

Fostering Peace Education through ICT

Dr. Kiran Lata Dangwal

Assistant Professor
Department of Education,
University of Lucknow, Lucknow.

Ms. Shipra Srivastava

Research Scholar
Department of Education,
University of Lucknow, Lucknow.

Received May 3, 2015

Accepted May 20, 2015

ABSTRACT

Education is the means to create individuals with self-reliance, and empower them by awareness to live with respect and dignity in peace and harmony with all. If we wish to create a culture of peace and harmony within human societies which is the need of the hour, peace education becomes very essential. Peace education could be considered as a social process through which peace is achieved. It includes the learning of skills of non-violent conflict resolution and respect for human rights. Peace education needs to be included in the curriculum from the primary stages, and carried forward till the higher ones. The obstacles on the road to peace are numerous and ICT by itself cannot create peace, but can definitely be a powerful tool to combat the culture of war and violence and is equally useful and rich resource for raising awareness and suggesting appropriate actions. Steady advances in ICT propelled education and expansions of new media of communication have enhanced expectations of the common man in almost all spheres of their endeavours, including long-lasting peace. ICT offers immense opportunities to make the teaching and learning of peace more effective. Efficient use of ICT in teaching and learning of peace education will provide ample information which could act as a catalyst for both personal and national development. The thought of peace building through ICT brings to mind the notion of customized messages to meet specific needs or solve particular problems. The current generation is at ease with rapidly changing technology as technology is all-pervasive with smart phones in the pockets of today's youth. The quintessence of using digital media is to communicate peace. It will be pertinent in the monitoring and evaluation of peace education projects, especially among young generation. As a precious goal of humanity, peace has to be accomplished and sustained by all plausible ways. The efforts to evolve a culture of peace and non-violence need a sincere, contributory and holistic approach. ICTs can be used effectively, in promoting peace education across the globe, have meaningful communication, and fostering the universal values and behaviors in people on which a culture of peace and non-violence is predicted.

Key words : Peace Education

Introduction

“Peace is possible for life at all stages and it is up to man to choose his destiny or to suffer from the horrors of war. Today mankind is at the crossroad where he has to choose with courage, determination and imagination.”

The above said statement by Federico Mayor clearly depicts that now it's a high time for the humanity as it has been passing through a crisis. Violence has become an incidence of daily occurrence in every part of the world,

which is a very serious matter of concern. The inhuman acts of violence against women and children, the brutal killings of innocents, terrorism, and injustice have become a bitter truth of our day to day life. It is time to sensitizing human beings to respect life, cultural identity, and the cherished values of love and respect for every living being. The majority of mankind has been living in stark poverty, daily fighting for survival, living hand to mouth. There is a lot of chaos and confusion in the society which human beings has constructed for them self. This situation of chaos and confusion in the society has been disturbing the innocent minds of children. Children are obviously absorbing the spirit of violence present in their surroundings and will grow very soon to be the subsequent generation of perpetrators of violence. Hence the need to nurture peace in the hearts and minds of children has arisen as an urgent issue to concentrate on.

Peace is a complex term to define. In its narrow sense it simply means the absence of war and violence. In a broader sense it can include many other concerns, e.g. religious, internal peace and happiness, the absence of social structural violence, democratic governance, gender equilibrium, satisfaction of basic needs, and harmony with the environment. September 21, is being observed around the world as the International Day of Peace. The United Nations has been recognizing the day by

holding a series of high-level debates on the connection between sustainable development and sustainable peace. There are many United Nations declarations on the importance of peace education. Ban Ki Moon, U.N. Secretary General, dedicated the International Day of Peace of the year 2013 to peace education in an effort to refocus minds and financing on the preeminence of peace education as the means to bring about a culture of peace. Koichiro Matsuura, the former Director-General of UNESCO, has written of peace education as being of "fundamental importance to the mission of UNESCO and the United Nations" Matsuura, (2008).

