

1-1-2010

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Rubina Bhatti

The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan, dr.rubytariq@yahoo.com

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Bhatti, Rubina, "Libraries and Education for Peace in Pakistan" (2010). *Library Philosophy and Practice (e-journal)*. Paper 467.
<http://digitalcommons.unl.edu/libphilprac/467>

Library Philosophy and Practice 2010

ISSN 1522-0222

Libraries and Education for Peace in Pakistan

[Dr. Rubina Bhatti, PhD \(UK\)](#)

Assistant Professor
Coordinator M.Phil Programme
Department of Library & Information Science
The Islamia University of Bahawalpur, Pakistan

This paper was originally presented at the National Conference organized by Pakistan Library Association, Karachi

Introduction

Pakistan has been facing the biggest challenge of terrorism and extremism for more than a decade that is consequently affecting all walks of life including educational institutions and their libraries. Therefore, the need for investigating the active part of libraries in promoting education for peace is the call for every academic and library professional. Thus, using libraries as a platform for exploring the causes and affects of extremism, bringing about positive change in the societal thinking and attitude convincing the global communities that violence is not an intrinsic ingredient of Pakistani society and that all the contributory factors must be examined, is the basic motivation of this study.

Waslekar and Serageldin, (2006) indicated that extremism and terrorism are plagues that take humanity back to the dark ages, a time when human life had no value, and violence prevailed over the rule of law. It is, therefore, of paramount importance to start examining the roots of these phenomena and to discuss appropriate response strategies that must be implemented in order to combat these modern day crises.

Objectives of the Study

- To identify the roles, strategies, basic issues and factors regarding the successful implementation for libraries in education for peace;
- To suggest the possible ways for libraries in promoting education for peace in Pakistan

Methodology

The methodology is based on reviewing the related literature and informal interviews with educationists, psychologists, sociologists, library professionals and other society members in Pakistan. Extensive discussion was

also conducted to highlight the possible roles of libraries for facilitating education for peace in Pakistan with the academicians and library experts from USA, UK, Germany, Hungary, Nigeria, South Africa, India and Nepal during the International Conference in India in February, 2010.

What is Peace Education?

Peace education is a participatory holistic process that includes teaching for and about democracy and human rights, nonviolence, social and economic justice, gender equality, environmental sustainability, disarmament, traditional peace practices, international law, and human security (Hague Appeal for Peace Global Campaign for Peace Education).

Hague Appeal for Peace Global Campaign for Peace Education pointed out that;

"A culture of peace will be achieved when citizens of the world understand global problems, have the skills to resolve conflicts and struggle for justice non-violently, live by international standards of human rights and equity, appreciate cultural diversity, and respect the Earth and each other. Such learning can only be achieved with systematic education for peace".

Peace Education is about empowering people with the skills, attitudes, and knowledge: to build, maintain, and restore relationships at all levels of human interaction.

- to develop positive approaches towards dealing with conflicts -from the personal to the international.
- to create safe environments, both physically and emotionally, that nurture each individual.
- to create a safe world based on justice and human rights.
- to build a sustainable environment and protect it from exploitation and war (Harris, 2002).

Previous Related Studies

The author found shortage of literature about the role of libraries in peace promotion. The Sierra Leone Association of Archivists, Librarians, and Information Scientists' (SLAALIS) organised their fourth annual conference on the theme "Information for peace building in the 21st century," on 21st–23rd March 2001. The conference resolved amongst other things that:

- SLAALIS should strengthen its advocacy and lobbying strategies with government, the Parliamentary Committee on Education, Civil Society Movement, the National Commission for Democracy and Human Rights (NCDHR), Disarmament, Demobilization and Reintegration (DDR) and other organizations dealing with peace building in implementing its programmes and activities.
- SLAALIS should provide a forum/base for activities relating to peace building, peace education and conflict resolution in the country.
- SLAALIS should work in collaboration with relevant organizations like Government, NCDHR, DDR, Civil Society Movement, Freetown City Council (FCC), and international organizations on networking, partnership and linkages in peace building.
- SLAALIS should organize talks, discussions and public lectures for schools and colleges and the community on peace building (SLAALIS, 2001)

Maheswara, (2008, p.108) noted that although there long a history of threats to libraries, they can play an important role in creating ethnic harmony.

Libraries are expected to change attitude of civil society, which is stakeholder in the peace process. The libraries- school, public, university and national library can bring about the attitude changes in minds of the nation, by providing relevant information, library exhibitions, display of current publications, maintaining clippings and translation services.

