BEYOND TRADITIONAL LEARNING: A CRITICAL REVIEW OF THE STATUS OF PEACE EDUCATION IN INDIA

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ABSTRACT
The relentless efforts of peace advocates and international agencies have helped broaden the view of peace to include micro-economic factors relating to the peaceful coexistence of individuals. Despite these efforts, global peacefulness has fallen by over 3% in the last 15 years (Global Finance Magazine - World's Most Peaceful Country 2023 — Global Peace Index, 2023). Even the most developed nations record a remarkably low performance in the global peace index. For instance, the United States ranks 131st in the global peace index despite its regard as the most developed economy in the world (Global Finance Magazine - World's Most Peaceful Country 2023 — Global Peace Index, 2023). Such pieces of evidence tend to imply that global peace is not a complementarity to development, but needs to be fostered through careful practices. Despite the strenuous efforts made by the Indian economy to foster peace, it currently holds the 126th position in the Global Peace Index (Global Finance Magazine - World's Most Peaceful Country 2023 — Global Peace Index, 2023). Owing to the high degree of correlation between the value systems of an individual (imbibed and built in early years) and their attitudes towards peace; the Nation Council Framework (NCF) for education has explicitly detailed ways to integrate peace education into the current educational framework.

KEYWORDS: *National Council Framework (NCF), National Education Policy (NEP), peace education.*

INTRODUCTION
The NCF 2005 draft introduced various guidelines for the conduct of education in schools, and re-established several existing ones. A key improvement in the NCF 2005 draft was the integration of peace education into the schooling systems by viewing micro-economic peace as an inherent part of the curriculum rather than as an "add-on subject" (Rajgopalan, 2008). Despite its various acclamations, the integration of peace education in the NCF 2005 draft was fine-tuned to the prevalent economic and social conditions of India. Two decades of rapid economic growth in India have ushered in a fundamental change in both the social and economic landscape. This shift, coupled with the advancement in scientific reasoning around emotional and mental development, has led to the release of a new educational framework by the NCF, as signified by the NCF 2023 pre-draft. This paper aims at reviewing the journey of peace education in India over the years against the backdrop of the recommendations of the 2023 NCF pre-draft. It aims to identify the key components of integrating peace education into the schooling systems, as signified by the NCF 2023 pre-draft, and review the challenges posed by the current Indian socio-economic state to its implementation.

The contributions of this paper are threefold: firstly, it critically examines the efforts of the NCF in integrating peace education into the curriculum in 2005 and comments on its success. Secondly, it reviews the proposed ways of integrating peace education as laid down in the NCF pre-draft of 2023 and comments on its strengths and challenges. Thirdly, it presents policy recommendations aimed at meeting the challenges presented to the implementation of peace education in India.

METHODOLOGY
This is a review paper which draws on the work of the existing field of research in this topic. Electronic literature databases were searched to identify studies that examined the current literature on peace education in India, governmental policies and projects for the same (at national and international level). This systematic literature review is guided by the Cochrane method, and the search method and findings are presented in accordance with the relevant sections of the Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-Analyses (PRISMA) guidelines (Higgins and Green, 2011, Moher et al., 2009). Studies were included in the systematic literature review based on the following inclusion criteria: they must (a) quantitatively examine and report the menstrual health management status in India, associated issues, policies and future direction; (b) use a multidimensional conceptualization of menstrual health management; (c) be published in an academic journal and public sector reports; and (d) be available in English.

JOURNEY OF PEACE EDUCATION IN INDIA IN THE 21ST CENTURY
The concepts of peace education and conflict resolution were in their infancy stages in India at the dawn of the 21st century. In 2003, there were no institutions in India that offered conflict resolution courses, and the general understanding of peace was limited to global issues like nuclear disarmament and world peace (Neha Sharma, 2021). In April 2003, the Centre for Peace and Conflict