Earlier it was assumed that the more knowledge people will have, the better they will be. For that reason, stress was given on cognitive development of children in schools at the expense of nurturing children's emotional, social, moral and humanistic aspects. The outcome of this kind of imbalanced education is evident at present in the form of the unrest of youth with their antisocial activities, attitudes and other behavioral problems. Now due to this dilemma there is an emergent realization in the education world that children should be instructed in the art of living peacefully. Accordingly, number of concepts, attitudes, values and behavioral skills related to peace are being incorporated into school curricula in several countries.

In this context Maria Montessori's loud and diligent reiteration on the need for peace education should be mentioned with admiration and appreciation. Today we are only rediscovering her vision of peace education which she tried to tell the world in the 1930s. For instance, she said in one of her public talks: *"Those who want war prepare young people for war; but those, who want peace, have neglected young children and adolescents so that they are unable to organize them for peace."*

Her vision of education offers a significant and sound base for peace education. She believes that education is a powerful tool for building World Peace. To her peace is the guiding principle of man and nature. If there will be any effort to diverge from this principle it will only bring on destruction. She also recommended that mastery over the external world alone is insufficient in constructing a peaceful world; human beings have to realize their inner sources of energies and strength which is being neglected so far. Peace is not only cessation of war. There are many positive qualities in peace which should be inculcated in today's young generation through peace education.

PEACE EDUCATION

Peace education is an integral part of the UNICEF vision of quality basic education. The 1990 World Declaration on Education for All clearly states that basic learning needs

comprise not only essential tools such as literacy and numeracy, but also the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values required to live and work in dignity and to participate in development. It further states that the satisfaction of those needs implies a responsibility to promote social justice, acceptance of differences, and peace (Inter Agency Commission, WCEFA, 1990). In 1999 UNICEF defined peace education as the process of promoting the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values needed to bring about behaviour 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.

According to, Fran Schmidt and Alice Friedman (1988), Peace education is holistic. It embraces the physical, emotional, intellectual, and social growth of children within a framework deeply rooted in traditional human values. It is based on philosophy that teaches love, compassion, trust, fairness, co-operation and reverence for the human family and all life on our beautiful planet. Thus one can say 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.

Harris and Synott (2002) 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.

Peace education be thought of as "encouraging a commitment to peace as a settled disposition and enhancing the confidence of the individual as an individual agent of peace; as informing the student on the consequences of war and social injustice; as informing the student on the value of peaceful and just social structures and working to uphold or develop such social structures; as encouraging the student to love the world and to imagine a peaceful future; and as caring for the student and encouraging the student to care for others", as suggested by James Page (2008).

Peace education is more effective and significant when it is implemented in accordance with the social and cultural context and the demands of a country. It should be enhanced by its cultural and spiritual values along with the globally accepted and relevant values for humanity and mankind. The fundamental concepts rooted in the above definitions are that peace education is a remedial measure to defend

children from getting involved into the various means of violence in society. It aims at the holistic development of the children. It attempts to instil high level of values into the mind of the child related to humanity and society. Mainly it tries to develop a set of necessary behavioural skills required for living peacefully and building peace through which the entire humanity will be benefitted. Actually, two among the four pillars of education suggested by the Delor report (1996) i.e. learning to live together and learning to be, are directly related to peaceful living. To name such efforts as peace education is not a matter of concern. What really matters is integrating attitudes, values, and skills related to peace into the process of teaching and learning in schools and make it a core element of the entire curriculum. Some countries and institutions have it in the form of subjects such as Values Education, (Malaysia and Philippines), Citizenship Education (U.S.A.), Education for Mutual Understanding (Ireland) and Developmental Education (UNICEF). While academic conversation on the subject has increasingly recognized the need for a broader, more holistic approach to peace education, a review of field-based projects reveals that three variations of peace education are most common: conflict resolution training, democracy education, and human rights education. New approaches have been emerging and among those the most

significant focuses on peace education as a process of worldview transformation.

