



MULTICULTURALISM IN SCHOOL PRACTISES (CASES FROM SSA INTERVENTION IN ODISHA, MADHUSTHALI VIDYAPEETH FROM JHARKHAND AND DIGANTAR SCHOOLS FROM RAJASTHAN)

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The paper depicts selective school practices that provides ample opportunity to value and recognize the cultural background of each student and to internalize the learning outcomes in a multi cultural perspective. The practices are extracted from the ongoing schools practices of Odisha, Rajasthan and Jharkhand. Common School practices like functioning of School Cabinet, Child Reporter, School as mini mecum of indigenous culture, painting work, openness in school uniform and library activities are some of the practices to generate a sense of acceptance and respectfulness to own culture as well as others; and to understand the learning outputs in multi-cultural perspective. The paper also highlights "SRUJAN" an initiative of SSA, Odisha for identification and nurturing the talent of school children towards indigenous culture. It is a statewide program to generate a sense of equity, dignity and respectfulness towards other cultures among the students at the elementary level.

The educational excellencies of a school better achieved through the practice of educational equity. Equity in education means equal opportunities for all students to develop their fullest potential. However, the very essence of multicultural education is freedom to students to develop the knowledge, attitudes, and skills to participate in a democratic and free society. According to Banks (1992) multiculturalism is a way of thinking and it appreciates and respects other perspectives.

Gay (1988) generalized three general approaches that can be extrapolated from these more specific approaches:

- Teaching content about cultural pluralism,
- Teaching culturally different students, and
- Using cultural pluralism to teach other academic subjects and intellectual skills.

Teaching content about cultural pluralism is the most traditional and common approach. It is primarily content-centered, with an emphasis on developing units of instruction (lessons, modules, courses) about the history, heritage, contributions, and social issues of ethnic groups (Gay, 1988).

Teaching culturally different students is more process-oriented than content oriented. Its center of attention is establishing more effective instructional relationships and rapport with students from different ethnic, cultural, and racial backgrounds as a basis for improving educational opportunities and outcomes.

The third approach to multicultural education combines content and process, and is often referred to as infusion. In practice, it means using culturally pluralistic content, experiences, and perspectives in teaching other knowledge and skills. Ethnic and cultural materials provide the contexts for students to practice and demonstrate mastery of more general academic and subject matter skills (Gay, 1988).

The third approach infusion suggested by Gay, 1988 best reflected in the following school practices prevalent in Govt. Primary Schools of Koraput District of Odisha. It was joint initiatives of UNICEF, Odisha and SSA, Koraput.

1. **School Cabinet** is a leading group of nominated/selective student representatives who are in charge of different kinds of responsibilities related to education, health, culture and publication etc. each student in the group is assigned a specific responsibility like education or health or culture and designated as the minister of that assignment. It is the duty of the cultural minister to organize different cultural program like mono action, singing song, folk tales, small screen shots, comedy and other indigenous programs like pala, daskathia, mela and others before the school on every Saturday. It has been the plat form for the students to perform and to get acquainted with the values, beliefs, language and living style etc. of indigenous, urban and other cultures.

ing style etc. of indigenous, urban and other cultures. All students get exposed to the other languages and culture; perceive how the values cherished, language spoken and beliefs prevails in other community, places and religion ;and at the same time learn how the above is equally respectful and relevant to their own culture.

2. **Child Reporter** is a strategic practice to make students to gain first-hand experiences about the people, language, fooding, living style, beliefs, values, historical background, flora and fauna of locality as well as outside the locality. By this practice students of class six to eight were advised to collect information about the views of villagers on the "school education" in other words what should be taught in school or how can community help to support school. It is being found that the answers to the questions best relates to the cultural back ground of the villagers. It was the duty of the reporter to compile the views of similar type and a brief of the people those shared the views. It was written and displayed on the board for all children to read.
3. **Indigenous instruments, games and living styles** are the great source of learning for all students. It's preservation and transmission to next generation is also one of the duty of the school. Thus incorporating indigenous cultural items in different cultural program of school, greeting guests in different cultural practices, display of musical instruments, dress, paintings, and utensils as specimen of different culture in school campus develop acceptance and addictiveness of students to different cultures.

The following are some of the practices that have been practiced in Madhusthali Vidyapeeth, Madhupur, Deoghar, Jharkhand which are best relates to the second approach that is teaching culturally different students.

1. **Painting by Children better reflect the diversity exists** in fooding, housing and living style. It is being found that if students is assigned paintwork and instructed to make it more contextualized, then work product reflects diversity and creativity among the children. For example-painting on scenery of their own locality, utensils they use, dress used by their family personnel, religious place, musical instruments, common occupations and food preservation system etc.
2. **Uniform:** We are habituated with the practice of school one or two uniform throughout the week. Some where it is section wise/classwise. But is found in Carmel English Medium school that students are free to wear the dress of his/her interest in every Saturday. It is found that students are fond of to wear the dress of different cultures at pre-primary and primary level. This practice generates a multi cultural dress code in the school situation and appreciation to each other.

The following is one of the practices prevalent in DIGANTAR school of Rajasthan.

1. **Library is the hub of Multicultural exposure** to students. The library enriched with the books, magazines and newsletter better expose the students to the value system, and religious practices, and language diversity, unique cultural heritage and historical back drop of each culture. It fulfills the curiosity of students to know about other cultures. The digital materials best helpful for it. The library classes on reading of topics related to global culture, religious practices, indigenous, major festivals and celebrations. The meaningful focus group discussions and sharing of information among the students of multi class or inter schools better develops the understanding of cultural values, believes and pattern of behavior.

SSA, Odisha has been practicing a child friendly statewide activity in which each and every students has an opportunity to perform, display and project on

multi lingual, multi-racial, multi religious and multi-class. This particular activity is named as “SRUJAN”

1. **Srujan** is a child friendly activity and about 12 (twelve) lakhs children have already been actively involved in the community based learning system that is connected with reading, writing and drawing picture, tapping the community knowledge system. Involvement of community in curricular activity is a new area of intervention that the NCF 2005 envisaged. As the part of the program CRCCs and the schools to create space for the children irrespective of age, sex and castes. Thus children have the scope to express their writing, reading and fluency through different activities provided in Srujan. Six different activities like storytelling festival, art and craft, music, song and dance, traditional games and sports, Nature study, village project, mathematics mela and science quiz.

One of the major challenges of the programme is how to capture the local resources in the curricular areas to fit in to the subjects like language, mathematics and EVs. Interestingly the stories and other items of Srujan have been applied in the Class III, IV and V MLE curriculum and Srujan has been the source of inspiration to the community, teachers and the children at large.

2. **Learning Material:** Initiatives has taken to collect stories, poems and folk tales etc from the community and use it to develop the reading habits of the children. It is being observed that children took much interest and develop the reading skills easily and fluently. KATHA is one of the model book for enhancing reading of primary school children developed by CYSD, Bhubaneswar.

The above initiatives of schools and state administration creating platform for multicultural education in a holistic approach. It is holistic in the sense that the expected learning outcomes/curricular objectives have been achieved along with the multicultural education. Teachers' attitude, ability and commitment have been the key factor to sustain the above practices in schools. It better indicates teachers understanding of global culture and importance of Childs fullest expression of potentials. It a march towards the educational equity.

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