

Aneza Pervez
Celebrating Diversity: Mitigating Conflict with Kindness
International House London
Pakistan

Description of the Project

Being the fifth most populous country in the world, with a population of over 220 million people¹, Pakistan is a country laced with diverse social, ethnic, cultural, and linguistic roots and customs. Each of the four main provinces in Pakistan (Punjab, Khyber Pakhtunkhwa, Balochistan and Sindh) and its extending territories boast their own language, food, clothes, and customs. However, unlike the changing landscapes, such differences across geographical locations are often barely tolerated, much less celebrated. Intolerance and a lack of appreciation of anything different has often led to the development of conflicts and discontent. This lack of appreciation and understanding towards the differences that unite the country can be seen as partly stemming from differences in religious affiliations, socio-economic divides and extremism. Approximately 95% of Pakistan's population identifies as Muslims (with 75% Sunni Muslims and 20% Shia Muslims). The remaining 5% represent the religious minorities of Pakistan (with 3% identifying as Christians). In very recent history, Pakistan has seen a rise in heinous incidents of brutality, particularly towards its minorities. These incidents can often be seen as being fueled by extremism and a lack of respect for people belonging to different ethnicities, genders, and religions. The prevention of such atrocities lies in the ability to foster and build a community of mutual respect, acceptance and kindness.

To bring lasting changes to existing attitudes it is imperative to re-educate and broaden the perceptions of children as well as adults. While high-schools, colleges and universities, afford students the opportunities to debate, discuss and appreciate inter-cultural similarities and difference, there is currently no program that targets children. Research shows that educational institutions, schools, and teachers can play a key role in laying the foundations of cooperation in children², unfortunately, the recently updated curriculum in Pakistani schools fails to address such key areas of socio-cultural functioning. Moreover, due to a lack of financial resources and personnel, schools are unable to invest in developing programs promoting an understanding of peace, cooperation and co-existence. Therefore, there is a need to design an informative program that helps children to identify and recognize the conflict that arises from diversity and learn to counter it with kindness and acceptance.

The current project aims to do this by engaging with key stakeholders to develop and implement a program that teaches children about the existence of conflict and enables them to become active members of society who promote peace and cooperation. Moreover, by developing and executing this program, the project will enable children to learn how to develop opinions and strategies that are inclusive and that do not inherently discriminate against people in their community based on personal characteristics.

Being a doctoral student whose work centers on understanding and fostering helping and kindness related behaviors in elementary school children, particularly in relation to social relationships and structures within school settings, I will bring not only subject-related expertise but also methodological awareness. I understand the importance of empowering communities to use their voice to create positive change and with this I hope to encourage children to start developing their voice for causes that extend beyond themselves. Moreover, I hope to work with the Beaconhouse School System (BSS), who have consented to collaborating on the project. BSS was established in 1975 and is now a leading educational provider in Pakistan. While BSS is the flagship of the Beaconhouse Group, the group has established a number of educational institutions that cater to the education and training needs of a

¹ Numerical data on the demographics has been retrieved from <https://data.worldbank.org/country/pakistan>

² Toker Gökçe, A. (2021). Core Values in Education from the Perspective of Future Educators. Sage Open. <https://doi.org/10.1177/21582440211014485>

large and diverse group of individuals of varying ages and socioeconomic backgrounds. By partnering and developing the diversity educational program with BSS, the project aims to reach a wide range of participants.

Proposed Activities

The project will take place over a period of 4 weeks and will be divided into four key phases.

Phase I: The first phase of the project will involve a full-day workshop with teachers teaching years 1 to 5. The workshop will be a collaborative event in which the project leader will share key concepts and educational literature pertinent to diversity education in children with the participants. The participants will then be invited to share their ideas and opinions and thoughts. Through a brain-storming activity, a number of scenarios will be developed. This scenario will represent conflict arising from differences in religious affiliations, gender, food, customs, clothing, and language.

Phase II: Collaborating with a graphic designer, the scenarios will be designed into cartoon images so that they are understandable for children studying in years 1 to 5. Moreover, the project leader will design an activity and a set of guidelines that can then be used by teachers.

Phase III: The digital images and activity guidelines will be shared with teachers so they can run the activity in their class. The activity will involve showing the children the images and asking them to identify themes of conflict. Once the children identify the themes, the teachers will ask children to come up with conflict management strategies that incorporate the essence of kindness and respect. Each class will be provided with a tablet/laptop so that all children are able to partake in the activity during class and are not left out due to lack of electronic resources (these laptops will be given to the school for future use at the end of the project).

Phase IV: An assembly will be organized that will allow children to use different creative tools (poems, stories, pictures/drawings/paintings/ plays/songs etc.) to showcase their ideas of combatting conflict with kindness. Parents will be invited to the event to support their child's learning.

Goals

Short-Term:

- To work collaboratively with teachers in developing educational resources so that they feel like valued members of the school community
- Engaging students in understanding and identifying possible conflicts arising from diverse characteristics of people
- Engaging students in focused discussions where they establish mechanisms to deal with conflict
- Providing children with the opportunity to showcase their understanding and beliefs through creative outputs
- Engaging parents to support children in their learning

Long-Term:

- Create awareness of the importance of diversity and inclusion
- The development of an informative program that creates awareness in Elementary school children of diversity, conflict and inclusion
- Implementation of the program across the Beaconhouse Group educational institutions and in other schools (particularly those catering to children from low-socioeconomic backgrounds)
- Greater acceptance of and respect for peers from diverse backgrounds

Indicators of Success & Impact

Quantitative:

- Number of teachers engaged in the initial workshop
- Number of students who partake in the class activity
- Number of scenarios-based cartoon images developed
- Number of kind behaviors proposed by children

Qualitative:

- Feedback from schools, teachers, parents and students on the project
- Implementation in additional branches of BSS schools.

Name: Aneeza Pervez
Project Name: Celebrating Diversity: Mitigating Conflict with Kindness
School: International House London

Note: all funds in US dollars.

Projects for Peace grant: \$ 10,000.00
 Additional Funding, if any:
Total funding available: \$ 10,000.00

TOTAL FUNDS REMAINING:
 \$ -

TOTAL EXPENDITURES:
 \$ 10,000.00

Student Expenses					Project Expenses				
Travel (Including Airfare)	Lodging	Communications	Food (Biweekly)	Miscellaneous	Non-Student Travel and Lodging	Direct Equipment and Supplies	Marketing and Event Support	Staffing Costs	Miscellaneous
1100		50	100		0	5000	300	700	200
90			100			1000		1360	
Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total	Total
\$ 1,190.00	\$ -	\$ 50.00	\$ 200.00	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 6,000.00	\$ 300.00	\$ 2,060.00	\$ 200.00

Total Student Expenses: \$ 1,440.00

Total Project Expenses: \$ 8,560.00