

Strategic Peacebuilding: Practices and Strategies for Community Engagement in Teacher Education

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Abstract

Strategic peacebuilding efforts reinforce the foundations of sustainable peace through the promotion of equitable, inclusive and sustainable development. Universities adopt service learning programmes to extend diversity policies and help to universalize educational access. This article analyses qualitatively the concept of strategic peacebuilding and identifies strategies and practices for achieving it through Teacher Education Institutions. The findings are condensed in five heads to prioritize the importance of these in moulding future teachers through individual and collective endeavors. As peace building is a complex field it must be integrated across all disciplines and various sectors and establishments of the society. The need for a social function of education is urgent. Teachers are the change agents who could contribute to peace by employing pedagogy to tackle discrimination and conflict. The contributions of this research would increase consciousness of the importance of encouraging peace education in the process of teacher education at all its levels.

Keywords: peace, peacebuilding, strategic peacebuilding, community engagement, service learning, peace education

Introduction

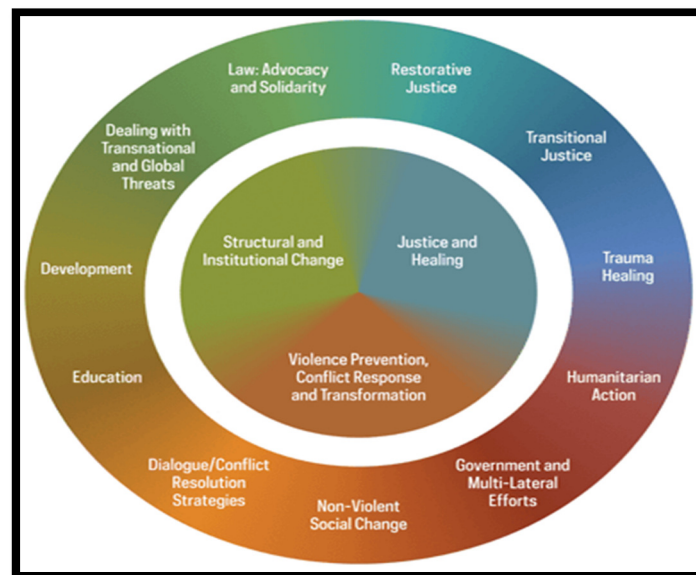
Individuals in whichever society would definitely need freedom from distress, oppression and disquieting thoughts or emotions as well as crave a state of tranquility and contentment. This is what is called 'Peace' which is important both socially and psychologically. This implies free conditions of security and calmness to create harmony in groups. Peace according to Albert Einstein is not merely the absence of war but the presence of justice – of law, order and government. The development of constructive, personal, social and political relationships across class, national, ethnical, racial and religious boundaries is known as 'Peacebuilding'. The aim is to resolve injustice in non-violent ways and to transfigure conditions that involve conflicts. Measures of peace building include prevention, management, resolution, transformation and reconciliation of conflicts. When such efforts establish and sustain relationships among people locally and globally at all levels of society, it becomes strategic in the long run. Transforming relationships is the key to putting an end to violence while encouraging people to discuss, repair and reform stereotypes. As Horner et al (2015) observes, multiple dimensions of positive peace

can stimulate innovative ways of thinking about self and others. The attributes of a peace educator are to have a philosophy of peace, practicability, and ability to identify issues.

Theoretical underpinnings and Background Literature

- **Strategic Peacebuilding: concept**

A strategic approach to peacebuilding involves preventing, mitigating and transforming conflicts. Strategic Peace building tends to connect people and groups ‘on the ground’ in a grassroots approach with communities, groups and organizations to sustain peace and justice. It addresses issues of human rights, environmental sustainability and economic prosperity. Stretching across generations, it recognizes peacebuilding as a long term vocation that requires cross-group networks, partnerships and alliances that creates platform for secure and sustainable human development that survives intermittent conflicts. The strategic peace building wheel develop by Lederack and Mansfield of the KROC Institute of Peace Studies illustrates the main and sub components of the field of peacebuilding and their relationship to each other. The inner circle highlights the three major areas: (1) efforts to prevent, respond to and transform violent conflict, (2) efforts to promote justice and healing, and (3) efforts to promote structural and institutional change. The outer circle highlights sub-areas of practice and career focus within those areas. The figure below depicts the components:



(Adapted from Lederack and Mansfield, KROC Institute of Peace Studies)

❖ **Strategies for Peace building**

There are a number of ways of accomplishing peace and real training in peacebuilding:

1. Equip through local ownership: Local ownership means communities coming together to revive and repurpose the benefits of the community. It ensures that local concerns are at the center of peacebuilding, helping them to identify challenges and develop their own solutions. Working with people by providing connections, developing skills and equipping to take part in balanced peace processes are ways for it. Ownership ceates a sense of belonging and confidence for local people to understand and discuss local capacities for peace. Key inhibiting factors that undermine this such as language, restrictions in civic space and self interest of mediating actors should be addressed.
2. Connect everyone involved: Connecting is all about others which require talent and initiative. It refers to the ability to identify with people and relate to them in a way that increases one's influence with them. Developing mutual and trusted networks and relationships with counterparts to communicate and connect are competencies everyone should learn.
3. Build sustainable solutions: Create ways to initiate dialogue, solve problems and mitigate solutions, United Nation's Sustainable development Goals (SDGs) 16 aims to promote peaceful and inclusive societies for sustainable development. Sustaining peace is a process with activities aimed at the prevention of conflict underpinned by a people-centered approach. It depends directly on the consistency of people's engagement in peace processes, politics, governance, policy making and institution building integrating gender. It is a shared task of prevention on a comprehensive rights based initiative to minimize inequalities, strengthen policy coherence and emphasize human security.
4. Support creative thinking: Creative peacebuilding supports an easy to adopt approach to conflict management through new creative and innovative dialogues of action and social change by trying something different. Encouraging creative approaches on multiple perspectives to find different possibilities for conflict resolution and solving challenges is necessary in today's world. Harnessing the power of visual arts discovers a range of perceptions and interpretations to initiate appropriate peacebuilding techniques.

5. Learn from experience: Reflective peacebuilding practitioners reflect explicitly on how things work, what they have learned from experience and on developing experience based theory. Gaining knowledge, skills and attitude for personal and collective growth and development through real and vicarious experiences based on either Lederack's Peacebuilding Integrated Framework or the Reflective Peace Practice Matrix of Anderson & Olson (2003).
6. Make a difference: Perpetual peacebuilding could change the way we think and act. Persistent and patient efforts to find creative solutions are needed to build sustainable peace. Recognition of problems acknowledging the needs of opposite sides and resolve positively with a potential to change is necessary. Quantitative, qualitative and participatory methods to evaluate efforts could be used to evaluate effectiveness.
7. Contribute to competence: Peacebuilding competencies such as analysis, responsiveness, prevention, envisioning and transformation enables non-violent approach to future conflict situations. Harnessing intercultural competencies are also essential for effective intercultural understanding. Introducing intercultural learning in schools in both formal and non-formal education as a foundation for global survival and sustainability (UNESCO, 2023). The importance of protecting shared values and promoting attitudes and behaviour conducive to dialogue, non-violence and socio-emotional resilience are key elements of democratic, inclusive and peaceful societies aiming to identify solutions to advance dialogue for peace.
8. Develop capacity to change: Integrative peacebuilding involves raising awareness, setting agendas and upgrading of capacities for societal change. Capacity building can be in the form of mission/service, leadership, governance and administration including resources, human management, fund raising , income generation, programme development and implementation, and legal matters. Mostly capacity is built by societies themselves, in the public, governmental or private sectors or through international organizations. Many NGOs offer capacity building programmes and services especially for individuals for advocacy skills, technical/organizing skills, communication and other personal and professional skills. The UN Volunteers (UNV) programme contributes to this worldwide.

Methodology

The study aims to contribute to the understanding of strategic peacebuilding that are transformative in nature with focus on developing future teachers. The objective was to identify, analyze and evaluate studies that highlight the aspects for the selection of these new methodologies and arrive at useful findings. Data was collected after a thorough review of literature.

Research Questions

- Which practices are innovative and transformative for peacebuilding?
- How do service learning pedagogies impact community engagement of teachers?
- What aspects of growth and development do they offer for future teachers?
- How could effective strategies be incorporated in teacher education?

Materials and Methods

To achieve answers to the proposed research questions, a systematic review was done using Google search engine with the following search strategies used for databases: search type (keywords, phrases) and document type (books, journal articles, working paper, policy documents, reports). The details drawn from these sources were analyzed for noting their effects on student teachers' attributes/practices of peacebuilding and community engagement, and applications in TEIs for better individual, institutional, professional and societal outcomes.

Results

The main findings from literature search are organized sequentially so as to provide answers to the research questions framed and are condensed in five heads to highlight aspects in detail.

