

Perceptions of Teachers and Students about the Impact of General Institutional Environment on Peace-Promoting Attitudes: A Peace-Education Perspective.

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Peace education is a process of achieving peace, at personal, interpersonal, national and international levels, through education, focusing on promoting universal brotherhood, global citizenship, and a culture of peaceful co-existence. Therefore, this research study is exclusively based on the formal mode of peace education. The area specified within this mode of education is, “Perceptions of teachers and students about the impact of General Institutional Environment on peace-promoting attitudes: a peace-education perspective”. The objectives were: i, to explore the perceptions of teachers and students about the impact of General Institutional Environment on peace-promoting attitudes; ii, to compare the perceptions of teachers and students about the impact of General Institutional Environment on peace-promoting attitudes. University level was selected for the study. The population consisted of teachers and students of a total of 113 public and private sector universities situated in Pakistan. The sample consisted of respondents for 11 universities in all, standing for 10% representation of the population. A total of 719 respondents (210 teachers and 509 students) participated in the study. In this survey type study, the perceptions of the respondents were collected through questionnaire. As research tool, a questionnaire covering the aspects of general institutional environment of the respondents was prepared to get responses from a wide spectrum of teachers and students across the country. The research tool was validated and duly pilot tested. The questionnaire was distributed among a total of 770 target respondents. Where 719 questionnaires were collected back, indicating 93.38 response percentage. The collected data was analyzed through SPSS version 16. It was found that General Institutional Environment plays significant role in affecting attitude towards peace education. In the light of the findings, suggestions and recommendations were presented.

Keywords: Peace, Peace-education, institutional environment, culture of peace

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Introduction

Over the years, for instance, institutions have evolved and statutes framed to materialize the shared vision of a conflict-free world. Peace activists also have taken considerable stride in this regard. The declaration of the year 2000 as the International Year for a Culture of Peace, and that of the period 2001–2010 as the International Decade for a Culture of Peace and Nonviolence for the Children of the World are not just two symbolic developments: indeed, they convey a strong and significant message reflecting the Will and dream of world community for securing a better tomorrow. UNESCO's initiatives about Peace programs and the efforts of NGOs, national and international peace organizations and other bodies have given impetus to peace related movements around the world.

In the wake of such peace initiatives, it is high time for imparting to the young generation, especially students all through their academic careers, knowledge and vision of how to become peace-loving global citizens. This is precisely what the basic objective of peace education is. It also involves equipping students with necessary skills for conflict resolution through peaceful means. Since children of today are leaders of tomorrow, peace education is a long-term but certainly a lasting means of ensuring a peaceful tomorrow. This may not be the only way to move towards a culture of peace as the causes of conflict are quite numerous but surely this is the foundation without which no superficial peace overtures can guarantee success.

However, the task of peace education is undoubtedly challenging. Researchers are aware of this fact when they say, "Changing an unstable and violent situation into one of peace is not an easy or straightforward task. Education, and more specifically peace education, can contribute to laying the foundation for lasting peace. In fact, several writers claim that this constitutes one of the most important methods for promoting reconciliation (Asmal et al, 1997; Callega, 1994; Kriesberg, 1998).

Since peace education has become indispensable for guaranteeing a peaceful tomorrow, it is pertinent to elaborate the concept at this point a little further. In the view of Harris and Morrison (2003), peace "implies human beings working together to resolve conflicts, respect standards of justice, satisfy basic needs, and human rights", (p. 12). In the words of Harris (n.d), peace education is "the process of teaching people about the threats of violence and strategies for peace". Srinivasan (2009) thinks of peace education as, "a process whereby people learn about the dangers of violence, develop their capacities to

counter violence and build sustainable peace in their communities". These observations converge, making prevention of wars and maintenance of peace the primary goals of peace education. Needless to emphasize that peace education is not just all about theory: it has useful applied dimensions as well. It is, therefore, pertinent to explore the perceptions of, at least, the educated class at university level wherefrom leadership is provided to any nation.

