What is Relational Pedagogy and why?

Relational Pedagogy is centred on relationships. It is curious, creative, critical, communal and compassionate thinking, feeling, learning and doing. It focuses on enquiry and practices based on the science and humanities of relationships with all of the natural world and the human family. Its purpose is to build a green, egalitarian and nonviolent world of relational peace.

Relational Pedagogy developed in Afghanistan out of multiple crises. The Afghan education system that is 'copied' from today's global mainstream pedagogies is not able to resolve the many pressing challenges of Afghans or the human family. Afghans and people across the world are facing the life-threatening crises of climate change, socio-economic inequalities and violence with its nuclear-risk wars. Underlying these crises is a relational crisis, in which human beings lose their skills of relating healthily and peacefully with their individual selves, the diverse human family and the natural world. Mainstream pedagogies were established in the past before humanity's relational knowledge, attitudes and practices were sufficiently developed. These pedagogies have been focused primarily on 'things', 'things' which the bronze, iron, industrial, information and digital ages have been manufacturing, like money, weapons, and sophisticated gadgets. Our pursuit and addiction to these 'things' under the 'old' systems have distracted us from nurturing our relationships with all, and from developing our relational understanding of a borderfree, shared life with Nature and the human family, and have driven us to crisis which threaten our very survival and well-being.

Even in Albert Einstein's time, he had said that it had "become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity." Fresh approaches to learning and education are urgently needed, approaches that can help us, especially new and future generations, to nurture and learn from relationships with everyone and everything.
Loving and sentient relational beings
who enjoy relational peace

Relational Pedagogy

Learning by Relating

Human Relational Development

Relational Learning Project 2019

Relational Learning Circles

Relating with all of Nature and the human family

Connecting everyone and everything i.e. ‘connecting the dots’

Curious
Creative
Critical
Communal
Compassionate

Relational Science, Skills,
Analysis and Application
1. Relational Pedagogy is education that builds a green, egalitarian and nonviolent world of relational peace, helping to care for all of Nature and the human family.

Today’s mainstream education has not yet included nonviolent peace education in its curriculum. It is hierarchical, elitist, for-profit and militarized, and its purpose is primarily economic. Therefore, it maintains elitist socio-economic, political and military violence and wars, causing harm to all of Nature and humanity.
2. Relational Pedagogy is curious (questioning), creative (imaginative), critical (evidence-based), communal (relational) and compassionate (loving) education in which student-teachers learn to enquire, think, feel and do things scientifically & relationally. They learn practical aspects of Relational Science, Relational Skills, Relational Analysis and Application.

In today’s mainstream education, students are overloaded with information that is not directly practical or relevant to their daily lives and problems. They memorize this information for standardized tests & exams, with a skewed focus on academic and material success. As such, some students unquestioningly & ‘obediently’ accept & get co-opted into today’s ecologically unsustainable, unequal and violent status quo, eventually maintaining them.
3. Relational Pedagogy is learning by relating directly and personally with all, including with self, community, the human family, the natural world (living and non-living things), Mother Earth, the cosmos and the universe. Through Relational Learning Circles, student-teachers learn from others and from Nature. These become their 'live books' in a large, inter-related and inter-dependent family.

Today’s education is disconnected from direct, personal relationships with all, leading to the dehumanization, demonization and exploitation of ‘the other’ as well as the loss of relational, empathetic, emotional and psychosocial skills. Students become individual economic machines & don’t embrace the inter-related human qualities, needs and values that are shared by all.
4. Student-teachers ‘connect all the dots’ of knowledge, people and life. They learn how everyone and everything in any particular subject matter of study is connected with everyone and everything else. Upon analysis and with a sense of humane responsibility for the well-being of all, student-teachers apply nonviolent solutions which benefit all and hurt none.

Today’s education is one in which students don’t intentionally ‘connect all the dots’. Nor do they build on how everyone and everything can cooperate with and be compassionate to one another, instead of competing for self-advancement. They solve problems in isolation without considering all angles, elements, root causes & effects. They are not working together enough, across all causes and borders. Many feel dis-empowered to practice humane responsibility for the well-being of all.
Relational Pedagogy builds a green, egalitarian and nonviolent world of Relational Peace.

Relational Peace is founded on love. It values all members of the natural world and the human family.

