



Peace Education in the Higher Secondary Level Curriculum of Bangladesh

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ABSTRACT

Education for peace attempts to transform the lives of students, teachers, and the whole community by directly confronting participants with the issue that was at the heart of conflict (Clarke-Habibi 2005 cited in Bar-Tal & Rosen, 2009). Peace education directly refers to the themes of conflict and tries to change societal beliefs, attitude, values and behaviors related to culture of conflict (Bar-Tal & Rosen, 2009). This paper has made a study of how peace education promotes conflict free world and ensures global harmony. This study has also concerned how textbooks can play an important role to develop students' understanding of diverse culture, tolerance against diversity. Adopting a qualitative method approach, this study has analyzed students' interviews. Ten (10) students from three (3) different colleges have participated in the interview session. The result of the findings and English For Today textbook for classes XI-XII has been analyzed and some suggestions have been made on the basis of the result.

Keywords: Peace education, Quality education, Global citizenship education, Conflict, Global harmony, Textbook.

1. Introduction

Education represents social hegemonic ideals and beliefs which transmits cultural capital to students. This can result in the duplication of existing cultural inequalities (Bourdieu 1977; Galtung 1996 cited in Standish, 2016). A vision of SDG-4 is to ensure sustainable and equal quality education and foster life-long learning opportunities for all. Target 4.7 deals with the educational materials aimed at improving awareness and skill for sustainable development, human rights, gender equality and cultures of peace and non-violence (Unterhalter, 2019). Target 4.7 also focuses on building global citizenship and appreciation of cultural diversity and of culture's contribution to sustainable development. In this paper, the focus will be given on how peace education can be used as a pathway to build global citizenship to promote a culture of peace. In order to create global citizenship, the citizens need to be aware about the culture of peace. Through quality education, the culture of peace can be ensured among the citizens. In order to promote a culture of peace, the educational policy needs to be changed. Thus, to provide quality education, teaching contents should focus on such topics that are related to various cultures and cultural norms. The curriculum should aim to develop students' intercultural awareness, sense of global citizenship, knowledge and appreciation of other languages and cultures to promote a culture of peace. Culture of peace in education can prevent violence, enhance interpersonal and social respect and tolerance against diversity. Peace education can also help to solve the ongoing human rights violations that learners face (Bajaj, 2015). Education is a foundation of social power and influence. If peace education can teach us how to understand violence, behave non-violently and work for positive cultural values, it is necessary to explore the extent to which these concepts are embedded in existing national curricula (Standish, 2016). In order to ensure social change and a culture of peace in communities, effective educational programs need to be created that can meet the needs of the community and lead to the development of a culture of peace at a universal level (Yilmaz, 2018).

2. Literature Review

The goal of SDG-4 widens the reach of education as a global initiative to include literacy, numeracy and broader learning outcomes like global citizenship, sustainability, gender equality, promote a culture of peace and non-violence. Actually, quality education is related to equalities and values such as sustainable growth, global citizenship (Unterhalter, 2019).

In order to make a peaceful world it is important to dismantle the culture of war; to live with justice and compassion; to create intercultural respect, reconciliation and solidarity; to foster human rights and obligation; to live in harmony with the earth and to cultivate inner peace. Educators and activists have long turned to education for peace in their efforts to protect and help the world's most disadvantaged citizens-our children. Global citizenship education (GCED) provides a new approach to helping children deal with challenges and create a culture of peace. No child is born with ethnocentric views, racist views, xenophobia or other types of cultural prejudice. By teaching children to appreciate and value cultural diversity GCED promotes the peace education component of building intercultural understanding, respect and reconciliation. Via GCED transformative bridges, children will reach out

to each other in a spirit of compassion to work together for social justice, human rights, prosperous futures and inner harmony, in contrast to social, economic and cultural conditions. GCED encourages a deeper understanding of diverse cultures and civilizations' knowledge and spirituality which will enrich each other, prevent feelings of dominance and enable cultural transformation. Anti-racist education has been catalyzed by this more transformative framework of intercultural or multicultural education, which stresses the need not only to promote the ideals and skills of personal and interpersonal non-discrimination but also to abolish institutional or systemic racism, ethnic inequality and ethno-cultural discrimination (Toh & Cawagas, 2017).

