

Peace Education as a Tool to Counter Violence

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Abstract

Education is an important tool to change and shape our minds because it is very important to learn and segregate between what we know and what we understand. Peace Education is the best tool to counter violence by equipping citizens with critical thinking skills. Sustainable development goals for education can reduce and eventually eliminate terrorism, radicalization, violence and extremism in societies. The present descriptive research focuses on building connections between people, programs and policies. This research aims at elaborating on the conceptual challenges in eliminating violence and explains ways to achieve this goal through education by identifying characteristics, trends and categories. The point of departure in this research is that peace education is the most effective instrument for combating violence and extremism.

Key words: Sustainable Development, Counter-Violence, Peace Research, Socialization, De-radicalization

Introduction

Educational institutions are not only moulding individuals to enhance society and eliminate negative elements, but are also shaping a peaceful society. The major responsibility of educational institutions is to teach lessons of peace, humility, tolerance, equality and fairness. Since the fundamentals of National education vary from one society to another, it is imperative to distinguish the context-specific features before conscripting

any precise educational strategies for counter-violence¹. Human potential is unlocked through education for it carries a better future for all those who get benefit from it.

It goes beyond saying that today when the world is under the threat and finding ways to counter-violence, it is high time to re-conceptualize where education is positioned. Contemporary western education considers it a lifelong learning process. Education is always political and ideological because educational practices do not take place in a vacuum. The world views of dominant groups in societies are reflected through education, eventually shaped by their values². However, education can be used both as a counter-violence and promoting violence, since it is a double-edged sword when seen through a security lens.

However, the purpose of education is much broader than just the cultivation of knowledge. Desmond Tutu, the Nobel Peace Prize Winner stresses the education for children in conflict zones and writes, “what could be a greater injustice if children are deprived of the right to education? Real peace will prevail when there would be justice everywhere. If schools don’t teach justice and tolerance, where else would they learn it³”.

History is replete with examples where techniques of conflict resolution have been taught to humans for evading violence. Peace education makes people learn about threats of violence and tactics to adopt peace. Banta

¹ Gul, A., Bashir, T., & Mustafa, J. (2020). *Role of Educational Institutions in Building a Peaceful Society*. Liberal Arts and Social Sciences International Journal (LASSIJ), 4(2), 267-277)

² Olave, B. T., & Dillon, J. (2022). *Chilean physics teacher educators' hybrid identities and border crossings as opportunities for agency within school and university*. Journal of Research in Science Teaching.

³ Pais, A., & Costa, M. (2020). *An ideology critique of global citizenship education*. Critical Studies in Education, 61(1), 1-16 Save the Children, 2009.

writes that anthropologists have mentioned about 47 relatively peaceful societies, existing on this planet⁴. However, no written literature is found that attests to whether there had been any kind of community-based peace education strategies to preserve their understanding of conflict resolution policies that endorse their security or not.

This study hypothesizes that peace education is an important tool to change and shape the minds. It has explored the importance of learning and segregating between what is known and what is understood. A rich diversity of peace education is supported by many contexts in which it is practiced. Because individuals differ about how to attain security, there are many diverse lanes to peace that are expounded in peace education classes.

Though in the 20th century, there was remarkable progress yet peace education did not grasp in the educational systems around the world. It is essential to consider that peace research is an important aspect that has been left unaddressed so far and this is where the present research fills the gaps.

This research is based on a qualitative research design to gather data and analyze it. This method is exploratory, it allows the data to speak for itself. This article aims to bridge the gap by examining the causes and consequences of extremism, particularly violent extremism, to provide a case for and critically evaluate the use of peace education through educational prevention strategies.

⁴Banta, B. (1993). *Peaceful Peoples: An Annotated Bibliography*. Metuchen, N.J: Scarecrow Press.

Explaining Violence and Counter-Violence

The term *violence* has not been adequately elucidated; however different scholars interpreted the term in different ways with different factors. Arendt, for example, emphasizes that violence always plays a role in terms of guidance and justification yet through the end it tracks⁵. There are two broad categories of violence explained by Galtung⁶.