In Relational Peace, the individual person, all members of the human family, all of the natural world (living and non-living things, the Earth, the cosmos and universe) and all societal structures and services (environment, economy, sociopolitics, justice, security, education, healthcare, culture, the humanities and others) enjoy green, equal and nonviolent relationships with one another, caring for the Earth, meeting the needs of current and future generations, and abolishing war.

All these elements are directly or indirectly related and connected to one another in a large interdependent community, which cosmologists and biologists understand as the ‘tree of energy and life’. Their actions and inactions affect one other. When any one element is exploitative and violent towards any other element, Relational Peace is disrupted.

Relational Peace includes work to mitigate today’s inter-connected global crises of global warming, inequalities and violence with its nuclear-risk wars. All the different individual and community efforts, causes and struggles to build a better world are directly or indirectly related to one another and share common root problems. There is an urgent need for all these efforts to relate and work with one another.

Of priority, Relational Pedagogy and its student-teachers seek to practise a nonviolent, non-military economy in which the human family equitably and justly meets the basic needs of all of the natural world and the human family.
Methodology and Curriculum of Relational Pedagogy

1. Relational Learning Circles

A key method of learning in Relational Pedagogy are Relational Learning Circles. In Relational Learning Circles, student-teachers learn from other student-teachers in the same or different locations across the world by relating with them in person or via online conversations. Student-teachers also learn by observing, studying, noting questions and working cooperatively with Mother Nature and Mother Earth. All members of the human family as well as Mother Nature become ‘live’ books (more than 7 billion ‘live’ human books and countless ‘live’ Nature books).

2. Relational Learning

Student-teachers learn to enquire and think scientifically and relationally by being curious, critical (evidence-based), creative (imaginative), communal and compassionate.

3. Relational Sciences

In a letter to the New York Times in 1945, Albert Einstein quoted the words of ex-U.S. President Franklin Roosevelt: “We are faced with the pre-eminent fact that if civilization is to survive, we must cultivate the science of human relationships - the ability of all peoples, of all kinds, to live together, in the same world at peace.”

4. Relational Skills (Relational Literacy and Intelligence)

Skills that are needed to build green, equal and nonviolent relationships and societal structures include: Organic Farming/Permaculture/Agro-ecology Skills, Renewable Energy Skills, Social/relationship/networking/people skills, Psychological and emotional skills including trauma healing skills, Listening and Empathy Skills, Sharing skills, Consensus building/Cooperative/Participatory Community Skills, Social Work Skills, Basic Skills in Social Economy and Worker Cooperatives, Scientific and Relational Enquiry Skills, Nonviolent Action Skills, Nonviolent Communication Skills, Nonviolent Conflict Resolution Skills, Mediation and Reconciliation Skills, Restorative Justice Skills, Basic Music and Arts Skills, Play/Sports skills

5. Relational Analysis & Application

Step 1: Ask questions, research for and understand the scientific evidence on the subject matter, asking about all the relationships and inter-connections of the subject matter with itself, the Earth, Nature, the student-teacher, the community and all in the human family.

Step 2: Brainstorm and make lists of possible personal and societal nonviolent applications and solutions for the Earth, Nature, the student-teacher, the community and all in the human family.

Step 3: Learn from other student-teachers in Relational Learning Circles locally and across the world.

6. Relational Pedagogy in Mainstream Curriculum

Relational Pedagogy focuses on practical knowledge that is related, relevant or useful to every-day life and realities, cutting down on the number of subjects and amount of information student-teachers use and de-emphasizing memory work. There is no standardized testing and no ranking. Students and teachers are considered learners and teachers. It is a non-profit method. Finland’s education phenomenon may be a good mainstream case study.

- Languages – focus on communicating, relating with, understanding and helping others
- Physical and natural sciences – focus on concepts and on interacting with ‘every-day’ natural & material world
- Math - basic mathematics, algebra, fractions and geometry that’s related to every-day life is taught. Economic literacy is included.
- Values and ethics, music, arts, humanities and sports are valued.
Values of a Relational Pedagogy Learning Community

1. We develop relational knowledge, attitudes and practices based on increasing scientific evidence that we’re connected to everyone and to everything. As relational beings in a relational age, we ‘connect all the dots’ and learn through relationships.

2. We value relationships & universal values, not Money or Power.

3. We value scientific and relational enquiry.

4. We learn so as to nurture egalitarian, nonviolent Relational Peace with all, building a critical mass of green, equal and nonviolent relationships and societal structures.

5. We have a humane responsibility for the well-being of everyone and everything.