

Fostering Conflict Resolution among Adolescents through Reflection and Practice: A Participative Approach

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Abstract:

“If humanity is to progress, Gandhi is inescapable. He lived, thought, acted and inspired by the vision of humanity evolving toward a world of peace and harmony.”
- Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr.

Elderly people always complain of the degradation of values among the youngsters; efforts are being made by the government to revive value education in schools but in vain. This may be because firstly, values are different to different people, secondly, the idealistic values hold no water for youngsters; thirdly, the adolescent period is such that they do not want to be told-they try to assert their independence; fourthly, ‘values cannot be taught, but caught’. The ten core elements of NPE being incorporated in some way or the other in the teaching subjects also does not result in value oriented action/ behavior among the students.

It is because of this that the researcher thought of developing an instructional intervention to foster peace culture among the adolescents through group discussion, reflection and action. The researcher aimed at participative approach to develop a culture of peace and the teacher, instead of preaching, becomes a facilitator leading the students towards self realization using situational approach. The present paper is an effort to present that model which was tried out and was found to be effective and what is more, was liked by the students.

Introduction:

“The only means to a world of peace and understanding is through the proper education of children into emotionally and intellectually mature and thinking adults, respectful and tolerant of other cultures.” (Norman Goble. The Function of Teaching UNESCO Paris 1977)

Globalization, liberalization and satellite invasion have brought the whole world at our doorstep: they have also brought with them certain woes: along with the identity crisis of adolescence, there is a dilemma regarding what is right and what is wrong among the youth; everyone is complaining of the arrogance and self centered behavior among youngsters; there is a growing unrest and unhappiness among them. The more people have the more they desire to possess

which is leading to an unending series of conflict with oneself and with others. There is lot of stress faced by everyone, students and adults alike. There is a growing concern as parents have lesser and lesser quality time to spend with their children in the process to acquire happiness in terms of materialist gains. The world is more interdependent now than ever before. But people seem to be facing more problems as “learning to live together” is becoming more elusive than ever. With the nuclear families being the order of the day, every one is particular about their living styles and habits and no one wants to compromise. We find ego conflicts at home, in the workplace, in the community...from where do we bring the role models for children to emulate? This state of disorder and confusion in the society is adversely affecting the innocent minds of our children. It is but natural that children absorb the spirit of violence in the atmosphere and are prone to grow up to be the next generation of perpetrators of violence. Therefore the need to nurture *peace within* and *peace around* have arisen as urgent issues to be addressed. Today being the era of team work and multicultural scenarios at work place, there is all the more reason to arm our future citizens with all the competencies and skills in order to help them to adjust and live in harmony with everyone in the society. As our former President *Dr Abdul Kalam* rightly quotes, (from Tamil literature),

*When there is righteousness in the heart there is beauty in the character,
When there is beauty in the character there is harmony at home,
When there is harmony at home there is order in the nation,
When there is order in nation, there is peace in the world”*

Many researchers over the years have tried to evolve strategies to inculcate values they are *developing kindness in school children by discussion of value dilemmas presented through video mode* (Singh, Basant Bahadur, 1994); through value-oriented activities (Rao, Haseen and Rekha, S 1995); through conflict resolution training among students to make them *peacemakers* (Johnson, David W; Johnson, Roger T, 2001); by focusing on relationships, i.e. how people interact with one another and with nature (Bogart, Louise; Slaughter, Helen 2001); by attempting peaceful solutions through peer mediation training (George, Yvetta et al, 1995); Nevo and Brem (2002) searched for peace education studies carried out in the last 20 years in real-life intervention settings, covering all available databases and websites. They identified 104 articles and chapters that dealt with peace education. Of these, 79 were empirical studies but only 13 dealt with peace education - within-school 9 conflict resolution, mediation and violence reduction programs. A second search of the database *Proquest* from 1986 to 2001 revealed 15 articles on peace education but not even one of them was a research article. A similar new search of ERIC yielded 394 entries but only 15 were research reports. Keeping in mind the significance of the topic and the dearth of studies on peace education in India, the researcher decided to try out a participative strategy for fostering peace culture among foster peace culture among secondary school students. What can be a better way of reaching the students than to train their teachers? Hence this effort was made to design a training module for training teachers in peace education through participation, discussion and follow-up action.

The human society around the world, over a period of time, has established greater contact. With globalization international integration has resulted in an array of social, political and economic changes. Unimaginable progress in modes of communications, transportation and computer technology have given the process a new lease of life. The world is more interdependent now than ever before. And due to this there is all the more reason to arm our future citizens with all the competencies and skills in order to help them to adjust and live in harmony with everyone in the society. Gandhiji's life showed us the ways to reconcile our differences, and of living in harmony with respect and love even for our enemy.

If peace education the process of acquiring the *values* and developing the *attitudes, skills, and behaviors* to live in harmony with oneself, with others, and with the natural environment, we should consciously cultivate constructive aspects of student's personality. Awareness and awakening of affective domain must be a part of education policy and curriculum.

What is peace education?

Peace education may be defined as 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.

Ian Harris and John Synott 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.
- to mitigate conflict, create unity in the context of diversity, and establish sustainable cultures of peace, is increased - be it in the home, at school, at work, or in the international community.