- Direct violence –physical or mental trauma to others.
- Indirect violence or structural violence- The circumstances that affect human beings' capacity to conquer their full potential, such as poverty, unemployment, socio-economic inequality etc⁷. Whereas in policy discourses, only direct violence is referred to, while turning a deaf ear to the broader structural violence before 9/11. There had been a well-established academic debate and discussion on the 'root causes of terrorism before 9/11, however, things changed rapidly after this incident.
- With time, rarely, the root causes were debated⁸. It gave birth to a new term of 'radicalization' and a new debate started 'what goes on before the bomb goes off'.
- The security policies were quick enough to connect violence with education as it is more likely related to the minds of individuals. The

⁵ Arendt, Hannah. (1969). On *Violence*. London: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, Publishers

⁶ Galtung, Johan, 1969. *Violence, Peace, and Peace Research* ', Journal of Peace Research. Vol. 6(3). P. 167

⁷Sajjad, Fatima Waqi. (2022, January 4). *Rethinking Education to Counter Violent Extremism:*

⁸ Review of Policy and Practice. Pp. 59-76

following years witnessed de-radicalization turning into a primary security policy through education⁹.

Counter-violence is a shared challenge for all humanity and human rights fulfillment stands at the first stage of bringing peace to societies. Comprehending global problems and the skill to resolve conflicts leads to efforts of counter-violence. When cultural diversity is respected, then systematic education can bring peace. Human security is a closer notion related to peace and violence. Non-violence is not a policy; it is a way of life and identity.

Concept of Socialization

According to Habermas, "Socialization of an individual includes a psychological sense of belonging, the practical aspects of adopting a code of conduct and the desirable idea of deriving symbols in a similar manner¹⁰. The surge of social polarization has pressurized societies to enrich their innermost cohesion. This eventually led to promotion of educational institutions, to be considered central for 'preventing' and 'countering' extremist dogmas and beliefs in many countries¹¹. Social cohesion and integration within a nation are normally maintained through school which is an imperative factor. Several researchers claim that the link between formal education and countering extremism can be traced through socialization theory. Within the broader framework of socialization theory,

⁹*Preventing Violent Extremism through Education: A Guide for Policy Makers*. (2017). UNESCO. Retrieved from <https://unesdoc.unesco.org/ark:/48223/pf0000247764>

¹⁰ Habermas, Jürgen. 1987. *The Theory of Communicative Action. In Lifeworld and Systems: The Critique of Functionalist Reason*. Translated by Thomas McCarthy. Cambridge: Polity Press, vol. 2. First published 1981

¹¹ Ghosh, Ratna, Alice Chan, Ashley Manuel, and Maihemuti Dilimulati. (2017). *Can Education Counter Violent Religious Extremism?* Canadian Foreign Policy Journal. Vol. 23. Pp. 117–133

the notion of “commitment” is predominantly essential. The knowledge or skills remain futile, if devoid of commitment.

Educational Prevention Strategies

Talking about social change, education is considered a significant instrument for ages but with variations between cultures. However, the main purpose of education has been merely instilling knowledge. With the emergence of nationalism and mass mobilization, the demand for public education gained momentum. Today, considerable debate persists over the role of education in preventing and countering radicalization and violent extremism.

Though educational prevention strategies have been adopted across the world, those explain that violence can be barred once the core educational functions are approached. This was the concept introduced in the education system of Finland, henceforth referred to as FNAE and the National Action Plan for Preventing Violent Radicalization and Extremism in Finland was prepared (Ministry of the Interior 2016)^{12,13}. To prevent extremism, Finland adopted the approach by looking at the institutional habitus of the educational system in the country which had a deep-rooted impact at the institutional level and arguing the hegemonies that are rooted in it. That kind of understanding is much crucial when edging education as a context for preventing extremisms since they represent the realities in which prevention is to take place.