I. Practices for Peace Building

Peace building should begin with an analysis of the dynamics and drivers of conflicts in society and the effects of interventions, decisions and resource allocations. Higher Education Institutions should reflect on how they can contribute to foster youth and sustainable peace building centering in peace processes in a strategic manner to ensure this dynamics. These processes require visionary leaders and skilled professionals committed to work in partnership with

communities to develop capacities to kindle change (Clarke-Habibi, 2021). These institutions should take proactive measures to reduce inequalities and violence in society by tailoring education and training to contribute individual and societal resilience, conflict transformation, sustainable development and socially just peace. For example the KROC Institute for International Peace Studies, University of Notre Dame teaches Peace Studies as an interdisciplinary academic field which draws on sociology, history, philosophy, psychology, anthropology, theology, political science and other fields to identify and develop ways to prevent and resolve war, genocide, violations of human rights, terrorism and the like in order to build peaceful and just societies. The course on *'Engaging in Mediation Policy and Practice'* introduces and practice the skills of peace making analysis, strategic planning and facilitating negotiations and agreements that deepens understanding of international mediation offering students a foundation for practical engagement. The institute released a report in collaboration with UN Women, Women's International Democratic Freedom and Sweden describing how the inclusion of a gender perspective and a specific gender related commitments in the context of the Columbian Peace Accord 2016, as an important step toward strengthening women's participation in peace building. Initiatives for Peace education studies in educational institutions often include systematic approaches to peace oriented educational instruction, policy making, governance and civic engagement for a just, inclusive and equitable society Peace oriented curriculum would increase the scope of peace enabling skills and values embracing peace pedagogies mainly incorporating inclusive dialogue, capacity building and collaboration. Research for conflict prevention, transformation and reconciliation could be undertaken with the potential to strengthen peace building in innovative and effective ways.

II. Service Learning and Community Engagement

Community Engagement refers to the collaboration between institutions of higher education and their larger communities for the mutually beneficial exchange of knowledge and resources in a context of partnership and reciprocity (Bhagwan, 2017). It enables the transformation of students into social justice activists and the institution into an agent of social transformation (Birkenmaier & Cruce, 2011). The University Grants Commission (UGC) in its National Curricular Framework for "Fostering Social Responsibility and Community Engagement in Higher Education institutions in India" recommend that each HEI conduct a compulsory course to

provide community engagement to all UG and PG students so that their appreciation of rural field realities as holistic, respectful and inspiring. The key principles of community engagement are: mutual learning and respect; university wide in each discipline and faculty; credit based for students and teachers; and linkage with local institutions (UGC, 2019). Its revised report in 2022 include key recommendations of NEP 2020: *‘towards the attainment of a holistic multidisciplinary education, the flexible and innovative curricula of all HEIs shall include credit-based courses and projects in the areas of community engagement and service, environmental education and value based education’*”.

Community engagement pedagogies combine learning goals and community service to enhance student growth, welfare and common good. The National Service Learning Clearinghouse, a digital repository of service learning policies, pedagogies, practices and research of the Singapore University of Social Sciences, considers service learning as a teaching learning strategy that integrates meaningful community service with instruction and reflection to enrich the learning experience, teach civic responsibility and strengthen communities. It is a form of experiential education where learning occurs through a cycle of action and reflection where students seek to achieve real objectives for the community and deeper understanding and skills for themselves, link personal and social development with academic and cognitive development experience that enhances understanding that would lead to more reflective action. In Teacher Education course this is incorporated in its bachelor’s and master’s programmes that has both learning and community action goals. This provides prospective teachers and teacher educands experiential learning opportunities to learn in real world contexts and develop skills of community engaged instruction. The positive impact on academic outcomes is demonstrated complexity of understanding, problem analysis and solving, critical thinking and higher cognitive development. Apart from these learning outcomes, the personal outcomes that accrue from service learning are greater sense of personal identity, self efficacy, interpersonal skills, and moral/spiritual development. The social outcomes of this learning could be reduced stereotypes and better inter-cultural understanding, improved social responsibility and citizenship skills, and greater involvement in community service. Moreover connections with community members and professionals improve career opportunities and leadership skills, open new avenues for research and publication. The ten principles of good practice suggested for service learning pedagogy by Howard (2001) help to authentically integrate service learning into coursework. As Joe Bandy,

Assistant Director of CFT at Vanderbilt University posits best practices in community engaged teaching that can be considered by faculty. The University of Minnesota's Center for Community Engaged Learning (CCEL) is an academic resource for seeking high quality and meaningful opportunities to engage with communities while teaching, learning and research.

