Education for Sustainable Development – Preserving Linguistic and Cultural Diversity

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Abstract: The paper deals with culture and linguistic diversity in association with schools. The influence international policies and national policies, provision to preserve the linguistic and culture diversity in classroom and schools. The role of education to preserve the linguistic and culture diversity needs in schools.

ISSUE: The diversity of students in today's classrooms underscores the importance of developing curricula, teaching strategies, and policies to help all students succeed in school. Diversity has to be welcome, understand, and affirm all students and to treat their cultural and linguistic backgrounds as equally valid and important which should be reflected in every face of the school environment. This is especially important when addressing literacy. Effective literacy instruction builds upon the cultural and linguistic backgrounds, ways of making meaning, and prior knowledge that all children bring to the classroom. Such instruction also acknowledges the important role of culture in language and literacy learning. Understanding and respecting the array of different cultures and languages represented in their classrooms helps educators adopt strategies for teaching literacy that will encourage and support student achievement and preserve. "Cultural differences should not separate us from each other, but rather cultural diversity brings a collective, strength that can benefit all of humanity." Robert Alan (2014) intercultural dialogue is the best guarantee of a more peaceful, just and sustainable world.

In today's interconnected world, culture's power to transform societies is clear. Its diverse manifestations – from our cherished historic monuments and museums to traditional practices and contemporary art forms – enrich our everyday lives in countless ways. Heritage constitutes a source of identity and cohesion for communities disrupted by bewildering change and economic instability. Creativity contributes to building open, inclusive and pluralistic societies. Both heritage and creativity lay the foundations for vibrant, innovative and prosperous knowledge societies. International Mother Language Day (21 February) is the opportunity to show the vital role of education for sustainable

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development in the preservation and promotion of mother tongues. Among the 6,000 languages and dialects of the world, 50 percent of them are threatened. UNESCO is convinced that no development can be sustainable without a strong culture component.

A language disappears on average every two weeks, carrying with it an entire cultural and intellectual heritage. The protection of linguistic diversity is a challenge for sustainable development. Languages convey knowledge and local know-how, they are an irreplaceable tool for sustainability.

The decrease in the number of speaker's holders of traditional knowledge has a direct effect on the environment. Thus, linguistic diversity is the refection of natural diversity. These two values ensure the prosperity of present and future generations and the advent of sustainable development. Traditionally, education for sustainable development places the promotion of mother tongues as a priority in its objectives with the fight against illiteracy.

CARE is an international humanitarian organization fighting for all children everywhere to have access to quality education to gain confidence and skills they will need throughout their lives.

About Linguistic and Culture Diversity

Culture is a broad and comprehensive concept that includes all the ways of being. Culture is learned throughout life as one participates in family and social networks (Gollnick & Chin, 2006). Cultures have several components, including values and behavioral styles; language and dialects; nonverbal communications; and perspectives, worldviews, and frames of reference (Banks, 2006). Cultural practices are shared within a specific group and may or may not be shared across groups. It is important to recognize that cultures are always changing because individuals, groups, and the surrounding environment are always changing. Therefore, it is difficult to develop a single, permanent definition of a culture.

In every culture, subgroups may form. Subgroups can differ by any of the components of culture, including ethnicity, language, class, religion, and geography. These subgroups can be very different from each other, even though they share some traits and values. Often members of the dominant society or subgroup of a culture view their culture as correct and all others as incorrect or even inferior.

Supporting Policies for Preserving Language and Culture

Sustainability education (ES), Education for Sustainability (EFS), and Education for Sustainable Development (ESD) are interchangeable terms describing the practice of teaching for sustainability. ESD is the term most used internationally and by the United Nations. Agenda 21 was the first international document that identified education as an essential tool for achieving sustainable development and highlighted areas of action for education. Kerala Official Language Act, 1969, Malayalam and English are treated as the official languages of the state without prejudice to the Articles 345 and 347 of the

Constitution of India helps to implement the bilingual in schools. Article 16 (1) of the constitution-the minorities felt discriminated against, they raise their voice through legal and political means.

Studies about Endangered Languages and Culture.

The number of foreign immigrants living in India is steadily declining, but India continues to be among the 10 countries with the highest in-migration in the world. At the same time, India sends the fourth largest number of emigrants to other countries. As per the 2001 Census, the total population of India is 1,028,737,436. Scheduled Castes (SCs) and Scheduled Tribes (STs) form an integral part of the Indian population. Scheduled castes amount to 16.2% and scheduled tribes amount to 8.1% according to the 2001 Census.

Endangered Language

More than 50% of the world's languages are located in just eight countries (denoted in red on the map): India, Brazil, Mexico, Australia, Indonesia, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, and Cameroon. In these countries and around them are the areas that are the most linguistically diverse in the world (denoted in blue on the map).

India has around 196 endangered languages, including about 80 in the Northeast, according to the UNESCO Atlas of the World's Languages in Danger 2009.