Peace education, an important type of peace building, is tailored to three primary objectives: acknowledging violence, non-violently resolving disputes, and working towards results compatible with positive peace (Galtung cited in Standish, 2016). The culture of peace promotes tolerance and conflict reduction initiatives, faces the causes and individualizes potential solutions, where everyone is a central character, where everyone is on the same level for discussion and legitimacy (Guetta, 2013). Peace education encompasses a number of different methods and activities that cultivate peaceful behavior, outlooks and beliefs and can occur before conflict, during conflict, after conflict and in quiet nations anywhere along the spectrum of conflict and peace (Salomon & Cairns cited in Standish, 2016). The educational system which acts as the key agent for socializing conflict through school textbooks, educational materials, teachers' instruction and school ceremonies (Bar-Tal & Rosen, 2009). It allows access to education to previously excluded groups like girls, differently abled children, indigenous communities, needy and sick people (Guetta, 2013). Textbooks are an important curriculum and cultural objects which can directly shape learning experience in the classroom and learners' ideologies (Ilieva cited in Nguyen, Malina & Cao, 2020). In the textbook, the representation of the enemy with whom the group was locked in intractable confrontation is the most important issue of concern. Through equalization, the rival comes to be seen as an equal partner with whom it is possible to establish a relationship. The history of conflict should be portrayed and analyzed in an impartial manner. This means peace education demands that both parties reconsider their own past (Bar-Tal & Rosen, 2009).

Including peace education in the curriculum can teach the learners some values to maintain a conflict free social environment. To achieve the objectives of peace education, a school system must go through major changes. It requires setting new educational objectives, preparing new curricula, writing school textbooks, developing instructional material, training teachers, creating a school climate that is conducive to peace education, and so on (Bar-Tal & Rosen, 2009). Cremin (2016) talks about how education serves the needs of the dominant group in the society and fails to bring about participatory democracy and critical consciousness. So, some developments should be made in the policy to reach the aims of peace education. For teachers, it may be useful to note that the curriculum holds a number of recommendations useful to promote peace through education. However, some important aspects of peace education are lacking or missing in the current curriculum (Standish & Nygren, 2018). The pervasive social problem of domestic violence, which many children witness and experience, also deserves to be included in curricula so that the patriarchal traditions that motivate and sustain such violence are revealed and challenged (Toh & Cawagas, 2017). The curriculum may also benefit from focusing more on content helpful to promote recognition of violence and a promotion of attitudes making students more active in line with theories of positive peace (Standish & Nygren, 2018). As a result, opportunities exist to strengthen peace education content within its existing curricula in particular the recognition of a more comprehensive understanding of violence, the prevention of violence, and addition of nonviolent tools for conflict transformation (Standish, 2016).

The communicative language teaching (CLT) approach has been considered as an appropriate approach for providing global citizenship education (Kruger, 2012). As the CLT approach focuses on improving learners' communicative competence so that learners can communicate with others fluently (Canale and Swain, 1980; Moore, 2018). In the classroom, the reading contents that are related to peace help students to increase their motivation (Swenson et al., 1993). English teaching plays a significant role to promote peaceful interactions (Kruger, 2012). Teaching literature not only helps students to raise their motivation and to develop their language proficiency but also it helps students to raise awareness of global citizenship (Tkenaga, 2012). Universal hospitality is closely related to global citizenship (Kant, 1957). Peace and conflict studies (PACS) education has been an integral approach to learn social justice in pursuing higher education (Harris et al., 1998 & Smith, 2007). Practitioners of peace education share techniques of non-violent conflict resolution, share ecological consciousness, show respect for diversity, gender awareness and non-violent political, cultural and social transformation (Boulding, 2000). Peace education is promising, oriented to protect human rights, transformative, oriented to establish environmental sustainability, social justice and positive peace (Harber and Sakade, 2009). Humans are not naturally cultured, through socialization they become cultural creatures (Alexander and Thompson, 2011). For the teachers', critical peace education mentions five stages- promoting consciousness through dialogue, inventing non-violent alternatives, providing distinctive modes of empowerment, shifting actions and rearrangement (Brantmeier, 2011). Peace education is a way to educate people in order to promote a peaceful world in various ways (Boulding, 2000). Peace education is a transformative pedagogy which includes principles of knowledge, skills and attitudes that support hope, human rights, environmental sustainability, equity and harmony (Freire, 2001; Harber and Sakade, 2009). Peace education helps people to find out the reasons of violence and war, and helps people to learn to deal with problems in a peaceful and formative way to create a peaceful world (Boulding, 2000; Harber and Skade, 2009). In peace education, participants and educators use organized learning to convey techniques and ideals (Noddings, 2012). It is not possible for the citizens to achieve a positive face if they are at risk (Polk Lillard, 1988). The first place of learning starts from home, after home school is the second primary place of social transfer (Noddings, 2012).

