

NATIONAL UNITY AND INTERNATIONAL UNDERSTANDING THROUGH  
CURRICULAR AND EXTRA-CURRICULAR ACTIVITIES

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Summary

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The report describes a project aimed at promoting a sense of national unity and international understanding among pupils of primary, secondary schools and students in teacher education institutions through a variety of programmes, group and individual activities, teaching materials in the classroom, exchange of ideas in the arts, and organisations such as Red Cross, Scouts and Guides and clubs. It was difficult to apply common evaluation techniques to the project, but by the criteria of interest, knowledge and enthusiasm, which the pupils showed, the study was considered a successful one.

Report

(This project was conducted by the SITU Council of Educational Research, Madras-28 India with financial assistance from an anonymous donor routed through the World Confederation of the Organizations of the Teaching Profession. S. Natarajan was the Director of the Project, M. Duraiswamy, Project Officer, and G. Srinivasachari Consultant.)

Objectives: The objectives were to help students to acquire an understanding and appreciation of:

- (a) India's cultural heritage with its diversity in respect of religions, beliefs, ways of living etc.
- (b) the various geographical, economic and social factors influencing the life of the people.
- (c) the impact of scientific and technological development on peoples with different cultures and civilizations, thus, bringing them together.
- (d) their responsibility to the nation and the world at large.
- (e) basic human values.

Design: The above objectives were sought to be achieved through a variety of curricular programmes, group and individual activities, teaching materials for use in the classroom, exchange of ideas regarding fine arts, drawing, painting, music and dance, utilisation of Scouting, Guiding, Red Cross Organization, Pen Friends, Clubs, etc.

Participation in the project: The participants included all types of schools from the rural elementary to the urban high school, 29 schools including two training colleges from the city of Madras and 25 other institutions including a few teacher education institutions, spread over 7 districts in Tamil Nadu, offered to participate in the project out of their own free will and choice. Boys and girls of different age groups from the nursery to Standard XI (equivalent to Matriculation) were involved in the project. This was a total programme in which all teachers belonging to different cadres were active participants.

Instructional materials: Subject committees gave detailed suggestions for implementing the programme. Two seminars of the participating teachers were held; the first was for planning the programme, and the second to develop the programme in the second year of its working. Subject committees showed how the department syllabus in each subject could be used for the development of attitudes necessary for international understanding. Participating institutions were advised to write to the departmental authorities and other agencies for relevant audio-visual aids and also to improvise aids as and when necessary.

Teacher orientation: There were pre-service and in-service orientation courses. Two officers of the Council paid periodical visits to some participating schools which needed guidance on the spot.

Communication, co-ordination and co-operation: A Monthly journal called 'Educational Experiments and Research' was started in January 1969. This served as a medium of communication between the organisers of the project and the participating teachers. This was also a medium for exchange of views and information about project work. The proceedings of subject committee meetings and of the seminars and the workpapers considered by them were published in the journal, besides articles on integrated instruction and inter-disciplinary cooperation.

The project had the support of the Government of Tamil Nadu and the National Council of Educational Research and Training, New Delhi. The Advisory Committee included their representatives. Several Extension Departments attached to Training Colleges in Tamil Nadu organised week-end courses on National Unity and International Understanding. The Tamil Nadu Teachers' Union, the Society for the Promotion of Education in India, the Association of the Mathematics Teachers of India, the Association of Geography Teachers of India and the Association for the Promotion of Science Education actively cooperated with the Council in working out the project. The Press in Madras gave generous publicity to the programmes of the Council.

Specific methods: Participating schools were allowed freedom to choose their own method, keeping in mind the spirit of the project. The Council advised teachers to make good use of the procedures suggested for Library Centred Teaching and the Reading Habit Competition. Investigations, group work, plays, concerts, school magazines all afforded opportunities for developing team spirit and a spirit of cooperation. Direct exchanges between pupil and pupil, class and class, school and school were encouraged to awaken and sustain students' interest in the project. In some schools direct contact of students with visitors from other parts of India as well as from other countries helped to broaden the students' vision.

A five-day State Education Camp (October, 12-16, 1969) was held at Madras.

Evaluation: A project aiming at the cultivation of desirable attitudes does not, like knowledge, admit of evaluation by means of tests; nor can the depth of assimilation of new values be quantitatively measured. From the point of view of research it is difficult to apply common evaluation techniques to a project of this type.

This project is a comprehensive effort to promote a sense of national unity and international understanding among pupils of primary, middle and high schools and also teacher education institutions. Our criteria for evaluation are:

1. Students' reaction as revealed by reports and by the observations of the project officers who visited the schools
2. a) Teachers' reactions and the tasks accomplished by them  
b) Parents' reaction
3. The extent to which classrooms were opened to the world outside
4. Interest evinced by the educational authorities and teachers' associations
5. Interest shown by the public as revealed by the Press and The All India Radio, Madras

Findings: The results obtained in general may be stated thus: Though the participating schools implemented the project with varying degrees of enthusiasm, and followed different methods, the attempt in the main yielded positive results, and the beneficial influence has gone beyond the class and the school, drawing the attention of the educational authorities and the public.

Pupils in the primary, middle, and high schools welcome the opportunity to learn about the peoples of other countries and about the people living in different parts of their own country.

Their curiosity is roused stimulating them to self-effort for gaining knowledge. They are receptive to ideas and information relating to national unity and international understanding.

Judged by our criteria of evaluation we may claim that the project has been successful, though we must own that in some schools enthusiasm flagged in the second and third year of the project chiefly because of the extra work involved in the project.