Importance of Mother tongue, the vast body of psycholinguistic research that has emerged in recent years has indicated that language development and cognitive development are intimately related. Empirical research on the relationships between language and cognitive development, especially in bilingual

environments, is of great relevance in the context of educational programs and in the context of theoretical perspectives on cognitive development. In some sense, the entire educational system in India is a bilingual system. No Indian student can ever hope to complete his school and collegiate education without studying at least two languages. Also in most cases, a language that may or may not be the mother tongue of the student may be used as the medium of instruction.

Distribution of Endangered Languages in India According to the Number of Speakers (Source: Sengupta, P. 2009: 18)								
Degree of Vitality	DataNot Available	Zero to 5,000 Speakers	5,000 to 10,000 Speakers	10,000 to 20,000 Speakers	20,000 to 50,000 Speakers	50,000 to 100,000 Speakers	Above 100,000 Speakers	Total
Extinct	-	9	-	-	-	-	-	9
Critically Endangered	4	22	2	4	2	1	-	35
Severely Endangered	-	6	-	-	-	-	-	6
Definitely Endangered	4	19	8	6	6	4	15	62
Unsafe/ Vulnerable	3	4	5	3	22	12	35	84
Total	11	60	15	13	30	17	50	196

Bilingual education, the role of bilingual education involving the mother tongue-medium of instruction has been subjected to thorough investigation by several studies. For example, in the Indian context, Anand (1971) compared the Kannada and English medium students and found the former significantly superior in verbal intelligence and achievement and the latter in nonverbal intelligence. However, a number of studies have reported either beneficial effect or no detrimental effect on the cognition of the child if he is educated through a medium other than his own mother tongue. A pilot study conducted by Srivastava and Khatoon (1980) in the schools of Mysore city with standard eight students showed that the English medium students scored significantly better than those in Kannada medium on the measures of nonverbal intelligence and the three dimensions of verbal creativity, namely, fluency, flexibility, and originality. However, when the school related measures were controlled, there was hardly any difference between the two streams.

A. K. Srivastava (1980) conducted a study years ago in which a sample consisting of eighth and ninth grade students in the age group of 13 and 14 respectively was studied. The rationale behind the selection of these age groups was the expectation that at this stage the effect of the medium of instruction might have consolidated in the learners in either direction. We also had in mind the often-repeated assertion that the lateralization of the human brain takes place around these years, with consequences for further language acquisition.

The students were from eleven trilingual media schools of Kanyakumari district of Tamilnadu. This district offered several intriguing combinations of the medium of instruction. In these schools instruction was being given through three languages, namely, Tamil, Malayalam, and English. In addition we also noticed groups of students who chose to study through the medium of Tamil even though their mother tongue was Malayalam. Note that this district has been returning a higher literacy rate than other districts in Tamilnadu. School administration in these schools in terms of the syllabus, teaching conditions, and examination patterns was uniform. As a result, the influence of school environment as an intervening variable was controlled. As there was provision for co-education in all the eleven schools we covered, almost equal representation from both boys and girls was available.

In 2010, there were 5.4 million foreign-born people living in India, according to new estimates released by the Population Division of the United Nations Department of Economic and Social Affairs. These numbers make India home to the ninth largest number of foreign-born people in the world.

Role of Education at Sustainable Development for Culture Diverse

Education is a human right and the primary agent of transformation towards sustainable development by increasing people's capacities to transform their visions for society into reality, (UNESCO). Education for sustainable development (ESD) is to help people to develop the attitudes, skills, and knowledge to make informed decisions for the benefit of themselves and others, now and for the future, and to act upon those decisions. Culture is concerned with the identities and values that shape the way people live, their responsiveness to educational programs, and the degree to which they feel involved in preserving for the future. UNESCO encourages an approach to sustainable development in which people are addressed with a discourse linked to their immediate concerns.

Converse the pre exciting culture, Education for Sustainable Development means adopting a more holistic approach to education with the aim of 'creating a better world for this generation and future generations of all living things on planet Earth'. This allows every child to acquire the knowledge, skills, attitudes and values necessary to shape a sustainable future.

Below are some recommendations for teachers and schools for effective teacher dispositions and practices for cultural and linguistic diversity.

1. Be clear that everyone has cultural biases
2. Be aware of how personal cultural biases may affect your teaching and relationship with students
3. Consider making a home visit to show the student that you are willing to go the extra mile to learn
4. Be aware that cultural differences do exist
5. Embrace students' cultural differences
6. Understand that differences are not deficits

7. Do not automatically attribute a student's difficulty to upbringing, low income, or environment

8. Take a positive approach and always build on the student's strengths

9. Do not treat CLD students differently from other students when in a group

10. Use a variety of instructional practices (e.g., cooperative learning, interactive learning, and project-based learning)

11. Multicultural Curriculum

12. Develop lessons that incorporate the student's culture in the learning process.

The schools have to help the child to explore the new culture and new language with the peers so that culture and language can be preserved. School should foster diversity rather than expecting rather than expecting all students to accept one way of doing things.

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