ICT and Peace Educatio

The widespread availability of Information and Communication Technologies (ICTs) has led to the globalization process and continues to have a large influence on social, economic, political and cultural structures around the world. In the context of Peace and Conflict Studies, ICTs can play an important role in many ways. On the positive side, communication technologies such as the Internet can support nonviolent, democratic movements, promote education, capacity building, intercultural dialogue and the establishment of a beneficial global civil society. They can also play a liberating role in processes to overcome authoritarian regimes, as has been demonstrated by the 2011 revolutions in the Arab world. On the negative side, ICTs can be used for cybercrime, cyber warfare, surveillance, the spreading of extremist propaganda, the suppression of democratic processes and other destructive purposes, Sabadello (2011).

The Vienna Conclusions – an outcome of the conference “ICT+ Creativity” held from 2-3 June 2005 in Vienna, Austria during the preparatory phase of the World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) – states the following on the topic of cultural and technical diversity in the online world: “Whereas ICT is most effective when it is standardised and

uniform, content is most valuable when it is varied and unique. Whereas ICT infrastructure strives to be culture-neutral, content is most powerful when it intermingles with local cultures.”

During the period of the “International Decade for a Culture of Peace” several reports have been published. A report by Foundation Culture of Peace, (2005) titled as Civil Society Report at midpoint of Culture of Peace Decade describes the Internet as a useful tool for promoting the idea and values of a Culture of Peace. Another report published by the same Foundation in (2010), Report on the Decade for a Culture of Peace states: “With access to the Internet and greater global movement people are connected with different cultures, ideologies, ethnicities, etc. that helps break down barriers.”

E-learning or ICT based learning is basically the use of electronic tools to assist in the process of learning, to encompass all aspects of electronically assisted learning. E-learning can involve education programs aided by the use of television, radio, internet, computers, video projectors, and so on. These wide varieties of prospective educational set-ups reveal a potential of ICT based education, its inherent flexibility produced by the many different tools it can make use of. E-learning facilitates wider access to learning cause through it information and lessons be able to convey from one location to another without the movement of pupil or teacher. Such type of facilities used

for providing lessons could also assist to eliminate psychological obstacles to education such as persons of different ethnicities and cultural backgrounds, as the teacher may not necessarily notice the students and therefore cannot make the choice to teach on religion or skin colour. Time restrictions could also be removed, as downloadable contents, lessons on CDs, DVDs or videos allow the learner to learn at a time of their choice and feasibility.

Peace education is the prerequisite of the essential knowledge and skills to avoid or resolve conflicts and E-learning is the use of electronic media to facilitate the process of learning, with the focus in this instance on the use of ICTs. These technologies are being employed to remove physical and psychological barriers, renovate learning relationships and empower learners to learn at their own pace, need, interest and desire.

The WSIS as stated earlier is being involved in encouraging research into the use of ICTs to facilitate in bringing about a state of Peace, specifically the ICT4Peace process. The WSIS also sought to encourage the incorporation of ICTs into education as two of its key principles, succinctly: connecting all education institutions, from universities to primary schools; and adapting curricula to 'meet the challenges of the information society'. These key principles entail an affirmative solution, i.e. we must e-learn. This is in accordance with the principles of the WSIS which indicates that education, ICT and

Peace can go hand-in-hand, and these principles have been universally acknowledged, as well as analogous to the Millennium development goals, especially building bridges in society and providing universal basic education, that is well accepted globally as indispensable for the development of mankind and the establishment of peace. Along with the fact that the ICT4Peace goals are likely to be fulfilled by the expected target of 2015 adds a sense of authenticity to the thought, e.g. it is seen as possible and likely.

Conversation or interaction among two or more persons involves a medium. The foremost qualities that are usually mentioned while exploring modern ICTs as a medium are their high speed, low price and interactivity. It is easier and faster to send an e-mail than to send a letter, really cheaper to use Skype than to make a traditional ISD call, on the Internet everybody can interactively both publish and receive information.

The likelihood of using ICTs to fortify or reconstruct societal bonds accurately, just as peace education is concerned with transformation society and providing the means to avoid and resolve violence and conflict, online communities are viewed as a tool of strengthening acquaintance between populace and consequently provide an additional tool to assist in the transformation and avoidance of conflict. These online communities i.e. Google+, Facebook, Whatsapp,

Twitter and Skype etc. can be observed as a ways of transmitting and sharing information, as people share their experiences, explicate their actions, share their knowledge, show their emotions with emoticons and so forth.