Mckee pointed out the importance to promote the freedom of access to information by the library. He further stated that we as librarians must be committed to intellectual freedom, democratic values, to promote equality and opportunity and understanding in our society and – by doing so – to make our contribution to the preconditions of peace in our society.

Roles of Libraries for Promoting Peace Education in the Society

Extensive discussion with educationists, sociologists, psychologist and library professionals (both nationally and internationally) and comprehensive literature review suggests that education for peace should aim at developing the belief and attitude to promote broadmindedness, love, tolerance, trust, equality, unity and reverence in the society. Libraries are considered as the nucleus of all the activities thus have the responsibility of taking positives steps for peace promotion. The aim of the libraries must be to educate formally and informally for peace promotion. The study pointed out the following measures that libraries need to taken for improving the situation of peace.

Role of School, College, and University Libraries

It is truism that school, college and university libraries are indispensable in meeting the educational, information and entertainment needs of members of the society. Libraries develop their collections, facilities and services to meet the information needs of their patrons. However, in order to accomplish this task effectively, libraries must have a thorough understanding of the information needs of their users. The goals of college and university libraries in Pakistan need to be broaden to cope with changes and reach its target in the enrichment of peace in all ways of life. Seminars/workshops must be arranged for the dialogue and exchange of knowledge and ideas for specific groups on issue, topics or problems in all areas of societal interest. The literature and interview responses suggested that these libraries should focus on the following to support peace building and become of strong agent of change in the society:

- Seminars, Lectures, Conferences
- Book fairs and library exhibitions
- Display of new publications about the subject
- Clippings maintenance
- Bibliographic services,
- Reference services,
- Selective dissemination of information and current awareness services
- Reprographic services
- Translation services (Maheswara, 2008).

Libraries should organise talks, lectures, seminars, conferences addressing the issues relating to peace building process and resolving conflicts.

Role of Public Libraries, Information Centers, & Museums

Public libraries, information and archival centers and museums must support the provision of efficient, user-oriented and excellent library and information services that seek to equitable access to information for all

communities (literate and illiterate) in Pakistan. Public libraries and museums should expand their concepts of library service and build up positive interaction within their community. These should be built with teachers, civil society, lawyers, doctors, sociologists, psychologists, journalists, artists, business community, social workers, madrasah community, community development workers, NGO's both local and international, youth workers, and peace and reconciliation officials. By providing required information, resources and services to these groups for organising seminars, conferences, workshops and community development meetings, libraries and museums can prove their usefulness.

Role of Pakistan Library Association in Promoting Peace Culture

Pakistan Library Associations has a very a vital role in the promotion of peace culture by organising various seminars, conferences, lectures, book fairs and exhibitions addressing the various contributing factors, problems and solutions for bringing up optimistic change in the culture. It should be committed to motivate and facilitate its professionals towards facilitating research activities influential to a growing educated society, peaceful culture, and conflict resolution in the country. The present author has already suggested for PLA to establish a Research and Development Section that should support research on various real-life issues.

Role of National Library of Pakistan

National Library of Pakistan should take steps for bringing together diverse streams of knowledge, focusing what might be incongruent approaches into solutions to common problems. By organising both intellectual and cultural programmes involving national and international community, the National Library can bridge the gaps not only between various religious sects but also between the global societies. It must be based on the philosophy that through a mutual process peace educators facilitate human development.

Importance of Information for Peace Promotion

Needless to say that for developing peace the provision of valid, reliable and relevant information is indispensable. Information is a key resource for conflict resolution, peace promotion and security. Through the provision of relevant information at all levels of libraries can support government, policy makers, civil society and can establish the base for the effective functioning of a democratic system. Wright, (2001) rightly said that "Information promotes and empowers citizens' participation in the democratic process; it maintains the Rule of Law and creates a viable outlet for the injection of public opinion. Information informs the policy-making process of political leadership, all of which nurtures the building of sustainable peace for the enhancement of the State".

Societal Awareness and Growth

The library associations have recognized and championed the power of the printed word in a free and open society. There is no right more fundamental to a democracy than the right of all citizens to information (Biddiscombe, R., 2000). In the present social, educational, political and economic scenario of Pakistan, the vision and mission of PLA (Pakistan Library Association) should be very critical as the libraries and societies are interlinked and interdependent. Library is a living social institution made up by the people and for the help of

people. PLA's mission must be to give the awareness to the society through greater use of libraries; and to promote the vital role of libraries in a democratic society.

