

# Teachers Role in Peace Education

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This first lecture on Peace Education was given at two programmes on the Notodden Campus and the Porsgrunn campus of Telemark University College in Norway 31 October and 2 November, 2006 by Dr. H. T. D. Rost, a member of the Board of the Bahá'í Academy and staff member of New Era Development Institute, Panchgani. These lectures were attended by professors and students of TUC and were very well received. They were followed by useful comments and questions to panels that included Prorektor Krut Duesund, Dr. (Mrs.) Radha Rost, and others.

In the early 1970s a group of the world's leading scientists, the Club of Rome, brought together their expertise in a study of the whole world's present problems. When they brought together the insights gained from their separate disciplines they became aware that all the major world problems that we think of under separate headings are, in reality, so closely related as to be aspects of one problem. They called this cluster of worldwide interconnected problems. "the human problem" and stated that real solutions apparently are interdependent. Finally, the scientists stated that these problems are not technological but are ethical problems. In other words, they have to do with values: universal values, near-universal values, particularistic values, higher values, lower values, et cetera and our choices of right or wrong values. Therefore, these problems center on what we think and believe about ourselves, about our relationships to other people on this Earth and how we understand the relationships of human beings with the natural environment. But if we attempt to deal effectively with these problems, the first essential, the scientists reported, is to see the problems in a global context and to develop a sense of world citizenship.

So, since the topic of this talk is "Some Aspects of the Teacher's Role in Peace Education in an Increasingly Multicultural and Multiethnic Society," we start with the basics. First, the teacher must understand that multicultural, multiethnic, and multireligious problems in society are not to be dealt with in isolation in bits and pieces of a good peace education program but, being interconnected with all other problems of peace and violence, are addressed in the whole program. For example, developing such qualities as compassion and service to others can help reduce racial, religious, or other prejudices, but students of all backgrounds must take part in the program.

Second, the teacher must be cognizant and wholly supportive of the basic nature and aims of peace education, one example given before from Dale Hudson being: "...education that actualizes [people's] potentialities in helping them learn how to make peace with themselves and with others, to live in harmony and unity with self, humankind and nature." The principles upon which this statement rests include: "1. The cardinal prerequisite for world peace is the unity of humankind. 2. World order can be founded only on the consciousness of the oneness of humankind." It follows that, in this view, the teacher of peace education in an apparently diverse society must keep certain basic aims in mind: the achievement of a unified, peaceful society both globally and within the nation, where world citizenship is fostered and "unity in diversity" is

recognized and practiced.

Third, the teacher should constantly keep in mind that the attainment of any aim is conditioned upon knowledge, volition, and action. Unless these three are forthcoming, nothing will be accomplished. The power needed to accomplish a peaceful world is the unification of humankind. To this end, the teacher must use his or her volition and will-power. In the words of Sarvepalli Radhakrishnan, we should "... will peace with our whole body and soul, our feelings and instincts, our flesh and its affections." Then we should act intelligently to reduce intercultural, interethnic, and inter-religious violence, bringing a greater degree of unity and harmony in society. To accomplish this, the teacher should develop qualities such as tolerance, respect of and appreciation of others, being fair and open-minded, and being able and willing to consider other points of view looking beyond his or her own self-interest. In other words, the teacher must be sincerely attempting to be free of prejudice.

In our experience, when a teacher becomes deeply and regularly involved in teaching peace education, this can cause that teacher to take a long, deep look at his or her values and beliefs. Clearly, it can center a person on one's own thoughts, words, and deeds. In order to be a model for the students, the teacher has the opportunity of transformation and change of the inner self. Then the students can be helped to understand and feel what is a peaceful person who is a peacemaker, and the teacher will have a powerful, positive influence on hundreds and thousands of children and youth.

A number of approaches exist, both secular and religious, besides those already given, to help teachers cope with prejudices, conflicts, and violence in an increasingly diverse society by starting with themselves. Our first example is the development of the teacher's own emotional intelligence. Some psychologists maintain that the old concepts of IQ revolved around a narrow range of linguistic and mathematics skills, and they took a wider view of intelligence, trying to reinvent it in terms of what it takes to lead a successful life. This is called EQ, emotional intelligence. People with high EQ know and manage their own emotional life well and understand and deal effectively with the feelings of others. They are skillful in relationships. No doubt many of you immediately recognize its connection with what has been said about peace education so far today.