Resolution Studies was formed with support from the ICEE and USEFI (Neha Sharma, 2021). In 2005, the Domestic Violence Act of 2005 was passed to safeguard households from domestic abuse (Neha Sharma, 2021). A major milestone was achieved in 2005 when the NCF integrated peace education into the existing schooling system by developing a framework more conducive to moral and ethical growth. The lack of structural and institutional factors to uphold peaceful relationships could be viewed as the key challenge faced by India during this time. To overcome this shortcoming, the UGC encouraged the study of human rights by funding universities to introduce courses in this area in 2007. Efforts by various stakeholders have led to an improvement in the awareness and practice of peace education in India over the years (Barbara et al., 2007). These efforts improved India's ranking in the global peace index from the 143rd position in 2014 to the 126th position in 2023 (Global Finance Magazine, World's Most Peaceful Country 2023—Global Peace Index, 2023). However, it's clear that we are miles away from where we want to be, which has led to reformulated guidelines for upholding moral values in the NCF 2023 pre-draft (NCF, 2023)

The country's overall peacefulness has increased by a significant 3.5 percent over the past year, which could be attributed to a number of factors ("Global Peace Index," 2023). This could be attributed to better management of violent crime, more cordial international relations, and lowered political instability ("Global Peace Index," 2023). India saw a decrease in geopolitical tensions with China as a result of fewer border incidents, and this, along with a general decline in social unrest, helped to improve the political instability indicator ("Global Peace Index," 2023).

NCF 2005 DRAFT
Challenges to Peace Education in 2005
At the time of formulation of the NCF 2005 draft, the following factors threatened regional, national and global peace in the Indian economy:
- **Structural features:** The lack of structural features in place to impart the values of peace at a global and inter-personal level furthered the ignorance of citizens. Moreover, many people did not believe in the power of education. For instance, only 10% of students opted for high school education in 2003. (Neha Sharma, 2021).
- **Institutional features:** The education system in India was highly traditional and autocratic. A new educational approach built on the principles of non-violence and cooperation was the need of the hour. The shortage of educational institutes trained in such matters further fuelled the lax attitude towards peace (Barbara et al., 2007).
- **Diversity and Cultural beliefs:** Several cultural factors led to hostility between different cultural and ethnic groups in India. Many empirical researches confirm the presence of such diversities and hostilities. Communal hatred, classism, and cultural beliefs hindered effective communication and peaceful coexistence (Rajgopalan, 2008).

Reviewing the effectiveness of the implementation of the NCF guidelines
In this section, we draw on the results of the textbook review conducted by Rajgopalan, 2008. The textbook review aimed at investigating the tone, content, and instructions included in the textbooks published by the NCERT and TTC to gauge the level of success of the NCF in implementing the guidelines. The key results of the textbook review are documented below:
a) Areas of Success
- Cultural diversity was promoted in the textbooks by including references to various cultures and regions (Rajgopalan, 2008). The text was carefully written to avoid gender-based, culture-based, and religion-based stereotypes; and the tone was to promote inclusivity among various individuals (Rajgopalan, 2008).
- Under the "train the trainer" model of the NCF, the textbooks included separate sections to guide the teachers in fostering ethical and moral values (Rajgopalan, 2008).
- A great deal of attention was given to making the students realize the existence and relevance of prevalent social norms against the backdrop of social and environmental issues. Open-ended discussions and debates ensured that students "learn by doing" (Rajgopalan, 2008).
b) Shortcomings
- Certain subjects used judgmental languages which could propagate communal hatred (Rajgopalan, 2008). For example, the history lessons in the NCERT curriculum only focused on the demerits of the British and Mughal empires.
- The absence of follow-up activities in some areas of the curriculum (for example, English and Hindi) led to limited impact accruing from lack of accountability (Rajgopalan, 2008).
- Owing to the low level of cultural and economic diversity at the school level, practical lessons on inclusivity called for a more sophisticated approach.
- Lack of parental training led to a limited impact of the program. Thus, interventions to remedy cultural biases of the parents, and parental training in promoting inclusivity could be seen as the main missing feature of this initiative by NCF.

Reviewing the underlying psychological mechanisms
In order to better refine our recommendations against the backdrop of the NCF 2023 pre-draft, we need to outline the underlying psychological processes in inter-personal communication. In this section, we refer to several studies pertaining to human behaviour in different situations which would enable us to further refine the policy recommendations.

Cricket and segregation
A field study was carried out in India to examine the effectiveness of collaborative and competitive communication in upholding the contact hypothesis. Cultural beliefs led to prejudice, which caused a divide between the upper caste and lower caste in India (Lowe, 2021). People of the two castes were enrolled into a cricket league comprising of mixed caste teams (collaborative interaction) and single caste teams (competition between single caste teams) (Lowe, 2021). Trade was facilitated between members of different castes through a trading game where they were given mismatched flip-flops and rewarded for finding the other half (Lowe, 2021). The intervention showed that collaborative interaction led to better friendships and trade (a proxy for productivity), whereas competitive interactions had no effect, at best (Lowe, 2021).