3. Methodology

In order to figure out the extent to which peace education is integrated into the higher-secondary level syllabus in Bangladesh, we will consider a qualitative method for our research. We have interviewed a total number of ten students from Dhaka Imperial college, Viqarunnisa Noon College and Notre Dame college to receive their opinion regarding peace education. They are mainly asked if the subjects they are taught include topics relevant to both intracultural and intercultural ideologies and norms. The students are also asked if their teachers put enough emphasis to teach them the relevance of learning about different cultural practices. During the interview, ten questions were asked to each student and their answers were noted in key words. Later, we have summarized those responses for speech analysis. Furthermore, we have done a textual analysis of the recent version of "English for Today"

textbook for classes XI-XII, prescribed by the National Curriculum and Textbook Board of Bangladesh. In doing so, we have looked for topics that resonate peace education. The focus of our research is to find out if the current educational policy and curriculum of Bangladesh acknowledge the importance of introducing diverse cultural aspects to the learners so that they learn to sustain a conflict free intracultural and intercultural communication.

4. Research Questions

1. How does quality education promote a culture of peace?
2. How does Global citizenship education promote a culture of peace?
3. How will a culture of peace bring global harmony?
4. How can the education policy be changed to promote a culture of peace?
5. What can be the teacher's role to promote a culture of peace?
6. Does English for Today textbook reflect peace education in our country?
7. What other aspects of peace education can be introduced in English for Today textbook to reduce cultural violence?
8. Does our current curriculum introduce a culture of peace?
9. Do students have awareness regarding a culture of peace?
10. What are the characteristics of a responsible citizen?

5. Data Analysis

We have interviewed ten college students over the phone and asked them some questions. Our focus was to evaluate their understanding of peace education. Their responses are given below:

Student 1

"I don't know about the culture of peace. I remember one topic that talks about gender equality though." (Dhaka Imperial college, phone interview)

Student 2

"Our English teacher talked about global harmony. I have read some topics on race, gender equality and cultural diversity. I think we should be respectful towards everyone despite their cultural and religious differences. I was once bullied in school because I come from a Chakma tribe." (Viqarunnisa Noon College, phone interview)

Student 3

"I think we should be taught how to maintain a non-violent society. I was beaten once on my way coming to college by some Muslim extremists because I am a Hindu." (Notre Dame College, phone interview)

Student 4

"We have read a chapter on human rights. Although, our teacher skipped the chapter that talked about different tribes of Bangladesh." (Dhaka Imperial College, phone interview)

Student 5

"I have learnt about global citizenship from a documentary. We have some topics that introduce different cultural practices but our teachers don't tell us the relevance of learning these topics. We just read these chapters because it's in the syllabus." (Notre Dame College, phone interview)

Student 6

"I have read some chapters on gender equality, social peace, violence and justice etc. We are taught to be respectful towards diverse cultural practices but these lessons are not enough to ensure peaceful intercultural and intracultural communication." (Viqarunnisa Noon College, phone interview)

Student 7

"We are taught some topics that concern a conflict free society. I think learning about these topics are important. It has helped me to understand the difference between violent and nonviolent approaches towards others different from us." (Notre Dame College, phone interview)

Student 8

“One of our teachers talked about peace education when teaching a chapter on immigrant experience. I personally hate stereotyping and racist attitudes. (Viqarunnisa Noon College, phone interview)

Student 9

“I think peace education is important because it can ensure global harmony. I have read chapters that talk about being friendly towards others beliefs and religious practices.” (Dhaka Imperial College, phone interview)

Student 10

“We are taught about racism and ethnic inequalities. Some groups are marginalized but we should be equally respectful towards them and provide them equal facilities.” (Viqarunnisa Noon College, phone interview)

Based on their opinion, it is evident that the majority of the students have read topics that resonate with peace education. However, they have read it as a part of their syllabus. They are not aware of the practical use of the knowledge they gained by reading these topics. The teachers fail to teach them the relevance of these topics in the real world. In some cases, the teachers skip these topics as something unimportant. As a result, the real purpose of peace education is missing in the higher secondary level curriculum of Bangladesh due to the absence of proper education policy and teaching approach.

This study has also analyzed English for Today for classes XI-XII in order to find out the research question ‘Does English For Today textbook for classes XI-XII reflect peace education in our country?’

