in him/her. According to

E. Wallet, six different needs exist in children. Psychological needs such as those of food; clothing, housing etc are some of them. Needs like that of love and attention, socialization and creative expression are somewhat ignored. Unfulfillment of these needs induces conflict and unrest in the minds of children. This is where the role of a teacher becomes vital. If the needs of children are duly fulfilled, that is, if they are allowed to express themselves and put forth their ideas and opinions, there is little scope for conflicts in their minds. Such an ambience where they are heard would not only enable them to share their perspectives but also help them imbibe the value of learning to accept and respect others' opinions. Therefore, a teacher, after understanding the needs of each child, can design with precision, what, when and how to teach a child.

Learning Activities in a Classroom:

It is at this stage where the teacher has to be most active and careful. A History teacher, in order to promote peace education through the pedagogy of history, has to select suitable learning activities during teaching-learning process to do this, he/she has to first identify the appropriate learning activities to ensure proper delivery of lessons. Then, he/she has to employ creative methods of teaching so that children are encouraged to uncover concepts and approaches on their own.

Besides, the teacher must ensure an environment which is favourable to learning. The students must feel free to express their opinions, attitudes, impressions and judgements. The general educational purpose for teachers is only to teach syllabus in classroom and taking only examination. In peace-oriented pedagogy, the centre of attention is not only on preservation or memorization of facts, texts or achieving personal goals & excellence but on learning to imitate, contribute to, concern and work together. Every concept, topic, lesson (History) has hidden mechanism to peace which needs to be speak with resolute scheduling from a positive and humanistic point of view. Teachers should stimulate and foster positive experiences and feelings, support sincerity to investigation by raising questions on different issues of societies, exploring, and constructing values, and give opportunities for applying knowledge of these values. As mentioned earlier, the teaching-learning process of the History teacher must be child-centric.

Therefore, verbal presentations given by the teacher must be short & concise and the involvement of students must be greater. The lesson should be developed through the help of student engagement and participation. In addition to these, the teacher must also promote multiple perspectives which must further lead to divergent thinking. This will enable students to understand that various viewpoints are possible, and they will learn to accommodate different schools of thought and perceptions thereby developing attitudes of peace and harmony. This process has to be done with care by the History teacher.

After these successive steps, the teachers must ask students to summarize the lesson by recalling the key points studied in the class. Moreover, they must encourage students to gather supplementary information by referring to other books in addition to their own textbooks. This will expand their horizons of knowledge and understanding even as it gives them exposure. Finally, as the history teacher organizes information into knowledge, he/she must yet again reinforce the concepts of peace building and reconciliation. In this way, students who learn together will live together peacefully. Thus, the teaching learning process should be made more effective.

History Teacher and Strategies for Promoting Peace:

One of the types of peace learning activities which a History teacher can employ in her class is grouping activities. These activities can be performed in a group of two or more students. Based on the learning activity, teachers can take the liberty to decide whether the groups should be large or small. Working in groups will help students to resolve their differences amicably and reach a consensus.

Yet another type of peace learning activity which can be performed in history classroom is that of 'Physical Arrangement.' When the students sit in a circle instead of the usual classroom arrangement then the participation of each and every student increases. Hence, sometimes it is better to change the physical arrangement of classroom in order to get the best responses from students. This will also help student exchange ideas peacefully.

Debating is another activity which a History teacher can conduct in the class to promote peace. This activity expands students' knowledge and understanding of a specific topic. It also helps students in seeing multiple points of views. A deep exploration of the topic of debate widens the scope of understanding of a student. To conduct a colloquy in a disciplined and peaceful way is the duty of the history teacher in history classroom.

Fishbowl is another interesting learning activity which can be done in a history classroom to promote peace. The broad idea of a fishbowl activity is that rather than a huge group having an open conversation about something, which can be complicated to handle and only benefits a few vigorous participants, a minor group is isolated to discuss while the rest of the participants sit around the outside of the circle and watch without interrupting. Facilitation is focused on the central part group conversation.

Value clarification is one of the best learning activities that can be performed using history in a classroom to promote peace. A History teacher can, from time to time, promote peace and clarify values by questioning and dividing students into two groups-- those who "agree" and those who "don't agree" with a particular value. Such a classification would help students in reaching a consensus on what maybe the right values for establishing peace and harmony in the society.

Giving a case study to the students is also helpful in promoting peace in the classroom. It will also help students discover the cause and effect relationship between ideas and events. Students can be asked to brainstorm and come up with solutions, questions, views etc. A variety of solutions can be derived from the students in a classroom. This will also help students to bring out a peaceful solution to a complex problem. The students must be given multiple opportunities to express themselves. It can be through extempore, speech etc. They can also be requested to write articles on what they think.

This will help them express their opinions Inner peace is as important as peace in the world at large. A person can behave peacefully with others only if he or she is peaceful within. Meditation is a peaceful exercise in this regard. A History teacher in a classroom can request their students to meditate for five minutes or so, a short and quick medication to calm their minds.

Conclusion:

A History teacher can use their pedagogy in various creative ways which are child-centred in order to promote peace. Students imbibe values of peace and harmony from their teachers. Brainstorming, discussion, debate, colloquy, fishbowl etc are child-centred learning activities which broaden the horizons of understanding in

children to accommodate peace. A History teacher can, therefore, without doubt, promote peace in history classroom. The lessons of history are not old or outdated but relevant even today. The bloody wars, mass destruction and genocides have been recorded in History textbooks. These can be used by a good history teacher to condemn violence and extol peace. Therefore, the best subject which can be used as a weapon to fight against violence and to promote peace is History itself. The best person to do it is the History teacher. To promote peace is an important task, which in turn raises the significance of the role of teacher in promoting peace.

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