Statement of the problem: Pakistan stands today at the center stage of a war theatre, involving various local, regional and international actors. Unless its youth are equipped with the requisite knowledge and skills through peace education, it is unlikely to have a future at all. The young generation is badly in need of grooming through peaceful conflict resolution: they cannot be left to the mercy of war mongering individuals and outfits. This in turn necessitates adopting suitable strategies for promotion and maintenance of peace in their communities. Rajagopalan (2009) is right in saying that the Pakistani society is caught in "a tripartite tug of war between the Taliban, Pakistani government and the US war on terror".

In this scenario, it is obligatory upon those concerned with education to see how much the country's educational institutions, especially universities, contribute to making a more peaceful world. The focus of this study is, therefore, to explore, "the perceptions of teachers and students about the impact of General Institutional Environment on peace-promoting attitudes: a peace-education perspective".

Objectives of the study: The objectives were:

- i. To explore the perceptions of teachers and students about the impact of General Institutional Environment on peace-promoting attitudes.
- ii. To compare the perceptions of teachers and students about the impact of General Institutional Environment on peace-promoting attitudes.
- iii. To suggest practicable recommendations for creating and strengthening a culture at institutional level.

Significance of the study: Given the facts that peace is the essential message of Islam and majority of the citizens of Pakistan profess Islam as their religion, one would naturally expect to see a tolerant and peaceful Pakistani society. Unfortunately, however, the truth is to the contrary. Violence, extremism, intolerance and conflicts are rampant in society and continue to spread venom in human body. Dwindling rule of law and rising trend of violations of human rights coupled with loosening writ of the state are fraught with ominous consequences. And to make it worse still, the ongoing militancy has pushed

Pakistani society to unprecedented lawlessness and insecurity. The causes of this dismal scenario are indeed too many to count in a single breath, but the sheer magnitude of the problem demands a more organized, multi-dimensional and long-term response.

One reason why the situation is gradually spinning out of control is that the nation has neglected its responsibility to prepare its young generation in the field of peace education. In the words of Montessori (1930), "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". Before it really gets too late, decision makers associated with education system in Pakistan must adopt long term corrective measures to steer the nation out of its existing quagmire. Outstanding among such measures is indeed peace education. Both teachers and students need to be exposed to new concepts, knowledge and skills with a view to inculcating among them a new vision: of a transformed world of peace and universal brotherhood; of a collective life based on the principle of live-and-let-live; of a society committed to the rule of law, justice and peaceful co-existence. This process, painful and daunting as it is, will also involve a sustained effort to relieve people of their stereotyped attitudes and choking prejudices. Regarding this transformed vision for teachers and students, Reardon (1988) has rightly remarked thus, "Thinking about how the world might be and envisioning a society characterized by justice are the essence of conceptualizing the conditions that comprise positive peace. If we are to educate for peace, both teachers and students need to have some notion of the transformed world we are educating for", (p.25). A pre-requisite for and first step towards the fruition of this cherished goal is preparing teachers and students for projecting, promoting and maintaining a culture of peace. This fact underpins the focus of the current study on the awareness and attitudes of university teachers and students in Pakistan. The significance and practical utility of this study is, therefore, hard to exaggerate, more so because minds of the students are primarily shaped in educational institutions by teachers. Therefore, the content, methodology, and above all, the learning environment, whether in the classroom or in the institution, have tremendous impact on the attitude of both the teachers and the taught. Understandably, this has been an area of concern for educationists. Michelle, (2005) says, "Many educators (Butler, 1988; Carlson-Paige and Levin, 1987; Reardon, 1988; Stomfay-Stitz, 1993), today wonder if there is a relationship between the behavior of children in the classroom, human aggression, and the likelihood of man destroying the earth with war or ecological havoc" (p.12).

This study offers some useful strategic input for policy makers, educational planners, curriculum developers, administrators and teachers. Moreover, it is equally useful for those pursuing research in education sector, particularly prospective researchers in peace education.

Methodology: The specific methodology adopted for the study was that university level was selected for the study. The population consisted of teachers and students of a total of 113 public and private sector universities situated in Pakistan. The sample consisted of respondents (both categories) for 11 universities in all, standing for

10% representation of the population. These 11 sample institutions were situated in the provinces of Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, The Punjab, the Northern Areas, and the Federal Area of Islamabad. A total of 719 respondents (210 teachers and 509 students) participated in the study.

