

Peace through Schooling and Education: Landscaping Self and Other

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INTRODUCTION

The essence of knowledge and entirety of consciousness deliberately liberate human beings from all kind of delusions, i.e. the source of sufferings (Archie, 2004). The implication of such knowledge in the past largely focused to inculcate spiritual thoughtfulness. The knowledge for spirituality depreciated over centuries (ibid, 2004) but the emancipating exactitude and hallmark of knowledge remained unaltered.

Since the long past, pursuit for knowledge among the people in Nepal has indubitably aimed at unshackling from the barbarities of the self and the others, be it social, cultural, economic and political. Unshackling of social-cultural, economic, political etc. limitations and ignorance were knowingly and unknowingly linked with peace, progress, prosperity and pleasure among individual and societies (Yeh, 2006, p.97). The knowledge for peace and pleasure was asserted by religious and cultural norms and values in Nepalese society which is revealed in the following verse of Sanskrit literature:

ljBf bbflt ljgod\ . ljBf bflt kfqQfd
kfqTjf wgdKgf]lt . wgt\ wd{ ttM;'vd\ ...

The verse above maintains that knowledge leads one to be a good character, which further leads him/her to prosperity and then to pleasure. The Gita, a religious text, asserts that pleasure can't be attained without peace (czfGt:o stM;'vd\). It is, therefore, obvious that the knowledge, peace and pleasure are the three entities which take place one after another in order.

This means that knowledge invites peace, which further invites pleasure. Thus, the endeavors to approach knowledge for peace among Nepalese persisted from the ancient to the most modern time.

Problem Statement

Peace is instantly related to happiness. Francis Bacon (Durant, 2006) holds the views that "happy the man who has learned the causes of things and has put under his feet all fears, and inexorable fate, and the noisy strife the hell of greed" (p. 160). To the best suitable with my family and professional life experiences the above Baconian inference asserts the connection and positive adherence among peace, happiness and learning. However, when I peeped into the peace culture and educational tradition of Nepal, I came across some severe paradoxes between the traditions of knowledge and culture of peace in Nepal. The most indispensable contradiction is, as I observed, is the inverse expansion of educational practices and peace practices in Nepal.

From the year of 2007 BS educational sphere for people in Nepal has been advancing day by day. At the time of abolishing the Rana rule in Nepal only 2% of the people in Nepal were literate. The number of primary, lower secondary and secondary schools were 3, 5 and 2 respectively. Currently, the literacy rate of Nepal reached 80% and the numbers of primary lower secondary and secondary schools reached 100, 200 and 3000 respectively. Similarly, the number of colleges and universities has also increased in number. Expansion of education in Nepal also resulted with broader opportunities for economic growth and global contact. The expansion of education as such, however, could hardly contribute to promote peace in the way that events of conflicts and killing in family and society remained intense in which the Maoist insurgency and the ongoing anarchy in Nepal can be taken as examples.

Linking of the above philosophical and procedural contribution of education with the existing peace culture of Nepal makes room for creating a number of questions and doubts. Why does the philosophical dimension of education in relation to nonviolence, love, compassion and reverence uttered very little about peace or remained almost silent in maximizing the peace culture in Nepal? What skills in relation to conflict resolution does the education in Nepal as a process impart to the people and how these skills contribute to expansion of peace culture in the changing context of Nepal? These are some questions that encouraged me to generate the basic problem for this study as: How do schooling and education of Nepal remains conducive to its peace culture?

Research Questions

To fulfill the purpose above I have formulated the following research questions:

1. How can peace culture be conceived in the context of Nepal?
2. How did Peace culture evolve and sustain in Nepal?
3. What role can (school) education play in recreating peace culture in Nepal?

Significance of the Study

Peace is inevitable for happy life. However, it is not something which takes place automatically. It is the subject to create. Creating peace demands a thorough knowledge of philosophic, political and religious differences, and skills in the part of peace agents (Pierre in Durant, 2006, p. 308). Since school acts as one of the peace agents in the society (UNICEF, 1999, pp. 1-9), this study will explore what knowledge and skills are to be practiced within the framework of schools to ensure the peaceful life of an individual in the context of Nepal.

METHODOLOGY

Hitchcock and Hughes (cited in Cohen, Manion & Morrison, 2000) suggest that "ontological assumptions give rise to epistemological assumptions; these, in turn, give rise to methodological considerations; and these, in turn, give rise to issues of instrumentation and data collection".

My Ontology

Before presenting ontological assumption for this research I would like to discuss what ontology actually is. Denzin and Lincoln (1994) assert that ontology deals with the question such as:

What is the form and nature of reality and, therefore, what is there that can be known about it? For example, if a "real" world is assumed, then what can be known about it is "how things really are" and "how things really work."

Based on the above understanding of ontology I would like to explain the existence of peace culture reality in society for which human beings have been striving since the dawn of its civilization. Basically I believe upon historical realism (ibid, p. 109) in the formation, existence and continuation of the knowledge and truth that guide the peace culture in Nepal. My paradigm towards the peace culture asserts that the virtual reality for peace culture is shaped by social, political, cultural, economic, and ethnic and gender values; which are crystallized over time. I

hence assert that peace culture of Nepal is not independent to its history, culture, economy, and social value system.

My epistemology

Based on the ontological principle that I have discussed above my epistemological principle for this proposed study is obvious. Since different people in Nepal follow different castes, culture and ethnicity; they must have different worldviews towards the subject under investigation. The subjective inquiry, therefore, seems to be imperative for this proposed study to explore the multiple realities existing in the society in question. The subjective relationship with the subject to be known will lead to explore the values mediated findings (Denzin and Lincoln, 1994, p. 109).

Methodology

Methodology deals with the question such as, how can the inquirer (would-be knower) go about finding out whatever s/he believes can be known (Clandinin, 2007)? This question leads me to create a roadmap through which I will make a journey towards finding out the multiple realities that I have assumed to have existed in the society under this investigation.

Findings and Reflection

During the initial visit to the research field I made major progress in relation to the research purpose and questioned through processes of informal observation and discussion. These processes established also a key to the relationship building which underpins successful participatory research. They described as ethnographic research (Russell 2004: 463, 482). I

recorded notes, observations and reflections, and also developed my analysis of the issues at the centre of the research. The information generated through these processes helped me to enrich the analysis of the data obtained through the interviews and documentary sources.

The fieldwork made possible in the concrete detail of the experience of peace and conflict in Nepal. Glesne (1999) referred to this immersion process in discussing the ethnographic methods of qualitative research, describing the need for a researcher to “sit in” the community under study, in order to grow to know the participants: their context, their motivations and their experiences. I visited the research field repeatedly for deepening my contextual understanding accelerated, alongside the more formal processes of interviewing particular informants, holding formal discussions with various stakeholders, and collecting and analyzing other primary source material. In between these activities, I spent my time with the research participants listening to their stories, their worries, their fears, their descriptions of the past and present and their hopes for the future. In particular, it revealed to me the depth of the peoples’ commitment to and belief in their capacity, as Nepalese, to make a better future, to transcend the experience of a decade of terrifying conflict, oppression, exploitation that caused destruction in their peace practice.

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