

ARTICLE

Published in Vihangama 2002 Vol. I (January - February)

CULTURE IN CURRICULUM : THE IGNCA INITIATIVE

For the past one and a half years, IGNCA has been working on preparing guidelines for schools, to inculcate culture in the curriculum. It has hosted several rounds of discussions involving teachers, principals and educationists and brought them together on the same platform in three workshops. A sub-committee consisting of representatives from all sections of this interactive group was also constituted.

From all this churning emerged a consensus on not only the need for inculcating culture in school curriculum but also on the methodology and the syllabus. Unanimously, the name Heritage Activity was decided for this subject. The teachers and the principals agreed that Heritage Activity would be taught as a regular, evaluated subject in school curriculum.

Vihangama has been reporting the progress on the discussions (Vols.III & IV 2001). IGNCA took an initiative in the matter as an institution involved in conservation, preservation and propagation of the cultural heritage of India. Though the government had set up several high level committees to go into the gamut of education, no innovative measure had been taken up in the area of cultural activity in schools. The sub-committee set up by IGNCA felt that no further delay should be allowed. During the course of 18 months, IGNCA has interacted with over 250 school teachers, a good number of principals and academicians.

The IGNCA initiative has been received well. This is clear from the fact that some schools have volunteered to introduce the subject Heritage Activity in their curriculum. The recommendations of the sub-committee are simple to adopt and convenient to implement, imposing no additional burden on the resources of the schools or burdening children with more texts and books. The objective of the subjects to introduce to the children, right from the nursery class awareness about the cultural heritage of India and develop a respect towards it and a sense of responsibility to preserve it. The subject will be local in content to begin with, teaching children by showing what is nearest to their learning environment. Academicians, educationists and historians after discussion with teachers, who are the ultimate vehicles of this knowledge transformation, have drawn broad sections in the syllabus. It is as follows: (a) Cultural mapping of the several sites and architectural heritage; (b) Folklore and lifestyles of rural, tribal and urban Indians; (c) Visual, oral and aural, performing and fine arts of India; (e) Pre and post Independence literature and literary figures of India; (f) Pre and post Independence philosophers, thinkers and saints; and (g) Modes of transmission.

In the beginning it was proposed that the detailed syllabi for project, cultural activity, workbooks, community activity, teaching of art etc. be prepared by the experts in various heritage subjects in association with school teachers. However, since the teachers kept busy schedules, and were unable to participate in extra-school activity, the sub-committee decided to prepare the pilot modules with the help of experts in respective areas (sites, performing arts etc). Once these modules are ready, they will be circulated among school teachers for their comments. Changes, if needed would be made and suggestions incorporated in the final modules are ready, they will be circulated among school teachers for their comments. Changes, if needed would be made and suggestions incorporated in the final modules. To begin with four modules would be prepared by the following persons: Religion and Religious scriptures by Prof. Bharat Gupt, Folklore by Dr. Sudha K. Rao and Kailash Kr. Mishra, Socio-natural-environmental heritage by Shri G.S. Negi and Architectural Heritage by Prof. Nalini M. Thakur and Delhi Institute of Heritage Research and Management.

Once accepted by the teaching community and school children, all the modules would be translated into all major Indian languages. IGNCA also plans to produce these modules on CD-ROM. The feedback

from the schools that have volunteered to introduce the subject will set the tone for further action. IGNCA hopes that its endeavor will be well-rewarded and some progress would be made in the direction of including Heritage Activity as part of curriculum.

- Kailash Kr. Mishra