The study was of survey type in which the views and perceptions of the respondents were collected through questionnaires. As research tool, a questionnaire covering the aspects of general institutional environment of the respondents was prepared to get responses from a wide spectrum of teachers and students across the country. Validity and reliability of the research tool was properly ensured. The research tool was placed before a panel of experts whose valuable input was incorporated accordingly. This was followed by pilot testing of the questionnaire and, consequently, its further fine-tuning. In the final phase, the validity and reliability concerns related to the questionnaire were fully addressed through Factor Analysis. Ultimately, the questionnaire was distributed among a total of 770 target respondents. In all, 719 questionnaires were collected back, indicating 93.38 response percentage. The collected data was analyzed through SPSS version 16.

REVIEW OF THE RELATED LITERATURE

The focus of the study is on the impact of general institutional environment; hence, a brief overview is presented below.

General Institutional Environment and Attitudes Formation: A conducive learning environment both inside the classroom and outside in the premises of the institution as well as the general/overall institutional environment is the third important element that boosts the acquisition of the knowledge, skills, and attitudes that are the pre-requisites for the establishment of a culture of peace in the institution, society, and ultimately the whole world. There are several factors, rooted in the environment, that influence the attitude and behavior of an individual. Peace education researchers (Carter, 2005; Gervais, 2004; Harris, 2004; Stomfay-Stitz, 1993; 2001) focusing on methodology have found that various social and academic variables in their mutual interaction contribute to creating peaceful environments.

The knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary for a culture of peace can be attained through proper content and methodology together with the institutional environment that is based on justice, equality, human rights, caring, support and help, as well as mutual understanding in cultural diversity. In such an environment the students must have chance for “say”. In plain words, learning is best when in interactive form rather

than in a monologue. For example, “Educators cannot teach about freedom while constantly telling students to be quiet and sit down; they cannot teach participation through passivity” (Walker and White, 2003, p. 30). Students who are compelled to sit passively in the class usually develop a negative and pessimistic approach and feel as if they have no voice; that what they say and do does not matter (Talbert and White, 2003). Walker and White (2003) say, “in order for students to be participating members of society, they need to be participants in the classroom; this is not a goal easily reached in a traditional teacher-centered authoritarian classroom” (p.30). Brookfield and Preskill (1999) believe that when students are involved in well-organized discussions, this leads the institutions to “become laborites in which students learn democratic habits” (p. 32). Researchers like Talbert and White (2003), found that when students are engaged in critical analysis of issues in a democratic manner in the class, they tend to gain confidence, and this confidence paves way for them to participate in public discussions.

Peace education is necessarily a process of transformation. For this process to take place, certain structures need to be developed in the institutional environment. Exposure to peace-making structures, methods, and content are the basic components that contribute to the process of personal growth and transformation (Lennart, 2003).

Peace researchers stress the need for peace-making social structures in the educational institutions and even inside the classroom. Dialogues and discussions are strongly endorsed. According to Brookfield and Preskil (1999), “Social relations in the dialogical classroom must be structured to resist the injustices and denial of different characteristics of the world outside the classroom” (p.19). In her article “Teaching for peace in higher education” Finley (2004) asserts, “... Peace education entails more than just content. It also includes how we craft our learning environment and the teaching methods we use” (p.272).

Eisler (2000) has indicated towards the three different elements that play crucial role in the educative process. These elements are the content, the methods, and the ways that schooling is structured. This aspect is so important that many peace scholars have criticized the traditional patterns of imparting education. Reardon (1988), for instance, is critical of the education system of the United States by calling it ill-structured, dualistic, antagonistic, confrontational, and based on militaristic values. Such types of weaknesses are prevalent in nearly all programs of education around the world; for example, one weakness of the educative process is that teachers, especially in universities, have the misconception of intellectual hegemony that they think they

possess. It is, therefore, the need for the time to bring about radical change in the teaching approach of the teachers and especially that of university teachers. For the development of a peace-building environment, university teachers must give up their preconceived intellectual hegemony in the classroom and should listen to the students in the teaching-learning process (Sperber, 2000). That is why the role of a teacher, especially at university level, is of immense importance. He is simultaneously an inquisitor, an accumulator, a promoter and a disseminator of knowledge. In the words of Sacks (1996), the postmodern teacher is not just a transmitter of knowledge in higher education but is supposed to be an expert consultant.

