The Practice Model of Gelao Ethnic Cultural Curriculum in Kindergarten: An Exploratory Case Study in China

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Abstract. In order to preserve cultural diversity in the process of globalization, ethnic cultural curriculum has been carried out in some kindergartens in Guizhou province since 2002. Based on survey of the Gelao Ethnic Cultural Curriculum in Wuchuan Center Kindergarten (WCK) in Guizhou Province, this article presents the practice model of Gelao ethnic cultural curriculum, and then putting forward some suggestions about construction of ethnic cultural curriculum.

Introduction

Today, with the development of globalization, preserving cultural diversity is considered a supreme virtue. Education is a dynamically approach to preserving culture. Therefore, Multicultural Curriculum (MCC) becomes the focus point of educational research field. MCC was introduced to China in 1990s (Brodsgaard, 2014; Grant& Gillespie,1993). In the following years, tens of the articles concerned were written, most of which, however, are introductory about MCC. China has 56 nationalities, and every nationality has her own culture. But in China, the central government provided a united curriculum framework and textbooks in the past; the MCC was seldom carried out in schools. Until June, 2001, we have had the policy support. And the MCC, which is represented by ethnic cultural curriculum, has the opportunity to be carried out in the education system, because every ethnic cultural curriculum is an important part of Multicultural Curriculum. Thus, ethnic cultural curriculum has been paid great attention in the minority nationality areas (Nganga, 2015).

To solve the issues in practice, the Ministry of Education issued the “Guidance for Kindergarten Education” (trial version) in 2001. The Guidance takes into consideration the gap between progressive ideas and reality, and offers compromise solutions by stating specific requirements and content in different domains. The reform movement is ongoing (Hu,& Roberts,2013). The ethnic cultural curriculum is a good way to protect and transfer the minorities’ cultures. The integration of ethnic- folk culture into class, which is a policy of Guizhou government to protect and inherit ethnic culture, has been carried out since 2006 (the government gave some economic support to these schools, so they are named project-schools ), which symbolizes the ethnic cultural curriculum began to carried out in some kindergartens.

The Gelao people are an old ethnic minority with a recorded history of 2,100 years. They have their unique ethnic cultures. The Gelao are a mountain agricultural people scattered across twenty counties in western Guizhou Province, with heavy concentrations around Wuchuan. The basis for transfer is unclear since the literature about them is sparse. At present the Gelao live in compact villages with housing following the Han style. However, they continue to practice customs either borrowed from neighboring groups or retained from their original culture that distinguish them from the Han. Gelao ethnic culture contains values, beliefs worship, moral quality, production activities, holiday customs, literature, dance, music, architecture, clothing, food, folk crafts aspects of content, the content of their national culture and material aspects related to the level of consciousness.
involving many aspects of literature, science, social, health, art, emotion and values, highly
diversified characteristics. As a part of our traditional culture of the Chinese nation, Gelao ethnic
culture is necessary to be inherited and developed. As an educational resource development and
utilization, it is an important way to develop and inherit Gelao ethnic culture and how to protect and
transfer the Gelao ethnic cultures becomes a difficult problem to solve.

This paper take Wuchuan Centre Kindergarten(WCK) as a case study, it shows the development
of Gelao ethnic cultural curriculum in kindergarten, This research examines the exploiting actively
and using rationally curriculum resources in preschool. This paper analyzes the model of practice of
Gelao ethnic cultural curriculum, and approaches to learning Gelao ethnic culture in preschool, and
holds that traditional educational conception and means of cultural heritage in preschool have
greatly changed. It reveals complex outcomes of Gelao ethnic culture succession in early education
development in China through a case study of in Wuchuan Autonomous County in Guizhou
Province, China.

The Practice Model of Gelao Ethnic Cultural Curriculum

The process of curriculum implementing is also thoroughly investigated and analyzed, and
practice model of Gelao ethnic cultural curriculum is summarized and sorted out(table3), there are
three main practice models of Gelao ethnic culture curriculum in WCK, it’s a complete process
from development to its implementation is manifested

Model 1: Integration with Teaching Activities

Model of integration with teaching activities refers to teaching activity combined the appropriate
choice of Gelao nationality cultural content. It is characterized of inserting Gelao ethnic music,
dancing, folk story and discrete Gelao artifacts into content of curriculum, which combining into
language education, health, scientific activities, art, social activities. An important characteristic of
the model of integration with teaching activities includes the content of general curriculum, which
remains the teaching and learning standards of early education. This model offers the basic
knowledge about Gelao ethnic culture including arts, dances, music, sports, folklores, and so on.
The rich variety of Gelao cultural resources penetrates into social communication, daily operation
and innovation activities in the early education.

Table 1. Practice Models of Gelao Ethnic Cultural Curriculum in WCK.

<table>
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<th>Model</th>
<th>Defining features</th>
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<tr>
<td>Integration with teaching activities</td>
<td>Integrates Gelao minority linguistics, health, science, art and social activities into class teaching</td>
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<td>Integration with theme activity</td>
<td>Integrates Gelao ethnic culture with theme activity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Integration with learning environment.</td>
<td>Integrates the Gelao culture content in kindergarten facilities, environment and other construction activities.</td>
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Model 2: Integration with Theme Activity

Model of integration with theme activity is characterized by the insertion of Gelao ethnic
minority folksong, folk story and discrete cultural artifacts into the theme activities, the approach of
integration can be divided into two ways.