Teaching students to be peace-maker program
This program aimed at investigating ways to encourage integrative mediation between students and discourage distributive mediation (Johnson, 2004). The resultant blue-print for promoting such constructive strategies of discourse could help in executional planning. The program advocated in-depth teaching of theoretical concepts for a year; followed by its practical application in non-classroom and non-school settings (Johnson, 2004).

Extended contact hypothesis
A study on the extended contact effect (which refers to the spill-over effects of inter-communal friendships) confirmed its presence and outlined ways in which it could be promoted (Aron et al, 1997). The study revealed that friendship between members of prejudiced groups helped overcome the cultural biases of society in general (Aron et al, 1997). The study found that friendship between person A and person B (who belong to prejudiced groups) led to a reduction in the biases of the friends and relatives of person A and B (Aron et al, 1997). The study employed anxiety reduction mechanism to achieve its desired result (Aron et al, 1997).

NCF 2023 PRE-DRAFT
Critical Acclamations
The NCF pre-draft guidelines have been carefully drafted after consulting with several teachers, experts, parents, and students. Such careful consideration, coupled with a scientific understanding of ethical and moral development has led to the establishment of an effective design for the NCF 2023 pre-draft. The guidelines have been established in line with the 5 stages of emotional, moral, and ethical development of individuals; which forms the rationale for the 5+3+3+4 structure of the curriculum (NCF, 2023). Moreover, the NCF draft acknowledges the five layers of self (physical development, development of life and energy, emotional development, intellectual development, and spiritual development), which has enabled the curriculum to outline ways to effectively stimulate these. (NCF, 2023). Additionally, the NCF has proposed several changes in the course content. The NCF has proposed to reduce the syllabus for students with a view to provide greater flexibility to schools in fostering moral and ethical development (NCF, 2023). It has also included a plan to facilitate textbook re-development in order to enhance cultural diversity, inclusion, teamwork, and cooperation (NCF, 2023). In order to further inclusivity and cultural tolerance, the NCF has decided to remove references regarding the 2002 Gujarat riots and certain aspects of the Mughal era.

Challenges to successful implementation of the NCF 2023 pre-draft
Any plan is only as successful as its implementation is. Even though the NCF 2023 pre-draft has formulated guidelines in line with scientific understanding and thorough consultations; serious executional challenges may overestimate the impact of this initiative. These executional challenges are enumerated below:

- **Teacher training:** The scientific approaches to fostering moral and ethical values in an individual has increased the complexity of the educational process, making it more "teacher dependant". The acute shortage of teachers, as signified by the remarkably high student to teacher ratio in Indian schools, can hamper the conduct of a teacher-centric learning process (Nanda, 2021). Additionally, the resources required in teacher training and teacher provision in government schools could further hinder this process (Nanda, 2021). The pupil-teacher ratio in some Indian states is so high (38:1 in Bihar, 41:1 in UP, and 42:1 in Jharkhand) that it hampers effective delivery of sessions by teachers (ASER, 2019). Empirical evidence re-iterates the above point, as only 26.8% of class 3 students knew how to read and 41.1% of class 5 students could solve basic math problems (ASER, 2019). Additionally, it was revealed that only 33% of class 8 students could solve real-life math problems and 43% of class 10 students understood science (ASER, 2019).
- **Appropriate follow-up mechanisms:** Lack of accountability on educational institutes may further the complacence on the teacher's part. Suitable mechanisms need to be developed to ensure the desired conduct of the NCF guidelines.

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- **Lack of Economic Diversity**: The structure of the Indian schooling system has led to the lack of economic diversity within its institutions. The astronomical fees associated with private education have led to an economic divide in the educational structure of India. Thus, prejudices related to classism need to be targeted through more innovative strategies such as practical learning.

- **Discontinuity in educational practices:** A large proportion of the Indian economy lives below the poverty line (10.2% of the total population as of 2019). This has led to the exclusion of several individuals from the schooling system and a discontinuous approach by many others. Most of the poor do not attend the entire 12 years of schooling, and thus special provisions need to be made for this segment of the population. The drop-out rate in primary schooling (grades 1-5) was 4.3%, whereas that in secondary schooling (grades 6-8) was 17.1% (Pajankar, 2019).

POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

- **A peaceful society**: Children learn from the world around them, and inter-personal peace could be propagated only through regional, national, and global peace. News channels should be encouraged to promote positive examples of national peace. At a regional level, the sustenance of basic human wants should be ensured to prevent violence occurring from unmet necessities (Nagasubramaniyan & Joseph, 2022).

- **Parental Training:** The key shortcoming of the integration of peace education in the NCF 2005 draft was the lack of focus on parental training, which led to a confused understanding of moral and ethical values. The facilities in place to inculcate independent thinking among students may help overcome this problem to some extent, but a larger intervention program is required for the parents. Such workshops should focus on removing the communal biases of parents to facilitate them in becoming successful role models. Additionally, bottom-up flow of information could be propagated by enabling students to apply their learnings in non-classroom settings.

- **Feedback mechanism:** Appropriate events should be organized to test the communal beliefs of students. Additionally, surveys could be designed to review the conduct of educational practices in schools, thereby increasing accountability on part of the educational institution. A centralized framework needs to be developed to collect feedback from parents, students, and other stakeholders to review the conduct of educational practices in schools. Suitable reward and punishment mechanisms need to be developed based on the degree of adherence to the NCF guidelines. For example, a release of national ranking for schooling practices based on the quantitative and qualitative surveys held to improve accountability.

- **Creating a ripple effect**: The view of culture as "self-enforcing beliefs" implies that a change in these beliefs would ultimately create a ripple effect throughout the economy. A "train the trainer" model may be propagated, where students who have mastered the art of peaceful coexistence are appointed as lay counsellors to help others. The education system may mandate students to be part of NGOs which may play a crucial role in enabling the literate students to inculcate such values among the illiterate ones. Collaborative engagement between different communities helps overcome personal prejudices, thereby leading to friendships (contact hypothesis); which in turn lowers the prejudice of society in general (extended contact hypothesis) (Aron et al, 1997).

- **Teacher training:** Teachers should be made aware of the scientific reasoning behind the guidelines laid down by the NCF. Additionally, they should be well trained in psychological theories in order to make them better aware of their roles. The social interdependence theory and its empirical validity calls for collaborative approaches to foster positive interdependence between students (Mbogo, 2016). Additionally, the constructive controversy theory lays the foundation for the conduct of collaborative activities. Students should be made to engage in deliberate discourse, where they discuss the advantages and disadvantages of a course of action, in order to promote creative problem solving (Mbogo, 2016). The teachers should ensure that negotiations are of an integrative nature (where the goal is to make mutually beneficial agreements) rather than of a distributive nature (Johnson, 2004). The results of the "Teaching Students to be peace-maker program" is highly applicable in this setting owing to the universality in psychological development. The study advocated teaching concepts of mediation and negotiation processes in one school year, followed up by its practical applications in classroom and non-classroom settings in the next year (Johnson, 2004). This type of intervention led to a reduction in disciplinary problems by 60%, and led to integrative approaches among trained students (Johnson, 2004). The strong empirical relationship between peace education and school culture (correlation coefficient = 0.812***) implies that deliberate efforts should be taken by the management to promote an inclusive and peace-loving environment (Mbogo, 2016)

CONCLUSION
A comparative evaluation of the NCF 2005 draft and NCF 2023 pre-draft shows the sound planning framework of the education committee in India, which is line with scientific understandings and theories. Both of these drafts established guidelines which were relevant to the existing state of affairs in India at the time. Moreover, thorough consultation with the stakeholders ensured greater applicability of the NCF pre-draft guidelines. However, certain executional features which hindered the effectiveness of the guidelines of the NCF 2005 draft, such as lack of parental training and lack of accountability of educational institutions, seem to be present in the NCF 2023 pre-draft as well. In order to circumvent these, more sophisticated executional planning is required to ensure that the NCF 2023 pre-draft delivers on its promises. Moreover, the power of the student community could be leveraged in

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spreading general awareness about the issue and create a ripple effect. Additionally, teacher training and appropriate feedback mechanisms to review the effectiveness of these efforts may help overcome these executional challenges to a great extent.

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