The issue of proper structuring for the establishment and maintenance of peaceful learning environment is of so much importance that Boulding (1988) believes that the obstacle in knowing is not primarily a matter of our mind, but our minds are shaped and framed inside the social structures of institutions where roles and patterns are developed for succeeding generations. 'Adequate Social constructs', is always a concern of peace educators. This issue is prevalent right from K-1 level to university education. Finley (2004) held higher education more responsible for lack of proper peaceful social constructs as higher education institutions have authoritarian methods and learning environments. Brock-Utne (1989) has raised a thought-provoking question: "Is it possible at all to teach democracy in an authoritarian school or university?" (p. 157). Peaceful academic environment is pre-requisite for the optimum operation of the peace education process because violence disrupts the learning environment. Violent behaviors obliterate the learning environment and make educational institutions unsafe places (Le Blanc, Lacy, and Mulder, 1998). Researchers are critical of this situation. Galtung believes that the normal school system is not well suited for peace education, (Galtung 1973, 1975). By developing a culture of peace, the three basic areas (viz. knowledge, skill, and attitude) of peace education can be developed more effectively.

DATA ANALYSIS

Institutional environment plays pivotal role in the teaching-learning process, in the acquisition of knowledge, and in the formation of attitudes of the learners. The General Institutional Environment factor has been addressed in this analysis. The data about this factor was presented in tables. Statistical formulae like: percentages mean frequency scores, mean, standard deviation, t-test, and ANOVA tests were applied to the same. Comparisons were also drawn between teachers and students. This factor consisted of a

total of 05 statements. The measuring scale for this factor was Five Likert Scale, ranging from Strongly Agree, to Strongly Disagree.

Table 01: Comparison of teachers' and students' perceptions in General Institutional Environment

Respondent Type	N	Mean Score	SD	t	p
Teachers	210	18.89	3.67	2.497	0.013*
Students	509	18.11	4.20		

* The mean difference is significant at 0.05 level.

Table 01 is about the perceptions of teachers and students regarding general institutional environment with reference to peace education. This was the third factor of the questionnaire which consisted of a total of five statements labeled as: "Social environment in our institution is conflict-free", "There is friendly relationship between the teacher & the taught in the classroom", "Teachers' dispositions are usually peaceful", "Teachers' approach to conflict-resolution is based on justice", and "Conflicts inside institution are resolved peacefully". The statistical analysis for the GIE factor reveals that teachers had relatively higher mean scores (18.89 and 18.11 respectively) and low standard deviation. However, overall, both teachers and students agreed to the statements of GIE factor. The value of p is 0.013 which was less than 0.05 shows that overall, there was significant difference in the response of teachers and students. Teachers' responses were relatively higher than students on this factor.

Table 02: Comparison of male and female in General Institutional Environment

Respondent Type	N	Mean Score	SD	t	P
Male	361	18.63	3.60	1.966	.050*
Female	358	18.04	4.47		

* The mean difference is significant at 0.05 level.

Table 02 is about the perceptions of male and female respondents regarding General Institutional Environment with reference to peace education. This was the third factor of the questionnaire which consisted of a total of five statements labeled as: "Social environment in our institution is conflict-free", "There is friendly relationship between the teacher & the taught in the classroom", "Teachers' dispositions are usually peaceful", "Teachers' approach to conflict-resolution is based on justice", and "Conflicts inside institution are resolved peacefully". The statistical analysis for the GIE factor reveals that both types of respondents had nearly same perceptions. The statistics (mean score

18.63 and 18.04 and standard deviations 3.60 and 4.47 respectively with a t-value being 1.966) indicate that both types of respondents agreed to the statements. However, overall, both male and female respondents agreed to the statements of GIE factor. The value of p is 0.050 which is equal to 0.05 thus, shows that overall, there was somehow significant difference in the response of male and female respondents.