Peace education programs centered on conflict resolution mainly focus on training individuals to resolve inter-personal disputes through techniques of negotiation and (peer) mediation. Learning to manage anger, being 'fair' to others and improving communication through skills such as listening, turn-taking, identifying needs, and separating facts from emotions, constitute the main elements of the training program.

Participants

The sample consisted of about 10 B. Ed students who, in turn, tried out the module on 500 secondary school students studying in Class IX.

Instrument

The author, along with her M Ed student *Ms Choden Roche*, prepared a **Peace Education Module** for training secondary school teachers in fostering peace culture among students. The module consists of activities designed for the following dimensions of peace:

- Learning to Live Together
- Conflict Resolution
- Compassion
- Positive Thinking and
- Critical Thinking

The present paper describes the activities designed for Conflict Resolution.

Procedure:

The implementation of the module consisted of sessions with 10 B Ed students on 7 days for an hour each day: first and the last days were for administering the pre test and post test and the middle five days for training them to implement the module in simulated setting where they played the role of standard IX students. The same procedure was then replicated by B.Ed students in real class room situations in selected schools. The procedure followed is presented below:

Conflict Resolution Training

Aim: Resolving a dispute or disagreement peacefully.

Objectives:

- To enable students to understand how conflicts arise.
- To sensitize the students to factors in their daily life that cause conflicts.
- To facilitate reflection/introspection on the factors causing conflicts by enabling them to relate them to their daily life.
- To elicit from the students suggestions about resolving conflicts peacefully.
- To inspire students chalk out an action plan to enable them to internalize the value of conflict resolution and implement it in their lives.

Materials required:

- Placards, Quotes, Index cards, Foolscap papers, sketch pens, Worksheets

Instructions to the teacher:

Put up the placards showing conflict resolution to create the ambience in the class.

The following quotes can be put up: (*these are just suggestive. The teacher can put up others too*).

- *If war is the violent resolution of conflict, then peace is the the ability to resolve conflict without violence. – C.T. Lawrence Butler*
- *The quality of our lives depends not on whether or not we have conflicts, but on how we respond to them. – Tom Crum*
- *The days are too short even for love; how can there be enough time for quarreling? – Margaret Gatty*

- *It takes two to quarrel, but only one to end it. – Spanish Proverb*
- *Life is ten percent what happens to me and ninety percent how I react to it. – Charles Swindoll*

Display the Rules on a chart:

- Agree to resolve the conflict.
- No name calling.
- Take turns talking. Don't interrupt.
- Be clear and truthful about what is bothering you and what you really need.
- Listen to the other person. Be sure you understand how he or she sees the problem.
- Use your brains, not your hands.
- Be willing to compromise (if that's appropriate).

Colorful Cartoons/ pictures with people fighting and people interacting happily can be put up.

Procedure:

1. Create the ambience of conflict resolution in class by putting up placards /pictures.
 2. Teacher asks the students in pairs to hold each other's hands and say one good word to each other as a compliment. Ask how they feel after that. Also find out how they feel when they fight with others.
 3. Divide the class into groups of six students. Distribute chart papers and sketch pens to them.
 4. Ask each group to share and discuss the recent incidents which led to a conflict: Divide the task among the groups as follows: *(Time: 15 minutes)*
 - Group 1 - causes of conflicts at home,
 - Group 2 - causes of conflicts in the school ;
 - Group 3- causes of conflicts their housing complex;
 - Group 4 - causes of conflicts in the daily soaps;
 - Group 5 - causes of conflicts between states;
 - Group 6 - causes of conflicts between countries;
- Tell students to try to keep the descriptions as general as possible. Make sure that students do not put their names on their cards. The teacher goes around facilitating, monitoring. .
5. After 15 minutes, each group puts the causes on a chart paper.
 6. One student from each group reads the examples put up on the chart paper. Discuss how much of stress conflicts bring in. Discuss the consequences of such conflicts and how they hamper progress. *(Time: 15 minutes)*
 7. The teacher again asks the groups to discuss how each one of them can play an important part in resolving such conflicts. The students put on Chart paper the strategies that they think would resolve such conflicts. *(Time: 15 minutes)*
 8. Teacher makes the students put up the causes and solutions group wise. All the students view each other's charts. *(Time: 15 minutes)*
 9. Teacher discusses the role of Manthara in Ramayana and Shakuni in Mahabharata and the role of Rajesh Khanna in film Bawarchi (Show video clips wherever possible). Discuss what

triggered conflicts in the former and what resolved conflicts in the latter ... This is only suggestive. You can bring in such episodes from any story, daily soap, or any movie. Teacher asks them whether they want to be like the former or the latter. (**Time: 15 minutes**)

10. Then the teacher asks each one of them to go home and say a word of praise to his./her father, mother, sister/brother, friend and ask them to notice what magic words can do. Ask them to note the actions in their diaries...

Make the monitors responsible for practicing compliments giving session. Announce prizes for those who avoid/resolve maximum conflicts in a week.

11. Distribute the following worksheets among all the students and ask them to fill them up and return the next day.

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