¹²Finnish National Agency for Education. 2014. *Finnish National Core Curriculum for Basic Education*. Publications 2016: 5. Helsinki: FNAE

¹³Ministry of the Interior. (2016). *National Action Plan for the Prevention of Violent Radicalization and Extremism*. Helsinki: Ministry of the Interior

When dealing with the national education, the understanding of the why and how is very much important because it is something that conveys messages on the acceptability and legitimacy of particular values, identities, religions and worldviews within the school and the wider society. The pivotal/ crucial role of education in the formation of cohesive and inclusive societies cannot be overlooked. But it certainly needs a whole school approach that remains consistent across different areas of curriculum and pedagogy, together with sustained funding and coordination. The education sector is considered an important partner in lessening violence in societies. For that matter, equal access to education is very much vital. The fact cannot be set aside that the role of educational institutions has not been brought into light when dealing with counter-violence and terrorism strategies¹⁴.

Today societies need to take up this issue seriously through capacity building, civil society, community policing and human rights. Denmark in 2014 translated Prevention of Radicalization and Extremism Action Plan into Preventing and Countering Extremism and radicalization National Action Plan. At the school level, human rights were included in the national curriculum for Social Studies and the compulsory subject of health and family education, eventually incorporated into the education system of the country¹⁵.

We need a comprehensive approach to address the underlying conditions. The real need is to invest in the programs that promote global citizenship and provide comprehensive primary through tertiary education, including

¹⁴Alzyoud, M. S., Al-Ali, A. S., & Tareef, A. O. B. (2016). *Violence against teachers in Jordanian schools*. European Scientific Journal, 12(10)

¹⁵Christodoulou, E., & Szakács, S. (2018). *Preventing violent extremism through education: international and German approaches*

technical and vocational education (Preventing Violent Extremism through Education).

The leading role of education for socialization and empowerment cannot be undone because it is an imperative source of human transformation and transmission.

Why “Peace” Education?

Following the 2nd World War, modern peace education originated in the West and by the 1960s peace education was widely taught in the Western institutions. Whereas talking about third world countries and the global South, one finds limited research on peace education policy as a subject rather more focus is given to the transformation of educational institutions. The peace-building framework does not reflect the full potential of education in vindicating social discrimination and other conflict drivers.

Violence is a grave threat to contemporary societies. Both developing and developed nations face this dilemma. In the contemporary changing geopolitics, it is seen through a different perspective and not only through the military and security lenses as earlier. The thoughts about the peace of this world are well explained by Murithi. He writes that “the future world will bank on the ability of human beings to cast-off violent and militaristic attitudes to resolving problems¹⁶. Consequently, Peace education should be the central pillar to cultivating human relations in the family, in schools, at the workplace, within countries and across borders”¹⁷.

¹⁶Murithi, T. (2009). *An African Perspective on Peace Education: Ubuntu Lessons in Reconciliation*, International Review of Education Vol. 55. Pp. 221–233

¹⁷Hina, Khushbakht, Khalique, Muhammad; (2018). Peace Education and Need of Its Culture System: Identification and Review of Government Effort in Curriculum of Pakistan. Vol. IX (1). The Pakistan Journal of Social Issues

Youth can be certainly transformed positively through peace education. The provision of knowledge, skills and attitude are the cornerstone to counter violence. How functional framework for peace can be attained? The answer is that formal education is a basic section of constructing peace and tolerance because, in civilized societies, academic institutions adopt a substantial share in the spread of thoughts and world perceptions¹⁸.

Conceptual Challenges

Violence is pervasive in societies for ages. Violence and extremism and their link to education are complex multifaceted problems that gained academic attention in the post-9/11 era¹⁹. A new trend emerged which tried to seek out the causes of this act and that eventually gave birth to the invention of new terminology in security discourses.

Dealing with the counter-violence approach, education faces an enormous uphill task to support the cohesion of the community in which it functions, besides vesting the individual to act critically in the same community. Allocating funds to reinforce security measures is no more relevant as it seems insufficient to protect individuals. The need of the hour is to make efforts within a holistic framework.