Table 03: ANOVA comparison of mean score of male and female teachers and students regarding general institutional environment

Respondent Type	Sum of Squares	df	Mean sq	f	p
Between Groups	156.033	3	52.011	3.179	.024*
Within Group	11698.187	715	16.361		
Total	11854.220	718			

* The mean difference is significant at 0.05 level.

Table No.03 shows comparative significance regarding general institutional environment. According to the table there was significant difference in the responses of teachers/students and male/female respondents. The statistical values ($f = 3.179$ and $p = .024$) reveal that there was a significant difference in the mean score of responses of comparative groups.

Findings

- i. About the factor of General Institutional Environment as a whole, all the respondent types agreed to the statements in the section.
- ii. There was significant difference in the responses of teachers and students. Teachers' responses were relatively higher than students on GIE factor.
- iii. There was somehow, significant difference in the response of male and female respondents
- iv. There was a significant difference between mean GIE score for the responses of male teacher and female students, as in this comparison $p < 0.05$.
- v. General institutional environment as independent variables; and attitude as dependent variable: there exists a significant effect among the contribution of predictors on attitude towards peace education as the value of significance for independent variables is .000

which is less than 0.05, thus shows significant effect on the dependent variable—attitude towards peace education.

- vi. Demographic data reveal that professional qualification, gender, respondent type, and academic qualification did affect the dependent variable—attitude towards peace education.
- vii. In regression analysis, there existed a significant difference among the contribution of predictors on the dependent variable—attitude towards peace education. The values of significance for both models are: .000a and .000b respectively.
- viii. General institutional environment plays significant role in affecting attitude towards peace education.

Discussion: This study was primarily concerned about the status of peace education where the awareness level, attitudes of teachers and students, besides the impact of GIE on attitudes, at university level were explored. The research questions that were posed in the beginning were appraised with reference to the findings of the study. The question was about the impact of General Institutional Environment on attitude towards peace education. General Institutional Environment indicated a significant positive effect on the dependent variable—attitude towards peace education—as their respective values of significance ($.000 < 0.05$) reveal. Simply, General Institutional Environment plays significant role in affecting attitude towards peace education.

Conclusions: Based on findings and discussions it was concluded that:

- i. Majority of the respondents held the General Institutional Environment peaceful and conducive for teaching-learning process.
- ii. There was a significant difference between mean General Institutional Environment score for the responses of male teachers and female students. While for the rest of comparison groups there was no significant difference in their responses.
- iii. General Institutional Environment together with awareness level were the influencing predictors and had positive correlation with attitude of the respondents.

Recommendations: Keeping in view the findings and conclusions of the study, where institutional environment had significantly positive correlation with the attitude towards peace education of the respondents. Therefore, in the light of this tendency of the mentioned variables on the dependent variable—attitude towards peace education—the following suggestions were recommended for the development and improvement of the state of peace education in Pakistan.

- i. All formal, informal, and non-formal modes of education may be structured on the philosophy of peace education.
- ii. An overall campaign for bringing about awareness about peace education and developing positive attitude towards peace education may be carried out throughout the country.
- iii. An Action Plan for the year 2040 may be launched for universalizing peace education in Pakistan.
- iv. Peace education as a discipline and as a subject may be incorporated in the mainstream education system and be made a compulsory part of the course syllabus at every stage of the educative process.
- v. Necessary measures may be taken for improving social institutional environment inside educational institutions at all levels ranging from primary schools to universities.
- vi. The present universities may be made responsible for starting peace education as a discipline within their own confinements.
- vii. Teachers, as well as students, may be imparted training in peace-promoting skills, and in peace education. Such training may equip the trainee with the knowledge, skill, and attitude compendium of peace education.
- viii. Necessary measures may be taken for improving social institutional environment inside educational institutions at all levels ranging from primary schools to universities.
- ix. Books, journals and other related materials on peace education may be made available in all educational institutions.
- x. NGOs that work for the cause of peace or peace education may be supported for developing a justice-based as well peace-based social environment.
- xi. Researchers and writers in the field of peace and peace education may be supported in their efforts of intellectual pursuits as well as in their practical strides in the field.

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