Five main domains of emotional intelligence as linked to our topic include:

1. Knowing one's own emotions. Recognizing a feeling as it happens. We need to notice our true feelings. For example, you recognize an inner feeling of bias or superiority toward a person from another ethnic group for what it really is, especially if you do not know the facts about that person. This can be a proud, selfish, self-centered feeling.
2. Managing emotions. Handling our own feelings so that they are appropriate is an ability that builds self-awareness. Carrying our example further, instead of feeling anxious, sad, annoyed, upset, indifferent, or dismissive when you realize you are prejudiced against this person, you decide to overcome such feelings by doing something constructive to deal with the problem.
3. Motivating oneself. Enlisting our emotions in service of a goal is essential for self-motivation

and mastery and for creativity. Emotional self-control is central to all sorts of accomplishments. Taking our example one step further, you set a firm goal for yourself – to overcome this prejudice through emotional self-control. You are determined to work towards your goal.

4. Recognizing emotions in others. Empathy, another ability that builds on emotional self-awareness, is the basic skill in dealing with people. If you are empathetic, you are more aware of the little or obvious signals that show what others need or want. You notice from the man's facial expressions and body language that he is disturbed and upset at your prejudiced attitude, yet he says nothing. Now is the time to keep the Golden Rule in mind: "We should treat others as we ourselves would wish to be treated," which requires your use of empathy. Teachers in particular need to develop the ability of recognizing emotions in others and dealing with them in a mature manner. Even if the man shows no outward signs, use the Golden Rule, put yourself in his place under the same circumstances, and think about what he is probably thinking and feeling.

5. Handling relationships. The art of relationships is, in large part, the ability to manage emotions in others. We can be either socially competent or socially incompetent. Using the Golden Rule as your guide, you put yourself in the man's place and try to understand how badly he feels and why he feels that way. You firmly decide to change your self-centered, prejudiced attitude toward him and treat him in a friendly way as an equal from now on, realizing that it may take time and patience to reduce his hurt feelings. In the meantime, as you learn more about his character, you are in a better position to assess your relationship with him. In sum, following the basics of emotional intelligence, you have completed a peaceful act.

We noted previously that one way for teachers, school administrators, and others in authority to combat biases, stereotypes, and prejudices inside and outside of the schools is to take a firm stand against them. This firm stand begins with your own thoughts and emotions. Here your skills in emotional intelligence are helpful, especially as you develop the ability to know not only when but how to speak up effectively against prejudice. How this is done depends on the circumstances. For instance, you can do this in such a skillful way that you can be heard by people without their being defensive. If you gradually learn how to do this, biases can be reduced. One mild, non-threatening way is to use "I" messages. Instead of accusing people of being biased and prejudiced and putting them on the defensive, you could say something like, "I really enjoy it when all of you work together on this project" or "I really felt very unhappy when someone in the class says something offensive about any religion and its followers" or "I truly feel upset when some boys don't want to play together on the playground. I would be much happier if they started playing together." Or the teacher or the school head could take a much tougher stand. But it is difficult for a person to take a firm stand against prejudice unless he overcomes it within himself first.

This leads teachers to the approach to combating prejudices and many other problems called "teachable moments." This is a further development of your sensitivity to the feelings and body language of your students, not just noting what words and actions are obvious. For example, when teaching cooperative games, where no one ever loses, as an integral part of peace education, after the teacher is experienced with it and has observed the social relationships among the students, he or she can wisely, starting in a small way, have two boys from different ethnic backgrounds who don't interact well with each other, do something cooperatively in such

a game for a short time. Then, over the following weeks, as cooperative games continue being played, the teacher deliberately manages the relationship so that the two gradually cooperate with each other more. This procedure is outlined in our peace education materials for cooperative games. In fact, even if the teacher did not focus on individuals and groups in this manner, these games help improve social relations.

Or, no matter what cultural, ethnic, or religious backgrounds your students come from, you encourage, praise, appreciate, and reward the work of all of them as equally as possible. Positive attention to all can lead to higher achievement for all.

Clearly, a teacher who teaches peace education to students learns a lot at the same time, much of which enables that teacher to deal more effectively with conflicts between students from various backgrounds. For instance, in our materials, starting with teaching students aged 7 or more, the teacher learns that there are a number of ways to help solve conflicts. Among others, the students and the teacher learn about listening, talking, sharing, taking turns, getting help, and apologizing. In all cases, stories and other activities are included in the lessons to reinforce learning. These techniques are developed further and others are added with older students.