Libraries as Advocates for Democracy

In countries with advanced education and librarianship systems libraries are considered as the advocate for democracy as, Nancy Kranich (ALA's active member), has avowed in the "Libraries: The Cornerstone of Democracy" that:

"An informed public constitutes the very foundation of a democracy. Libraries are the cornerstone of democracy in our communities because they assist the public in locating a diversity of resources and in developing the information literacy skills necessary to become responsible, informed citizens who can participate in our democracy" (William R. Gordon (2000).

Use of New Technologies

New information technology is a facilitator of the mission, goals and the objectives of academic, public, school and special libraries around the world. However, implementing the technology has its impact, drawbacks and obstacles associated to specific environments and infrastructures either by geographical location or socio-economic factors. Implementation and use of new information technology as a tool for the above stated purposes may be related to the impact and the obstacles experienced, as well as the perceptions, on its value for information handling, (O'Brien and Sidorko , 2000).

Use of new information and communication technologies for promoting education for peace was discussed with the international colleagues in India. The application of new ICT is seen imperative to reach out to community to elucidate that conflict may be resolved peacefully. Wikis, folksonomy, Flickr, Podcasting, You-Tube, social networking sites (MySpace, Facebook), virtual worlds (Second Life), Web 2.0. and Library 2.0. may be used in order to combat the crises caused by extremism. The implications of new technology for public awareness, promoting quality are seen as positive in the changing patterns of librarianship.

Bibliotherapy

Bibliotherapy can be defined as the use of books to help people solve problems. Precisely stated, bibliotherapy is a family of technique for structuring interaction between a facilitator and a participant based on mutual sharing of literature (Pardeck, 1989).

The idea of healing through books is not a new one--it can be traced far back in history, from the days of the first libraries in Greece (Bibliotherapy, 1982). The present author suggests that this technique should be in public libraries and special libraries i.e. hospital libraries, special rehabilitation centers' libraries and jail libraries etc, for helping people understand that violence is not the real solution of the problems.

Need for global collaboration for research for peace promotion

Sharing of resources, reading materials, technology and sharing of ideas must be promoted for research for peace promotion. Thriving partnerships between libraries and other professionals, such as the teaching faculty and

researchers, journalists, computing professionals, publishers, media designers and instructional specialists, are also becoming increasingly common in the environment of the World Wide Web and is very much desirable for sharing relevant information for the broader objective of building a culture of peace globally. There is a strategic benefit for libraries and librarians in expanding collaborative relationships both within the academic field and out of it. No one individual or profession has all of the skills now desirable to create and maintain an information infrastructure for a community of users, Webb and Doll (1999), and Wordsworth, A. (1988). All the stake-holders need to focus on the ultimate benefit of collaborative relationships, improved products and services for the community of users in an increasingly complex and sophisticated information environment.

Budgetary Limitations

Adequate funds are required in libraries for providing valuable resources and organising useful programmes for users. Strong political will is necessary for governments to provide finance and planning in order to implement improvements in libraries. The government must provide sufficient budget to education sector and libraries because with scarce financial resources it would be very difficult for libraries to focus on latest information provision and user satisfaction. Without the provision of the latest information to researchers, staff and students, there can be no scientific and technological development. And there can be no economic and social development without an effective information service.

Libraries should find ways of raising funds like charging for services rendered, sales, sponsorship, support from friends of the library groups, and soliciting external financial support. In addition, they should be research oriented to be able to identify those services that society needs and can provide. Together, they should be able to market their provisions and services through the creation of public relations offices (Kargbo, 2002).

Conclusion

Libraries and Information Centers in Pakistan need to be on the front line to contribute meaningfully in combating extremism and promoting education of peace in the society. But unfortunately, it is observed that the overall culture of librarianship tends to be responsible only to it. Explicitly, the structure of its work, its commitment and loyalties are defined institutionally and professionally rather than in relationship to the community which is the focus of its work, (SLAALIS, 2001). The study concludes that Libraries and Information Centers in Pakistan should provide relevant sources (both print and electronic) and service tailored to the immediate and imperative needs of their communities. By organising seminar, conferences, lectures, translation services, library exhibitions and book fairs, display of new publications about the subject, maintaining clippings, and translation services libraries can contribute for bringing positive change in the situation. Libraries and information centers are considered as the best advocates for democracy and promoting societal awareness and development. Bibliotherapy is the technique that can be used for creating the awareness and using books for healing. The interviewees highly recommended the utilisation of new technology for peace promotion and for communicating positively and logically with global communities.

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