In our English for Today textbook, the textbook includes some chapters related to culture of peace. Thus, it has been observed that our textbook curriculum promotes a culture of peace. In order to provide quality education, the textbook focuses on the topics related to human rights, and peace. Thus, students get the opportunity to know more about culture and human rights from their learning materials. The English for Today textbook includes some chapters related to human rights, diaspora, and peace and conflict. Through these chapters’ learners can learn how to work together for social justice, human rights, compassion and for global harmony. If the learners know the human rights properly, they can raise their voices for justice and compassion. There is also a chapter ‘Path to Higher-to-Higher Education’ where diverse and multinational workplaces are discussed. This chapter emphasizes that mutually beneficial relationships are important to get entry into the global marketplace. Peace education promotes a positive attitude towards diverse culture and global citizenship. Through this chapter learners can be acknowledged about the importance of global citizenship and how to survive in diverse cultures. In the human rights related chapters students get to know about their human rights, about their health facilities and education rights. This chapter helps students to be aware of their own rights as a citizen. Thus, the students get to know what their rights are as a member of a particular society and cultural group and how to get those rights. Moreover, the students are taught how equal educational facilities can be ensured for both genders. There is also a chapter titled ‘Diaspora’ where the learners get to know about overseas countries. In this chapter, the focus is given on the Bangladeshi people who are living in the overseas countries. The chapter focuses on Bangladeshi in Italy, Bangladeshi Community in the UK. Through this chapter, students get to know more about the context of overseas countries. Students also get to know how the Bangladeshi people survive in the overseas countries, how the Bangladeshi people adjust with a new culture. Thus, this chapter helps the students to know more about the culture, context of the overseas countries. Through this chapter, students get to know the possible challenges that Bangladeshi people might face in the overseas countries, and also get to know the strategies to overcome the challenges. In the English for Today textbook, there is also a chapter titled ‘Peace and Conflict’. In this chapter, the focus is given on the definition, causes and types of conflict. Moreover, the definition of conflict has been discussed elaborately in this chapter. The cruelties of conflict have also been discussed in this chapter. Moreover, this chapter also discusses the peace movement. Through this chapter, students get a clear concept about peace and conflict, the causes of conflict, and the different types of conflict. So, this chapter teaches the students how to differentiate between an act of reconciliation and conflict and how to respond in a situation of conflict.

6. Recommendations

The English for Today textbook discusses peace, human rights, global marketplace, diaspora and conflict. However, some other aspects like: gender equality, education for women, immigrant experience, stereotyping, racism and intercultural communication etc. should be included as topics in the textbook. Examples should be given from real life experience so that the students learn how these aspects are inextricable parts of quality education and harmonious society. The students are required to be taught how they should respond to the set of norms, ideologies and practices different from our own. The topics should teach them how to behave in a non-stereotypical and racially unbiased manner. Some topics should be included to make the students aware of political, religious and racial violence in the national and global spectrum. In other sense, peace education should be promoted in some more topics to ensure quality education through this textbook. On the other hand, it is the teachers’ responsibility to teach these topics with equal importance. The teachers should relate these lessons to the students’ personal experiences so that they understand the relevance of these issues in real life.

7. Conclusion

To conclude, throughout this paper it has been observed that in our curriculum a culture of peace concept is not well known to all of the students. From the collected data, it has also been observed that students have very limited knowledge about violation, war, global conflict, and culture of peace. Moreover, students do not have enough exposure to know about a culture of peace. Global harmony, violation, ethnicity is not discussed as learning issues. Thus, students have less knowledge about these issues. Reading a particular chapter or watching a documentary, students get to know about the

violation, war, ethnicity, conflict, and culture of peace issues. Moreover, the concept of tribal groups is ignored in our curriculum. To know more about other cultures, knowing the tribal context is highly important. Moreover, religious conflict should be avoided in order to promote a culture of peace.

Appendix A. Interview Questions for students:

- 1) What do you know about the culture of peace?
- 2) How do you know about the culture of peace?
- 3) Do you think a culture of peace is necessary? If yes then why?
- 4) What can be the possible conflicts in the absence of a culture of peace?
- 5) Have you found any reading content related to the culture of peace in the syllabus?
- 6) Do you think a culture of peace will bring global harmony? If yes then why?
- 7) What is your perception about cultural diversity?
- 8) Do your teachers put enough emphasis to teach cultural diversity?
- 9) Can you share your attitude towards racism and ethnic inequalities?
- 10) Have you ever experienced any cultural conflict issue? If yes, how have you handled that?

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