Moreover these online communities permit people to get a better understanding of the people around them, and thus possibly empathise with them, get an understanding of the causes and reasons behind other people's actions, collect information, and learn to work collectively. Hence online communities can be seen as a complimentary concept to ICT based peace education, as they allow the gained education to be placed into practice, in particular online communities put forward an opportunity in form of a forum where earlier opponents can meet each other, talk through their differences and make efforts to create a peaceful situation, in addition to being another tool through which relationships could be transformed and knowledge could be generated.

APPS, WEBSITES AND SOCIAL NETWORKING GROUPS

There are various examples of ICT applications and services that are exclusively relevant to the vision and principles of a Culture of Peace. For example, the Culture of Peace Initiative (CPI) website offers online resources such as reports, best practices, an events calendar, and other community

services for organizations working on peace-building efforts.

Several groups and initiatives promoting the concept of a Culture of Peace exist on social networking services such as Facebook:

- Culture of Peace Campaign:
<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=135306216564758>
- Culture of Peace Press:
<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=119792618049606>
- Youth Team for a Culture of Peace:
<http://www.facebook.com/group.php?gid=196437314231>

The blogging platform "Global Voices" runs a so-called bridge-blogging service where volunteer authors, translators and editors attempt to provide reports from a local perspective that cannot normally be found in the mainstream media, therefore raising awareness and cross-cultural understanding. For example, on this platform it is possible to read English translations of Egyptian blog posts that had originally been written in Arabic.

Another example web application which is specifically designed for promoting respect for cultural diversity and beneficial intercultural dialogue is *Soliya*, which states: "*Our mission is to improve relations between Western and predominantly Muslim societies*

by enabling youth to participate in cross-cultural dialogue and education."

With Soliya, participants can engage in a moderated video conference, discussing specific topics, posing questions, and exchanging personal views, ideas and opinions. It is exactly this kind of application that has the potential to enable learning how to respect cultural differences and how to transform conflicts peacefully Sabadello (2011).

PROBLEMS INHERENT IN ICTS

At this point it is also important to be mention that we should be conscious of the potential of ICTs which at any time could be converted into a place for origin and reproduction of conflict, rather than of resolution and peace, Interactions on the Internet can in fact sometimes provides reinforcement to the prejudices instead of to providing assistance in overcoming them. According to Hsu (2009), mostly people are used to visit those sites on the Internet that are equivalent to their already existing views. Along with this the Internet provides an easy way to people to hit upon and join groups and forums with which they already agree, consecutively, which may make their views even more intense, rather than helping in the advancement of the vision of Peace.

According to Butt, (2006) the thought of ICTs being able to spread conflict has arisen from developed countries through the idea of

cyber-bullying. Cyber-bullying is the harassment of another person via email, mobile phone or online messaging, it has proved difficult to control, and some have likened ICTs to a new electronic school yard without a teacher or supervisor. Indeed this concept is taken to a much larger scale when one considers the focus of the latest WSIS conference, control of the internet, who has it and who should have it? This idea arises from the use of the internet for anti-social behaviour such as terrorism, racism and discrimination.

Along with the threats that ICTs can directly pose to culture of peace and conflict resolution there are also some factors that are related to ICTs and the consequence produced by them in general can also constitute a hurdle to the idea of fostering Peace education through the use of ICTs. One of the important factor is "Information Overload", which is one of the most frequently cited advantages of ICTs that means the possibility to quick and easy access of a large amount of information on the fingertip, this information itself could very easily become a problem if available in quite a large amount to process and in a structure too hard to search.

Another factor is related with the phenomenon which shows that basic access to ICTs is unequally distributed, among different regions of world, as well as within different parts of societies and the term given

for this phenomenon is “Digital Divide” (or “Digital Gap”). This inequality exists not only in the availability of technical infrastructure but also the education and knowledge to use it effectively.