The first way is according to the characteristics of the season, in the different season choose
different theme activities, such as "when the peach blossom is open", the theme game holds in the
spring, the objective is children know more about the peach blossom; "Wangpo melons" is held on
watermelon planting season, the objective is children understand the watermelon to grow roughly
after germination, three stages of flowering knowledge, experience farming, and so on; "skating" is
held in winter, this game is for children to know in cold winter is nasty and fun at the same time.
The second way is the specific festival theme activities. The adaption of festival of Gelao folk culture performed in the kindergarten stage, so that the children can feel the festive atmosphere in the folk culture and the joy of the game, also the seeds of Gelao culture get sown in the hearts of the children.

Model 3: Integration with Learning Environment

The Gelao ethnic cultural curriculum is a systematic project, which needs a variety of ways and methods to implement. The infiltration of campus circumstances is one of the important sectors of the Gelao ethnic cultural curriculum. On one hand, The Gelao ethnic cultural curriculum of school needs the support of the infiltration of the campus circumstances; on the other hand, the campus circumstances also contain the value and functions of the Gelao ethnic cultural curriculum. The learning environment of Gelao ethnic cultural curriculum is a hidden curriculum that learning as an integrated process encompassing the learning environment, materials, and equipment promote the young children to understand and experience the Gelao culture through the construction of campus culture and optimize the campus circumstances.

The infiltration was part of WCK intelligence-gathering effort that the physical environment, and the activities and experiences offered to children are interdependent and must be considered together in planning and carrying out the program. Activities and materials are available for extended periods of time so children can repeat and expand on their previous experiences. Teaching staff continuously assess and modify the environment to enhance and expand children’s skills and knowledge across all domains. The leaders of WCK understand that Gelao ethnic cultural curriculum program’s structure, how relationships are nurtured, the physical environment, and the activities and experiences offered to children are interdependent and must be considered together in planning and carrying out the program. Similarly to a high quality Gelao cultural program, the interpersonal and physical environment in a high quality preschool program is designed to enable children to experience: a sense of self-identity; confidence in their capacities to explore and learn local culture; growing skill in communication and their habits of mind; and the opportunity to build healthy social dispositions that contribute to the heritage of Gelao culture.

The learning environment is a physical representation of the Gelao ethnic culture curriculum and should reflect the opportunities available for child curiosity, engagement and participation. Environments are created that reflect the culture and language of the children. Since so much of young children’s development and learning take place through their senses and as a result of direct interaction with materials of local residential doors and windows in the building carving, Gelao ethnic minority artifacts exhibition corner, children wearing Gelao ethnic costumes in collective activities and other local learning materials play a critical role in advancing their sense of Gelao ethnic culture. Items must be available, adequate in quantity, well maintained, and appropriate to children’s age, developmental levels, and relate to what they are learning, investigating, exploring, and creating, guarantee.

Conclusion and Discussion

In Chinese mainland, since the beginning of the 20th century when new-type schools were established, schools have started such inside-school curriculum construction activities, such as “second classroom”, “second channel”, “outside-school extra-curricular activity”, “interest group”, etc. At that time, the central government provided a curriculum framework, laid down specific teaching content, and even provided the same textbooks. In order to improve students’ examination scores, few inside-school curriculum construction activities, such as “second classroom”, “second channel”, “outside-school extra-curricular activity”, “interest group”, etc., are about ethnic culture. Maybe, a centralized curriculum development system is considered to be a more realistic option at least for third world countries.

This paper has investigated the situation of Gelao ethnic cultural curriculum in WCK. The general challenges identified are not unique to the study site but, in fact, are common in places
where socio-economic and power imbalances are large and cultural traditions are being developed for ethnic education, taking WCK as a good example for understanding integration Gelao ethnic culture into curriculum and heritage of ethnic culture. Similar to many cultural attractions in ethnic minority area, construction of ethnic cultural curriculum not only in response to the requirements of cultural heritage but also to the needs of internal domestic politics (Bruner, 2005). The desire for nation building and ethnic minority cultural development has been emphasized by Chinese government. The preschool in minority area caters primarily to heritage of Gelao traditional ethnic culture and serves national political purposes. Guizhou ethnic groups have a history of conflict and subsequent negotiation with the Chinese government(Swain, 1990). Strengthening unity among ethnic groups is the essential objective of China’s ethnic policy (Lee, 2001). Designed as an educational hub, WCK showcases an official version of theory and practice of ethnic cultural curriculum development and. The significance of construction of Gelao ethnic cultural curriculum in heritage of Gelao ethnic culture, promotion of children’s comprehensive development and national identity building is considerable. We have achieved some achievements, but also a lot of problems need us to discuss.

The new curriculum reform gives us the opportunity to practice ethnic cultural curriculum. But we are just stepping into the new field; we meet a lot of problems and challenges. Clearly, ethnic cultural curriculum is a complex undertaking. The complexity of this process necessarily needs more and better researches, teacher training and other supports if we hope to change the kindergarten’s experience for the minority children in Guizhou.

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