Listening actively and carefully includes certain guidelines: look at who is speaking, keep your body still, keep thinking, do not interrupt, ask questions, make comments, repeat what the other person says, be sincere and interested. Talking about problems as a means of solving conflicts introduces the students to consultation, an important approach that is developed further with older students. To help solve conflicts students can learn to share material objects such as pens, pencils, erasers, balls, and food and nonmaterial things such as ideas. Taking turns involves one person having or using something for awhile and then letting another person take his or her turn. Getting help is useful when you cannot solve a problem alone. Students aged 9 and older are exposed to S-T-O-PHACC--S-O-P-H-A-C-C, which stands for share, take turns, outside help, postpone, humor, avoid, compromise, chance. As teachers teach, they learn to use such approaches and others in dealing with conflicts in school and in their everyday lives.

You learn a topic best by teaching it. Direct teaching about prejudices is included in our materials for students aged 8 plus. In the first activity, the objective is for the students to learn about different types of prejudice and how they can lead to injustice in society. The activity is carried forward in four steps. First, the teacher writes "Let us remove prejudice" on the board. She has the students write it in their Peace Books. She then explains that prejudice is when someone "judges" someone else ahead of time, without really knowing the facts. A person might think, "I do not like people from China" without ever having directly met someone from that country. She gives other examples of different types of prejudice -- racial, cultural, religious, social or gender prejudices. Second, she tells the class a simple story about a girl who experienced many prejudices, a story that reflects the reality of life for many people in India where, as it has been said, prejudice is the greatest barrier to development and progress. "A girl from another state started to go our school for the first time. She was a good, polite girl and looked forward to making new friends. But some people who did not know her were prejudiced and said bad things about her. Some said, "She is a girl. Boys are better than girls." Others said, "She doesn't speak our language. Our language is better." Others thought, "Her religion is different from ours, her skin color is different from ours, she is a poor girl and we are rich."

Many people were not friendly with her and some children teased her almost every day. They did not practice the Golden Rule. At first the girl was surprised and sad. Later she became miserable and often cried. She did not like to go to school at all and wanted only to become friends with others and to live a good and happy life.” The story is repeated. Third, the teacher asks the class to identify the various kinds of prejudice against the girl. These include language prejudice, as she speaks another language; religious prejudice, as she belongs to another religion; gender prejudice, as she is a girl; racial prejudice, as she has a different skin color and other physical characteristics; and social status prejudice, as she comes from a poor family, perhaps from a low caste living in a separate part of the village known as a wadi. Fourth, the students are already familiar with the structural approach in cooperative learning, so, with the students sitting in pairs facing each other, the teacher uses the powerful thinking skills structure known as Think-Pair-Share to ask the following questions: If you were this girl, how would you feel? Why would you feel that way? (Note the emphasis on empathy.) Then the students all think quietly for some time, such as from 30 seconds to one minute, then discuss the questions in pairs, and finally the teacher calls on a few of the pairs to share their answers with the class. Such feedback is very valuable for the teacher.

You will note that both the students and the teacher are learning both cognitively and affectively from this activity about how serious a problem prejudice is and what harm it does to a child based upon what has already been included in this curriculum up to this point:

1. A strong stand against injustice.
2. The development of sympathy for those who are ill-treated and empathy based on understanding of others’ emotions and feelings.
3. Consequences of failure to practice the Golden Rule.
4. A continuation of simple examples that students of a particular age level can understand and, at times, have directly or indirectly experienced, in this case being examples of prejudice.
5. The fundamental human need for friendship and happiness rather than rejection and isolation.
6. The use of a thinking skills structure, Think-Pair-Share, to reinforce empathy toward the unfortunate girl. In essence, the reduction of prejudice begins in our own thoughts and feelings.

In the second activity for ages 8 plus both the students and teacher learn more, in this case centered on the objective of how the students can help to reduce or remove prejudices. First, the teacher writes “Prejudices of any kind are the destroyers of human happiness and welfare” on the board and the students write it in their Peace Books. She explains that we can help to remove prejudices at home, at school, and in our communities. She also explains that we need to know that prejudices are not based on truth, but on ignorance, and that by experiencing one bad thing done by one person does not mean that all such people are bad. This is known as generalizing. She then gives examples of how people are prejudiced. Second, she asks the class four questions: When people are prejudiced, what do they think? What are some of the different kinds of prejudice? How do people feel when others are prejudiced against them? If someone were