III. Models of Community Engagement

- **Discipline based model:** In this model prospective teachers are expected to have a presence in the community throughout the semester in different spells and reflect on their experiences regularly. This will be in accordance with the requirements of their optional subject discipline and evaluated with specific criteria. Evans (2017) presents numerous studies of the effectiveness of service learning on college students enrolled in both seated and online courses and its impact on a range of outcomes, including mastery of course content, inter-cultural competence, awareness of social injustices, professional identity formation, individual empowerment, and civic and political engagement attitudes.
- **Service Internship:** This approach requires students to work 10-12 hours a week in a community setting. They have to produce a body of work as in traditional internship that is of value to the community. Would-be teachers would get sufficient circumstance to be in the practice teaching institutions to accommodate themselves with teaching. This has on-going faculty guided reflection that challenge students to analyze experiences using discipline based theories.
- **Problem based:** In this model student teachers work and relate to the community as 'consultants working for a client'. They associate with community members to understand a particular need or issue presuming that students will develop capacities to help communities solve a problem. For example Natural Science student teachers might identify organic methods of farming, Geography Education students could design sustainable energy models and Language Education student teachers may develop communication models for better language learning. Hou (2014) integrated problem based Learning (PBL) with Community engaged learning (CEL) in the Implementation Course to engage graduate students in developing theory based health promotion programmes for communities. This innovation in education provided valuable learning structure for students in higher education and produced theory and evidence based

intervention plans and material products addressing community identified health needs. The investigation by McDonald & Ogden-Barnes (2013) provides evidence as to why students participated in intensive service learning events , what they expect and what they receive in terms of benefits.

- Capstone model: Designed for all students, these courses expect student teachers to draw upon the knowledge they have obtained throughout their course and combine it with relevant service work in the community. The purpose of capstone project is to demonstrate what is learned in academic disciplines through volunteer assistance with institutions, organizations, firms or agencies. The goal is to explore a new topic or synthesize their understanding of their own discipline. The Liberal education and America's promise (LEAP) challenge in 2015 of the Association for American Colleges and universities (AACU) calling for Universities and Colleges to integrate "Signature Work" into the experiences of all undergraduate students means an opportunity for real campus change. To be capable, students must need prior experiences working closely with community members, understand issues of diversity and inclusion, and create integrative pathways within and across disciplines. For example the Corella and Bertram F. Bonner Foundation provide a pathway for students to engage in capstone projects that serves a civic purpose. These projects allow doing something worth that builds the capacity of local community or promotes awareness and action on a pertinent social issue to be considered.
- Action research model: Community based action research (CBAR) provide startlingly different evidences leading to different problem framing, analysis, and solutions to build social capital and collective efficacy in solving local and real world problems. This could take form of Community based Participatory action research (CBPAR) that involves all stakeholders throughout the research process or Place-based research that refer to physical , geographic space or location such as neighborhood in which issues and interventions are concentrated and change is intended to occur. The relationship between researchers and community members is built on trust, respect, consensus, values, by learning with and from each other through an exchange of knowledge, skills, resources and ownership between stakeholders within a mutual agreement. Community based research (CBR) is a co-learning process for capacity building and empowerment that

centers on caring and sharing where practitioners have common goals and recognize one another's strengths and contributions (Minkler & Wallerstein, 2010).

IV. Peace Education

The understanding of the concept of peace has changed throughout history and so has its role and importance in the education system. Pacifism is a commitment to peace and opposition to war meant solely for peace making by removing injustice, repression and exploitation of people. The complexities of societies, circumstances and life intricacies make peace education essential and unavoidable. UNESCO plans, develops and implements general changes in education according to international politics of peace and security. Peace Education is considered as an interdisciplinary area of education whose goal is institutionalized and non institutionalized teaching about peace and for peace. Its aim is to help students acquire skills for non-violent conflict resolution and to reinforce these skills for active and responsible action in society for the promotion of peace. It is a proactive approach to prevent a conflict in advance and educate individuals for a peaceful existence upholding tolerance, equality, non-violence, respect for differences and social justice. In the process of achieving positive peace, it advocates the rights of others with the motivating element of defense as the foundation of shared responsibility for peace building. The Gandhian concept and principles of peace and promotion of peace education through Gandhian Studies are part of the fundamental architecture of many Indian and foreign educational initiatives. The philosophy and life of Mahatma Gandhi is extremely important in peace studies and education by enthraling constructive, peaceful and mass action in nonviolent ways. Daisaku Ikeda's philosophy of peace constitutes three things: human revolution, dialogue and global citizenship/civilization. According to John Dewey, peace education is grounded in active citizenship, preparing learners for assiduous participation in a democracy through problem-posing and problem solving education and a commitment to transformative actions in our societies. It strives to inculcate higher order human values among individuals as Paulo Freire puts it as a mechanism of for transformation from a culture of violence to a culture of peace through a process of conscientization. Actually it is a call for an inclusive approach to mutual coexistence and to a holistic way of living. The overall goal of education for peace in TEIs is to develop in student teachers a commitment to maintain and sustain peace with focus on developing values and appropriate behaviours in students.