CONCLUSION

It is the need of today to have an education system that is capable of saving humanity from the present crisis. Such an education system must involve the spiritual development of child along with the enhancement of values in him as a human being. It is time to make peace education obligatory in our schools; peace education can be defined as an educational response to the emerging problem of conflicts and violence. It includes certain basic characteristics i.e. aims to protect minds of young ones from being scarred by violence present in the society, prepare them to construct a world full of peace by means of providing essential knowledge, attitudes, and skills.

The vision implicit in this paper is that Peace education can be fostered through the use of ICTs. It has been shown very clearly that ICTs can be used as a potential aid in the providing peace education and also in the empowerment of societal bonding. The role of ICT in dealing with the Millennium Development Goals is being recognized increasingly. However, that technology has a critical role to play in shaping future

strategies for peace, if the respective online applications and services are designed in a way that enable the users free and beneficial exchange of thoughts and ideas and a provision to safeguard them and keeping control on them. Certain threats to the idea of creating a Culture of Peace through the use of ICTs exist which needs to be addressed cautiously. It is also important to keep in mind that it is not possible to achieve intercultural interactions, acceptance and understanding through technology alone. It requires some prerequisites such as respect for cultural diversity, open mindedness along with such political and social conditions which encourage peaceful conversation.

It appears that if we think wholeheartedly and creatively about ICTs, keeping in mind that they are best supported by a myriad of other response, then ICTs can be a very effective tool in promoting peace education across the globe, have meaningful communication, and fostering the universal values and behaviors in people on which a culture of peace and non-violence is predicted.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Brock- Utne, Birgit. (1985). Education for peace. Pergamon press, London.
2. Delors, J. (1996) Learning the Treasure within Report to UNESCO of the international commission on education for the 21st century, UNESCO.

3. Felicity, Butt. (2006). E-Peacebuilding/Development: Analysing the Potential Impact of ICTs on Providing Peace Education and Strengthening Civil Society in Post-Conflict Development. <https://www.academia.edu/3081327> Retrieved Nov.20,2014.
4. Foundation Culture of Peace. (2005). *Civil Society Report at midpoint of Culture of Peace Decade*. Foundation Culture of Peace.
5. Foundation Culture of Peace. (2010). *Report on the Decade for a Culture of Peace*. Foundation Culture of Peace.
6. Fountain S. (1999). Peace education in UNICEF. UNICEF, New York.
7. Harris, Ian and Synott, John. (2002). Peace Education for a New Century. *Social Alternatives* 21(1) 3-6.
8. Hsu, J. (2009, June 7). *People Choose News That Fits Their Views*. Retrieved from LiveScience:<http://www.livescience.com/3640-people-choose-news-fitsviews.html> Retrieved Nov.21, 2014.
9. <http://cultureofpeace.org/>
10. <http://globalvoicesonline.org/>
11. <http://www.soliya.net/>
12. Inter-Agency Commission, World Conference on Education for All, (1990). 'World Declaration on Education for All'.
13. Matsuura, Koichiro. (2008). 'Foreword'. In: J.S.Page *Peace Education: Exploring Ethical and Philosophical Foundations*. Charlotte: Information Age Publishing. p.xix.
14. Page, James S. (2008) 'Chapter 9: The United Nations and Peace Education'. In: Monisha Bajaj (ed.) *Encyclopedia of Peace Education*. (75-83). Charlotte: Information Age Publishing.
15. Page, James S. (2008). *Peace Education: Exploring Ethical and Philosophical Foundations*. Charlotte: Information Age Publishing. P.189.
16. Sabadello, M. (2011). ICTs for a Global Culture of Peace. Module Paper 8, EPU Summer Trimester 2011, <http://projectdanube.org/> Retrieved Nov.20, 2014.
17. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2001). Learning the way to peace. A Teachers guide to education for peace. UNESCO, New Delhi.
18. United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization. (2005). Peace education Framework of teacher education. UNESCO, New Delhi.
19. World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). (2003). 'Declaration of Principles'. *UN ICT Task Force*: New York.
20. World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS). (2003). 'Plan of Action'. *UN ICT Task Force*: New York.

The harder you fall, the higher you bounce.

– Unknown.