prejudiced against you, would you like it? Why not? Third, since she wants the students to give each other a wider range of views than when they discuss in pairs, she uses the cooperative learning structure Team Discussion-Share in which the class is divided up into teams of four based on guidelines for making groups and they first discuss the question: What virtues can we practice to reduce or remove prejudices? Then while some of the teams share their answers with the class, the teacher writes these virtues on the board. Fourth, she explains that if we meet a man from another country who is dirty, does that mean that all people from that country are dirty? She then asks the children to apply this same way of thinking to other prejudices and has one or more of them present their ideas to the class. Fifth, she asks the class to choose one virtue that will help reduce or remove prejudices. (One example is love. Another is kindness. Another is justice and fairness. And so forth.) She writes this virtue in very large letters on the board. She has the students think of ways in which this one virtue can work against the different types of prejudice. She lets several students present suggestions, and she writes them on the board. Last but far from least, considerable time can be taken in a separate class period to first ask the students to think of different situations that can cause prejudice. The teacher then asks them about what they can do to remove prejudice. One or two thinking skills structures such as Think-Pair-Share or Think-Pair-Square or Three-Step Interview or Team Discussion with Talking Chips or a Gatekeeper and a Recorder, which are all participatory, would be effective here.

Through these activities both the students and teacher can internalize some ways and means of reducing or removing prejudices. Again a foundation has been laid, particularly in the previous activity on Removing Prejudice outlined a few minutes ago, but carrying these concepts further. The students are introduced to the concept of generalizing. Then, the activity centers on the role of practicing virtues—or some would call them higher values -- in reducing or eliminating prejudices. Great emphasis is placed on the development of higher peaceful values throughout this peace education program at all age levels, so the students should already have a foundation. Then, using one or more thinking skills structures the class members think reflectively and discuss in depth about various causes of prejudice and possible ways of removing prejudices. It is surprising what insights some students of this age can have. If the teacher wants more feedback for herself and the whole class, the structure of preference is Think-Pair-Share.

After the second talk and this one were prepared, I became firmly convinced that more classroom activities can be identified and developed to target specific problems and issues associated with stereotyping, generalizing, bias, and prejudice as well as the promotion of harmonious relations in a multicultural, multiethnic, multireligious society. However, it is also clear that the whole program as it stands can help engender harmonious relationships between students of various backgrounds and can have a wider impact, especially on teachers and families. For example, in the unpublished materials for age 10 plus which builds on previous levels, we explore linkages between emotions, empathy, and peace; developing virtues or higher values as the purpose of our lives; standing up against unreasonable or aggressive behavior; some barriers to peace including prejudice, teasing, backbiting, and bullying; some worldwide problems including the lack of equality of men and women, the need for education for all, and poverty; the Universal Declaration of Human Rights; whether I am ever a contributor to conflict; brainstorming and win-win solutions to conflicts; and additional cooperative games appropriate for the age level.

Clearly, the teacher needs certain crucial abilities and skills in order to deal effectively with

conflicts between students, especially if these conflicts are intensified because of their social backgrounds. One such is mediation, which teachers learn first in order to train their students. Starting at the age 6 plus level, students learn that in certain instances a special person--a mediator--must be called in to solve a conflict between various people. Then in the age 7 plus materials, they learn that their teacher is a mediator, a peacemaker. There are slight variations in the mediation process. The one they learn on this level is simple and basic. I will present a more detailed approach to you.

Solving conflicts and problems through mediation is done through following a certain procedure. The mediator sits with the two parties in conflict for mediation and uses the following steps:

1. He or she lays down and explains the ground rules:

(a) Treat everyone with respect.

(b) Everyone will be truthful.

(c) State your points honestly and politely.

(d) You may state your feelings with "I" messages but not by accusing others.

(e) No one will interrupt while the other is speaking.

2. One person at a time will give their side of the story and how they felt. The other listens carefully without interrupting. The other then repeats what he or she understood.

3. Then this second person gives his or her side of the story while the first one listens carefully without interrupting. The first repeats what her or she understood.

4. The mediator may acknowledge what is said by both parties, especially their feelings.

5. Both parties brainstorm possible solutions. The mediator may help. Several solutions may be suggested.

6. Both parties choose the most appropriate and practical solution. The mediator may help. This should be a solution the parties respect.

7. The solution is put into action.

You will note that the mediator must listen very carefully to everyone, be fair to all, and try to help find a solution that everyone can agree upon.