V. Strategies for Peace Education

- **Stage specific approaches:** As peace education is important for every individual at different stages of growth and development, it is to be enhanced from childhood stage and progressing to later stages of life. The approaches may vary from each stage. Elementary students need to be equipped to develop cognitive competence to understand the values underlying hygiene of self and surroundings as well as respect for others, tolerance, responsibility etc. Skills for rational thinking, effective communication and self discipline should be developed in the middle stage of education; awareness of ways to resolve conflicts, interdependence and interrelationship and peacemaking at the secondary stage; and knowledge, attitudes and competencies in the area of peace keeping at the higher stages. So is important in teacher education curricula for inculcating the 'culture of peace' by means of an education oriented towards inner peace or peace of mind which means state of being mentally and spiritually at peace, with enough knowledge and understanding to keep oneself strong in the face of discord and stress. According to UN Resolution 1998, 'culture of peace is an integral approach to preventing violence and violent conflicts based on education for peace, promotion of sustainable economic and social development, respect for human rights, equality between women and men, democratic participation, tolerance, the free flow of information and disarmament. Participatory communication is an effective strategy for this which helps student teachers for sustainable development of peace culture. Democratic participation and gender equality are other components fostering culture of peace.
- **Curricular integration:** Integrating peace in the curriculum is achieved in the scholastic and co-scholastic aspects, instructional methods, staff development and school management procedures. Subjects taught should contribute to learner's intellectual, emotional, social and moral self development. The teaching-learning methods used for peace education should make peace as a subject of study, concern and action both in classroom and beyond. Content and subject specific scholastic activities and co-scholastic experiences should incorporate curricular engagement opportunities to work in teams and exercise leadership and encourage taking initiatives themselves. Faculty and staff members should exhibit proper manners, mediate conflicts and inspire through refined and disciplined managerial skills. NCERT and NCTE have set guidelines for integrating

peace education in teacher education curricula. The practice of peace education is an opportunity to promote the welfare of students, advocate for their just and equitable treatment and promote individual and social responsibility for both educators and learners (Sridevi, 2021). Using inquiry method they should enquire into the obstacles of peace and the peacelessness in individuals, institutions and societies, thereby develop capacities to develop proactive approaches towards dealing with conflicts, and educate every new gen students to become peace makers. .

Implications and future directions

The realization of various dimensions of peace building entails the regulation of emotions directing ways to strengthen positivity in individuals. Activities that manifest inner peace utilizing emotional self regulation help teachers for a safe setting to develop positive emotions in learners. Student-centered pedagogies integrate community engagement in an existing course with credits depending on learning goals to be achieved. Ways of integration range from one-time group service projects to option within a course or required within a course or as disciplinary capstone/multiple course projects as well as action research projects. The role of peace education in all sectors of education should nurture competencies of democratic citizenship, critical thinking, intercultural communication, human rights and global stewardship. Peace learning should develop peace building awareness and the role of teacher should be to reduce conflict narratives in classrooms. Community- institutional partnerships should identify and disseminate solutions to pressing social challenges and create opportunities for ‘do-no-harm’ approach. Thorough integration of academic content and projects is associated with the greatest synergy of community engagement and realistic experiences shaping their experiential, ethical and social learning. Exposure to diversity has positive impact on student teachers particularly personal outcomes such as identity development and cultural understanding that is highly expected for future teachers. They need constant and regular opportunities to reflect upon their community work in the context of course content either by personal journals, portfolios, directed writings, discussion, narratives and exit cards after each class session, and case study reports. Receiving quality feedback from instructors and peers would highly impact their self reported learning.

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