Efforts to build inclusive societies and peace do involve the study of those factors which give rise to this situation. Violence itself is a big barrier in the course of development because it is something that instils fear within

¹⁸DESA, D. (2009). Creating an inclusive Society: Practical strategies to promote social integration

¹⁹Organization for Security and Co-operation in Europe. Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights. (2014). *Preventing terrorism and countering violent extremism and radicalization that lead to terrorism: A community-policing approach*. OSCE Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR).

communities. However, every society experiences differently. The lack of an integrated approach is adding fuel to fire. Education will only be a tool when it becomes a catalyst for critical thinking. Unless societies involve and adopt free thinking and debate, no policy will work. The collective action can help reduce risks to peace that spans the national border.

The societies face challenges because the role of social actors is absent in shaping education systems and the lack of coherent, progressive and contemporary education system in societies that face violent behaviours. Moreover, the quality of education is not monitored constantly. The education system does not cater to and train students to counter the prevalent problematic narrative in societies and media though higher education institutions have a larger role to play in peace promotion yet it has to begin from the school level²⁰.

Strategies to Prevent Violence through Peace Education

Education is an important tool to change and shape minds. In this connection, people, programs and policies carry a significant position. Educational programming is not only about the content of the curriculum; it is also about nurturing connections between people and their communities to safeguard a benign, cooperative and beneficial environment²¹.

Though the literature on the topic exists yet it deals with a quite narrow aspect: What schools and higher educational institutes ought to be doing or could be doing. Academic conferences are organised on a daily basis in both

²⁰Omeye, Kenneth. (2015). Strengthening Peace Research and Peace Education in African Universities. Vol. 19. African Sociological review

²¹ Parker, A., Morgan, H., Farooq, S., Moreland, B., & Pitchford, A. (2019). Sporting intervention and social change: Football, marginalised youth and citizenship development. *Sport, Education and Society*, 24(3), 298-310

national and international levels, yet they never produce anything solid, instead focused only on future conferences and additional studies.

The strategies to build up an inclusive resilience-building approach to prevent violence, adoption of instructive approach and culturally relevant peace program through inclusive coordination between policy makers and curriculum developers. Furthermore, the policy-relevant knowledge needs to be strengthened to have a practical presentation of peace and mapping the right policy. Right perceptions need to be explored, teaching tolerance through critical thinking and support to alternative narratives.

The students need to learn cognitive skills and constructive criticism with logical reasoning. Moreover, studying anti-social behaviours rather than being simply human rights defenders builds community cohesion. Counselling for educational institutions conducts a survey of existing literature on the acceptance of cultural/religious differences. Multiculturalism and diversity training engagement of most influential actors (teachers, families, students and local community leaders) last but not the least, the reforms in national education policies are the need of the hour to counter extremism.

The educational system does not respond to the challenges of increased violence. Multiple factors play a role in driving individuals towards radicalization. Geo-political and socio-economic factors could be the one reason. The other could be wars and conflict-ridden societies.

Conclusion

Education is the global antibody against terrorism. How the lives of children and nations would become productive and peaceful? How violence will be

shunned? The answer is through peace education which is the need of the hour. The resilience and critical thought process would lead toward counter-violence. Societies can develop tools for negotiating their way through a complex and changing world. This needs to be done for their children and themselves. If we want to make the world peaceful and free of violence, we need to do more to inoculate our children against extremism with the prevalence of the rule of law, individual liberty, mutual respect and last but not the least inter-religious dialogue. Unless nations learn to decode between what is seen and what is heard? Unless multiple problems of the educational status quo are addressed, societies will never find the answers to why education fails to counter the violence. We need to re-conceptualize where education is positioned because education is the foundation to build peace.

The fundamental principles and organisational framework of Jackson's "hidden" educational system must be emphasised in order to further the discussion on the role that education plays in preventing violence. Unquestionably, educating people about the fundamental principles of democracy, freedom and justice correct the erroneous conduct, ignorance and misconceptions that give rise to violent radicalism.

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