As students grow older, they learn such an advanced approach to mediation, and some schools have student mediators who have been selected for this function. But the advantage for teachers who learn and demonstrate mediation to their students is obvious, as the teachers can use these

skills themselves and not only in schools.

Some schools go beyond our approach and give their teachers and key administrators as well as students from a certain minimum age onward a program of conflict resolution training including not only mediation and other approaches in our program but a variety of other techniques that are available. Such training would be especially needed if there were a danger of interethnic and other similar conflicts in schools.

This leads us to several basic approaches teachers can follow each and every day of their lives as peaceful persons being peacemakers and contributing to a more unified, peaceful society, helping to promote more harmonious relations between social, cultural, ethnic, and religious groups. Here we propose that the teacher's basic purpose in life is to develop the peaceful universal human values such as love, justice, trustworthiness, truthfulness, and honesty so that the teacher can look within himself or herself and recognize with great happiness and inner peace that he or she has been a source of social good. Obviously, to accomplish this, understanding and practice of the Golden Rule, a universal ethic, comes first to mind. The teacher, being open-minded, seeks to learn from the variety of the world's rich heritage of Golden Rule statements from philosophers and religious figures. One is from Jesus Christ 2000 years ago as recorded in the book of Luke in the Bible: "Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets." Or this attributed to the Prophet Muhammad 1400 years ago as recorded in the most respected collections of Hadith: "None of you [truly] believes unless he wishes for his brother what he wishes for himself." Or this one from the Chinese philosopher Meng Tzu around 2500 years ago: "If one strives to treat others as he would be treated by them he will come near the perfect life."

Some scholars claim that the Rule of Love is the highest level of the Golden Rule. This exalted love is not only for friends but for enemies. A number of examples can be given, but ours is from a talk given by 'Abdu'l-Baha in 1912: "You must manifest complete love and affection toward all mankind. Do not exalt yourselves above others, but consider all as your equals, recognizing them as servants of one God. Know that God is compassionate toward all; therefore, love all from the depths of your hearts, prefer all religionists before yourselves, be filled with love for every race, and be kind toward the people of all nationalities."

The daily development of higher values within ourselves to bring social good, practicing the Golden Rule, is given a powerful impetus through the use of bringing yourself to account each day, a practice first introduced in the age 7 plus materials. There is no fixed way of bringing yourself to account each day, but one way is to be alone in a quiet place near the end of the day and think deeply about three questions: What did I do today that was good? What did I do today that could be done better? What will I do tomorrow to improve? This is another activity that everyone can use to advantage, including the teacher and school administrator coping with opportunities and dangers in a society made up of various social groups.

This leads us to two interrelated approaches that teachers of a more spiritual bent can follow every day: prayer and meditation. I will not comment on the use of prayer to help others to become more unified, harmonious, and peaceful and to help oneself to grow internally along these same lines, as for each of you it is an internal matter. But every educationalist is free to use

its power.

Meditation is recognized as an important means of acquiring knowledge and solving problems. People usually sit silently and contemplate while meditating. You cannot both speak and meditate at the same time. Freeing your mind from everything else, you concentrate your mind on a particular matter. You are speaking to your inner self. These matters can include social and scientific and technological and artistic as well as spiritual issues. You can discover things you did not know before. However, the meditative faculty is like unto a mirror: if you put it before earthly objects such as disunity, hatred, conflict, and prejudice toward others it will reflect them. But if you turn your mirror upwards, toward unity, love, harmony, peace and reduction of prejudices toward others it will be reflected in your hearts, and higher values and virtues will be developed within you. Students learn a simple, generally acceptable approach to meditation to deal with social problems in connection with the Golden Rule in the age 9 plus materials, and meditation is taken further in the unpublished 10 plus materials.

We will complete our treatment of some aspects of the role of the teacher in an increasingly multicultural and multiethnic society by focusing on the starting point--us. In all the countries of the world the longing for universal peace must take possession of human beings everywhere. Do not think that world peace is an ideal impossible to attain. This powerful desire, this longing for universal peace begins with us as individuals, spreads to the children and youth we teach, and, through us, our students, and our schools, spreads to parents, families, and the community. If you are nurturing this powerful desire, do not lose it. Protect it, nourish it, act upon it, and, in time, you will behold its fruits. Let stronger, higher thoughts of universal love, peace, and unity overcome thoughts of division, hatred, conflict, and war. Again, you will behold the fruits.

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